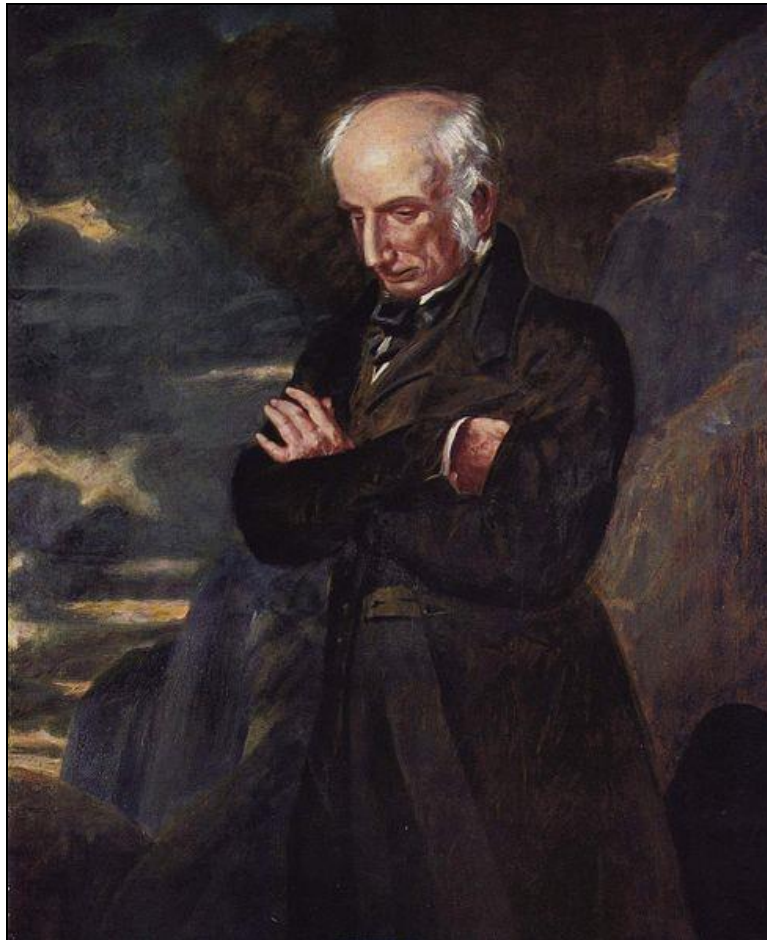


**A HISTORY OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S WINTER
GARDEN AT COLEORTON HALL AND THE ENGRAVED
MEMORIALS (PLUS SUPPLEMENTS ON THE VISITS TO
THE HALL BY JOHN CONSTABLE, BENJAMIN ROBERT
HAYDON AND DAVID WILKIE)**



**William Wordsworth
(b. April 7th 1770 d. April 23rd 1850)
By Benjamin Robert Haydon 1842**

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Thanks to Prof. Tim Reynolds for taking the time to show me around the grounds of Coleorton Hall prior to writing my book entitled "Coleorton Village History" in 2015, from which the material for this specific publication was taken.

Wordsworth's original plan and the original of the accompanying letter are included on "The Morgan Library & Museum" website and therefore the copyright is owned by them. The plan however, was included in Professor William Knight's Memorials of Coleorton, and can be found in numerous other locations and books.

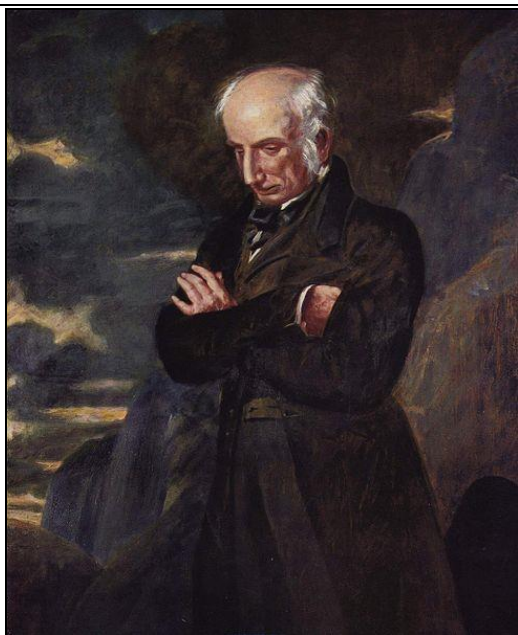
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Where possible bibliography details have been appended to the text in the book

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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S WINTER GARDEN



William Wordsworth
(b. April 7th 1770 d. April 23rd 1850)
By Benjamin Robert Haydon 1842



Sir George Howland Beaumont
7th Baronet (1753-1827)
By Sir Thomas Lawrence

In 1806, Sir George Beaumont, 7th baronet, and Lady Margaret decided to invite William Wordsworth to design a “Winter Garden” at Coleorton Hall.

Sir George Howland Beaumont, 7th baronet, was a generous and discerning patron of the arts, and developed a remarkable relationship with poets and artists of his day including William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey, David Wilkie, Sir Walter Scott, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Thomas Hearne, John Constable, Joshua Reynolds, Lord Byron, Benjamin Robert Haydon, Dr. Johnson and Sir Humphrey Davy (of the Davy Safety Lamp fame) etc.,. However, it is his relationship with William Wordsworth, to which this publication is mainly dedicated. According to the “Memorials of Coleorton by Professor William Knight”, Beaumont was credited with knowing Coleridge before meeting Wordsworth and was one of the first to appreciate the genius of these two men. He was aware that they had formerly lived close to each other in “Somersetshire” and had engaged in writing together “The Lyrical Ballads in Concert”.

Sir George had visited the Lake District on several occasions before he got to know its poets, in fact, in the year he was married, he spent part of the summer in Keswick. In 1803, he stayed at Greta Hall when Coleridge was residing there. Sir George first entered Wordsworth's life in that same year. When Beaumont first met Coleridge, he, as many others had, came under the spell of his conversation. Coleridge told Sir George that he regretted not living closer to Wordsworth. This prompted Sir George to make the impulsive gift of a property named Applethwaite, near Keswick, to Wordsworth where he could live and be closer to Coleridge, with a view to enabling them to stimulate each other's poetical minds. Unfortunately, Beaumont's wishes did not plan out, and due to various severe domestic problems that Coleridge had in his life, he left Cumberland for the continent, thereby leaving Wordsworth and his family to live on at Dove Cottage, Grasmere. Beaumont and Wordsworth continued to develop a mutual respect for each others talents and work, which culminated in a close friendship being established.

The gift of the property prompted Wordsworth to write a Sonnet in 1804 as follows:-

BEAUMONT! It was thy wish that I should rear
A seemly Cottage in this sunny Dell,
On favoured ground, thy gift, where I might dwell
In neighborhood with One to me most dear,
That undivided we from year to year
Might work in our high calling a brighter hope
To which our fancies, mingling, gave free scope
Till checked by some necessities severe.
And should these slacken, honoured **BEAUMONT!** Still,
Even then we may perhaps in vain implore
Leave of our fate thy wishes to fulfill.
Whether this boon be granted us or not,
Old Skiddaw will look down upon the Spot
With pride, The muses love it evermore.

Shortly after writing this sonnet, the poet was almost heartbroken at the loss of his brother John, who went down in his ship the East Indiaman, "Abergavenny", off the shambles in 1805. It was reported in "The Morning Post – February 8th 1805", that William Wordsworth's brother Captain John Wordsworth was a man of remarkably mild manners; and of so cool a temperament was his disposition, that he used to be known amongst his ship-mates by the title of "The Philosopher". As the ship was going down, the first mate told the captain she would sink in a moment – the captain replied, "It cannot be prevented – God's will be done". He was seen for the last time clinging to the ropes. Mr. Gilpin, one of the mates, went down from the top to endeavour to save him but in vain.

Total lives lost 300 – Saved 120

In the "Salisbury and Winchester Journal – March 25th 1805", it was reported – "that the body of the unfortunate John Wordsworth, Esq., late Captain of the Abergavenny – India Man, was taken up on the beach near Weymouth on Wednesday last and was interred on Thursday at the parish church of Wyke-Regis".

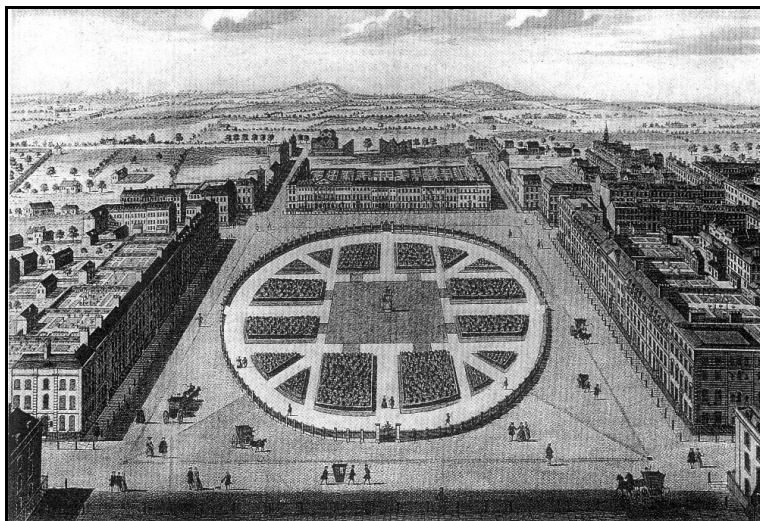
At this time, there came into Wordsworth's life Sir George Beaumont, one of a family long distinguished for art and culture, a man of high breeding, of a most unselfish disposition, a painter of no mean merit, and a connoisseur. His friendship formed a most valuable link in Wordsworth's life, and lovers of "the poet of nature and humanity" owe a deep debt of gratitude to the kind and generous patron of Wordsworth. It must be remembered that when Sir George first met Wordsworth he was in his fiftieth year, whilst Wordsworth was sixteen years his junior.

Sir George had started to take more interest in his collieries at Coleorton as a result of his concerns about the activities of his agent Boulton, and was spending more time in the locality. At this time Wordsworth's family had grown to six, and due to Coleridge's domestic problems they were expecting him to come and reside with them also. Clearly, "Dove Cottage" was not large enough to house so many people, and they desperately needed to find alternative larger accommodation before winter arrived. Beaumont generously offered Wordsworth the use of Hall Farm, which was also his own temporary residence whilst Coleorton Hall was being re-built, and which stood to the west of the hall. The Wordsworth's gratefully accepted the offer, and arrived at Hall Farm in October 1806. Besides William, his wife Mary and family, his sister Dorothy and his wife's sister Sarah Hutchinson joined them. The Beaumont's spent the winter at their residence in London, so the timing was perfect. This combination of circumstances was the catalyst which led to William and Dorothy, his sister, helping to design the "Winter Garden" at Coleorton Hall for Sir George Beaumont at his request.

