



Bradbourne House

*A History of a
Significant Country House*

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Bradbourne House

Preface |

Bradbourne House, in Kent, has never been the grandest of country houses, but from its earliest form to the house we know today, it has always been an important feature of the locality. Today it is held in great affection by local residents, people who work on the estate and those lucky enough to have had their wedding receptions here.

The earliest known references to the house go back to the middle of the 16th century when it was willed to George Catlyn by his parents. He sold the house to Richard Manningham in 1590 or 1591 and it stayed in the Manningham family until 1656, when it was purchased by Thomas Twisden. It remained in the Twisden family for 282 years.

Over this period the house and park were developed, with the main changes taking place in the 18th century. In the 19th century the family became embroiled in a legal dispute which resulted in a considerable dissipation of the family's wealth. The last of the Twisden line, Sir John Ramskill Twisden, twelfth Bart, died in November 1937.

The house was auctioned in 1938, and purchased by the 'Kent Incorporated Society for Promoting Experiments in Horticulture', who owned the adjacent East Malling Research Station. From this society evolved the East Malling Trust, which today owns the house and park, and the land occupied by NIAB EMR.

The East Malling Trust has restored the fabric of the house and converted many of the rooms in the main house and outbuildings to offices. The main function rooms are available for hire for weddings and conferences. The Trust's income from these resources supports horticultural research at NIAB EMR and elsewhere.

The house has also benefited from the bequest by Sir John Ramskill Twisden of the family portraits to the Kent Archaeological Society, which has elected to display these pictures in their original setting in the house.

This booklet gives the reader a more detailed picture of the house, and describes the, at times, turbulent development of the Twisden family over nearly 300 years. More detailed descriptions of the Twisden family and of the 19th century water colours displayed in the house are contained in a sister publication titled "The Twisdens of Bradbourne House".

BRADBOURNE, KENT—II

HEADQUARTERS OF THE EAST MALLING RESEARCH STATION *By ARTHUR OSWALD*

The 16th-century courtyard house was completely remodelled in 1713-15 by Sir Thomas Twisden, 3rd baronet. The west and south fronts are notable for their beautiful brickwork.



1.—THE WEST FRONT OF 1713, WHICH WAS DESIGNED AS THE SHOW FRONT, ALTHOUGH THE ENTRANCE IS IN THE NORTH RANGE



2.—THE MIDDLE OF THE WEST FRONT AND THE HALL DOORWAY. The fanlight is a later substitution, probably of 1774

THE last baronet of Bradbourne, Sir John Ramskill Twisden, devoted much of the leisure of the last 25 years of his life to compiling a detailed history of his family. It was unfinished when he died but far enough forward to allow Mr. C. H. Dudley Ward to complete it, and it was published in 1939, two years after Sir John's death, with the title *The Family of Twysden and Twisden*. Last week it was shown how Bradbourne was bought about 1656 by Sir Thomas Twisden, the judge, who established a junior branch of his family there, within a few miles of Roydon, where his brother Sir Roger Twysden was seated. It was also explained how Sir Thomas, the younger of these two baronet brothers, spelt his name Twysden, as did all his descendants, while the senior line at Roydon continued to use the older spelling Twisden. But nothing was said about Sir Thomas's forbears, who for several generations had been prominent in the county. In filling in that gap at this point, however sketchily, my authority is Sir John's valedictory history.

The family took their name from a "den" in the parish of Goudhurst, where an old house called Twyssenden still remains. There were Twysdens living in Goudhurst in Edward I's reign. At the same time others held land in Sandhurst, another parish close to the Sussex border. Early in the 15th century Roger Twysden of Goudhurst went to live at Chelmington in the parish of Great Chart, having married the heiress. Chelmington remained in the family's ownership until 1705. But in Henry VIII's reign a later Roger made his home at Wye, where he leased the manor from Battle Abbey. His son William, who succeeded him, also lived at Wye, and at the time of his death held upwards of 1,500 acres of land in East Kent and Romney Marsh.

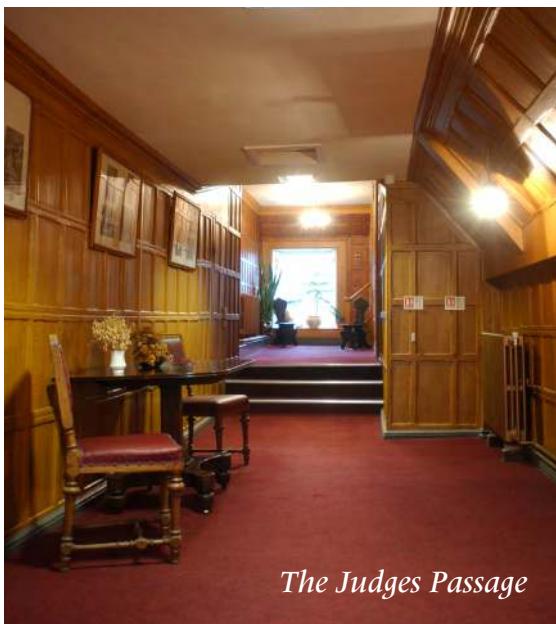
About 1539 William made a marriage destined to have important results for his descendants and to bring about a move to a fourth home in Kent. His wife was Elizabeth Roydon, third daughter and ultimately co-heir of Thomas Roydon, who had built himself a fine house in the parish of East



