

YEOMEN, CLOTHIERS AND SCHOLARS

CHAPTER X

Henry, 5th Baron Beaumont (see page 58) had two sons. The elder, John, the friend and favourite of Henry VI, became 6th Baron and Premier Viscount of England. The younger, Henry (page) settled at Thorpe, Yorkshire, married Joan, daughter and heiress of William Lavensthorpe of Wednesbury, Staffordshire, and became founder of the short-lived Wednesbury branch of the family. Henry probably died in or before 1450, but we find his widow still resident either permanently or temporarily at Thorpe, for in October 1472 her son, also named Henry presented a petition to Parliament asking for the punishment of certain men who had assaulted her. An account of the petition runs:

"..... his mother on 27th October 1452 being in the Chapel at Thorpe in Balme hearing high mass, there came Edward

Lancaster of Skipton in Craven, William Lancaster of Burgham in Westmorland and forty others, and that Edward

Lancaster, assisted by the others ravished the said Joan and having set her on horseback behind a man to whom she

was bound, conveyed her away to some unknown place and then in order that she might not have any suit against

him compelled a priest who was his confidant to marry them. She resisted saying that she was the wife of

another man."

The petition goes on to say that goods worth a hundred shillings

belonging to the late Henry were stolen, Ann's her daughter and sister

of Henry the Younger was also forcibly carried away and as a result

came to be 'benomen' or ravished, and lame - another example of north-

country lawlessness in those days.

Henry the Younger settled at Wednesbury, died in 1471 and was

buried in the church there. In that year were fought the two battles

which ended the Wars of the Roses. Two years earlier, in 1469 Edward

IV had made a definite break with the Yorkist commander Richard Earl

of Warwick who had been driven into exile, and had changed sides, taking

up the cause of Henry VI. Then, during the autumn of 1470-71 Warwick

landing at Dartmouth raised the Lancastrian standard and, supported by

men of the West Country and Kent entered London, turning the tables on

Edward who fled and took refuge in Burgundy.

This state of affairs lasted until March 1471 when Edward,

encouraged by dissensions among his enemies, took ship and landed on

the Yorkshire coast (March 15th). Within days he had gathered suffi-

cient force to march on London where he was enthusiastically received.

On April 14th Warwick was defeated and killed at the battle of Barnet.

Three days before this battle Henry Beaumont was appointed High Sheriff for the County of Stafford. Meanwhile, on the very day Barnet was fought, Henry's queen, Margaret, landed at Weymouth to rally the Lancastrian forces. During the fortnight following both sides gathered their strength and met at Tewkesbury on May 3rd. Here Margaret and the Lancastrians were completely defeated, the Prince of Wales was killed and the throne of Edward IV was secure. Most of the Beaumont family were on the Lancastrian side, but Henry of Wednesbury fighting for the Yorkists was knighted on the field of battle. He did not long enjoy his honour for he died in November of the same year.

We knew little of his son Sir John except that he was implicated in a riot at Wednesbury in 1498 after which he and two hundred others were charged, having been "arrayed in bows, arrows, bills, gloves (lances) and other unlawful weapons with intent of proceeding to Walsall in order to obtain the release of a citizen of Wednesbury and another of Dudley." The Mayor of Walsall petitioned the Star Chamber to cite the leaders before the Council but, on their being bound over to keep the peace, the matter was dropped.

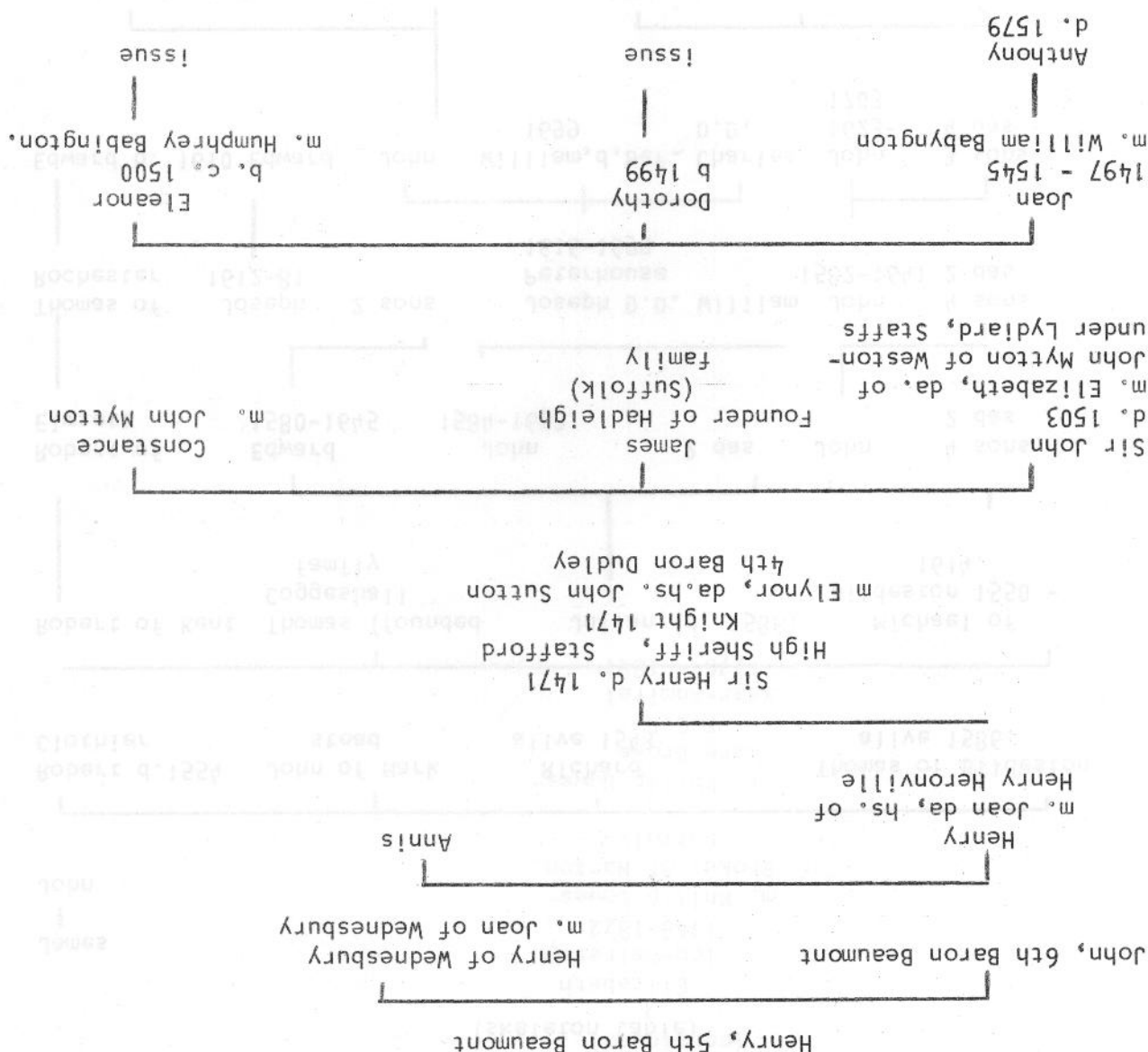
Sir John died in 1503 leaving no male heirs, and the Wednesbury branch of the family passed out of existence. His younger brother James married a daughter of William Tending of Essex and became the ancestor of the four branches of the Beaumonts of Hadleigh, Suffolk, the branches of Coggeshall, Essex and Dunwich, Suffolk.

