

FRANCIS BEAUMONT'S MONUMENT IN CHARTERHOUSE CHAPEL AND ELIZABETH, BARONESS CRAMOND AS PATRONESS OF MEMORIALS IN EARLY STUART LONDON

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SUMMARY

The monument to Francis Beaumont in the chapel of the Charterhouse commemorates his period as Master of Thomas Sutton's charity, from 1617 to 1624. It was the only monument to a Master erected in the chapel between 1613, when the charity was established, and 1842, and was sponsored not by the governors but by Beaumont's niece, Elizabeth, Baroness Cramond. She included her name and status in the inscription, and incorporated the heraldry of the Beaumont family and those of her two husbands in the design. In her role as patroness of church monuments, she placed three others in London churches, marking the advancement of her kindred from county gentry to a family with strong connections with the metropolis and the Stuart Court. Francis's memorial in the Charterhouse is the only one of the four to survive. It records for posterity his life and rank and Elizabeth's own social status, as well as her achievement in erecting it in that quasi-monastic establishment.

THE CHARTERHOUSE

The 14th-century Carthusian priory in Clerkenwell was rebuilt as a mansion by Sir Edward North after the Dissolution and subsequently improved by members of the Howard family: Thomas, 4th Duke of Norfolk and Thomas, Earl of Suffolk. The buildings provided a substantial and prestigious home for the charity founded by Thomas Sutton, which was unequalled in scale between the Reformation and the foundation

of Guy's Hospital in the 1720s. Established after Sutton's death in 1611, it consisted of an almshouse for 80 men and a school for 40 foundation scholars. The school was moved away in 1872, but the almshouse remains, the buildings having been restored after a devastating fire begun by a fire-bomb during an air raid in 1941. The chapel, which escaped the fire, consists of the chapter house of the priory, which forms the principal aisle, an aisle added on its north side in 1614 for Sutton's foundation, and a further bay projecting from that side which was built in 1824. It is unlikely that any monuments were placed there when it was the priory's chapter house, or while it served as the chapel of the Tudor house, and the memorials which are now there commemorate the officers and others connected with Sutton's charity.¹

FRANCIS BEAUMONT'S APPOINTMENT AS MASTER

By Sutton's arrangements, the governors of the charity included prominent churchmen and lawyers, many of whom were among the leading figures in church and state, with the Archbishop of Canterbury acting as chairman. The establishment was headed by a Master, appointed by the governors, with the knowledge and approval of the King. But Francis Beaumont, the fourth Master of the Charterhouse, was appointed in 1617 by James I, and not by the governors.² The

monarch had the right of appointment only if the post had been unfilled for two months and the grant to Beaumont was made just a few days after the expiry of that period. The governors had met once since the death of his predecessor, Peter Hooker, but seem to have dealt only with routine administrative matters. It is likely that they did not approve of Beaumont's appointment, for the first three Masters had been clergymen, and this was the governors' preference. There is no record of the appointment in either the minutes of the governors' meetings or the volume of the charity's contracts and appointments, although those documents were consulted, perhaps to see what procedure should be followed, for it was discovered that the seal had not been fixed to the contract appointing Hooker, which was therefore invalid.³

The second son of Nicholas Beaumont of Coleorton, Leicestershire, Francis matriculated at Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1565, and, unusually for a gentleman's son, took both a BA and an MA. Described as a 'Dramatic Writer', but not to be confused with the dramatist of the same name, he contributed to the preface of the edition of Chaucer's collected works first issued in 1598 by Thomas Speght, who had been his contemporary at Peterhouse.⁴ His literary skill was not matched by his administrative ability, however, and during his Mastership the charity got into financial difficulties which were not overcome until after his death in 1624.

