A HISTORY OF BIFRONS MANSION HOUSE

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1. INTRODUCTION

A report on the excavation of the foundations of the vanished mansion house of Bifrons in Patrixbourne has recently appeared in this Journal.[1]

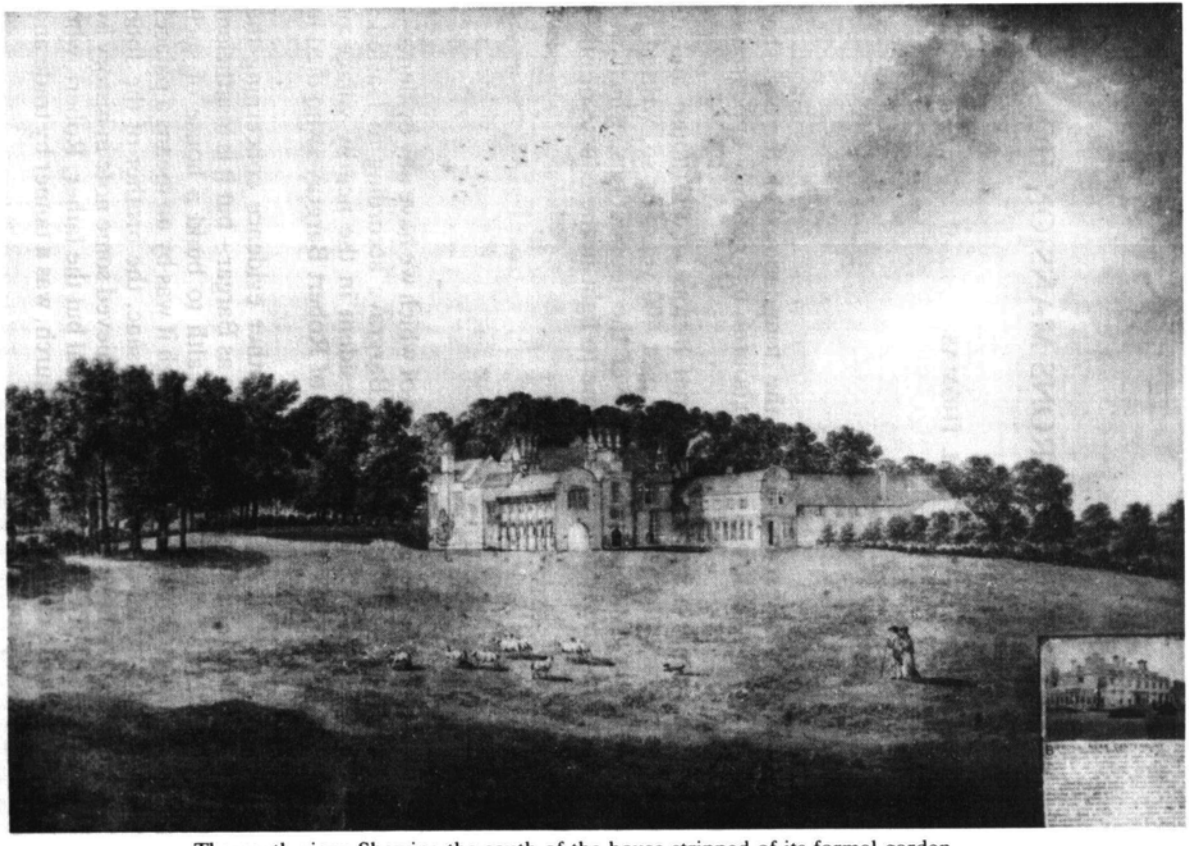
This compilation started as a brief history of the house and its re-building and alteration over the past 400 years or so, written to accompany the work done to uncover the foundations, which was added to as further information came to light in the course of other work.

2. THE BARGRAVE FAMILY

The first house on the site of Bifrons of which we have any evidence is said to have been built by a John Bargrave according to Hasted.[2] Hasted says that the family were resident in the nearby village of Bridge, and John was the eldest son of Robert Bargrave who died in 1600.

There is some documentary and other evidence concerning the Bargrave family – alternatively known as Bargar – but it is insufficient to explain how they came by the wealth to build a house of such generous proportions as Bifrons; though it was by no means a palace. Certainly one member of the family, Isaac, the brother of the John who is reputed to have built Bifrons, achieved some note in history by becoming Dean of Canterbury Cathedral but the father, Robert, who was buried in the chancel of Bridge church, was a tanner by trade and described as a yeoman.

[1] R. Cross and T. Allen, 'Bifrons', *Arch. Cant.*, cvii (1989), 327–32.
[2] E. Hasted, *History of the County of Kent*, 2nd Edition, ix, 277.



