

CHAPTER VII
THE CADETS

DEVONSHIRE

The direct line of the noble house of Beaumont barons and viscounts, which had descended from Agnes de Bellomonte and Louis de Brienne, became extinct in the male line in 1507 and the viscountcy had been forfeited at the time of the Atlander. There was, however, several other male lines including an unbroken male line descended from Agnes's brother Sir Philip of Highampton. Because Sir Philip may possibly have been illegitimate, this Devonshire branch, though older than that of the barons, may be considered a junior or cadet branch. Nevertheless it produced a number of knights and country gentlemen who distinguished themselves in several walks of life. William, a grandson of Sir Philip is said to have accompanied St. Louis of France on the sixth Crusade in 1249. A great-grandson, Richard was with Edward III in the campaign in 1346. The town records of Abberville give an account of one of his exploits:

"The Black Prince, being hard pressed by the French at the battle of Crecy and being surrounded and thrown to the ground, would infallibly have fallen into the power of the enemy but for Richard de Beaumont, who carried the great banner of Wales which he threw over the Prince and having placed his feet on it, with his sword in both hands, he repelled the assailants, the Earl of Arundel came up at the critical moment at the head of the second division and forced the French to retire."

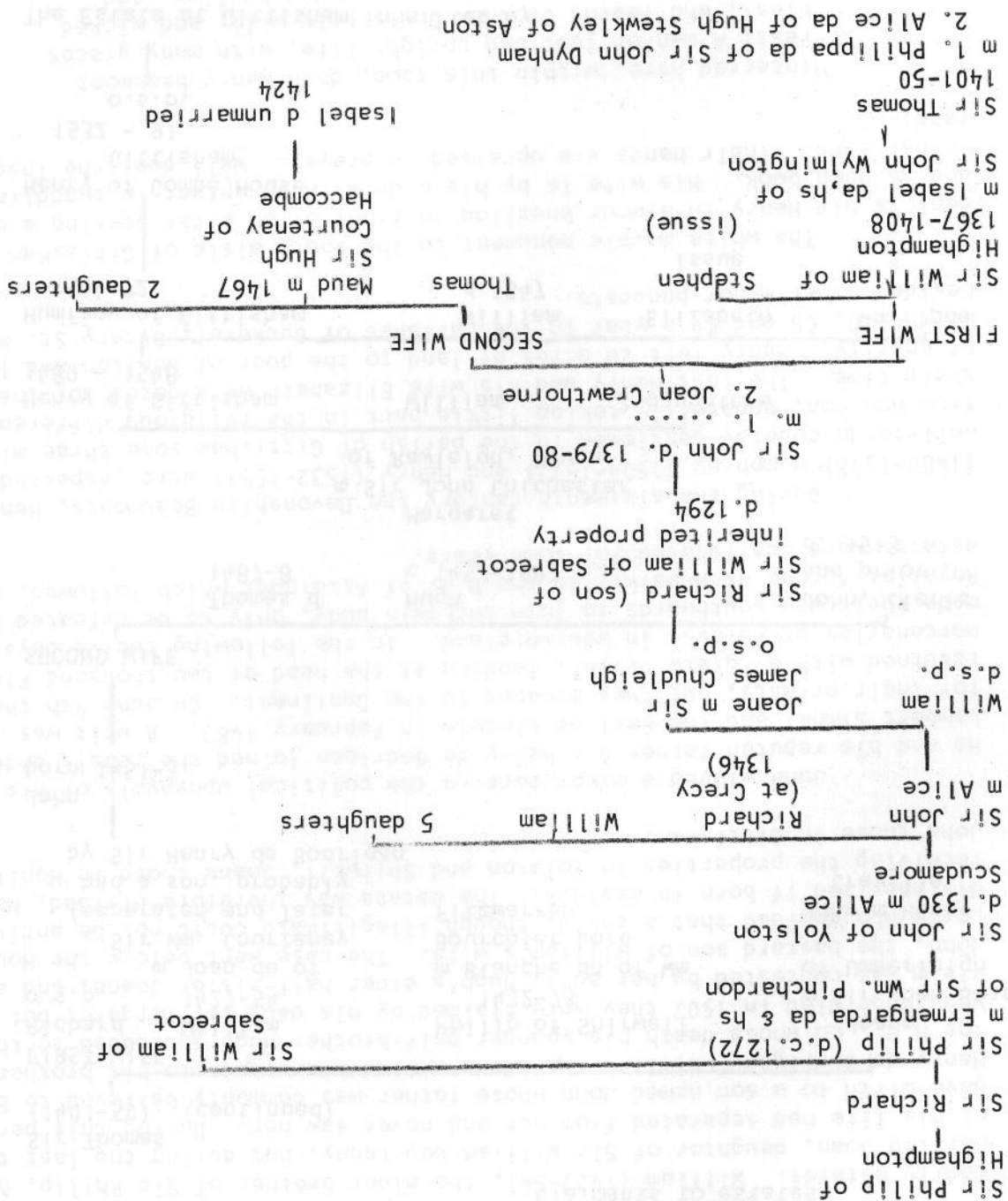
Later in the same year Richard's elder brother Sir John of Yolston provided sixty archers who sailed from Portsmouth to join the expeditionary force then advancing on Calais. In 1415 a certain Thomas de Beaumont, believed to be a member of this branch of the family served under Sir Richard Hastings at Agincourt.

The Devonshire Beaumonts married into prominent families including the Courtenays, the Bouchiers and the Wyllingtons, bringing many manors and much wealth into the family. One daughter married Sir John Luttrell of Duncaister Castle, Somerset (d. 1427-8), who owned an estate which has remained in the family until the present day.