Bradbourne House

Early History

The site has certainly been occupied since Roman times and there is some evidence of a prehistoric settlement nearby. Some artefacts have been found, and in the 1970s indications of a Roman road were discovered in the area to the northwest of Bradbourne House. In 1996 during the building of the modern housing estate to the north of the house, a Roman cemetery was discovered. Traces of twelve skeletons, thirty cremations and a lot of pottery were found, but none were well preserved because of the acidic soil. No written records have been found to confirm interim occupation until the 15th century when an agreement dated 1411 between the Abbess of West Malling abbey and the tenants of East Malling was signed. This refers to "a house next to Bradbourn". "Bradbourn" is old English for "place at the broad stream".



The Judges Passage



The Tudor House

A Tudor house certainly did exist here, but its traces are now contained within the present Queen Anne building. The most obvious Tudor remains are the brick cellar and the brick stairway leading to it; the stone slabs which formed the floor of the inner courtyard (now the Marble Hall); the panelling in the Judges Passage on the first floor; the furniture on the first floor doors; and finally, the clear outline of the roof pattern of the Tudor house, as viewed from the air. Judging from the quality of these features and the overall size, it must have been a house of some standing. It is also thought to have been a moated house. The Tudor house is first mentioned in records of 1568 when it was willed to George Catlyn by his parents. He sold it c.1590 to Richard Manningham and it stayed in the Manningham family until c.1656 when it was sold to Thomas Twisden. Thomas Twisden was a judge who was knighted in July 1660 almost immediately after the Restoration of the Monarchy. He gained his baronetcy in June 1666. He received considerable acclaim for his work in successfully arbitrating in property disputes after the Great Fire of London in September 1666.



The Present House |



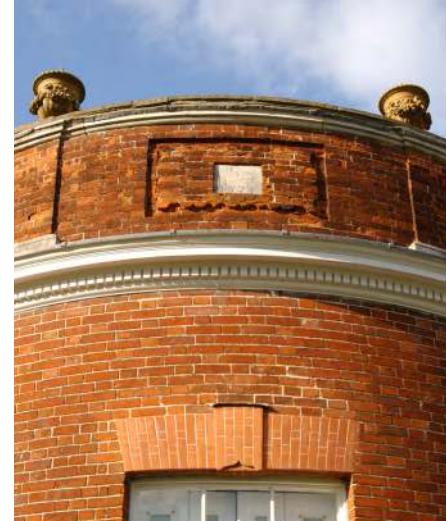
Sir Thomas bought more land and established Bradbourne Park in the late 17th century. Originally the road from Larkfield to East Malling ran close to the house, but this was felt to be unsuitable for a judge with the stature of Sir Thomas. In 1676, his son Roger, applied for the road to be diverted and it was moved 250 yards to the west to its present location, to this day called "New Road". The map of the manor of East Malling dated 1706 shows Bradbourne Park with the entrance on the west side.

The house we see today encloses the Tudor building and was largely built between 1712 and 1715 by Sir Thomas Twisden, third Bart. The initials "TAT" (Thomas Twisden and his wife Anne) and the date 1713 can be seen on the leaded pediment on the west front and on a rainwater head on the south side. Sir Thomas's second son, Sir Roger Twisden, fifth Bart, continued to develop the building in the middle of the 18th

century, particularly the Balcony Room on the first floor. His son Roger, sixth Bart, also made changes to the south front and redecorated some of the interior rooms in the Adam style. Through the 19th and early 20th centuries, the fortunes of the family changed and the building, though occupied, was not well maintained. The house remained in the Twisden family until 1937, when Sir John Ramskill Twisden, the last baronet, died without an heir.

In 1938, the house, park and 200 acres of land were purchased by the Kent Incorporated Society for the Promotion of Experiments in Horticulture (from which evolved the East Malling Trust) for use as its administrative centre. Money was scarce and fund raising was supported by David Lloyd George in a letter to the Times on 8 June 1938. Over the next 60 years large sums of money were spent restoring the house and





nearby buildings. The house continues to be owned and administered by the East Malling Trust; the large public rooms are used for receptions and business meetings; the smaller rooms are offices.



The multi-shaded brickwork of the house is a superb example of Queen Anne brickwork and has been commented on in numerous publications and specialist books. It is best seen on the west and south elevations of the house. The west elevation is largely unaltered since 1713 and includes the original front door of the house, which gives access to the Great Hall. The current doorway has Corinthian pilasters and a projecting canopy, supported on carved consoles. The fanlight above it was introduced later, probably around 1774. The original doorway used to be approached under an extended porch, traces of which have been found under the steps which now lead to the door.

The south elevation of the house was significantly changed in 1774 by Sir Roger Twisden, sixth Bart, when he added a large bow window to the Drawing Room (now the Committee Room). His initials and date, "Sir RT 1774" are engraved in stone over the window.

Around 1779 the official entrance to the house was changed to the north elevation with the construction of a covered way leading to the door. This remains to this day the house's main entrance. The five first floor windows above the door in the north elevation have been reliably dated to circa 1680 and are of an unusual combined casement/sash type. They clearly pre-date the wall and were thus "second hand", a fairly common practice at that time.