James's son John in his will dated July 1543 describes himself as "of Bydeston (Bildeston) in the Countie of Suff." and he was buried in the churchyard of that parish. He does not appear to have been very wealthy, for he possessed only a small estate called Havelles, held of the Bishop of Ely, and this he left to his son Robert, who was either to pay his second son Richard ten marks £6 13s. 4d.) or to let him take the house and land. His legacies amounted to no more than £4, 6s. 8d. to his only granddaughter Margaret, to be given to her when she was 18, £1. 13s. 3d. each to his eldest grandson Robert and his second grandson Thomas when they became 21 years of age, and £2 to Agnes his daughter together with his wife's best dress. Part of the will concerns the possibility of the death of his second son Richard but involves a sum of no more than £2 13s. 4d.

"Furthermore, yf my sonne Rychard be departed this world, I will that my sonne Robert paye unto the eldest child of my sonne Richard 1111 mks. The residue of the sayd money over and above the sayd 1111 mks to remyne to Robt my sonne. If the sayd Richard fortune to have no chylid lyffing of his bodye the sayd 1111 mks to be pted (parted) between my sonnes Robt and Thomas Beymonte." The rest of his possessions were to be used "to bring my bodye honestly to the erth." Though John had two houses, one at Bildeston and another at Beaumont Hall, Harkstead on the north bank of the estuary of the Stour, his will gives no indication of great possessions.

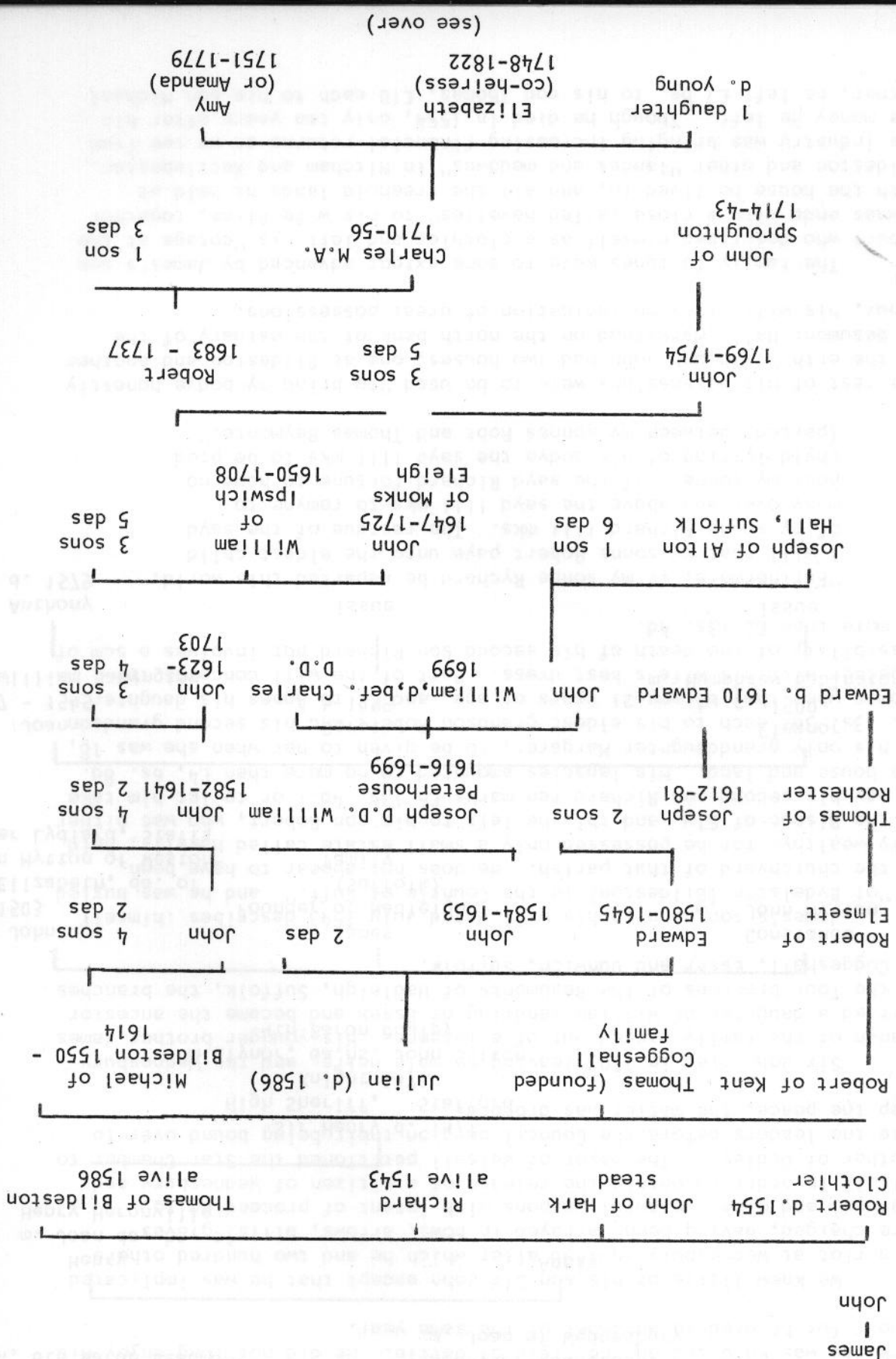
The family fortunes were to some extent advanced by James's son Robert who described himself as a clothier and left his "cottage at the townes ende with a close called Havelles" to his wife Alice, together with the house he lived in, and all the freehold lands he held at Bildeston and other "landes and medowes" in Hitcham and Kettlebaston. His industry was bringing increasing financial returns as we see from the money he left. Though he died in 1554, only ten years after his father, he left £7 8s. to his son Thomas, £10 each to his son Michael

