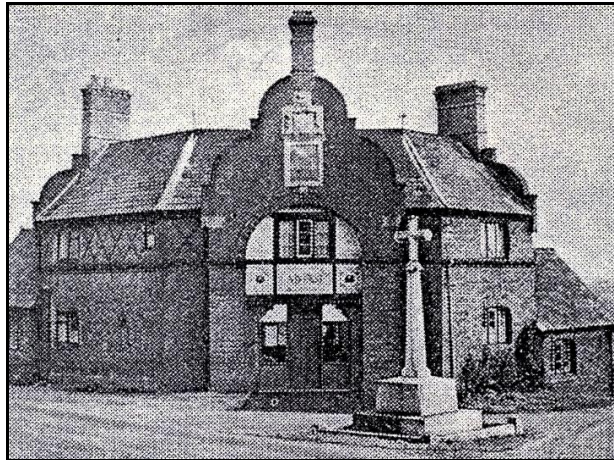


**A HISTORY OF THE ORIGINAL COLEORTON HOSPITAL AND
FREE SCHOOL, THE ALMS HOUSES AND VISCOUNT
BEAUMONT'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL**



BY SAMUEL T STEWART June 2020

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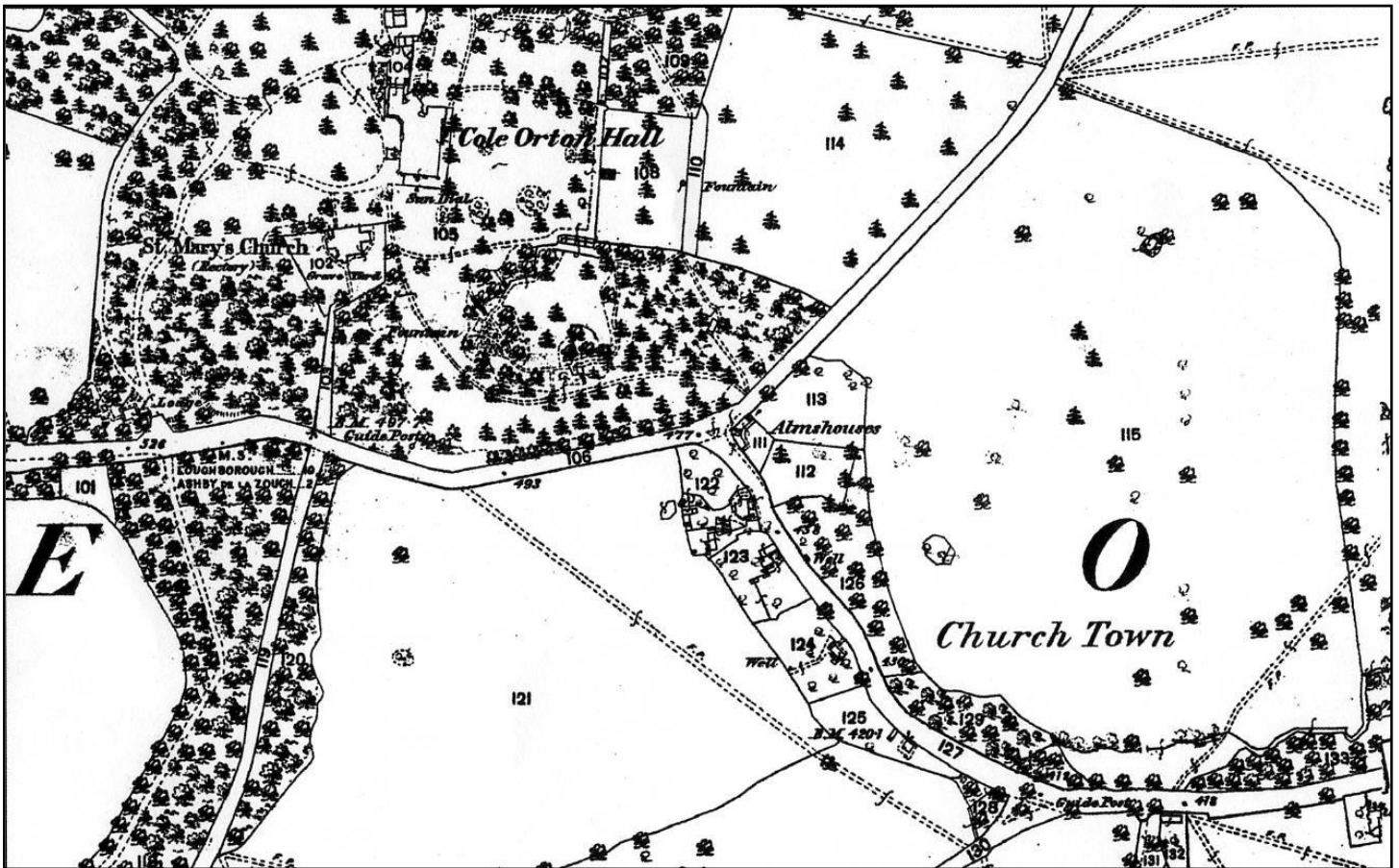
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PART 1

THE COLEORTON HOSPITAL (ASYLUM) AND FREE SCHOOL – FOUNDED IN 1707

ORIGINAL LOCATION OF THE “HOSPITAL AND FREE SCHOOL”



1885 published O/S map (surveyed 1881)

The above map shows the location of the *Alms Houses* (plot 111) at the old junction of Church Hill (Ashby Road) and the Rempstone Road, prior to the Coleorton by-pass being constructed in 1992. The *Alms Houses* were built on the same site as the original *Hospital and Free School* (see part 2).

The relatively modern map on the next page shows the *Alms Houses* marked **A** relative to the new by-pass junction.

The *Alms Houses* are now a private residence and cannot be seen directly from the main road now.



INTRODUCTION

The last and 3rd Viscount, Thomas Beaumont (see the following chart), died on June 11th 1702, and was buried in the family vault at St. Mary's Church. There is no monument to his memory, but his name lives on in the Hospital and Free School. In his will, dated 20th August 1701, he set up a trust to erect a combined "Hospital and Free School" in the Church Town area of Coleorton.

