

DISCOVERING LAWRENCE

CHARLES RAAB

Talk given in the Scottish Arts Club

Edinburgh

2 September 2023

©

Who Was Thomas Lawrence?

- **b. 13 April 1769 (Bristol) – d. 7 January 1830 (London)**
- **Successor to Gainsborough, Romney, Reynolds as the leading English (and European) portrait painter of his day**
- **Painted royalty, aristocracy, cultural, political, military figures, Pope Pius VII, etc.; also ‘history’ and religious pictures**
- **Commissioned by Prince Regent (later George IV) in 1814 to paint portraits of rulers and military leaders who defeated Napoleon; now in Waterloo Chamber, Windsor Castle**
- **Knighted 1815; 4th President, Royal Academy (1820 - 1830)**
- **... and a ‘child prodigy’ (like Gainsborough, Mozart, Angelica Kauffman, Mary Moser...) or even ‘genius’**

Queen Charlotte (1789)

(London, National Gallery)



Lawrence Drawings (1780) in SAC Permanent Collection

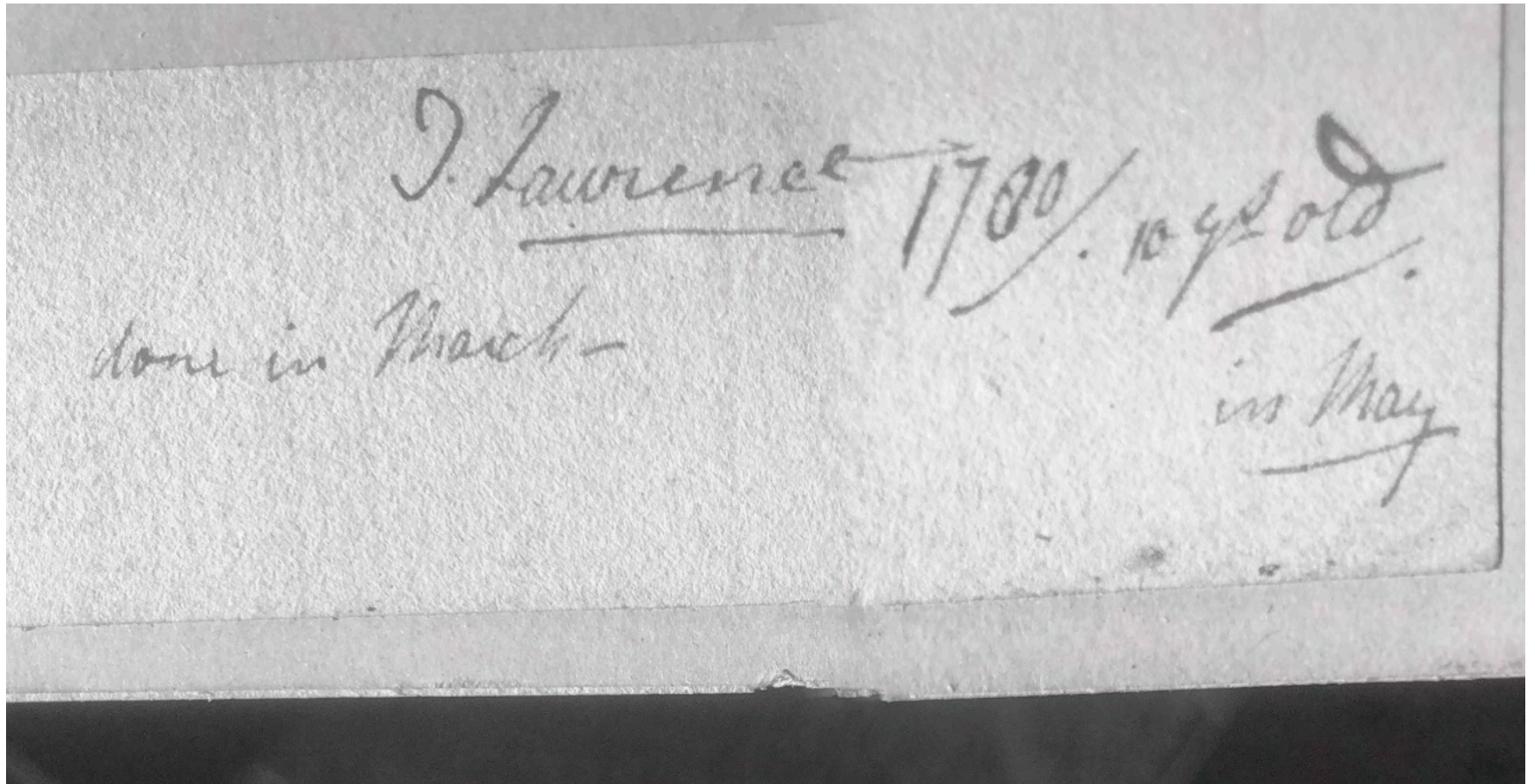


8.27 x 11.69 in

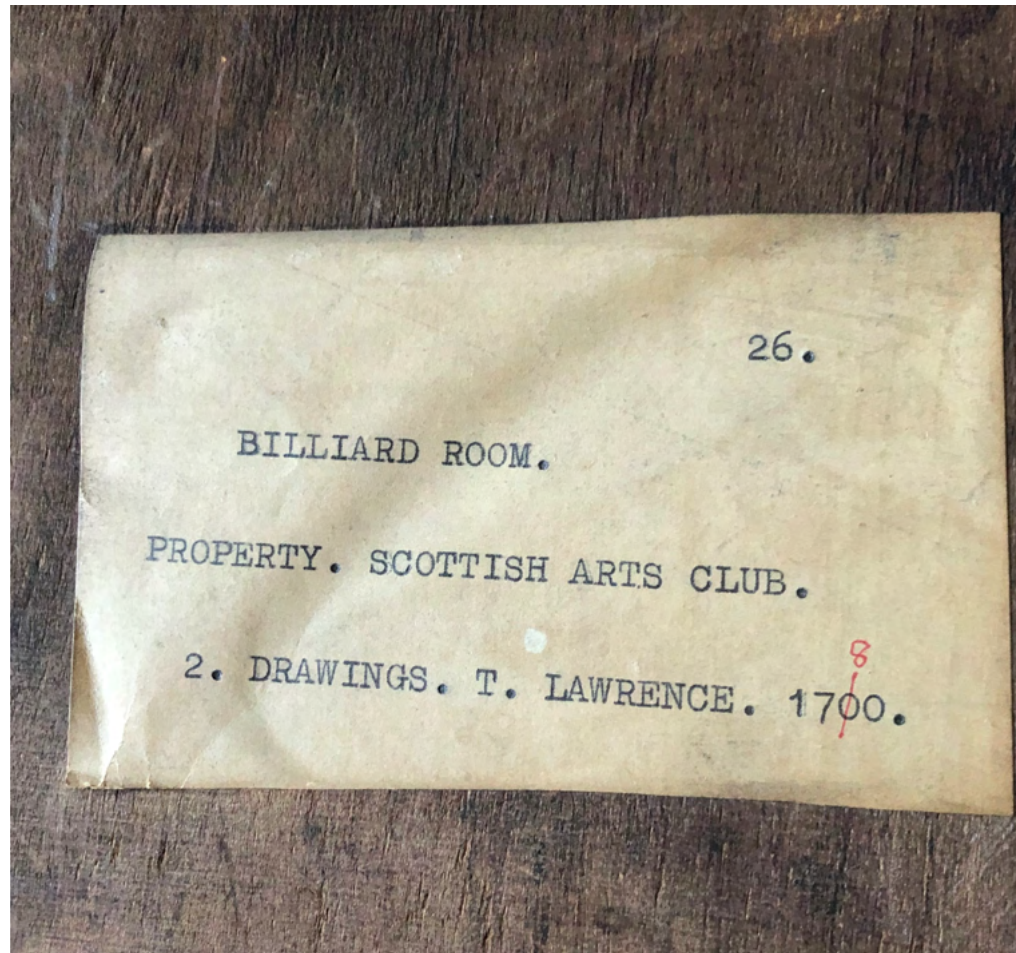
Discovering Lawrence in the SAC Permanent Collection

- **Early 2022: Joyce Campbell, John Young and I find two pencil drawings in a single frame, stored in the SAC Permanent Collection**
- **Listed in inventory (2014) as ‘No. 125, Unknown artist. Two drawings of a boy’s head. Pencil’**
- **But left-hand drawing clearly says ‘T: Lawrence / Fecit’; inscription (by another hand, pre-1815?) affixed to card frame mount says ‘T. Lawrence / 1780/ done in March - /10 ys. old. / in May’; inscribed label not unusual on Lawrence’s early drawings**
- **Label on frame backboard says (typescript) ‘26. / BILLIARD ROOM /PROPERTY SCOTTISH ARTS CLUB ./2. DRAWINGS T. LAWRENCE. 1700.’ [sic]**