Inside the House |



The Main Hall laid out for a meeting



*Blue panelling and
gold ornamentation in
the Main Hall*

The largest and most impressive room in the house is the Great Hall; two storeys high, with a coved ceiling above walls panelled with deal. The wood panelling is painted light blue, with ornamentation highlighted in gold. The Great Hall now houses the bulk of the collection of portraits of the Twisden family. When first built, the eastern end of the hall was not panelled, and during renovation work in the 1950s, a wall painting (right) was discovered beside the door. It was however in poor condition and has now again been covered by panelling. To the north of the Great Hall is the Green Room, also panelled in deal and

Room is a 'secret' door, which gave access to a ladder to the rooms above. The large glass-fronted cupboard on the north wall contains publications from East Malling Research and various archaeological societies, as well as some artefacts found in the cellars of the house. The carpet is from Mershed in present day Iran. This room used to be the formal dining room of the Twisden family.



painted green. It houses a number of 19th century water colours of the house, its outbuildings and the park, painted by the Twisden sisters, who then managed the house. The carpet is from Amritsar, India.

To the south of the Great Hall is the Breakfast Room, panelled in oak and notable for its twin oculus windows. In the panelling to the left of the door between the Great Hall and Breakfast



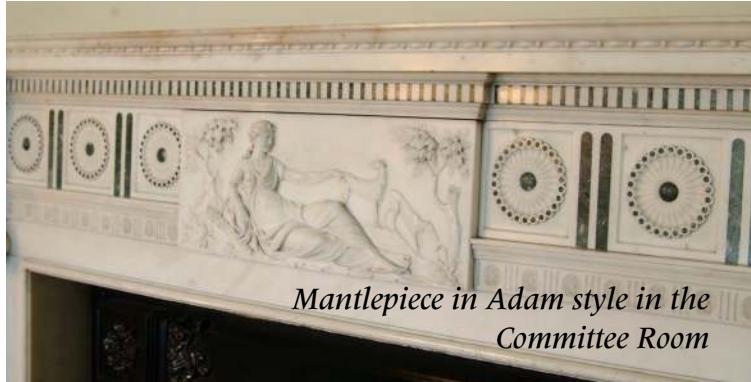


The next significant room is the Committee Room, originally the Drawing Room of the house. It was this room that was formed when Sir Roger Twisden added the bow window in 1774. The beautiful Adam style ceiling and the marble fireplace also date from this period. Although hidden from view, the original winding mechanism to raise and lower the, now modern, chandeliers still exists above the ceiling.

The adjacent room is the Dining Room, which was used by the Twisden family as an informal parlour. It too has a marble fireplace and an Adam style ceiling, now with a rather uneven surface. The ceiling was damaged by water when a fire broke out in 1969. The walls of the room were lined with dry heather and when painters tried to burn off old paint on window frames, the heather ignited and the fire quickly spread to the roof. Fortunately the fire was extinguished before it reached other parts of the house.

The large Kitchen has been reduced in size in modern times to two interlinking more modest rooms. Some of the original features have been preserved, including the bread oven, the "copper", a brick oven and a very large hearth. The original flagged floor is heavily worn, with the traffic of hundreds of years. A modern kitchen has been installed next to this to cater for weddings and functions.

Access to the Dining Room is from the Marble Hall, which in the original



Mantelpiece in Adam style in the Committee Room

Tudor house was an open courtyard. The Marble Hall also gives access to the Tudor cellars and - by way of a largely undecorated walnut staircase - to the first floor. This staircase would have been the everyday route to the upper floors for the family members, and leads to what was once the Balcony Room, now an office.





The Balcony Room was developed by Sir Roger Twisden, fifth Bart in 1746 (the rainwater head outside is dated 1746 and bears the initials of Roger Twisden and his wife). It, like the Committee and Dining Rooms, once had an Adam style ceiling, but this has been lost. However, a particularly handsome two tier chimney piece survives. The upper section is a plaster panel surmounted by a phoenix. The fireplace itself is of green and white marble, with a carved frieze and Apollo's head in the tablet.

The landing at the top of the stairs leads to the Judge's Passage, a corridor lined with Elizabethan oak panelling.



Some of the doors retain their original furniture. The passageway, which is said to be haunted, leads to Judge Sir Thomas Twisden's bedroom (now an office) at the southwest corner of the house - and then to the servant's quarters on the second floor.

Returning to the ground floor, near the present day front door is a very handsome oak staircase, reliably dated to the first decade or so of the 18th century. It is of cantilever construction and was originally designed to stand free of the wall. Prudence however has dictated that five supports should be placed under the central landing. The undersides of the treads are beautifully moulded and carved and the three barley twist balusters per tread support an elegantly curved handrail.



The Contents of the House |

The staircase leads to two moderately sized rooms, one of which is believed to have been the main reception room of the original house. When the main entrance to the house was directly into the Great Hall, it is probable that guests would have entered the Great Hall, and then proceeded up the oak staircase to the reception room.

