

NOTES ON THE NAME AND FAMILY OF BARHAM

By Sidney Pay Barham (1887 -1978)

In these notes I propose to place on record such facts and surmises regarding the name and family of Barham that I have been able to collect or from family tradition. The record is incomplete and suffers from one radical defect, namely that it is in two separate fragments by inference only and not by documentary evidence. On the one hand we have reliable statements, in such sources as Hasted's Survey of Kent and the Dictionary of National Biography, which enable us to trace, however indistinctly, the origin of the name and some of the lines of descent of the family from the twelfth century, as well as the features of one or two of its more notable members. On the other hand we have the traditions of our own family, leading back dimly to some time in the eighteenth century and there failing entirely. The family of ours has no authenticated pedigree and can make no claim to affiliation with the ancient family that could bear legal investigation. We do however share with it the name of Barham.

Note, in the first place, that the family name Barham is in origin a place-name. Some English surnames are derived from the physical or mental characteristics of their owners, such as "Strong", "Brown", and "Wise". A numerous class denotes trades, such as "Smith" and "Taylor". Very many surnames however have been borrowed from the place where the family originated, or where it first acquired a distinct personality. Sometimes such names are merely topographical generalities, like "Field or Wells", but often they are identical with the name of a specific place, as in fact is "Barham". Apparently therefore, we should be entitled to conclude that families named from the same village came from that village, and were probably closely related or identical. There are however place names which belong to two or more villages, perhaps widely separated. For instance, Barham is the name of a village in East Kent on the downs of the same name between Canterbury and Dover, but there are also villages called Barham in Suffolk and Huntingdonshire and a Barham Hall in Cambridgeshire. Someone once told me that "Barham" was a family name in East Anglia. That may very well be since there are these Barham names in the Eastern counties. On the other hand all the Barhams with whom we are concerned are connected with Kent or Sussex, and we can prove that the surname derived from the East Kent village spread elsewhere in Kent and also entered Sussex. I think therefore that we are entitled to believe that we are descended in the male line from the Barhams who were first heard of in East Kent in the twelfth century.

I emphasise "in the male line"; for, of course, as we each have two parents, we must have two main lines of descent, including innumerable subsidiary lines. As, however, in our society a family name is handed down from father to son (apart from such legal accidents as adoption and change of surname), we are apt to reckon only with the one titular line of descent instead of the myriad lines of inheritance that have worked together to make us what we are. Every one of us has as long and complicated a pedigree as another, whether or not he is able to trace it, and no family is without its heroes and villains. Nevertheless, most normal people find a certain pleasure in attempting to establish their pedigree and are

far from horrified if they find, like our own, it includes an assassin, provided of course it is sufficiently far back! The pleasure is surely innocent, if it is not allowed to minister to vanity or breed contempt for the common man (who, thank heaven, is the largest ingredient in every family mixture). It may in fact give some stability to character and incentive to personal achievement, and it may besides foster the sense of history with soil and race.

In the first section of these notes, I shall study the Barham family as known to history, and in the second section that which we are conscious of forming a part. As I have already hinted, faith or imagination must supply the link between these two. I regret that, in my present circumstances, I cannot have access to some of my sources, in particular to "Hasted". I am therefore obliged to omit some names and dates. If opportunity offers, I shall endeavour to supplement these notes from the sources now inaccessible.

I

The Barham Family in History

Fitzurse and John de Bereham

In 1168 AD, approximately a century after the Norman Conquest, Reginald Fitzurse inherited the manor of Williton in Somerset from his father Richard, of whom he was the eldest son. Richard Fitzurse was the descendant of Ours or Urso, who "came over with the conqueror" and held, under him, the manor of Grittleton in Wiltshire of the Abbott of Glastonbury. Richard Fitzurse had acquired the manor of Williton in the reign of Stephen and passed it to his son in the reign of Henry II. Beside Williton, Reginald held of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in knight's service, the manor of Barham or Berham, in East Kent, and perhaps other lands in Kent, together with estates in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. Reginald was a knight attendant on Henry II, the first of the Plantagenet Kings. His surname, in Norman-French, signifies Bear's Son (in modern French, Fils d'Ours), and is doubtless derived from the Ours or Urse ("Bear") of the age of the conquest.

In 1170 A.D. , two years after he had inherited the manor of Williton, Fitzurse took part in the murder of Thomas Becket, to whom he owed service for the manor of Barham, and with whom he may have had relations in the days when Becket was still a man of this world. The Archbishop, formerly Chancellor and close friend of the King, was engaged in a long and violent quarrel with Henry over certain matters in which he believed the interests of the Church, and in particular of the Archbishop of Canterbury, were in danger. As is well known, some hasty words of the King in a fit of exasperation instigated four knights to plot Becket's destruction. They were Reginald Fitzurse, Hugh de Moreville, William de Tracey and Richard le Breton. Fitzurse was the leader and appears to have had personal differences with the Archbishop. The attack was planned in the castle of Ranulph de Broc, at Saltwood near Hythe. De Broc was another of Becket's enemies and had usurped his castle.

