

Sir George and his Bacon-Shakespeare interests

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I first met Sir George because of his interest in the 16/17th century philosopher Sir Francis Bacon and the probability that he was the real but secret author of the Shakespeare works. The story, as Sir George related it to me, was that one winter day in the 1970's, as he was perusing his bookshelf, a book fell off the shelf and landed heavily on his foot. On picking it up he discovered that it was a volume about Francis Bacon that he had not read for some years.

Feeling that this incident was not by chance, Sir George felt impelled to renew his contact with the Francis Bacon Society. He telephoned the Society's secretary, Hope Brameld, who invited him to tea at her home in London. Hope then telephoned me and asked me to come to tea as well, to meet a rather remarkable man. This I duly did and found Sir George indeed to be truly remarkable as well as deeply interested in the life and philosophy of Francis Bacon, and the likelihood that Bacon was the real Shakespeare.



Sir George and Peter Dawkins in the late 1980's

From that moment on, despite the years that separated us (Sir George was more than old enough to be my father), the friendship between Sir George and myself rapidly developed, sparked off by our

common love of Shakespeare and the Master concealed behind that mask. Many times during the following years Sir George would visit my home in Edinburgh, where I lived with my wife Sarah and our (then) two young children, John and Elene. (Our third son, Samuel, was born later, in England.) Bouncing the eldest, John, on his knee, he would invariably ask me to pick up a volume of the Shakespeare plays and start reading a play with him. He also told riveting stories of his own younger years at Wallington Hall, where he had been brought up in an atmosphere permeated with Shakespeare, with house parties wherein he and the other guests performed some of the plays or extracts from the plays.



He had for a long time questioned the authorship of the Shakespeare works and come to his own conclusion that Bacon was the likely author. Like me, Sir George loved a mystery, so his passion for the Shakespeare plays extended also into Bacon's life and philosophy, so much of which is mysterious because purposely veiled. It was with his and Hope's encouragement that I founded the Francis Bacon Research Trust, together with the help of a few others. Later Sir George also became the President of the Francis Bacon Society.

One of our joint delights was in giving Shakespeare weekends at the Alderminster Old Rectory (near Stratford-upon-Avon), which became the headquarters of the FBRT and our family home in the 1980's. Each weekend was in the nature of a house party cum symposium, wherein Sir George and I would introduce the guests to a Shakespeare play on the Saturday (with Sir George reading and acting the main parts with his usual gusto), take them to see the play

performed at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in the evening, and then investigate the deeper meanings of the play and its authorship on the Sunday. Breakfasts, just as much as the other meals, beautifully prepared by Sarah, were feasts of heart warmth and intellectual delight, in which even our three children took immense interest, with eyes and ears wide open. It was a good education and joyful way to learn for all of us-and, as Sir George noted, very Platonic and Baconian.