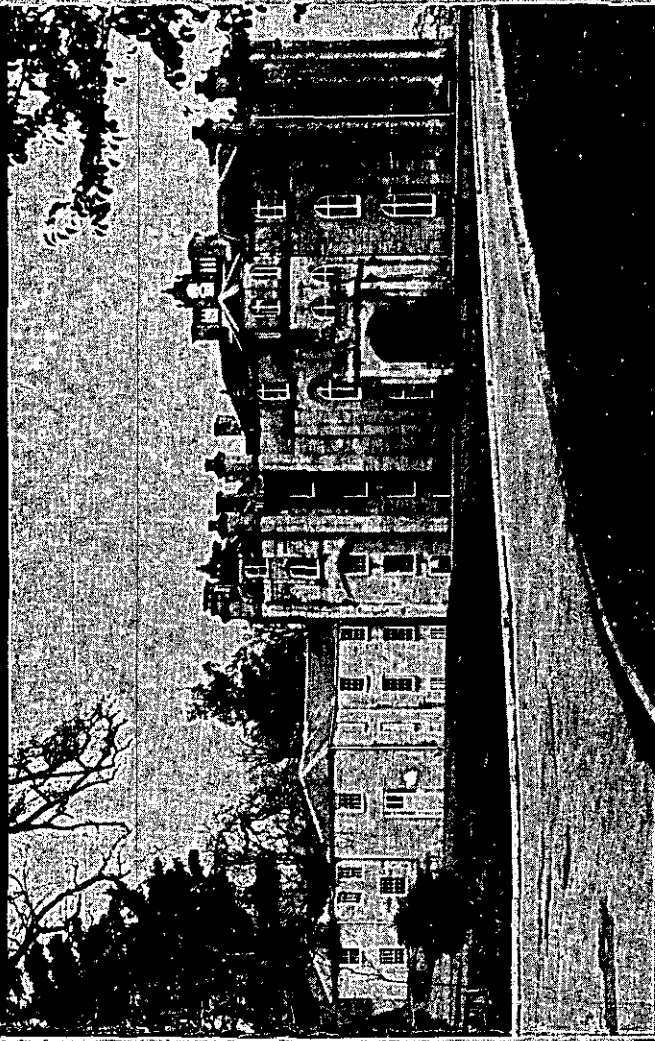


# COLE ORTON AND THE BEAUMONTS

in Art, History and Literature



## A.E. EAGAR

BEAUMONT

HAYDON

WORDSWORTH

COLERIDGE

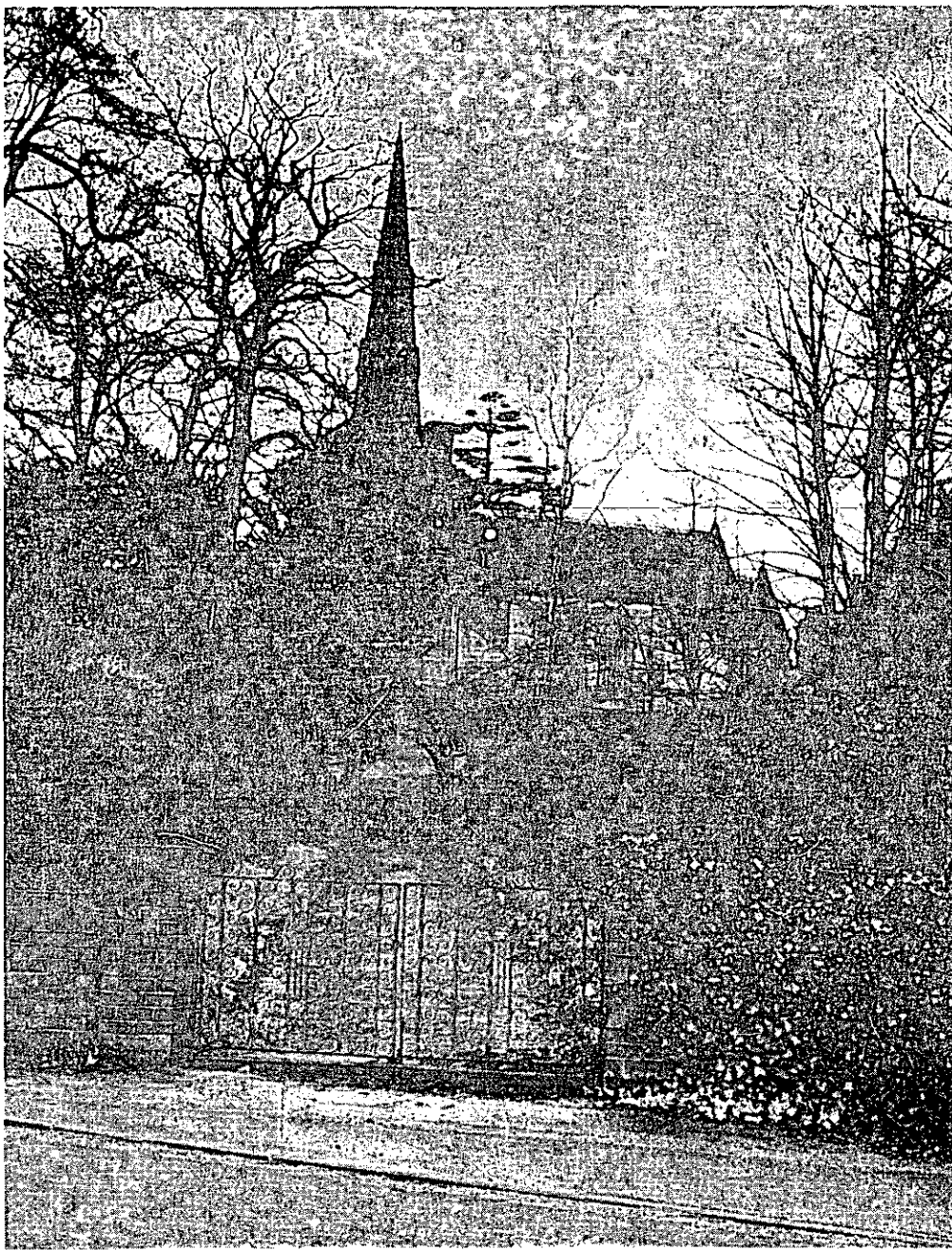
WILKIE

CONSTABLE

REYNOLDS

SOUTHEY

WALTER SCOTT



*Photograph by Phil Sutton*

COLE ORTON CHURCH

# COLE ORTON AND THE BEAUMONTS IN ART, HISTORY AND LITERATURE

REV. A. EVELEIGH EAGAR  
Captain (S) Royal Navy (Rtd.)  
Rector of Cole Orton

EDGAR BACKUS  
LEICESTER

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1949

BY EDGAR BACKUS  
(WM. F. BURBIDGE)  
44-46 CANK STREET, LEICESTER

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER I —History	...	...	...	7
CHAPTER II —Cole Orton Hall. Its Owners & Visitors				10
CHAPTER III —Coal and Industry	...	...		20
CHAPTER IV —In and Around Cole Orton	...	...		22
CHAPTER V —The Church, School, Etc.	...	...		29
CHAPTER VI —Incumbents of Cole Orton	...	...		34
CHAPTER VII —Some Notes on the Diocese of Leicester				37
CHAPTER VIII —The Cole Orton "Town Booke"	...			39

## ILLUSTRATIONS

THE HALL	...	...	...	...	Cover
COLE ORTON CHURCH	...	...	...		Frontispiece

## CHAPTER I

### HISTORY.

WHEN I became Rector of Cole Orton in 1942, I fell heir to a number of notes on the parish, compiled by my predecessors and by others interested in the place. This present little book is based on these notes and on information that I have been able to gather from other sources.

The first historian of Cole Orton (often known as Coleorton) whose record has been preserved, so far as is known, is "William Burton, Esquire, of Falde, near Tutbury, in Staffordshire." In 1622, he published a volume entitled "The description of Leicestershire containing matters of Antiquitye, Historye, Armourye & Genealogy, Written by William Burton Esqu: London Imprynted John White at the holy lambe in little Brittain near unto Aldersgate Streete."

Burton writes "Cole-Orton, so called of the cole mines that are there, & have been (many yeeres ago) in great abundance. It is in the Hundred of West Goscote, & anciently called Overton Quatermarche, of the sometimes Lords thereof, named Quatermarsh. This Mannor came after to the house of Maureward, who bore (i.e. as Coat of Arms) azure a fesse arg; between 3 cinquefoiles or; whose heir generall Philip (i.e. Philippa) was married 5 H 6 (i.e. in the fifth year of the reign of King Henry VI, viz. in 1428) to Sir Thomas Beaumont, Knight, second sonne to John Lord Beaumont, & Knight of the Garter; of whom is lineally descended Sir Thomas Beaumont, Knight, Viscount Beaumont, now living, Lord of the Mannor, who hath here a faire house, & married Elizabeth, daughter & heire of Henry Sapcote of Elton, in the countie of Huntingdon, Esquire."

The history of Cole Orton is not startling. It is that of a typical ancient village in the Midlands and is inextricably bound up with the history of the Leicestershire Beaumonts, who have had their seat at Cole Orton Hall, or in the vicinity, for hundreds of years. Even fifty years ago, no resident of the district could have visualised Cole Orton without the benignant sway of a Sir George Beaumont at the Hall. But time has marched on and brought changes in accordance with the trends of the mid-twentieth century. No

Beaumont now lives in Cole Orton. The Beaumont Estate in the district has decreased very much in size. The home of the Beaumonts for so many generations has now passed out of the ownership of the family, and is to-day owned by the National Coal Board, the Hall being headquarters for No. 7 area of the East Midlands District of the nationalised industry.

Some notes on the Beaumont family, their friends and their literary and historic associations will be found in Chapter II.

The name Cole Orton (or Cole Overton) is a corruption of Cole (or Coal) Overtown. In old days Cole Overtown had its counterpart, known as Cole Nethertown, or Overton Quartermash, alternative spellings being Quatermarshe, Quartermaris and Catormars, among others. Coal has been worked at and near Cole Orton for hundreds of years. Further reference to coal is made in Chapter III.

Another name that occurs in ancient records is "Overton Sawcey," elsewhere called "Orton Sauce." This district may possibly have been what is now known as "Farmtown," but more probably it comprised the part of the parish known in these days as "The Moor." It is thought that "Overton Sawcey" included the area that would be enclosed, were lines to be drawn from Sinope Bridge to "The George" Inn, from the Inn to the Rectory, and from the Rectory to Sinope Bridge.

In the days of the Civil War, Cole Orton had a temporary importance. Rather over two miles from the Hall lay the Castle of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, which was a Royalist stronghold, and was under attack by Cromwellian forces, whose headquarters were at the Hall. The Castle and the Hall were reduced to ruins, while Cole Orton Church was extensively damaged. The Roundheads not only destroyed much of beauty and artistic value in the Church, but also stripped the lead from its roof to make ammunition. It is on record that the Lady Beaumont of those days was so impoverished as a result of the depredations of the Commonwealth soldiers that, after the Restoration, Charles II gave a grant of 20/- a week for her maintenance.

Records exist of a census of the parish carried out in 1603. The name of the Rector is given as James Stacye (see list in Chapter VI.). He reported 160 communicants and that there was "no recusant, and no coicant," i.e. there were no Papists who refused to attend the services of the Parish Church. He further stated that there was no parishioner above the age of 16 who was not a communicant, *O tempora, O Mores!* It is of interest to note that the first entry in the oldest Parish Register in the custody of the Rector is of the burial of this James Stacye on 29th October, 1611.

Another census held in the same century, in 1676, was ordered by Henry Compton, Bishop of Lincoln (Leicestershire then formed a part of the Diocese of Lincoln). This showed that there were no "Popish recusants" and no "schismatical recusants." Conformists

to the Church of England numbered 146 men and 145 women over the age of 16. The balance between men and women at the date of this census seems to have approached the ideal here. The report was made by William Pestell, Rector, Will Farnham and Gawen Walker, Churchwardens.

The population, with children, in 1676 may then be reckoned as around the 400-500 mark. In 1948, the population of a considerably extended parish is between 1,000 and 1,100.