The Beaumonts were county gentry in Leicestershire who developed connections with the Court during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Sir George Villiers, of Brokesby, married, as his second wife, Mary Beaumont, Nicholas's aunt, and their son, also George, became the favourite of both James I and Charles I, and successively Earl, Marquess, and Duke of Buckingham. His dominant position at Court was such that he wielded enormous influence and patronage, and almost certainly played a role in Francis's appointment. In 1618 Mary was created Countess of Buckingham.⁵

ELIZABETH BEAUMONT

The Beaumont family's second link with the Court was through Francis Beaumont's niece, Elizabeth Beaumont, the daughter of his younger brother Thomas. She married, c.1602, John Ashburnham, who was knighted at the Tower of London in 1604. Despite his revenue from the

Wealden iron industry, Sir John was forced to sell his property at Ashburnham, Sussex, for £8,000 to meet his obligations, but this was not enough to save him from being incarcerated in the Fleet prison for debt. He died there intestate in 1620, 'not leaving to his wife and six children the least subsistence', and the administration of his estate was granted to a creditor.⁶

Their sons, John and William, quickly repaired the family fortune, partly through beneficial marriages. In 1627 William married Jane, daughter of Sir John Boteler and widow of James, Earl of Marlborough, and in 1629 John married Frances Holland, daughter of the heir to a wealthy alderman of Chichester. Jane Boteler was a distant relative of the Duke of Buckingham, and the brothers also used that connection to obtain places at Court. By 1627 John was well enough established for Charles I to refer to him as 'Jack' Ashburnham and in the following year he made him a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber. Appointed Groom of the Bedchamber and Treasurer at War in 1642, he was an influential member of the king's entourage during the Civil War and one of his companions after it. William was appointed Cofferer of the Household in 1642 and served with the royalist forces. Both regained their posts at the Restoration and are commemorated by substantial monuments in St Mary's Church at Ashburnham, which they rebuilt in 1665.⁷

Elizabeth also improved her fortunes by an advantageous second marriage. In 1625 she described herself as being 'left destitute', but in December 1626 she married the eminent lawyer Sir Thomas Richardson, who had been knighted in 1621, had recently been appointed Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, and in 1631 was advanced to Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench. As a judge he did not take a title, but by his influence she was created Baroness of Cramond in the Scottish peerage, on 28 February 1629.⁸ Sir Thomas provided a further link to the Charterhouse, through his professional connections with Sir Robert Heath and Sir Ranulph Crewe, who were appointed governors during the 1620s.⁹

FRANCIS BEAUMONT'S MONUMENT

Francis Beaumont died on 18 June 1624 and was buried in the vault beneath the founder's tomb in the Charterhouse's chapel. His monument was set up on the east wall of the north aisle,

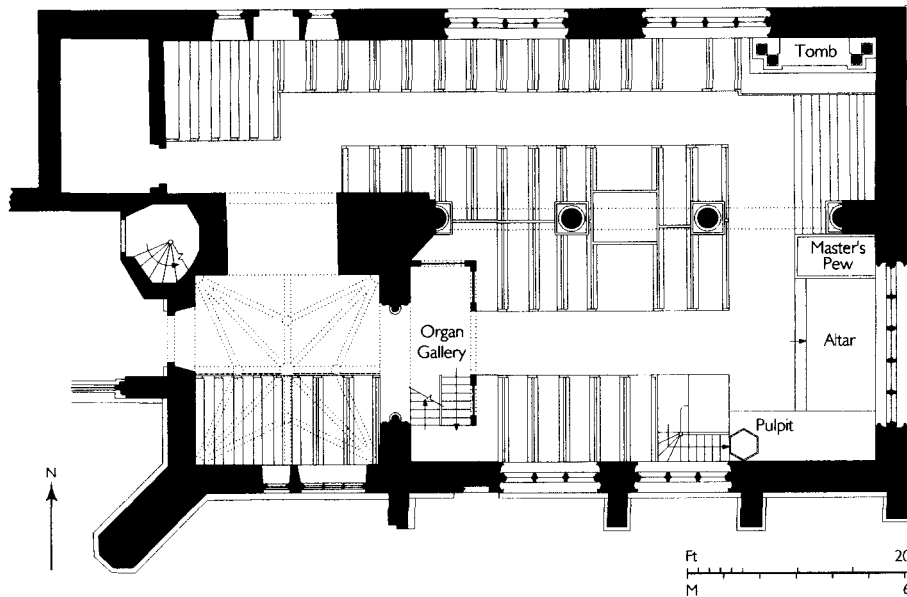


Fig 1. Charterhouse chapel in 1805 (© English Heritage)

but when a window was inserted there in 1842 it was moved to its present position on the short section of wall on its south side (Fig 1). An east wall was an unusual position for a monument, but the north aisle did not have an altar and the space beneath the monument was occupied by the schoolboys' pews. At Salisbury Cathedral the Hertford monument (c.1625) and Gorges monument (c.1635) occupy the sites of medieval altars against the east walls of the south and north choir aisles respectively.

