THE LIMNER COMPANY



THOMAS HAZLEHURST (c.1740 - c.1821)

Portrait Miniatures of Robert Graham of Fintry (1745-1819), his son (almost certainly Robert (1775-1799)), and his daughter (most probably Anne)

Circa: 1793; 1794; circa 1798

1793

Watercolour on ivory (licence EPKZW5YL)

Oval, 50mm high

Signed and dated ‘T.H / 93’, lower left

Gilt metal frame with hairwork reverse (featuring two different strands of hair)

1794

Watercolour on ivory (licence 89SW3H88)

Oval, 66mm

Signed and dated ‘PMC / 1794’

Gilt metal frame with hairwork reverse, featuring the monograms ‘RG’ and ‘DG’

circa 1798

Watercolour on ivory (licence 1V83HG8Y)

Oval, 74mm

Gilt metal frame with hairwork reverse

These three miniatures form a remarkable group of paintings, marking the life of Robert Graham of Fint
friend and patron of Robert Burns (1759-1796). Until 2025, they have remained within the collection of t

Fintry Family, whose lineage can be traced back to King Robert III. Also in the family's collection were m Burns manuscripts, some of which are now housed in national collections. Since their conception, the miniatures have travelled to Cape Town, where Robert's second son, John Graham (1778-1822), hac moved, and they remained there until 1932. Until 1946, they were housed in Finsbury Circus, London. A three miniatures are painted by different artists; they were not intended as a set but have remained toge since they were taken.

Robert Graham Fintry first met Burns at the end of the Summer of 1787. Robert had lived a large part of life by this point, attending the University of St Andrews, inheriting the family estate, and marrying his sec cousin, Margaret Elizabeth ('Peggy') Mylne of Mylnefield. The couple would go on to have five sons an eleven daughters, only two of whom are represented in this set of portrait miniatures. In the late 1780s Graham was forced to sell his estate due to debts. However, in 1787, he was appointed 'His Majesty' Commissioner for the Receipt and Management of His Majesty's Revenues of Excise in Scotland'.

In a coincidence that would define the career of Burns, Fintry and the Poet came across each other at B Castle – the ancestral seat of John Murray, 4th Duke of Atholl. At this time, Burns had embarked upon a of the highlands, partly for inspiration, and partly to obtain further patronage. We do not know what Fintry thought of Burns, though we do know, from a letter that Burns wrote after the introduction, that he thoug Fintry a man who appreciated "the charms of conversation."[1]. From sources, it seems that their relation was not built on patronage from Fintry and acceptance by Burns, but on respect and common interests. 1788 Burns called him "one of the worthiest and most accomplished gentlemen, not only of this country, b will dare to say, of this age"[2]. Communication between the two is recorded in letters, and Burns wrot numerous poems dedicated to Fintry,, including *To Robert Graham, Esq., of Fintry, with a request for a Excise Division* (1788), *Epistle to Robert Graham of Fintry on the Election for the Dumfries String o Boroughs* (1790), and *To Robert Graham of Fintry, Esq.* (1791).

The first, exquisite, finely finished portrait of Robert Graham of Fintry is signed with the crisp Roman initi "T·H" and dated at the lower left. It was painted in 1793 by the Liverpool-based miniaturist Thomas Hazelhurst (c.1740–c.1821), then working from 9 Rodney Street.[3] The portrait belongs to a pivotal mon in the Burns-Fintry friendship when Fintry was helping the poet defend himself against charges of disloya and when *To Robert Graham of Fintry, Esq.* appeared in the *Second Edinburgh Edition*. It was also th year Fintry received payment for disseminating pro–William Pitt propaganda, and his son John had jus been commissioned as an Ensign in the 85th Regiment of Foot.[4] The miniature displays several hallm of Hazelhurst's hand, including the bluish shading of the face and the subtle halo of lighter backgroun framing the sitter.[5] Looked at closely, this portrait is astonishing in the way it combines the many facet Fintry's personality. He appears as a man of the Establishment, wearing a powdered wig *en queue* an dark blue coat. Yet he is shown facing left, a pose that softens formality and offers the viewer a glimpse more expressive, emotional temperament.[6] This impression is heightened by the delicate white highlig on the eyes, which animate the sitter with lifelike immediacy and suggest the innate goodness Burns hac recently proclaimed to the world. Moreover, his white cravat, tied in the fashion of a blooming flower, may read as symbolic of intellectual refinement, openness of character, and emotional sensitivity – all qualiti we have pointed out in this article.