William Wordsworth's initial proposed plan of a "Winter Garden" at Coleorton Hall is appended on page 6. The gardens were planned and planted by the poet, partly in an old stone quarry.

However, the author gets the impression from letters sent by Lady Beaumont that the initial idea to use the old stone quarry came from her. Clearly Lady Beaumont had some garden design acumen as she was responsible for the design of the Flower Garden which features later. The plan for the Winter Garden was included in a letter from Dorothy Wordsworth sent to Lady Beaumont at their London winter residence on December 23rd 1806. Apparently, Wordsworth's designs matured in 1806/7 and were adopted for the "Winter Garden" at this time, but were probably somewhat different from the original plan. Wordsworth took on the entire job when he was deeply immersed in his poems, and both his sister Dorothy and Coleridge (see later text re his arrival at Hall Farm) had a hand in it. During the winter, spring and autumn of 1807, Wordsworth threw himself enthusiastically into the task. He reportedly visited the workmen twice a day, passing over the site, usually accompanied by Dorothy or Coleridge.

As an example of how close Wordsworth and the Beaumonts' became, Sir George, in his will, left Wordsworth the sum of £100 a year for life, to cover the expenses of a yearly holiday ("Coleorton and the Beaumonts" by Rev. Eveleigh Eager). Wordsworth also became Godfather to the Rev. William Beresford Beaumont, M.A., younger son of Sir George Howland William Beaumont, 8th baronet. Lady Margaret Beaumont, the 7th baronet's wife was Godmother to Wordsworth's daughter Dora. 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 classical ground of Coleorton", under the inspiration of past Beaumont poets.

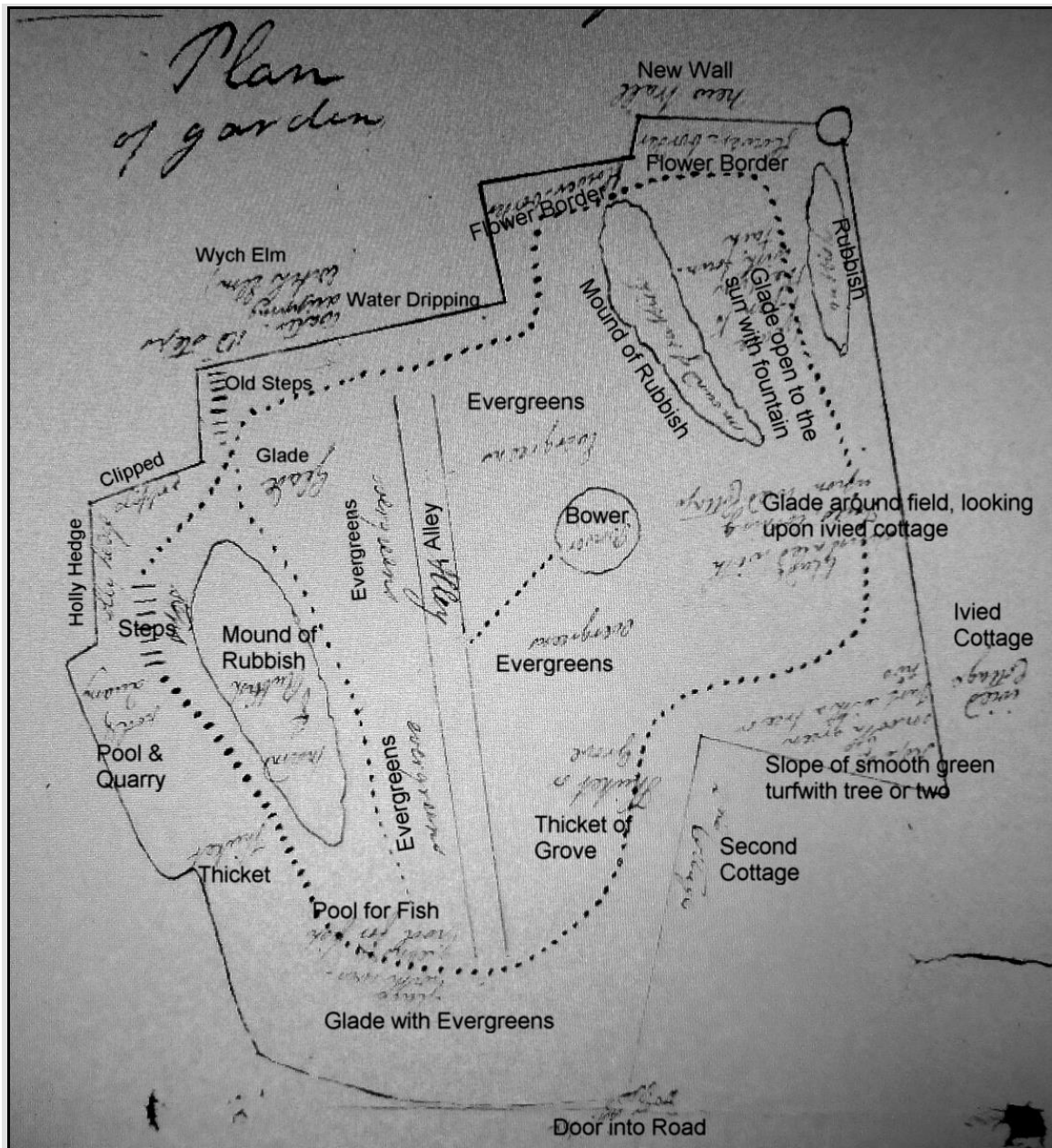


An engraving by Sutton Nichols c.1731. of Grovenor Square, London. The Beaumont's residence, Number 34, is shown in the bottom LH corner.



**Lady Margaret Beaumont by Joshua Reynolds 1780
The lease for the London residence was inherited by Lady Margaret in 1785**

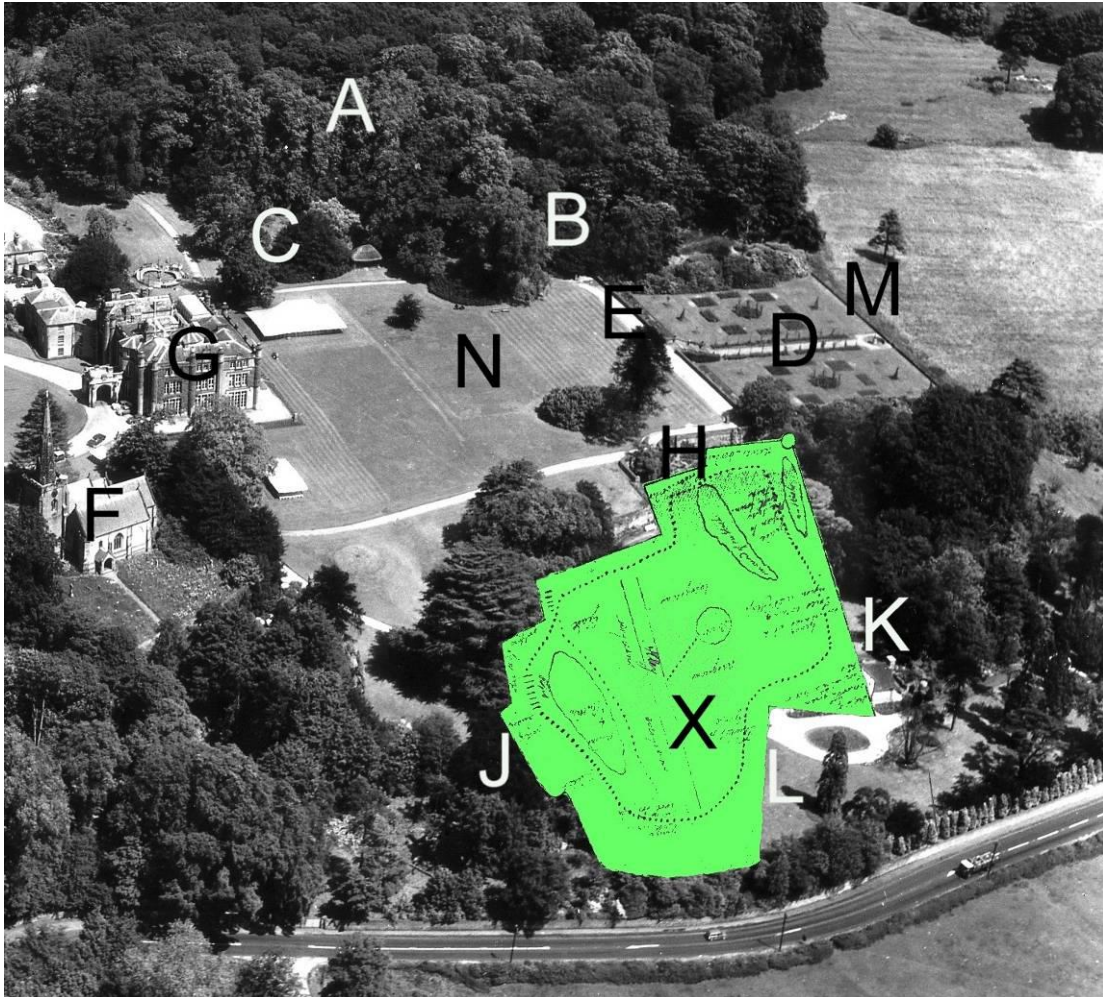
NORTH



Wordsworth's original plan for the "Winter Garden"

Translations of Wordsworth's notes on the plan have been added by the Author. The dotted lines are the walkway proposed by Wordsworth for Lady Beaumont to follow. This plan and the original of the following letter are included on "The Morgan Library & Museum" website and therefore the copyright is owned by them. The plan however, was included in Professor William Knight's Memorials of Coleorton, and can be found in numerous other locations and books. The area of the Winter Garden comprises about 1 acre.

The aerial photograph below has been included at this point to provide the reader with an idea of the approximate location of Wordsworth's Winter Garden and its relation to Coleorton Hall and St. Mary's Church prior to the Coleorton bypass being constructed. Various other features which are the subject of later articles have been added and a key is provided below.



