

THE BEAUCHAMP PAGEANT

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in association with

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DONINGTON

2003

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discussion of the *Pageant* since both works were conceived with great attention to realism. We know that the warden of the Worshipful Company of Barber-Surgeons was engaged to advise on anatomical details, and it is obvious from the furrowed brow, the blunt nose, an oddly shaped ear and the delicate veining of the hands that Massingham's portrait was meant to be as lifelike as possible. The whole undertaking was completed by 1460 at a cost of more than £3,000, and the exceptional quality of the artistry and workmanship involved in all aspects of the execution make both the chapel and the tomb effigy probably the finest examples of their kind outside the royal sepulchres at Westminster.⁶⁵

It was undoubtedly the circumstances of Anne Beauchamp's own life which directly prompted the commissioning of the *Pageant*. She was born in 1426 to Isobel, Lady Despenser, Richard Beauchamp's second wife (and a great-granddaughter of Edward III), at her mother's manor of Caversham in Oxfordshire. At the age of eight, she was married to Richard Neville, eldest son of the earl of Salisbury, who was her junior by two years; and in the same ceremony at Leicester her brother, Henry, married Richard's sister Cecily. It was a sumptuous occasion, as part of which the entire Beauchamp clan made an elaborate progress from Abergavenny accompanied by a huge retinue summoned, most likely, in order to impress their Neville relations.⁶⁶ Even so, there was no doubt in the minds of the two families which of them was bestowing an honour and which receiving one, for Salisbury had to agree to pay Warwick the enormous sum of 4,700 marks – one of the highest marriage portions ever paid by a late medieval nobleman – as well as offering his own heir as a husband for Anne in order to secure the hand of Henry Beauchamp, considered to be the greatest match of his day. Because of their extreme youth, the little newlyweds continued to live with their respective parents until 1439 when, on the death of the earl and countess of Warwick within a few months of each other, Henry entered the household of Henry VI as a royal ward,⁶⁷ while Anne probably came under the care of her parents-in-law. At this time, she was not an heiress since the majority of the Warwick properties were entailed in the male line, but the untimely death of her brother in 1446, 'ar he had be fully a quarter of a yer owt of his wardeshup', and then of the latter's infant daughter in 1449 left her as the main beneficiary of most of the vast Beauchamp and Despenser estates, valued at some £5,000 yearly during the 1430s.⁶⁸ The Neville couple were almost at once confirmed in Anne's title to the inheritance, and shortly afterwards, by royal patent, she was created countess of Warwick and her husband earl of Warwick, with the status of premier earl formerly enjoyed by Henry Beauchamp. Their already great wealth was further increased by the Salisbury inheritance, which came to Richard Neville on the death of his mother in 1462, and by the fruits of the earl's political influence, which included many rich and important offices and valuable estates, often forfeited by his enemies.⁶⁹

Between 1449 and the death of her father-in-law in 1460, Anne's main home would have been Warwick Castle; later, the couple moved to the great Neville strongholds of Middleham and Sheriff Hutton, in Yorkshire, which became centres of political influence, social life and patronage for all the counties of the north. Both here and in London, the earl's 'exceeding household' was a byword for largesse and ostentatious display, where five oxen were served each day at breakfast and provisions

⁶⁵ Lindley, *Gothic to Renaissance*, pp. 48–49; Evans, *English Art*, p. 157; Harvey, *Gothic England*, p. 99; Hicks, 'Beauchamp Trust', p. 140. There is no mention of the tomb or chapel in the *Pageant* for, in a narrative whose timescale is circumscribed by the birth and death of its protagonist, this would be anachronistic

⁶⁶ *CP*, vol. 12, xii pt 2, p. 393; BL Egerton charter 8775 m. 7. Travelling expenses alone amounted to an enormous £152, and a further £40 was distributed in rewards to members of the retinue, *ibid.*

⁶⁷ McFarlane, *Nobility*, p. 201; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 54, 356.

⁶⁸ Courthope, *Rous Roll*, no. 54; Sinclair, thesis, p. 68.

⁶⁹ *CP*, vol. 12, pt 2, pp. 385–87, 389–90, and Biography, below.