

BEAUPORT PARK



The history of Beauport Park is not wholly clear before the eighteenth century. We know of its repute in Roman times, when its iron smelting furnaces for the fleet were among the largest in Europe, but thereafter darkness descends. It is not until the seventeenth century that it re-enters the records. By the end of that century (and we do not know for how long before that) the estate was the property of the Denham family, who had a house there. It may have been the first substantial house there since Roman times.

The Denhams may have been related to the poet Sir John Denham; the evidence is absent, but it is clear that they had money. The first to be recorded as living in what became Beauport was David Denham, whose will was proved in 1719. That document states that he was a kinsman of John Collier (1685-1760) of Hastings, a remarkable man who from non-aristocratic origins amassed a considerable fortune, in the process becoming mayor of Hastings, having previously been town clerk. The connection appears to have been through Denham's wife Elizabeth (Delves) who was the aunt of Collier's wife Mary. Denham's son, also David, is recorded as 'clerk' to Collier in 1729. Denham built or rebuilt a house on the estate. In due course it fell into Collier's hands.

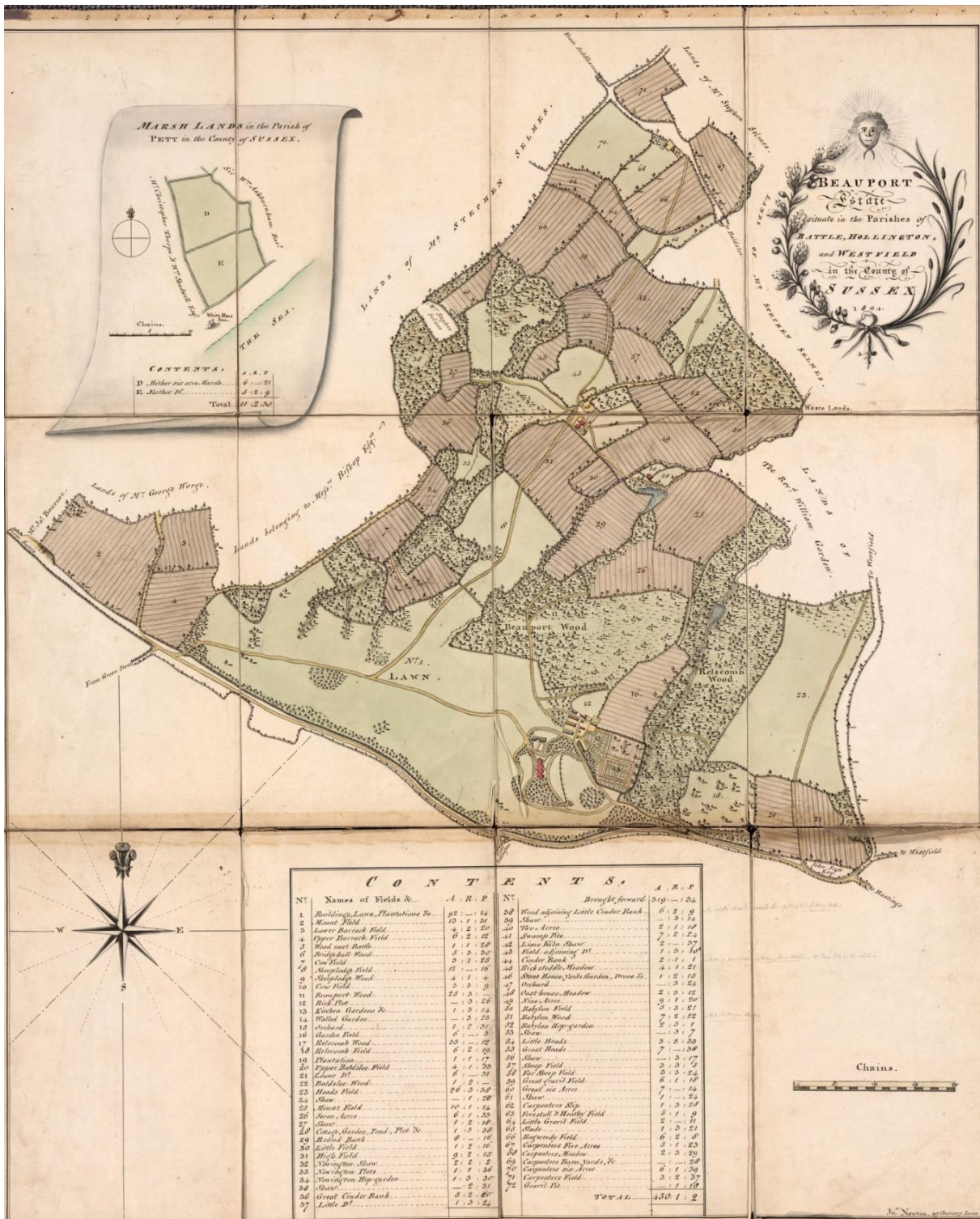
David and Elizabeth had at least two sons. One was David, whose will was proved in 1729; the other was Thomas, who became Rector of Hollington (his will was proved in 1735). The loss of these two meant that the property ran out of heirs, his daughters all having married.