Between the dates of these two census returns, an important event was a Metropolitan Visitation of Archbishop Laud, on 28th March, 1634. The report on this visitation states that "The perambulation (probably, the Rogationtide beating of the Parish bounds by the Rector, Churchwardens and other parishioners) is neglected, & that is because the towne consists of colliers who cannot be taken from their work as their minister informeth."

Later in the same year, one Francis Stacye—we do not know whether he was a relation of the James Stacye who had been Rector at the time of the 1603 census—"appeared & was dismissed with a warning," he having been charged with "not standing uppe at the Creede, nor bowing at the name of Jesus."

Mention has already been made of the importance of Ashby-de-la-Zouch Castle as a Royalist stronghold in the Civil War, and of Cole Orton as the stronghold of the besiegers. Charles I was a guest at Ashby Castle shortly before the capture of Leicester by his forces, and his subsequent defeat at Naseby. The king was pursued by Cromwell's cavalry to the walls of Leicester. Thence, Charles fled to Ashby, where he was again entertained for one night, before leaving on the following morning for Lichfield on his way to Wales.

The Parliament Forces besieged Ashby for two and a half years. They used cannon from a fort at Cole Orton to drop cannon balls into Ashby, a full two miles away—a great range for those days. Frequent skirmishes occurred, these generally ending in favour of the Roundheads. For example, it is recorded that on 26th February, 1695, the Royalists made an attempt to surprise and plunder the "town" of Cole Orton, but failed, losing 70 or 80 of their horses.

An old resident of the parish has told me that, just off Corkscrew Lane, which is one way of travelling from Cole Orton to Ashby, there is a copse which, as a child, she was frightened to enter for fear of the ghosts of Commonwealth men who fell in the attacks on Ashby and who are believed to have been buried in this copse.

The Castle fell in February, 1646, the garrison marching out with the honours of war. It was subsequently destroyed, its ruins standing today open to the inspection of the historically-minded and the curious. The ruins possess the dignity of a fallen 'grand seigneur' of a past age.

The rival stronghold, too, has vanished, but there stands on its site the more modern Hall. This lovely Georgian building, the home for so many years of the Leicestershire Beaumonts, gives a grace to the countryside which will not wane for many years, whatever may be the uses to which the Hall may be put in the years to come; not until time removes the beautiful house from its commanding position facing the wild grandeur of the historic Charnwood Forest.

## CHAPTER II

### COLE ORTON HALL. ITS OWNERS AND VISITORS.

COLE ORTON has been the seat of the Leicestershire Beaumonts for over 500 years. It is one of the few families in England whose tree is firmly rooted in the soil of the days of William the Conqueror.

In their long line the Beaumonts have given to England warriors, statesmen, lawyers, poets and artists. The National Gallery owes its foundation to the seventh Baronet, himself a landscape artist of very considerable gifts (his painting of the woods and streams of Gracedieu, near Cole Orton, a place closely associated with the Beaumont family, is now in the possession of the National Gallery trustees). This Sir George Beaumont was a generous and discerning patron of the arts, and among his friends and protégés we find such names as William Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, David Wilkie, Sir Walter Scott, Shelley, Constable and Joshua Reynolds.

The present Hall is the third that has stood on the high ground alongside the Church, looking across the valley, in which lies Cole Orton village, to the rugged grandeur of Charnwood Forest. The present stately Georgian mansion, with its Doric portico, was planned in 1800 and completed in 1807 by the seventh Baronet, the architect having been George Dance. It is surrounded by large and charming grounds, in which lies the Winter Garden laid out by William Wordsworth. In that garden there can still be seen the stone seat where Sir Walter Scott sat as he planned the tournament scenes that figured so prominently in "Ivanhoe." Sitting in that seat, too, Scott wrote a large part of the book.

From its picture gallery came the sixteen pictures given by the seventh Baronet which formed the foundation of the National Gallery. Other famous pictures were in the gallery of the Hall up to recent years. Two of these were from Rubens' brush.

Another member of the family was Francis Beaumont

(1584-1616), the Elizabethan dramatist. The following lines are still clearly decipherable on a stone wall tablet in the grounds of the Hall—they were written by William Wordsworth in 1808.

Beneath yon eastern ridge, the craggy bound,  
Rugged and high, of Charnwood's forest ground  
Stand yet, but, Stranger! hidden from thy view  
The ivied ruin of forlorn GRACE DIEU;  
Erst a religious house, which day and night  
With hymns resounded, and the chanted rite:  
And when those rites had ceased, the Spot gave birth  
To honourable Men of various worth;  
There, on the margin of a streamlet wild,  
Did Francis Beaumont sport, an eager child;  
There, under shadow of the neighbouring rocks,  
Sang youthful tales of shepherds and their flocks;  
Unconscious prelude to heroic themes,  
Heart-breaking tears, and melancholy dreams  
Of slighted love, and scorn, and jealous rage,  
With which his genius shook the buskined stage.  
Communities are lost, and Empires die,  
And things of holy use unhallowed lie;  
They perish:—but the Intellect can raise,  
From airy words alone, a Pile that ne'er decays.

Coleridge in 1804 referred to Francis Beaumont as one of "the first-rate men of that true golden age of English poetry."

In the following year Wordsworth wrote of him with respect, describing his work as "very elegant and harmonious and written with true feeling." Wordsworth had a plan, never carried into effect, of re-publishing Beaumont's verses.

Francis' brother John was also a poet and earned the admiration of Wordsworth. Francis seems to have died at the age of 28 and his early death prompted the lines which Wordsworth ascribes to Bishop Corbet of Norwich—

By whose sole death appears,  
Wit's a disease consumes men in few years.

The Hall has, or had, its ghost. One Dame Margaret is said to walk the corridors and haunt the rooms as well as the grounds at the Ides of March. On 12th March it is claimed that Dame Margaret rattles chains, too, first in the house and then in the gardens.

One of the last Sedan Chairs in regular use in England must have been that in which one of the Beaumont ladies, in her old age, was carried about the grounds during the last century. Later this chair was kept at Swannington House, the home until her death in 1946 of Lillie Ellen, Lady Beaumont, widow of the tenth Baronet. She died, honoured and loved by all Cole Orton people. After her death the Sedan Chair was sold and, as far as the writer is concerned, lost to sight.

One of those who came to England with the Conqueror in 1066 was Roger de Beaumont, and during and after the days of the Norman Conquest the Beaumonts, a family directly descended from the kings of France, took a prominent part in the government of England. William de Beaumont succeeded to the Earldom of Millint and in 1144 was also dignified by the title of Earl of Worcester. His forebear, Robert de Beaumont, had been created Earl of Leicester in 1103 by King Henry I, having earlier succeeded to the Earldom of Millint. His wife was of the blood royal of France and his third son, Hugh (nicknamed the Poor) was created Earl of Bedford. Both the second and third Earls of Leicester went on Crusades.

As early as 1076, Henry, the son of Roger de Beaumont, Earl of Millint (known as Barbutus) was made Earl of Warwick. This Earldom died out in 1242. Henry's sister took the veil and became an Abbess.

William de Beaumont, the first Earl of Worcester, married a sister of Simon de Montfort. Their son, Robert, married Maud, daughter of Reginald, Earl of Cornwall, the natural son of King Henry I. Their son, Peter, became Earl of Leicester, a title which died out in 1204, for lack of issue.

Another 12th century Beaumont, Robert, married twice; first, the daughter of the Earl of Warwick and after her death, the daughter of Ralph de Montfort. His daughter by his first wife, Isabel, married the Earl of Huntingdon. Robert died in 1168.

A later Roger de Beaumont died as Bishop of St. Andrews' in 1202. His younger brother, William, is said to have died without issue, but according to Sir Robert Douglas, in his "Peerage of Scotland," this William de Beaumont was ancestor of all the Hamiltons in Scotland.

In 1238, Louis de Brienne married Agnes de Beaumont, and the family name was then changed to Beaumont.

William Maureward was living in Cole Orton in 1328, according to the roll of taxpayers in "Orton Quatmarz" of that date. This William was an ancestor of the Cole Orton Beaumonts, through Philippa Maureward, who became the wife of Sir Thomas Beaumont, the second son of John, Lord Beaumont, K.G.

Consequent on this marriage, the manor of Overton was conveyed to Sir Thomas Beaumont in 1426. Since that date, the Beaumonts have been Lords of the Manor of Cole Orton continuously.

A later Thomas, son of Sir Henry Beaumont, Knight, and Lady Elizabeth (whose tomb in Cole Orton Church is referred to in Chapter V.) was created Viscount Beaumont by James I in the year 1622. This title died out in 1702, with the death of the Viscount who gave the tithes of Swannington to set up an almshouse for six women. His body lies in the family vault at Cole Orton.

The income from the benefaction at the beginning of the 18th century was £175 per annum. Of this sum, £65 was appropriated for the payment of the Master and Mistress, a further £20 being set aside for the provision of coal for the almswomen.

The present Almshouses, built on the site of the old Beaumont-endowed school (mentioned later) were re-built by Sir George Beaumont in 1867, and now stand in Churchtown, at the junction of the Leicester—Loughborough—Shephed roads, close to the Church. The building has recently suffered considerable damage from mining subsidence and during a large part of 1948 was uninhabitable.

In modern times, the most notable member of the family was the seventh Baronet, who died in 1827 and who, as has been said, built the present Hall. He collected around him the most famous and most promising men of letters and artists of the day. This Baronet was himself an artist, and an art collector as well as being a patron of artistic people. He made many friends by his open interest in their work, his generous hospitality and friendliness, and his real love of the arts. In these friendships and interests he reaped great personal satisfaction and became one of the leading men of culture of his time. As a young man he had known Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds (to whom he later erected a memorial in the grounds of Cole Orton Hall) was one of his closest friends.

His friendships were genuine and had a touch of that true humility which considered his own advantage to be greater than that of those to whom his friendliness was extended. He had to a remarkable degree the gift of calling out the best in his friends.

His earliest literary friendship seems to have been with Coleridge, for in 1803 he lodged at Greta Hall after Coleridge had gone to live there. Later he met William Wordsworth. Sir George had already passed his fiftieth year, while Wordsworth was sixteen years his junior. Beaumont was one of the first to appreciate the genius of these two men, notwithstanding the sad fact that Coleridge's genius was on the wane, because of his reckless indulgence in opium. Sir George knew that they had lived close to each other in Somerset and had written the "Lyrical Ballads" in collaboration, and also that they wished to live and work together once more.

In 1804, the Baronet therefore bought a small property at Applethwaite, on the southern side of Skiddaw, not far from Greta Hall. In the hope of bringing Wordsworth and Coleridge together he presented this property to Wordsworth, whom he had not yet met. But his desire was not fulfilled, as Coleridge left Cumberland and went abroad for two years, the Wordsworths having helped him to recover some semblance of health, and had lent him £100.

The first connection of William Wordsworth with Cole Orton

came in 1806, when he, at the invitation of Sir George, brought his wife, his sister Dorothy, his wife's sister, Sarah Hutchinson and two children to the Hall Farm, which Sir George himself had occupied not long before, during the time that builder's work was being carried out at the Hall. Here the Wordsworths stayed during the winter of 1806 and the spring and part of the autumn of 1807.

It was during this stay at the Hall Farm that Wordsworth devoted much time and effort to the planning of the Winter Garden at the Hall. He had expressed his ideas on its lay-out before he left Grasmere, and during this visit his plans developed and were put into effect.

Wordsworth found this occupation a relief from his work and he planned, with Coleridge's agreement and support, that "the house should belong to the country, and not the country be an appendage to the house." So closely was Wordsworth connected with the laying out of these gardens that they contain more memorials of him than do the grounds of Fox Howe or Rydal Mount.

Coleridge was on the continent when Wordsworth took up his residence at the Hall Farm, but he returned to England in time to arrive at Cole Orton on Christmas Day, 1806, and his fellowship with Wordsworth of the Quantock days was renewed.

At night, as they sat in the farm, perhaps in that kitchen that Sir David Wilkie has immortalised in "The Blind Fiddler," Wordsworth recited his "Prelude." Here, too, Coleridge wrote those memorable lines regarding Wordsworth and his

orphic tale indeed,  
A tale of high and passionate thoughts  
To their own music chanted.

