# THE LIMNER COMPANY



**MOSES GRIFFITH (1747 - 1819)**

**Portrait miniature of Lieutenant Joseph Martineau, wearing a uniform, most likely that of the Rutland Light Dragoons**

Circa: 1796

1796

*Watercolour on ivory (licence number PFLAKA49)*

Oval, 80mm (3 ⅛ in) high

It has been possible to attribute the present work to Moses Griffith, given the existence of a watercolour sketch in the National Museum of Wales, which provides details of the sitter and date on the reverse.[1] Griffith was a Welsh draughtsman and miniature painter, more commonly known for his zoological, landscape, and architectural sketches. His miniatures are rare but of great quality, as is demonstrated here. This portrait was painted relatively late in Griffith's career, following a long period during which he worked for Thomas Pennant (1726-1798), an antiquarian and traveller. Griffith followed Pennant on his travels, and the majority of his known works are the result of these journeys.

Thanks to Griffith's inscription, it is possible to identify the sitter of this portrait as Lieutenant Joseph Martineau, of the Rutland Regiment of Fencible Cavalry, also known as the Rutland Light Dragoons. This regiment was part of the 'regular' army, although it was never stationed outside the country. Instead, it acted as a defence force, hence the name 'fencible', which comes from 'defencible'. By 1801, when the regiment was disbanded, Martineau had become a captain. At the time this portrait was painted, he was still only a Lieutenant, and would become a captain-lieutenant only a few months later, in September 1796.

An extreme amount of attention has been paid to capturing the accuracy of the sitter's uniform, which is elaborately decorated with silver epaulettes and cord. These were only briefly captured by Griffith in the

initial sketch for the miniature, and he likely filled in the detail away from Martineau. The uniform he wears is typical of that worn by Light Dragoon Regiments in the 1790s, and a plate on the left side of his helmet reads ‘DRAGOONS’, which allows the identification of Martineau to be confirmed.

On the reverse of the drawing in the National Museum of Wales, Griffith has noted that Martineau was in Holywell when he was painted. This must be the Holywell in Wales, rather than Ireland, as this is where the artist settled after his employment by Pennant. Griffith remained in this area until his death in 1819. Today, his works remain within the collections of not only the National Museum of Wales, but also the National Library of Wales, the British Museum, and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

*We are grateful to Stephen Wood for his assistance in identifying the uniform in this portrait.*

[1] Item Number NMW A 16904