WEDNESBURY



THE SUFFOLK FAMILIES

(skeleton table)



THE SUFFOLK FAMILIES

(continued)

Elizabeth

(co-heiress)

1748-1822

m. Philip Bowes-

Broke, of Nacton,

Suffolk

Sir Philip Bowes-

Vere Broke

K.C.B.

Rear-Admiral

1776 - 1841

and his daughter Margaret, £10 to a child as yet unborn and small bequests to three children of his wife's previous marriage.

Robert had five sons. Of these the eldest called Robert of Kent succeeded him. The second, fourth and fifth were ancestors of the Coggeshall Beaumonts and two junior branches of the Hadleigh family. The male descendants of his eldest son died out with Edward Beaumont who died at Hadleigh some time after 1640.

"It will not be amiss (wrote Thomas Fuller) to pray that the plough may go along and the wheel around, that so (being fed by the one and clothed by the other) there may be by God's blessing no danger of starving in our nation."

Some idea of the prosperity of the industrious seventeenth century clothiers of East Anglia may be gained from a study of the progress of the Beaumont families resident there, especially that of Julian, fourth son of Robert of Bildeston.

Since the thirteenth century this corner of England had been renowned for the wool it produced. Thousands of sheep browsed in summer on the coastal saltings of Essex and Suffolk, and the monasteries, especially those of the Cistercian order, had grown rich on the profits from their sales. In the Middle Ages, merchants from Bruges, Ghent, Ypres, and even from far-off Italy came in shearing time with their packhorses to buy the raw wool and carry it off to their countries to be made into cloth for export over the whole of the known world. It was not for nothing that the Lord Chancellor's seat was called the Woolpack, for the stability of England's finances as well as her prowess in war depended primarily on the wealth produced by this lucrative export.

"I always say and ever shall
It is the sheep that pays for all."

Spinning and weaving began on a large scale in England when Philippa, Queen of Edward III invited Flemings to live in East Anglia and the Cotswold towns to teach their craft to the people there. Prosperous clothiers, as they were called, then carried on the manufacture. They were among England's earliest country capitalists, putting out their work to men and women who spun and wove on a commission basis in their own homes. "Blessed be the Queen who invented clothing", was a common saying among them.

During the reign of Elizabeth I more Flemings, this time in flight from the religious persecution of Philip II of Spain in the Netherlands came to England and revived the trade with the introduction of new fabrics - bays, says, grograms and perpetuanas. Profitable enterprises could be started with moderate capital, and many smaller men including the Suffolk Beaumonts became substantial clothiers and gentlemen on the profits of their industry.

Such a one was Julian Beaumont, whose carriers with their pack-horses, bells jingling, plodded along the winding Suffolk roads, unloading bales to be carded and spun, there collecting the bobbins for putting down at the next weaver's cottage, and taking in their place the forty-eight yard long pieces of broadcloth.

"Julian Beaumont of Hadley in the County of Suffolk, Clothier, doe ordaine this my last will. I commend my

soule unto the handes of Almighty God, and my bodye to the earth, whence I was taken owte, in hope of the glorious appearing of our Sayour Jesus Christ. To Sara my wife and her heires all my houses in Hadley, which I late bought of Mr. Edward Clarke. I give her one hundredth pounds."

In addition be bequeathed £200 to Edward his eldest son and £100 to his younger son John when they reached the age of 21 and £100 to his daughter Sarah when she reached the age of 20. Other bequests were £4 to his uncle Thomas of Bildeston, £10 to his half-brother William Boggas and £20 to his brother-in-law.

The tone of the will shows how much Julian had been affected by the Puritan doctrines which in the eastern counties were spreading even at this early date (1586). He left £10 to the parish of Hadleigh "to buy woode in the sommer so that the poore may have it in the winter for their money as good and cheape as it was bought in the sommer", and a copy of Foxe's Book of Martyrs (first published in English in 1563) to the Hadleigh Church "to remain there for ever."

"The rest of my goodes I bequeath to Sara my wife to the bringing up of my children in the feare of God, and to sett them to schoole and to wrighte and to reade. I make (her) my executr and my brother in lawe William Wade of Bildeston to be my supervisor. If it shall please God that Sara my wife, contracte herself in marriage with any man, my mind is that my brother in lawe shall demand a good assurance in severall bonds to ech of these to the performance of this will"

In the seventeenth century there was a sharp contrast between on the one hand, the Anglican parson approved by the Elizabethan religious settlement and conforming to the 39 Articles, and the zealous Puritan who believed in the power of the spoken word for the conversion of unbelievers. A Puritan congregation would listen rapt to an hour-long sermon from a celebrated preacher, and then clamour for the hourglass to be turned and the sermon to continue. For this reason many of the parson's discourse, employed others whom they called lecturers or preachers to expound the Word of God outside the regular hours of Church service, on Sunday afternoons or evenings during the week. Dedham in Essex was one such congregation who employed Edmund Chapman, one-time canon of Norwich Cathedral who had incurred the wrath of Archbishop Parker by denouncing the singing during one of the Cathedral services. In 1576 he was deprived of his canonry and was afterwards lecturer at Dedham until his death in 1602. "No one either spoke more of God or lived more to God," runs part of the memorial inscription on the north wall of the chancel. Julian Beaumont must have been a strict and sincere Puritan to have left

"to Doctr Chapman, preacher of the Churche of Deadham, ffive pounds."

and "to Mr. John HOlden, preacher of the Church of Billesden, ffive pounds."

