

# Who is Buried in the Tomb in St Kenelm's Church, Minster Lovell ?

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Francis, Viscount Lovell, Richard III's close friend and chamberlain, was the scion of an old family. From William Lovell, who owned estates in England during the reign of Henry I, to Francis Lovell's disappearance after the battle of Stoke in 1487 there were twelve generations of the family. Nevertheless, only one tomb has survived which can be definitely identified as that of one of the Lords Lovell: the tomb situated in St Kenelm's Church, Minster Lovell.<sup>1</sup>

The tomb was identified by E.A. Greening Lamborn as that of William Lovell (1397-1455) and this identification has been widely accepted.<sup>2</sup> In this article I want to argue that it is more likely that the tomb was in fact built for William Lovell's son, John Lovell (1433-1465), the father of Francis Lovell.

First, let us look at the argument Lamborn put forward for his identification. The tomb can stylistically be dated to the third quarter of the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The figure of a knight in the plate armour of this time is lying on the tomb, his hands folded. On his right side the figure has a dagger, on his left a sword. His head is resting on a helmet with a lion as its crest. His feet are resting on another lion. Five figures are depicted around the sides of the tomb, two female weepers on the north side, St Christopher on the west end of the tomb, and the Virgin Mary and St Margaret on the south side.

Lamborn (and following him the writer of the guide of St. Kenelm's Church) argues that the figural programme clearly identifies the tomb as that of William Lovell. He points out that William Lovell had been a founding member of the

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<sup>1</sup>The simple tomb in St Mary the Virgin in Titchmarsh can stylistically dated to the fourteenth century and the guidebook of the church states that here 'possibly lies buried a Lord Lovel', *A Short Guide to the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Titchmarsh* (no date), but there is no evidence that this is the case.

<sup>2</sup>E.A. Greening Lamborn, 'The Lovel Tomb at Minster', *Oxford Archeological Society Report*, vol. 83 (1937), pp. 17-18. The guidebook available in the St Kenelm's Church follows Lamborn's argument but admits that the identification is not conclusive. Sometimes the tomb is summarily described as that of William Lovell (<http://www.wospweb.com/site/Minster-Lovell-Village/St-Kenelm.htm>). Another webpage even identifies the tomb as that of Francis Lovell ([http://www.headington.org.uk/oxon/postcards/minster\\_lovell.htm](http://www.headington.org.uk/oxon/postcards/minster_lovell.htm)). William Lovell is generally referred to as the seventh Lord Lovell but was in fact only the fifth head of the family to receive an individual summons to parliament. Two of William Lovell's ancestors, who are usually counted as the third and fourth Lord Lovell, never actually received an individual summons to parliament, Monika Simon, 'The Lovells of Titchmarsh. An English Baronial Family, 1297-1487' unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of York 1999, pp. 150-51.

<sup>3</sup>Lamborn, 'The Lovel Tomb', p. 13.

guild of St Christopher in Thame:<sup>4</sup> the presence of St Christopher as the patron saint upon the tomb at Minster thus suggests that William Lovell is the person commemorated by it.<sup>5</sup> The two female saints represented, according to Lamborn, William's wife Alice Deincourt, whose name might have given her a special link to the Virgin Mary, and her sister Margaret, who had died only a few months before William Lovell.<sup>6</sup> When we choose to read the evidence like this, the decorations do indeed point to the conclusion that the tomb is William Lovell's. However, it does not clearly prove it. The saints chosen to decorate the tomb were among the most popular saints in England at this time

Another clue to the identity of the person buried in the tomb is its heraldic decorations. The sides of the tomb are decorated with ten shields of arms, four each on the north and south sides and two on the west end. While the present colouring is recent, it is worth examining whether it is close enough to the original to be used in an attempt to identify whose tomb it is.