The south view: Showing the south of the house stripped of its formal garden.

John Bargrave is known from his will[3] to have died around 1624 leaving a widow Jane and a son Robert. Jane was the daughter and co-heir of Giles Crouch of London, and it has been suggested that it was through this marriage which took place in 1597 that John acquired the money to build Bifrons. Blake[4] presents a good argument for the building to have taken place between 1607 and 1611. The fact that the family moved away from Patrixbourne for four years – a typical construction time for such a building when lime mortar was used – and then returned, indicates that there was perhaps a previous house on the site which they had to vacate for its demolition.

The house passed out of the Bargrave family when John's grandson who was also named John sold it to Sir Arthur Slingsby in 1662[5] and it then had four other owners before being bought by John Taylor in 1694.

3. THE BARGRAVE HOUSE

All that is known of the architecture of the house John Bargrave built at Patrixbourne is given in two painted views now in the possession of a descendant of the Taylor family, one of which is shown in Plate I, and a landscape view looking down on the garden at the rear of the house from the hill beyond, owned by the Yale Center for British Art and dated by them as painted around 1705 or 1710, some century after the house was built.

Architecture of the reign of James I, who came to the throne in 1603, was a transitional style of the early English renaissance known as Jacobean. Many large houses of this period are left for us to enjoy: among them Hatfield House, Hertfordshire; Blickling Hill, Norfolk; Charlton House, Greenwich; Aston Hall, Birmingham, and nearby Chilham Castle in Kent. Most of them have features of layout, elevation and ornament in common. Typical of the external features are the cupola-topped square towers, gable ends to the roof and porches of a recognisable though debased renaissance form. Most of them in the south of England were built of brick with stone quoins, string-courses and window frames. The windows themselves were usually large with stone mullions and transoms and were glazed with leaded lights; large sheets of glass not then being readily available.

[3] L.L. Duncan, 'Kentish Administrations', *Arch. Cant.*, xx (1897), 15.
[4] P.H. Blake, 'The Builder of Bifrons', *Arch. Cant.*, cviii (1990), 270.
[5] C. Greenwood, *Epitome of County History*, Vol. 1, Kent.

The windows were often set in bays; square, rounded or canted. Flat roofs were seldom used and the hipped end was unknown.

Though we can place the building of Bargrave's house within reasonably close dates, any further information has to be deduced from the early paintings mentioned above.

The Landscape painting encompasses a wide sweep of the countryside in which the house and garden are seen as a small part. Nevertheless, the detail shown is informative. A typical Jacobean house stands facing roughly northwards with its garden at the rear enclosed by brick walls and containing formal beds and planting, much statuary and a gazebo: in fact, a typical early Jacobean garden developed from the medieval pattern with little concession to natural form. There are gates in the wall at the end of the garden, which open on to an avenue of trees in a meadow running down to a river. It is in many ways surprising that a garden of this design should have survived to the beginning of the eighteenth century. About the same time, John Harris, a historian of Kent, recorded his impressions of the garden at Bifrons.[6] He mentions the view down the garden to the 'Canal', which had two islands at one end of it and a bathing house with 'Beds and Rooms for Company'. He also mentions the garden walls, covered with 'striped' holly growing from one side and trained over the top and down the other side to the ground and he comments favourably on the 'Turff' of the green walks.

The house is shown in the Landscape as built of brick with stone detail and with two wings to the south which, differing in style, appear to be additions.

The other painting of importance for this period (the view from the south shown in Plate I) seems to depict the house at a later date than the Landscape since the formal garden has disappeared. In the course of the seventeenth century the garden lost much of its rigidity and more plants became available which were employed in a more natural fashion. The final stage of this gradual movement was the landscape school of park and garden which began in the early years of the eighteenth century and culminated in the wholesale destruction of a large number of formal gardens under the influence of such as Capability Brown. The formal garden shown in the Landscape is absent in Plate I, so the second must represent a later state. Since not even the garden walls are shown, it cannot be the result of neglect.

Capability Brown started his work around 1750 and only gradually became popular. It seems possible, therefore, that the clearance of the formal garden may have been carried out at around the time the

[6] J. Harris, *History of Kent*, (1719), 233.

house was bought by Rev. Edward Taylor at the end of the eighteenth century.

Another reason for Plate I being later than the Landscape view is the apparent disappearance of the bay window on the west side of the house. From the beginning of the eighteenth century the development of Georgian architecture exhibited a dislike of bay windows and a preference for flat façades. This was an English interpretation of a feature of the renaissance style. The bay window shown in the Landscape on the west side is no longer to be seen in Plate I, having been replaced by two flush windows probably to accord with this later trend.