- A** The lime walk and the engraved Joshua Reynolds Memorial (this is shown on the 1888 O/S map shown earlier)
- B** The Engraved Memorial to Francis Beaumont
- C** The Wilson Stone Memorial
- D** The Flower / Rose Garden
- E** The East Terrace Walk
- F** St. Mary's Church
- G** Coleorton Hall
- H** The New Wall
- J** Engrave Memorial to the planting of the Cedar Tree of Lebanon

- K Possible Location of the Ivied Cottage**
- L Possible Location of the Second Cottage**
- M Walled Ha Ha**
- N Possible second terrace area**

There follows a transcription of the page of the letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont dated December 23rd 1806, in which the map of the proposed layout of the “Winter Garden” shown earlier was inserted. –



Samuel Taylor Coleridge with his son Hartley aged 10, at the time he would have been visiting Hall Farm with his father as described below.

.....Coleridge and his son Hartley arrived on Sunday afternoon. My dear Lady Beaumont, the pleasure of welcoming to your house mingled with our joy, and I think I never was more happy in my life than when we had him an hour by the fire-side; for his looks were much more like his own old self and though we only talked of common things and of our friends, we perceived that he was contented in his mind and had settled his affairs at home to his satisfaction. He has been tolerably well and cheerful ever since and has begun with his books. Hartley poor boy! Is very happy and looks uncommonly well, but we are afraid of the hooping cough; for there is no doubt that the cough which our young ones have is the hooping cough. Thomas is better than when I wrote on Saturday. I long to know your opinion and Sir George’s of my brother’s plans of the “Winter Garden”. Coleridge is much delighted with it and only has doubts about the fountain; and he thinks that it is probable that an intermingling of birch trees somewhere, on account of the richness of the colour of the naked twigs in winter might be an advantage. I may add also from myself that we have often stood for half an hour together at Grasmere on a still morning to look at the rain or hoar frost drops glittering in sunshine upon the birch twigs and the purple colour and the sparkling drops produce a most enchanting effect.....

Coleridge travelled to Malta in 1804 where he was appointed secretary to the Governor of Malta for a period. He apparently became homesick and lonely whilst in Malta and had become addicted to opium. On his return to Greta Hall he decided to leave his wife, and the opportunity arose for him to join the Wordsworths’ at Hall Farm, as described above.

According to Arthur Mee's "Leicestershire", Wordsworth, on the evening of 7th January 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! 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.

There follows extracts from an undated unaddressed letter sent by William Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont which is thought to have accompanied the above letter. It refers to the garden design in conjunction with the earlier plan. William did not like penning letters and particularly very lengthy ones of this nature it seems:-

My Dear Lady Beaumont,

From the most northerly point of his plan adjacent to the "new wall", shown in the following photographs, Wordsworth describes his ideas to Lady Beaumont by following the outer path of the Winter Garden and then the inner path (shown as a dotted line on the plan) in a clock-wise direction. The following is only a synopsis of what appears in the letter:-

There's penmanship for you! I shall not be able to keep it up to the end in this style, notwithstanding I have the advantage of writing with one of your little pens with which Miss Hutchinson has just furnished me. - - I have a long work to go through; but first let me tell you that I was highly gratified by your Letter, and I consider the request that I would undertake the laying out your Winter Garden as a great honour; you kindly desire me not to write, but I cannot enter upon my office till I have had your opinion on my intended plan, and solicited the improvements which your taste and invention, and those of Sir George may suggest.

Before I explain my ideas I must entreat your patience; I promise you I will be as brief as may be but meaning to be minute, I fear I shall be tiresome. First then, to begin with the boundary line. Suppose ourselves standing upon the Terrace above the new built Wall; that, of course, would be open, and we should look down from it upon the Garden; and winding round by the left Bank, I would plant upon the top of it, in the field, a Line of ever-green shrubs, intermingled with Cypress, to take the place of the existing hedge: and, behind these, a Row of Firs such as were likely to grow to the most majestic height: and this kind of fence, leaving visible such parts of the cottages as would have the best effect (I mean the beautiful one with Ivy, and the other which is of a very picturesque form but very shabby surface). I would continue all round the Garden, so as to give it the greatest appearance of depth, shelter, and seclusion possible. This is essential to the feeling of the place, with which indeed I ought to have begun: and that is of a spot which winter cannot touch, which would present no images of chillness, decay or desolation, when the face of nature everywhere else is cold, decayed and desolate.....

Having now done with the double evergreen fence, we will begin again with the Wall, with its Recesses, Buttresses, and Tower, I very much admire. It should be covered with ivy, and pyracanthus or any other plants that bear scarlet berries.....

From the wall going round by the left, the first thing we meet is a mound of rubbish which should be planted; then before we reach the Ivied Cottage, we come to a perpendicular bank or scar, this should be planted along the top with ivy, periwinkle, and other beautiful and evergreen trailing plants, which should hang down and leave the earth visible in various places (*this bank appears to be the sand stone rock face shown in a later photograph and where the Scott seat was hewn out of the rock*).....

Coming to the second cottage, this if not entirely taken away, should be repaired.....and planted with ivy. This second cottage is certainly not necessary, and if it were not here nobody would wish for it; but its irregular and picturesque form, its tall chimneys in particular, plead strongly with me for it being retained.....Therefore do let it stand.

Wordsworth then describes his ideas for a rather ugly corner of the site adjacent to the worked out quarry and then moves on as follows.

Between this unsightly corner (where I would have the holly hedge) and the new stone wall, and this space would be diversified first by the steps which now descend into the garden, and next, and most beautifully would be so by a conception which I have of bringing the water, which I am told may be done without much expense, and letting it trickle down the bank about the roots of the Witch Elm, so as if not to make a waterfall (there might not be enough for that) at least a dripping of water, round which might gather and flourish some of those vivid mosses and water plants, a refreshing and beautiful sight in the dead time of the year, and which when cased in ice form one of the most enchanting appearances that are peculiar to winter.....

We will begin with the wall once more. This as the most artificial, ought to be the most splendid and ornamental part of the garden; and here I would have betwixt the path and the wall, a border edged with Boxwood to receive the earliest and latest flowers, within and close to the edging of Boxwood I would first plant a row of crocus, these would succeed each other. Close under the wall I would have a row or fringe of white lillies, and in front of this another of daffodils.....

The path of which I have been speaking should wind round the garden, mostly near the boundary line, which would in general be seen, or felt, as has been described, but not always; for in some places particularly near the high road it would be kept out of sight.....

We have done with the circumference, now for the interior, which I would diversify in the following manner. And to begin as before with the wall: this fronts nearly south: and a considerable space before it ought to be open to the sun, forming a glade enclosed on the north side by the wall.....

The next compartment (if you look at the plan you will understand me) is to be a glade unelaborate and simple, surrounded with evergreens, and a few scattered in the middle. N. B. The former glade is to be entirely open with a fountain; and of this second glade so much of the ivied cottage as could be shewn with effect would be the presiding image. No border or garden here, but wild-flowers to be scattered everywhere. Then (still looking at the plan) we come to a dark thicket or grove, the path winding through it, under the second cottage; then the path crosses the outlet where the door leads into the high road, which door, ought to be entirely concealed, and led to under a thick arch of evergreens.

Proceeding with the path, we cross the end of a long alley of which I shall speak afterwards, we are then brought to a small glade or open space, belted round with evergreens, quite unvaried and secluded. In this little glade should be a bason of water inhabited by two gold or silver fish.....

From this glade, the path leads on through a few yards of dark thicket, and we come to the little quarry, and this (adopting an idea of yours which I had from Mr. Craig, and which pleases me much) I should fill with a pool of water that would reflect beautifully the rocks of the scar with their hanging plants, the evergreens upon the top, and shooting deeper than all, the naked spire of the church.....

You would appear to be shut up within this bottom, till turning with the path round a rocky projection of the mound of rubbish you are fronted by a flight of steps, not before visible, which will be made to bring you out of the quarry close under the clipped holly hedge spoken of before. Here you open into a large glade, one side formed by the trees on the mound of rubbish, the other by the holly hedge, and still further by those other steps near the Witch Elm Cottage (*this was taken down as requested by Lady Beaumont*), which now lead down into the garden; these steps not visible until you come at them, and still further on by the principal object in the glade, the waterfall, for so I will call it, from the root of the Witch Elm. Having passed through this glade, you go on a few steps through a thicket, and before you come to the newly built wall you cross the end of the alley spoken of before. The alley to be quite straight, the ground to be perfectly level shaded with evergreens.....

Out of this alley towards the middle of it, on the left side, should be a small blind path leading to a bower.....

I have chalked out (see the plan) along the foot of one of the ridges of rubbish; these intermediate plantations when they get up, will entirely break any unpleasing formality which the alley and bower, or any other parts of the garden might otherwise give to it when looked at from

above. If you add to these features, or passages, a seat in some sunny spot, or perhaps a small shed or alcove, you have introduced as much variety within the compass of an acre as my fancy is capable of suggesting. I had some thoughts that it might be possible to scoop out of the sandy rock a small cell or cavern on the stormy side of the quarry but the rock there is not continuous or firm enough. That part of the rock on which the decayed cottage stands as it is much firmer might perhaps admit of something of this kind with good effect.....

A word before I conclude. I have only given the garden two settled inhabitants, the pair of fishes in the pool; but, in the early spring, bees, much more attended to in the stillness of that season, would murmur round the flowers and blossoms, and all the winter long it would be enlivened by birds which would resort thither for covert. We never pass in our evening walk the cluster of holly bushes, under one of which Mr. Craig has placed my seat, but we unsettle a number of small birds which have taken shelter there for the night.....

As to the thickets under the forest trees in the walks about the hall, I have pressed Mr. Craig, and his wishes are good; but lately he has seemed fully occupied: and, to speak the truth, as he has very cheerfully given up the Winter Garden to my control, I do not like to meddle much with the other; it looks like taking the whole of the intellectual part from him, which would dispirit him, and be unjust and impolite, as he has a good taste, and seems a truly respectable man.....

My dear Lady Beaumont, I have now written you the longest letter I ever wrote in my life, heaven forbid that I should often draw so largely upon the patience of my friends. Farewell! And may this and all our *(rest of sentence and signatures cut away)*.

Below are comments taken from a letter dated February 3rd 1807 from Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont regarding objections to part of his garden design by Lord Redesdale which involved an over-arched alley of evergreens:-

"His objection to an over-arched walk of evergreens, except for summer, at first appears well founded, but there is an oversight in it. In summer, you may have a shade of deciduous trees or plants, but what are you to do in April or March, and sometimes even in February, when the heat and glare of the sun are often oppressive, notwithstanding the general cloudiness of our climate?"