The Puritan of the seventeenth century, like the Quaker and non-conformist of the eighteenth, was liberal to his own kind without being prodigal and thrifty without being miserly.

Julian's son Edward (1580-1645) carried on the trade of clothier and continued to acquire property including messuages at "Elmett and Rattlesden". He also gives details of a mortgage of £400 lent to William Walgrave on certain tenements in the Bures (Bures St. Mary) Suffolk, and another of £700 to Dame Susan Bruce of Wenham and her two sons on messuages called Fauxhall. In his will he also mentions his business:

"All the reste of my estate I doe leave unto my sonne Joseph Beaumont for his own use and bewoofe, except the half parts of all my plate, linnen and household stuff, the ech I doe give unto Alice my wife, I doe hereby expresse and declare that my wooll, yarne, cloth, and other things belonging to the trade of clotheing shall come wholly unto my sonne Joseph Beaumont, whom I ordaine full and sole executor and I make my brother John Beaumont, overseer, to be ayding my executor with his counsell."

He was clearly a man of some substance, and was one of the first sixteen burgesses of Hadleigh at the incorporation of the Borough in 1618 and was elected an Alderman.

In Edward's son Joseph this branch reached the height of its power and wealth Joseph's will mentions numerous properties at Hadleigh, Wiltresham, Henley, Elmsett, Assington, Bures, Wormingfield and Costford Bridge some of which were leased to tenants. In legacies alone he left nearly £400, a very large sum in those days, and these included £25 to fifty poor people of Hadleigh. A tablet at the west end of the church, translated from Latin, reads:

"Nearby lies
Joseph Beaumont,
a man truly noble
three times mayor of this town,
Regarded with honour, liberal towards the poor.
He was a remarkably good friend, and he cherished all.
He led a holy life and piously departed
in the 69th year of his age,
the 26th day of May 1681."

Long before the end of the century the wool trade of the south-eastern counties had started its steep decline, partly owing to the competition of Yorkshire whose domestic industry had grown up, supplied by the long wool of the local sheep. To stimulate the demand, two acts of 1666 and 1668 provided that whoever was buried, except in the case of death from plague, should first be wound in a sheet of pure wool, and that no coffin should be lined or faced with any material but sheep's wool only.

The Beaumonts must have felt the impact of this decline, and we hear no more of them as clothiers after 1681. They had, however, accumulated wealth as is seen by the comparison of Joseph's possessions with the meagre legacies of his great grandfather John a century or more earlier. Joseph left one son, Edward, to succeed him but we hear no more of his descendants after 1681.

From this family alone we see how the yeoman class formed the backbone of English society at that time. Whether the yeoman worked

on the land as a free man, or engaged in some country craft or small business, he was the fount of national wealth as well as the unpaid servant of the parish as churchwarden, overseer of the poor, surveyor of the highways, constable and holder of other innumerable offices in the government of his community. By thrift and hard work he might establish his sons as gentlemen or squires and even as peers if they made enough money and knew the right people. Practical men themselves, hard-headed in business affairs though often unlearned, they valued education, and used some of the money they made to send their sons to high schools and universities. Many of England's most distinguished clerics, lawyers, physicians and men of letters sprang originally from this class.

The Hadleigh branch of the Beaumonts is a good illustration of this trend. John Beaumont (1584-1653) was the second son of Julian. Like his elder brother Edward he was one of the first sixteen burgesses when the Borough of Hadleigh was incorporated, became an alderman and was mayor several times. From his father he inherited £200 and a good education. With other money from his grandfather Robert and his uncle Robert he set himself up as a clothier and became prosperous. His life was not without serious reverses, for when the Civil War broke out he took up the cause of the King. Whether he joined the Royalist army we do not know, but the slate slab outside the vestry enclosure in Hadleigh Church describes him as "a loyal sufferer for K.C." No doubt he had, like others, to pay heavily for the redemption of his landed property.

John's second son William, also a Burgess of Hadleigh occupied the same offices as his father, playing a full part in the civic life of the town, while his eldest son Joseph became one of the most learned men of his day, a noted theologian and a minor poet.

Joseph Beaumont (1616-1699) showed as a youth "such readiness of wit and such love of learning" that his father determined to give him an education suitable to his promising genius. He spent some years at the Grammar School at Hadleigh and then, at the age of fifteen and a half, was admitted to Peterhouse, Cambridge where he took his B.A. in 1635, was elected a fellow in 1636 and became a Master of Arts in 1638.

In a letter to his father dated March 1642, he described a visit made by Charles, Prince of Wales (later King Charles II), then a boy of eleven, to the University for the presentation of an honorary degree. The Prince was so well treated by the University that the King, in spite of all his private anxieties, paid a special visit to thank the Vice-Chancellor and others. At that time Charles had received from the Long Parliament the Grand Remonstrance, and it was little more than a month before this that he had attempted without success to secure the person of the five Members. Within five weeks of his visit to Cambridge he was refused entry into Hull and Civil War was a certainty. There is something prophetic in his parting words to the University - "Whatsoever becomes of me . . . " Joseph's description shows clearly the attitude of the University and its students to the coming struggles:

" . . . On Saturday seaven night (fortnight) the Prince came hither betwene 9 and 10 of the clock, attended with the Duke of Lenox and Buckingham, his tutor, the Earl of Carlisle, Lord Selimour, Lord Francis the Duke of Buckingham's brother, and divers other gentlemen. The Vice Chancellor received him with a speech in our Regent Walk: thence he went and saw Kings Chappell, where at his entrance into the Quire I saw him say his prayers of wh. he was so little ashamed, that in the midst of that multitude he hid not his devocon in his

"That: From thence he retired to the Regent house and sitting in his father's place was saluted by the public orator. Before he came in amongst us, a grace passed for his degree, with this addition extraordinary, Ad sempiternu Academic Honorem; to the eternal honor of the University. After the orators speech, he was created Master of Arts: and then, by Commission from the king, for all those whom he should nominate: the Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Carlisle, the Lord Selimour, and divers gentlemen of the University. His Tutor also the Bishop of Salisbury, was admitted to the Degree he had formerly taken in Oxford. From the Regent House his Highness went to Trinity College, where after dinner he saw a comedy in English, and gave all sighs of great acceptance which he could, and more than the University dared expect. The Comedy ended he took coach in the courts and returned to Newmarket. . . . the Duke of Lennox and all the rest waited upon him the whole day, and all the Comedy while, bareheaded. The truth is that the Prince wanted (i.e. lacked) no circumstance of honour which the Court about him or the University could give.