They had town houses in London, and we find Sir Thomas Beaumont of Yolston (1401-1450) paying Thomas Pomeroy, prior of Holy Trinity (by Aldgate) forty shillings, arrears of quit rent for a tenement and garden lying in the parishes of St. George, Botolph Lane and St. Andrew, Eastcheap. His son Sir Philip of Shirwell and Gittisham (1432-73) was M.P. for Devon in 1467 and sheriff in 1469. He seems to have been implicated in an attempt at bribery (not uncommon in those troubled days), for another member, Philip Statham of Morley, co. Derby, stated in his will (1472)

"I received two shillings ofBemont, a worshipful squier of the West Country by the hands of Page in the last Parleament. I did nothing there.....and if I did, it is against my conscience for so Moche, as I was one of the Parleament. I will that he have it again."

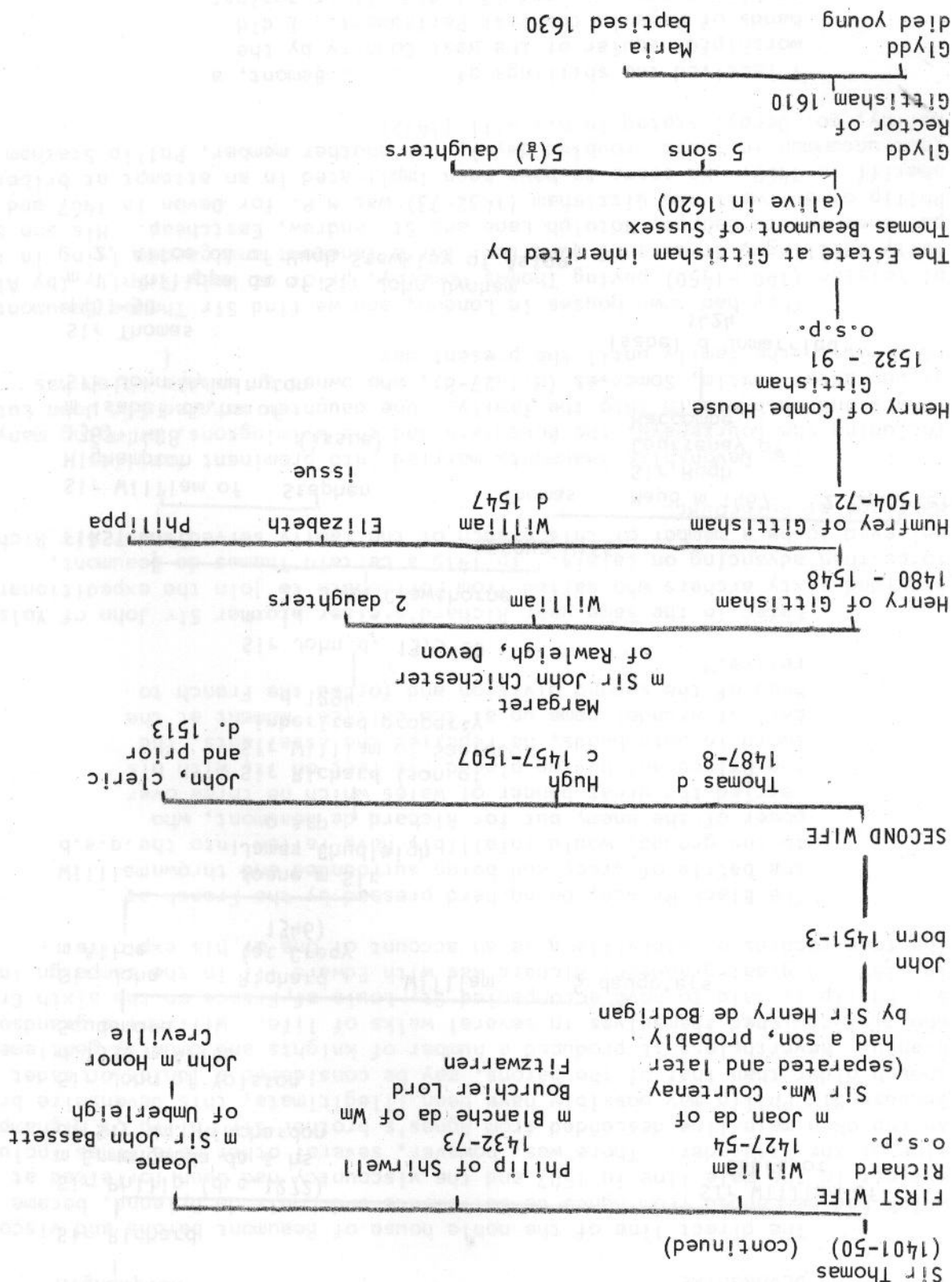
THE DEVONSHIRE BRANCH (continued)



KEY

Descent of estates from
Thomas to his grandson
Hugh

Claimants to estates



One wonders what were the feelings of Sir Philip when particulars of the bribe were made public and the two shillings returned.

This generation witnessed an important legal battle for the family estates. William (1427-54), the elder brother of Sir Philip, had married Joan, daughter of Sir William Courtenay, but during the last two years of his life had separated from her and never saw her. During this period she gave birth to a son named John whose father was commonly believed to be Sir Henry de Bodrigan. William therefore willed his estate to his brother Philip, the M.P., on whose death his younger half-brother Hugh succeeded to them. When Hugh died in 1507 they were claimed by his daughter Margaret but the claim was contested by her aunt, Hugh's elder half-sister Joane, and also by John, the bastard son of William's wife. The case went before the House of Lords who decided that a child, though illegitimate could not be entirely disinherited if born in wedlock. The estate was therefore divided, Margaret receiving the properties in Yolston and Shirwell, Joane those in Honiton and John those in Gittisham.

John played a minor part in the political upheavals of his day. He and his reputed father Sir Henry de Bodrigan joined the rebels under Lambert Simnel and the Earl of Lincoln in February 1487. A writ was issued for their arrests, but they escaped to the Continent. On June 4th they returned with a 'grete navye', landing at the head of two thousand Flemish mercenaries at Furness in Westmoreland. In the following twelve days they made their way southwards to join the main body, only to be defeated by the Royalist forces at Newark. In the Bill of Attainder which followed, their estates were confiscated for some years.