Only two other monuments were erected in the chapel in the 17th century; those of Thomas Sutton, founder of the charity, and John Law, one of his executors, who died in 1614. Both were placed there by the governors' direction during the conversion and extension of the building by Francis Carter, and were made by Nicholas Johnson (or Jansen), Edmund Kinsman and Nicholas Stone, who included the monument to Law in their contract for Sutton's monument.¹⁰

As the inscription on Beaumont's monument records, it was made at the direction of his niece Elizabeth, who acted as his executor.¹¹ It includes her name and title, and her precise relationship to the deceased:

Elizabeth Lady Richardson, Barones of Cramond
in Scotland his nece and executtris daugh': to Sr

Tho': Beaumont of Stauston in ye co: afforesaid
& brother to ye said Francis.

The monument, of painted stone, must have been erected after February 1629, when she was created Baroness Cramond. It has Beaumont's effigy kneeling on a cushion at a prayer desk, flanked by pilasters formed from narrow bookcases (Fig 2).¹² Two of the shelves contain, on the left, an hour-glass and skull, and, on the right, a globe, cube, and dividers; the others carry his books, with finely tooled spines and clasps. On the cornices are figures of an elephant surmounted by a tower (the Beaumont crest), and a lion. The large central achievement has a shield with the Beaumont coat-of-arms and has a lion standing on a helm. The lion rampant between three fleur-de-lis on the coat-of-arms and carried on shields on either side is the Beaumont family arms. On the apron two horses support a heraldic lozenge, also bearing a lion rampant. This is flanked by shields carrying the arms of the Ashburnham family and Sir Thomas Richardson.

Tombs of academics and clergymen scholars at this period commonly represented them preaching or lecturing, in clerical garb, and facing the viewer.¹³ This was not appropriate for Beaumont, who indeed was a scholar but was not ordained, and he wears the cloak and ruff of a gentleman.