The knights and their men rode from Saltwood to Canterbury on 29th December and sought out the Archbishop in his Palace. Bitter words and accusations were exchanged and the interview was inconclusive. Later in the afternoon, the knights again approached him. They were in arms, and the monks, anxious for their own safety as well as their master, endeavoured to drag Becket through the cloisters to the sanctuary of the Cathedral. He resisted, but they succeeded in forcing him into the North Transept, still known as the

“Martyrdom”, and secured the door. The Archbishop commanded it to be re-opened and the knights entered as Vespers were being sung in the Choir. There was an altercation and a struggle in the gloom. The knights endeavoured in vain to drag the Archbishop, a powerful man, from the Church. The first blow was struck by Fitzurse, but it glanced off. Tracey followed, but le Breton delivered the fatal stroke, severing the top of the skull with such force that his sword was broken upon the pavement. De Morville did not strike, but held back the people who were trying to crowd into the Transept. After the murder, the knights pillaged the Archbishop’s residence and rode out of Canterbury, making their way to South Malling, near Lewes, where Becket had a manor.

At first, horror of the crime was mainly excited by the sacrilege committed in the Cathedral. The monks and clergy were perhaps not altogether sorry to be rid of an imperious master of whose piety they might have a doubt. When however, the body of Becket was found to be clad in haircloth garments beneath the episcopal robes and, moreover to be verminous, the monks of Canterbury were convinced that their late Archbishop had indeed been one of themselves. Soon, the fame of the miracles wrought by the relics of St. Thomas spread throughout England and Christendom, and brought thousands of pilgrims annually from all quarters to the shrine at Canterbury for over three centuries, until another Henry, Henry VIII, destroyed it and as far as it was he was able, the reputation of the martyr. The detailed story of these events can be read in Dean Stanley’s ‘Historical Memorials of Canterbury Cathedral’.

Henry II performed a public penance at the tomb of St. Thomas. What was the fate of the murderers and of Reginald Fitzurse in particular? As the glory of the martyr grew with the years, the character and punishment of his assassins were depicted by legend in ever darker colours. In fact however, it appears that the crime was regarded as an ecclesiastical one, to be visited by spiritual rather than temporal punishment. The Knights were excommunicated, in itself a very heavy punishment in the twelfth century. Later, it is said, they were sent to the Pope for judgement and by him were ordered to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. There, according to one story, they all died and were buried at a place called the Black Mountain. Another, and perhaps more credible tradition, asserts that Fitzurse either did not go to Palestine or returned thence alive, and that he subsequently migrated to Ireland. There, like many another of Henry’s Knights, he is said to have founded a Norman-Irish family, bearing the name MacMahon, which is simply Fitzurse – “Bear’s Son” - in Erse.

At his disgrace, Fitzurse divided his manor of Williton between his brother and the Knights of the order of St. John. The manor of Barham passed to “a kinsman”, John de Berham. I do not know what happened to the land in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. The family of Fitzurse was perpetuated at Williton through the later Middle Ages until, with the lapse of time, the Norman name degenerated into the plain English “Fisher”. No later Fitzurse seems to have done anything of note, whether good or bad.

I think it is probable that all the Barhams of Kent and Sussex may claim descent from John de Berham or some other member of his family. He is in fact the first of all the John Barhams of whom we know. The Barhams cannot be the direct descendants of Reginald Fitzurse, who, so far as we know, left no legitimate offspring in England. John de Berham is

described as a 'kinsman' of Fitzurse. What that means is not clear. Either he was not entitled to the name Fitzurse or he did not use it for some reason. Tradition says that the name was regarded as ill-omened, and that the kinsfolk in Kent adopted Berham as a sort of English equivalent for Fitzurse, "Bear's son", just as the Irish family took the name of MacMahon. It is not possible, however, to translate Berham as "Bear's son". Moreover it is not probable that a Norman family would have adopted an Anglo-Saxon surname, unless it was the name of their estate. In fact the territorial "de" shows that we are concerned with a place name. "Berham" is simply an old spelling of Barham and the village is so named in Domesday Book. There can be no doubt that there was a village or settlement of Barham in East Kent centuries before any Normans set foot in England. It appears certain that the home of the Fitzurse family was at Williton and that the manor of Barham was an outlying possession; but we do not know whether John was settled in Barham in his "kinsman's" time or whether he removed there after Fitzurse had surrendered possession.