Label on SAC Drawing



Label on Backboard



Mysteries

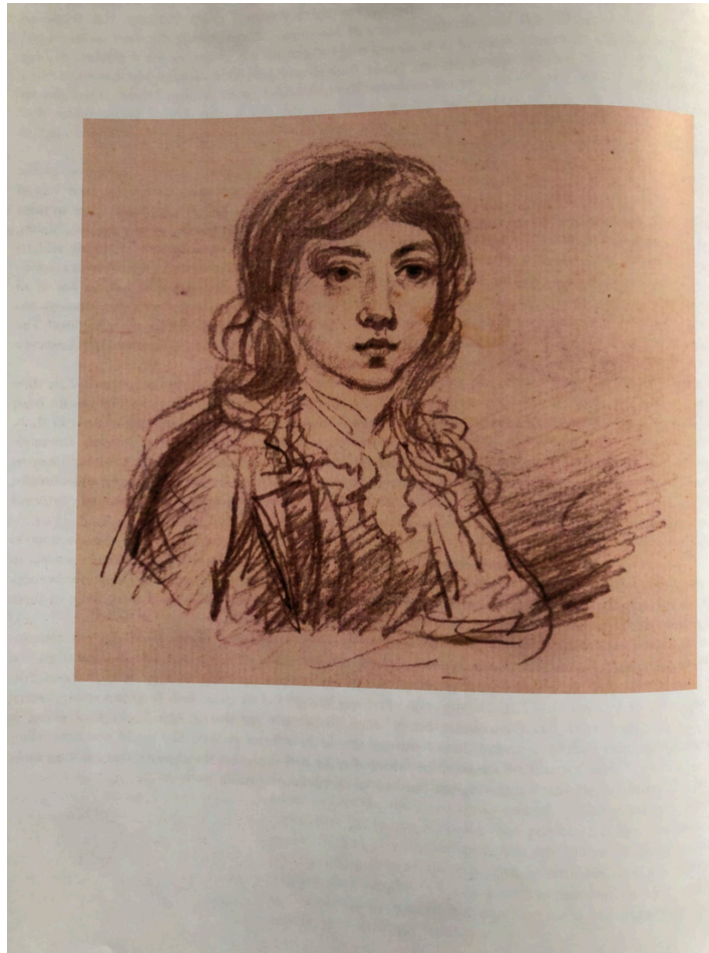
- **Why ‘hiding in plain sight’, overlooked by past arts conveners, club administrators, cataloguers, and obviously mis-labelled?**
- **How, when, why did they get to SAC?**
- **When, where were they drawn?**
- **Who was the sitter?**
- **Who owned them since 1780?**

Detective Work 2022-2023 (1)

- To find any record of accession, I read all available SAC Council Minutes from 1872 on**
- Nothing found on Lawrence drawings; no available SAC accessions list; recording of accessions of art works haphazard and vague**
- To learn more about Lawrence, I consult many available art-historical scholarly sources, online and in libraries (Central Edinburgh, Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh)**
- What did young Lawrence look like?**

Self-portrait as a boy (c. 1780-81)

(Stamford, Lincolnshire, Trustees of the Burghley House Collection; Levey (2005), p. 40)