It was during this residence at the Hall Farm that Wordsworth wrote his sonnet on the conquest of Switzerland by Napoleon, and that Dorothy Wordsworth penned her delightful description of the welcome the children gave to their mother, after her return from a month's absence in London.

In the spring of 1807, Wordsworth and his wife paid a visit of some duration to London, leaving his sister and sister-in-law at Cole Orton with the children. When they returned in the autumn they brought with them Sir Walter Scott.

Wordsworth's poetic genius seems to have been at full flood when he stayed in Cole Orton. Here he wrote a number of poems, including the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle," which was composed on the path between the farm and the Hall. Here, too, he wrote the "Lines to the Nightingale," commencing "O nightingale! thou surely art a creature of a fiery heart," and a number of other sonnets.

Wordsworth continued to delight in the Hall, its kindly hosts and its grounds. He was here once more in 1808, when he wrote two inscriptions for the grounds. Two more were written about three years later, when the poet was at Grasmere. Three of these four were cut in stone and set up in the grounds. One of these—that referring to Francis Beaumont, the dramatist—has already been quoted.

Another is still to be seen near the funerary urn erected by Sir George in memory of Sir Joshua Reynolds. It was written at Sir George's request and stands in a grove of lime trees leading up to the urn. It reads—

Ye lime-trees, ranged before this hallowed Urn,  
Shoot forth with lively power at spring's return;  
And be not slow a stately growth to rear  
Of pillars, branching off from year to year,  
Till they have learnt to frame a darksome aisle;—  
That may recall to mind that awful Pile  
Where Reynolds, 'mid our country's noblest dead,  
In the last sanctity of fame is laid.  
There, though by right the excelling Painter sleep  
Where death and glory a joint sabbath keep,  
Yet not the less his spirit would hold dear  
Self-hidden praise, and Friendship's private tear:  
Hence on my patrimonial grounds have I  
Raise this frail tribute to his memory;  
From youth a zealous follower of the Art  
That he professed; attached to him in heart;  
Admiring, loving, and with grief and pride  
Feeling what England lost when Reynolds died.

Later, Constable painted the lime groves and the urn, his picture being in the National Gallery. So true to life is the picture that a stranger to Cole Orton whom I took into the lime grove, exclaimed in astonishment "Why, I know this place!" He was an artist himself and had often admired Constable's picture.

Wordsworth had a great and respectful liking for Lady Beaumont, and in 1807 dedicated to her the following sonnet—

Lady! the songs of spring were in the grove  
While I was shaping beds for winter flowers,  
While I was planting green, unfading bowers,  
And shrubs to hang upon the warm alcove,  
And sheltering wall: and still, as Fancy wove  
The dream, to time and nature's blended powers  
I gave this paradise for winter hours,  
A labyrinth, Lady! which your feet shall rove.  
Yes! when the sun of life more feebly shines,  
Becoming thoughts, I trust, of solemn gloom  
Or of high gladness you shall hither bring;  
And these perennial bowers and murmuring pines  
Be gracious as the music and the gloom  
And all the mighty ravishment of spring.

When Wordsworth published his first book of collected works in

1815, he dedicated the volume to Sir George Beaumont. In his Epistle Dedicatory, written at Rydal Mount, he refers to the fact that "some of the pieces were composed under the shade of your own groves, upon the classic ground of Cole Orton," under the inspiration of past Beaumont poets.

A more direct inspiration was one of Sir George's pictures — "Peel Castle in a storm"—which drew from Wordsworth some elegiac stanzas which commence—

I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile!  
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee:  
I saw thee every day; and all the while  
Thy form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

At this time (1805) Wordsworth was grieving over the tragic death at sea of his favourite brother John. The influence of his grief can be read in the stanzas.

The picture that had inspired the poem was presented by Sir George to Mrs. Wordsworth. A copy of the picture was given by the trustees of the Beaumont estate to the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, where it can be seen.

Wordsworth stood as Godfather to William Beresford, the younger son of the tenth Baronet. This is the Beaumont who became Rector of Cole Orton in 1864, on the death of Francis Merewether. Lady Beaumont was Godmother to Dora, Wordsworth's daughter.

Sir George illustrated some of Wordsworth's poems. His illustrations were engraved in several editions of the poems, notably those published in 1815 and 1820.

It was not only with men of letters that Beaumont was intimate. Contemporary artists were numbered among his friends, including Sir Joshua Reynolds, as has been mentioned, Haydon, Wilkie (both visited Cole Orton in 1809, when Wilkie painted "The Blind Fiddler" in the kitchen of the Hall Farm). Lawrence, Cozens and Gibson. Nor did Sir George restrict his friendship to established artists and men of letters. He extended much kindness and not a little pecuniary aid to more than one struggling aspirant. Among those whom he assisted were Haydon and Coleridge.

Wilkie may be said to have been discovered by Sir George. The artist had painted "The Village Publican" in 1806, at the age of 20. Soon after this the Baronet extended to him his patronage, and it was on his commission that Wilkie painted "The Blind Fiddler." Shortly afterwards Haydon was introduced to Sir George by Wilkie.

In 1809, during the artists' visit to Cole Orton, Haydon wrote, with a touch of that malice that was characteristic of him that he, Wilkie and Sir George "did nothing morning, noon or night, but think of painting, talk of painting, dream of painting, and wake to paint again."

During this visit, Haydon painted "an excellent study for Lady Macbeth," posing one of the maids on the staircase "with a light behind her, so as to cast a good shadow on the wall." This picture was still hanging on the staircase where it had been painted when Haydon re-visited the Hall in 1837.

In 1810, Beaumont and Haydon fell out over a "Macbeth" commissioned by Sir George. The breach was not healed until more than a year later. That Haydon retained no bitterness as a result of this disagreement is shown by his tribute written some twenty-five years later—"Lawrence and Sir George Beaumont are the two most perfect gentlemen I ever saw—both naturally irritable and waspish, but both controlling every feeling which is incompatible with breeding."

A little later, Haydon wrote "Sir George was an extraordinary man, one of the old school formed by Sir Joshua—a link between the artist and the nobleman, elevating the one by an intimacy which did not depress the other. Born a painter, his fortune prevented the necessity of application for subsistence and, of course, he did not apply. His taste was excellent, not peculiar or classical, but Shakespearian. Painting was his great delight. He talked of nothing else, and would willingly have done nothing else. His ambition was to connect himself with the art of the country, and he has done it for ever." In writing of the founding of the National Gallery, Haydon says "For though Angerstein's pictures were a great temptation, yet without Sir George Beaumont's offer of his own collection, it is a question if they would have been purchased. He is justly entitled to be considered the Founder of the National Gallery . . . His loss, with all his faults, will not easily be supplied. He founded the National Gallery! Peace to him!"

With regard to the founding of the National Gallery, it may here be said that Angerstein's pictures were bought by the State in 1824. In 1826, Beaumont added sixteen of his own pictures, which included paintings by Claude, Rembrandt, Rubens and Wilkie. It was due to his appeals, his tact and his gifts that one of the finest art galleries in the world was founded — the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square.

Other visitors to the Hall included Byron, Southey and Samuel Rogers, as well as Constable.

Sir George died on 7th February, 1827, at the age of 73, and was buried in the family vault in Cole Orton Church. His wife survived him by a little more than two years. She, too, had her influence on contemporary England, both as helpmeet to her husband and by her own charm. Henry Crabb Robinson, a diarist of her day, wrote of her—"She is a gentlewoman of great sweetness and dignity, I should think among the most interesting persons in the country."

In his will, Sir George left to Wordsworth the sum of £100 a

year for life, to cover the expenses of a yearly holiday.

Wordsworth again stayed in Cole Orton in November, 1830, this time for a week. He rode on to Cambridge, and of this journey he notes "Thirty-seven miles did I ride in one day, and through the worst of storms; and what was my resource? Writing verses to the memory of my departed friend, Sir George Beaumont, whose house I had left the day before."

In these verses, Wordsworth speaks of the fact that Beaumont would not allow any elaborate memorial to be erected to his memory, and remarks on his admirable qualities of mind and heart, as well as on his gifts as an artist and man of letters.

Southey, who seems to have been a humble friend, more in the character of a hanger-on, wrote in 1833: "Sir George's death was not from any decay. His mother lived for some years beyond ninety, and his health had greatly improved during the latter years of his life. He was never better than when in this country a very few months before his death. The seizure was sudden: after breakfast, as he was at work upon a picture, he fainted; erysipelas presently showed itself upon the head, and soon proved fatal."

Southey praises the excellence of Beaumont's pictures painted in his later years, and adds—"He was one of the happiest men I ever knew, for he enjoyed all the advantages of his station, and entered into none of the follies to which men are so easily tempted by wealth and the want of occupation. His disposition kept him equally from all unworthy and all vexatious pursuits. He had as little liking for country sports as for public business of any kind, but had a thorough love of art and nature . . . I verily believe that no man ever enjoyed the world more, and few were more humbly, more wisely and more religiously prepared for entering upon another state of existence . . . Next to painting and natural scenery, he delighted in theatricals more than in anything else. Few men read so well, and I have heard those who knew him intimately say that he would have made an excellent actor." ("Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey," edited by the Revd. Charles Cuthbert Southey, vol. vi., pp. 215-217).

Sir Walter Scott added his tribute in his diary on 14th February, 1827.—"Sir George Beaumont's dead—by far the most sensible and pleasing man I ever knew, kind too in his manner and generous—gentle in society, and of those mild manners which tend to soften the causticity of the general London tone of persiflage and personal satire. As an amateur painter, he was of the very highest distinction and though I know nothing of the matter, I should hold him a perfect critic in painting, for he always made his criticisms intelligible, and used no slang. I am very sorry—so much as it is in my nature to be—for one whom I could see but seldom." (Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, vol. ix., p.p. 89-90).

Sir Humphrey Davy, of the miners' safety lamp fame, wrote of Sir George, during the latter's lifetime "Sir George is a remarkable sensible man, which I mention because it is somewhat remarkable in a painter of genius, who is at the same time a man of rank, and an exceedingly amusing companion."

On the wall monument to this Beaumont, who was held in such esteem by his contemporaries, is the humble appeal "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord."

Probably no house in England has richer literary and artistic memories than has Cole Orton Hall. The Hall is no longer the home of the Beaumonts and has even ceased to be a private house, now being offices of the National Coal Board. There is a prophetic ring about the concluding lines of one of Wordsworth's inscriptions written for the grounds of the Hall—

"Communities are lost and Empires die,  
And things of holy use unhallowed lie:  
They perish, but the intellect alone can raise,  
From airy words alone, a pile that ne'er decays."

This chapter may well conclude with a remarkable story of Coleridge and Wordsworth when Coleridge was staying with his friend at Christmastide of 1806-7. A full account of the incident can be found in Arthur Mee's "Leicestershire." Coleridge, it will be remembered, had reached Cole Orton on Christmas Day, and stayed at the Hall Farm for a while with the Wordsworths. On the evening of 7th January, Wordsworth "recited to the family circle the part of the 'Prelude' that tells intimately of the growth of his own mind." Coleridge was deeply distressed as he contrasted the steady growth of Wordsworth's powers with the diminution of his own, due to his excesses.

Sleepless, he sat up all night writing his own tribute to Wordsworth—"Friend of the muse! Teacher of the good!" a line that originally read "O Friend! O Teacher! God's great gift to me!"

Inspired as he was by a spark that flew from the genius of Wordsworth and the proximity of his friend, something of Coleridge's lost genius returned to him, as he pictured his host among the immortals. "With steadfast eye I viewed thee in the choir of ever-enduring men. The truly great have all one age."

Never again did Coleridge write any lines that had any claim to greatness.

For much of the information regarding Sir George Beaumont, 7th Baronet, I am indebted to William Knight's "Memorials of Cole Orton, being letters from Coleridge, Southey and Sir Walter Scott to Sir George and Lady Beaumont of Cole Orton, Leicestershire, 1803 to 1834, edited with introduction and notes by William

Knight, University of S. Andrew's" 2 Vols. Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1887.

Arthur Mee's "Leicestershire" is also of great interest.