The original furnishings of the house were sold at auction in 1938, following the death of Sir John Ramskill Twisden. The only items of furniture now in the house which are known to have originated from the Twisden family are the 19th century grand piano, by William Stodart, which was bought by members of East Malling Research Station, and the long-case clock in the Marble Hall. The clock was bought for nine guineas by Mr Spencer Mount and later presented to the Trust.

The rest of the furniture has been bought by the Trust, or given by various individuals over the last 60 years and includes furniture and clocks dating from the 17th and 18th centuries.

However, the most important contents are the portraits of the Twisden family, on loan from the Kent Archaeological Society. These are described in a sister booklet, entitled the "Twisdens of Bradbourne House".



Stained Glass |



Bradbourne houses some unique pieces of stained glass recently restored and renovated for display.

The most colourful of these pieces are two heraldic sequences currently hanging in the Hallway of the house. The first one depicts four Roman emperors in the corners with the imperial heads possibly originating in Portugal. The central sections on each side and bottom are Tudor badges and may be Tudor in date. The central panel is composed of 2 repeated designs; the arms of the Holy Roman Empire and possibly the Byzantine Empire.

The second large window is a compilation piece assembled from at least 2 separate sequences. The panels 'depict' the arms attributed to the pre-Norman kings – 'depict' because these kings lived before the

period of heraldry. They were known as the Bretwalda, the Paramount Kings of the Saxons

- Raedwald possibly the royal personage interred at Sutton Hoo, and Ethelbert.

The familiar emblem of the white horse of Kent is shown here in its older naturalistic leaping position, not rampant as in the County arms.



The other frames depict Edwin's arms along with the assumed arms of Athelstan, Edward the Confessor & Oswald, Ella and Eadwig, Edwin, Alfred the Great and Edgar.





In the Breakfast Room hangs 2 lit panels created from glass that was originally part of a covered walkway to the southeast corner of the house which was demolished in the early 20th century. The glass is probably Flemish and whilst depicting mostly religious imagery, their themes have some affinity with the Tarot i.e. the pack of 78 cards used from the mid-15th century to play card games and from the late 18th century, for divination by mystics and occultists.



The Outbuildings |





The Paddock behind the stables 1948



North of the house stands a handsome complex of buildings. Their construction is undated, but buildings are clearly visible on the site on a map dated 1706.

The largest building is the Stable Block, now converted to offices. Originally it was a single storey building, maybe an orangery, with a cupola and clock. Adjoining it is an old Tithe Barn, which has been renovated recently, maintaining many of the original timbers and features. It is also now an office. Next to it are two cottages converted in c. 1985 from an old oast store.

The walls of the cottages abut the walls of the two kitchen gardens, originally constructed in 1779. The walls were increased in height to 14 feet in the 19th century. The most easterly of these gardens was named "The Hatton Fruit Garden" after Sir Ronald Hatton.



Hatton Garden |





Following visits to fruit gardens on the continent and in the UK during the 1930s, Dr (later Sir) Ronald Hatton (then Director of the East Malling Research Station) decided that a model fruit garden should be established at East Malling. One reason for this was his concern that the art of tree forming (training trees into different shapes) was disappearing and amateur gardeners in particular were finding it increasingly difficult to gain advice in this very skilled operation.

The walled garden at Bradbourne provided an ideal site. The garden is bounded on the north, east and west sides by 14-foot high walls and open to the south. Planting took place during March 1944 and Hatton's aim was to demonstrate:

- how fruit trees could be grown to come into cropping as soon as possible,
- how a wide range of fruits could be produced in succession over the season
- how operations such as pruning, spraying and harvesting could be made as simple as possible.

1927 - Hatton winning his bet that Northern Spy on M9 would crop within 4 years - hence his 4 fingers (on more vigorous rootstocks N. Spy is slow to crop)





Added to this, a wide range of different tree forms was established making use of the walls, trellises, beds and borders. Tree fruits were grown on the most dwarfing rootstocks available (such as M9 and M7 for apples) in tree forms including oblique cordons, 'U' cordons, arches, espaliers and bushes and, after the formative years, pruning was carried out during late summer. In addition to apples, pears and plums, gooseberries, raspberries, currants and blackberries were also grown.

Today, some of Hatton's original trees remain but over the years several new planting schemes have been established.



Weddings can now take place in the garden using the renovated 'bothy' building.



The garden was named the Hatton Fruit Garden in 1965 in recognition of Sir Ronald Hatton's major contribution to fruit growing at both the commercial and amateur levels.

*Pyramid trained apple tree with
'The Bothy' in the background*



The War Years |



Above - Farm worker William Rogers and Researcher Robert Garner prior to leaving for Germany as civilian military government officers - 1945

During WWII, many historic houses were requisitioned by the government. Bradbourne House covenanted some of the panelled areas of the house to the nation in order to help preserve it, though it was never requisitioned. Meanwhile, most areas of land previously used by the Research Station, were used to grow food as part of the war effort.



A 1944 Pastoral (right) - 'Land girls pruning at East Malling' by Evelyn Dunbar

The Park |

The park around the house was first established by Sir Thomas Twisden, first Bart, in the second half of the 17th century, but the development of the garden and the planting of avenues of trees (shown on a map of 1706) were probably the work of his son Sir Roger Twisden, second Bart. The park was much larger then than today, and extended to the East Malling Church to the south, and included to the west Clare Park, now largely a housing development and school. Much of the park was sold during the legal disputes which decimated the family's finances in the 19th century. The present driveway from New Road was established between 1769 and 1789 by Sir Roger Twisden, sixth Bart.