Sir Thomas Beaumont inherited the Coleorton estate, such as it was, when his father died in 1658, at which time he was 25 years old. Following the massive disruptions of the Civil Wars, the estate was in a very poor condition. When Sir Thomas inherited the estate, he was living in Whitwick. In 1683, he wrote a letter to his friend William Herrick at "Beaumanor" concerning the purchase of a number of trees, which would be used in either his mines or to re-build his Manor-House. This would suggest that the manor-house was re-built between 1683 and 1702, as Sir Thomas was living in it when he died in 1702. Sir Thomas was Lord of the Manor for 44 years, and by the time he died, he had apparently placed the Coleorton Estate on a very stable footing.

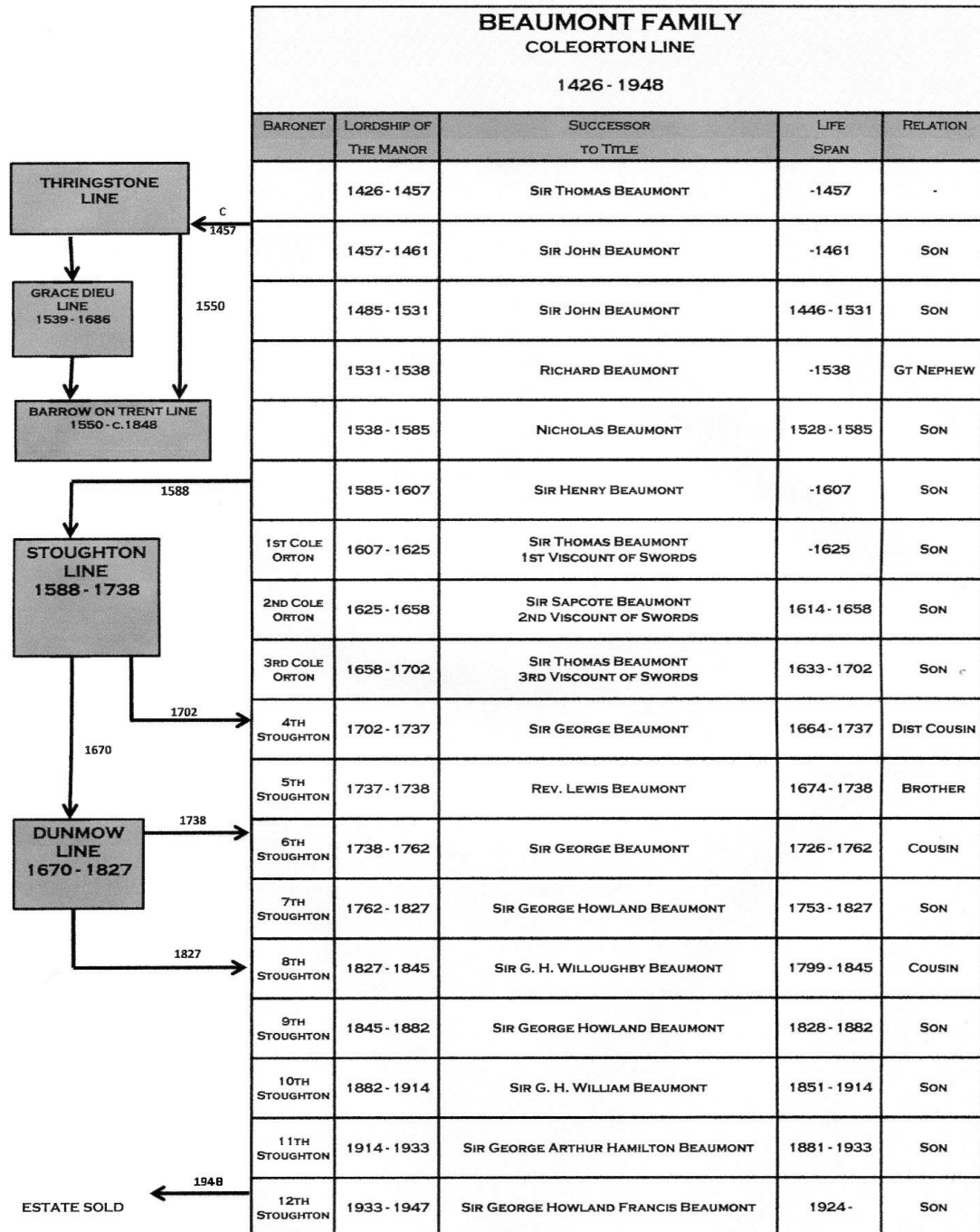
Unfortunately, Sir Thomas had not been blessed with children, and so his titles of 3rd Viscount Beaumont of Swords, and 3rd Baronet of Coleorton became extinct, together with the Baronetcy of Coleorton. The estate was inherited by Sir George Beaumont, the 4th Baronet of Stoughton, who was a distant cousin of Sir Thomas. He apparently took very little interest in the Estate, and continued to live at Stoughton. **All the subsequent Lords of the Manor were Baronets of Stoughton, not of Coleorton.**

The Coleorton Estate continued to be owned by the Stoughton Beaumonts, but none of them resided at the Coleorton residence, and they continued to manage the estate through their agents.

For the next hundred odd years, there were no Beaumont's resident in Coleorton, until Sir George Howland Beaumont, the 7th Baronet of Stoughton, chose to move to Coleorton permanently with Lady Beaumont to live in their newly built Coleorton Hall on 12th August 1808.

See the publication entitled "The return of Sir George Howland Beaumont, 7th Baronet & Lady Margaret to Coleorton & the re-building of the old Manor House" by Samuel T Stewart. This is free to download and read on his website.

LINEAGE CHART



**Sir George Howland Francis Beaumont 12th Baronet
Passed away on March 26th 2011**

AN ACCOUNT BY JOHN NICHOLS – THE LEICESTERSHIRE HISTORIAN

The following was recorded in John Nichol's "The History of Antiques of the County of Leicestershire", Volume 3. Pt. 2. dated c.1800.