One who was intimately connected with Sir George Beaumont was Rector of Cole Orton from 1815 to 1864, Francis Merewether. Clearly Wordsworth was on terms of friendship with the Rectory family after, and perhaps before, the Merewethers came to Cole Orton. Francis Merewether was Vicar of Whitwick, as well as being Rector of Cole Orton, and it was with him that John Wordsworth served as Curate. Francis Merewether built the present Rectory to which additions were made by Canon W. B. Beaumont.

### CHAPTER III

#### COAL AND INDUSTRY.

COAL is the basis of life in Cole Orton. The name "Cole" is simply another form of "Coal." The ancient names of the settlements in the parish were "Cole Overton" and "Cole Nethertown," or, in modern language, "Upper Coal Town" and "Lower Coal Town."

From William Burton's "Description of Leicestershire" published in 1622, we gather that coal was found on the surface before the days of King Henry VIII. that it was surface-mined in his days, and that it was then distributed around the countryside by donkey pannier. Burton tells us that "These coal mines in the beginning of the reign of King Henry the Eighth (as I have heard reported) did burne many yeares together, and could not be quenched, untill that sulphurous and brimstony matter (whereupon it wrought) was utterly exhausted and consumed."

In quite recent years a fire lit by a picnic party not far from the Hall burnt for more than a week, surface coal having been ignited.

The old Cole Orton pit was the first coal-mine to be worked in Leicestershire. In old days, the pit was known as "The Bread and Herring," so badly were the miners paid.

At one time a Moody and Sankey evangelist used to hold religious services in the wood shed near the shaft, before the men went down the mine. Wesley, too, visited and preached at Cole Orton in or about 1780. According to his own evidence in his diaries, he was ill-received and almost stoned during this visit.

In connection with this pit, there was an old superstition of the Seven Whistlers. If ever seven shrill whistles were heard not a

single miner would go to work, since the whistles were believed to foreshadow an accident in the pit.

One wonders how often advantage was taken of this superstition by the practical joker, or the trouble-maker—or the merely lazy.

The mining of coal over centuries, sometimes from shallow seams, has had its effect on the life of the village, apart from the degree of prosperity brought to its people by the industry. Many houses have been damaged by subsidence, in the wake of getting coal from the ground beneath their foundations. In a number of fields the fact that subsidence, due to the mining of coal, has occurred is evident from the irregularity of the surface.

Many of the houses have been patched up and the damage repaired. A few have suffered beyond repair. And in the case of a number of houses that show no obvious damage as a result of mining operations that have taken place below them, doors and windows jam in a rather mysterious manner, without doubt due to slight subsidence of the foundations, in consequence of mining work in the vicinity.

In the days before the nationalisation of the coal industry, the colliery companies made themselves responsible for repairs due to subsidence caused by mining operations. Now this responsibility has been assumed by the National Coal Board.

Coal-mining has made Cole Orton and the surrounding district prosperous, especially since improvements have been accomplished in the remuneration and working conditions of mine workers. Up to the year 1933, Cole Orton was the centre of this prosperity, for the Cole Orton Colliery, on the Moor, was working continuously. Many of the older miners now in the district were employed at one time in this pit.

When the Cole Orton Colliery was closed down, the New Lount Colliery, on the edge of Cole Orton, commenced operations. New Lount is one of the most important in the Leicestershire coalfield. Its production averaged over 36,000 tons a month in 1948, whilst that of the Snibston Colliery, the pit-head of which stands almost in the main street of Coalville, and employs many of the residents of Cole Orton, raised nearly 27,000 tons a month in that year.

I am proud to number among my friends and parishioners some of the men who work in the Leicestershire coalfield. Many of them are staunch friends, generous neighbours and good Christians. They work hard, and fully appreciate the advances that have been made in recent years in the conditions governing the industry. The salt of the earth, whose savour has not been lost. Nor is there any sign of this savour being lost in the foreseeable future.

Until the latter part of the last century, important potteries were still at work in Cole Orton. Their products, of glazed yellow ware, have now become something in the nature of museum specimens. The old kilns are still standing.

Bricks are still made locally. These hard bricks are much used in London and elsewhere in the country. Leicestershire bricks were used for the building of St. Pancras Railway Station.

Up to a hundred years ago, lace was made locally in considerable quantities, and sent by carrier to Nottingham for sale.

#### CHAPTER IV

#### IN AND AROUND COLE ORTON.

A GUIDE BOOK description of Cole Orton tells us that it is a very pretty village, with picturesque cottages, and that the Hall contains (e.g. contained until its recent sale to the National Coal Board) many works of art, and that its beautiful gardens are associated with Shelley, Wordsworth, Scott, Southey, Beaumont and Fletcher. Further, that in the Church can be seen Renaissance woodwork, a fifteenth-century stained (this should read "painted") glass window, and Beaumont family tombs, with effigies. In the Hall Farm nearby, the guide book concludes, is the kitchen portrayed in Sir David Wilkie's picture "The Blind Fiddler."

The village is certainly one of the most beautiful in Leicestershire. The old village lay on what is now the north-western side of the parish, close to the old 13th century Church. Now there are only a few houses in Church Town and Farm Town, the two hamlets that seem to have been the original Cole Netherton and Cole Overton.

The Rectory stands on a rise at the bottom of the hill which falls away from the Church in a southerly direction. It faces north, towards the Church, and from its little knoll, the view up the hill is one of striking beauty. Close by, along the main road to Leicester and Loughborough, stands the school, founded in 1701 by Viscount Beaumont, and re-built on its present site by his descendant, Canon William Beresford Beaumont, in 1867. (Canon Beaumont became Rector of Cole Orton in 1864, on the death of Francis Merewether and died at the Rectory in 1901).

Beyond the school is St. John's Chapel and the "new" Cemetery, which has been in use for some eighty years. An extension to this cemetery was consecrated in 1948.

On the opposite side of the road lies the Fish Pond, which in past years was well stocked with fish for the table of the Hall. It is from and to this pond that a gryphon is said to have flown on many occasions, the other end of its journey having been at

Griffy Dam, a small district that lies south-east of Cole Orton. The name "Griffy Dam" is claimed to be a corruption of "Gryphon Dam" — or did the story arise from a mis-hearing of the name of the place? In these days, nothing more exciting than a coot, a heron, or an occasional swan, is to be found on the waters of the Fish Pond.

A few hundred yards further on lie Cole Orton cross-roads, with the present village down the hill to the left, and the Moor (the ancient "Overton Sawcey") up the hill to the right. The village and Moor are well populated, while at the top of the Moor lie the Council houses, the most thickly-populated part of the parish. This group of about fifty houses lie a good mile from the village and Post Office, still further from the school, and not far short of two hilly miles from the Church.

The placing of these houses so far from the village and Church was due to the impossibility of finding a site for so many houses nearer the centre, because of past, present or probable future mining operations.

Just beyond the Council houses, at Sinope, runs the railway connecting Burton-on-Trent with Leicester and serving Coalville and Ashby-de-la-Zouch. This line is of great importance for the carriage of coal from New Lount, Coalville (Snibston), Ellistown and other collieries.

At the other end of the village, at the bottom of Stoney Lane, there still remains the embankment of the second railway that was built in England. Stephenson was responsible and the principal traffic was coal.

In addition to the Church and St. John's Chapel, the Primitive Methodists have a modern chapel, as well as an older chapel, now used as a Sunday School. These stand in the village, while on the Moor is a Baptist Chapel. The Methodists also have a chapel in Griffy Dam.

The views from different parts of the parish are varied. Those towards the Church and from the higher parts, in the direction of Charnwood Forest, are remarkably fine. To the north-east lie the twin tips of the New Lount Colliery. These certainly have no beauty in themselves but they fall into the general landscape in a manner that is not displeasing; a resident of Cole Orton soon accepts them as an essential part of the scene, reminding him of the source of the district's prosperity.

On the north side of the Moor stand the tips of the old Cole Orton Colliery, much reduced in size during the Second World War, when they provided material for road-making and for other essential requirements. These tips are now grass-grown and clothed with willow-herb and other flowers. In the course of years these local "alps" have assumed a certain wild beauty of their own and lend grace rather than ugliness to the countryside.

The thirst of man is generously catered for; there being five public houses in the parish. The village has two, "The Beaumont Arms" and "The Blacksmith's Arms." There are also two, "The Angel" and "The King's Arms," on the Moor, while "The George" on the Loughborough Road is mainly a place of call for travellers.

Cole Orton enjoys a number of organisations for the people. A branch of the Mothers' Union, and a "Women's Bright Hour" (Baptist) cater for the women; while the men have a branch of Toc H. and a branch of the British Legion. There is also the Beaumont Youth Club, with a considerable membership, and a field of their own. A Youth Club is also attached to the Methodist chapel.

There is a spirit about Cole Orton which calls out a deep loyalty from its people, a loyalty not confined to those who are still resident in the place. Its long history, and past literary and artistic associations contribute to this spirit, a spirit implicit in one of the inscriptions written for the grounds of the Hall by William Wordsworth, which can still be read on a stone there.

The embowering rose, the acacia, and the pine,  
Will not unwillingly their place resign;  
If but the cedar thrive that near them stands.  
Planted by Beaumont's and by Wordsworth's hands.  
One wooed the silent art with studious pains,—  
These groves have heard the other's pensive strains:  
Devoted thus, their spirits did unite  
By interchange of knowledge and delight.  
May nature's kindest powers sustain the tree,  
And love protect it from all injury!  
And when its potent branches, wide out-thrown,  
Darken the brow of this memorial stone,  
Here may some poet sit in future days,  
Some future poet meditate his lays;  
Not mindless of that distant age renowned  
When inspiration hovered o'er this ground,  
The haunt of him who sang how spear and shield  
In civil conflict met on Bosworth field;  
And of that famous youth, full soon removed  
From earth, perhaps by Shakespeare's self approved,  
Fletcher's associate, Jonson's friend beloved.

(Written in 1808).

This inscription stands on a spot that looks out across the valley, in which lies the village, to the heights of Charnwood Forest.

Leicestershire is, of course, a favourite haunt of those who follow hounds. In past years there have been meets at the Hall and at Cole Orton cross-roads. But I have seen no huntsman or hounds in or near Cole Orton in recent years.

Charnwood Forest was a hunting ground in Saxon days. Then the Forest Courts were held at Groby, Whitwick and Shepshed.

Modern fox-hunting may be said to have been evolved in the district at the foot of the Charnwood hills. For it is there that stands Quorn Hall, which was the home of Hugo Meynell for nearly fifty years.

#### ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH — 3 MILES.

A pleasant old-world market town. Its name appears in Domesday Book as ASCEBI—the abode of the Ash tree. Ashby is an ancient town of the Norsemen, who had penetrated to the Midlands by the time of Alfred the Great. But in 918 some Midland areas, including Ashby, were recovered by Ethelred and again became a part of Saxon England for nearly a hundred years, until, in 1016, Canute became King of Midland England.

In Norman times, about 1130, Alan la Zouch became Lord of the Manor of Ashby, and the description "de la Zouch" was added to distinguish this Ashby from other towns of the same name. Alan la Zouch was a descendant of the Earls of Brittany.

At the date of Domesday Book, Ashby was an unimportant place. It had eight labourers and six others who, in these days, would probably be called "allotment holders." There were also four cottagers, paying rent in kind, as well as a priest, who ministered in a simple church.

The Ashby Tournament, described in Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe" is placed in the last years of the twelfth century, i.e. during the reign of Richard Coeur de Lion, the Black Knight of the story. At Smisby, 1½ miles away is a field where tournaments were actually held.

In the year 1219, Ashby was granted the right to hold an annual fair, as well as a weekly market. The annual fair still survives, in the Statutes Fair, held each autumn, when the main street of the town is closed to traffic and occupied by roundabouts, swings and other amusements which would no doubt astonish and intrigue the original participants in the thirteenth century fairs.

The last Zouch, Hugh, a Knight under John of Gaunt, died in 1399. His successor, Hugh Burnell, was a tenant of the Cole Orton Beaumonts, rendering to them the service of a Knight's fee. Subsequently, the Manor passed into the possession of the Hastings family. George Hastings being created Earl of Huntingdon in 1529. In St. Helen's Church, Ashby, there is a tomb to the memory of Francis, the second earl.

