Portrait of a Gentleman, traditionally thought to be Rev. Fulwar Craven Fowle

Hugh Douglas Hamilton



REF: 2985

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Description

Guy Peppiatt Fine Art Ltd.
Riverwide House, 6 Mason's Yard, Duke St. St. James's, London, SW1Y 6BU
T: 020 7930 3839 M: 07956 968 284 E: guy@peppiattfineart.co.uk www.peppiattfineart.co.uk

Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808)
Portrait of a Gentleman, traditionally thought to be Rev. Fulwar Craven Fowle

Inscribed on backboard: For Mr C Fowle/Revd F C Fowle
Half-length, wearing a brown coat and white waistcoat
Pastel over pencil
Oval 21.5 by 17.6 cm., 8 ½ by 7 in.

The present portrait is traditionally thought to be of the Rev. Fulwar Craven Fowle (1764-1840) who was born in Kintbury, Berkshire, the son of Rev. Thomas Fowle (1726-1806), vicar of Kintbury, and Jane Craven (1727-1798). However, the costume of the sitter dates to the end of the 1770s, which would make Fulwar about sixteen at the time, and the sitter appears to be older. The inscriptions on the backboard links the portrait to the Fowle family and to both the Rev. Fulwar and his younger brother Charles (1770-1806).

Fulwar matriculated at St John's College, Oxford in June 1781. In 1788, he married Eliza Lloyd and took over the living at Kintbury from his father in 1798. He was fascinated by developments in agriculture and he kept a flock of prizewinning Leicestershire sheep. He also helped form a brigade of local volunteer rifles, part of the mass of local regiments formed at the time to defend England in the event of a French invasion. Fulwar led his regiment on parade in front of George III in 1805 and the King is recorded as saying that whilst he knew Fowle to be a good clergyman and a good man and now he knew he was also a good officer.

His brother Charles Fowle joined Lincoln's Inn in 1790, was called to the bar in 1800 and subsequently practiced as a lawyer in the nearby market town of Newbury. He married Honoria Townsend in 1799. He fell ill in 1805 and moved to Bath for his health but returned to his brother's house in February 1806, where he died just a few days after his father.

Thomas Fowle was close friends with Rev. George Austen, father of the writer Jane, from their student days at Oxford and he sent all four of his sons to George Austen to be educated and prepared for entry to Oxford. The friendship of the fathers continued into the next generation and the Austen and Fowle children became close and the families often visited each other. Jane Austen's sister Cassandra became engaged to Fulwar's brother Thomas (1765-1797), although he died in the West Indies before they could marry. Jane's brother, Rev. James Austen (1765-1819) was close to Fulwar and was on occasion called to officiate in Kintbury church including to christen Fulwar's fourth child Caroline. Furthermore, James married Fulwar's sister-in-law, Mary in 1797. Jane and Cassandra became close to both Eliza and her sister Martha Lloyd and Charles Fowle and Jane appear to have enjoyed a teasing friendship, judging from Jane's correspondence. In 1828, following the death of his first wife, Francis Austen (1774-1865), later Admiral of the Fleet, married Martha Lloyd.

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