The lake appears to have been built in two stages, the first involving the undermining of the stream and the formation of the circular island prior to 1769, and the second, the damming of the stream and the digging of the



lake itself in the period 1769 to 1789. The lake was originally longer than it is today, stretching almost as far as the bridge that spans the stream.

The park now contains many magnificent trees, particularly planes and beeches, some of which may well date to when the park was formed.

From 2006, more than 1700 new woodland trees have been planted including cherry, oak, ash, walnut and sycamore trees from selected sites around the country.

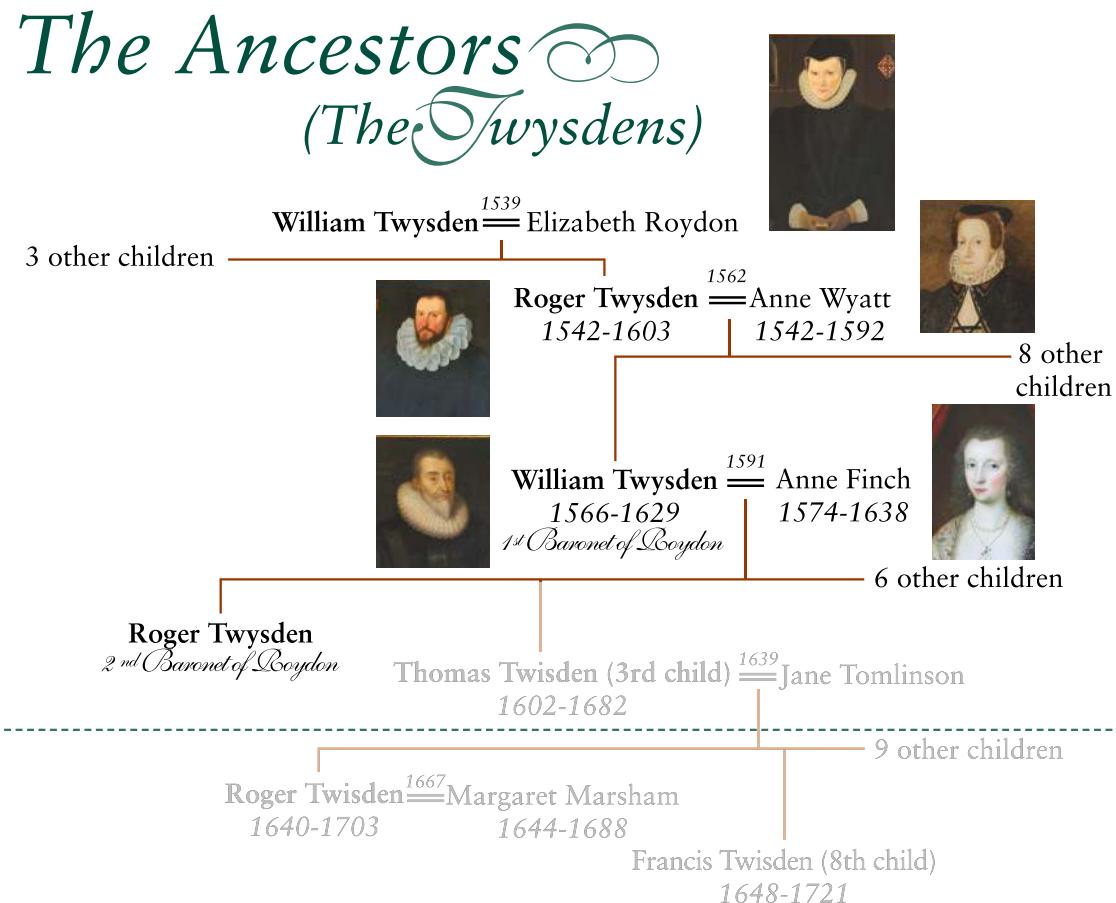


The Twisdens - a brief history |



*Sir Thomas Twisden, first Bart,
'The Judge'*

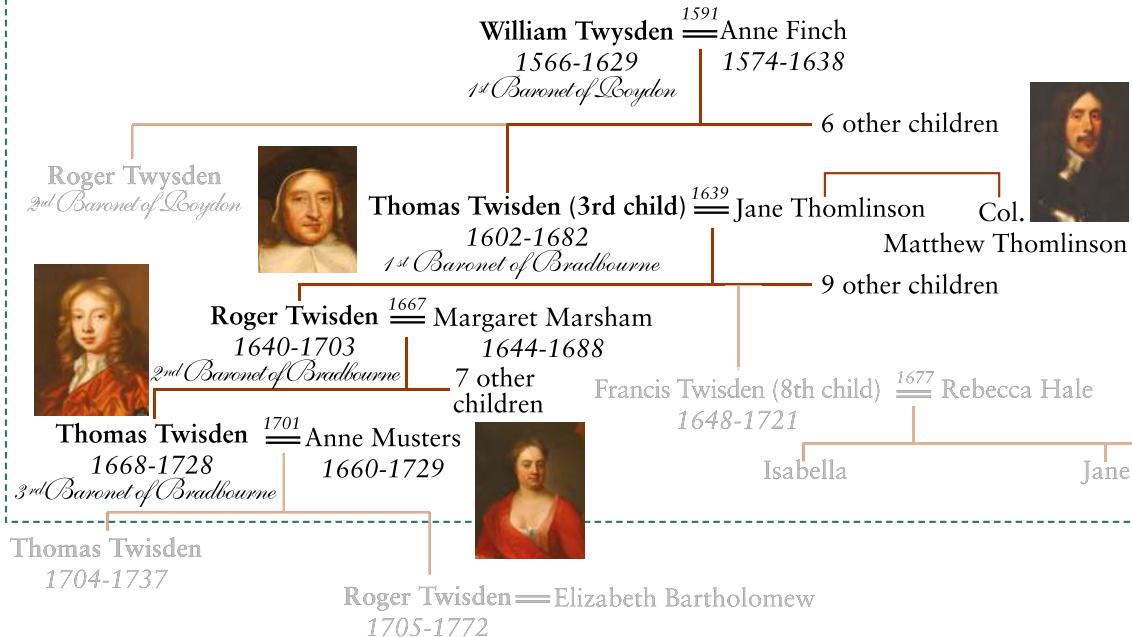
The Twisdens |



The story of the Twisden family begins with Elizabeth Roydon of Roydon Hall, East Peckham. Roydon Hall is about seven miles from East Malling. Elizabeth married William Twysden of Chelmington and Wye in 1539 and they