"This highly please the King that the Monday after, he came hither himself and whereas it was thought that otherwise he would privately have passed through, he then graciously turned in and stayed awhile. At his coming out of the coach which was before Trinity College the University being placed ready, saluted him with such vehement acclamations of Vivat Rex as I never heard the like noise heard before upon any occasion. The Vice-Chancellor met his Majesty, and with a long speech presented him a very fair Bible, after he entered Trinity College, the Master saluted him with another oration, and presented (I think) a book also. The speech ended he went into the Chapel, and seemed very well to approve all their ornaments, as soon as he had seen that Chapel and library, took a travelling banquet in the further court, which was presented to him upon banquet charges. He was then saluted by a speech from the orator, and another from Mr. Cleveland. . . . At St. John's Gate he took coach and went to Huntingdon. What he did there and what he did at Newmarket, printed papers I suppose have already told you. At his parting one tells me he spoke thus to the Vice-Chancellor: Mr. Vice-Chancellor, whatsoever becomes of me I will charge my sonne, upon my blessing to respect the University."

"Sir I would fain hear how you endured your journey to London; and how my Mother and sisters doe. My duty to yourself and my mother; and my love to the rest: and take my leave.

Your obedient son
Joseph Beaumont"

Joseph shared the misfortunes of all Royalists when Parliament gained control of the Eastern counties. The ejection from his fellowship came early in 1644 from the Earl of Manchester. One of the scholars ejected at the same time was Richard Crawshaw, the poet styled "the divine", linguist, musician and artist, who later went into exile and embraced Catholicism. Joseph, however, returned to Hadleigh where he took the daily services of the liturgy in his father's house and preached every Sunday to his little congregation. During the rule of Cromwell he held various minor rectories but not until the Restoration did any worthwhile offices come his way.

The return of the Stuarts restored his fortunes. He was made a Doctor of Divinity (Cambridge, July 1660), Master of Jesus College (1662) and of Peterhouse (1663). During this period he restored the chapels both of Jesus and Peterhouse which had been badly damaged during the war, at his own expense.

In 1674 he became Regius Professor of Divinity, his most important and valued trust being "to keep the University untainted by the tenets of Calvin and the absurdities of Puritanism." At that very time the arch-Puritan of all, John Bunyan the tinker, was incarcerated in Bedford Gaol, not languishing, but lost in the composition of his masterpiece, "The Pilgrim's Progress."

Joseph was a noted preacher. On January 1st 1665 Samuel Pepys heard him at Whitehall "preach a good sermon, and afterwards a brave, brave anthem on the 150th Psalm whereupon the word 'Trumpet' very good music was made." He was an artist in chalk and charcoal and some of his drawings, no longer in existence, were once on the wall of the chapel at Peterhouse. Doctrinally he could be described as 'high' and, though not a papist, valued Church tradition and ritual "that the travail of his own soul seemed fused in, or subordinate to, the experiences of the sainted martyrs."

His work included one long treatise on the calamities of the Roman Empire under Theodosius and various other dissertations, but his chief delight was in the composition of poetry. In our day, when the work of the seventeenth century poets is being revalued, some of his couplets may deserve attention. Spurning Spenserian romance and the idyllic songs of the court lyrists, he gave voice to the need for worship and the relationship of man with God. His longest poem, 'Psyche or Love's Mystery' an allegory "representing the Soul led by the Divine Grace and by her Guardian Angel through the various Temptations and Assaults of Lust, Pride, of Heresy, of Persecution and of spiritual Dereliction - - - to a holy and happy Departure from temporal life to heavenly Felicity" is a sort of educated Anglican's 'Pilgrim's Progress' besides being the longest poem in the English language - 24 cantos and 6,487 six-line stanzas.

Some of his minor poems are very beautiful. In one, the Easter Dialogue, he describes how Magdalene, searching for Christ at the empty tomb sees him, and takes him for the gardener. For ease of reading, the spelling is modernised:

MAGDALENE:

Sweet gardener, if thy hand it were

Which did transplant Him; tell me where

Thou sett'st that precious Root, on whom

Grow all my hopes; and I will from

That soil remove Him to a bed

With balm and myrrh and spices spread;

Where by mine eyes 'two fountains, He

For evermore shall water'd be.

JESUS:

Mary;

MAGDALENE:

O, Master;

ANGELS 1st

With what sweet fury she flies at His dear feet

and 2nd:

To weep and kiss out what she by

Her tongue could never signify!

CHORUS:

Oh no! The pow're of sweetest tongues

Of string, or pipe-attended songs

Can raise no pitch of joy so high

As Easter's rising majesty.

Other minor poems are worth study. Here are the first and last verses of one entitled "Home."

"Home's home, although it reached be

Through wet and dirt and night; though heartily

I welcom'd was, yet something still

Methinks was wanting to fulfil

Content's odd appetite: no cheer

Say I, so good as that which meets me here.

"But home, sweet home, releaseth me

From anxious joys, into the liberty

Of unsollicitous delight;

Which, howsoever mean and slight

By being absolutely free

Enthrones me in contentment's monarchy."

The American poet John Howard Payne might well have had this last verse in mind when he inserted his brief lyric "Home, Sweet Home" into the libretto of his opera "Maid Marion and the Clari" (1822), set to music by Sir Henry Bishop.

