THE LIMNER COMPANY



GEORGE ENGLEHEART (1750 - 1829)

Portrait miniature of Sir Robert Abercromby, Baronet (1784-1855), in profile, wearing 'Van Dyck' dress

Circa: Dated 1802

Dated 1802

Pencil and watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration number: KM7YALSV

Gold frame

Oval, 70 mm (2 $^{3}/_{4}$ inches) high

Sir Robert Abercromby, Baronet of Birkenbog and Forglen House (Aberdeenshire), was born in 1784. This profile portrait shows him as a young man of around sixteen years old. George Engleheart painted him, his father (Sir George Abercromby) and his mother in 1802.

Robert was M.P. for Banffshire, 1812-18 and succeeded to the family Baronetcy, 18 July 1831. In 1816 he married Elizabeth Stephenson (1795-1863), daughter and sole heir of Samuel Douglas, of Netherlaw, Kirkcudbrightshire. They had 15 children of which the first 7 were daughters. The eighth child, George Samuel Abercromby (22 May 1824 – 14 November 1872) became 6th baronet on his father's death.

Engleheart began to paint in a very different technique towards the end of his long career. His self-portrait of circa 1803, painted around the same time as the present work, shows a similar technique – using pencil to sketch in the basic elements of the face and costume and placing the sitter in profile ((Fig. 1. George Engleheart, Self-portrait, watercolour, circa 1803; Collection: National Portrait Gallery

[NPG 2753]). Note also the low placing of the earlobe – a common characteristic in Engleheart's profile portraits. In 1816, Sir Robert was painted by Henry Raeburn – a painting which was presented (in 1974) by Lady Abercromby to Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums.

This sketch of Abercromby shows him on the brink of adulthood, wearing the 'Van Dyck' style dress which had been fashionable from at least the mid-eighteenth century. He may have been painted with his mother and father at Engleheart's London studio.

Literature:

George C. Williamson and Henry L. D. Engleheart, George Engleheart, 1750-1829; Miniature Painter to George III, Pub. George Bell & Sons, London, 1902, p. 86.