During the sixteenth century the Devonshire Beaumonts, Henry (1480-1548) Humphrey (1504-1572) and Henry (1532-1591) were respected and well-to-do country gentlemen in the parish of Gittisham some three miles from Honiton, apparently taking little part in the religious differences of their time. The last Henry and his wife Elizabeth were noted for their works of charity. Henry left 20 acres of land to the poor of Honiton and land worth £20, £5 and £4 a year to the parishes of Buckereil, Ottery St. Mary besides other minor bequests.

The white marble monument in the south aisle of Gittisham Church depicts Sir Henry in armour kneeling in front of an altar bearing a cushion and an open book. His wife is by his side with an infant in swaddling clothes in her arms. Their hands are upraised in prayer. Well does the inscription read:

"Interred here, within this tomb, doth Henry Beaumont
rest: A man of just and upright life, with many graces
blest, who learned to know God's holy will; and wicked
works defyd; And as he learned, so did he live, and
as he lived he dyd."

The lines go on to speak of his ancient family mentioned so often in French and English chronicles, but now spent, as he had no issue. His estates were therefore left to his kinsman Thomas Beaumont, son of George of Godeby in Leicestershire. Thus, as his epitaph says:

"The sinking line he corked with one of that descent."

Thomas's son Glydd was Rector of Gittisham from 1610 to his death in 1633. His son Glydd, born in 1628, died young and with his death the

Devonshire branch of the family came to an end.

2. COLE ORTON, LEICESTERSHIRE

Thomas who inherited the Devonshire estates belonged to the second cadet branch of the Beaumont family. For its origin we must go back to Thomas, Lord of Basqueville, younger brother of Henry the 5th Baron, who died in France in 1458. Through his wife Philippa he had come into possession of estates at Cole Orton. He had three sons, two of whom were killed at Towton in 1461, outliving him by only three years. The third, Thomas who had estates at Thringston near Cole Orton survived the wars and became the ancestor of two branches of the family, one at the confiscated nunnery of Grace Dieu near Whitwick in Leicestershire, the other at Barrow-on-Trent.

There was, however, in John's son John, a direct heir to Cole Orton. Born in 1446, he was on the edge of manhood when his father was killed, and when the attainder on the family was reversed in 1485 he came into possession of the family estates. When in 1490 Prince Arthur, eldest son of Henry VII was installed as Prince of Wales John was made a knight of the Bath. Apart from this, however, his public life was singularly uneventful. When in his late fifties he married Alice, daughter of Sir William Fielding of Newnham Padox and died in 1531, leaving no children. His younger brother predeceased him leaving four children. Of these, the eldest, William, succeeded to the estates.

Gradually the family began to achieve some measure of prestige. Richard's son Nicholas (d. 1607) was a man of considerable local standing and great ambition. In 1585 he was M.P. for Derby and in 1589 for Leicestershire, and was High Sheriff of the County in 1594. When in 1603 James I journeyed from Scotland to be crowned King of England, Henry formed one of the company of gentlemen who met him at Worksop and escorted him through the county. He received great favours from the new King, including knighthood both for himself and his son Thomas, together with the grant of lands in Leicestershire and Derbyshire.

Profiting by royal favour Henry petitioned the King for the restoration of the Viscountcy forfeited by his ancestor William the Lancastrian a century earlier. In the petition he tells how his forbears had won great honours under former kings both in war and peace and

"Have suffered great diminutions of estate, hazards and damages for their faith and service to their Prince",

how his grandfather Richard had been taken prisoner in the service of Henry VII and to regain his freedom had been forced to sell part of his estate. He follows his line back to the founder of the Cole Orton branch.

"Thomas Lord Backville (Basqueville), some to the Lord John Beaumont, the last of the males of which family was the Lord William who, being Viscount Beaumont and Lord Bardolf dyed without issue in the time of Henry VIII, which derivation of blood, as also that the said Sir Henry Beaumont is the next in blood is apparent both by records and by approved pedigrees and the service of Queen Elizabeth."

COLE ORTON BRANCH

John, 4th Baron
1361-2 - 1396

Henry 5th Baron
1380-1 - 1413

Thomas, Lord of Basqueville
of Cole Orton d 1458
m 1427, Philippe da, hs, of
Sir Thomas Maureward of Cole Orton

John (K. Towton 1461)
m Joan da of Ld Darcy
of Torkesey

Henry of Godeby
(K. Towton 1461)
m Anne da of Sir Robert
Moten of Pickelton co Leics.

George d. c. 1530
4 sons

John 1446 - 1531
m 1514 Alice da of
William Fielding
of Newham Paddox
o.s.p.

William,
m Mary da of Sir
John Bassett of
Blore, Stafford.

Edward
George
Ann

Thomas of Gittisham
Henry
d 1627 be in
Margaret
St. George's issue
Chapel,
Windsor

Richard d 1537 4 sons

John
Anthony of Glen
1 son

Richard Clerke
m Coletta da
Rector
Cole
da of Thomas
Orton
Corby, Lincs

Sir Nicholas
1 son
Sir Francis
m George Villiers
Mary
2 sons
3 das

m Anne da of Wm,
Saunders of
Welford, Northants

Cassandra da
of Thos Ogle
of Pinchbeck
Buckingham
1618

Sir Henry d 1607 Francis
Viscount of Swords 1551-1624
Stoughton
1 son
2 das

m Elizabeth da of
John Lavis of Agleare

Cornwall

Sir Thomas. Viscount
da 1624-5, m. Elizabeth
da of Henry Sapcote of
Elton, Hunts.

George Duke of
John
Christopher
1 da

Buckingham d 1627
Viscount E of
Purbeck Anglessea

The Viscountcy was not restored, but the favour Henry had received was continued in his son's time. Sir Thomas Beaumont, who had been knighted with his father at Belvoir Castle in 1603 was made a baronet in 1619 and in 1622 was created Viscount of Swords, a small town in the County of Dublin. The Viscountcy remained in the family until the death of his grandson Thomas in 1702 without male issue.