Since the first restoration in 1873, on which Lamborn's discussion of the heraldic decoration of the tomb is based, more work seems to have been done on the shields on this tomb. He states that the restorers of the tomb must have consulted only the earlier of the two reports existing of the original colouration.<sup>7</sup> As this report by Richard Lee, Clarenceux King of Arms, describes only six shields, the restorers included a coat-of-arms which belonged in fact to a different tomb.<sup>8</sup> However, the arms described by Lamborn as wrongly painted on one of the shields on the tomb during restoration cannot be found on the tomb today.

Starting at the south east corner at the foot of the tomb and walking around it to the north east the current colourings on the tomb are as follows:

- 1) *gules, ten bezants or (Zouche);*
- 2) *barry argent and azure, a bendlet gules (Grey of Rotherfield);*
- 3) *barry undy or and gules (Lovell) impaling gules, three padlocks or (Sydenham);*
- 4) *argent, a lion rampant sable (Burnell);*
- 5) *gules, three padlocks or (Sydenham);*
- 6) *barry undy or and gules (Lovell);*
- 7) *gules, three padlocks or (Sydenham);*
- 8) *quarterly of six: i) barry undy or and gules (Lovell), ii) azure, billety a fess dancetty or (Deincourt), iii) azure, semy de lis a lion rampant argent (Holland),*

<sup>4</sup>CPR 1446-1452, p. 180-81.

<sup>5</sup>Lamborn, 'The Lovell Tomb', pp. 17-18.

<sup>6</sup>'St Margaret would, naturally, be the patron saint of one, and the Blessed Virgin with her emblem of the lily might well be the patron saint of anyone christened Alys', Lamborn, 'The Lovell Tomb', p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Lamborn, 'The Lovell Tomb', p. 14.

<sup>8</sup>'an eagle in a flowered tressure on a field tricked b, with a crest, a sitting dog, above the shield,' which seems in fact belong to the tomb of John Vampage, Lamborn, 'The Lovell Tomb', pp. 15-16.

iv) *barry argent and azure, a bendlet gules* (Grey of Rotherfield), v) *argent, a lion rampant sable* (Burnell), iv) *divided per fess in chief gules, three padlocks or* (Sydenham) in base *gules, ten bezants or* (Zouche);

9) like 8;

10) quarterly: i) *barry undy or and gules* (Lovell), ii) *gules, three padlocks or* (Sydenham), iii) *barry argent and azure, a bendlet gules* (Grey of Rotherfield), iv) *gules, ten bezants or* (Zouche).

The programme of heraldic decorations seems to be somewhat haphazard. It is particularly surprising that the Lovell arms are not given the prominence one might expect. However, it would be too easy simply to disregard the entire programme as flawed.

To establish whether the heraldic programme is close to the original, it is worth comparing it to the two existing reports. As mentioned above, the earlier description compiled by Lee in 1574 does not include all ten shields but only six. These are (in Lamborn's words):

- 1) *ten roundels, tricked or and g.* [Zouche];
- 2) *barry a bendlet, the bars tricked ar and b, the bend untricked* [Grey of Rotherfield];
- 3) *barry nebuly untricked* [Lovell] *impaling three padlocks or and g.* [Sydenham];
- 4) *a lion crowned, tricked sa. and or on ar.* [Burnell];
- 5) quartered: i) *barry nebuly* [Lovell], ii) *three padlocks* [Sydenham], iii) *barry with a bendlet* [Grey of Rotherfield], and iv) *ten bezants* [Zouche];
- 6) quartered by six: i) *barry nebuly* [Lovell], ii) *a dance between billets* [Deincourt], iii) *a lion with indications of a flowered field* [Holland], iv) *barry and a bendlet* [Grey of Rotherfield], v) *a crowned lion* [Burnell], and vi) *divided per fess padlocks* [Sydenham] and *bezants* [Zouche].<sup>9</sup>

A later description of the Lovell tomb, written by Richard Symonds, a royalist officer, in 1643-44, recorded all the coats-of-arms on the tomb. While some of the paint had deteriorated in the intervening years, his record mostly concurred with Lee's description. Unlike Lee, Symonds also noted the position of the coats-of-arms. Symonds records the arms as follows:

North Side these four: first, quarterly 1 and 4, Lovel, 2 *three padlocks*, 3 *two bars debriused by a bend*; second, 1 Lovel, 2 Deincourt, 3 gone, 4 *two bars and a bend*, 5 gone, 6 same as 1; third as second; fourth, *three padlocks*.