About one hundred yards from the Church stands the Hospital and School, forming together, a good brick building with a large front, in the middle of which, facing the street, is a large slate with the "Beaumont Coat of Arms", but no date :-

***"THIS HOSPITAL AND SCHOOL WAS FOUNDED AND ENDOWED BY THE RIGHT
HONOURABLE AND TRULY CHARITABLE THOMAS LORD VISCOUNT BEAUMONT OF
THIS PLACE"***

The school is considerable, and in good reputation, it runs all the length over the hospital, and is a free school for reading and writing, with a good house for the master and his family, parlour and two chambers, two garrets (attics) and two gardens.

The hospital contains six widows belonging to the Parish, each having a separate house and garden with advantages paid out of the great tithes of Swannington (stipends, gown, coal etc).



An engraving of the original Hospital and School by S.Shaw Feb 1794

The above engraving also appears in Nichol's publication. It demonstrates that the Hospital and Free School was an elegant brick building, and records two windmills, a number of colliery waste tips and many small dwellings in the background. The plaque above the door in this engraving was not the original one as explained on the next page. This rural scene would definitely not have been as attractive as the engraving portrays it to be. Note the state of the road in front of the building leading to and from Church Hill.

The School Master was allowed to receive "paid scholars", but the number of those seldom exceeded six. The master was assisted by his wife in teaching the girls, and her services were considered to be paid for in the salary allowed her husband. Books and stationery were provided for the use of the free scholars, at the expense of the charity fund.

The headmaster was expected to teach as many children from the parish as could be accommodated. The children had to be over 6 years, and not many stayed beyond the age of 12

as they would have been needed to support the home income by working in the fields or helping with home-based cottage industries for example. In 1839 there were 50 boys and 40 girls registered, although the average was said to be 60 boys and 50 girls.

WILLIAM WHITE'S 1846 TRADE DIRECTORY

Below is an extract from "White's 1846 Gazette and Directory of Leicestershire and the Little County of Rutland", which provides a good insight into the Hospital and School:-

The HOSPITAL AND SCHOOL, at Coleorton, were founded in 1707, by *Lord Viscount Beaumont*, who devised the tithe of Swannington to Sir G. Beaumont and other trustees, and their heirs, upon trust, with the rents and profits thereof, to erect a hospital and school, and to endow them, for the support of six poor widows, and the education of poor children. The building contains on the ground floor eight rooms, six of which are occupied by six widows, and two by the schoolmaster. Over the latter are two school-rooms, capable of accommodating 60 boys and 60 girls. The tithes produce a yearly income of £175, out of which the schoolmaster and his wife have a yearly salary of £65, for which they teach reading, writing, and accounts to about 100 children, who are also provided with books and stationery. The six almswomen have each a weekly stipend of 4s., and a nurse 2s. Coals to the amount of £20 per annum are provided for the hospital and school; and the six widows are provided with stuff gowns every year. The Rector, Sir G. H. Beaumont, and others, are the trustees. Coleorton is one of the three parishes entitled to send alms-people to Ravenstone Hospital, which see. The *Poor's Close*, 2A., let for

One has to ask the question as to why this building was always referred to as a "Hospital" and School? Clearly it wasn't a hospital as such, and the first slate plaque on the building, as shown on the following page even described it as an "Asylum".

ORIGINAL SLATE PLAQUE

Below, is a photograph of the original plaque placed on the Hospital and Free School building. It is interesting to note, that it is referred to as an “Asylum” and a Free School. It does not give the actual date of the building being opened in 1707.

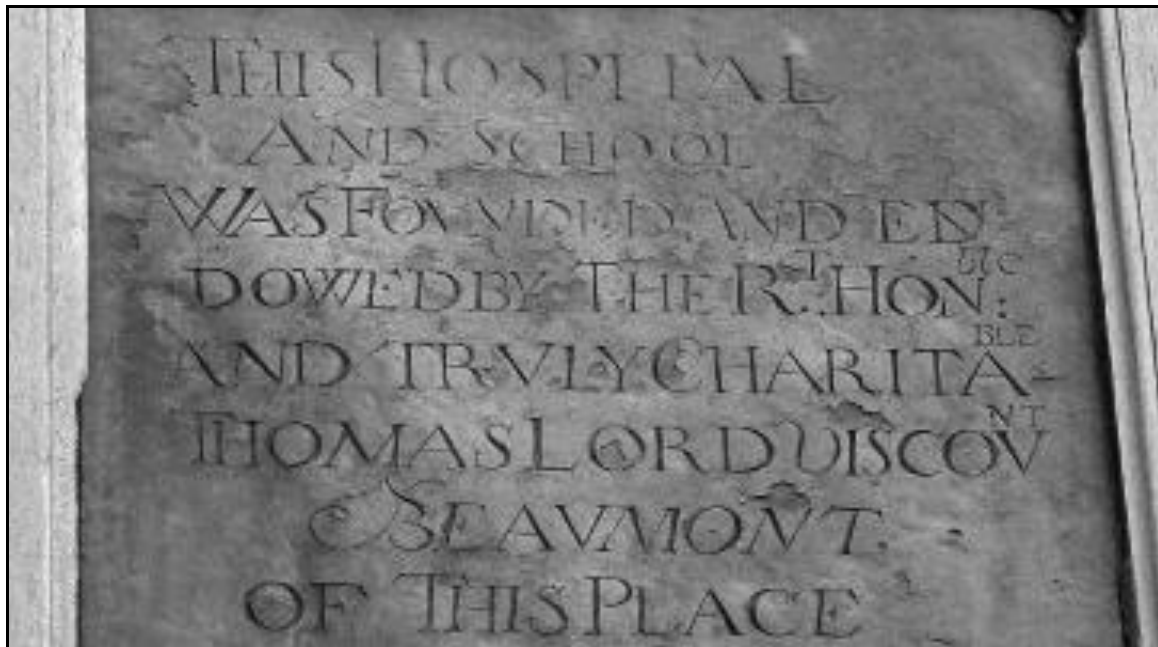
The plaque is inscribed as follows:-

THIS ASYLUM
FOR SIX WIDOWS
AND THIS FREE SCHOOL
WERE FOUNDED AND ENDOWED
BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
AND TRULY CHARITABLE
THOMAS LORD VISCOUNT BEAUMONT
OF THIS PLACE
WHO DIED JUNE THE ELEVENTH
1702



LATER PLAQUE PRE 1794

When the engraving by S. Shaw was done in 1794, clearly the plaque portrayed on the front of the building had changed from the original one. Below is a photograph of what is thought to be the slate plaque Nichols' referred to with "no date". This was later incorporated into the Alms Houses which replaced the original Hospital and Free School as shown later.