Joseph married in 1650 Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Robert Brownrigg, an Ipswich Merchant, and step-daughter of Bishop Wren of Ely. For ten years they lived on the estate inherited from her grandmother at Tattingsstone, Suffolk. She died in 1662 and was buried behind the altar in Ely Cathedral.

Joseph's work is commemorated on an oaken tablet in the ante-chapel at Peterhouse where he was buried. On it, he is described (in Latin) as

"a Storehouse of all learning and piety, a poet worthy of honour, and an orator and a most prominent theologian, in each capacity a hammer of the heretics. He died in the 84th year of his age, a clear proof that the life of worthy men is prolonged beyond the ordinary span."

The memorial continues with a long eulogy of his character and work.

His will is well worth perusing as a testimony to the wealth beyond even that of his father, which he acquired. Tenements in Wharfed, Layham and Struton are mentioned besides those previously held by his forbears. The will takes note of a loan of £2,500 made to Mrs. Jane Balam of Ely which he leaves to Charles, his son and heir, £200 each to two grand-daughters, £40 to his brother William, and £20 to the poor of Little St. Mary in Cambridge.

"All my bookes and papers, I bequeath to my sonne Charles Beaumont, he by noe meanes to suffer any papers of my writing to be made pub lick, unless it be the copy of Psyche revised and augmented to 24 cantos. . . I give to St. Peters Colledge £300 towards a stock for Chappell. The £300 shall in the meane while be repositid in the colledge treasury soe that the Master and Fellowes may improve it."

Joseph's eldest son John was Lord of the Manor of Tattingstone, inherited from his mother, and patron of the living. His second son William was, like his father, a graduate of Peterhouse but died while his father was still living. The third son Charles (b. 1660) followed the pursuit of learning and became almost as celebrated at Cambridge as his father had been, becoming a fellow and a Doctor of Divinity. He died in 1727 and was buried in the chapel at Peterhouse. His will, apart from family bequests (lands in Wivellingham, Cambs. and Haddlesham, Isle of Ely to a cousin, £500 to nephews and nieces) is almost entirely concerned with charities in and around Cambridge and gifts to friends.

"I give to my faithful servant John Gee my three tenements in Cambridge in Little St. Marie's parish, and all my layes (meadows) in Swinescroft, out of which he is to pay the minister of Little St. Mary's forty shillings a year for preaching a sermon on Good Friday. I bequeath to the said John Gee and to his son John Gee my tenements in St. Ives sums of £955 and £600 lent upon mortgages I bequeath to St. Peter's Chapel to be laid out in purchasing perpetual advowsons of 2 livings for the benefit of the fellows of the said Colledge for ever "

"I give £25 to Little St. Marie's parish for binding out five poore boys apprentice and £5 to be laid out in buying bread and coals for the poor. I give £25 to the parish of Stapleford for binding out five poor boys and £5 to buy bread and turf for the poor, and £10 to the poor of Wivellingham, and £20 for buying a decent cloth for the pulpit and another for the Communion table, and a black silk hood for the minister "

"My silver tobacco box, silver standish (inkstand) and silver cup I give to my dear friend Mr. Burnett fellowe of St. Peter's Colledge. And all the rest of my plate, I give to my servant John Gee together with my gold rings, watch and seal and my chariot and horses, and to his son John Gee all my books "

One bequest is of special interest:

"I bequeath my dwelling house in Cambridge, with the brew-house, garden and lyes adjoining and all my pictures to the Masters and fellows in St. Peter's Colledge in Cambridge "

This house was a large red brick building on the east side of Trumpington Street and just opposite the Colledge. It was given for the use of the Masters as a residence, and Dr. Charles Beaumont's portrait hangs on the staircase.

Charles died unmarried and the only direct descendants of the two surviving brothers were two sons and five daughters of John, the eldest. Between them the Beaumont property was divided. Of the two sons Joseph inherited Alton Hall, Suffolk and the youngest, John, a captain in the militia of the Hundred, inherited the farms in Kettlebaston and Hitcham. Though the branches of the Hadleigh family accumulated sufficient lands and wealth for the principal male members to put after their name the coveted term 'Gent', none established male lines lasting more than a couple of hundred years or rose, even to a knightly rank. Instead,

they formed part of the numerous body of men who as magistrates became the unpaid administrators of county government and justice, and as mayors and parish officers laid the foundations of democracy in local affairs.

Members of the fourth branch of the Hadleigh family, descended from Michael of Bideston (1550-1614), fifth son of Robert of Hadleigh established themselves in various parts of Suffolk and neighbouring counties. Michael, like his father and his brother Julian, was a clothier. His first wife was Susan, daughter of John Alabaster, one of the principal citizens of Hadleigh. The surname, one of the most curious perversions of all English surnames, was originally Arbalaster, the medieval term for the man who handled the arbalest (Latin arcu-ballista) or crossbow. For this reason the arms of this branch impale with the Beaumont arms those of Alabaster-ermine, a crossbow erect. "By her (Susan), says Michael's memorial, "he had 6 sons and 7 daughters." His eldest son John (1582-1641) inherited his property.

There is an understandable similarity between many of the wills of these Suffolk Beaumonts. Their prosperity can only be gauged by the mention of their estates and the amount of money they left. The money bequests left by John, totalling at least £1900 to children and grand-children, gives some idea of the wealth he earned as a gentleman clothier. His wish as to his son's future occupation is natural.

"I would have my said sonne John Brought upp to exercise the art of clothmaking, and leave (him) the cesterne, weights, and other untensills as are belonging to the art."

The wills that are extant betray the care these Beaumonts took in specifying what lands, how much money and which gifts should go to each relative, obviously to avoid the possibility of family disputes. The gifts extend to cousins and often to more distant relatives, showing that they were in the main conscious of the links that existed between them. Sarah, John's youngest sister who married Truth Norris (a typical Puritan name this;) of Ipswich left £1 for him to buy a ring "and weare it for my sake", together with ten shillings each to all the children and grand-children to be spent on rings. To her niece Deborah Beaumont she left £50, two silver spoons and a silver porringer.