Meanwhile Collier continued to make money. His will left the enormous sum of £2000 to his daughter Elizabeth, the wife of Thomas Worge, which no doubt helped him build his large house at Rose Green on Battle Hill. Another daughter was Cordelia, the first wife of James Murray, a famous soldier who came to own Beauport in 1762. Indeed, he gave it its name, after the village in Quebec at which he had made his own military name in 1759.

In 1794 Murray died without heirs interested in keeping Beauport. His son James Patrick Murray (1782-1834), like his father a soldier, held it until its sale to the executors of John Lamb in January 1804. The Lambs that owned it later were no known relation to John Lamb: their original surname was Burges, the first of them to live at Beauport being James Bland Burges (1752-1824).

Burges was the son of a man who had distinguished himself at the Battle of Culloden in 1746 by capturing the standard of Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender, and was later deputy paymaster in Gibraltar where James was born. (The standard remained with the family until its property was sold in 1922; it then went for £400.)

Burges must have had money, because he had been an MP and had served as Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the younger Pitt's government between 1789 and 1795, when he was created a baronet. He wrote music and poetry, and his sister Mary Anne (1763-1813) wrote too, as well as being active in the study of geology and botany, and



The Beauport estate at the time of its sale in 1804

reputedly spoke seven languages. Burges had married the daughter of a well-established peer and his mother bore the middle name *Whichnour*, which explains the name of the smaller estate close to the Beauport gates. He was also lucky. For reasons that are not clear he inherited not only Beauport but also large estates in Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, Suffolk, Sussex and Middlesex from the Lamb family, on condition that he changed the family name to Lamb. He obtained permission to do so in 1821.



Burges/Lamb married three times, without issue with his first and last wives but with eight children from Anne Montolieu. In 1812 his second son, Ensign Wentworth Noel Burges, was killed in the assault on Burgos in the Peninsula War, and is commemorated in an obelisk on the estate.

James Bland Burges (later Lamb)

The second Lamb baronet was Charles James Saville Montolieu Burges Lamb (1785-1860). Born in Montgomeryshire, he also had substantial connection with Scotland through his first wife Mary Montgomerie, daughter of the Earl of Eglinton. His second wife was Frances

Margesson (1819-84), daughter of a priest, and took place in Geneva; one record states that after Charles's death she deserted the family. He followed the usual landowner's trail: Lt Col in the Ayrshire Yeomanry, High Sheriff of Sussex and (more specially) Knight Marshal of the Royal Household. His son (also Charles) predeceased him in 1856, and so his grandson Archibald (1845-1921) became the third baronet.

The Charles who died in 1856 had married Anna Charlotte Grey of Kent, who became mother to Archibald. In 1861 she is recorded as living in Lewisham with some of her family, including Archibald. Archibald's sister Mary Montgomerie Lamb was not with them. Following an older tradition she later became famous under the pen-name of Violet Fane [see article on Writers}, and indeed to some extent infamous. But Beauport was then leased out to Thomas Brassey, son of the railway contractor and later the builder of Normanhurst at Catsfield. Thereafter, although remaining in Lamb's ownership, it was occupied by various people.

Archibald was destined to become the last Lamb owner of Beauport, coming back to live there. He was a local magistrate and an army officer, and took a considerable part in local affairs. His son Charles (1857-1948) succeeded him but lived in Hampshire. He made a further local connection in marrying Leila Adamson, daughter of the owner of Vine Hall and Great Sanders, but preferred to live in Hampshire. He gave to the Church the land on which the Church of the Ascension, Telham, stands by the main road. He was the last baronet.

In 1922 the house and its contents were sold. In 1923 the house was ruined by fire but rebuilt to become a hotel. In 1935 it was advertised as a first class hotel with riding facilities, in an estate of 1200 acres, but the owner had problems: she went bankrupt in 1942. By then Canadian troops had taken over, and they dug extensive tunnels and chambers in the grounds in preparation for a German invasion. The hotel reopened after the war and included a country club. Later it assumed its present role of hotel and health and sporting facility.

George Kiloh

© BDHS June 2017, minor corrections March 2018

Sources

<http://www.craftspeerage.co.uk/online/content/baronetage.htm>

Hastings and St Leonards Observer, various dates

www.ancestry.com

Also see: Collectanea J2.1 The life and times of the Hon James Murray.