TEACHERS AT THE FREE SCHOOL

JOHN BECKWITH – HEADMASTER

LUCY BECKWITH – HEADMISTRESS ?????



Lucy Beckwith

(Photograph from the Leicester Advertiser 1975 – copyright held by the originator)

It was recorded in an article in the Leicester Advertiser dated Friday July 25th 1975, that one of the headmistresses of the school who taught the girls, was the formidable Lucy Beckwith, a stickler for discipline. She wore - or so it is reputed - a whale bone corset from which she would whip a whale bone and rap any erring pupil. It also stated that she reigned from 1817 to 1857 – 40 years of tyrannical female rule. The author has found nothing elsewhere to confirm she was a schoolmistress and finds the story rather fanciful!

Lucy and John Beckwith were born in 1797 and 1798 in Castle Hedingham, Essex and Walter Belchamp, Essex respectively. John Beckwith is recorded in White's 1846 directory as being the schoolmaster at the Free School, Coleorton, but there is no mention of Lucy Beckwith being the schoolmistress! However, as the school was for boys and girls she may well have looked after the girls under her husband's direction. It is hard to imagine that with all their children she would have had the time to be a schoolmistress anyway, having had 11 children between 1822 and 1841. Reputedly they had been married for 4 years when they moved to Coleorton, and already had a daughter Ann. Their names and date of birth were:-

Ann (1822), William (1823), Emma Lucy (1826), John (1827), James Edward (1828), Charles Frederick (1831), Frances Hannah (1834), Edward (1836), Mary Ann (1838) and Elizabeth (1840), George (1841 **when Lucy was 44**).

The following newspaper report is rather amusing, and could be taken as confirmation that John and Lucy Beckwith were resident in the school house at that time.

THE WESTERN TIMES – SEPTEMBER 5TH 1829

Anti-Population Mania –

*Lady Beaumont, who died a few weeks since, at her seat in Coleorton, near Ashby de la Zouch, and who was the relict (widow) of the late Sir George Howland Beaumont, 7th Baronet, by whose death the title became extinct (incorrect), used to make a practice, for the purpose of impeding the increase of the population, to reject all candidates for farms, or other situations in her patronage, who had large families of children, and even those who had been lately married, if there appeared a probability of a numerous family. She even went so far to call on some of her tenants, and tell them she would dismiss them from her estate, if they had anymore children; **and she compelled a school master and his wife**, whose situations were in her appointment, to sleep in different bedrooms, and threatened them with the loss of their situations, if they had anymore children. **By this time, Lucy and John had five children.***

After their retirement, sometime between the 1851 and 1861 census, John and Lucy were recorded in 1861 as living with four children on Coleorton Moor as farmers of 24 acres and shopkeepers. Clearly, the teaching profession paid well in those days. Lucy and John died on Dec 28th 1876 and Apr 1st 1876 respectively and are both buried in St. Mary's Church graveyard with a headstone.

The author acknowledges with thanks that the following details of the Beckwith's children are taken from the Coleorton Heritage Group website:-

The oldest of their children, Ann (Annie) worked and lived at Coleorton Hall as a domestic servant for a while and lived with her parents for the rest of her life, unmarried.

The 1841 census shows William was working and living as a gardener in Farm Town. (He died aged 25 in 1848 and is recorded as being buried in St. Mary's Church graveyard).

Second daughter, Emma, married a gardener from Northampton and later moved to Mickleham in Surrey. Emma had seven children of which at least one died in infancy. She and her husband lived till they were 78.

James married and became a brewery clerk in Burton on Trent. They had a son who was also a brewers clerk.

Charles was a time keeper and bookkeeper and later a railway clerk. He married Sophia, and lived first in Narborough and then East Street in Leicester. They had no children.

Frances married an army school master, Thomas Walker, born in York. Army postings took them to Malta and to Keurracher, India. They had 4 children. Frances died at the age of 43.

Mary was a dressmaker, didn't marry, and continued living at Coleorton. Note that the early census records were very vague about addresses. Individual houses weren't recorded, so we don't know if family members lived all in the same house or next door or down the road.

Edward married Rose Caroline Daniels on 3 March 1859 and had five children. They lived in Swannington and Whitwick.

The youngest child George married Mary Cross from nearby Derbyshire in 1862 but had no children. George kept the books for his father's farm, and subsequently worked as a baker and a grocer and later a colliery clerk. They lived with his brother and sister in law, Margaret and Gerry Green on The Moor, Coleorton.

HENRY AND KETZIA BECK

By 1861, Henry and Kezia Beck together with their seven children were listed as being at the school house, with Henry and Kezia being schoolmaster and schoolmistress respectively. Henry was also given as an organist, presumably at St. Mary's Church.

MR. GEO BROWN

A newspaper report dated February 1867 in connection with the **COLEORTON MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION, held at the "Office Room", Coleorton Moor** and prior to the new "Viscount Beaumont's Church of England School" being opened, mentions Mr. Geo Brown as the Schoolmaster, and Hon Sec.

The complete report is in the book entitled "Coleorton Village History (As seen through the eyes of the newspapers) by Samuel T Stewart on page 60. The book is free to download and read on his website

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The 1851 and 1861 census records the number of children at school as 88 and 63 respectively. The 1841 census did not record scholars.