The relation between Reginald Fitzurse and John de Berham was sufficiently close for the Barham family to possess a coat-of-arms which points back to the "bear" ancestry even if we cannot prove that it is identical with that of Reginald himself. The coat-of-arms of the Berhams, which appears in their various settlements, in heraldic language : *Argent, three bears passant sable muzzled, or*; in other words, three black bears with gold muzzles, walking on a silver shield.

Here I will mention a curious coincidence which I am unable to explain. According to the students of place-names, all the Barham localities in East Anglia have a name which signified in the original Anglo-Saxon "Enclosure on a hill"; but the Kentish Barham contains what was at first a place or family name signifying "Bear" – in short, it was "Enclosure of Bear" or Bear's Home". You may speculate whether the bears in the Barhams arms got there by virtue of the first Anglo-Saxon or Jutish settler in the spot in East Kent rather than by inheritance from the Fitzurses. I think myself that the Norman connection is the more probable one, and that the possession of the English "Bear's Enclosure" by the Norman "Bear's Son" is no more than coincidence.

Barham and Teston

The descendants of John de Berham remained in possession of the manor of Barham throughout the Middle Ages. History, however, knows little of them. Their fortune dwindled and in the reign of James I the last of the Barham estate was alienated by Thomas Barham to Fotherby, Archdeacon of Canterbury. When I visited the village of Barham I was unable to discover in the parish church any memorials or other witnesses to the long reign of John de Berham and his line. There is, however, a Barham House in the village which is no doubt the succession of the original manor house.

In the meantime, colonies of Barhams settled widely elsewhere in Kent and Sussex. We find them at Teston and Cranbrook in Kent and at East Hoathly and Wadhurst in Sussex. There are also slighter connections with Ashford, Maidstone and Boughton Monchelsea. I do not know how the former Barham Mill at Egerton got its name.

The principal settlement in Kent, after Barham, appears to have been at Teston, where the great house is still known as "Barham Court". Statements in "Hasted" suggest that the first

Barham who settled at Teston, Robert de Berham, may have done so at about the same time as John succeeded to Barham on the disgrace of Fitzurse, who perhaps had also held the manor of Teston. We do not know what relation Robert bore to John, but we do know that the Teston family were entitled to the shield with the three bears. (It is stated that the same device appears on a brass in Ashford parish church; but I have not verified the statement and know no more of any Barham family at that place).

I regret that I have not had the opportunity to visit Teston village or church. It is possible that interesting information could be obtained there from memorials in the church or churchyard, or perhaps from old inhabitants or local histories.

The sojourn of the Barhams at Teston came to an end in the reign of James I, at approximately the same time as that of the Barhams of Barham. The male line of descent failed, and the heiress – Anne Barham, and the estate passed by marriage to another family.

The tradition of the Barhams lived on, however, at Teston. The best known member of that branch of the family was Henry Barham F.R.S., a writer on natural history, who lived from 1670 to 1726 and is described in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as “descended from the Barhams of Barham Court”. Henry Barham died in Jamaica, leaving there a son, another Henry, a doctor of medicine. The second Henry returned to England in 1740 and settled at Stained, Middlesex. Later, I shall mention some Barhams by adoption who attained some measure of celebrity and were perhaps connected with this branch of the family.

In a curious, indirect manner, Teston has added unmerited fame to the name of Barham. You may remember the battleship *Barham* that was sunk in the last war and you may have been asked, as I have, what connection this vessel had with your family. The answer is, I am afraid, that there is no connection. The name of the battleship was doubtless derived from Lord Barham, who had himself been an admiral, and at the advanced age of over 80 was made First Lord of the Admiralty in 1805, the year of Trafalgar. His personal name was Charles Middleton. He was not a Barham; but he appears to have been living at Teston when created a Baron and to have taken his title from his residence, Barham Court. I have somewhere in my possession the prospectus of a proposed canal to be constructed across the Weald of Kent, of which Lord Barham was one of the sponsors. The canal was never dug. The title of Lord Barham has long been extinct.

Cranbrook

The Barhams appear at Cranbrook in the later Middle Ages. They were, however, connected less with the town of Cranbrook itself than with that hamlet of the parish now called Sissinghurst and which was formerly known as “Milkhouse Street” and which, in my youth, was still referred to as “The Street” by the older generation. Near Milkhouse Street stands a residence of Tudor brickwork, now universally, but incorrectly, named Sissinghurst ‘Castle’. The builders of the original Sissinghurst were the Saxonhursts and it is this ancient name of the place which, in a modified form, has been extended from the “Castle” to the “Street”.

Richard, son of Henry Barham, acquired Sissinghurst in the reign of Edward III by marriage into the Saxonhurst family. I do not know the origin of the line of Barhams, but it is certain that they bore the ancestral arms.