The additions can be seen clearly in Plate I. They have plain gables compared to those on the house to which they connect and smaller windows, moreover they seem to be on a less grandiose scale with lower ceiling heights. There is little evidence on which to date them. They are similar in proportion, but differ in detail and would seem to have been built some years apart in different styles and do not have the symmetry both in elevation and in detail of earlier Jacobean architecture. The south-west wing seems to have an open loggia or cloister on the ground floor. The south-east wing has 6 small windows on the first floor and 9 on the ground floor and certainly looks to be more Georgian in period. Neither view shows a door on the south side.

Plate I also shows an added block, which can be seen though less distinctly in the Landscape view, between the north-west wing and its southern extension. This has windows at mid-floor height as if it contains a staircase and raises interesting questions about the internal arrangements of the house as originally built.

There is another painting in the same style as Plate I showing the front of the house looking much as would be expected of an early Jacobean house. Walls and railings enclose a courtyard, indicating that the formal garden might still exist behind the house. If this is so then this painting must be earlier than Plate I.

If the assumptions about the additions are correct, then the original house was U-shaped. From what can be seen in the painting of its front elevation, Bifrons has some possible precursors for example Wimbledon House to which it bears a striking resemblance. This house was built by Thomas Cecil in 1588 (and demolished in 1720) and there is a plan among Thorpe's drawings and an elevation by H. Winstanley. This house is shown with an entrance front with a central porch, square towers in the angles of the two wings containing staircases with landings about 16 ft. sq. and canted bay windows. It seems to have been much the same size as Bifrons.

Hatfield House (1611) though of greater size than Wimbledon has

also a U-plan with the original entrance on the south side in what is now the courtyard. It possesses a remarkably fine great staircase which feature is one of the principal inventions of Jacobean architecture.

The extent to which the building fashion set by the wealthy members of the Court, such as the Cecils who built Hatfield, was echoed by the gentry was governed by the gentry's contact with the Court. If this was tenuous, the building fashion, particularly of the interior which is less easily seen by those with little acquaintance with the owner, was likely to be some years behind the times. Since as far as is known John Bargrave had no contact with the Court, though he may have frequented London through his connection with his wife's family, he may have been able to copy the outside of a house such as Wimbledon but not having seen the interior his layout would have been conservative. In the light of this possibility the later addition of the great staircase without which the house would surely be regarded as old-fashioned would suggest an early date for the first building of the house.

Reverting to the painting of the entrance front, it seems likely from the appearance of the fenestration, that the entrance porch led into the Great Hall as it does at Chilham Castle and Hatfield House. This Hall and its associated passages and gallery were of considerable size and height: about 65 ft. (20 m.) long with a ceiling height of nearly 25 ft. (7.50 m.) to judge from the size of the staircase towers. This again would favour an early date for the house for in the later years of the period the Hall had declined in size to that of a vestibule.

The large building to the east of the house, to be seen both in the Landscape and in Plate I was probably the stables; the windows on the first floor, the only ones visible, lighting the accommodation for the stable staff with the stables and carriage houses below.

The name given to the house – Bifrons – is probably derived from the two Latin words *bi-*, meaning two, and *frons*, meaning face or façade. This seems the equivalent to today's 'double-fronted' applied by estate agents to detached houses which show some form of symmetry about the entrance, though it is possible that it indicated a similarity between the entrance and garden fronts. The symmetrical elevations displayed by most houses influenced by renaissance ideas in architecture, including John Bargrave's house, were indeed 'double-fronted'.

4. THE TAYLORS

John Taylor, who purchased Bifrons on 29th September, 1694 (the date is given precisely on his memorial tablet in Patrixbourne church), was born in 1665 the son of Nathaniel Taylor, a barrister

from Shropshire who had the dubious distinction of being 'elected by letter' from Cromwell to represent the County of Bedford.[7]

At the age of 19 John, who was said to have been a person of somewhat morose temper, married Olivia, the daughter of Sir Nicholas Tempest.[8] Their eldest son Brook was born in 1685 and later became a famous mathematician and discoverer of Taylor's Theorem. Though Brook married twice both wives died in childbirth and no male heir survived. Bifrons then passed first to Brook's brother Herbert and in turn to Herbert's eldest son who died young in 1767. The estate then passed to Herbert's second son the Rev. Edward Taylor.

Edward Taylor was 33 when he inherited Bifrons and within a few years he pulled down the old house and began to build again. Hasted says that he rebuilt nearly on the old site and the recent excavation of the foundations has uncovered Jacobean brickwork in the foundations of the later house.

