THE LIMNER COMPANY



SAMUEL COOPER (1607/8 - 1672)

Portrait miniature of a Gentleman, probably Robert Greville, 4th Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Court (1638/9 – 1676/7), wearing armour, lawn collar, his hair worn long and curled

Watercolour on vellum

Oval, 62 mm (2 1/2 in) high

Signed ‘SC’ in monogram

Gilt metal frame with scroll surmount, with erroneous inscription on the reverse; ‘Robert, Lord Brooke, a Commanding Officer in the Service of the …. …… was killed by a shot in the Eye, from a Common Soldier of the Royal Party, at Litchfield, … / SC Cooper (in monogram), pinxit.’

There has been some historical confusion about the identities of several members of the Brooke family painted by Samuel Cooper. The present work was previously in the collection of the Earl of Warwick and is therefore likely to depict a male member of the Brooke Family. Warwick Castle was inherited by Robert, 2nd Baron Brooke (1607-1643) from his adoptive father, Fulke Grevile,1st Baron Brooke (1544-1628), in 1628.

An erroneous inscription on the reverse suggests that this is a portrait of the same Robert Greville, 2nd Baron Brooke, whereas the appearance of the sitter and the longer lawn collar he wears points to him being Robert, 4th Baron Brooke (1638-1677). These longer lawn collars were more common in the 1660s, when the 4th Baron would have been in his early 20s, and his father was already dead. A portrait in the Victoria and Albert Museum, said to be the 2nd Baron, bears a much greater resemblance to him. The gentleman in this portrait has a much more rounded nose, whereas his father’s was sharper. Another portrait of the 4th Baron was sold in the Kimbolton Castle Sale, 1949, and comparison with this portrait further supports this identification.

The 4th Baron adopted his title in 1658 from his older brother, Francis Greville, 3rd Baron Brooke (1637-1658), who died without issue. Unlike his brother and father, both staunch parliamentarians, Robert was a supporter of the king and one of the six peers sent to the Netherlands in 1660 to invite Charles II back to England. He was appointed the Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire and Recorder of Warwick in the same year. With his wife Ann Doddington, Robert had eight children, though only his daughters outlived him, meaning the peerage was passed on to his younger brother, Fulke Greville.

In August 1654, the diarist John Evelyn visited Warwick Castle and the 15 year old Robert Greville. His account stated; '*We passed next through Warwick, and sawthe castle, the dwelling house of the Lord Brook, and the furniture noble. It is built on an eminent rock which gives prospect into a most goodly green, a woody and plentifully watered country; the river running so delightfully under it, that it may pass for one of the most surprising seats one should meet with*.'

Little else is known about the Baron's life, though he is mentioned in Samuel Pepys' (1633-1703) diaries, in an entry from 25 June, 1666, in which he recounts visiting multiple gardens:

'*the other [garden] my Lord Brooke's, where the gardens are much better, but the house not so good, nor the prospect good at all. But the gardens are excellent; and here I first saworanges grow. some green, some half, some a quarter, and some full ripe, on the same tree, and one fruit of the same tree do come a year or two after the other. I pulled off a little one by stealth (the man being mighty curious of them) and eat it, and it was just as other little green small oranges are; as big as half the end of my little finger. Here were also great variety of other exotique plants, and several labarinths, and a pretty aviary*.'

Two years later, Samuel Pepys would call on Samuel Cooper to paint a portrait of his wife. As with the 4th Baron, Cooper experienced the King's favour in the 1660s and was appointed his limner in the early years of the decade. As a talented artist and businessman, Cooper was aware of a need to switch his loyalties in order to retain his popularity. As a result, he was responsible for the famous 'warts and all' portrait of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), as well as multiple portraits of the restored King Charles II.

The miniature must have remained within the collection of the Earl of Warwick until 1978, when

when the castle was sold to the Madame Tussauds group. The miniature was sold as the property of a gentleman, but alongside a portrait by Cooper of the 3rd Baron, and other members of the Greville Family from later centuries. Previous cataloguing has also erroneously identified this miniature as the one exhibited at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, London, in 1889, lent by Edward H Lawrence Esq. This miniature is not the same as the present work, which at that date was still in the Earl of Warwick's collection. The portrait is a superb example of Cooper's bravura in painting in thick, opaque watercolour – the Baron appearing content and well-fed – his armour a reminder of the earlier, bloodier times endured by his Parliamentarian father.

Exhibitions

London, South Kensington Loan Exhibition 1865, no. 1947 (lent by the Earl of Warwick).

London, Somerset House Art Treasures Exhibition 1979, no. J52 (according to label on reverse).

Literature:
J.J. Foster, *Supplement to Samuel Cooper and the English Miniature Painters of the XVII Century*, London, 1916, no. 33.