John's two sons, John (1623-1703) and Michael (1627-1689) were both clothiers, but there is no mention of the trade in the will of his eldest grandson John of Monks Eliegh, nor do the bequests the latter made amount to more than £100 to be paid out to his two daughters Sarah and Susan. Even to do this and provide for his other bequests his executors were instructed to sell a copyhold messuage in Bideston. The clothing industry was apparently in decline. The ultimate descent of his property was very complicated. Disputes arose between his heirs and records of claims and counterclaims are to be found in the Bideston manor rolls.

A more interesting line is that of John's second son William of Ipswich (1650-1708) from whom the Ipswich Beaumonts were descended. William was a clerk in holy orders, whose white marble memorial, once to be seen in St. Mary's Church, Ipswich, raises a puzzling question as to the manner of his death:

".... William Beaumont M.A. Rector of the Church of Hintonlesham, a man without blandishments, without pomp, Liberal without orthodox zeal, without religious fervour, who met with an untimely fate, not for himself but for his relatives and in the very place in which he left his

life, he found his grave. In the same grave is laid that which can die of his wife Mary to whose becoming manners nature and grace, modesty and fidelity, sternness and mildness, prudence and simplicity are all sweetly joined."

We can only venture guesses at the event that caused this strange inscription to be made.

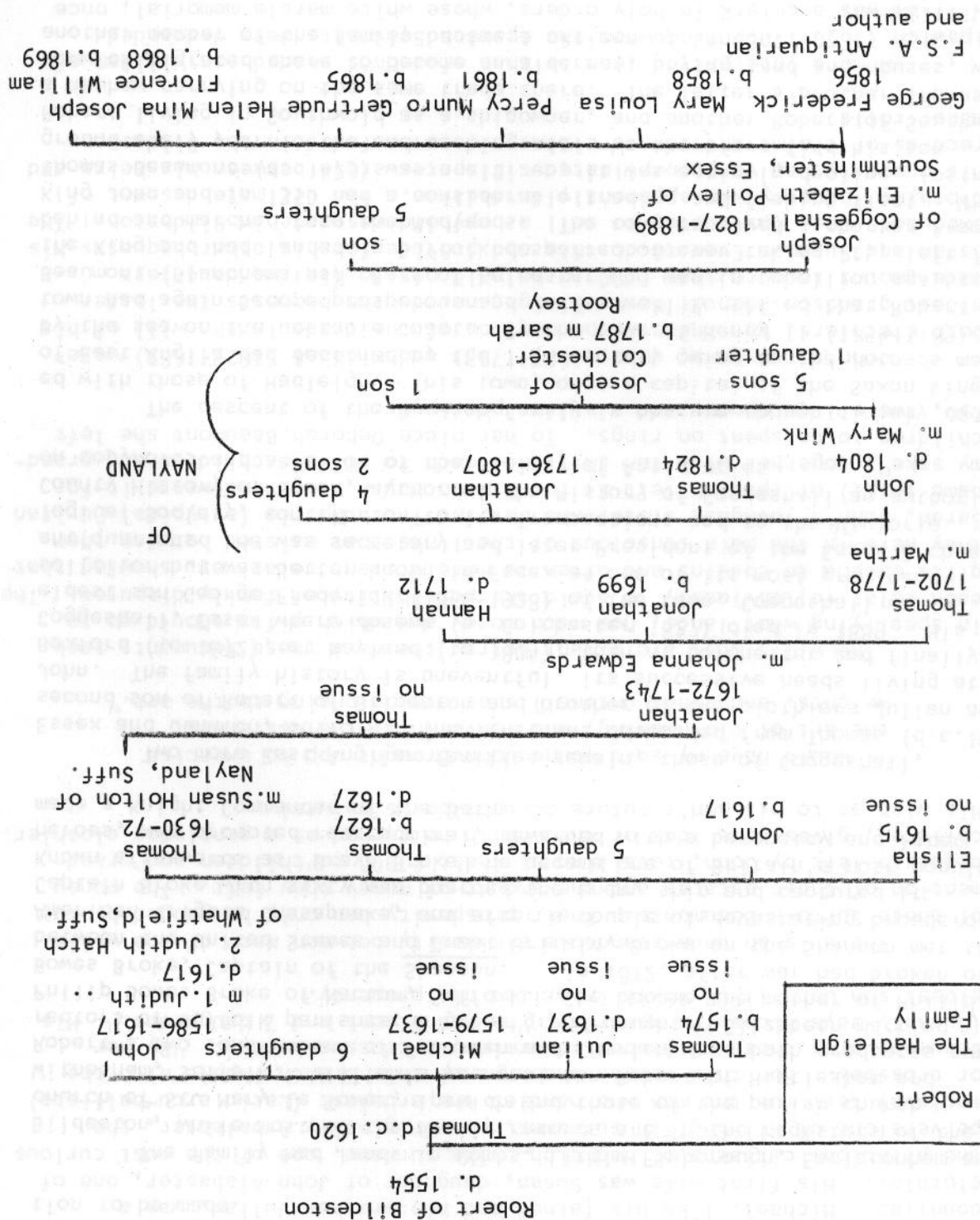
The family had lands in Combs, Little Finborough, Earlistonham and Bildeston, while most of the family records are in the registers of the church of St. Mary le Tower, Ipswich and those of the parish church of Wintesham, Suffolk. William's youngest son Robert of Hintlesham and Robert's two sons Robert of Framsdon and Charles were both graduates and rectors of Suffolk parishes; a great grand-daughter Elizabeth married Philip Bowes Broke of Nacton, Suffolk. She became the mother of Philip Bowes Broke, Captain of the Shannon. In 1812, after war had broken out between the United States and Great Britain, Broke on the Shannon met the American frigate Chesapeake, and after a couple of devastating broadsides, Captain Broke with sixty men boarded the enemy ship and captured it. Known afterwards as "Brave Broke" he became one of Britain's most popular heroes, was promoted rear-admiral, rewarded with a baronetcy and later made a knight Commander of the Bath.