Henry's son Francis is often confused with his kinsman the dramatist who collaborated with John Fletcher in writing some of the best plays of the period, possibly because he wrote in 1697 a "judicious apology for the supposed levities of Chaucer" which was prefixed to the 1598 edition of that great poet's works. He was a graduate of Cambridge. Born in 1551 he was admitted late in life (1618) to Gray's Inn. Apart from law his chief interests seem to have been literature and cockfighting. In 1618 he was elected Master of the Charterhouse which had been endowed as a hospital and of the Chapel in his monument, habited in gown and ruff, kneeling at a prie-dieu. It was erected by his niece Elizabeth, daughter of his younger brother Thomas and wife of Sir Thomas Richardson, Speaker of the House of Commons. Something of the state of politics in England is better seen from the career of Henry's son Thomas who inherited the estates and became Viscount of Swords.

In the reign of James I differences arose between King and Parliament about the duties the King was levying without consulting the Houses. In 1610-11 as M.P. for Leicestershire Sir Thomas took Parliament's side, questioning the King's power to levy these duties. In June 1610 he moved a resolution in the House of Commons

"That it were more for the King's safety and honour, for our own credits and reputations and for the satisfaction of our Country to deferre a supplie till wee had an answer of our grievances"

In November he objected to the raising of £200,000 on land in return for the King's abandonment of certain antiquated feudal dues such as Wardship and Marriage. On 23 November Sir Thomas moved for a Committee to be appointed to consider the whole question of supply, but before the "Great Contract" between King and Parliament could be drawn up new disputes arose and James ordered a dissolution.

Sir Thomas may have been a sincere believer in the liberties of the subject, but the growing influence in James I's Parliaments of the extreme Puritan element must have had something to do with his change of attitude. Moreover, in 1600 he had married Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Henry Sapcote of Elton, Huntingdon. Her father was a Catholic recusant who died in the Fleet Prison in 1629. At that time the Catholics had nothing to thank the King for, but had even less sympathy with the narrow-mindedness and intransigence of the rising Pym-Hampden group in Parliament. Thomas was, moreover, second cousin to George Villiers, whose rapid advance, first to an earldom and then to a dukedom made him, as Duke of Buckingham, the King's favourite and the most powerful man in the country.

Buckingham was a descendant of Richard's brother Anthony of Glenfield, Leicestershire whose daughter Mary (1559-1632) married Sir George Villiers of Brokesby. She was left a widow when young and educated her second son George for the life of a courtier, sending him to France with John Eliot, a young man of his own age who was at first his friend but who later came to be his most bitter political adversary.

Mary Beaumont must have done much to ensure the advancement of the younger members of her family. Her elder brother Francis was knighted at Whitehall in 1618. His elder daughter Mary in 1621 married Spencer Compton, Earl of Northampton, King James being present at the wedding; and his younger daughter Elizabeth married Robert, first Earl of Nithsdale and Baron Maxwell. Of Mary's two younger sons John was created Viscount Purbeck and Christopher Earl of Anglesea.

Mary is said to have been a woman of great charm and strength of character. She was a prominent member of the court circle of James I who, the year after her son was created Earl of Buckingham, conferred on her the title of Countess. When James I was on his deathbed she and her son George in the absence of the doctors applied a plaster to the king's breast. When the doctors returned they found the king in a fainting fit and obviously in great pain, and believed that he had been poisoned. It was only some time after his death that they agreed that he died of natural causes.

Without her aid and encouragement Mary's son George could not possibly have become a royal favourite, but the decision to have him educated in courtly ways must have been a mistake which she afterwards greatly regretted, for it led him into a political career for which he was totally unsuited, and ultimately to disaster and assassination.

Mary survived her son by four very sad years. She is buried with her first husband Sir George Villiers in St. Nicholas Chapel, Westminster Abbey, and over their tomb is the black and white marble memorial carved by Nicholas Stone (1586-1647) one of the most famous sculptors of his day, and erected by her a year after her husband's death. At the east and west ends of the tomb are the arms of Beaumont quartered with those of Villiers. The Villiers Dukedom of Buckingham became extinct on the death of George, the second duke in 1687.

3 GRACE DIEU. LEICESTERSHIRE

Little more than a mile to the north of Coalville are the lands which once belonged to the Leicestershire Beaumonts. In the Middle Ages they were part of the Forest of Charnwood whose wild and desolate tracts dominated that part of Leicestershire. The western half of this region has now been covered by the industrial complex of which Coalville is part. At the beginning of the fourteenth century all these lands belonged to the Scottish family of Comyn whose heiress Alice, daughter of Sir Alexander brought them to her husband Henry, first Baron Beaumont and Earl of Buchan. In 1240 a small parcel of land near Whitwick had been given by Lady Rohesia de Verdun towards the foundation of a convent in honour of the Holy Trinity and St. Mary. This was the convent known as Grace Dieu. When Henry de Beaumont acquired the Comyn estates the convent had already been enriched by a hundred acres of waste, the gift of John Comyn, and was considered of sufficient standing for him to send his daughter there to be educated at an annual charge of four marks (£2-13-4). On one occasion he only paid three, but the nuns seem to have thought him too great a personage to be reminded of the balance due. On one occasion when he visited them they made a feast and among the items of expenses we find that three halfpence was spent on "one shoulder le molton" and eight pence for two lambs.

The annual value of the Priory at the Dissolution (£92-3-9) shows it to have been a fairly substantial establishment, with a Prioress who was given a pension of 60 shillings a year and fourteen nuns who received thirty shillings a year. The property and stock were valued at £125-7-4. It was

Thomas of Thringston, grandson
of Joh, 6th Baron Beaumont
1487(?) - 1530, Anne da of Sir
Robert Moton of Peckleton, co
Leicester.