DERBY MERCURY – JANUARY 21ST 1863

Coleorton School –

*At the annual distribution of prizes at this school, the children thought the indefatigable exertions of Miss Merewether, gave a great treat in the exhibition of a large and fine Christmas tree, on which were hung nearly 150 prizes, **and which was lit by nearly as many wax tapers.** The prizes were afterwards distributed to the scholars by Miss Merewether. They consisted of books, work boxes, dress and pinafore pieces, knives, comforters, and also every other useful or ornamental toy that could be thought of. It is needless to say that all were highly delighted, and gave three hearty cheers for Miss Merewether*

PART 2

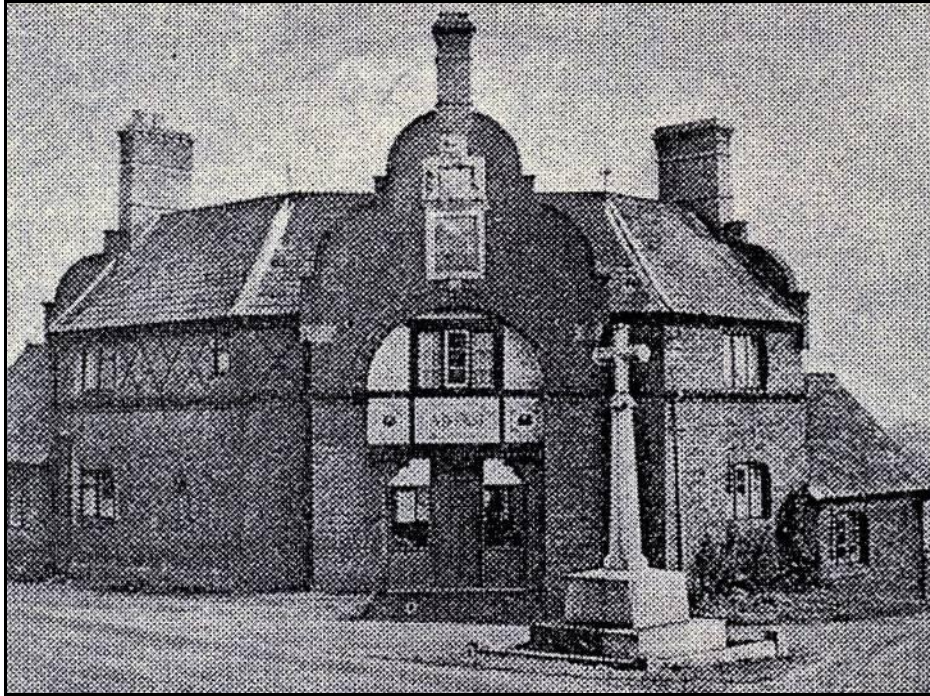
THE ALMS HOUSES

The old "Hospital and Free School" was eventually demolished, and in 1867 the "Alms Houses" were being re-built on the same site. **See the map on page 3.**

They were constructed at the expense of Sir George Howland William Beaumont, 10th Baronet, and were designed to accommodate six poor widows of the village. Accommodation was also provided for a nurse / carer. They are now a private residence and cannot be seen from the road now following the building of the Coleorton by-pass. The Alms Houses were sold to a private buyer by the Beaumont trust in 1979 after the last two Alms persons moved to the senior citizens flats in Hugglescote in 1975.



"The Coleorton Alms Houses" - Built in 1867
Photograph taken pre 1922



Photograph taken post 1922



17th Sept 1922

The above photograph shows the Alms Houses with the War Memorial commemorating those killed in the Great War, in the centre of the road at the top of Church Hill where it intersected with the Rempstone Rd. Those who fell in WW II were subsequently added. The memorial was erected during the summer of 1922, and unveiled in a ceremony on Sunday 17th Sept 1922. It was re-located in the 1970's down to the bottom of Church Hill on the old Ashby Rd, at the entrance to Farm Town Lane. See further photographs on page 17 which help to show what the road layout was like prior to the Coleorton by-pass being constructed.

The plaque built into the Alms Houses above the front entrance is thought to have utilized the large slate described by Nichols on the original Hospital and Free School. This was clearly large enough to accommodate the following inscription added to the bottom of the original inscription. Nichols also mentioned the "Beaumont Coat of Arms" and it is highly likely they came from the Hospital and Free School building as well.

**"THIS HOSPITAL WAS REBUILT
BY SIR G H BEAUMONT
A.D.1867
THE SCHOOL WAS REMOVED TO
ANOTHER SITE IN THE SAME YEAR"**





FURTHER DETAILS OF THE HISTORY OF THE MEMORIAL AND THE FALLEN HEROES NAMED ON IT CAN BE FOUND ON THE COLEORTON PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION



The above is a photograph showing a pair of semi-detached thatched cottages half way up Church Hill on the LH side, reported in the following 1932 newspaper article as being 500 years old at that time. This photograph was taken pre 1922 as the War Memorial is not there. At the top on the RH side are the Alms Houses which were ivy clad on the front and facing end as shown in the photograph on page 14. The grassed area in front of the Alms Houses was removed and the War Memorial was located there. The cottages are located on plot 123 in the map on page 3.

The following report came from a newspaper article (name of newspaper lost) dated Good Friday 1932, so it is assumed that the fire took place on the previous Sunday.



Two families were rendered homeless by a fire which destroyed two 500 year old thatched cottages at Coleorton, near Coalville on Good Friday.

Sir George and Lady Beaumont of Coleorton Hall, with Major-General Sir Edward Northey, of Epsom, parents of Lady Beaumont, who are staying at Coleorton Hall, and their son, Mr. Edward Northey, assisted the villagers in fighting the flames and salvaging the furniture.

The occupants escaped injury, but only the walls of the cottages remain. Mr. Edward Northey pluckily climbed on the burning roof and played on the flames with a fire extinguisher before the arrival of the firemen.

*The cottages, two of the prettiest in the county, have often been the subject of artists' brushes, and have been photographed times without number. Situated a few hundred yards from the ancient church, they were occupied by Mr. and Mrs. James Yates and five children, and Mr. and Mrs. Horace Bird and their only child. Mr. Yates was attending service at the Coleorton Church when the fire broke out and was called home to find his home blazing. Mr. Yates and Mr. Bird are both employed at New Lount Colliery. **When the Swadlincote Fire Brigade arrived**, the cottages were a mass of flames, and it was realised they were doomed. The homeless families were accommodated by relatives and friends in the village and two of the Yates's children were cared for by the Dowager Lady Beaumont at her home at Swannington. The fire was caused by a spark from the chimney alighting on the dry thatched roof. It was due to the efforts of residents of the village that the whole of the furniture and effects of both houses were saved.*