West End these two: first, Lovel; second, *three padlocks*.

South Side these: first gone; second, Lovel impaling the padlock; third, Grey of Rotherfield; fourth, *gules ten bezants*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>The description is from Lamborn, Lamborn, 'The Lovel Tomb', p. 14 and plate 4, the identification my own.

<sup>10</sup>Lamborn, 'The Lovel Tomb', p. 15-16.

When we put the two descriptions next to each other the concurrence between the two, and following them the modern colouration, becomes clear.

		Lee (1574) (no order)	Symonds (1643-4)	Today
1	South Side	Zouche	Zouche	Zouche
2	South Side	Grey of Rotherfield	Grey of Rotherfield	Grey of Rotherfield
3	South Side	Lovell impaling Sydenham	Lovell impaling Sydenham	Lovell impaling Sydenham
4	South Side	Burnell	Gone	Burnell
5	West End		Sydenham	Sydenham
6	West End		Lovell	Lovell
7	North Side		Sydenham	Sydenham
8	North Side	Lovell / Deincourt / Holland / Grey of Rotherfield / Burnell / Sydenham + Zouche	Lovell / Deincourt / gone / Grey of Rotherfield / gone / Lovell	Lovell / Deincourt / Holland / Grey of Rotherfield / Burnell / Sydenham + Zouche
9	North Side		Lovell / Deincourt / gone / Grey of Rotherfield / gone / Lovell	Lovell / Deincourt / Holland / Grey of Rotherfield / Burnell / Sydenham + Zouche
10	North Side	Lovell / Sydenham / Grey of Rotherfield / Zouche	Lovell / Sydenham / Grey of Rotherfield / Lovell	Lovell / Sydenham / Grey of Rotherfield / Zouche

The discrepancy between the descriptions of Lee and Symonds of the three shields listed last may have been the result of the further deterioration of the colouring in the intervening period. If the painting had further faded, Symonds may have interpreted the remaining red and gold colour as the Lovell arms.

The modern restoration of the tomb was therefore not done 'with doubtful authority' as the guidebook of St Kenelm's church claims, but was clearly based on

both Lee's and Symonds's descriptions. According to Lee's description the Lovell arms should be *barry nebuly or and gules*.<sup>11</sup> However, the arms *barry undy or and gules* were also used, for example in the Lovell Lectionary.<sup>12</sup> Having established that the current state of the tomb is as close to the original as is possible, the next question that needs to be asked is why these particular coats-of-arms were chosen for the tomb's decoration.

While Lamborn cites the transcriptions of the two descriptions by Lee and Symonds, he does not identify most of the coats-of-arms – perhaps assuming that the reader would know their significance already – nor does he examine why these particular arms were depicted on the tomb and what their relevance was for the Lovell family. This is surprising as these questions determine in the end whether the two reports of the original colouration can be trusted and if the coats-of-arms can be used to identify the person buried in the tomb.

In addition to the Lovells' own arms, the coat-of arms of six noble families can be found on the tomb, those of Sydenham, Holland, Deincourt, Grey of Rotherfield, Burnell, and Zouche. With the exception of the Zouche arms, the coats-of-arms all belonged to families whose estates the Lovells had inherited. Alice Deincourt, wife of William Lovell and mother of John Lovell, was, after the death of her sister Margaret in 1455, the sole heiress of the Deincourt and Grey of Rotherfield baronies.<sup>13</sup> The Sydenham estates had been inherited by the Lovell family in the thirteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The Holland barony came into the family with the marriage of John Lovell, the rich' (d. 1408) and Maud Holland in 1373.<sup>15</sup> The majority of the Burnell estates were inherited by William Lovell on the death of Hugh Burnell in 1420.<sup>16</sup>