Thomas, m. Anne, da of Christopher
Harcourt of Stanton Harcourt, Oxon

John, d. after 1552 Edward
Mary m Richard Storey
of Bramston co Leicester
2 daughters

Dorothy Ann
m. John d. 1598 m Anne
Sir Francis Henry
Elizabeth m William Ld
Jane
issue

Sir Henry 1481-1605
m Barbara da
of Anthony Faunt of Foston
Leics
1583 - 1628
Francis 1585 - 1616
Elizabeth 1589 - 1644
m Ursula da, coh
of Henry Hsley
of Sundridge, Kent
Frances alive 1700
Elizabeth b. c. 1614
alive 1682

John Francis 3 sons Thomas
b. 1608. poet Jesuit priest
1607-44
Kent
William Tufon of Vintners
5 daughters 1 son

Cicely 3 daughters Vere 2 das Jane
m Robert Beaumont d 1697
of Barrow on Trent m Sir John
o.s.p. Rayner
m Chas Byerley
of Belgrave, Lincs
issue

THE GRACE DIEU BRANCH

granted, together with Merill Grange to Sir Humphrey Foster for fifty shillings a year and shortly afterwards he sold it to Sir John Beaumont, Master of the Rolls. With the sale was included the furniture of the church valued at £15 and consisting of

"One table of wode, over the Hygh Alter certain images, two laten (brass) candlestyks, one lamp of laten, certain oulde forms in our Lady Chapel, certain oulde images, one Particion of tymber, one lampe and oulde formes in the nunnes quere, one rode, certain images, one particion of wode and the nunnes stails; in the belhouse one cloke, certain oulde images, oulde stoles of woode, one oulde chest, one oulde holy water stole of brass, and the rosse, glasse and iron in the stepile".

Compared with some abbeyes and priories which were stripped of all valuable materials, even of the lead on the roofs, Grace Dieu seems to have come out fairly well, though the scene after the despoiling must have been one of utter desolation. Sir John Beaumont was not even sure at first that the property was really his, probably since his predecessor had only paid rent for it, and he wrote to Sir Thomas Cromwell, sending him £20 and begging him to use his influence with the king to have him confirmed in his possession, as his wife's uncle, the Earl of Huntingdon was also trying to obtain it. He was not the only man who sent this kind of suppliant letter to the king's Secretary of State:

"My dutye to your ryght honorable Lordshype in most humble

forme remembred, pleyseth hyt the same to be by thes advertysed, that I have caused XX le to be delivered unto my ffelowe Thomas Avery to the use of your good

lordshype, humbly besechyng your lordshypes ffavour and goodnes that we shall stand wyth the kynges plesure I may other purchase or have in fferm the demenez of Grace Dewe

Abbey whych I am in possessyon of, and my ffelowe Whalley (The king's Receiver for Yorkshyre) to eether by your honorable letters, whych seyde Abbey the Erie of Huntingdon (George Hastings, the first Earl) doth labour to take ffrom me, whyche have no trust but of your lordshypes goodnes wythoute whych I am undoynd; ffor I do ffeyre the seyde Erie and his sonnes do seke my lyfte and all ffor the truthe sake, ffor I have secured warnyng by one off hys counsell

to weyre a prevy cote, which ys not suffycient ffor me, hys powre beyng envyrion my poore howse, besychyng God that your Lordshyp will take in good parte my inornate colleeccion of the kynges supremety, wherin ys no thyng apte to be presented unto your lordshyp, but the apparance of a trewe herte, with whych I shall contennually pray or labour to send your Lordshyp your moste noble hertes desyre.

From Wellesborough, the XXVII daye of Decembre (1539)
Your humble servant, JOHN BEAUMONT

John Beaumont seems to have had enough influence to persuade Cromwell to leave him in possession of the ruined priory, for he had already done good service to the king in compiling an ecclesiastical survey of the county of Leicester (1535) prior to the Dissolution, a service which no doubt stood him in good stead. From that time onward the Grace Dieu Beaumonts occupied the priory, rebuilt the house and beautified the grounds, surrounded on three sides by the forest, on the fourth looking over fertile and well watered meadows stretching to Belton. The gardens and grounds were laid out on an extensive scale judging by the area enclosed and by the still standing boundary walls. Thomas Bancroft (1639) in his first book of Epigrams and

Epitaphs thus describes it:

"Grace Dieu, that under Charnwood stand'st alone,
As a grand Relicke of Religion,
I reverence thine old (but fruitful) worth,
That lately brought such noble Beaumonts forth:
Whose brave Heroick Muses must aspire
To match the Anthems of the Heavenly Squire."

Grace Dieu was the birthplace of several of the most talented members of the Beaumont family. This branch, like that of Cole Orton, sprang from the same Thomas Lord of Basqueville whose youngest son Thomas took up his abode at Thringston a mere mile or more from the family seat. His grandson was the John who purchased the ruined nunnery from Sir Humphrey Foster.

John Beaumont enjoyed a steady rise to affluence and power. In the early years of Henry VIII's reign he was admitted a member of the Inner Temple. Those were the days when the services of lawyers were at a premium to help the king and his chief advisers to organise the extensive acquisition of land from the monasteries, under the court which was very aptly called the Court of Augmentation. The value of his services to the Crown was recognised in a series of grants of land at Belton, Sheepy Magna, Burton Overy and Ragdale and part of the monastic property at Wythcote, all in his own county. He also bought the manor of Newark-on-Trent. In 1547 he was appointed Treasurer of the Inner Temple, in 1550 Recorder of Leicester and in December of the same year Master of the Rolls.

At this point a promising career was brought to a sudden end. In February 1552 a significant entry appeared in the diary of King Edward VI.

"John Beaumont Mr. of the Rolls was put in prison for forging a false deed from Charles Brandon Duke of Southfolke to the Lady Anne Powes of celrtein landes and leases."

This gave rise to an immediate sensation in the Royal Court, for Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, deceased in 1545 had been married to Mary, the sister of Henry VIII until her death in 1533. One of their daughters was Frances who married Henry Grey, Marquess of Dorset and became the mother of Lady Jane Grey.