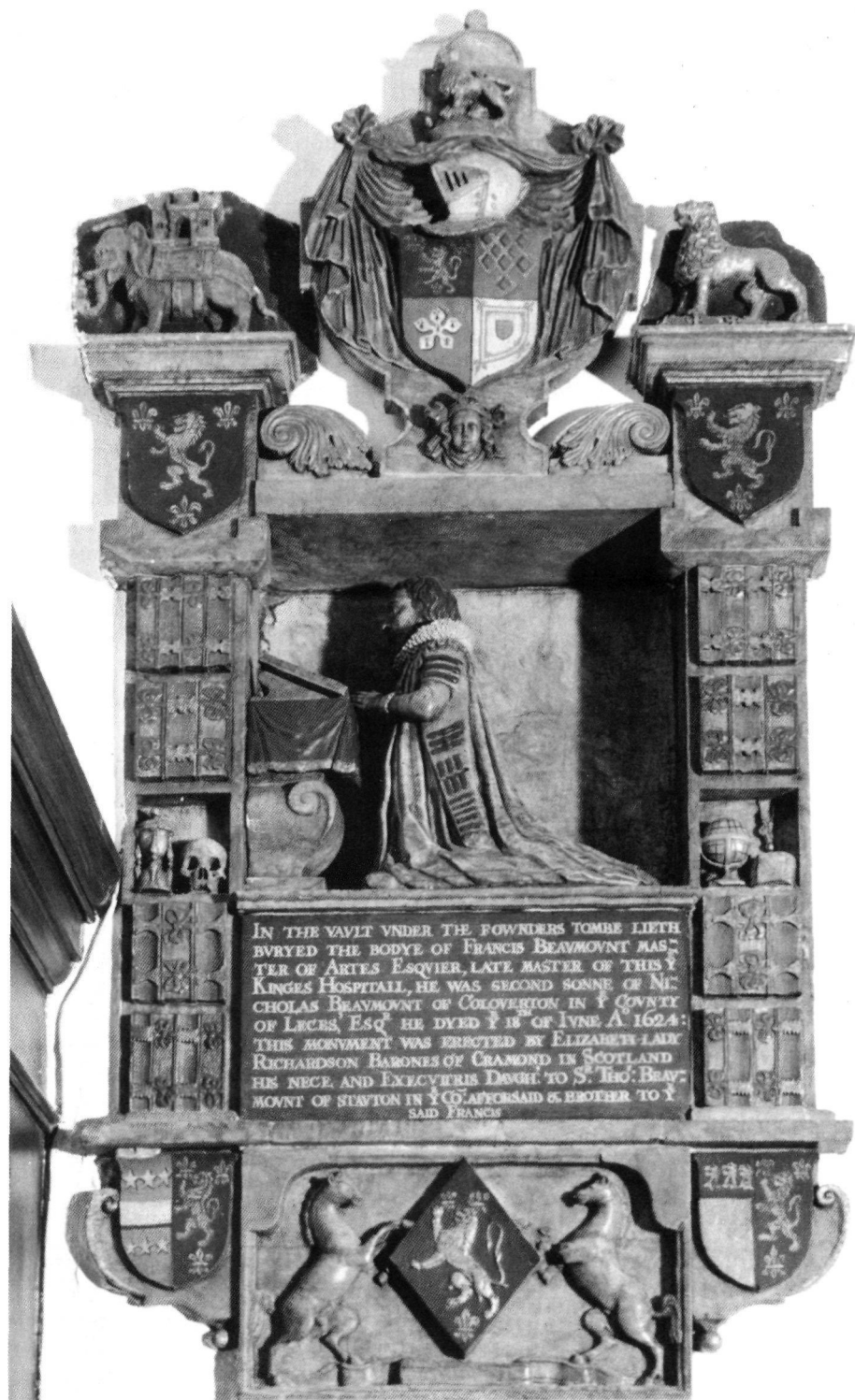


Fig 2. Monument to Francis Beaumont, Charterhouse Chapel (© English Heritage)

His position, kneeling in prayer, conveys his piety, while his scholarly interests are indicated not by his pose but by the books on the shelves flanking his effigy and the inscription tablet. These are by no means unique. Thomas Bodley's monument by Nicholas Stone in Merton College chapel, made in 1615, has pilasters built up of books laid flat on each other, a form that is echoed on George Abbot's tomb in Holy Trinity Church, Guildford, erected in 1640. But the memorial tomb to David Doulben, Bishop of Bangor, who died in 1633, in St John's Church, Hackney, has books arranged in a similar manner to those on Beaumont's monument (Fig 3).¹⁴ Doulben's monument has been attributed to Humphrey Moyer, but it is difficult to extend that attribution to Beaumont's, for the books are the only feature which links them, and Beaumont's has an angularity that is stylistically dissimilar from other monuments by or attributed to Moyer.¹⁵

ELIZABETH BEAUMONT AS PATRONESS OF CHURCH MEMORIALS

Elizabeth Beaumont already had experience as a patroness of memorials in London parish churches commemorating her family, but, as their makers are unknown and the memorials have not survived, they do not provide evidence for the maker of Beaumont's monument. Sir John Ashburnham was buried in St Andrew's, Holborn, in 1620 and in the following year Elizabeth set up a memorial to him there. The inscription was conventional, giving his status, date of death and age, the names of their children and also her name and that of her father, Sir Thomas Beaumont of Stoughton, Leicestershire.¹⁶

Her father died in 1614 and her mother in 1621; both were buried at Stoughton. Nevertheless, in 1622 Elizabeth commissioned 'A very fair Table full of rich Coats of Arms' in their memory, which was hung in the church of St Botolph, Aldersgate. Presumably a painted panel, this was placed in a prominent position, on a pillar of the central aisle opposite the pulpit. The inscriptions were assembled by her brother-in-law Sir Wingfield Bodenham, who was to be High Sheriff of Rutland and was committed to the Tower in July 1643 for being in arms against the Parliament. They paid tribute to her parents, listed her nine siblings and herself, noting that she was the eldest daughter and that she had set up the panel, and showed the eighteen elements of the family arms.¹⁷ The connection

with St Botolph's presumably came through her daughter Mary, who had been buried there in 1621, and the parish adjoins the extra-parochial precinct of the Charterhouse.