The presence of the arms *gules, ten bezants or*, however, is more surprising. They were originally the arms of the Zouches of Ashby de la Zouche; the arms of the related Zouches of Haringworth were differenced by *a quarter ermine*.<sup>17</sup> It is possible that the arms were either described incorrectly, perhaps due to the fading colouration, or that the Zouches of Haringworth used the undifferenced arms after the extinction of the senior branch of the family in 1314.<sup>18</sup> Although

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<sup>11</sup>These are also the arms given for example in B. Burke, *The General Armory of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales*, London 1884, p. 622.

<sup>12</sup>Janet Backhouse, 'The Lovell Lectionary: a memorial offering to Salisbury', in J. Backhouse, ed., *The Medieval English Cathedral: Papers in Honour of Pamela Tudor-Craig. Proceedings of the 1998 Harlaxton Symposium*, Donington 2003, p. 120, plates 2 and 4.

<sup>13</sup>*Complete Peerage*, vol. 4, pp. 128-30.

<sup>14</sup>*Complete Peerage*, vol. 8, p. 215. The arms *gules, three padlock or* are identified as those of the Sydenham family for example by Burke, *The General Armory*, p. 992.

<sup>15</sup>*CIPM 7-15 Richard II*, vol. 13, no. 263.

<sup>16</sup>*Complete Peerage*, vol. 2, pp. 435-36.

<sup>17</sup>Burke, *The General Armory*, p. 1153.

<sup>18</sup>*Complete Peerage*, vol. 12.2, p. 936.

the Lovells had not inherited any estates of the Zouches of Haringworth, the two families had strong ties. There were three intermarriages between the two families. At the end of the thirteenth century, Maud Lovell, daughter of John Lovell (the first Lord Lovell to receive a individual summons to parliament) married William de la Zouche of Haringworth.<sup>19</sup> John Lovell (1314-1347) and his grandson, another John Lovell (c. 1378-1414) and the father of William Lovell, both most likely married daughters of the de la Zouche family.<sup>20</sup> It could be argued that the arms were adopted to commemorate the close link to this neighbouring family.

However, there is another possibility. The John Lovell who may be buried here was involved in the quarrel over the possession of the manor of Ashby de la Zouche. Before 4 April 1461 he expelled James Butler, Earl of Wiltshire and Ormond, shortly before the earl's estates were officially forfeited.<sup>21</sup> The manor was part of the Beaumont lands. Since John Lovell was married to Joan Beaumont, daughter of John Beaumont who had been killed in the battle of Northampton in 1460,<sup>22</sup> it is possible that John Lovell occupied the manor as part of his wife's inheritance or because the manor had been settled on her.<sup>23</sup>

The coats-of-arms as described by Lee and Symonds are, with one exception, those of families whose estates the Lovells had inherited. There is therefore no reason to assume that their descriptions were incorrect. Even the at first glance strange choice of the arms of the Zouches of Haringworth – or of Ashby de la Zouche – can be explained: they were either included to show the close relationship between the Lovells and their neighbours, the Zouches of Haringworth, or they represented John Lovell's claim to part of the estates of his father-in-law.

What is surprising is the prominent place the Sydenham arms are given on this tomb. They appear twice on their own, and are included in all four of the combined shields-of-arms. One indication that the coats-of-arms on the tomb are those of the original scheme, is that the programme bears a strong resemblance to the heraldic decoration of the Lovell Lectionary. This manuscript, mainly known for the portrait of John Lovell (d. 1408), survives only in a fragmentary state. Many of the pages are decorated with coats-of-arms, and here, too, the Sydenham arms are strongly represented.<sup>24</sup> In fact, the padlocks of the Sydenham arms appear as part of the 'full achievement' of the Lovell coat-of-arms. From the fifteenth

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<sup>19</sup> *Complete Peerage*, vol. 12.2, p. 940.