The crime was a direct assault on people who were very near to the seat of power. Other allegations were that he had bought land for himself with the king's money, that he had lent £9,000 of it and had neglected to collect £1,000 in debts for the king and all these things had been done for his own profit. A minor offence was that he had concealed the crime of one of his servants who had stolen £200 and had himself appropriated the money.

On May 28th he wrote his confession.

"I John Beaumont do most humbly surrendre and gyff into the handes of our Sovereigne Lord the Kynges Majestie my offyce of Master of the Rolles: most humbly besechyng hys Highness to be mercyfull unto me, and all my mysdemeynours and contempts and in especyall for the debt, which I do owe unto his Grace, to have some dayes upon good securities; and I am agreed to deliver my Patent to be cancellid unto the Lord Councilor of England, set any other, who shall plyse Hys Hyness to appoint and receive the same."

He was ordered to give up all his lands and goods to satisfy the debt but later went back on his confession. Two entries in the king's diary state:

"June 16. Beaumont, who had before made his confession in writing, began to deny it again; but after being called before my counsel, he did confess it again, and there acknowledged a fine of his land and signed an obligation in surrender of all his goods."

"June 20. Beaumont in the Star Chamber confessed, after a little striking upon the matter, his fautes to which he had put to his hand."

Thus ended a career which might have achieved real greatness. Beaumont's sequestered estates and goods were given to Francis, Earl of Huntington, his wife's uncle and he himself was committed to the Fleet Prison. Shortly afterwards he died and his property was re-conveyed to his widow.

The family fortunes thus restored were further advanced by John's eldest son Francis who, born about 1542 was, like his father, destined for the law. In November 1559 he was admitted to the Inner Temple and subsequently was a commoner of Peterhouse, Cambridge where in 1564 he witnessed the pomp and solemnity of the Queen's visit. In 1568 he was called to the Bar, ten years later was raised to the Bench subsequently to become Recorder to the Inner Temple, Sergeant-at-law and finally, in 1593, Judge of the Common Pleas, when he was knighted. He enjoyed a great reputation as a Counsel and was well known as a man of integrity, wisdom and learning, inferior to none on the Bench. As a Judge his discernment and impartiality were enough to inspire reverence and to give rise to legends which almost equalled those related of Solomon. On one occasion, it was said, two men came to him for justice and one of them said that if what he attested was not true he hoped that the ground would open and swallow him up. A moment later plaintiff and defendant stood agast as a large chasm opened at their feet. The Judge, pointing with his finger, warned them sternly against speaking vainly, and after they had been ordered off, the ground closed up again.

Such renowned wisdom sorts ill with the reputation Sir Francis had for condemning Catholics to death on account of their religion, but it must be remembered that those were days when the Queen's life was in danger through Catholic plots, and that to offend on religious matters by attending, organising or conducting a mass was tantamount to reason and punishable by death. In 1564 the English Catholic Seminary had been founded at Douay to train priests with a view to missionary work in England and within a few years many of these had landed and were being sheltered by members of Catholic families in whose houses they celebrated mass.

The words of Sir Francis at the trial of Father Walpole at York on April 3rd 1593 illustrate the severity of the laws then in force against practising the Catholic religion. "Merely being a Jesuit is no treason, but what makes you a traitor is returning to the Kingdom against the laws." Four days after the trial they were executed. Sir Francis' words in August of the following year when he sentenced the Venerable John Boste show the prevailing hatred and fear of Catholics in some sections of the community:

"You have behaved yourselves as undutiful and naughty subjects, who have gon about by all means possible to withdraw from Her Majesty's subjects their good affection,

obedience and loyalty, which faithful and loyal subjects ought in conscience to give to their Sovereign, and how do they steal into their bosoms, and withdraw their minds? They come into this realm with the Pope's bulls forsooth and tell the people they are not bound any more to be subject to her Highness. And why? because Pius or Sixtus Quintus hath excommunicated our Queen long ago and deprived her, as you say, of all power of requisit whatsoever; nay and hath commanded, say you, all her subjects to give no more obedience unto her under pain of excommunication. This is that yee preach in corners."

He then went on to enlarge on the part English priests were playing in spreading disaffection against England in other parts of Europe:

"All these are Englishmen and therefore more to be hated, and their treasons more to be punished, behaving themselves like filthy birds, who defile their own nests. What said I? Defile their own nests? Nay, who are cruel towards their own mother, seeking the destruction of their native countrie and therefore (turning himself towards the people) I would not have you think that these men are to suffer for religion, but for treason, not for counterfeit piety, but for professed iniquitie against God, against their Prince, against their friends and kinsfolk; Yea, against their own soyl and native country."

In vain these Jesuit priests and their followers protested in all the courts of England, their loyalty to their Queen. To spread Catholicism in those days was treason, and the only possible sequel was the hangman's rope.

In the course of his life Sir Francis made himself very wealthy, holding lands in ten parishes in Leicestershire and two or three more in Derbyshire. At the time of his death at Grace Dieu in April 1598 he could not have been sixty years old. His younger brother Henry, also a barrister died in August 1585 and was buried in the Temple Church, London.

In the fifth generation of the Grace Dieu Beaumonts the talents of this branch of the family reached its full fruition. Sir Henry had three sons and a daughter. Elizabeth who married as her second husband Robert, eighth Lord Maxwell, first Earl of Nithsdale; the eldest son Sir Henry (1581-1605) might well have carved out for himself a notable career had his life not been cut short at the early age of 24, for in 1597 he was admitted to the Inner Temple and afterwards became a Judge of the Common Pleas, an office uncommon for a man so young. In 1603 he met James I at Workshop when the new King was on his way to London to be crowned and like his relatives Henry and Thomas of the Coleorton Branch he received his knighthood there. At his death in July 1605 the succession to the estates passed to his younger brother John.

Sir John and his brother Francis are regarded as two of the most distinguished members of the family; Sir John is generally regarded as one of the best of England's minor poets though his reputation would no doubt have been greater had the work on which he expended most of his labour not been lost. This was The Crown of Thorns, an epic in eight volumes. His patron and friend, the Earl of Southampton expressed great admiration for it, and Sir John wrote an elegy in Southampton's praise, acknowledging the Earl's interest.