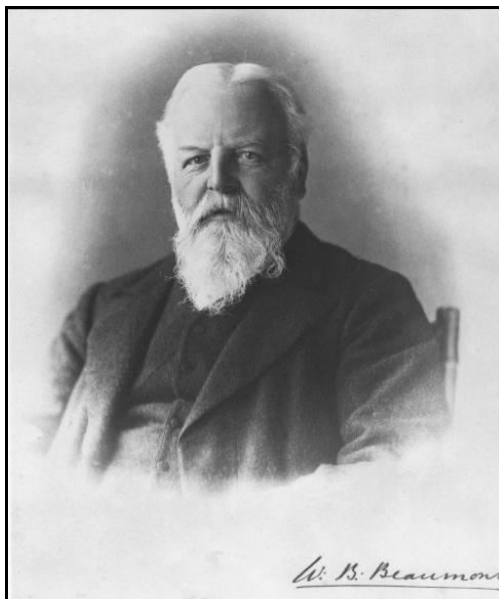
PART 3

VISCOUNT BEAUMONT'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION



The school was built in 1867, close to St. John's Chapel and is marked **F** on the map on page 3. **This school was built at the expense of Canon William Beresford Beaumont.** A residence for the headmaster was incorporated at the RH side of the school. It is currently one of the oldest surviving schools in the area, and its motto is - "**Be Kind to One Another**".



Canon William Beresford Beaumont

The school was built to house boys, girls and infants and in its early days it was referred to as a "National School" which was often the case with Church of England denomination schools. The 1871 to 1901 censuses record the number of children at school as - 1871(145), 1881 (139), 1891 (165), 1901, (163).

HEADMASTERS / HEADTEACHERS

FIRST HEADMASTER - MR GEORGE BROWN

Based on information in the following newspaper article and that which appears at the end of the feature on the old Hospital and Free School, it appears that Mr. Geo Brown was the last headmaster at the old Hospital and Free School and took up the same position at the new school when it opened

THE LEICESTER CHRONICLE & LEICESTERSHIRE MERCURY UNITED - June 13th 1868

Charity Concert

On Tuesday evening a concert was given in Lord Beaumont's endowed School at this place in aid of the "Leicester Infirmary", at which a numerous audience was present, including many persons from Ashby and the surrounding neighbourhood. The programme was a very attractive one. Lady Beaumont presided at the piano-forte. The violinists were Messrs. H. Dennis, George Orchard, W. Rowlett, - Poole, and W. S. Bithrey. Mrs. Hall presided at the harpsichord and guitar, and Mr. **George Brown (master at the school) officiated as the conductor.** The vocalists were Miss Snelson, Miss Tugby, Mr. George Barker and Messrs. Woodroffe, Timms, Briggs, Gibson, J.Cock, G. Orchard and W. S. Bithrey. The pupils of the Ashby and Coleorton schools, assisted by the Coleorton Church Choir, also sang several part songs very creditably. The entertainment altogether gave the greatest satisfaction as was evident by the repeated encores which were elicited in the course of the evening. We have not heard the amount realized towards the funds of the institution in and of which the concert was given, but we have no doubt the sum will be creditable to the public spirit of the place and commensurate with the object it sort to attain.

SECOND HEADMASTER - WILLIAM BRIGGS

(ASSISTANT TEACHER - WIFE EMMA BRIGGS)

AND ASSISTED LATER BY SELINA BIRD (INFANT TEACHER)



Photograph from the Leicester Advertiser 1975

William Briggs, the son of Samuel Briggs, an agricultural labourer and a stocking frame knitter, was born in Melbourne, Derbyshire on Nov 3rd 1832. William will have spent his early years with his family in Melbourne, and in the 1841 census we find the family living at Church Close, Melbourne.

By 1851, William was living at the Melbourne Rectory where he was a house servant to the Vicar of Melbourne, the Rev. Joseph Deans. This appears to have been a critical move for William, and we can speculate that it was the vicar who would have sponsored him when he decided to move into teaching. Unlike his future wife, William had no formal teaching qualification. It is likely that during his stay at Melbourne Rectory, his musical abilities were developed. We know that he was active in church bell-ringing, and it is possible that it was during this period that he may also have been an apprenticed organist.

The 1861 census shows that William Briggs had moved to Staunton Harold and was living in the School House with his sister Sarah and was the schoolmaster. His aunt Hannah Newbold, who was aged 71, was also living at the School House and was listed as a stocking framework knitter. William, at the age of 28, married Emma Judd On the 2nd September 1861 at Melbourne Parish Church. Emma, who was also a teacher, was listed as a National School Mistress at the National Academy, Penn Lane, Melbourne in the 1861 census (this school is now a listed building). She was born in Cubbington c.1836, and was an apprenticed school teacher in the Kenilworth area according to the 1851 census.

William and Emma Briggs moved to the Viscount Beaumont School, Coleorton in the summer of 1868, by which time they had two children, Agatha and Francis John, both of whom had been born at Staunton Harold. William Briggs became the second headmaster at Viscount Beaumont's Church of England School and retired in 1901 following 32 years plus service. William was not a qualified teacher it seems, although his wife who became the schoolmistress was. They made their home in the School house attached to the side of the school and by the 1871 census had a daughter Eleanor and a general servant Sarah Ann Wright living with them. By 1891 they had two further daughters Alice M and Constance E.

The following report appeared in an edition of the **Leicester Chronicle in 1869**. This was not a good start for William.