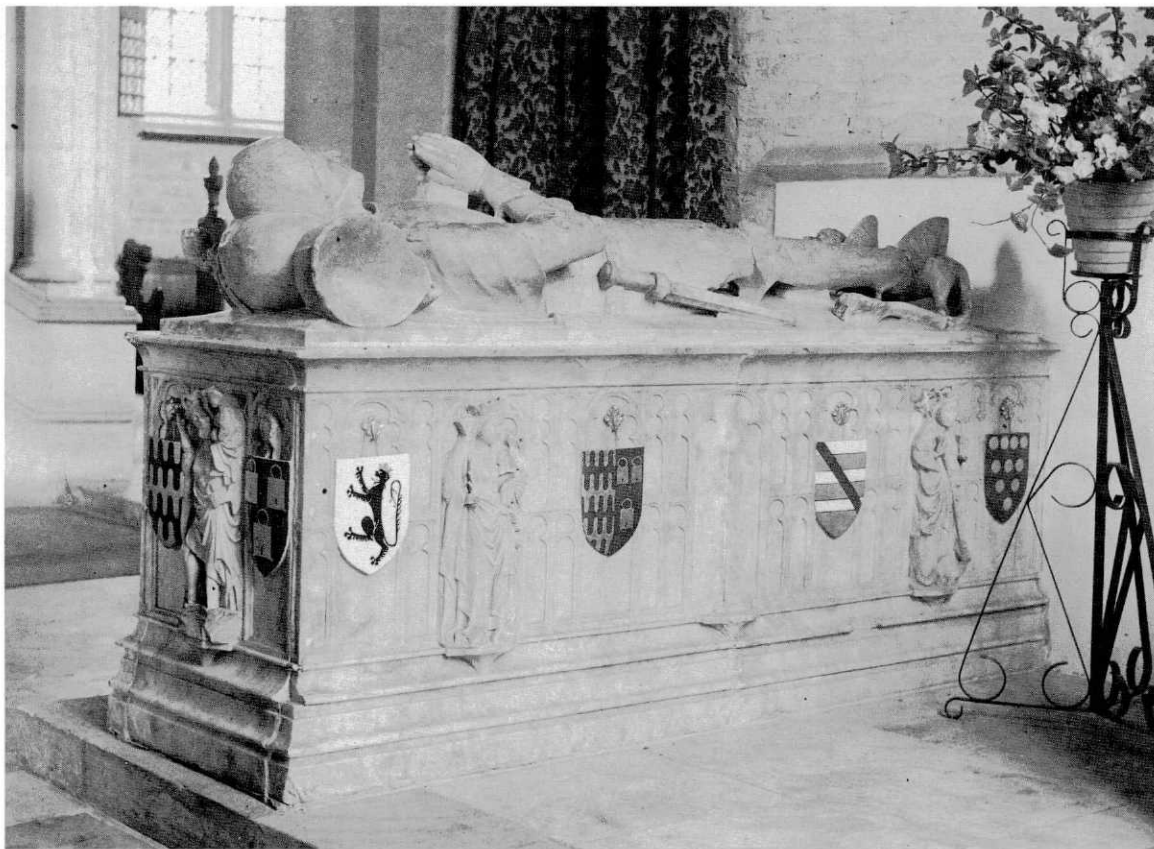
<sup>20</sup> *Complete Peerage*, vol. 8, pp. 218, 221.

<sup>21</sup> *CPR 1461-1467*, pp. 549-50.

<sup>22</sup> *Complete Peerage*, vol. 2, p. 62.

<sup>23</sup> Francis Lovell's claim on Ashby de la Zouche, Thornton and Bagworth was most likely derived from his mother's claim, J.M. Williams, 'The Political Career of Francis Viscount Lovell (1456-?)', *The Ricardian*, vol. 8 (1990), p. 383.

<sup>24</sup> British Library, Harleian MS 7026; a padlock can be found on folios 5 and 17, the Sydenham arms on folios 7 and 9; see also Backhouse, 'The Lovell Lectionary', plate 3.