"His only memory my poor worke adorne,

He is a father to my "Crown of Thorns:"
Now since his death how can I ever looke,
Without some teares, upon that orphan booke?"

John Beaumont was born, probably at Grace Dieu in April 1583 and in 1596 entered Broadgates Hall, the residence for students in law at Oxford which later developed into Pembroke College. In 1598 he was admitted as a student at the Inner Temple, but throughout the whole of his life he showed a far greater preference for poetry. In his twentieth year he published his *Metamorphosis of Tabacco*, a mock heroic poem of 1024 lines dedicated to his friend the dramatist Michael Drayton. Smoking was already becoming a popular habit and Beaumont added his own eulogy to those which were already being spoken and sung in the taverns, but in a much more refined style:

"I sing the loves of the Superiour powers,
With the faire mother of all fragrant flowers:
From which first Ioue a glorious Simple Springs,
Below's of Heau'nly Gods, and Earthly Kings."

- a pointed contrast to King James I's famous Counterblast to Tabacco, written two years later which describes the smoking habit as "a custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black stinking fume thereof nearest resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless."

During the greater part of his life John Beaumont was cut off from the royal court and society because he became a Catholic. He succeeded to the Grace Dieu estates in June 1605 on the death of his elder brother Henry but he held them for no more than three months. In October of the same year they were confiscated by James I because of John's recusancy and in November 1607 they were granted to the king's Scottish favourite Sir James Semphill "for him to make profit of it." John Beaumont appears to have lived in modest state in the family home pursuing his studies and gratifying his passion for poetry. During this time he was not even permitted to leave home without a licence, and one of these signed by the Earl of Huntingdon in January 1610 is still in existence. His conversion may explain the grave and religious tone which pervaded most of his writings. In the 1629 copy of his works one leaf has been cut out, a leaf which contained on the one side an elegy on the death of a number of people who were killed in the fall of a floor at a Catholic sermon at Blackfriars, while on the other side a poem of great tenderness "On the Assumption of our Blessed Lady" which is worth quoting in full:

"Who is shee that ascends on highe,
Next the heavenly Kinge,
Round about whom angels flie
Ane her prayes singe?
Who is shee that, adorned with light,
Makes the sunne her robe,
At whose feet the Que en of night
Layes her changing globe?

To that crowne direct thine eye
Which her heade attyres;
There thou mayst her name discerne
Wrytt in stary fires.

This is shee in whose pure wombe
Heav'n's Prince remain's;
Therefore in no earthly tombe
Can shee be contain'd.

Heaven shee was wíth held the fire
Whence the worlde took líght,
And to heav'n doth now aspire,
Flames wíth flames to unite.

Shee that díd soe clearly shine
When our day begunne,
See how bríght her beames decline
Now shee sytts wíth the sunne."

A few years later he appears to have been allowed to travel for we find him in London between 1616 and 1623 endeavouring to found a Royal Academy. Doubtless during this period he was able to cultivate the acquaintance of the literary figures of the day such as Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton. At that time George Villiers, a descendant of the Coleorton Branch of the family was rapidly advancing in the King's favour, having been created Marquis of Buckingham in 1618, and Duke in 1623. Beaumont's poem "True Greatness" reveals that it was Buckingham who introduced his poems to the King and made him a public figure:

"Sir, you are trueely great and euey eye
Not díme wíth enuy, Joyes to see you hýe
But chieflý míne, wích buried in the níght,
Are by your beames raís'd and restor'd to líght.
You, onely you haue pow'r to make me dwell
In síght of men, drawne from my sílent cell."

Beaumont was much more renowned as a poet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than he is today. Thomas Campbell said that he deserved notice as one of the earliest polishers of what is called the heroic couplet, a form which others such as Dryden, Milton and Pope used to such great effect. "In the evenness, sweetness and flow of his numbers Sir John Beaumont is very excellent." Wordsworth praised him highly and William Winstanley in his *Lives of the English Poets* (1686) wrote, "He was one who drank as deep draughts of Hellicon as any of that age."

In 1627 John Beaumont was created a baronet and his estates were restored but he did not enjoy his good fortune for long. He died at Grace Dieu on April 19th 1628 at the early age of 45. Michael Drayton gave an obscure hint as to the cause of his death in the following lines:

"Thy care for that wích was not wórt h thy breáth,
Brought on too soon thy much lamented death,
But heaun was kínde and wóuld not let thee see
The Plagues that must vpon this nátion be,
By whom the muses haue neglected bín
Wích shall adde weíght to méasure to theír síne."

What was the unworthy cause for which Beaumont worked and which brought about his death? We shall probably never know. Both he and Drayton were buried in Westminster Abbey, Sir John as the register reads, "in ye Broad Ile on ye south (side)" though the exact spot is not known.

The poetry of Sir John Beaumont would not have been so well known but for his eldest son John who, two years after his father's death brought out an edition of his poems under the title

On the death of their father in April 1598 the two younger brothers left Broadgate Hall and never returned to take the degree. Francis was admitted to the Inner Temple in November 1600. His father having been a Benchler, he was excused from the ordinary duties and charges and

HENRIS BEAUMONT	LECEST	BARON.	FIL	aet.	15
JOHN	"	"	"	"	14
FRANCISE	"	"	"	"	12
					(210)

matriculation register of February 4th, 1597:
 Like Henry and John, Francis was admitted to Broadgates Hall, Oxford as a gentleman commoner. The names of the three brothers appear on the
 "Grace Dieu, that under Charnwood stand'st alone
 That lately brought such noble Beaumonts forth,
 Whose brave herock Muses might aspire
 To match the anthems of the Heavenly Quire."