There may have been numerous such wooden memorial tablets in English churches, but relatively few have survived.¹⁸ The St John triptych at Lydiard Tregoze, Wiltshire, with its painted figures and long family tree, is far more elaborate than the Beaumont panel. Closer in scale, at least, is the painted wooden epitaph of 1613 to three members of the Maynard family in St Albans Abbey. This has two commemorative poems and an inscription recording the fact that it was erected by Robert Maynard, 'the sorrowfull sonne of his deare and worthie parents'. St Mary's, Monken Hadley, near Barnet, has a large wooden hanging wall monument to Henry Carew, who died in 1626, and his mother, Alice. It imitates a stone monument in form and contains his portrait in a central oval and a painted surround, with genealogical information in the inscription.¹⁹ The interiors of Dutch churches in the 17th century also contained many pillar-mounted wooden memorials. The majority were relatively small diamond-shaped hatchments, but larger plaques carrying substantial texts, set within architectural surrounds, were also displayed.²⁰

Elizabeth Beaumont also had a link with Christ Church, Newgate Street, where her grandparents Nicholas and Anne Beaumont were buried and where, in 1627, she placed a memorial to them. This was probably a ledger slab, as it was described as being in the pavement. The inscription noted that it was provided at her 'care and cost' and described her standing in full: 'Elizabeth Lady Ashburnham, widow, late wife of Sir John Ashburnham, knight, daughter of Sir Thomas Beaumont of Stoughton in the county aforesaid, their third sonne'. It added that she had commissioned the memorial 'at the appointment of her uncle, Francis Beaumont, Esq their second sonne, to whom the erector hereof was executrix'. This comprehensively established her status, her relationship to the deceased and to her late uncle, the Master of the Charterhouse.²¹

In identifying herself so clearly in the inscriptions as the patroness of the monuments she was not simply making known her own piety and role in erecting them, but also demonstrating that she was fulfilling the important function, on behalf of the family, of ensuring the proper recording of the deceased for posterity. The reference to



Fig 3. Monument to David Doulben, St John's Church, Hackney (© English Heritage)

the fact that she had taken the responsibility of acting as Francis's executor can be interpreted in a similar way.²² On the other hand, the inclusion of the arms of her two husbands in the designs of her uncle's memorial stresses her own attainments, in having married two men who were armigerous. Their connections with the Beaumonts were through her, not her uncle, and they had no association with Sutton's charity. It is in this respect that the monument is unusual, as a private monument in the chapel of the best-endowed charity of the period, the governors of which were, throughout the century, reluctant to permit the erection of any monuments at all, let alone one commissioned by a woman that emphasises her own achievements and family genealogy.

Sutton's charity was very much an all-male establishment which did not admit women to the almshouse or girls to the school, and the regulations did not allow the almsmen or officers to be married, or any women, even the scholars' matrons, to live within the precincts. Thomas Heyward, the Registrar, did manage to evade the regulation concerning marriage, but the governors reacted sharply when his daughter's burial in the chapel was considered, in 1628, ordering that 'no woman or woman kinde' should be buried in the chapel or burial ground.²³ In this and in other ways the charity deliberately harked back to the Carthusian priory, with the return to the designation of the buildings as the Charterhouse — it had been known as Howard House during that family's ownership — and the adoption of the term Poor Brothers to describe the almsmen.