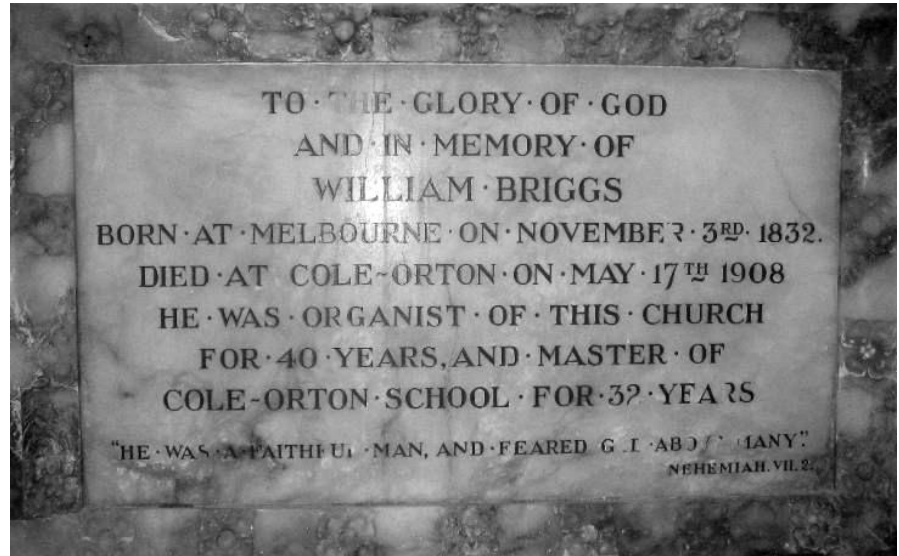
Coleorton accident – *A sad accident occurred to a boy on Monday afternoon, four years old, the son of William Ward, a miner, of Coleorton. It appears that the little fellow had just returned to school from dinner, and with several others of his school fellows was swinging on the iron gate of the pallisading round the school house. He was standing on the end of the gate, which swinging to, caught his fingers against the post, with such violence as to completely cut them off, the ends falling to the ground. Another of the child's fingers was so terribly lacerated, that it is thought amputation must take place. Dr. Hatchitt of Ravenstone, immediately attended the child and we understand that the little sufferer is going on favourably.*

By the 1881 census, their sixteen year old daughter Agatha was given as a "pupil teacher" also. By the 1891 census, Agatha was a dressmaker, and their nineteen year old daughter Alice was recorded as a "pupil teacher". 1901 was their retirement year, and their daughter Agatha was now recorded as an assistant teacher of 68 pupils.

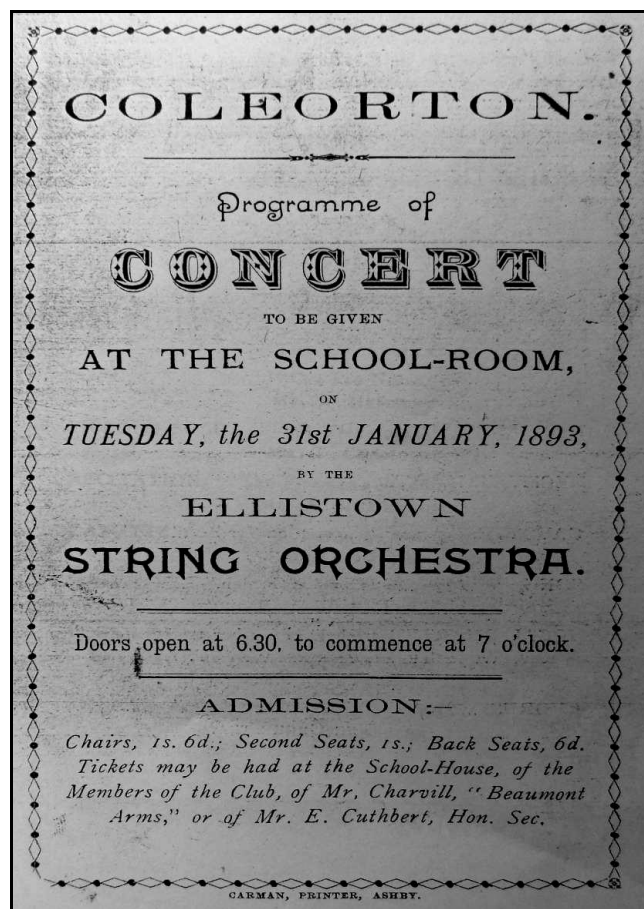
William was a man who cared little for detail, and resented the need for red tape in school life. An insight into his view of school records can be seen in the first entry of his school log book. In a charming sentence, he sums up his whole attitude - "after a visit by a school inspector I was instructed to keep a log book to record school events". His entry records the fact that he is starting a log, and says that this prompts him to recall that it is 23 years since he first came to the school. Once he started, his entries were far from frequent or lavish. In 32 years he had filled only as many pages of his new book.

William Briggs would go on to become a very significant figure in Coleorton society, during which time he became the church organist for forty years. William was honoured with a stained glass window, commemorating the contribution he made to this parish.

William died at the age of 75 on May 17th 1908 and is buried in St. John's chapel cemetery



The window and plaque in St. Mary's Church, dedicated to William Briggs, A tablet beneath the window bears the words from the second verse of the seventh chapter of the Book of Nehemiah –
 "He was a faithful man, and feared God above many".



Programme of a Concert held in 1893 at the school
 During William Briggs time as headmaster

HEADMASTERS / HEADTEACHERS FOLLOWING WILLIAM BRIGGS UP TO 1973

MR. H M CUTHBERT 1901 TO 1924

Leicester Chronicle - May 29th 1909

Coleorton

*There was an interesting and picturesque observance of the occasion here. The school children assembled in their school playground, where Lady Beaumont brought a number of visitors including General Craster, Lieut. George Beaumont (Kings Royal Rifles), the honourable Mrs Macnaughten, Lady Morton, Miss Morton, The Misses Smith and the Rev. Harold Robinson, Rector of Coleorton. **On their arrival, the children, under the direction of Mr. H. M. Cuthbert, sang the National Anthem and the Union Jack was hoisted on the flagstaff.** After several patriotic songs, "The Desford Industrial School Band" played the procession around the village to the church, where a short service was held. The processionists assembled again in the grounds of Coleorton Hall, whence they marched to the school where tea was provided by Lady Beaumont, and the rest of the afternoon was spent in games, some fire balloons being sent up at night.*

MR. GEORGE JOHN LEEDS (KNOWN AS BILLY) 1924 TO 1953 (SCHOOL MISTRESS RECORDED AS MISS LOGAN IN 1940)

Nottingham Evening Post – August 23rd 1924

Mr. Leeds (known as Billy), of Southend-on-Sea, succeeds as headmaster of the Coleorton Church School, Mr. H. M. Cuthbert, whose teaching career extends over about 43 years. Mr. Cuthbert has been a Sunday School teacher for 50 years, and chorister and choir master for 56 years.