A later earl was first a guard of, and later one of the peers who tried, Mary, Queen of Scots. He was the principal founder, in 1567, of a school in the town to teach, instruct and inform young boys and youths in good morals, letters, science and virtuous living.

About this time, the population of Ashby was in the neighbourhood of 300 persons.

The fifth earl lived in a style of great splendour. His household

included 68 persons who dined at his table, "besides strangers and others that come out of the town." His servants numbered 62, while his "charges and expenses" for one year were £2,855 13s. 4d., a very great sum for those days.

In 1617, King James I was sumptuously entertained at Ashby Castle, the cost of this entertainment seriously impairing the fortune of the Earl.

The wife of the ninth earl was one of the most remarkable women in ecclesiastical history. From this redoubtable and not over-modest woman sprang the nonconformist Huntingdon Connection. The Countess Selina was a friend of the Wesleys and a patron of Whitefield, whose cause she later espoused against the Wesleys. Later, she built her own chapels, appointed her own chaplains, and founded a college for the training of the ministers of her sect. She also organised open-air preaching on a wide scale.

On the return of Whitefield from missionary work in America, he became one of the Countess' chaplains. The Connection was nominally within the Established Church for many years but it spread rapidly and eventually the Countess had, under the terms of the Act of Toleration, to register her chapels as dissenting meeting houses. A group of her followers carried on her work after the Countess' death—work which survives to this day.

Selina's son, Francis, fought at Bunker's Hill and rose to high military rank. In 1813 he was Governor-General of the British Dominions in India. When under thirty years of age, he was created Baron Rawdon, and later he became Viscount Loudoun, Earl Rawdon, and in 1816, Marquis of Hastings.

He, too, was a benefactor of Ashby School, helping to raise its annual income from £73 to £357.

At one time a "Blue Coat School" and a "Green Coat School" existed in Ashby. The former dated from the early 18th century, and the latter from 1769, the founder being Alderman Newton, who also founded the Alderman Newton School in Leicester, which stands near to the Cathedral there.

There is a dignity about Ashby-de-la-Zouch that is missing in its neighbouring and much younger sister, Coalville. It is not difficult, standing in Market Street, Ashby, with closed eyes, to visualise a troop of men-at-arms, one or two Knights at their head, riding noisily up the street, bound possibly on a foray against the Roundheads at Cole Orton.

Something of the history of the Castle in the days of the Civil War has already been mentioned. Its ruins, all that is left of the second castle built in 1474, are well worth a visit.

Other visits may well be made to

- (a) The Loudoun Memorial, erected in 1874 in memory of Edith Maud, Countess of Loudoun.

- (b) St. Helen's (Parish) Church. A Church in Ashby, dedicated to St. Helen, is mentioned in Domesday Book. It was altered and enlarged at the time of the building of the second Castle in 1474. Most of the existing church dates from that period, but restoration and enlargement was undertaken seventy years ago.

The 17th century reredos with trailing vine leaves and a cherub's head is ascribed to Grinling Gibbons. The Hastings chapel and the unique "finger pillory" should be seen. This finger pillory is believed to have been used to subdue the unruly in Church. Two posts about three feet high, support a beam with thirteen grooves, to take fingers of all sizes. Another beam, similarly grooved, fits over the first, the two forming an effective prison for the fingers of the brawler or inattentive member of the congregation. Such a discipline must have been highly uncomfortable and probably painful. The 15th century pilgrim memorial in the north aisle should not be missed.

- (c) Trinity Church was built in 1838 and consecrated in 1840. The site was given by the Marquis of Hastings. The sixty-six feet high tower was originally surmounted by a spire, but this was found to be out of the perpendicular and, being considered dangerous, was taken down in 1899.

- (d) The Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, the corner stone of which was laid in 1913. The Church was paid for by a legacy of jewellery left by Flora (Hastings), Duchess of Norfolk, who died in 1887.

It is an imposingly solid building of Norman architecture, with a fine 100-foot tower. The Wheel Window at the Western end is well worth attention. The Church has a large crypt.

Road communication between Cole Orton and Ashby early in the 19th century seems to have left much to be desired. Dorothy Wordsworth wrote in 1806, while she was at the Hall Farm: "The roads, if you do not go very far from home, are by no means as bad as I had expected; for instance, the Ashby road, till you come to the turn-pike is very well; afterwards, to be sure, it is shocking, and I have no doubt the Ashby people think we are marvellous creatures to have the courage to wade through it." It may be noted that the road from the turnpike that was so execrable in 1806 is now a part of the excellent main road from Birmingham to Nottingham.

#### COALVILLE

This is a modern, utilitarian town, centring round, and largely dependent on, the Snibston Colliery, the pithead of which is a prominent and unbeautiful feature of the main street. It is a good

shopping centre. Christ Church, about a hundred years old, has interesting features, including a memorial to 34 miners who lost their lives in a disaster at Whitwick Colliery in April, 1898. Those who perished left 27 widows and 84 children.

The Clock Tower, in Memorial Square, in the centre of the town is a memorial of the 1914-18 war. I have seen it described as "a striking feature," this presumably referring to the tower, rather than to the clock. But the Memorial cannot be described as beautiful. It does, however, suit the workaday aspect of the town.

#### BARDON HILL

Two miles beyond Coalville, in the direction of Leicester, is said to be the highest point in the county. It is a prominent landmark, rising to a height of 912 feet above sea level. Large granite quarries exist here.

#### BREEDON-ON-THE-HILL. — 4 MILES.

The Church stands in a matchless position, on the top of a steep hill. The village stands at the bottom of the hill and the climb to the Church is exhausting. The history of Breedon goes back to a time when "men fought and delved with flints." The Church dates back to the 7th Century, and on its walls are fragments of stone Saxon carving which are almost unique. These include foliage, birds, animals and small human figures carved with unusual delicacy. There is no 8th or 9th century work in Europe that can equal this carving, and it is quite unsurpassed in England.

In very early days, ancient Britons chose this site on the hill-top, high above the surrounding forest, as a defence post. They surrounded the hill-top with an earthwork, within which there swarmed the colony.

Within this earthwork, too, there was built a minster, to which the Venerable Bede refers. A Norman Priory followed in 1144, and considerable re-building was carried out in the 13th century. The panelled font dates from the 14th century, and the clerestory from the following century. The north aisle is occupied by monuments to members of the Shirley family, the present representative of which family is Earl Ferrers of Staunton Harold Hall. This aisle contains an elaborate canopied Jacobean pew.

In the village is the eighteenth-century lock-up, a round-house with a conical top and a nail-studded door.

Not far from Breedon, on the road to Ashby, is Staunton Harold, whose Hall is, as has been said, the seat of Earl Ferrers. The surroundings are of great charm, while the "Golden Gates" at the entrance to the park are celebrated. The Church, by the Hall, is of considerable interest. It has fine panelling and decoration, and dates from 1653.

#### GRACE DIEU — 2 MILES.

Was closely associated with the Beaumonts of bygone days. Only a few ruins remain of the Priory, founded in 1240.

It was here that Francis Beaumont, the Elizabethan dramatist and the companion of Fletcher, was born in 1584. (He died in 1616).

"Grace-Dieu, that under Charnwood stand'st alone,  
That lately brought such noble Beaumonts forth,  
Whose brave heroic muses might aspire  
To match the anthems of the heavenly choir."

(Thomas Bancroft).

#### CHAPTER V

#### THE CHURCH, SCHOOL, ETC.

The stone Parish Church of Cole Orton, built in the Gothic style, and dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin, stands in a charming position on a slope, above the main Ashby-Leicester road, cheek by jowl with the Hall.

There is no record of the foundation of the Church. The oldest part is believed to be the 13th-century tower, a grand embattled structure, surmounted by a fine spire, at the west end. In the tower is a peal of eight bells, three of which date back to the 18th century. Three more were added in 1826 and the last two in 1878. In that year a clock was put into the tower but this proved to be unsatisfactory and a new clock was given in 1888 by the Rector, Canon W. B. Beaumont.

The spire was struck by lightning in 1839 and severely damaged. Fortunately, it was found possible to make good the damage. The Parish records show that the spire had been rebuilt and the tower repaired in 1821, at a cost of a little more than £350.

The beauty of the Church is enhanced by its background of fine trees, standing in the grounds of the Hall. One of these, a cedar, standing close to the north door of the Church, was, according to an inscription at the foot of the tree, "planted the 30th of July, 1846, by William, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the 81st year of his age."

The Churchyard, now no longer in use for burials, is a place of beauty, particularly in the early part of the year when it is carpeted with snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils. Later in the year, ferns, Canterbury bells and wild strawberries add their grace to the steep approach to the south door.

The lych-gate is a memorial to Elizabeth Mary, the second wife of Canon W. B. Beaumont.

The stone porch was erected in 1874 as a memorial to Harriett Lewis, its dedication taking place exactly ten years after her death.

Inside the Church, many of the memorials are to members of the Beaumont family. The altar has a fine reredos, largely of marble, with a fine "pieta" in the centre, placed in a recess carved out of the marble. This pieta was brought from Rome by Canon Beaumont during his incumbency. The reredos is surmounted by a large plain cross.

There is excellent woodwork in the Church. The lectern is of old carved oak, probably German in origin, with a revolving top. The graceful curve of the main support is most attractive, though this causes the lectern to be a little top-heavy. The two books—the Old Testament and the New Testament—are massive volumes and the writer has narrowly avoided upsetting the lectern on more than one occasion.

These two books were placed in the Church in 1864, and bear labels, stating that the Rector was W. B. Beaumont, and the Churchwardens T. Radford and J. Hough.

The carved wooden screen on the north side of the choir is of 17th-century Flemish Renaissance workmanship. It is more elaborately carved than the average English work. Scenes from the life of the Saviour are depicted, as well as figures typifying Temperance, Knowledge, Faith and Courage.

Some years ago, when the organ was re-built, this screen was skilfully cut to enable one panel to be raised so that the organist could see into the choir and sanctuary. So well was this work done that the hinged panel can be replaced in its normal position without any sign of a joint.

On the west side of the organ chamber (which is also used as a choir vestry) is a screen which carries carved panels, also Flemish in origin. The figures on these panels repay careful study. So does a small wooden figure of a cherub which hangs by the priest's stall on the north side of the choir.

The Church was very thoroughly restored in 1851, when the north aisle was extended, the chancel re-floored, a new organ installed and a new pulpit provided. It is no doubt due to this restoration, as well as to the occupancy of the Hall by Cromwellian forces during the siege of Ashby, that so little ancient work is now to be found in the Church. The damage done by the Roundheads was severe. They stripped the lead off the roofs to make ammunition, threw down the battlements and ruined the windows.

After the Restoration, it was estimated that the cost of putting the church into serviceable order would be £1,391.

The raising of such a sum was quite impossible for the people of Cole Orton, and by direction of the then Bishop of London

(Humphrey Hinchman, 1663-1675) a Brief was issued calling for collections in the Churches throughout the country, to help the Cole Orton congregation out of the difficulties.

The east window, presented by Charles Merewether in memory of his father, Francis Merewether, Rector from 1815 to 1864, has graceful tracery. Scenes from the life of Jesus are represented.

The Church has a number of stained glass windows. That in the Vestry, at the west end, however, is of painted glass of the 15th century. It was brought to England from Rouen and presented to a former Sir George Beaumont, by whom it was given to the Church.

The parish memorial window (of stained glass) to Francis Merewether is at the western end of the north wall. Yet another window in the Church, that at the west end of the south aisle, was given by Mr. Merewether's widow, in his memory.

Mr. Merewether was buried outside the east end of the Church, and the monument over his grave is cruciform in shape.

Also on the north wall, to the east of the Merewether window, is the parish memorial to Canon W. B. Beaumont, while the window in the south wall is in memory of William Briggs, who was organist of the Church for 40 years, and Schoolmaster of Cole Orton for 32 years. A tablet beneath the window bears the words from the second verse of the seventh chapter of the Book of Nehemiah—"He was a faithful man, and feared God above many."

Yet another stained glass window, at the east end of the south aisle, is in memory of Pauline Menzies, wife of the 8th Baronet. She, with her husband and two of their children, is also commemorated in a wall tablet on the south side. Between these two memorials is the Beaumont altar tomb. This stands on the south side of the south aisle at the east end and commemorates Sir Henry Beaumont, who died in 1607 and his wife, Elizabeth, who died in the following year. This holder of the Baronetcy was less distinguished than others of his line who are not commemorated in the Church.