Taylor's reasons for this considerable expenditure can only be guessed. Jacobean houses were inconvenient, being laid out on the principle of one room leading out of another; thus, there was little privacy as the rooms functioned also as passageways. The servants were, therefore, unable to carry out their duties without invading the privacy of the owner and his family. Inconvenience apart, the Jacobean style was by this time considered old-fashioned. In those days the concept of the heritage was barely recognised and a man was admired for being up-to-date and not for keeping to the old ways. In an age of great confidence and forward looking, a new house was the symbol of the owners' wealth, taste and progressive views. The Jacobean house was said to be Gothick, a term of disparagement. Harris in 1719 describes the house as being 'built after the Gothick manner'.[9]

Many seventeenth-century houses had been adapted for the new way of living by the addition of corridors and extra rooms in the course of replanning the interior and by changing the external appearance to suit the current architectural style. As has been shown, there are indications that previous owners had removed some bay windows and added a staircase quite apart from the addition of the two wings. However, if one could afford it, a new house would obviously be more convenient for the occupants and would excite more admiration from one's acquaintances.

[7] Kentish Register, June 1794, page 229.
[8] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th. Edition, vol. 26, 467.
[9] *Op. cit.*, 6.

5. TAYLOR'S NEW HOUSE

The new Bifrons as drawn by Oldfield for the Kentish Register (Fig. 1) was a plain building in the classical style with little ornamental embellishment. The cornice was probably dentillated and the pediment over the front door was supported by simple columns. The basement was not differentiated from the upper storeys in any way, which was unusual for a house of its size and made it look rather tall for its length. Edward Brayley in *The Beauties of England and Wales* in 1806[10] speaks of '. . . the present mansion, a respectable brick structure. . .', but there seems to be no other contemporary description of the house.

The stable block, which still exists, though it has been heavily altered on more than one occasion, could be of the same period as the house, but there is no firm evidence on which to base a date.

Rev. Edward Taylor died in 1798 leaving four sons each of whom achieved some success in life.[11] The eldest, also named Edward, became Member of Parliament for Canterbury and it was he who eventually sold Bifrons in 1830. The second son, Sir Brook Taylor, became private secretary to Lord Grenville, the Whig Prime Minister in 1806 and 1807, and a Privy Councillor. The third was private secretary to Frederic, Duke of York, and then to George III. The fourth son became a captain in the Royal Navy.

6. THE TAYLORS' LATTER YEARS

In 1802, the younger Edward Taylor married Louisa, the only child of Rev. Charles Beckingham of Bourne Park some two miles from Bifrons.[12] Louisa's father died in 1807 some four months after Edward had been elected Member of Parliament for Canterbury coming second in the poll, and, therefore, taking the second seat for that City. It seems probable that Louisa inherited Bourne Park for the land tax returns[13] show that the Taylors went to live there in 1824 and let Bifrons. Louisa's mother must at some stage have moved out of Bourne Park for, when she died in 1844, she was living in Dover.

Bourne Park, whose architect was John Shaw the younger,[14] is a

[10] E.W. Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales*, ii (1806).

[11] Rev. W.A. Scott Robertson, 'Patricksbourne Church and Bifrons', *Arch. Cant.*, xiv (1876), 173–6.

[12] *Kentish Gazette*, September 7th, 1802.

[13] Land Tax Returns, Kent County Archives.

[14] *Country Life*, 6th–13th May, 1922.