Early in the fifteenth century, the parish church of St Dunstan at Cranbrook was enlarged and the present tower built. Over the great west door of the tower are stone shields bearing coats-of-arms. Three of these arms are Barham, Chicheley and Bettenham. Chicheley was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1414 to 1443. It was he who encouraged Henry V to undertake the war with France which we always associate with the battle of Agincourt in 1415. (It is said that afterwards, in remorse for the lives he had helped to lose, he founded All Souls' College in Oxford, by way of expiation). This roughly fixes the date of the tower, under the patronage of the Archbishop. The other coats-of-arms represent, no doubt, the families that had helped substantially with the work in money or materials. St. Dunstan's was, of course, the parish church of the Barhams of Sissinghurst, as Milkhouse Street, which now has a church of its own, had at the time only a chapel-of-ease. Bettenham is now a farmhouse on the border of the parish, not far from Sissinghurst. So we may gather that the two families were contemporaries and perhaps connected. The three bears *passant* of the Barhams can still be made out on the stone shield over the west door.

The Barhams did not stay so long at Sissinghurst as their other Kentish settlements. Towards the end of the reign of Henry VI, Sissinghurst was sold to Thomas Baker and the name of Barham disappeared from Cranbrook after a sojourn of about a century and a half. The Bakers were newcomers to Kent and did not belong to the old county gentry. It was they who rebuilt the old house in the fashionable style of the Tudor period - an imitation castle in red brick. Although there was no family connection between the Barhams and the Bakers, you will no doubt be interested in a short description of the subsequent history of the building which was once intimately associated with our family. It must however be relegated to an appendix.

East Hoathly and Wadhurst

By the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Barhams had departed from their principal medieval homes in Kent – Barham, Teston and Cranbrook. They fared differently in Sussex. Of the two settlements of Barhams in Sussex, I know to my regret, nothing of that of east Hoathly. This village lies about eight miles north-east of Lewes and is eleven miles distant from Wadhurst. The principal residence here is still known as Barham house, although I understand it has been rebuilt in recent years. The family name enduring until the present time suggests that we have a settlement of the memorial type, as at Teston, dating from the Middle Ages. I have passed through East Hoathly, but have never been able to visit the church or its monuments, so that I cannot say whether the Barhams have left any traces of themselves, other than the name of their abode.

In contrast, the history of the family at Wadhurst is full of interest and instruction. The settlement there was a comparatively late one, dating from the early Tudor period. We read that the Wadhurst Barhams were descended from a John Barham, who was born towards the end of the fifteenth century and was connected with the Barhams of Teston. He was one of the first and most successful ironmasters and is stated to have founded the furnace at Lamberhurst on the Kentish border, afterwards named the Gloucester Furnace

after the consort of Queen Anne. (This furnace, according to a tradition which cannot be confirmed, produced the iron railings that still, in part, surround St. Paul's Cathedral.)

It is well to pause here to survey the history of the iron industry of the Weald. Iron ore, in the form of carbonate, occurs plentifully in the Wealden deposits, especially in the clays that are well developed in the Wadhurst area and are known as the Wadhurst clay from that fact. Iron was worked in various places in the forest of the Weald at least as early as Roman times. The primitive smelting process was a simple one and was carried on as a craft somewhat similar to that of the charcoal burner. A pile of ore and charcoal was constructed and coated with clay; it was then ignited and the fire maintained by hand bellows. When the ore was reduced, "blooms" or viscous masses of iron ore mixed with clinker were obtained. These were beaten out by hand until the grosser impurities were removed, and wrought iron, or in some cases steel, was produced.

Towards the close of the Middle Ages, the principle of the blast furnace was imported into this country from France. These furnaces were tall erections which were filled with a mixture of iron ore and charcoal, with lime as a flux. Combustion was maintained at a high temperature by means of a blast produced mechanically. The molten metal was tapped off from the bottom of the furnace and allowed to solidify into "pigs" of brittle cast iron. The pigs were converted into wrought iron by re-heating in forges and beating by trip hammers.