**Lovell tomb seen from the south-west: west side: St Christopher between Lovell and Sydenham; south side (left to right) Burnell, the Virgin Mary, Lovell impaling Sydenham, empty niche, Grey of Rotherfield, St Margaret, Zouche. Photograph courtesy of Geoffrey Wheeler.**



Lovell tomb seen from the north, left to right: quarterly, 1, Lovell, 2, Sydenham, 3, Grey of Rotherfield, 4, Zouche; female weeper; quarterly of six, 1, Lovell, 2, Deincourt, 3, Holland, 4, Grey of Rotherfield, 5, Burnell, 6, per fess, in chief, Sydenham, in base Zouche; empty niche; the same; female weeper; Sydenham. Photograph courtesy of Geoffrey Wheeler.



century onward the mantling of the Lovell crest is powdered with padlocks.<sup>25</sup>

It should also be kept in mind that coats-of-arms were used with greater liberty when used as decorations, as for example on the tomb or in the Lovell Lectionary, than on the seals a family used.<sup>26</sup> On the Lovell tomb, heraldry was used to commemorate the family's history, showing their strong link to, and pride in, the history of their family.<sup>27</sup> Situated in a public place, as the tomb is, it advertised their lineage and nobility to contemporaries and posterity alike.

Does the heraldic decoration allow us to answer the question of who this tomb was built for: William Lovell or his son John Lovell? Lamborn argues that the tomb cannot be that of John Lovell as the arms of the Beaumonts are not among those depicted on the tomb, though Joan Beaumont, wife of John Lovell, was the heiress of the Beaumont barony (which incorporated the Phelip and Bardolph baronies at this time).<sup>28</sup> However, at the time of John Lovell's death, his wife Joan Beaumont was only the heiress-apparent of the Beaumont barony, and her brother William was a young man of not even thirty and the likelihood that he would die without children very small. The absence of the Beaumont arms is therefore not surprising. There is also no indication that either John Lovell or Francis Lovell ever used the Beaumont arms: For example the garter stall plate of Francis Lovell includes the arms of Lovell, Burnell, Holland, Deincourt and Grey of Rotherfield, but not the Beaumont coat-of-arms.

Unfortunately, there are no further indicators to decide the question. Since John Lovell died only ten years after his father, it is impossible to decide the question on stylistic grounds. Both John Lovell's and William Lovell's widows remarried after their husbands' deaths. The absence of a second tomb gives therefore no indication as to the identity of the man buried there. It was not

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<sup>25</sup>For example on a seal of William Lovell, The National Archives E 210/11136; and on the garter stall plate of Francis Lovell. His arms are surrounded by a garter, crowned with a helmet whose mantling is powdered with padlocks.

<sup>26</sup>One example that shows this clearly is Thomas Chaucer's tomb in Ewelme which is decorated with twenty-four shields-of-arms, including not only the arms of Thomas Chaucer's mother, Philippa Roet, and those of his wife Maud Burghersh, but also the arms of his daughter's husbands and a number of high-ranking relatives, as for example Philippa's royal nieces and nephews, children of John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford, E.A. Greening Lamborn, 'The Arms on the Chaucer Tomb at Ewelme, with a note on the early medieval history of the parish', *Oxoniensia*, vol. 5 (1940), pp. 80-90. The tomb of Reginald Cobham in Lingfield is decorated with a series of arms that commemorated his companions in arms and relatives, Nigel Saul, *Death, Art, and Memory in Medieval England. The Cobham Family and Their Monuments, 1300-1500*, Oxford 2001, pp. 167-68.

<sup>27</sup>Christine Carpenter's conclusion that 'Heraldry could indeed be regarded as the single most important source of memory of the lineage amongst the gentry' is also true for a baronial family like the Lovells of Titchmarsh, Christine Carpenter, *Locality and Polity. A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499*, Cambridge 1992, p. 253-54.