There is no mention of the monument in the records of the charity, nor does any source provide an explanation for the delay between Francis's death and its erection. The cost was borne by his niece and so did not appear in the charity's accounts, and if she obtained permission from the governors, as she surely did, this is not mentioned in the minutes of their meetings. She may have had some difficulty in getting their consent, especially as they appear not to have approved of his appointment, although she had a connection with the Charterhouse through her uncle's successor, Sir Robert Dallington, who, like her sons, had been a member of Charles's household until appointed by him to the Mastership. Yet, even if he supported her, there was still a delay of at least five years before Beaumont's memorial was erected.

WOMEN AS PATRONS OF MONUMENTS IN 17TH-CENTURY ENGLAND

Women in early 17th-century England were not precluded from undertaking a programme of monumental patronage, using memorials in churches to record for posterity their affection for deceased relatives and a family's genealogy.²⁴ Baroness Cramond was not unusual in that respect and, if she did encounter difficulties in placing her uncle's monument in Charterhouse chapel, they related to the charity's own practice, rather than a general objection to her taking the role of patron. Most notably among her contemporaries, Lady Anne Clifford (1590–1676) was responsible for a number of monuments commemorating her family, including one to her mother, Margaret Countess of Cumberland, in St Lawrence's Church, Appleby, and her father's tomb in Holy Trinity Church, Skipton. The most spectacular record of her life and family, however, is a painting: a triptych commissioned in 1646 from an unidentified London painter and expressively known as 'The Great Picture', with portraits and coats of arms. It depicts her ancestry and also has portraits of her governess and her tutor, the poet Samuel Daniel. She commissioned a memorial to Daniel in St George's, Beckington, in Somerset, and, from Nicholas Stone, one to her favourite poet, Edmund Spenser, in the south aisle of Westminster Abbey.²⁵ She had a childhood connection with the Charterhouse when her father was the Crown's tenant between 1593 and 1595, and would have known Baroness Cramond through their links with the Court.

Baroness Cramond's embellishment of St Mary's Church at Ashburnham with a gallery, sometime before 1649, was also characteristic of women patrons, again including Lady Anne Clifford. The gallery was incorporated in the new building erected by her sons in 1665, and her donation was recorded on the fly-leaf of the parish register.²⁶

A LADIES LEGACIE AND ELIZABETH BEAUMONT'S ACHIEVEMENT

In another undertaking Elizabeth Beaumont made it clear that she was aware of encroaching on responsibilities usually taken by men. During the plague epidemic in London in 1625 she lodged at the Countess of Buckingham's house at Chelsea and used the time to write a book of spiritual guidance for her four daughters. In the

preface she comments that her intention 'to bring you to eternal life' may be contemptible to many because she was a woman, and so she gave copies only to her daughters and did not include her two sons, 'lest being men, they misconstrue my well-meaning'. She later added two further books and published all three in 1645 as *A Ladies Legacie to her Daughters*.²⁷ On the title page she was, characteristically, given her formal title: 'Madam Elizabeth Richardson, wife to the late Sir Thomas Richardson Knight Lord Chiefe Justice of the Kings Bench'.

Sir Thomas Richardson entrusted to his executors the task of erecting a 'small monument' that would cost no more than £100, and they, not his widow, were responsible for the wall-monument, incorporating a bust by Hubert le Sueur, set up in Westminster Abbey after his death in 1635.²⁸ Her name is not included in the inscription, although she did receive generous bequests in property, rents, silver plate, and even his coach, with two horses of her own choosing. The Beaumont arms were set in Westminster Abbey nonetheless, impaled with those of the Villiers family on the tomb of Sir George Villiers and the Countess of Buckingham, made by Nicholas Stone, in St Nicholas's chapel.

Baroness Cramond's commemorations of the Beaumonts and her husbands' families were not so prominently placed, and she was not given a separate memorial after her burial alongside her first husband in St Andrew's Holborn in 1651.²⁹ She was, however, commemorated in the inscription on the memorial in Ashburnham church to her son John, who died in 1671, where she is described as 'very eminent for her great Temper and Prudence'. Her efforts demonstrate her determination to record, within the metropolitan context, the new-found status of those families. The Beaumonts, Ashburnhams, and Richardsons all achieved considerable social advancement in the early decades of the century, chiefly through close association with the Stuart monarchy. She also drew attention to her own role in erecting the memorials. The extent of her achievement at the Charterhouse may be judged from the fact that no further monument to a Master was placed in the chapel until that to Philip Fisher, who died in 1842.