In contrast with the traditional handicraft of blooming, the new method was industrial. Capital was required to build the blast furnaces, and especially to form the hammer ponds which provided water power for the trip-hammers and which still remain in many places to beautify what was once the Black Country of the Weald. The new industry grew in wealth and power during the Tudor period and spread beyond Sussex into Kent and Surrey. It reached a climax in the seventeenth century and declined rapidly in the eighteenth. By 1760, it is stated that only four furnaces remained in operation. Sussex iron came to an end in 1825, when the last furnace of Ashburnham was blown out. During its season of prosperity, the iron industry of the Weald excited much hostility. It was accused of exhausting the woodlands for fuel and of ruining the roads, such as they were, by the carriage of heavy loads of iron ore, ordnance and other iron products. The decay and death of Sussex iron were brought about, however, by the substitution of coal for wood as a fuel in the iron industry of the Midlands and the North of England. While Sussex iron flourished, the Sussex iron-masters enjoyed good wealth, employed many operatives and built fine houses for themselves and the families they founded. As the furnaces were extinguished, the wealth fled away, the descendants of the iron-masters sank to the ranks of the artisans, and their great residences became farmhouses. Thus are explained the rise and fall of the Barhams of Wadhurst. We may conjecture that John Barham, or his father or grandfather, saw that the new industry offered possibilities of advancement which the decaying feudal system of the Middle Ages could not do, and migrated from Teston to Wadhurst. The family had already attained to influence by the middle of the sixteenth century, for as we shall see, it produced an eminent lawyer of the Elizabethan age. John Barham of Great Butts was born about the close of that age. In 1630 he built, or rebuilt, the house called Great Shoemiths which still stands, a substantial farmhouse of comfortable aspect to the north of the village, close on to the Kentish border, and he worked the adjacent furnace and forge. John Barham died in 1648 and lies in the chancel of Wadhurst church under a slab of his

own cast iron. This slab is considered the most elaborate of the many such memorials which mark the graves of Sussex iron-masters at Wadhurst and elsewhere. Another iron slab, who may have been her slab covers the body of Mr. William Barham "of Scragg Oak" who died in 1701 aged 80 years. Scragg Oak was built, or rebuilt, in 1678. Yet another slab commemorates Ann, daughter of David Barham, Gentleman; she died in 1647 and David Barham, who is commemorated on the same slab and who may have been her father or brother, in 1643. David, the father of Anne, owned a house called Snape, which like Shoemiths and Scragg Oak, had a furnace. The last of the name whom I can discover at Wadhurst was John, a son or perhaps a grandson of John Barham of Great Shoemiths, who died in 1724. So far as I know, he has no memorial in the church. By the date of his death, the fortunes of the Barhams must have been waning and the family may have sunk into obscurity soon after.

We thus trace three branches of the Barhams at Wadhurst, all iron-masters; one at Great Shoemiths, represented by John, another at Scragg Oak, represented by William and a third at Snape, represented by David and Ann. There is a peculiarity of their memorial slabs which indicates that they belonged to independent, though doubtless related families. William's slab carries the traditional Barham arms – three bears "passant" on a shield. John Barham has a much more elaborate coat-of-arms. He has the shield with the three bears, but the shield is crossed by a "fesse", or horizontal band adorned with a fleur-de-lys, flanked by two martlets, or birds. Moreover it is surmounted by a helmet with a crest represented some long-legged bird among rushes. The Barhams of Snape have no bears at all, but their shield shows simply three five-pointed stars.

Now what do these varying blazons denote? Frankly, I do not know. William Barham's three bears agree with those carved upon the tower of Cranbrook, and with the mediaeval arms of the Teston family, as described by Hasted. On the other hand, John Barham's coat, with the three bears, fesse and crest is identical with the arms claimed by the author of the Ingoldsby Legends, Richard Harris Barham of Canterbury, of whom I shall write further on. Recently I have found them described in a collection of coats-of-arms of living families as pertaining to Sir George Barham and his sons of Wadhurst and Rolvenden. Sir George was a modern industrialist who was knighted and who claimed descent from the Barhams of Wadhurst. The arms so described were recognised in 1574 and were confirmed to Sir George by "collateral descent" about 1912. I will record the heraldic description: "Argent on a fesse gules, between three bears passant sable, muzzled gules, a fleur-de-lys between two martlets, all or. *Mantling, gules and argent. Crest* on a wreath of the colours, a stork among bulrushes, all proper. *Motto, Fortis et Patiens.*" That may not convey much to you, but you will see the resemblance to the arms moulded on John Barham's slab. The simplest explanation that can be offered of the addition to the three bears of Fitzurse and Barham of the fesse, fleur-de-lys and birds, not to speak of the crest, is that connection with some other family is indicated.

Whatever may be the cause of the varying blazons, it is clear that the Wadhurst Barhams were conscious of gentle descent, and were proud of it. (Both John and David Barham were styled "Gentlemen" on their slabs, although William of Scragg Oak is plain "Mr."). Yet it is also clear that they were not feudal landowners, but wealthy, middle-class industrialists.

There is no Barham Court or Barham House in Wadhurst. The houses they built or enlarged for themselves bear simple rustic names.