In a letter Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont, she stated that she was of the opinion that Mr. Craig, *(thought to be the head gardener)*, "may be inwardly petted" with the job of designing the garden taken out of his hands. Ominously, Mr. Craig "gives no opinion whatever about Williams plans", but she comments that as he and Wordsworth went off together to a Nottingham nursery to buy plants, the situation seems to have been amicably handled.

During the laying out and planting of the winter garden, Wordsworth dedicated the following poem to Lady Beaumont:-

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 a fancy wove
The dream to 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 bloom
And all the mighty ravishment of spring.

The following is an extract from “Gossip of the Garden” journal 1858 -

.....Leaving the flower garden with reluctance, we pass through a small iron gate and along a pleasant walk bordered by evergreens, to the Winter Garden, a spot bringing to our remembrance many of those great men whose names are as household words amongst us. The Winter Garden was designed by Wordsworth, the late poet laureate, and every tree was planted by his own hands. – They are all evergreen, calculated to bear the English climate, and bordered with early spring flowers. Here, hewn in the solid rock, is a rude seat, also the work of Wordsworth, and in that rustic spot, Sir Walter Scott wrote part of *Ivanhoe*. Through the Winter Garden we pass to a grotto reminding us, by its wild solitude and graceful luxuriance, of the hermit’s cells of old; we linger not here, however, save to give one last glance at the ruined ivy-covered cottage, once part of the village of Cole-Orton, which, with the old woman who lived in it, formed the subject of one of Sir David Wilkie’s paintings (*questionable, see the following feature on Sir David Wilkie*). Turning through a low stone arch we come to a wide lawn, and here also we find conifers flourishing in profusion. On the left hand is a sloping bank, ascending which we gain a view, not so extensive indeed as the one from the terrace before named, but one which shows the picturesque village of Cole-Orton to great advantage. The grounds are bounded on this side by a stone wall, completely hidden however by a border of evergreens, and in front are masses of Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Kalmias, and other American plants. Following the gravel walk which leads by the side of the lawn, we come to a stone with an inscription from the pen of Wordsworth, the Cedar of Lebanon beside it having been planted by him in conjunction with Sir George Beaumont, the eminent amateur painter.....From the edge of a plantation adjoining the pleasure grounds, we have another fine view. In the distance may be seen the Peak of Derbyshire, Gotham, where the wise men hedged in the Cuckoo, and nearer home Grace Dieu, Belton and many other villages too numerous to name. The flower garden at Cole-Orton having so much excited our admiration, we solicited from Mr. Henderson (*head gardener*), the names of the principal plants used in making the display, and by his kindness are enabled to subjoin a list of them for the benefit of the readers of Gossip of the Garden.....

The following is an extract from “The Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardeners” - 1875. It gives an insight into what was left of the Winter Garden some 65 years after its completion:-

.....“The “Labyrinth” has gone, and the “winter flowers” are overgrown by the “green unfading bowers”, save a few old spring herbaceous plants and bulbs which fringe the shrubby beds; but the “perennial Pines” are vigorous, almost majestic, and are living memorials of the poet’s love and labours. The garden, which was known as “Wordsworth’s Garden”, is charmingly diversified in character. It contains a romantic dell, bounded on one side by rugged rocks, overshadowed by a gigantic Wych Elm (*shown on the earlier map*), whose gaunt arms stretch over immense space, and its twisted tortuous roots leap over the sides of the rock, affixing themselves in the crevices below. At the base are ferns reveling in wild luxuriance. Wending our way under the “unfading bowers” we come to still more Ivy-clad rocks of venerable aspect, and near them a fine marble vase from Pompeii. We pass on – the very atmosphere redolent of romance and poetry – and here is the Grotto, just such a place as one might fancy “where rural fays and fairies dwell”, and here we find the niche in the rock. (*see later photographs of the grotto*). Near to this hermit-like retreat we pause to glance at the ruins of an Ivy-covered cottage (*shown on the earlier map*), reached by an ascent of rude steps. This once formed part of the village of Coleorton, and was the scene of David Wilkie’s famous painting of “An Old Woman Knitting” (*questionable – see the later feature on Sir David Wilkie*). The old ruin is quite ornamental, and is in admirable keeping with the wild solitude of this part of the grounds. Passing through a stone arch, we come to an ornamental lawn.....

A representation of some of the key features of the Winter Garden using photographs from the late 20th century

It is quite clear that Wordsworth's final design for the garden was somewhat different from his original plan, but not dramatically so. Now, after over two hundred years, little remains, but we are fortunate to be able to bring some of it to life with these photographs and his poetry, coupled with a little imagination. Little remains of Wordsworth's garden now and the centre is occupied by a private modern residence with landscaped gardens. However, the following photographs, the Wordsworth plan, and the marked up aerial view shown at the beginning at least establishes the site of Wordsworth's Winter Garden.



4m high retaining wall viewed from the Winter Garden area in 1984, with the Hall in the background.

The wall which was referred to as the "new wall" and partly designed by George Dance for Lady Margaret Beaumont c.1806, is shown on Wordsworth's plan at the northerly end. A terrace runs along the back of the wall which provided a view over the Winter Gardens, which is shown in the following photographs. Prior to the wall being built, the ground sloped down towards the quarry where Wordsworth created the Winter Garden.



Aerial view of 4m high north retaining wall



Aerial view showing north wall in relation to hall and church



There is a fish pool to the extreme right in the above photograph, and a close up view of this is shown below. This is now within the landscaped gardens of “The Cedars” residence and can just be seen above the trees to the left in the preceding photograph



**Eastern edge of the former “Winter Gardens” with
The ornamental fish / lily pool c.1980.**

Apparently the ornamental fish pool was originally intended to be a swimming pool, but was changed following the death of Sir George in 1827. This demonstrates that only twenty years after Wordsworth designed the Winter Garden, changes had already been made. There are references to Lady Beaumont starting to clear out the Winter Garden in 1825.



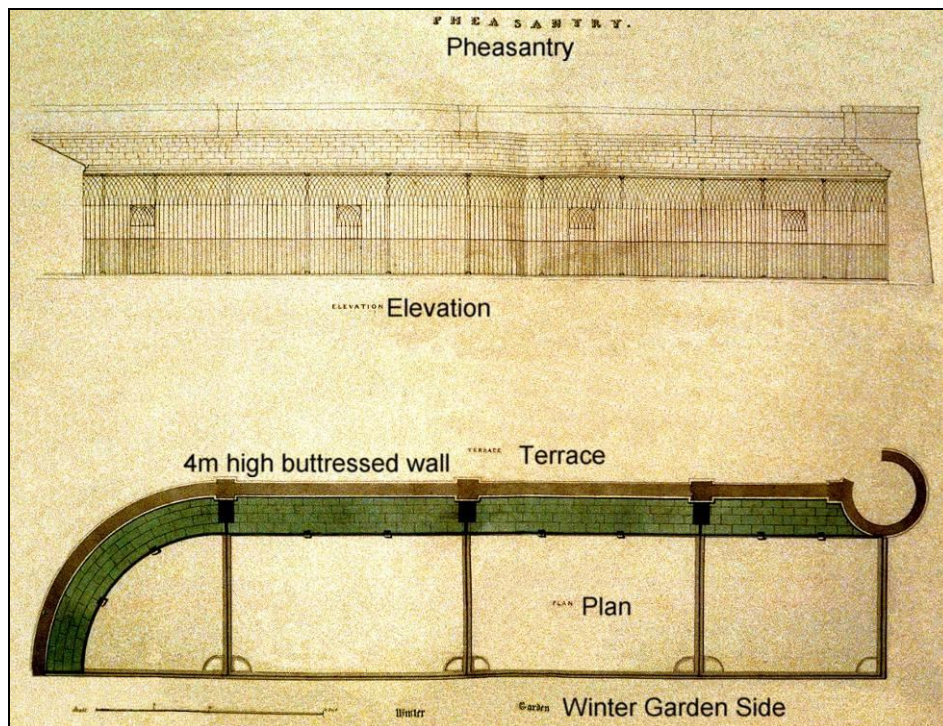
**Eastern end of the 4m high retaining wall with a viewing “Pulpit” at the end.
This is shown on Wordsworth’s plan at the north east corner. The
photograph was taken after repairs to the wall were carried out in 1986.**



“The Pulpit”



This photograph shows the area that the “Pheasantry” below fitted into.



Robert Chaplin’s plan of the “Pheasantry” dated 1831. This was built onto the inside of the wall shown above and was commissioned by the 8th Baronet’s wife Lady Mary Anne Beaumont.

In 1841, it was recorded by Noyes that during a visit to the gardens he saw the above aviary and made the following comment – “.....which took up room that could not be spared, shuts out of view the ornamental masonry of the high terrace wall, and is altogether out of character with this place”



A modern view from what was once Wordsworth's Winter Garden in a southerly direction, showing the seat hewn out of the sandstone by Wordsworth, with the help of Mary and Dorothy. This is the seat where Sir Walter Scott reportedly wrote part of "Ivanhoe".



According to an article in the Journal of "Horticulture and Cottage Gardener" – 1875, the following poignant poem by Wordsworth, was inscribed on a tablet close by the grotto (the use of the word grotto is thought by the author to be incorrect and should be referring to Wordsworth's or Scott's Seat) :-

Oft is the medal faithful to its trust
When temples, columns, towers, are laid in dust;
And 'tis a common ordinance of fate
That things obscure and small outlive the great;
Hence, when you mansion and the flowery trim
Of this fair garden, and its alleys dim,
And all its stately trees, are passed away,
This little Niche, unconscious of decay,
Perchance may still survive. And be it known
That it was scooped within the living stone, -
Not by the sluggish and ungrateful pains
Of labour plodding for the daily gains,
But by an industry that wrought in love;
With help from female hands, that proudly strove
To aid the work, what time these walks and bowers
Were shaped to cheer dark winter's lonely hours.

On the death of Sir George Howland Beaumont, 7th Baronet, on February 7th 1827, Sir Walter Scott added the following comments in his diary on February 14th:-

' Sir George Beaumont 's dead ; by far the most sensible and pleasing man I ever knew, kind, too, in his nature, 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 yet I should hold him a perfect critic in paintings for he always made his criticisms intelligible and used no slang. I am very sorry — as much as it is in my nature to be — for one whom I could see but seldom.'
(Lockart's Life of Scott, vol. ix., p.89-90)

At the end of the outcrop of rocks in the preceding photographs is thought to be the chimney & remains of the "Second Cottage" which is shown on the east side of Wordsworth's Winter Garden plan. From the way Wordsworth describes the second cottage with its tall chimney, and pleads for its retention and repair, and to be subsequently covered in Ivy, the author feels that it is more likely to be the second cottage and not "Ivy Cottage", however, this has to be left open to conjecture.