Grace Dieu:
 (1639, B.I. Ep.81) connects all the wellknown members of the family with their father lived most of the time. Thomas Bancroft in his Epigrams brothers, but it is possible that they were baptised in London where of Grace Dieu and Belton contain no entries of his birth or that of his Francis the Dramatist, born at Grace Dieu in 1586. The baptismal registers The genius of John, however, pales before that of his younger brother They had the king with them, and so have I."
 Because they in the weaker quarrell die?
 Two valiant Cliffords, Roos, or Beaumonts name
 Northumberland or Buckingham defame,
 "Dare any tongue, since York spread forth his light;

"The winter's storme of ciuill warre I sing,
 Whose end is crown's with eternal spring,
 Where roses joy'n'd their colours mixe in one,
 And armies fight no more for England's throne."
 Members of his own family had joined the Percys, the Cliffords and the Stafford Dukes of Buckingham in the struggle against the Yorkists. He must have had in mind John, the first Viscount, killed at Northampton, Sir Henry at Tewkesbury and the two brothers Henry and John who lost their lives at Towton when he penned the lines:

On this volume the reputation of Sir John Beaumont as a poet mainly rests. The proximity of the site of Bosworth field to his house at Grace Dieu must have inspired him to recreate in imagination the episodes of this decisive battle. The poem of 818 lines, the first of considerable length written in the heroic metre, opens with the following stanza:

BOSWORTH FIELD
 WITH
 A TASTE OF
 THE VARIETY OF
 OTHER POEMS LEFT;
 BY SIR JOHN BEAUMONT BARO-
 NET, DECEASED:
 SET FORTH BY HIS
 SONNE SIR JOHN BEAU-
 MONT, BARONET;
 AND DEDICATED TO THE KING'S MOST
 EXCELLENT MAJESTIE

allowed to board and lodge outside the Inns of Court.

The precise and exacting study of the law had little appeal to young Beaumont, whose passionate and fiery genius found far greater satisfaction among the convivial crowd who frequented the Mermaid Tavern, the Triple Inn and the Sun. In this company he met Ben Jonson some ten to twelve years his senior, ex-soldier, duellist and stage-player whose comedy Every Man in his Humour had already endeared him to the London crowd. It is believed that Jonson introduced young Beaumont to John Fletcher, the son of a Bishop of London, left penniless through the indiscretions and the unexpected death of his father. As early as January 1599 the three, possibly also Shakespeare, were present at the funeral of Edmund Spencer in Westminster Abbey bringing mournful elegies which they cast into the tomb together with the pens they had used to write them.

The collaboration of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher proved to be the finest combination of talent that has ever occurred in English literary history - "a wonderful consistency of Phansy" as contemporary writers described it. Until in 1613 Francis Beaumont married Ursula, daughter and co-heir of Henry Wisley of Sundridge Kent and became a family man, the two friends lived together at the Banke Side, Southward, not far from the famous Globe Playhouse, where they wrote some fifty plays and thirty poems, apart from those which each wrote singly. In all these, Beaumont's dramatic genius and his gift for tragic pathos tempered the zest and ardent activity, the flights of extravagance and the more buoyant exuberance of Fletcher.

Their joint output is unequalled by any poet or dramatist of their age save Shakespeare, and their acknowledged masterpiece The Knight of the Burning Pestle will bear comparison with that of any English playwright. Gerald Langbaine, the quaint seventeenth century historian of the stage says of Beaumont, "Francis was a master of good wit and a better judgement; he so admirably well understood the art of the stage that even Jonson himself thought it no disparagement to submit his writings to his correction." The great Ben's praise of Beaumont's work is typical of his generosity.

"How do I love thee, Beaumont, and thy muse
That unto me dost such religion use;
How do I fear myself, that am not worth
The least indulgent thought thy pen drops forth;
At once, thou mak'st me happy, and unmake'st;
And giving largely to me, more thou tak'st;
What fate is mine, that so itself bereaves?
What art is thine, that so thy friend deceives?
When even there, where most thou prais'st me,
For writing better, I must envy thee!"

Next to Shakespeare, the verdict of time has given pride of place to Jonson, as much for his sterling character as for his work. Beaumont was one of his most distinguished disciples. In February 1612 his Masque of the Inner Temple and Grays Inn was presented before King James and the Royal Court in the Banqueting Hall, Whitehall. Those taking part in it assembled at Winchester House and proceeded by river in the Royal Barge which was illuminated for the occasion. They were attended by other barges and galleys led by two admirals. They were received by the Lord Chamberlain at the King's private landing stage. Beaumont's play depicted the marriage of two famous rivers, the Thames and the Rhine, which took place in the presence of Jupiter, Juno and other gods. The expenses of the entertainment were met by the Benchers of Grays Inn and the Junior Temple; students paid £2 and Benchers £5.

One of the original poems of Francis and probably his best is that "on

the tombs of Westminster Abbey" consisting of eighteen lines beginning:

"Mortality, behold and fear
What a change of flesh is here;
Think how many royal bones
Sleep within this heap of stones;
Here they lie, had realms and lands;
Who now want strength to stir their hands;
Where from their pulpits sear'd with dust,
They preach, 'In greatness is no trust!'"

Beaumont's early death in 1616 deprived English literature of one of its most promising figures. It is said that he died from overwork caused by the sheer activity of his mind and the fire of his genius, though his portrait showing a fair open countenance, clear-eyed and serene, betrays little evidence of mental strain. Artists, however, were known always to have been flatterers.

Who can say to what heights he might have risen if he had been vouchsafed the half-century Shakespeare had? The two dramatists died within seven weeks of each other in that dark spring of 1616. Fletcher survived his great collaborator a mere nine and a half years.

At the entrance to St. Benedict's Chapel, close to Chaucer's tomb in Westminster Abbey a stone slab carrying the Beaumont arms marks the spot of Francis's burial. His elder brother John wrote his epitaph, an extract from which reads:

"An Epitaph on my deare brother Francis Beaumont

Thou should'st have followed me, but Deathe, to blame
Miscounted yeares and measur'd age by fame.
So dearely has thou brought thy precious lines
Their praise grew swiftly: so thy life declines:
Thy muse, the hearer's queene, the reader's loue,
All eares, all hearts - but Death's - could please and moue."

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