Nicholas Barham

The most famous of the Wadhurst Barhams was not an iron-master but a lawyer. This was Nicholas Barham who was born in the first half of the sixteenth century. Although a native of Wadhurst, he is associated with Maidstone, and so in a sense returned to the ancestral area. During the reign of Mary, Nicholas acquired a manor named Digons or Bigons, which I have been unable to identify, but which must have been in the neighbourhood of Maidstone. The manor had been forfeited by an adherent of Wyatt who raised an unsuccessful rebellion against the Queen. I am unaware of the services which Nicholas had rendered to the Crown to be rewarded. At about the same time he purchased Chillington Manor, which as you know is incorporated in the building of Maidstone Museum. He served as recorder, and for a time (1562-1563), as Member of Parliament for Maidstone. This was early in the reign of Elizabeth. Soon after, in 1567, he was made a serjeant-at-law, a superior grade of barrister, now extinct, from which it was usual to appoint judges.

As serjeant-at-law, in 1571-1572, Nicholas Barham prosecuted the Duke of Norfolk, and subsequently the Duke's secretary, on behalf of the Crown for high treason in plotting to replace Elizabeth by Mary Queen of Scots. He procured their condemnation and they were later executed. Nicholas was a very able lawyer, but gained a reputation for unscrupulousness, especially in the use of torture, to extract evidence. He was clearly most useful to the Crown, and a candidate for the Bench. In 1577 he was at Oxford assizes, prosecuting a Roman Catholic bookseller for sedition. The bookseller was condemned to lose his ears. He had his revenge however, for from the crowded Court House, an epidemic of gaol fever started which put an end to the career of Nicholas Barham and of many others. It is stated that some years later a letter of legal advice was addressed to the corporation of Hastings, by a Nicholas Barham, but this is believed to be another of the same name as "the Barhams were a numerous tribe" in Kent and Sussex, and Nicholas was a favourite name among them.

Nicholas Barham left one son, Arthur, of whom, I know nothing, except that he sold both Digons and Chillington. I used to be told that somewhere in the stained glass of Chillington Manor the three bears of the Barhams were to be seen; but I was never able to find them. Perhaps if they ever existed, the German bomb swept them away?

Richard Harris Barham

We must now descend about two centuries and a half to meet the Barham who is without doubt the best known of all the Barhams, although by his pen-name, Thomas Ingoldsby, rather than his real name, the Reverend Richard Harris Barham. He was born in 1788, at 61, Burgate Street, in a house which it is feared was destroyed in the "Baedeker" raid on that city. His family had been settled in Canterbury for some generations. His grandfather or great grandfather married the daughter of Thomas Harris, a wealthy hop factor. The marriage brought into possession of the Canterbury Barhams the residence known as Tappington, or Tappington Everard, a small manor-house in the diminutive hamlet of Denton, a few miles from the ancestral seat of Barham.

I have read that Richard was proud to claim descent from Reginald Fitzurse. If that was the case, he does not allow his claim to appear in any of his writings that I know. His family were entitled to the Barham coat-of-arms, in a form identical with those on the memorial slab of John Barham of Wadhurst – that is, the original three bears of Fitzurse – Barham with the addition of the fesse, fleur-de-lys and martlets and of the stork in the bulrushes crest. This shows very clearly that the Barhams of Wadhurst and the Barhams of Canterbury were of the same stock, but the connecting links elude me.

Richard adopted the church as his career and held curacies for short periods in Ashford and Westwell and was subsequently made rector of Snare in Romney Marsh, with which was attached the curacy of Warehorne, also in the marsh or on its borders. Promotion came to him soon. He was given a minor canonry in St. Paul's Cathedral and other ecclesiastical offices and finally the living of certain City churches. He died at Amen corner in 1845, and his body, after some vicissitudes, rests in Kensal Green Cemetery. He has, I believe, a memorial in the crypt of St. Paul's.

This is, in outline, the official career of Richard Harris Barham; but his title to fame rests upon the authorship of the *Ingoldsby Legends*. You may have dipped into these legends; and in any case this is not the place for me to attempt a description. They are recognised as a classic of free humorous verse, scarcely equalled in their own field. Barham drew largely on the legendry lore of Kent – aided indeed by his own imagination – but his stories in verse are by no means limited to the county and range widely over Christendom. He places many of his tales at "Tappington Hall", an ancestral mansion which bears little resemblance to the real Tappington, and he invents a family of "Ingoldsbys", with himself "Thomas Ingoldsby" as its chronicler. One asks what led him to adopt a name like Ingoldsby, much more suggestive of Yorkshire or Lincolnshire than East Kent. It certainly proved very effective camouflage.

In reading the *Ingoldsby Legends*, you may wonder that they should have been produced by a clergyman. The humour is broad, and the author loves to poke fun at saintly personages and church dignitaries. He was, however, in the old Protestant tradition, with its anti-papal prejudice mellowed by eighteenth century indifference, and he regarded the ancient ecclesiastical traditions with kindly amazement spliced with contempt. As a clergyman, his life was beyond reproach. His son wrote his biography, which I have not yet had the opportunity to read.