Two more East Anglian families remain, those of Coggeshall, Essex and Dunwich, Suffolk. The first was descended from Thomas (d.c. 1620) second son of Robert of Bildeston and brother of the clothiers Julian and John. The family history is uneventful, its successive heads living at Boxford (to 1672), at Nayland (to 1804), then at Colchester and finally at Coggeshall, Essex where Joseph (b. Colchester 1827) died in 1889. His eldest son George Frederick (1856-1928) of the Lawn, Coggeshall was a solicitor but was better known in Essex as one of its most prominent antiquarians. He was secretary and later President of the Essex Archaeological Society, contributor to its Transactions and to the Victoria County History of Essex, author of the History of Coggeshall an authority on copyholds and a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

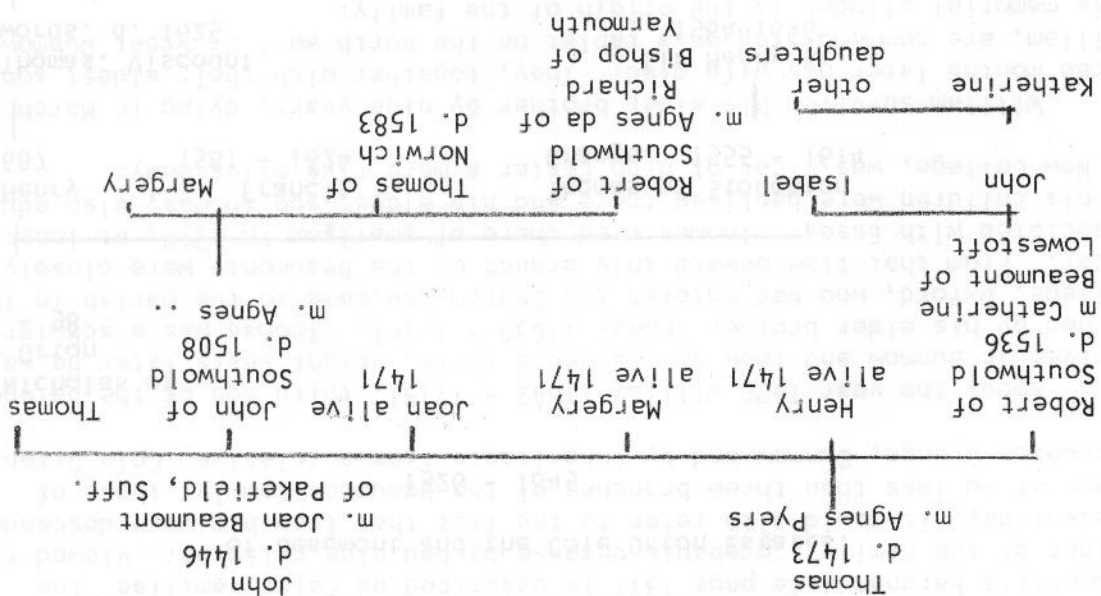
The descent of the Dunwich family is obscure though closely connected with those of Hadleigh. This town, once a capital of the Saxon kingdom of East Anglia had declined by the 11th century owing to the inroads made by the sea on the unstable coast. By the time of Henry II (1154-1189) the town had again become prosperous and was so well fortified that Robert Beaumont (Blanchemains), Earl of Leicester who was in rebellion against the king and had landed in Suffolk despaired of ever taking it, left it behind and marched into the Midlands. The town received a charter from King John and in 1350 had a considerable trading and fishing fleet. When Thomas Beaumont (d. 1473) was a citizen, it was again in decline, losing ground every year to the encroaching sea. We therefore find his son Robert living in Southwold as a shipowner, and another Robert of Southwold, a nephew carrying on the same trade there. The latter's brother Thomas of Norwich migrated there to become an alderman, buying land and houses, while another member of the family became a citizen of London.

Families, like plants, take root in one place, throw out shoots: their offspring are scattered far and wide. Nobility and commoners migrate, mingle, prosper and decline, forget their lineage and become part of the great English People. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the origin and absorption of the Beaumonts of Suffolk.

THE COGESHALL AND BOXFORD FAMILIES



THE DUNNICH FAMILY



NOTES

1. Hunter, South Yorkshire. 1 219
2. Hist Coll. Staff. 1912. p. 282
3. J. Musket. Suffolk Man. Fam. 11.321
4. Romilly. Graduat. Cantabrigensis
5. Eloise Robinson. Minor Poems
6. London 1648. d. 77 N & Q 2nd S. X.177
7. Spenser's Faerie Queene has 34,299 lines
8. Minor Poems p. 372
9. Baker MSS. Cambridge 26.1
10. Musket 11 233

COLE ORTON, STOUGHTON GRANGE, DUNMOW

AND BUCKLAND

Showing the Descent of the Baronetcy

of Beaumont and the Cole Orton Estates.

1526 - 1845

Sir Nicholas of
Cole Orton
1526 - 98

Sir Henry
Francis
d. 1607
1581 - 1624

Thomas of Stoughton
Grange. 1555 - 1614

Sir Thomas, Viscount
of Swords. d. 1625

Sir Sapcote, 2nd Viscount
of Swords 1614 - 58

Sir Thomas, 1st
Baronet, 1608 - 76

Sir Henry Kt.
1584-1646

Sir Thomas, 3rd Viscount
of Swords. 1633-1702
(no male heirs)
Sir Henry
2nd Bart.
1637-89

Thomas, Vicar
of Dunmow
1639-1710

William of
Dunmow
1642-1719

Sir Thomas
3rd Bart. 1663-90
Sir George
4th Bart. 1664-1737

Sir Lewis
5th Bart. 1674-1738

William
1683-
1729

Henry
16
85
17
337

Henry
1710-
1732

Thomas
1718-45

George
6th Bart. 1726-62
of Buckland
1729-96

George Howland
7th Bart. 1753 - 1827

John
1744-1801

Thomas
d.s.p. 1746
Robert
d.s.p. 1762

Thomas
1769
- 1818

J.T. Barber
Beaumont
1774-1841

George Howland
8th Bart
1799-1845