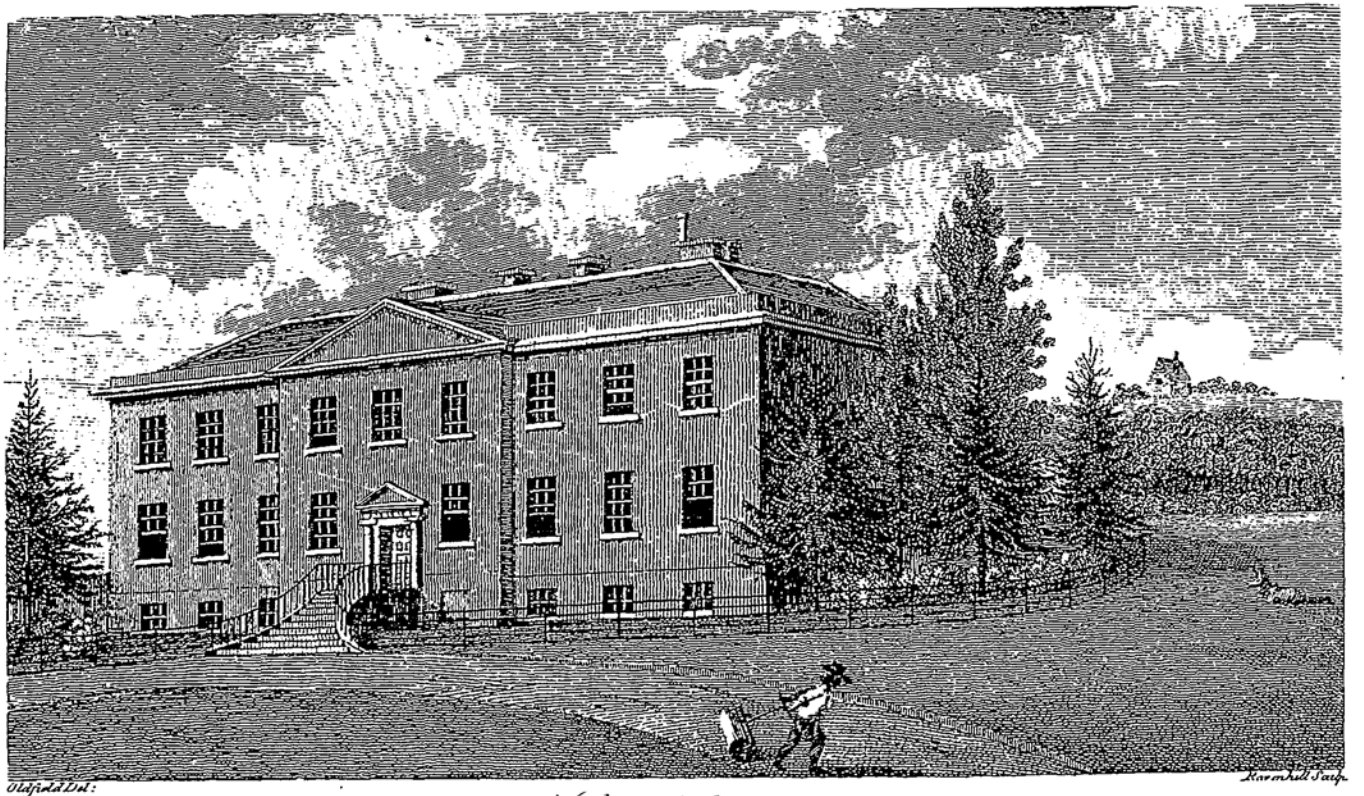


Fig. 1. The new Bifrons: An engraving in the Kentish Register of 1794 drawn by Oldfield.

larger house than was Taylor's Bifrons though of much the same style. It has two storeys and was built of brick with stone trimmings such as quoins and is set most elegantly in a wide valley overlooking a lake where it stands today almost unaltered. Apart from its lovely setting Bourne may well have had somewhat better arrangements inside to persuade Edward Taylor to move out of the house his father had built.

The first tenant of Bifrons in 1825 was the second Marquess of Ely who occupied the house for two years.[15] In 1828, Lady Byron became the tenant. Lord Byron, from whom she had separated in 1815 after only a year of marriage, had died in Greece in 1824 by which time the family home at Newstead Abbey had already been sold to Col. Wildman whose brother lived at Chilham Castle 10 miles away, for the sum of £94,000.

In 1830, Edward Taylor sold Bifrons to the first Marquess Conyngham and a new chapter opened in the life of the house.

7. THE PROBLEM OF THOMAS HUNT

A dictionary of architects[16] states that Bifrons – meaning the house that stood in the Conynghams' time – was the work of Thomas Hunt. He was born in 1791 and from 1813 – at the age of 22 – he was employed by the Office of Works at St. James's and Kensington Palaces. He is said to have been an able architect who made a special study of the Tudor style but, unhappily, suffered from a tendency to run into debt and so spent some of his time hiding from the bailiffs. He died on 4th January, 1831, at the young age of 40 and his obituary appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that year.[17]

Hunt was probably best known for his books of which he wrote four, all concerned with the design of cottages and houses in a style derived from his studies of Tudor architecture of which he had experience from the Tudor palaces in his charge.

The only evidence for an association of Thomas Hunt with Bifrons occurs in remarks made by William Jerdan in his four volume autobiography.[18] Jerdan founded and edited the *Literary Gazette* of that time and was an acquaintance of Hunt who contributed to the *Gazette*. Jerdan says that Hunt trained in the office of Sir John Soane

[15] Voters' Lists, Kent County Archives.

[16] H.M. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*, London (1978).

[17] *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1831, 376.

[18] W. Jerdan, *The Autobiography of William Jerdan*, iv, London, (1853), 52.