The figure of Sir Henry is that of a bearded man in ruff and armour, with a long cloak and belted dress. Beside him lies his bonneted wife, and his son kneels at a desk.

The pulpit and the font date from the restoration of 1851. The font, it may be noted, is not in the traditional position, close to the south door, but is at the bottom of the main aisle half way between the south and the north doors, the latter door being the one that leads to the Hall grounds and to the Hall.

The organ, installed in 1851, was re-built in 1943-4 as a memorial to the 11th Baronet. It is on record that, in the days of the Rectorship of Francis Merewether — his curate was John Wordsworth, son of the poet—music was provided by a seraphine,

which was played by Miss Merewether, and is said to have looked like a four-poster bedstead. It stood at the east end of the south aisle, near the altar-tomb of Sir Henry, in the position now occupied by the Hall and Rectory seats. Miss Merewether later married Dr. Curry (or Currie), the Master of the Charterhouse.

Beneath the Hall and Rectory seats is the Beaumont vault. This vault has not been opened for many years and could only be opened by removing the seats and tearing up the flooring. The massive key of the vault is now in the Parish strong-box.

The heavy stone Litany Desk is the work of Canon Beaumont's second wife, as is the beautifully illuminated Book of the Litany that rests on the desk.

The oak candlesticks in the Sanctuary are also the work of Mrs. Beaumont.

In 1662, the living was valued in the "King's Bookes" at £10 6s. 0d.

Wordsworth has left his impression of the Church and its people. In 1806, he wrote "I was sorry to see (in the Church) at Cole Orton few middle-aged men or even women; the congregation consisted almost entirely of old persons, particularly old men, and boys and girls. The girls were not well dressed. Their clothes were indeed clean, but not *tidy*."

The last Viscount Beaumont, who died in 1702, was buried in the family vault. In the Church, there is no monument to his memory, but his name lives in the "Viscount Beaumont Hospital," the almshouses that stand close to the Church, on the site of the old school. This Viscount Beaumont was responsible for the establishment and endowment of both Almshouses and School.

In 1867 the Almshouses were re-built on the old School site, the School being then transferred to its present position, close to St. John's Chapel. The Almshouses were rebuilt at the expense of Sir George Beaumont, and the school at the expense of Canon Beaumont.

The Church contains no memorials to any of the Rectors who ministered here before the 19th century.

In the course of the centuries the population has gradually moved away from the neighbourhood of the Church. The most densely populated part of the parish is nearly two miles from the Church, which is, moreover, at the top of a considerable hill. There is, however, a chapel at the cemetery, consecrated to S. John the Apostle and Evangelist, which is considerably nearer the bulk of the people. This is a 19th-century building seating 24, which, apart from funerals, is used for services on many occasions — principally for celebrations of the Holy Communion on Sundays and some weekday mornings.

There is nothing very remarkable about this Chapel, apart from its lovely altar of carved Spanish oak. It has three stained glass

windows, two commemorating Canon W. B. Beaumont, while the altar rails are in memory of his second wife, Elizabeth Mary, who did so much to beautify the Parish Church.

The Church School established and endowed by Viscount Beaumont in 1702, and re-built by Canon Beaumont in 1867, now serves the Cole Orton District as a Junior School. The buildings are in good condition, but, under the Education Act of 1944, they have to be expanded. This expansion may not be called for until about 1965. When it does take place half of the cost will be met by the Ministry of Education, but, if the School is to remain an "aided" (i.e. Church) School, the balance has to be found by the Managers. Their share of the cost will probably be about £2,000. It is intended that the reconstruction shall be carried out as a memorial to Lillie Ellen, Lady Beaumont, widow of the 10th Baronet. Towards this memorial, the Managers have in hand a sum which, by 1965, should be worth about £1,000. A part of any profits that may result from the publication of this book will be devoted to increasing the fund.

The CHURCH REGISTERS go back to 1611, and are in good condition.

The COMMUNION PLATE belonging to the Church includes a Britannia Silver Paten, with the inscription "Given to ye parish of Coleorton in ye County of Leicester for ye use of ye H. Communion by James Hawkins, A°Dom. 1701."

The Church possesses two chalices, a flagon, another paten and a silver-gilt spoon, believed to have been originally a tea-strainer, made either in India or Malta. This was presented to the Church by Canon Beaumont in 1872. The filigree work in the bowl might well have been executed in Calcutta or Valletta, the capital city of Malta.

There is also a beautiful wood and ivory box for breads, made by Canon Beaumont's second wife.

The chalices, flagon and second paten (of silver) were given in 1818 by Sir George Beaumont, the 7th Baronet, the friend of Wordsworth and so many other literary and artistic men of his day.

In 1704, there was no Rectory. The following are among the fees payable in those days:

Churchings	...	2d.
Burials	...	4d., plus 2d. for registering.
Marriages after banns	...	2/6
Marriages by licence	...	5/0

The Clerk's fee for tolling the bell at a funeral, if the deceased were buried in a coffin was 6d. If buried without a coffin 4d.

## CHAPTER VI

## INCUMBENTS OF COLE ORTON.

(Cole Overton, Overton Quartermarsh).

- 1209 W. de Quartermares.
- 1231 Robert de Landa, Sub-Deacon. Presented by William de Quartermaris, to the Church of Overton Quartermaris.
- 1236 John de Dalby.
- 1246 John Clarel, Sub-Deacon. Presented by Dominus (?Sir) Geoffrey Malreward.
- 1266 Robert de Hodeshak (or Hodwake). Presented by Dominus John Clarel, by reason of the wardship of the lands, and of William, son and heir of the late William Mauregards. Magister John Clarel resigned (died 1276).
- 1277 Magister John Clarel, Sub-Deacon. Presented by William Maurewards, on death of Magister Robert de Hoddisake.
- 1293 Magister John Clarel, Clerk. Presented (in minor orders and now ordained Sub-Deacon and instituted) by Dominus Ralph Bassett in right of wardship of William, son of William Maureward, on resignation of Magister John Clarel, Senr.
- 1323 Magister Robert de Patritra (or Paca), by William Malward, on exchange with John Clarel.
- 1329 Magister Henry de Whitchenore, acolyte, by John Maurewarde, on resignation of Robert de Patritra, Archdeacon of Stafford.
- Richard Maurewarde. No record of institution found. Known to have resigned.
- 1336 John Russell, acolyte, by Sir John Maurewarde, Knight, lord of Overton Quartermers, on resignation of Richard Maurewarde.
- Magister Henry de Bagworth. No record of institution found. Known to have resigned.
- 1350 Roger de Middleton, priest, by Johan, relict of Sir Ralph Bassett, of Drayton, Knight, on resignation of Magister Henry de Bagworth.
- 1379 John Tirell, priest, by Elizabeth de Berkeley, lady of Overton Catermars, on resignation of Robert de Middleton, exchanged for Carleton R.

- 1437 John Hylton, presbyter, by John Southam, Canon of Lincoln and Thomas Rowton and William Hay, Clerks, feoffees of Sir Thomas Beaumont, Knight, now beyond seas. Cause of vacancy not stated.
- 1440 John Bell, by Magister J. Southam, Canon resid. of Lincoln, on resignation of John Hylton. (From this date, the patronage of the living was in the hands of the Beaumont family).
- 1449-50 John Monwere, Chaplain, by Sir John Beaumont, on death of Magister Adam Dyn, alias Herdley.
- 1491 Dominus John Ewen, priest, "per disiretum virum," by John Beaumonte, Esq., on death of John Ball. (It is found by inquisition that the said John Beaumonte is Patron by hereditary right).
- 1507 Dominus John Walkar, priest, "per strenuum virum," by John Beaumont, on resignation of Dominus John Ewen. Pension of 46s. 8d. to the retiring Rector.
- 1522 Magister Thomas Storar, M.A., by John Beaumonte, Esq., on death of Dominus John Walkar.
- 1531 (?1525) Magister Edward Bassett, LL.D., by William Lolle, of Asheby la Souche and Thomas Beaumont of Threngerton, Esqres., Roger Draper of Overton Sawcey and John Burley of Osgathorpe, feoffees of John Beaumont of Overton Quatermashe Esq., on resignation of last Rector.
- 1531 (?1534) John Beaumonte, Clerk, by Richard Beaumonte of Gawdeby, Esq., on resignation of Magister Edward Bassett, LL.D. (Dominus Radulphus Hethcok, Curate).
- 1535 Dominus William Wode, Clerk, "per honestos viros". By Richard Beaumonte of Overton Quatermershe, Esq., John Villers and Henry Sutton, Knights, John Bassett, Esq., Edward Bassett, Clerk, Edward Beaumonte, Gent., Roger Draper and John Burle, feoffees of the said Richard Beaumonte, on cession or dimission of John Beaumonte, son of William Beaumont, late of Gawdeby, the last incumbent.

Note.—No institutions for the parish are traceable at Lincoln between 1535 and 1667. Several of the Bishop's Register for this period are missing. The next few entries are from other sources.

- 1605 (or earlier). James Stacie, M.A., by Sir Henry Beaumont. Died 1611.
- 1611 Thomas Pestell or Pestlock. (In 1634, a Mr. Molde was Curate).
- 1640 William Pestell. Sequestered 1654; restored 1662; buried 31st January, 1695-6.

- 1654 Samuel Oldershaw intruded. (He was ejected in 1662, and then went to Derbyshire as a chaplain in a private household. Apparently he later practised medicine).
- 1662 William Pestell restored. (See note below).
- 1667 William Pestell, M.A., by Thomas Beaumont, Viscount Swords, on death of last Rector.
- 1696 John Harrison, A.M., by Roger Cave, of Stamford, co. Northants and Thomas Greenwood of Chastleton, co. Oxon, Gents., patrons pro hoc vice, on death of William Pestell.
- 1700 William Hunt, A.M., by Thomas, lord Beaumont, on death of John Harrison.
- 1727 Henry Leybourne, by Sir George Beaumont, Bart., on resignation of William Hunt.
- 1757 Thomas Beaumont, Clerk, by same patron, on death of Henry Leybourne.
- 1761 Thomas Hurst, Clerk, by same patron, on death of Thomas Beaumont.
- 1778 (Feb. 3rd.) William Beecher, M.A., by same patron, on resignation of Thomas Hurst.
- 1778 (Dec. 26th) William Beecher, M.A., by same patron, on his own resignation.
- 1785 William Beecher, M.A., by same patron, on cession of himself.
- 1815 Francis Merewether, Clerk, by Sir George Beaumont, of Cole Orton Hall, Bart., on cession of William Beecher.
- 1864 William Beresford Beaumont, M.A., Clerk, by Sir George Beaumont, Bart., of Cole Orton Hall, on death of Francis Merewether.
- 1901 Harold Robinson, M.A., Clerk, by Sir George W. B. Beaumont, Bart., on death of William Beresford Beaumont.
- 1921 John Nigel Philpott, M.A., Clerk, by Sir George Beaumont, Bart., on cession of Harold Robinson.
- 1932 Herbert Edward Stevens, M.A., Clerk, by Sir George Beaumont, Bart., on death of John Nigel Philpott.
- 1942 Alexander Eveleigh Agathos Eagar, Clerk, Captain (S.), Royal Navy (Retired), by trustees of Sir George F. Beaumont, Bart., on cession of Herbert Edward Stevens.

**WILLIAM PESTELL.** This Rector was a poet, and a devoted Royalist, as apparently were all the residents of Cole Orton in the days of the Civil War, from the squire downwards. On the capture of Cole Orton by the Roundheads in 1654, Pestell was sequestered and, contrary to the custom of the time, cruelly used. This ill-treatment was probably a form of vengeance against all the people of the district. He was robbed of his property and his money and "set on a poor jade with a halter, and because it could not keep pace, his body must be made the anvil of fury in so

barbarous a manner as the infamy of the fact will never die." His wife, very near her confinement, was turned out of doors with her children, who were later supported by charity.