The second miniature is almost certainly a portrait of Robert (1775–1799), Fintry's eldest son. Painted 1794 by Patrick John McMorland (1741–c.1809), the work depicts the young sitter in a navy coat and wh cravat, his powdered hair worn loose and flowing, set against a blue-sky background with foliage to the Although McMorland's style exhibited considerable range, the handling of this piece closely recalls tw gentlemen's miniatures he produced in the mid- to late 1790s during his Manchester period, suggestin consistent approach to male portraiture in these years.[7] The miniature bears on its verso two interlac

initials, ‘RG’ and ‘DG’. The slightly smaller ‘DG’ may plausibly refer to David Graham, a younger brother the sitter, who was only nine years old when Robert departed for India and to whom the miniature may ha been entrusted as a personal token. The miniature was very likely conceived as a parting gift, commissio on the occasion of Robert’s appointment to the East India Company as Second Assistant Register at t Provincial Court of Appeal and Court of Circuit in the Province of Benares.[8] His promising career was tragically short: Robert was killed in the Massacre of Benares, murdered on the orders of the ex-Nawab Awadh, Wazir Ali Khan, in retaliation against the British Bengal Establishment.[9] Among the few perso possessions he carried to India was “A Portrait Miniature Set in Gold,” evidently preserved as a cherish keepsake from the Fintry household.[10]

The third miniature is a finely executed and delicately observed portrait of one of Robert Graham’s eld daughters, most probably Anne. Painted around 1798 by Andrew Plimer (1763–1837), it dates from th period when Plimer, formerly apprenticed to Richard Cosway, had established his own successful pract in fashionable Golden Square, London. It was in these years, more than two decades before his later tou Scotland, that he produced the portrait of ‘Miss Graham’. The work displays several hallmarks of Plime mature manner. Most notable is the characteristic cross-hatching visible in the background on either sid the sitter, a technique through which he created depth and tonal nuance by means of fine, intersecting strokes. The absence of a signature is consistent with Plimer’s so-called “second phase” (after 1789), w he frequently left his miniatures unsigned.[11] The qualities singled out by George C. Williamson as emblematic of Plimer’s style – his distinctive handling of hair and the luminous brilliance of the eye – are clearly present here.[12] It is striking that the locks of auburn hair set into the reverse of the miniature ma the sitter’s hair precisely, suggesting not only that the portrait has retained its original vividness, but also the material fragment reinforces the miniature’s claim to authenticity and intimacy. In a similarly delicate v Anne Graham was the recipient of Burns’s *To Miss Graham of Fintry,* a formal sonnet composed in Dumfries in January 1794.[13] Burns later sent her a copy of *A Select Collection of Original Scottish A* inscribing it with the opening line of the poem: “Here, where the Scottish Muse immortal lives.” In his fir letter to Fintry, Burns explained that this gift to Anne was intended as a gesture of gratitude to his patron the Graham family.[14]

Together, the miniatures form a historically significant group of portraits, which help demonstrate the var nature of Fintry’s artistic patronage. Whilst Fintry is best known for his patronage of Burns, he has also b involved in the patronage of three miniature artists to have these portraits painted. Furthermore, the re emergence of these items of Burnsiania adds a fresh insight into the relationship between the poet an Fintry, and the influence that both figures had on each other’s legacies.

[1] Letter to Josiah Walker, 5 September 1787. Maurice Lindsay (1970). The Burns Encyclopedia. Lond Hutchinson, p.149.

[2] Letter to Mrs Dunlop, 10 December 1788

[3] Daphne Foskett (1963) *British Portrait Miniatures.* London: Methuen, p. 146.

[4] Heinz Archives, *Notes on Collections*, ‘Graham of Fintry’, p. 2.

[5] Daphne Foskett (1963) *British Portrait Miniatures*. London: Methuen, p. 146; and Daphne Foskett (19
A Dictionary of British Miniature Painters, vol. I. London: Faber & Faber, p. 319.

[6] Annukka K. Lindell (2025). 'Turning the other cheek: Portraits of doctors and scientists don't show a l
cheek bias' in *BCMJ*, vol. 67, No. 2, available at: https://bcmj.org/articles/turning-other-cheek-portraits
doctors-and-scientists-dont-show-left-cheek-
bias#:~:text=Research%20confirms%20that%20left%2Dcheek,judged%20to%20be%20more%20scier

[7] Heinz Archives, British Miniaturists 1775-1800 box, Patrick John McMorland file. See also Basil S. L
(1929). *British Miniaturists*. London: Geoffrey Bles, p. 285.

[8] *Calcutta Gazette*, 23 July 1795, p. 1.

[9] As a consequence of his unprincely behaviour, the British deposed Wazir Ali Khan (1780-1817) a
Nawab of Awadh. Robert Graham was instructed to investigate the pretensions of the riextendedval prin
When Wazir was replaced by Saadat Ali Khan II and asked to move to Calcutta, he organised a blooc
insurrection and killed five officials, including Robert. *Belfast News-Letter*, 16 July 1799, p. 4.

[10] British Library, *British India Office Inventories and Accounts of Deceased Estate* (available in
FindMyPast).

[11] Daphne Foskett (1972) *A Dictionary of British Miniature Painters*, vol. I. London: Faber & Faber, p
450-51.

[12] George C. Williamson (1897). *Portrait Miniatures from the Time of Holbein 1531 to that of Sir Will
Ross 1860. A Handbook for Collectors*. London: George Bell, p. 76.

[13] *The Canongate Burns*, pp. 809-10.

[14] *The Complete Letters of Robert Burns*, p. 440.