THE LIMNER COMPANY



NICHOLAS DIXON (1660 - 1708)

Portrait miniature of a nobleman, facing the right, wearing blue sash, red sleeves with slashes, and lace cravat

Circa: circa 1680

circa 1680

Watercolour on parchment

Oval, 58 mm (2 ¼ inches) high

Gilded metal scroll-top frame

As the King's Limner to Charles II (1630-1685) between 1673 and 1678, Nicolas Dixon was known for his portrait miniatures of noblemen, as well as the King himself[1]. It is thought that he was trained by Samuel Cooper, who had also worked for King Charles and Cromwell before him. Because of this, a large number of his miniatures feature men wearing the similar fashion, including the blue sash that is included within this portrait.

It is this blue sash that indicates that the sitter was likely a nobleman. One possible candidate is Robert Spencer, 2nd Earl of Sunderland (1641-1702), who served as an ambassador under King Charles. Dixon is known to have completed a portrait of his son, the 3rd Earl of Sunderland, (1675-1722), so it could be possible that the artist had a connection with this family. However, as this is not certain, the sitter remains to be fully identified.

When the portrait was sold in 1994, it was leaving the collection of the art historian Robert Bayne-Powell (1910-1994), who had acted as the honorary keeper of miniatures at the Fitzwilliam Museum, university of Cambridge, being an expert in the field.

[1] See Royal Collection Trust, RCN 420129, https://www.rct.uk/collection/420129/charles-ii-1630-1685.