Some Barhams by Adoption

In an earlier section [page 5] I referred to Henry Barham F.R.S. who died in Jamaica in 1726 and to his son Henry Barham M.D. who returned from Jamaica and settled at Staines in Middlesex in 1740. As I read that the latter had been practicing as a physician in Jamaica for twenty years, he must have been a middle-aged man on his return to England. These men were offshoots of the Teston stock.

The Dictionary of National Biography tells of a Thomas Foster, son of James Foster, who was born in Bedford in 1766 and who took the name of Thomas Foster Barham by authority of a private Act of Parliament and in accordance with the will of Henry Barham. Was this the Dr. Henry Barham of Jamaica and Staines? The Dictionary is silent and we are reduced

to conjecture. Thomas Foster Barham is described as a musician and miscellaneous writer. It is fairly clear that he was a man of strong personality and we may guess that with the name he also inherited the wealth of Henry Barham. He settled at Leskinnick, near Penzance, Cornwall and he had a large family of which four sons have gained a place in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Thomas Foster Barham M.D. was the eldest son of the first Thomas. He was born at Hendon in 1794 and lived until 1869. He was a classical scholar as well as a physician, and had professional connections with Penzance and Exeter. He was a supporter of the Unitarian congregation meeting at St. George's Chapel in the latter city and subsequently conducted independent religious services at Newton Abbot.

William Foster Barham, the third son, was born at Marazion, Cornwall, in 1796 and died somewhere in Kent in 1844. He is described as a poet.

Charles Foster Barham M.D. the fourth son, was born at Truro, Cornwall in 1804, and died there in 1884. He was a physician, and also had interests in antiquarian and geological studies. The Dictionary states that he carried out investigations into the climate of Cornwall and the diseases of Cornish miners.

Francis Foster Barham, the fifth son, was born at Leskinnick in 1808. He first studied law and then turned to authorship. He became known as Barham the "Alist" because he devised a new and comprehensive religion which he named "Alism" from the Hebrew and Arabic names of God. He produced a large body of writings, which were edited after his death by his friend, Sir Isaac Pitman, the inventor of a system of shorthand.

You will see that the adoptive family of Foster Barham became associated with the West Country. When I visited Bridgewater in Somerset in 1969, one of the first things I saw was a brick works bearing in large letters the name Barham. How did this Barham journey so far West? Was he perhaps an offshoot of the Foster Barhams?

Some Contemporary Barhams

There must be many contemporary families who share with us the name of Barham but with whom we can trace no relation by birth. There is, or was, a Barham in Wadhurst who keeps a newspaper shop. Is he descended from the iron-masters? There is, I am told, a family of the same name Rolvenden, but if report speaks true we should not be proud to claim its acquaintance. One has heard of a Barham-Boorman who owned a newspaper in Maidstone. There is, or was, a chain of provision shops in the City of London with the engaging name of "Barham & Marriage". Here, however, I would refer to one contemporary family only before passing to the second part of my task, which is to trace back our own family line.

Early in the present century, after I had left for London, but while my father was still alive, we heard that our relatives in Hawkhurst had had a visit from a distinguished Barham, who was in search of his ancestral home and the graves of his forebears. This was Sir George Barham, the head of the Express Dairy Company, and, I believe, the son of its founder. Sir George claimed descent from the Barhams of Wadhurst and was apparently able to

substantiate his claim. I have mentioned already (page 8) that the arms of the Barhams of Wadhurst (in the full form shown over the vault of John Barham of Great Shoemiths) were confirmed to George Barham in about 1912.

He settled at Wadhurst, having purchased Snape, formerly the home of David Barham, the iron-master. Being a wealthy man he became a benefactor of the village. Wadhurst church possesses choir stalls presented by Sir George to the glory of his ancestors who lived in that place. I read also in the county directory that the Barham Charity attached to Wadhurst Church, an educational endowment originally of the value of £10 was increased by David Barham; but who David was and what was his relation to Sir George I do not know.

Sir George Barham died in 1913. The present head of the family is Colonel Arthur Saxby Barham J.P., the younger son of Sir George, born in 1869. Some time ago he settled at Hole Park in Rolvenden, where he still lives. Besides being the head of United Dairies Ltd., he fills several public offices, including the chairmanship of the Governors of Cranbrook School. One of the recent additions to the School has been named Barham House.

APPENDIX

The later History of Sissinghurst

As I stated in an earlier section of these notes, (page 6) there was no connection of blood between the Barhams of Sissinghurst and their successors, the Bakers, who acquired the estate by purchase. It is a safe assumption that the present red-brick "castle", with which we are now familiar, was the work of the first or the second of the new dynasty and has never housed one of the mediaeval Barhams. So it has no claim to a place in these notes; however the latter-day Barhams who are natives of Cranbrook, or the near descendants of natives, will fuel sufficient interest in the old house to pardon a short sketch of its later history.