**An alternative view of what is thought to be the derelict remains of the
“Second Cottage”.**

The following photograph taken in 1986 is thought to be of the derelict remains of what was known as “Ivy Cottage” which is shown on the east side of Wordsworth’s Winter Garden plan. The remains of the graveled path edged with stones suggest that this was possibly part of the walk around the winter garden as they were a feature of all the paths around the hall grounds. The building also portrays the contrast of red brick and ivy which Wordsworth described. Again this is open to conjecture.



There are references made to the fact that before and after Sir George's death (7th baronet) in 1827, Lady Margaret Beaumont carried out clearance work in the Winter Gardens, although she only survived him by little more than two years. The following paragraph seems to confirm this.

Following a visit to Derbyshire, Wordsworth called at Coleorton Hall, and in a letter to his sister Dorothy on November 8th 1830 he wrote....."The changes at Coleorton will in time prove decisive improvements – at present parts are cold and bare. Sir George (8th baronet) took me round – **when I sat down near Lady B's grotto near to the fountain (see next page), I was suddenly overcome and could not speak for tears.**

Wordsworth rode on to Cambridge, and of this journey he noted – "Thirty seven miles I did 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".



The lined grotto above which is grade II listed is on the west side of the garden and just above the intended fish pool shown on the following page. The 2001 Coleorton Hall Conservation Appraisal report by N.W.L.D.C. describes the grotto having shell work by Dorothy Wordsworth and a floor with “Star of David” pattern.

.....“Through the Winter Garden we pass to a grotto reminding us, by its wild solitude and graceful luxuriance, of the hermit’s cells of old”. **A comment taken from “Gossip of the Garden” Volume 111. June 1858.**

We cannot be sure exactly when this grotto was created, as no specific references are made to it by Wordsworth when he is describing the walk around the Winter Garden to Lady Beaumont. It is reached by steps and looks directly down onto the fountain / fish pool shown on the next page. It is interesting that Wordsworth, in his later 1830 visit, refers to it as Lady Beaumont’s grotto, suggesting that it was originally of her design / making.



Area in front of the Grotto prior to the fish pool re-construction below



A reconstruction of what was originally intended as a fish pool and situated at the base of the steps leading up to the first of the engraved memorials featured in the following two pages. The fountain / fish pool, which is 5m in diameter, is depicted on the Wordsworth design drawing shown earlier. A small fountain was placed in the centre at some time prior to 1830. Photograph was taken c.1980. It is grade II listed. The urn on a short pillar situated close by the grotto and pool, is supposedly from Pompeii, but there is no actual proof of this?

THE ENGRAVED MEMORIALS AT COLEORTON HALL

There were three memorials engraved with poems written by Wordsworth for Sir George Beaumont –

- The first commemorating the planting of a cedar tree by the poet and his host - Sir George Howland Beaumont, 7th baronet. This tree was a “Cedar of Lebanon”.
- The second in honour of the renaissance playwright dramatist and poet Sir Francis Beaumont.
- The third in memory of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

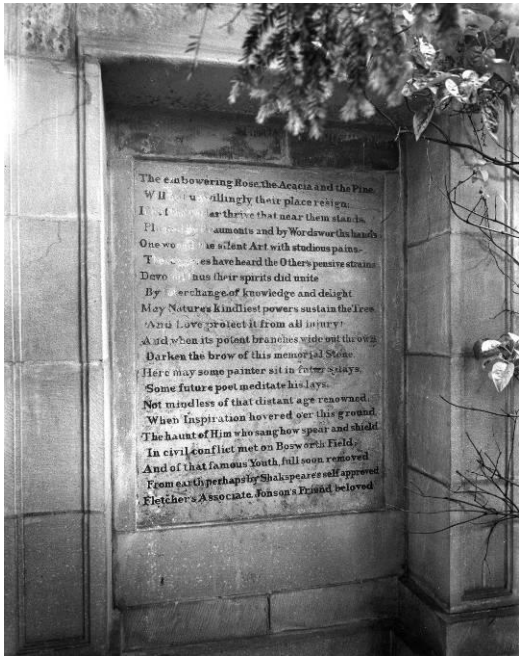
The memorial commemorating the planting of the cedar tree

Poem written in 1808 by Wordsworth to commemorate the planting of the cedar tree by himself and Beaumont.

The embowering rose, the acacia, and the pine,
Will not unwillingly their place resign;
If but the cedar thrives and near them stands,
Planted by Beaumont's and Wordsworth's hands.
One wooed the silent Art with studious pains;
Those 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 painter 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.



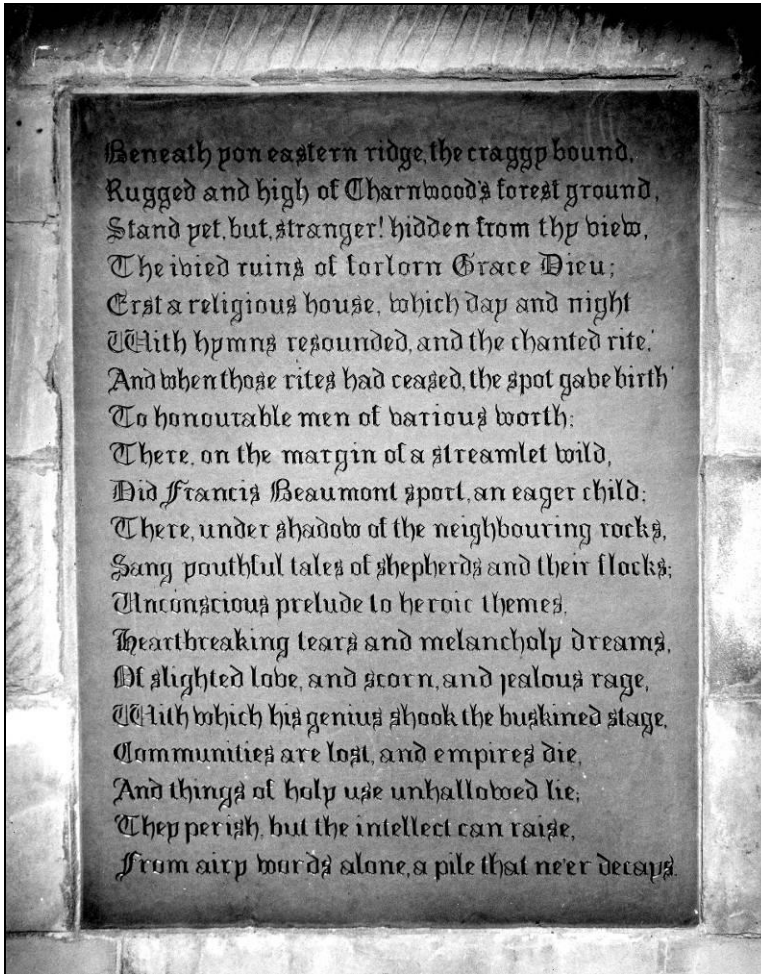
The lines of the poem on the previous page are engraved on this monument at the top of the steps, which lead up from the fish pool shown earlier. The steps were reportedly built by Wordsworth and Beaumont's gardener Mr. Craig.



The photograph on the right shows the stone edged gravelled path around the memorial which leads on from the steps shown above.

In Honour of Sir Francis Beaumont (1584-1616) of Grace Dieu – Renaissance Playwright, Dramatist and Poet

Another of William Wordsworth's three inscription poems was sent in a letter to Lady Beaumont from Grasmere, Wednesday November 20th 1811, and carved onto a tablet as shown in the following photographs in memory of the dramatist and poet Francis Beaumont. Apparently, this inscribed slate tablet is a copy of the original which was made following damage by a falling tree in 1976, which necessitated part of the memorial including the pilasters to be rebuilt. The original plaque was restored and is mounted on the north wall of the main entrance to the hall.



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 ruins 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.



The above photograph is of Sir George Howland William Beaumont, 10th Baronet, sitting on the steps which lead in a northerly direction, up to the memorial tablet in memory of the dramatist and poet Francis Beaumont. This Sir George was lord of the manor from 1882 to 1914. Photograph thought to be pre 1897. The 10th Baronet deserted his wife, Dame Lillie Ellen (Ellenor) c.1900 and went to France to live with his mistress, Mademoiselle Gabriel Louise Liegeard.

To the left, on a stone pier, is the coade stone bust of William Shakespeare. To the right, hidden by the bush, is a bust of Milton, again on a stone pier. These are reputedly dated 1817. Apparently, the above photograph came from the family album, and was thought to be the only one to survive. The Coade Stone vase to the left of the photograph is not there anymore.



A photograph taken in the 1980's showing the memorial seat and tablet inscribed with Wordsworth's poem in memory of the dramatist and poet Francis Beaumont



The busts of Milton & Shakespeare



A more recent photograph of the memorial to Francis Beaumont



Inscription – “To the Memory of Francis Beaumont”

A Memorial to Sir Joshua Reynolds

In the "Memorials of Coleorton" by Professor William Knight, he states the following in relation to Wordsworth, and the last of the three inscription poems:-

"Written in 1808 at the request of Sir George Beaumont, and in his name, for an urn, placed by him at the termination of a newly-planted avenue". He states that the urn was "set up" in 1807.

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 learned to from a darksome aisle;-
That may recall to mind that awful Pile
Where Reynolds', mid our countries 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
Raised 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.

There follows, modern photographs of the memorial to Sir Joshua Reynolds. It comprises a square funeral urn on a plinth and is inscribed with the above Wordsworth poem. Sir Joshua Reynolds had in fact died some twelve years before Sir George started re-building Coleorton Hall. Sir George had first come into contact with Joshua Reynolds in the late 1770's and had developed a great admiration for his talents. Even twenty years after his death, Beaumont erected the "Cenotaph" to his hero.

In 1823, during a five week visit to Coleorton Hall, John Constable drew sketches of the scene. He committed himself to making an oil painting of it 10 years later, and the original, entitled "The Cenotaph", is now held in the National Gallery. A copy of this is shown on the following page. When he painted it, Sir George Beaumont had been dead 6 years and Constable's beloved wife Maria was also dead. The terrible, tangible emotion of this painting is a larger grief than just that for Reynolds.