made their home at Roydon Hall. Their son Roger Twysden, who became Sheriff of Kent in 1599, married Anne Wyatt, daughter of Sir Thomas Wyatt of Allington Castle.

Roger and Anne had a son, William in 1566, who became a great courtier in the reign of Elizabeth I and married Anne Finch, daughter of Elizabeth, Countess of Winchelsea. Anne and William lived in style at Roydon Hall and William became the First Baronet of Roydon. The eldest son, Roger who became the Second Baronet, was a noted scholar. He was an outspoken man and fell foul of the Roundheads who imprisoned him for several years because of his loyalty to the king.

1602-1728
The Founding of the Twisdens & The Establishment of the Bradbourne Estate



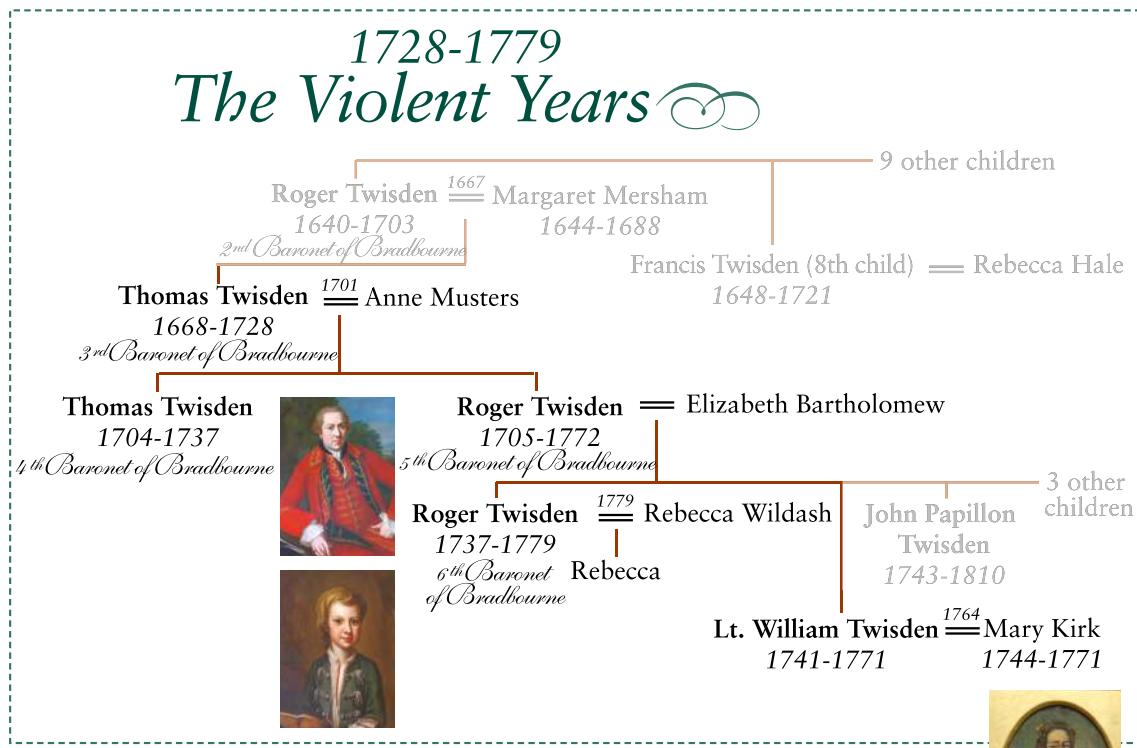
It was during this period that the Bradbourne Twisdens were established. Thomas, the second son of William and Anne and brother of Sir Roger of Roydon, trained as a lawyer. He purchased Bradbourne from Richard Manningham in 1656 and, marrying Jane Thomlinson, changed his family name from Twysden to Twisden.