Mr. "Billy" Leeds

Supplementary information – Billy Leeds is on record as training Sir George Beaumont's (11th Baronet), dogs when the latter had an involvement with "Coalville Dog Racing Track". **See the publication entitled "The Sporting Baronet" by Samuel T Stewart which is free to download and read on his website.**

MR. R J T SMITH 1953 TO 1973

Mr. Smith and his wife lived in the School house at the side of the school and a former pupil related recently to the author that Mrs. Smith used to make fudge and sell it to the children through her kitchen window. Mrs. Holdsworth from Gelsmoor was the assistant teacher and there were three classes at the time – infants, juniors and seniors with Mr. Smith teaching the senior class. Girls were still segregated from the boys in the playground. Eunice Lord cooked the lunchtime meals for the children at the school.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Pre Mr. H M Cuthbert, the school had no central heating, but did have **open fires** in the classrooms, something that would have certainly been frowned on by health and safety today. It is recorded in the school log, that on one occasion, the ink in the ink wells actually froze, causing

school to be abandoned for the day. The boys and girls were segregated in the playground, but not in the classrooms. A pupil at the school during the early 1900's, under the headship of Mr. H. M. Cuthbert, recalled children marching around the playground chanting tables using a slate and chalks, and there being blazing open fires in the classrooms. The children used to stoke the "Robin Hood" boiler which was outside the school, near to St. John's Chapel. At this time, the front row of seats in the classroom, were reserved for the Beaumonts' and the Rector.

In the mid 1900's, the population of Coleorton started to diminish, and there were concerns about the lack of younger people already living or moving to the area. This was compounded by the fact that couples were having fewer children of course. For example, in 1925 when Sir George and Lady Beaumont were managers of the School, there were 125 children on the roll, and in 1975, there were just 44.

British industry stopped on 4th May, 1926 when between 3 and 4 million workers obeyed their Trade Unions and stopped work when a General Strike was declared in sympathy with the miners who had come out on strike because of poor pay and working conditions. Mine owners wanted the colliers to work longer hours for less pay. The miners themselves wanted a national basic wage, seven hours work per day and the pits to be re-nationalised, as they had been during World War I. Due to the lack of coal, which was needed not only for domestic use, but for factories and all the other things such as railways etc., the country was in a perilous situation. Men, women and children had to resort to coal picking from pit banks, and anywhere else it could be found, together with wood from the countryside.

Stick collecting became a major pastime, particularly for the children. Anything with wheels was used to transport the coal, such as prams, bicycles, trolleys etc. Eventually, the miners returned to work with some slight improvements in pay and conditions, concessionary loads of coal as part of their wages, perhaps being the most important. The miners' strike lasted for six to seven months, and the miners gradually returned to work on the basis of district wage settlements, and an increase in working hours.

It is recorded that around 400 miners were employed at the "Bug and Wink" colliery at that time, which shows how important it was in terms of employment to the locality. A Mr William Stacey recalled that he remembered the time when a deputy at the "Bug and Wink", would account himself well off on a wage of 4s per day. The salaries and working conditions were extremely poor, and below is an example of the miners average earnings per shift, and annual salary, which was taken from "The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Miners", Volume 1, by Colin Griffin:-

Average Per Shift	Average Annual Salary
1914- 6s 4d	£18 12s 1d
1918- 13s 0d	£199 18s 4d
1923- 9s 0d	£125 2s 0d
1928- 9s 10d	£111 2s 01d

The miners pay stayed pretty well the same until 1936, when it went up to an average of 11s 0d per shift.

The school log book records that a relief committee had been set up at the school, to provide food vouchers of varying values, dependant on the number of children in any one family. On the 19th of July 1926 therefore, free school meals were provided, despite the fact that the school had no facilities to supply these meals. This meant that 69 children had to march from the school at 12.15p.m., down to the old Coleorton Primitive Methodist Church on Lower Moor road built in 1839, where they had the facilities to provide the meals. Ten years earlier, the village had been hard hit by food shortages, during the First World War. A log book entry for Nov.1917 records that there was little food left in the village, and one shop had closed. Children were sent to Coalville and Ashby to seek something to eat.

PART 4

VISCOUNT BEAUMONT SCHOOL PUPIL PHOTOGRAPHS



The above two photographs of pupils at Viscount Beaumont School, dating from 1898, under the Headship of William Briggs. William features in the top photograph, and his wife Emma in the bottom one.
(Note the large number of seggs / studs in the soles of the boy's boots)



Another 1898 photograph with William Briggs on the left



Pupils at school in 1905 under the headship of Mr. H. M. Cuthbert



**Pupils at Viscount Beaumont School in 1922
Under the headship of Mr. H. M. Cuthbert**



**Senior pupils at Viscount Beaumont School in 1940
under the headship of Mr George John Leeds (Billy)**

Back Row L to R - Geoff Martin, June Granger, Gwen Wooley, Nora Marshall, Julia Yates, Nancy Green, Edna Smallwood, Maureen Potter, Len Bird

Middle Row L to R - ? Green, Ron Wallis, Freda Green, Betty Whitehead, Ruby Marshall, June Clarke, Barry Green, Fred Richards, Joe Frettsome, Mick Parker

Second Row L to R - David Darby, Vena Birch, Brenda Robinson, Monica Bettison, Doreen Platts, Nancy Parker, Desrine Martin, Greta Martin, Nancy Brooks, George Parker, George Darby

Front Row L to R - William Robinson, Ken Smallwood, Colin Bird, Alec Yates, Alan Platts, Ron Platts, Jimmy Martin, Norman Elliot, Brindley Wooley, John Bettison



**The intermediate pupils at Viscount Beaumont School in 1940
with teacher Miss Logan**

Mr Bill Platts of Coleorton, recalls that during the Second World War, the school had an influx of evacuees, first from Birmingham, and then from London. This resulted in the school not having the room to accommodate all the children at the school, and a class of the youngest children was taken up to the Rectory to be taught, Bill was in this class. He estimates that the evacuees will have arrived later on in 1940, and would not have been on the above photograph. Therefore, we think a third photograph exists somewhere, of the most junior pupils.



**Pupils at Viscount Beaumont School in 2000
(Compare to the 1898 photographs)**