<sup>28</sup>Lamborn, 'The Lovell Tomb', p. 17.

unusual for husband and wife to be buried in separate places.<sup>29</sup>

Lamborn then argues that William Lovell's family decided to bury him in St Kenelm's because he rebuilt the church.<sup>30</sup> However, in his will William Lovell expressly stated that he wished to be buried in the church of the Greyfriars Convent in Oxford.<sup>31</sup> William Lovell gave detailed instructions to his executors about the obsequies which he wished to be performed for his soul: a thousand masses should be said within eight days of his death.<sup>32</sup> A chapel and tomb for him and his wife, Alice, were to be built in Greyfriars Church, and two priests were to be employed and paid £20 wages. The church was to receive £133 6s 8d, partly in cash, partly in ornaments for the church.<sup>33</sup> Lamborn thinks that William Lovell's wishes were ignored, but there is evidence that William Lovell was indeed buried in Greyfriars Convent; a 'small structure' in the north aisle of Greyfriars Church has been identified as the tomb and chantry of William Lovell. The dissolution of the monasteries, however, meant that the tomb was destroyed.<sup>34</sup>

Obviously, a final answer to the question for whom was the tomb in St Kenelm's church, Minster Lovell, built, is unlikely to emerge. I hope I have shown, however, that the indications are strong that it was John Lovell rather than his father William Lovell. As already stated above the figures decorating the tomb can be regarded as a sign that it was intended for William Lovell. However, the saints depicted were among the most popular of the time. Additionally, it is not even necessary to dismiss the idea that the tomb was commissioned by Alice Deincourt, as it is possible that she ordered this tomb to be made for her son, John, who predeceased her. The heraldic decorations do not allow a final identification, but the absence of the Beaumont arms should not be regarded as an argument against

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<sup>29</sup>Joel T. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise. Gift Giving and the Aristocracy, 1307-1485*, London 1972, pp. 116-17.

<sup>30</sup>Lamborn, 'The Lovel Tomb', p. 20.

<sup>31</sup>*Lincoln Diocesan Documents. 1450-1544*, ed. Andrew Clark, Early English Text Society orig. ser. vol. 149, London 1914, p. 72.

<sup>32</sup>'And I wol that within viij dayes after my dethe a M' Messes to be don for my soule'. *Lincoln Diocesan Documents*, p. 72.

<sup>33</sup>*Lincoln Diocesan Documents*, p. 73. In the first codicil appended to the will, William Lovell specifies that the two priests were to be secular priests with a degree in the divinities, or at least masters of arts, and should be good preachers. The priests were to be appointed by the current Lord Lovell, *ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>34</sup>VCH, *Oxfordshire*, vol. 4, *The City of Oxford*, p. 367. Interestingly, a third tomb in Holy Trinity Church in Hinton (Northamptonshire) has been identified as being that of William Lovell by J. Bridges: 'In the north aisle are two ancient monuments without inscription. On the one is the effigies of a man completely armed, lying on his back with a dog at his feet. On the other side is the effigy of a woman in the same posture. These are supposed to be the monuments of the Lord Lovel and his Lady'. J. Bridges, *History and Antiquities of the County of Northamptonshire*, 2 vols, London 1791, vol. 1, pp. 177-78. However, as this tomb has no description and no other record supports this theory, it can be safely disregarded.

John Lovell being buried here, as his wife was not the heiress of the Beaumont estates when he died.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, it could be argued that the presence of the coat-of-arms of the Zouches of Ashby de la Zouche points to the tomb being John Lovell's as he may have claimed the honour in right of his wife, but this conclusion is speculative. The strongest argument against the tomb being ascribed to William Lovell is that he wished to be buried in Oxford and that there are indications that there used to be a Lovell tomb in Greyfriars Church. Therefore, it seems most likely that the tomb is that of John Lovell, the father of Francis Lovell.

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<sup>35</sup>In fact, the Beaumont estates only fell to the Lovell family in 1507, when the inheritance was divided between Joan Beaumont's grandsons, Brian Stapleton, son of Joan Lovell and Brian Stapleton, and John Norris, son of Frideswide Lovell and Edward Norris, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 2, p. 63.