The Rector's aged father was then Rector of Packington, a few miles away. The father lodged a formal complaint with Sir George Gresley, the Commander of the garrison. Whether the Rector of Cole Orton received either apology or compensation is doubtful, but on the Restoration, he was again inducted into the living. Later, he received the Rectory of Ravenstone, apparently in plurality.

**SAMUEL OLDERSHAW** was intruded into the living in 1654. He in turn was ejected in 1662, as shown in the Table of Rectors that starts this Chapter. There is some doubt as to the year in which William Pestell was restored to the living. According to one account, an intruder was at Cole Orton until 1667. It is certain that William was re-inducted not later than the latter year. If he was not restored until 1667, his suspension lasted for thirteen years.

**FRANCIS MEREWETHER** (1815-1864) was Vicar of Whitwick, as well as Rector of Cole Orton. He left his mark on the parish in many ways. He built the present Rectory in 1816, at some distance from the Church. The ruins of the earlier Rectory are still to be seen in the Hall Grounds, near Sir Walter Scott's seat. Later Rectors have often deplored Merewether's choice of a site, which involves a considerable uphill walk to the Church.

**WILLIAM BERESFORD BEAUMONT** (1864-1901), Canon of Peterborough, was the younger son of the Hall. He was a great benefactor of Cole Orton in many ways. Some of the older residents can still remember him. A large photograph of the Canon hangs in the School. This shows him to have had dignified and benignant features; he wore a beard which, by modern standards, would be considered very large.

It will be noticed that Francis Merewether and Canon Beaumont held the Rectorship of Cole Orton between them for no less than eighty-six years.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOME NOTES ON THE DIOCESE OF LEICESTER.

**THE** Diocese was formed about the year 650, as a result of the zeal of the followers of St. Aidan. Holy Island, therefore, was the cradle of Christianity in Leicestershire. From 650 to 870, there are recorded the names of nine Bishops of Leicester who had charge of eight or nine of our Midland counties.

Bishop Stubbs' "Registrum Sacrum Anglicanum" gives the following list:—

Cuthwine.	Consecrated in	680
Wilfrid.	"	692
(From 705 to 737, the See was joined to that of Lichfield).		
Torhthelm.	Consecrated in	737
Eadberht.	"	764
Unwona	"	?
Werenberht	"	802
Hrethun	"	816
Aldred	"	?
Ceolred	"	840

The 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' gives the following variations in the spelling of Leicester — Ligeraceastre, Ligereceastre, Ligranceastre, Ligoraceastre and Legraceastre. The name is believed to be derived from the river Legra, flowing by the city.

With the Danish invasions, and the overwhelming of the Church in Leicestershire, the see came to an end somewhere between 870 and 874.

But the faith of the surviving Christians gradually but surely overcame the paganism of the invaders, and Christian worship was restored. The Diocese of Leicester was not then revived, however, but was included in the Diocese of Dorchester until 1072, and after that date, in the newly-created Diocese of Lincoln, remaining under the jurisdiction of the Bishops of Lincoln until 1839, when it was transferred to the See of Peterborough, which included then, as now, the counties of Northampton and Rutland.

The Archdeaconry of Leicester comprised the whole county for nearly 850 years. It was not until 1921 that the county was divided into the two existing Archdeaconries of Leicester and Loughborough.

Before 1220, the county was divided into seven Rural Deaneries, there being 203 parishes in all.

After the Reformation, a proposal was made to restore the See of Leicester, but, although six new Dioceses were created, the plans in regard to Leicester came to nothing, probably for financial reasons.

The Diocese of Peterborough included 600 parishes, and it became clear in the latter part of the nineteenth century, that it was too vast a diocese for full supervision by one Bishop to be possible.

Bishop Theodore Woods was Bishop of Peterborough from 1916 to 1923, and took the first steps towards the restoration of the ancient Diocese of Leicester. His successor, Bishop Cyril Bardsley, carried through the division of the Diocese. This division came into effect on 12th November, 1926, Bishop Bardsley becoming the first Bishop of the restored See, where he continued

to work until his resignation in 1940. He died in December of that year, deeply lamented.

He was succeeded by Bishop Guy Vernon Smith, translated from Willesden, where he had been Bishop Suffragan of North London. Bishop Guy Vernon Smith is still, happily, the Chief Shepherd of the Church in Leicestershire.

The Diocese which in 1947 celebrated the twenty-first anniversary of its restoration with thankfulness to God for all His goodness, follows the boundaries of the County of Leicestershire, so that throughout the whole county, we continue the work of those Christian men and women who lived faithful lives in Leicestershire over a thousand years ago.

Bishop J. J. Willis, who was Bishop of Uganda from 1912 to 1934, came to Leicester as Assistant Bishop in 1935. To the regret of very many he retired at Easter, 1949. His successor is Bishop F. S. Hollis, lately Bishop of Labuan and Sarawak.

The Cathedral Church of the Diocese is that of St. Martin's, Leicester, which was hallowed to its new dignity on 21st February, 1927. The dedication is to St. Martin of Tours, the soldier-Bishop who died in 401. The story of his chivalrous generosity is well-known. It is related that, one bitter winter day, when the saint was riding near Amiens, a beggar implored him for alms. St. Martin immediately cut his cloak into two pieces with his sword, and gave a half to the beggar.

The latin name of the cloak was a "cappa" or "capella," and later, a sanctuary called a "capella" was built to house St. Martin's cloak. This "capella" was guarded by "capellani." Hence, we have the modern names "chapel" and "chaplain." So the generous act of the Patron Saint of Leicester's Cathedral has affected our language by the introduction of names that are on our lips almost daily.

The day of the Saint is November 11th, so that, whenever we observe Remembrance Day for the dead of two wars, we should also be remembering St. Martin of Tours, the friend of the friendless.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE COLE ORTON "TOWN BOOKE."

IN the custody of the Rector, and kept in the Parish Chest, is the "Cole Orton Town Booke." This old account book contains also a list of the Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor and Constables from the year 1740 to 1850. The "Headboroughs" are also shown from 1778 to 1841. The Headboroughs show remarkably long terms

of office, Richard Potter having held the office from 1785 to 1816, Francis Potter from 1817 to 1822, and Robert Porter from 1823 to 1838.

The book also contains the accounts of the Overseers of the Poor from 1770 to 1797, though they are incomplete for the latter years of this period.

The expenses of the office of the Overseer were met each year by a levy on the inhabitants, the rates of assessment not being shown. In 1777, however, there was a deficit of nearly £26, which was a little more than covered by a "a 9d. levy."

The tendency during this period was for the disbursements to increase year by year, the total for 1771 being £140 2s. 0½d. (the lowest figure shown is for 1785—under £131). In 1796, the total outgoings had risen to £352 13s. 1d., this being nearly £100 greater than in 1794, which in itself was an advance of over £70 on the previous year.

The amounts of these payments may seem surprising, when the comparatively small population and the low cost of living are taken into consideration. It should be borne in mind also that "the ancient parish of Cole Orton" covered a much smaller area than is comprised in the present parish. On the other hand, the burial registers for the time show that many parishioners were interred in those days as "paupers."

The names of the "Surveyors of the Highways" are also shown from 1771 to 1812, with their accounts covering the first twenty-one years of this period. Their expenses were much smaller than those of the Overseers of the Poor, generally ranging between £10 and £20.

The wage then paid to a labourer on the roads was normally 1/- a day; on occasions 1/2 was allowed.

The payment for "getting" loads of stone (size not stated) was 2d. per load, while that for spreading the loads was 3/4 per hundred loads.

The cost of upkeep of the roads was covered by "Composition Money," and where this was insufficient to pay for the upkeep, by a levy up to 4d.

The Churchwardens' accounts cover the years 1770 to 1871. Their expenses were also covered by levies, varying in amount from 2½d. to 1/8 in the £, so far as the amounts of the levies are shown. In some years there were two levies, and in one year (1821, when the spire was rebuilt) there appear to have been three.

Nearly all those called upon to pay these levies seem to have honoured these calls to the full, but in most years a small proportion of "bad levys" are shown. In many years, the Church was in debt, usually to one or other of the Wardens, at the year's end, for varying sums. In one year, the debt was over £95.

The amount of the levies called for, in consequence of the re-

building of the spire, was reduced by a gift of £100 by Sir George Beaumont.

A number of the items are of considerable interest to us in these days of high prices, e.g.

In 1771, a "brush for ye church" cost 1/8.

In several years, payment for washing "the" surplice and for supplying "Bread for the Communion" was 7/- a year.

"The" surplice seems to have been an expensive item for those days. A new surplice cost £2 1s. 2d. in 1771, 4/- to 5/- a year being paid for its washing.

Collections in Church first appear in the accounts for 1885.

Collections for Foreign Missions do not make an appearance until 1901.

Easter Offerings were first handed to the Rector, "as requested by the Rural Dean," in 1905. The first collection for the Leicester Royal Infirmary had been made two years earlier. In subsequent years, the Harvest Festival Collection was divided between the Infirmary and the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Society.

Visitation and Court Fees (with payments for the Churchwardens' attendance) formed a considerable item in the expenses. The presence of the churchwardens for Visitations and Court attendance was required twice a year, i.e. at Easter and at Michaelmas.

Those who know the present-day cost of renewing and splicing bell-ropes will be interested to read these entries:

1771	Mending bell-ropes (for three bells)	...	6d.
1772	Splicing ye bell-ropes	...	1/-
1786	New bell ropes	...	8/-

By 1803, the purchase of new bell-ropes involved the wardens in an expenditure of £1 1s. 0d.

In 1790, 16 dozen eggs "at sundry times" cost 1/4d.

The Churchwardens of 1770 to 1774 write of the "Ringers." In 1774 and 1775, however, the entry appears as "Wringers." Presumably, the Rector's warden of those years was a staunch upholder of ancient spelling, and perhaps a marked "traditionalist."

An entry of 1779 would bring a wry smile to the lips of a Churchwarden of 1949—"Pd. for coals for the use of the Church -/8d." It should be added that the warden also 1/- gave to the man who brought the coal.

In 1821 a load of slack for the stoves cost 1/-, but a toll-gate charge of 1/1½ had to be paid on this load.

"Beesoms" for cleaning the church were bought for 2d., 3d. and 4d.

In 1779 sixty bricks, and their carriage to the Church cost 1/3, while the warden "gave to the bricklayer by ale, 1/-." This seems to have been the bricklayer's only form of payment.

Frequent entries are for "hedge hoggs" and sparrows. The

wardens were authorised to pay for the destruction of these pests, the usual payments being 4d. for an old hedge hog, 2d. for a young one, and from ½d. to 2d. a dozen for sparrows. What profitable amusement the children must have had!

Payments for sparrows involved considerable outlay at times. One disbursement was for 152 dozen sparrows.

Another entry that occurs more than once is for "stopping pigeons out of the church," at 2/- on each occasion. Yet another 1/- for killing "rats" in the church at 4d. each.

Skins and parchments appear in the 18th century accounts at prices varying from 9d. to 1/-. Early in the next century, the cost had risen to 2/10.

In 1788, an item reads "Lock and escutcheon for the Town chest 2/2."

"Ringing Drink" or "Ringing Ale" appears on a number of occasions, the cost being about 6/6 a year.

Two rather mysterious entries in 1794 and 1795 are "Gave a man for a fire at Cheshire 5/-."

Reference has been made in Chapter V to the raising of a "brief," addressed to all the Churches in England, to help Cole Orton to cover the cost of repairs after the heavy damage done by Cromwellian forces during their occupation of the Hall. In 1803 Cole Orton gave to 14 Briefs, the sum of 14/. We know that, in 1712, the Church of Hucknall gave 1/3 in response to a brief issued on behalf of Cole Orton—we may assume that this was the brief issued after the Restoration, in spite of the late date.

The last entry for 1805 is "Paid for tolling the bell at Nelson's funeral 1/." On 18th October, 1852, the ringers were paid for ringing for "Duke Wellington's funeral £1." And on 11th September, 1855, they were paid 5/- for their services "on the fall of Sebastopol."

In 1817, the Sexton was paid £3 3s. a year, his wife being allowed 1/- a week "for opening and shutting windows," and another 1/- a week for cleaning the Church.

In 1820, the wardens "gave to 4 American seamen by request of the Magistrates of Plymouth to assist them on their way to Yarmouth 2/6." Why this payment was made by the Churchwardens and not by the Constable is not stated.

