THE LIMNER COMPANY

ANDREW PLIMER (1763 - 1837)

Portrait miniature of a daughter of Robert Graham of Fintry, likely Anne, wearing white dress and a white band in her hair

Circa: circa 1798

circa 1798

Watercolour on ivory (licence 1V83HG8Y)

Oval, 74mm

Gilt metal frame with hairwork reverse

Sold with:

[THOMAS HAZLEHURST (c.1740–c.1821), Portrait Miniature of Robert Graham of Fintry (1745-1819 1793.](#)

[PATRICK JOHN MCMORELAND (1741 -](#)

[c.1809), Portrait miniature of a son of Robert Graham of Fintry, 1794.](#)

These three miniatures form a remarkable group of paintings, marking the life of Robert Graham of Fin 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), had moved, and they remained there until 1932. Until 1946, they were housed in Finsbury Circus, London. / 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 of
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 init
"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 the y
Fintry received payment for disseminating pro–William Pitt propaganda, and his son John had just bee
commissioned as an Ensign in the 85th Regiment of Foot.[4] The miniature displays several hallmarks
Hazelhurst's hand, including the bluish shading of the face and the subtle halo of lighter background fram
the sitter.[5] Looked at closely, this portrait is astonishing in the way it combines the many facets of Fint
personality. He appears as a man of the Establishment, wearing a powdered wig en queue and a dark b
coat. Yet he is shown facing left, a pose that softens formality and offers the viewer a glimpse of a mor
expressive, emotional temperament.[6] This impression is heightened by the delicate white highlights on
eyes, which animate the sitter with lifelike immediacy and suggest the innate goodness Burns had so
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 wl
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 h
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 Dum
in January 1794.[13] Burns later sent her a copy of A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs, inscribir
with the opening line of the poem: "Here, where the Scottish Muse immortal lives." In his final letter to Fir
Burns explained that this gift to Anne was intended as a gesture of gratitude to his patron and the Graha
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. Lon
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) as Nawab of Awadh. Robert Graham was instructed to investigate the pretensions of the riextendedval prince When Wazir was replaced by Saadat Ali Khan II and asked to move to Calcutta, he organised a blood 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 Willia 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.