The Sir Joshua Reynolds Memorial



John Constable's 1833 painting "The Cenotaph", which was subsequently sold to Louis Philippe, the late King of the French for 650 guineas. It is now in the National Gallery. To the left and right are busts on plinths of Michelangelo and Raphael which he had introduced much nearer to the memorial than they were actually sited. He also introduced a stag into the picture.



The above photograph was taken in 1986 and can be related to John Constables painting entitled “The Cenotaph” shown on the previous page.

The avenue of lime trees approximately 50m long runs from east to west with the memorial to Sir Joshua Reynolds at the west end. The walk is pebble and brick decorated and expands at the east end into a pebbled circle approximately 10m in diameter. It is still in remarkably good condition. The walk is situated in the start of the woodland grove (described later) which runs north of the hall’s upper lawn. It is behind the summer house and its approximate location is marked **A** on the aerial map shown earlier.



The busts of Raphael (top) and Michelangelo

Wilson's Memorial Stone in "The Grove"



Above is a copy of an oil painting by Sir George Beaumont entitled "View in the Winter Gardens of Coleorton Hall". It is very similar to the view into the winter gardens drawn by Constable and shown on the following page.

An inscription on the back of Beaumont's picture, painted in 1821, states that the Wilson memorial stone was found within a quarter of a mile of Coleorton Hall near Hall Farm, and was brought to the place it is now, by twenty three horses. Carved on the stone is - "brought here 1818". It is called "Wilson's Memorial" from the resemblance it bears to the stones that the landscape artist Richard Wilson (d.1782) introduced into the foreground of his pictures. The photograph to the right depicts the engraving on the stone.



The above is a pencil and grey wash drawing of the “Wilson Stone” by Constable and dated November 28th 1823. On October 21st 1823, Constable wrote to his wife Maria telling her of his arrival at Coleorton Hall, Leicestershire, where he stayed with Sir George Beaumont for several weeks.....”O dear this is a lovely place indeed – such grounds – such distances – rock and water – all as it were can be done from the various windows of the house” (John Constable’s Correspondence, R.B. Becket, p.290).



The “Wilson Memorial Stone” photographed in 2015 with the summerhouse to the right after re-thatching and repair c.2005

Wordsworth Centenary Commemoration at Coleorton Hall in 1907

Ironically, although the Wordsworth Centenary Commemoration was organized by the Abel-Smiths who were leasing Coleorton Hall at that time, there was no family ancestral relationship with Wordsworth.

Extracts only from newspaper articles on Wordsworth's Centenary Celebrations

From the Loughborough Monitor - July 1907

WORDSWORTH AT COLEORTON

CENTENARY COMMEMORATION PROCEEDINGS

AN INTERESTING GATHERING

Note – Pictures plus information in italics added by Samuel T Stewart.

One hundred years ago, the great poet, William Wordsworth, paid his first visit to Coleorton, and on Sunday and Monday this fact was commemorated by divine service in the church on Sunday and a gathering in the hall grounds on Monday.

During the first visit to Coleorton, the poet lived at the "Hall Farm" from October, 1806, to August, 1807 (*whilst designing the Winter Garden for Sir George and Lady Beaumont- see the earlier article on the Winter Gardens*)



Hall Farm in 1981

Here his friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was with him from December 1806 to February, 1807; there also he was visited by Sir Walter Scott. In the Hall Farm which has been occupied by Mr. T. Radford for nearly half a century (*his grave is in St. Mary's Churchyard*), is a record of the famous people who have visited it. It runs:- "From the early days of the nineteenth century, Coleorton Hall, the seat of Sir George Beaumont, with its shady groves, its smooth lawn, its classic alters, and its antique treasures, was the haunt of many a child of genius. Sir George Beaumont, who was endowed with true artistic perception, acquired some celebrity both as a landscape painter and a collector, and extended his hospitality without stint to votaries of the brush. There Wilkie, Lanseer and Gibson in the morning of life found a warm and kindly patron. There Wordsworth conversed and meditated with Coleridge, and wrote some of his best poetic pieces. There

Haydon went to talk and dream, and there Sir Walter Scott met Davy, Rogers and Byron. The Hall Farm has been visited by Sarah Siddons, the celebrated actress, in the time of Sir George Beaumont's residence for four years whilst the hall was being re-built (*he spent much of his time at his Grosvenor Square London residence with Lady Beaumont*). It has also been visited by Charles Dickens (*the author has found no other evidence of this*).

Sir Walter Scott, the wizard of the North, there wrote part of "Ivanhoe" whilst visiting Sir George, for of those who have read the romance know, the scene of the tournament took place just a short distance away "on the memorable field of Ashby de la Zouch, one of the most gallantly contested tournaments of the age". Coleorton, indeed, abounds with many memories particularly relating to the post Wordsworth. In the Parish Church there are two tablets by Chautrey, one in memory of Sir George Beaumont referred to by Wordsworth in his "Elegiac Musings", the stanzas of which were suggested by a picture of Peele Castle which was painted by Sir George. Another was in memory of Mrs. Fermont, the inscription upon which being composed by Wordsworth. *Mrs. Fermont was the sister of Sir George Howland Beaumont, 7th Bart's wife Margaret Willes of Astrop Manor, who he married in 1778.*



B&W copy of "Peele Castle in a Storm" by Sir G. W. Beaumont, 7th Baronet.

On the Sunday, the sermon in the morning was preached by the Rev. Christopher William Wordsworth, Chaplain of Clifton College, and a great-grandson of the Rev. John Wordsworth.

From the Leicester Daily Post - Tuesday July 9th 1907

**WORDSWORTH CENTENARY
CELEBRATION AT COLEORTON**

**INTERESTING MEMORIES OF
THE POET**

Note – Pictures plus information in italics added by S T Stewart.

The celebration in connection with the Wordsworth centenary, organized by Mr. and Mrs. F. Abel-Smith, of Coleorton Hall, which, as already reported, began on Sunday, were continued

yesterday, when a large party were entertained by Mr. And Mrs. Abel-Smith, and the villagers were provided with tea and sports, and other amusements were indulged in. The arrangements were, however, somewhat marred by rain, which fell towards evening. A very large number of guests had accepted invitations amongst whom were.....*there are too many to list but well over two hundred are estimated including some Wordsworth relatives.....*

THE HALL FARM ASSOCIATIONS

Hard by Coleorton Hall lies the Hall Farm (the residence of Mr. and Mrs. T. Radford), which is full of relics of Wordsworth and contemporary poets, chief amongst which are six line engravings of what is known as the "Coleorton Group", being portraits of William Wordsworth, Walter Scott, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in one frame, and George Gordon Byron, Thomas Moore, and Robert Southey in another. Wordsworth lived at the Hall Farm in 1806 and 1807 at the invitation of Sir George Howland Beaumont, himself one of the finest amateur artists of the day, which accounts for his intimacy with Sir Joshua Reynolds. Sarah Siddons was also a visitor at Hall Farm. Mrs. Radford also had an autograph of Wordsworth, which with one of the late Queen Victoria and Prince Consort were lent to the exhibition, which was arranged in the magnificent library in the hall. Sir Walter Scott wrote the greatest part of "Ivanhoe" here, according to a statement made by Sir George Beaumont, who died in 1881 (*should be 1882*). Dorothy Wordsworth (*who was with the poet*), writing to Lady Beaumont in November 1806, speaking of the Hall Farm, said:- "We like the place more and more every day, and every day we find more comfort in having a roomy house. The sitting-room, where, by the fireside, we have seen some glorious sunsets, we far more than like - we already love it". Again - "We have not been much further than your grounds except to Ashby, where we have gone several times on business - the roads, if you don't go very far from home, are by no means as bad as I expected. For instance, the Ashby-road till you come to the turnpike, is very well. Afterwards to be sure it is shocking, and no doubt the Ashby people think we are marvelous creatures to wade through it".

Other exhibits included the original edition of "The Excursion" with the poets corrections; Wordsworth's poems, his gift to his godson, W. B. Beaumont; the official catalogue of the contents of Dove Cottage, Grasmere (*Wordsworth's home*); one of the Coleorton parish registers, containing two signatures by Rev Jn'r Wordsworth, 1828; a portrait of the Rev. Francis Merewether, who is mentioned in several of Wordsworth's letters; and many other interesting relics lent by members of the Wordsworth family.

Professor Knight, LL.D., of St. Andrews sent a large number of portraits and pictures to the Rev. Harold Robinson, the rector of Coleorton, to be included in the exhibition, comprising five photographs of portraits of Wordsworth, a portrait by W. Byron, Grasmere Church, Wordsworth's grave at Cockermouth, Dove Cottage, and Heidelberg Castle, by Dorothy Wordsworth, when visiting the Rhine with her father and Coleridge in 1828; the walk in the gardens behind the house at Cockermouth, where Wordsworth and Dorothy were born; seven engravings from water-colour drawings, by J. MacWhirter, of places associated with Wordsworth; other portraits of Wordsworth, his wife, sister, daughter etc., and a book of MSS, of Wordsworth Coleridge and Southey. Professor Knight also wrote a study and a eulogy of the poet, which was read by the Rev. Harold Robinson to the guests in the picture gallery, where also Miss Elizabeth Wordsworth, principle of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, gave an address, which, with the professor's paper, showed that Wordsworth was the poet of humanity as well as of nature.

ADDRESS BY THE BISHOP OF LEICESTER

The Bishop of Leicester gave an address to the company assembled at tea on the lawn. He said that he believed most of them were in church on the previous evening when he had an opportunity of saying something about the poet himself. This commemoration was a very unusual thing. There were not many places that had a connection with great men, and when there was a connection, it did not seem at all suitable that it should be forgotten, as they were apt to be. He could imagine that the young people of Coleorton would remember that day for the rest of their lives. It would set them thinking of Wordsworth, and his (the bishop's) belief was that there were

very few of our great poets who were better worth thinking about than he was. Among the lessons he taught them was of value and interest in every human life. No one ever took more interest than Wordsworth did in everybody that he came across, no matter what his condition might be. Even a beggar on the road was of interest to him! He never saw a human being but what his heart went out to him, and he found something in him that was worth thinking about. "Peter Bell" was not a model character at all, but Wordsworth felt there was something in him. There was a tale about a Coleorton man and he (the bishop) would be glad to know whether it could be traced. Whilst walking between the Hall Farm and the hall, Wordsworth used to repeat his verses in rather a loud voice, and he discovered that a Coleorton man used to walk after him and listen to what he was saying, picked up a good many of his lines, and used to repeat them. When the poet heard of this some years later after, he sent the man a copy of his poems, and hoped he would recognize some of the lines. "I wonder" said the bishop, "if that copy is in Coleorton now"? It would be well worth while, he proceeded, to make enquiries about it. There was a reference by the poet also to a Coleorton man named Mitchell. (a voice; There is no Mitchell in the parish now). This man was a watchman in whom Wordsworth was interested. He told Wordsworth the tale about the seven whistlers and of "Gabriell's Hounds". "I wonder" said the bishop, "if anything is known about that"? The idea is that a man was hunted by his own hounds, but as to the seven whistlers, he believed that the story was well known, although he did not know if anyone had heard them. He did not know what a better lesson could be taught than to learn to find interest in all that there was about us, and to believe that there was something well knowing in every human being they met. His Lordship concluded an interesting address by an expression of exceeding sorrow that Mr. F. A. Abel-Smith was unable to be present due to illness (*he died in 1908*), a sorrow which was, he was sure, shared by all. (Hear, Hear). It deprived him of the pleasure of making Mr. Abel-Smith's acquaintance. (Applause). The Rev. H. Robinson, in a few remarks, thanked the bishop for his address, and especially for his references to Coleorton.