The price of coal in 1880 was 6/8 per ton.

And so it would be possible to continue with extracts from the "Town Booke." But such details might well prove tedious, and I will conclude with the following entries made early in 1809. One can almost see the disgust on the face of the Warden as he wrote carefully and very neatly "Pd. for a letter from Manchester sent by some quack doctor 9½d."

The other entry gives rise to strange thoughts regarding the frequency—or infrequency—of the wearing of "the" surplice. It

reads "To 1½ yd. of cloth and mending the surplice, it being eat with mice 7/-."

The Constable's accounts for 1770 and the following years contain some items of interest, such as:—

7 July, 1770 For assessing the Land and Window Tax 5/-.

24 December, 1770 Paid to the mole catcher £1, Rat catcher £1 5s. (Recurrent items. The word "mould" is used at times).

1771 Gave a passenger 1/-.

1771 Gave a poor woman, by order 1/-.

1771 and subsequent years. Charges at Ashby Statutes to High Constable, 2/-. The Constable apparently dined with the High Constable yearly, at the time of the Ashby Statutes Fair.

1772 and similarly in later years:—

Making a list for Militia, 5/-. Expenses were also incurred for taking the list to Loughborough, attendance on Appeal Day and on Ballotting Day and "to have the men sworn in."

1773 Gave a soldier and his wife for lodging ... -/3d.

Gave a woman with two children ... -/6d.

1796 Gave 4 soldiers' wives with a Pass ... 1/-

(similar entries are frequent).

1773 Paid for ale for two witnesses ... 2/-

1773 Paid for a Window Tax Warrant ... 2/-

1776 Paid for a Press Warrant ... 2/-

1787 Going to Leicester with Press Warrant and Man ... 2/-

1781 Paid for a woman and child with a Pass for their supper, breakfast (*sic*) and lodging ... 1/3d.

1785 Paid at Loughborough for warrants to assess the Shop, Servants, Carriage and Horse Tax ... 3/-

1791 For searching for geese, had in ale ... 1/8d.

1791 Paid for a lock for the handcuffs ... -/10d.

1796 Going round the parish to measure the men liable for service in the Militia ... 5/-

1798 Paid to post and shaize boy ... 3/-

1799 Journey to Leic. with Thos. Hall he being ran away from his Master ... 2/6d.

1801 Gave 2 American men with a Pass ... -/6d.

1807 Gave a West Indiaman distressed ... -/6d.

1807 Gave 3 American sailors distressed ... 2/6d.

Other expenses are claimed in connection with making arrests, conveying prisoners to gaol. "Bridewell" and "House of Correction," for inquests and for Search Warrants.

A number of payments are made for "tenting" offenders.

Disbursements appear also for "mittimus" for various men. A

typical series of entries reads (1787):—

Going to Ravenstone with Chas. Hail	...	...	1/-
Paid for his "mittimus" 1/-, Do for ale at the Work-			
house 6d.	...	...	1/6
Going to Osgathorpe and Breedon to get him married			2/-

Up to 1790, the expenses of the Constable were paid by yet another levy (usually 4d. or 5d.). From 1791, the Overseers of the Poor re-imbursed the Constables.

In 1803, charges for balloting and drawing the "Army of Reserve" lists are shown, with other expenses in connection with the "old Militia list." Payments were also made for services connected with the "additional force" (1805) and a "Levy en mass" (1806).

Frequent charges appear for the repair of the "Pinfold Gate," the "Pinfold" being the pound into which stray cattle, and other animals were put.

Some of the names of neighbouring villages that appear in these accounts vary at times from those now in use. Among these are Raunston, Mountsoval, Swebstone and Shackstone.

A note in the Town Book shows a composition made between the Church Officers and a Mr. Cartwright, who had done some work at the Church in 1823-4.

This note reads "Mr. Cartwright's bill for work done at the Church having been laid before the Meeting and likewise Mr. Matthew's valuation of the work left standing, which Mr. Cartwright had agreed to leave to be valued by any workman:

It was resolved that Three Pounds eight shillings and seven pence be offered to Mr. Cartwright to balance his account, that being the sum remaining due after deducting Mr. Matthew's valuation for the work standing from Mr. Cartwright's Bill: and that no further sum be offered to Mr. Cartwright."

This resolution is signed by Francis Merewether, the churchwardens and two others.

The following are the "Archdeacon's Order at Cole Orton," dated 20th May, 1797:—

"The weeds and grass growing out of the Interstices of the walls to be rooted up and the Cracks and Crevices to be filled with Mortar and fresh pointed. It is recommended, if practicable, to make a brick drain or trench round the Church as near the foundation as can be done with safety in order to carry off the wet and keep the Church dry. The windows to be cleaned and casements put into two opposite ones in the Church and one in the East window of the Chancel occasionally to let in air and ventilate them. The Creed, Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments which at present are scarcely legible to be fresh delineated upon the boarded Tables. The pulpit Cushion

and Carpet and the Carpet or Covering for the Communion Table to be well scoured and cleaned. A new Napkin to cover the elements. A new Prayer Book for the Minister and several new Bases for the Poor to kneel upon to be all provided. An Account of the Poor Land of the School and Hospital Endowments and of all other Parochial Charities and Benefactions to be hung up in the Church, and a Copy of it transmitted to the Archdeacon's Registry. It is recommended to have the old Monument belonging to the Beaumont family cleaned and repaired. The three Registers, one beginning with the Year 1601, another with 1611, and a third with 1664, being all in very bad condition, it is recommended to have them carefully examined, put into the best condition possible, and if necessary copied and attested by the Minister and Churchwardens. The Parsonage house is a comfortable one and in good repair. The Church Yard quite full of graves and not in such good order and neat condition as it ought to be."

An interesting Memorandum drawn up by the Innkeepers of the parish has been copied into the book. It is unsigned and undated, but must have been drawn up considerably more than a hundred years ago. It appears between the Archdeacon's Orders quoted above (1797) and the Rules and Orders for stinting the fields which follow, dated 1773. This Memorandum reads:—

"We whose names are underwritten keeping Public Houses in the Parish of Cole Orton do agree to the following Rules:—

1st. That we will not suffer any Ale or Liquors to be drawn or sold in our separate houses after ten o'clock at Night nor suffer any Company to remain after a Quarter past ten (Travellers excepted) nor will we suffer any Ale or Liquors to be drawn or Sold during divine Service on the Lord's Day.

2nd. We will not suffer any Person to play at Cards, or Dice, or any other unlawful Game in our Separate Houses at any time or upon any Occasion.

3rd. We do all agree to sell our Ale in full Measure by the Quart, Pint, &c., &c.

4th. That if anyone shall transgress against the first Rule he shall forfeit & pay the Sum of Thirty Shillings.

If anyone shall transgress against the second Rule he shall forfeit & pay the Sum of Thirty Shillings.

If anyone shall transgress against the third Rule he shall forfeit & pay the Sum of Thirty Shillings.

The forfeitures to be paid into the Hands of the Church Warden for the time being & to be given to the Poor by the Direction of the Vestry Meeting.

The following "Rules and Orders for stinting the fields, &c." were agreed to at a Vestry Meeting held at Cole Orton on 13th September, 1773.

- 1 Fifteen Sheep for a Yard Land not to be turned in till 14 days after the other Cattle.
- 2 Tups to be taken out Aug. 31st & kept out till St. Luke.
- 3 To Draw the Field to a Stint at Old Martinmass.
- 4 Seven single Gates for Cattle for every Yard Land.
- 5 All Cattle to be Branded that are turned into the Field—within ye Town—branded by ye field reeves.
- 6 The Fields to be broken at the Discretion of the Field Reeves.
- 7 Thoffouros (?) (?) furrows) to be made good in the Cornfield & the P. Field to be drove a fortnight after Michaelmas.
- 8 All the Field Fonrus to be made good in 24 hours after Notice given by the Field Reeves or to forfeit five Shillings.
- 9 Any farmer that has Gates to spare to set them to the rest of the farmers at 1/6 each, & if no one has Occasion for them to be allowed the same for them.
- 10 All swine that are 8 weeks old to be kept rung or to forfeit 2/6.
- 11 The Field Reeves to have each of them a Gate allow'd for their Trouble.
- 12 To drive the Pease Field after the 2nd Man begins to sow or to forfeit 2/6 each.
- 13 Ridgells to be kept out till tuppung time is over.
- 14 No Tup to be turned in but what is agreeable to the Field reeves.
- 15 All Foals to be Tedder'd after they are a Month Old.
- 16 No Diseased Cattle to be turned into the Field upon the forfeiture of 5/0d.
- 17 The Field Reeves to pound whatever is turned in contrary to the Agreement & the Owners to pay for every Offence 1/0 per Head to the Field reeves.
- 18 The Field Reeves to employ a Bird tenter to be paid as usual.
- 19 No Cattle that are branded & turned in to be taken out, & others turned in, in their room.
- 20 No Person to begin to Mow in the Corn Field, till two days after notice given by the Field reeves to wade out the Grass.
- 21 The Churchwarden to pay 2d. per dozen for sparrows destroyed in this parish but not elsewhere.

The above Orders Concluded & Agreed upon the day & year above written and to continue in force until Altered by a Vestry Meeting, by us.

These Rules and Orders were signed by Jos. Toone, John Ayre, Robert Swain, Thos. Ayre, Thos. King and Wm. Burflem.

The Field Reeves for 1773 were Thos. King and Robert Swain. Those for 1774, Jos. Toone and Thos. Ayre. No further names of Field Reeves are entered in the Book.

The Town Book also contains a copy of a levy for Cole Orton, worked out to show the amounts payable from 2d. to 6d. in the £. The total sums payable by those assessed vary from 1d. to 19/- for every penny of assessment.

On the last page of the Book, there appears the following copy of a report of the examination of a "Rogue & Vagabond," with a copy of the Justice's order in regard to the woman examined.

COUNTY OF DERBY. The examination of Margaret Sherwood, a Rogue and Vagabond, taken on oath before me, Sir John Every, Bart., one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace in and for the sd. County this 3rd day of April, 1772. Who on oath saith that she is ab't ye age of 50 years, was born as she has heard at Coliones (?) at Lerwick in the Islands of Shetland. When she was ab't ye age of 20 y'rs she was Married to James Clownis whose Settlem't she saith was at Lerwick af'd w'n she had been married ab't 15 or 16 y'rs her sd. husband died that ab't 5 yrs after she was mar'd to George Cheadle a Pedlar whose Settlem't she saith was at Coleorton in ye County of Leic'r when she had been mar'd ab't 7 y'rs to her sd. husband Geo. Cheadle had dyed, then on the ninth day of Dec'r last she mar'd to Jno. Sherwood whose Settlem't is as she has often heard him say at Hamstall Ridward in ye County of Stafford saith that on the Tenth day of Jan'y last her sd. husband Jno. Sherwood run away from her & further this Exam'n saith not.

Margaret Sherwood

X

Her Mark.

Taken & signed the Day & )

Year above written before me ) John Every

(Copy taken June 23rd, 1772).

COUNTY OF ) To the Overseers of the Poor of the Parish of  
STAFFORD ) Hamstall Ridward in the sd. County.\*

Whereas it appears to me one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace in & for ye sd. County of the Settlem't of Margaret Sherwood the wife of Jno. Sherwood & in right of her husband in your sd. Parish of Hamstall Ridward that she hath applied to

\* Professor G. M. Trevelyan's "English Social History," p.281 in the "World Books" edition, is of interest in this connection.

you or one of you for relief w'ch you or one of you hath refused  
I therefore Order and Direct that you allow the sd. Margaret Two  
Shill'n p'r week or forthwith to show me Cause to ye contrary.  
Given under my hand the 29th day of Jan'y 1772.

---

Charges of the Officers of Hamstall Ridward:

	£	s.	d.
Expenses going down to Newport after Cheadle	0	16	0
Gave her at Easter	...	0	10 6
Going to Coleorton	...	...	Not completed

(Sd.) Jos. Jordan, Overseer, Wm. Jos. Riley, Churchwarden at  
Hamstall Ridward near Litchfield.

Marg't was with Cheadle w'th in 2 Y'rs.