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NOTES

¹ The inscriptions are recorded in Francis Collins (ed) *The Registers and Monumental Inscriptions of Charterhouse Chapel* Harleian Soc., Register Section, vol 18 (1892), 81–91.

² *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1611–1618*, 499.

³ Charterhouse Muniments (CM), G/2/1, pp 91–2, 171.

⁴ John Nichols *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, vol III, pt ii (1804), 734; J & J A Venn *Alumni Cantabrigienses, Part I* (1922), vol I, 118; T W Baldwin 'The three Francis Beaumonts' *Modern Language Notes* 39 (1924), 505–7; Derek Brewer (ed) *Chaucer, The Critical Heritage vol I* (1978) 135, 140.

⁵ *The Complete Peerage* II, 391–2.

⁶ Guildhall Library, MS 9050/5, f 128v. C Thomas-Stanford *Sussex in the Great Civil War 1642–1660* (1910), 189–90.

⁷ Basil Duke Henning *The House of Commons, 1660–1690* (1983) I, 552–4.

⁸ Elizabeth Richardson, Baroness Cramond, *A Ladies Legacie to her Daughters* (1645), 4. *The Complete Peerage* III, 488–90.

⁹ CM, G/2/1, pp 187, 219.

¹⁰ W L Spiers (ed) *The Notebook and Account Book of Nicholas Stone* Walpole Society vol VII (1919), 40–1.

¹¹ London Metropolitan Archives, DL/C/342, f 63v.

¹² An engraving of the figure and prayer desk is in James Peller Malcolm's *Londinium Redivivum II* (1803), 317, where the image is reversed.

¹³ Nigel Llewellyn *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (2000), 329.

¹⁴ Information kindly supplied by Simon Watney.

¹⁵ Bridget Cherry & Nikolaus Pevsner *The Buildings of England: London 4 North* (1998), 481.

¹⁶ John Strype *Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster ... by John Stow* (1720), vol I, bk iii, 251.

¹⁷ Strype *op cit* (note 16), vol I, bk iii, 116; John Nichols *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, II, pt ii (1798), 859; *Commons' Journals vol. III, 1642–44*, 187. Sir Wingfield Bodenham was described in the royalist ballad *The Royal Feast* as 'firme both to the church and crowne'.

¹⁸ Llewellyn *op cit* (note 13), 204.

¹⁹ I am very grateful to Simon Watney for allowing me to consult his list of wooden memorials.

²⁰ Daniëlle H A C Loken 'The Delft church interior 1650–1750' in Michiel C C Kersten & Daniëlle H A C Loken (ed) *Delft Masters, Vermeer's Contemporaries* (1996), 43–86.

²¹ Nichols *op cit* (note 17), 858; Strype *op cit* (note 16), 116, 136, 251.

²² For the motives of patrons in Lincolnshire for a slightly later period see, John Lord 'Patronage and church monuments 1660–1794: a regional study' *Church Monuments* I pt 2 (1986), 95–105.

²³ Charterhouse School, muniments, 170/1/9. CM, G/2/1, p. 211.

²⁴ Llewellyn *op cit* (note 13), 282.

²⁵ The Great Picture is in the collection at Abbot Hall, Kendal, and was displayed at Tate Britain in 2003. Adam White 'Westminster Abbey in the early seventeenth century: a powerhouse of ideas' *Church Monuments* IV

(1989), 16. Her admiration for Spenser was shared by Francis Beaumont; Baldwin *op cit* (note 4), 505–7.

²⁶ *Victoria County History: Sussex IX* (1937), 129.

²⁷ Richardson *op cit* (note 8), 3, 6. The copy given to her daughter Elizabeth is in the East Sussex Record Office, ASH/3501.

²⁸ The National Archives, Public Record Office, PROB11/167/35.

²⁹ The National Archives, Public Record Office, PROB11/216/63.