(1753–1857), who was certainly not inclined towards the Tudor style, before going to the Board of Works. In this second post he 'designed and fitted up the State apartments for holding courts and levees' in St. James's Palace and also altered the Duke of Clarence's house 'with whom he was an especial personal favourite. . .' Jerdan records that Hunt carried out other works in all departments of the royal palaces. It is worth noting that Lord Conyngham may well have met Hunt in the course of Hunt's work on the royal palaces.

Jerdan goes on to praise Tudor architecture in contrast to the 'naked, bizarre' Greek, Roman and Palladian and then says that 'Bifrons, the seat of the Dowager Marchioness of Conyngham, is a fine original specimen of Mr. Hunt's skill. . .'

The only other house Hunt is known to have built in the south of England is Danehurst in Sussex for Lt.-Col. Francis Davies,[19] a veteran of the Peninsular War, probably in 1827. This house is somewhat in Hunt's Tudor style as exemplified in his book *Designs for Parsonage Houses, Almshouses etc.* If, abandoning his Tudor style, Hunt had made some alterations to Bifrons, the question is when?

Edward Taylor moved to Bourne Park sometime after 1824, and it seems unlikely that he would have carried out any alterations to Bifrons once he had let it. On the other hand, any work by Hunt would probably have been carried out after, say, 1815 when at the age of 24 he would have gained a few years' experience, leaving a period of, say, nine years in which the work might have been done. However, in view of the total dissimilarity between Hunt's known work and interests and the style of the altered house as can be seen in the late nineteenth-century photographs, it seems possible that for some reason Jerdan was mistaken in his attribution of Bifrons in a Tudor style to Hunt. On the other hand, Jerdan knew Hunt quite well, and it seems strange that he should make such a mistake. Certainly in 1806 in Brayley's *Beauties of England and Wales*[20] and again in 1829 in Ireland's *History of the County of Kent*,[21] Bifrons is described as a house rebuilt by Edward Taylor with no mention of subsequent alterations. However, we have no record of the house's appearance between the early days of Edward Taylor and the photographs of the greatly changed house of the later years of the nineteenth century.

There are in the villages of Bridge and Patrixbourne some half

[19] D.M. Forrest, *St. Raphael's, Danehurst*, n.d.
[20] *Op. cit.*, 10.
[21] W.H. Ireland, *History of the County of Kent*, ii (1829), 477.

a dozen cottages and two lodges to the Park with a Tudor cottage look to them akin to John Nash's work at Blaise Hamlet near Bristol (*c.* 1810) and in a style reminiscent of some of Hunt's illustrations to his books.

Hunt had a pupil named G.H. Smith of whom little is known but to whom some alterations to Bifrons in 1835 about which we know nothing are attributed.

8. THE WORK OF THOMAS CUNDY

Henry, Marquess Conyngham, was much at Court for he was made Lord Steward of the Household on the eve of George IV's coronation, a post he held until the King's death in 1830. Henry died in 1832 and his widow remained at Bifrons until her death at the age of 91 in 1861.

