THE LIMNER COMPANY



ANDREW PLIMER (1763 - 1837)

Portrait miniature of Sir Walter Stirling, 1st Baronet (1758-1832), in a light blue coat with brass buttons, white shirt and cravat, and red waistcoat, his hair powdered

Circa: circa 1795

circa 1795

Watercolour on ivory (licence USG6KPV2)

Oval, 66mm (2 9/16 in) high

The identification of the gentleman in this portrait as Sir Walter Stirling, 1st Baronet, has previously been questioned, however the appearance of a portrait of the sitter by William Philip James Loder[1] on the market allows this identification to be confirmed. Both gentlemen have the same wide, brown, eyes, and a matching nose. This other portrait was painted in 1800 and depicts Stirling in a uniform, of the Somerset Place Volunteers. In this miniature, Stirling is depicted in normal clothing, around five years before, a date taken from Plimer's artistic handling.

Other miniatures by Plimer from the mid-1790s show men in remarkably similar blue coats with a brief flash of a red waistcoat showing underneath their cravat, and it is likely that his attention was paid more to depicting the unique features of his sitter's faces, placing these on a standardised outfit. By this point Plimer was working in the second distinctive phase of his career, defined by Daphne Foskett[2] for its more restricted palette. Andrew and his brother Nathaniel (1757-1822) had trained under Richard Cosway (1742-1821), having become his manservants once they had moved to London in 1781. They both enjoyed successful careers in their own rights.

In 1795, Sir Walter Stirling became a partner at the bank of Hodsoll and Mitchell in the Strand, and it is possible that the portrait was painted to commemorate this progression in his career. Stirling was the son of another Walter Stirling (1781-1786), Captain and naval officer. His father had married Dororthy Willing, a Philadelphian, and Walter junior was therefore born in Philadelphia. He established his career in Britain, however, and was clearly motivated throughout his life to gain political influence. The Duke of

Gordon wrote so in 1796:

‘*he is a gentleman of independent fortune, much attached to the present government and whose sole ambition is to be created a baronet…*[3]’

He was not created a baronet until 1800. It is perhaps surprising that he was, given the attitude that many of his peer had towards him, including George Canning calling him a ‘*fool*[4]. He did not contribute to any great political changes, but nevertheless created enough of a personal impact on these peers for them to remember him, even if this was in a negative light.

[1] See https://www.sellingantiques.co.uk/1030869/portrait-of-sir-walter-stirling-1st-baronet-signed-dated-1800-by-william-philip-james-lodder-loder-active-17831805.

[2] D. Foskett, Miniatures: A Dictionary and Guide, 1976, ‘Plimer, Andrew’.

[3] In a letter to Henry Dundad, dated 4 May 1796.

[4] In a report to his wife, dated 3 December 1800.