Thomas had a very distinguished career. He was Recorder and MP for Maidstone and, although a Royalist at heart, he held posts under Cromwell, and appointments following the restoration of the monarchy. He became one of three judges who tried the regicides and was one of the Assessors who decided on ownership of land and other matters relating to the Great Fire of London. Thomas was knighted in 1660 and became the First Baronet of Bradbourne in 1666.

Thomas's brother-in-law, Colonel Thomlinson, as Captain of the Guard, attended Charles I on the scaffold and, for his courteous behaviour, received from the King his gold toothpick; this became a family treasure. Colonel Thomlinson lived in seclusion at Bradbourne for the rest of his days and is buried in East Malling church.

Sir Thomas's son Roger, the second Bart, consolidated the Bradbourne estate. During this period much work was carried out to establish the Bradbourne park. Sir Roger's son Thomas, third Bart, did a great deal to change the house and at this time (early eighteenth century) Bradbourne House assumed its present form.

1728-1779 *The Violent Years*

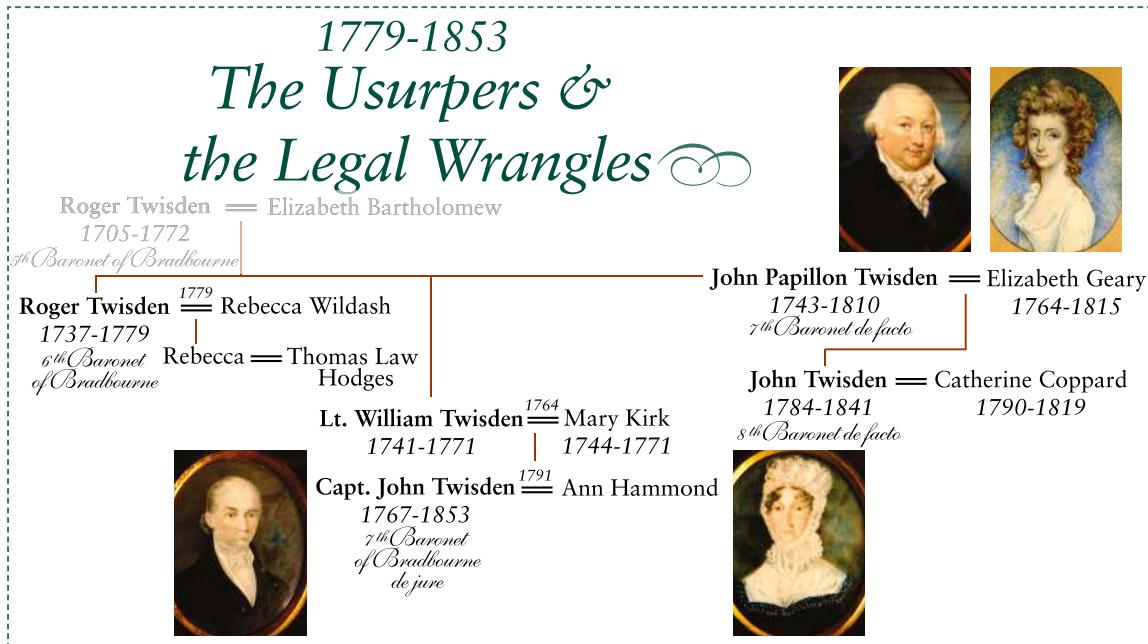


Following the death of Sir Thomas, the family fortunes deteriorated financially and in other ways. His eldest son, Thomas, fourth Bart, spent most of his time abroad and, after eloping with a nun, met a violent death in Granada.

The younger brother Roger, who succeeded him in 1737, as fifth Bart, lived extravagantly at Bradbourne as a country gentleman following a spell in the army and in Parliament. In his will Roger excluded his second son Lt William Twisden because he did not approve of his marriage (to Mary Kirk) and this laid the foundation of a dispute which was to prove very damaging to the Twisden family.

Roger's eldest son, also Roger, duly succeeded as sixth Bart in 1772. He had a stormy relationship with his younger brother Lt William, with whom he fought a duel, with swords, in West Malling High Street. Roger carried out many alterations and improvement to Bradbourne House both inside and out. He only outlived his father by seven years, leaving one daughter, Rebecca, who married Thomas Law Hodges