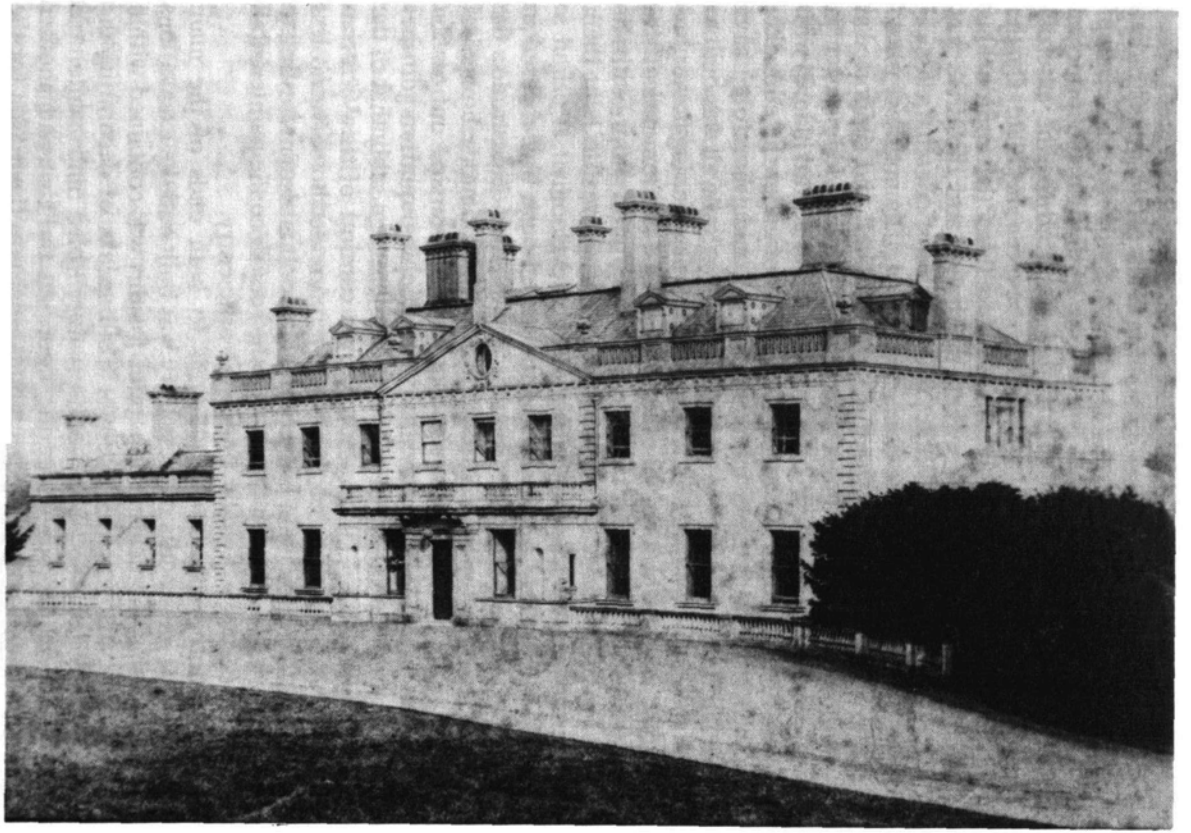
On his mother's death, the second Marquess Conyngham took possession of Bifrons until he died in 1876. Francis Conyngham had the distinction, as Lord Chamberlain from 1835 to 1839, of acquainting the young Princess Victoria of the death of King William and so of her accession.

Soon after his mother's death Francis Conyngham carried out some major works at Bifrons which were completed in 1863. The architect was Thomas Cundy of Eaton Chambers, Pimlico. He was the third generation of Cundys – all called Thomas – to take up architecture and he trained in the office of his father, who in turn had inherited the practice – and also the surveyorship of the Grosvenor Estates – from his father.[22]

Some of the accounts of the work have been preserved in the Conyngham papers[23] showing that the total expenditure was £12,014–4–9 covering seven separate accounts. Only one of these accounts still exists, that for the painter and decorator whose bill came to £1,677 and covered such items as painting the Turkish Bath, repairing and cleaning the fountain, scagliola work to two columns in the dining room and putting up 40 pieces of French *moiré* paper with gilt moulding to boxings in the Drawing Room. Thomas Cundy's fees amounted to some £678 and the Clerk of Works was paid nearly £115.

If one compares the photograph of the front of the house (Plate II), which is unlikely to be earlier than the 1860s, with Oldfield's drawing of the Taylor house the extent of these alterations seems to have been

[22] Biography Database, R.I.B.A. Pers. Com.
[23] Conyngham MS, U238, Kent County Archives, Ramsgate.



The entrance front: A photograph of Bifrons in the late nineteenth century.

considerable. Most obviously the basement storey can no longer be seen.

For many years after the destruction of the house, the only visible remains, for the actual foundations had been covered over, comprised a carriage drive with the remnants of the balustrading which separated the drive from the house, built over a series of vaulted brick cellars. This new drive was level with the principal rooms of the house and thus eliminated the need for the external staircase of the Taylor house. As can be seen in Plate II, the basement windows were, therefore, hidden from the approaching visitor. The basement area between the house and the drive was bridged by a single storey vestibule, which rather spoilt what classical lines the entrance front of the house possessed. The architect would better have brought the pediment forward as well and supported it with columns. In adding the vestibule the entrance door shown in Oldfield's drawing appears to have been raised to accord in level with the ground floor and its windows. The basement under the entrance, shown by Oldfield to have blind windows, could, therefore, have been brought into use. At the rear of the house a low wall was built to hide the basement windows in front of which was a sloping flower bed to diminish the apparent height of the wall. Thus, the domestic offices were effectively hidden leaving only the ground floor with its principal rooms visible. Left with only a narrow 'area' to light them the basement rooms must have been dark and gloomy.

It seems likely that it was at this time the house was encased in stucco, the parapet given a heavily ornamented balustrade, the windows on the south or garden front given a modest classical treatment and a kind of rusticated quoin-work carried out on the corners. To provide the servants with sleeping quarters dormer windows were inserted into a roof that is still recognisably that of the original Taylor house. To provide for the comfort of the Victorian occupants large numbers of chimneys were erected to serve no less than 42 hearths in the main body of the house. It is also interesting to see the top of a skylight on the east of the roof since the painter's bill mentions 'one large skylight' under the attic entry.