The visit of John Constable (1776-1837) to Coleorton Hall from October 21st to November 28th 1823

Details of the visit are taken from "John Constable's Correspondence" edited by R. B. Beckett. The following extracts are mainly taken from letters to his wife Maria whilst he was staying with Sir George Beaumont, 7th Baronet and Lady Margaret.

Coleorton Hall. Octr 21, 1823

My very dear Love

I hasten to fulfil my promise to write to you on my arrival here – though Sir George and Lady Beaumont both wish me to defer it to another day, as he wants me in his painting room. But you are everything to me and everything I wish.

My journey was not an unpleasant one, though shut up in a coach from 6 in the evening till 12 at night, with only one other person – a decent sensible middle aged Lady – till we got to Leicester, where two more got into the coach to Ashby.

O dear this is a lovely place indeed and I only want you with me to make my visit quite complete – such grounds – such trees – such distances – rock and water – all as it were can be done from the various windows of the house. The Church stands in the garden & all looks like fairy land.....

J.C

I am just returned from a walk – all around and about with Sir G. He is now painting, & I shall take my box, and do a little bit of rock or tree covered with moss.....

Coleorton Hall. Octr. 27. 1823

.....We find such occupation here that I can hardly say when I shall come back, whether this week or not till the next. Sir George and Lad Beaumont are so kind to me, that I feel quite at home.....

We are early here – and I am now writing before breakfast that when the boy goes to Ashby to post at ten, I may be ready.

We breakfast at half past 8, but today we began for the winter hour 9 – this habit is so delightful that if you please we will adopt it, but I must say you are very good.

We do not quit the table immediately but chat a little about the pictures in the room, the breakfast room containing the Claudes (*17th century French painter*). We then go to the painting room, and Sir George most manfully like a real artist sets to work on anything he may fix upon – and me by his side. At two o'clock the horses are brought to the door – and Lady Beaumont hunts us both out.

So one of these fine days I had the opportunity of seeing the ruins at Ashby, the mountain streams and rocks at Griesdieu (*Gracedieu*), and an old convent there. Lord Ferrer's (*Staunton Harold*) – a grand but melancholy spot – I would think of the Lord Ferrers who was hanged for shooting his steward.

We then return to dinner. Do not sit long – hear the newspaper by Lady Beaumont (the Herald-let us take it in town) – then to the drawing room to meet the tea – then comes a great treat. I am furnished with some beautiful portfolios, of his own drawings or otherwise, and Sir George reads a play, in a manner the most delightful – far beyond and pronunciation I have ever heard – on Saturday evening it was "As you like it", and the Seven Ages I never so heard before.

Last evening (Sunday) he read a sermon and a good deal of Wordsworth's Excursion, it is beautiful but has some sad melancholy stories, and as I think only serve to harrow you up without a purpose – it is bad taste – but some of the descriptions of landscape are beautiful. They strongly wish me to get it.

Then about 9 the servant comes in with a little fruit and decanter of cold water and at eleven we go to bed – where I find a nice fire in my bedroom – and I make out about an hour longer, as I have everything here, writing desk &c. This makes me grudge a moments sleep here.

I shall have much to say, & I am sure this visit will form one of the epochs of my life in (taste), industry, pride, and so on - & I will take care of myself and not let vulgar writers come and

insult and intrude upon (me) as I have done, I will have a proper opinion of myself. A friend of ours, and R.A., is much laughed at here, and fully known – but we will talk of this matter alone.

This is a dreary morning, but I do not mind, I have so much that I want within – but I shall make a few sketches on the grounds, & I (have) done a little one from the window. Sir G. has kindly allowed me to make a study of a little Claude, a Grove – probably done on the spot.....

Yours ever affectionately
J. Constable

Coleorton Hall near Ashby de la Zouch
Novr. 5th 1823.

.....Sir G.B. paints a good deal – we work in the same room. He is very entertaining – so full of delightful stories about painting – & he laughs, sings, whistles & plays with his dog who is a surly fellow, but quite friends with me. This is the most punctual house that ever was – at 9 breakfast – no lunch – dinner four – tea seven – prayers 10 – bell always rings as the clock is striking those hours.

Sir G. rides out about 2, fine or foul – rises at 7 – walks in the garden – the horses come under the window – he feeds the birds at breakfast – after dinner the newspaper is read out, & at 7 tea & then some book, or play read by Sir G.....

Nov 21.

.....Just as I am doubling this letter the clock is striking nine & the bell ringing for breakfast – nothing can exceed the punctuality of this place. I believe some great folks are coming here in December which Sir G. dreads as they interfere with his painting habits – for no artist can be more regular or fond of it.....

26 Novr. 1823.

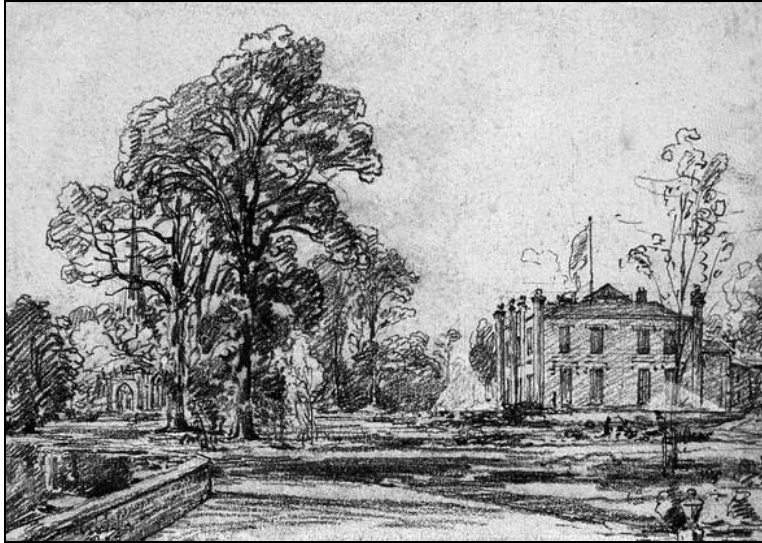
Sir George is so very anxious that I shall not leave him for another day or two that I shall stay till Friday & be with you on Saturday morning, and have a quiet day together on Sunday. I have worked so hard that I really want a day or two & he will ride with me every day - & some company are coming here on Friday so that all things will suit.....

My second little copy of Claude is only done this morning & it is beautiful and all wet so that I could hardly bring it with me.

Nothing can exceed the kindness of all here and Sir G. we have been of mutual and great service to each other. No one unpleasant circumstance has happened whilst I have been with them six weeks on Tuesday since we met. O dear – it is sad – I long to see you & if you have any friends staying with you I beg you will dismiss them on my arrival

Yours

J. Constable.



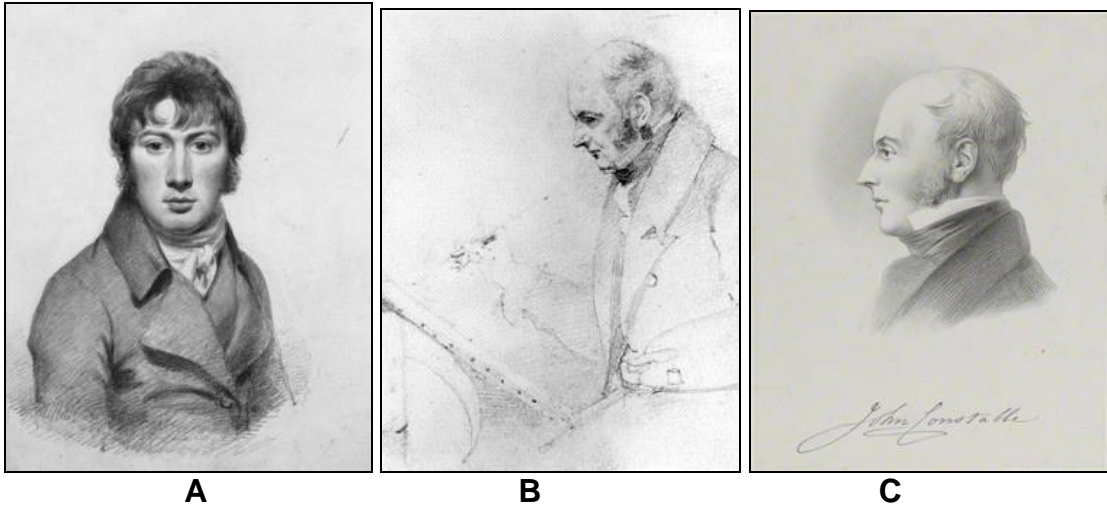
A pencil drawing of the hall by John Constable made during his November 1823 visit. The original was sold at Bonhams, in London on July 14th 2013 for £67, 250.



An 1823 pencil & wash drawing of the hall by John Constable reportedly done in Southey's daughters album.

On the morning of his last day at Coleorton (if he left after all on the 28th November) Constable amused himself by strolling to the end of a grove where he had already noticed a monument erected by Beaumont to the memory of Sir Joshua Reynolds and there making two drawings (Victoria & Albert museum Nos 815 and 835), one of which he used many years later for his painting called "The Cenotaph", which was itself a tribute to the memory of his host. A copy of this is shown earlier.

PORTRAITS OF JOHN CONSTABLE



- A** - Self portrait 1799-1804 (original pencil and black chalk heightened with white and red chalk).
- B** - By Daniel Maclise – pencil – c.1831.
- C** - By Richard Lane after Charles Robert Leslie – Lithograph – 1825-1850.