1779-1853
*The Usurpers &
 the Legal Wrangles*



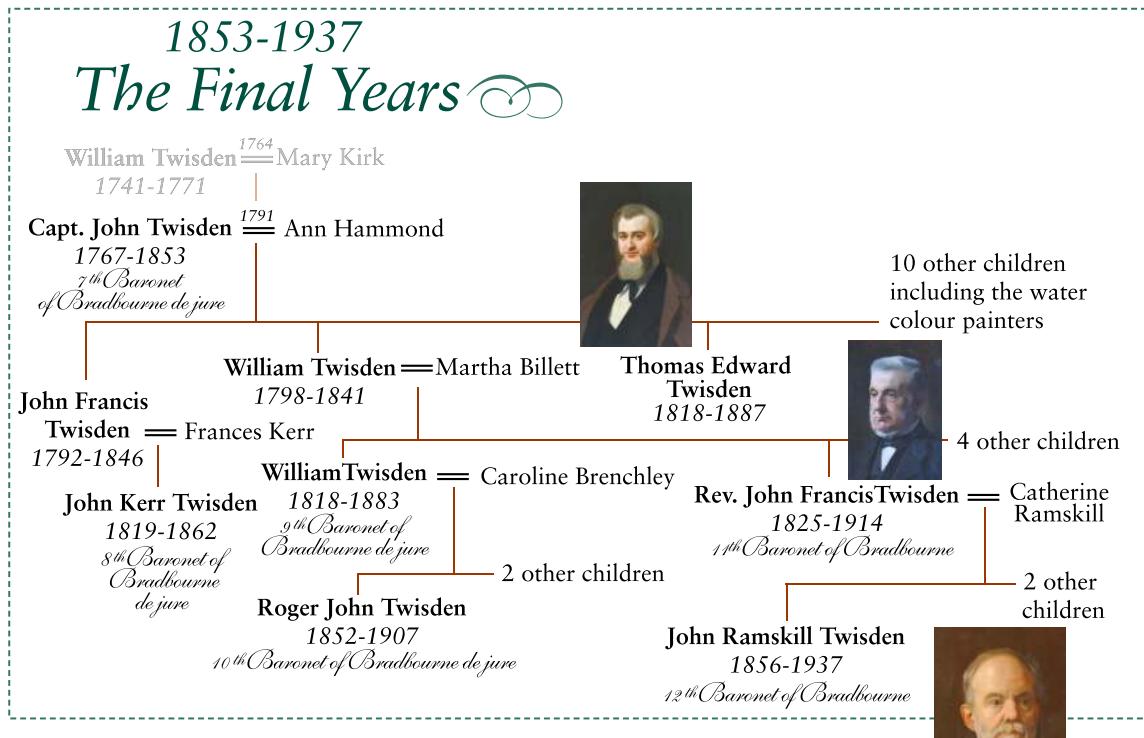
Lieutenant William had been disinherited and his son, Captain John Twisden, did not succeed to the title when Roger died (leaving no son) in 1779. Instead the title and estate were usurped by Lt William's younger brother John Papillon, the de facto seventh Bart. The poor state of the Twisden family fortunes was such that land had to be sold, including Clare Park.

By his wife, Elizabeth Geary, John Papillon had one son, John, who was weak and simple. He also usurped the title as Sir John Twisden, eighth Bart in 1810, but he had no children. At his death in 1841 the title became dormant.

Captain John Twisden (son of the disinherited Lt William), the de jure seventh Bart then laid claim to the estate while Thomas Law Hodges pressed the property claims of his wife Rebecca. At one stage the rival claimants, Captain John Twisden and his family and the Law Hodges, occupied different apartments in Bradbourne while dining, separately, in the Great Hall.

After interminable legal wrangles the estate was divided. Captain John Twisden retained the House and surrounding gardens while the park and lake were assigned to Rebecca Law Hodges together with the furniture and paintings.

1853-1937 The Final Years



Captain John Twisden had a large family (three sons and nine daughters). The two eldest sons spent little or no time at Bradbourne but the third son, Thomas Edward, was a prosperous solicitor who helped his father buy back many of the family portraits and the rest of the estate from the Law Hodges. After Captain John and his wife died the five surviving daughters remained at Bradbourne. These five ladies (Elizabeth, Anne, Charlotte, Mary and Emily) formed a “republic”, each in turn ruling the house for a year. Watercolours in the Green Room in Bradbourne House, painted by the sisters, show that some amongst them were excellent artists.

William, Captain John's second son, had two sons, William (the elder), who was blind and unstable, and the Reverend John Francis. William, had a sickly son Roger John (tenth Bart de jure) who died at the age of 55 in 1907. Rev. John Francis, a mathematical scholar and lecturer, was eventually persuaded to assume the title of Baronet, when, after lengthy litigation it was revived in 1909. His son, Sir John Ramskill Twisden succeeded to the title in 1914. A family solicitor, Sir John never married and the title lapsed with his death in November 1937.

Acknowledgments |

This booklet has been drawn together by a number of very knowledgeable volunteers who have long association with Bradbourne House

Miss Sheila Pryer - who has made available her considerable research into the history of the Twisden family

Mr Mike Perring and Dr Frank Alston - representatives of the Kent Archaeological Society, who have provided documents about the house and paintings from the Society's Library collection

Dr and Mrs Jim Quinlan - whose extensive knowledge of the history of the house and park has been invaluable

Mrs Elsa Martin – for her helpful advice throughout

Mrs Lorraine Farman – for updating the original text for this edition and for writing new text on the stained glass and War Years sections

Ms Penny Greeves for the design of the booklet and all of the photographs except some from the photographic archives and:

- Page 4 - Country Life Picture Library

In preparing the text the writers have drawn on the contents of numerous documents about the house and family including:

Country Life

Notes on the Family of Twysden and Twisden
by R G and Rev C H Hatton

Manuscript notes of Sir John Ramskill Twisden twelfth Bart

The Family of Twysden and Twisden,
Their History and Archives by Sir John Ramskill Twisden
twelfth Bart, completed by C H Dudley Ward, 1939

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