The Baker family is chiefly known to fame by the somewhat sinister figure of Sir John Baker, probably the son of the man who purchased Sissinghurst from the last of the Barhams. He appears to have been a self-made man, with few antecedents, who achieved success in the legal sphere under the earlier Tudors. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer to Henry VIII and Queen Mary, and in the course of his service to the Queen he played some part in the prosecution of protestants. His deeds have been magnified and his character blackened by tradition, to which he is known as "Bloody Baker", just as his sovereign has become "Bloody Mary".

Over the South porch of Cranbrook Church is a small room approached by a stairway within the building, which was anciently a priest's chamber. It appears that an accused protestant was once kept in custody there for a night, pending trial, by order of Sir John. The room is known to this day as "Baker's Jail", and many martyrs are popularly supposed to have been imprisoned, or even starved to death in it. Legend also tells that Sir John Baker died about

the same time as Mary and that, as he was being borne to burial in the parish church, the church-bells suddenly began to ring for the accession of Queen Elizabeth. At that moment the coffin grew so heavy that the bearers were forced to drop it. The devil had come to carry off "Bloody Baker". The spot where this miracle is alleged to have happened, just at the eastern entrance to Cranbrook, is still known as Baker's Cross. Yet more foolish tales have been told about Sir John, to whom in fact many of the features of Bluebeard have been attributed.

Richard, the grandson of Sir John, won fame as the author of a popular Chronicle of the Kings of England. The family ceased to reside at Sissinghurst, but members of it continued to be buried in the family vault in Cranbrook Church, under a towering pyramid monument which still exists, although no longer over the vault. The opening of the vault for the burial of one of the last of the Bakers late in the eighteenth century caused the collapse of part of the roof of the South aisle; the stone pier erected to support the repaired roof can still be seen.

After the passing of the Baker family, Sissinghurst fell upon evil days. During the Napoleonic Wars it became a detention centre for French prisoners; and this seems to be the reason why it acquired the unmerited title of "Castle" which we still give to it. Subsequently, the Overseers of the parish of Cranbrook acquired the Castle for use as a poorhouse. They lodged the paupers in the old buildings and farmed the lands with the able bodied. They made such a success of the "Parish Cow" that, after the Union Workhouse was built, and the castle was no longer required as a poorhouse, the money made by pauper labour was sufficient to erect the existing Vestry Hall at Cranbrook.

In my youth, Sissinghurst Castle was simply a farm, or rather, farm buildings, for the farmer lived in a substantial modern house outside the old entrance gates. Inside was the "Keep", a tall rectangular brick tower, with a turret at either end, standing isolated in the middle of a garden. It was inhabited by an elderly woman, who lived upon the ground floor. She would admit visitors to the Keep. In one of the rooms she would show a remarkable writing-desk with a seemingly infinite number of secret drawers. In another room hung a few grim portraits of Tudor monarchs painted upon wood. The view from the leads was somewhat disappointing. The Castle lies low and the prospect from the roof of the Keep is limited to the surrounding fields and woods.

In recent times Sissinghurst Castle has been worthily restored, and it is now the residence of Harold Nicholson, the publicist, and his wife the Hon. V Sackville-West, an authoress and a member of the family of Sackvilles of Knole, Sevenoaks. I understand that she has a writing-room in the old Keep. I should like to know whether the desk with the secret drawers is still there and whether the Tudors still hang on the walls.

I must repeat that the Barhams with their three black bears had passed from the scene before the events that I have recorded in this appendix. Would that we know as much about them and the pre-Tudor Sissinghurst as we do about the Bakers and their Sissinghurst. I think we may say that the transition from one family to the other marked the opening of a new epoch. The Barhams, as a family, represented the old feudal gentry, notwithstanding the fact that they entered into industry at Wadhurst. The feudal system

received its death-blow in the century that saw the Wars of the Roses and the rise of the new Tudor dynasty and, with it, the new middle class of merchants and professional men. The Bakers belonged to the new order.

The change is illustrated by the history of Cranbrook Church. When the tower was built early in the fifteenth century, it was the families with coats-of-arms - the Barhams and the Bettenhams – who were recorded as the benefactors. A century later, the Church was further extended and beautified, and in particular, the south aisle, which is so much admired, was rebuilt in the perpendicular style. This was not the work of the old landed gentry, but of a new class of wealthy clothiers, the makers and merchants of broadcloth who owed their fortunes to the policy of Edward III when he invited the Flemish cloth workers to settle in the Weald and other parts of England and who attained the heights of their prosperity under Elizabeth.