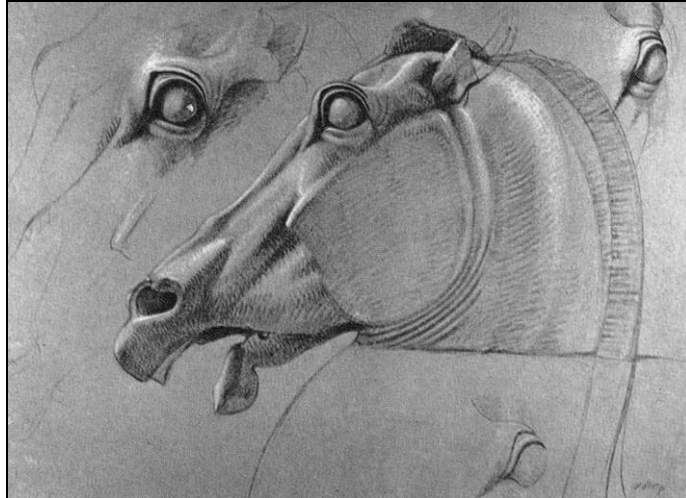
The visit of Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846) and David Wilkie (1785-1841) to Coleorton Hall in 1809.

Taken from Professor William Knight's Memoirs of Coleorton

Benjamin Robert Haydon and David Wilkie (famous English and Scottish painters respectively) went on a visit to Coleorton in 1809, of which Haydon gives the following account: —

There had been a great deal of fun at Lord Mulgrave's about this visit. Sir George, like all men of fashion, had a way of saying pleasant things without the least meaning. He was always full of invitations to Coleorton, and when, he disapproved of my rocks in "Dentatus" (*painting finished in 1809*), he said, "There are some capital rocks at Coleorton which you and Wilkie must come down and study. I will write to you as soon as I get down." When, on his return to town, he again found fault with the rocks. Lord Mulgrave slyly said, "Haydon, what a pity it was you did not see those unfortunate rocks at Coleorton"; and when the picture was up, and Sir George tried to say anything in my defense, Lord Mulgrave would say, Ah, Sir George, it is all owing to those cursed rocks!" 'Sir George at last, quite ashamed of his wilful forgetfulness, wrote us both a most kind invitation while we were in Devonshire; and so, the moment we returned to town, off we set for Coleorton. We got to Ashby-de-la-Zouche at night, slept there, and the next day posted on to Coleorton. The house was a small seat, recently built by Dance in the Gothic style, very near a former house where Beaumont and Fletcher used to spend their summers. Sir George, I think, told us he was descended from the same family as the dramatist. 'Both he and Lady Beaumont received us very kindly, but I could not help thinking that it was more to avoid Lord Mulgrave's future quizzing than from any real pleasure in our company. As I was walking with him next day about the grounds, he said, "Now I hope you and Wilkie will stay a fortnight." . . . We passed a fortnight as delightfully as painters could. Sir George painted, and Lady Beaumont drew, and Wilkie and I made our respective studies for our own purposes. At lunch we assembled and chatted over what we had been doing, and at dinner we all brought down our respective sketches, and cut up each other in great good humour. We dined with the Claude and Rembrandt before us, breakfasted with the Rubens landscape, and did nothing morning, noon or night but think of painting, talk of paintings, dream of painting, and wake to paint again.

'We lingered on the stairs in going up to bed and studied the effect of candlelight upon each other, wondering how the shadows could be best got as clear as they looked. Sometimes Sir George made Wilkie stand with the light in a proper direction, and he and I studied the colour. Sometimes he held the candle himself, and made Wilkie join me; at another time he would say, "Stop where you are. Come here, Wilkie. Asphaltum thinly glazed over on a cool preparation I think would do it," and David and I would suggest something else. We then unwillingly separated for the night, and rose with the lark, to go at it again, all of us feeling as jealous as if we were artists struggling for fame. Wilkie and Sir George had the best of it, because, after all, rocks are inanimate; and seeing that I should be done up if I did not bring out something to sustain my dignity, I resolved on a study of a horse's head. Without saying a word, by dinner next day I painted, full of life and fire, the head of a favourite horse of Sir George's, and bringing it in when the party assembled for dinner, I had the satisfaction of demolishing their little bits of study, for the size of life effectually done is sure to carry off the prize.



Haydon's Horses Head

'The next morning at breakfast I perceived that something was brewing in David's head, and I clearly saw that my championship would not be a sinecure. Away went David to his studies, I to my rocks. Sir George to his painting-room, and Lady Beaumont to her boudoir. Dinner was announced, and in stalked David Wilkie with an exquisite study of an old woman of the village, in his best style, so that the laurel was divided; but they all allowed that nothing could exceed the eye of my horse.

'One evening, I made Lady Beaumont's maid stand on the staircase with a light behind her, so as to cast a good shadow on the wall, and from her I painted an excellent study for Lady Macbeth. Our fortnight was now fast drawing to a close, and Sir George began to lament that when we had left him he should be compelled to attend to his coal-mines.

'In the gardens he had a bust of Wordsworth, and I think a memento of Wilson. Coleorton is a retired spot; I visited it in 1837, when at Leicester, and was touched to see it again after so many years. A group of sculpture had been added near the hall; my Macbeth (of which presently) was on the staircase. Jackson, Lord Mulgrave, Sir George and Lady Beaumont, were all dead, and I walked through the house in a melancholy stupor; angry to see the rooms, where once hung the site of our now national pictures, filled with modern works, and the two superb heads (by Sir Joshua) of Sir George and Lady Beaumont pushed high up to make way for some commonplace trash. Sir George said to us one day at dinner, "Wordsworth may perhaps walk in; if he does, I caution you both against his terrific democratic notions." This was in 1809 and considering the violence of his subsequent conservatism, it is a curious fact to recall.

The following is taken from "The life of Sir David Wilkie" by Allan Cunningham published in 1843 and taken from Wilkie's journal.

1809 August 14th - Reached Coleorton Hall at 11 o'clock: Dance who designed it, has acquitted himself well: we found it most spacious and magnificent. We were most kindly received by Sir George and Lady Beaumont. We entered first through a large portico into the lobby, which leads into a splendid hall lighted from the ceiling. Round the hall is a suite of rooms fitted up in the most elegant manner. The room above are chiefly bedrooms, while at the top of all is the painting room of Sir George himself. We next went round the cottages in the neighbourhood, some of which I intend to make studies of. The country around is picturesque and thickly wooded.....

15th – Went and began a sketch of an old cottage close to the house. Continued painting until 3, and was visited once or twice by Lady Beaumont, also by an old gardener, whom I found to be a Scotsman, and a rather intelligent person.....

16th – Put in today the sky to the background of The Cottage.....

17th – Began to paint in the Winter-Gardens, and finished the sketch of the cottage.....

18th – Finished The Cottage sketch, and standing on the bank which overlooks the Winter Garden, I saw a distant landscape, broken by trees and cottages in the foreground, which seemed well calculated to accompany the sky which I had painted. When I had put it in, I took it into the house and compared it with Sir George's Rubens, and made such alterations as the study of that great master suggested. When we had dined, we took a walk to the farm-house, where we saw, besides some very fine trees, a pigeon house which I think will suit me exactly.

19th – Began to paint at 10 at The Gardener's Cottage, and continued till I finished the sketch which I began yesterday, though much interrupted by rain. In the evening I amused myself by looking, with Haydon, over Hogarth's prints, and Sir George read us Wordsworth's poem "The Thorn"

20th – In a walk all round the fields we saw a farm-house with a group of the most picturesque trees I ever beheld; nor did we fail to perceive that the farm-house itself was remarkably clean and neat. At the door of another house we found a draw well, with household utensils beside it, arranged in such a manner that, if time allows, I shall make a study of it. In the evening Sir George desired all the servants to come in, when Lady Beaumont read to us part of the church service, and Sir George read a sermon. I was highly gratified with this devotional duty, which I had never witnessed before in any part of England.

21st – Had a walk with Sir George and Lady Beaumont in the fields this evening: looked through the telescope at the moon, which shone uncommonly clear.....

22nd – Went and painted from the group of trees at the farm, and made a useful sketch.

23rd – Went to paint the well at the house which I saw on the 20th. The woman of the house allowed me to sit within the door; she talked incessantly to me all day; she was such a dame as I should suppose the neat herd's wife was who scolded Alfred about burning her cakes. Yet, for all her roughness of manner, she showed me much kindness. A young woman came in with a very beautiful countenance and a young child at her breast, daughter-in-law to the old women. I succeeded in hitting off this little rustic scene to my satisfaction. When I returned, I found that Sir George had gone a great way in the picture he is painting for me. Sir George in the evening read us Addison's comedy of The Drummer.

24th – Painted for an hour before breakfast at the window of The Gardener's cottage.....

25th – Made some sketches of various scenes: finished that of the well; and introduced it as a background to a sketch of Mrs. Knight, with whom I had a bicker about religion, very violent, yet very civil.

26th – I began to paint, but as I was rubbing in the broken surface of a sandy road for the foreground, I was told that Lady Beaumont wished me to paint a gipsy-woman who was then in the house. I went at once: this woman seemed a singular character. I sketched in the head, and as her child lay sucking at the breast I put it in also, although it had nothing interesting in its appearance. I finished the sketch to my satisfaction, and for the first time tried the effects of yellow lake on the flesh, which even surpassed my expectations.....

27th – Lady Beaumont requested me to read after breakfast Wordsworth's Preface to his poems.....I rode with Sir George to the distance of three miles, where we saw some rocks which Haydon has been painting; they are both massy and rugged. We had a beautiful view from this spot of Coleorton and the more distant country. On our way home we passed an old abbey in ruins (*Gracedieu*): the chief circumstance which renders it interesting is, that it is the birth-place of the celebrated Beaumont, who wrote in conjunction with Fletcher.....

Wilkie with his companion (*Benjamin Robert Haydon*) left Coleorton on the evening of the 27th of August. This visit was long held in remembrance. "The pleasure", says Sir George, "which your visit gave us will not soon pass from our minds, and I cannot but look forward with pleasure to the time you are to paint a picture here".

Supplementary information - Three years before his visit to Coleorton, Sir David Wilkie painted his famous picture, "The Blind Fiddler" for Sir George Beaumont who commissioned it in 1806, and it was completed by August 20th of that year. Sir George subsequently presented it to the National Gallery. Further information is included in the book entitled "The life of Sir David Wilkie" by Allan Cunningham published in 1843.



"The Blind Fiddler" by David Wilkie



Benjamin Robert Haydon



David Wilkie c.20 years old.

Both self portraits