Earlier photographs show additions to both ends of the main house. On the west end a conservatory was built and the excavations have shown that the heating apparatus for this was contained within the basement below it. The painter's bill speaks of decorating the ironwork roof of the 'large conservatory' blue and white and mentions the iron pipes under the floor. At the east end another conservatory appears to have been built – perhaps the reason for the emphasis on 'large' at the west end – connected by a short passage to a building – almost invisible in the photographs – which may have been the original stables.

9. DAVID BRANDON

Francis Conyngham died in 1876 and was succeeded by his brother George Francis, the third marquess. In 1878, the architect David Brandon, who had already carried out major alterations to Chilham Castle in 1862 and built the new house at Bayham Abbey in 1870, was called in for further work on Bifrons. His Estimate, in the Conyngham archives, covered alterations to the east side to the cost of £6,000 and to the Stables and Coach House amounting to £750. The Clerk of Works was to be paid £140 and Brandon's fees were to be £375. As it turned out the Clerk of Works was paid only £110, Brandon's fees and travelling expenses came to £408 and the whole came to £7,715. A Mr Simpson carried out the work.

Plans numbered 1 to 4 are quoted in the Estimate and that for the Stable Block still exists. The main change was the extension of the stable area to accommodate eight horses instead of four by taking in the former wash-house part of which was first divided off to form a narrow scullery to serve the adjacent dairy. In the Stable Block in addition to the originally proposed works improvements were made to the rooms over the Coach House and shelves were put up in the larder and dairy bringing the cost up to £892.

The only indication we have of the work done on the east side of the house is to be got from comparing some of the many photographs. It would appear that what had been built on the east side in 1863 as a small conservatory with another building of a single storey was expanded to accommodate a billiard room and a smoking room, for Brandon supervised the re-roofing of the first and the installation of heating in the second. The 24 in. Ordnance Survey map of around that date shows a small open area in the middle of the eastern extension which is approximately square and of the same dimension as the depth of the house, i.e. 16 m. However, it seems difficult to reconcile the spending of £6,000 on such a small alteration and much else must have been done which we cannot now discover.

10. THE LAST YEARS

In 1882, on the 2nd June, George Henry Conyngham died and Bifrons passed to his eldest son Henry Francis, the 4th marquess. Neither he nor his successors ever lived at Bifrons again.

From 1882 the Voters' Lists show that Bifrons was let to various tenants: Edward Weinholt, J.A. Miller, Frank Penn from Upper Hardres and finally to Col. The Hon. Milo Talbot the younger son of the 4th Lord Talbot of Malahide. Mrs. Talbot remained in residence

in some state with ten indoor servants until 1939, the Colonel having died in 1932.

During this period further improvements continued to be made to the house. For example, an efficient modern drainage system was installed in 1893 at a cost of £535–3–11 and, in 1913, an agreement was reached with Frank Penn to install electric light including dynamos, batteries and other plant.[24]

The installation of a self-contained generating plant is of interest as there is evidence that the village had its own small gasworks for gas lighting; a not uncommon feature of village life at the turn of the century. In the Voters' Lists of 1891 and 1908 there is one Samuel Thompson and then Joseph Fittal living in Gasworks Cottage.

All this came to an end in 1939 when Mrs. Talbot moved with a few servants to Hampshire leaving Bifrons to play its small part in the war effort. As the war began the house was emptied of its contents and taken over for military purposes and then as a hostel.

In 1945, Lord Conyngham first engaged Sir Edwin Savill the senior partner of Alfred Savill, a leading firm of land and estate agents, to manage his affairs in Kent. The condition of Bifrons at the end of the war was very dilapidated and to avoid costly repairs to a large house for which there seemed to be no economic use at that time the house was demolished and a sale held to dispose of the materials. At the same time most of the houses in the village were sold and the land rented out to a farmer on a long lease together with the stable block which was converted into houses for farmworkers.

In this manner the sad remnants of Bifrons continued to slumber for more than 35 years.

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My thanks are also due to the many people who helped me to find the information I needed; the staff at the Kent County Archives at Ramsgate and Maidstone, the librarians in the Reference Library in

[24] *Op. cit.*, 23.

Canterbury and Ashford and at the Royal Institute of British Architects in Portland Place, the Mother Superior of St. Raphael's, Danehurst, Tim Allen of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, and finally Joan Carpenter of Patrixbourne.