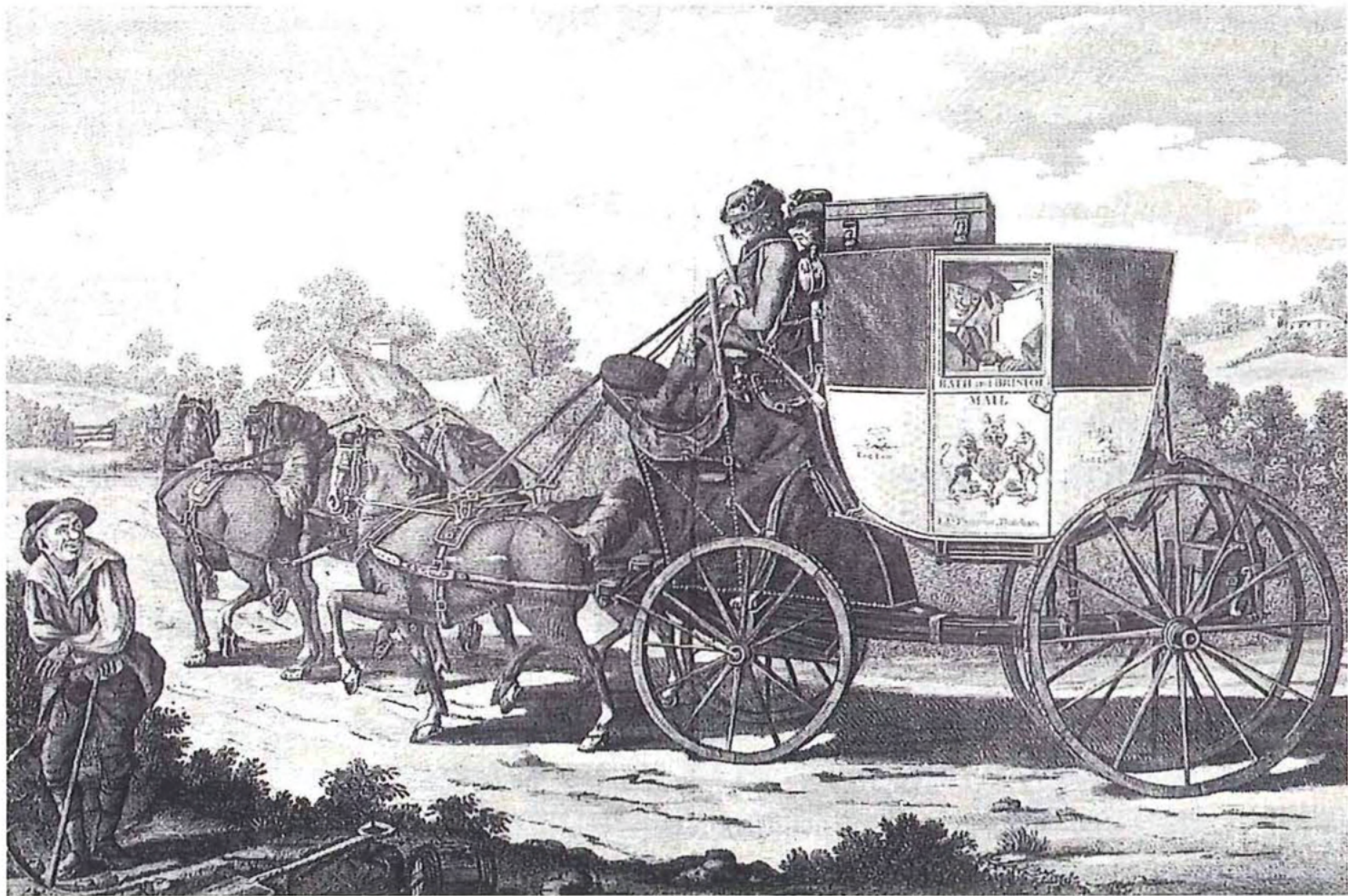
Self-portrait at the age of twelve (1781)

(Victoria Art Gallery, Bath; Wright (2020), p. 11)



Early Years (1)

- **Father: Thomas Lawrence, supervisor of excise, then innkeeper of 'The White Lion' (Bristol; failure); art collector, sometime poet; improvident**
- **Mother: Lucy Read, clergyman's/gentleman's daughter**
- **Young Thomas was 5th and last to survive of 16 children; cultured, talented family, with interests in literature, music, theatre, arts**
- **Family moves to Devizes (Wilts.) 1773, take tenancy of Black Bear Inn (c. 1559), on coaching route from London to fashionable Bath**



2 The Original Bath Mail Coach, 1784, with armed guard.

The Black Bear Hotel (today) Devizes, Wiltshire



Early Years (2)

- **Tom: little schooling; draws from age 4 or 5 (self-taught); recites poetry (Milton, Shakespeare); praised for artwork (e.g., by David Garrick; Fanny Burney: ‘not merely the wonder of the family but of the times for his astonishing skill in drawing.’)**
- **Charming, attractive, popular; father promotes him to wealthy clients at Inn (‘Gentlemen, here’s my son — will you have him recite from the poets, or take your portraits?’)**
- **Father takes him to Oxford (1779) to draw prominent persons for money; some 50 Oxford portraits but none known today**
- **Moves to Bath from 1780; supports family; pastel portraits of great and good (for c. 3 gns = c. £700 today); soon well-recognised**
- **But SAC’s undiscovered drawings not in Kenneth Garlick’s exhaustive catalogue (1964) or in Susan Sloman’s catalogue (2020) of Lawrence monochrome drawings up to 1788**
- **What did his very early drawings (miniatures and larger) look like?**

Charles Pepys (22 November 1777)

(Foskett, D, (1972), vol. II)



510

Mr. & Mrs. Grier (c. 1779/80?)

(The Daphne Foskett Collection, on loan to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery; Levey (2005), p. 47)



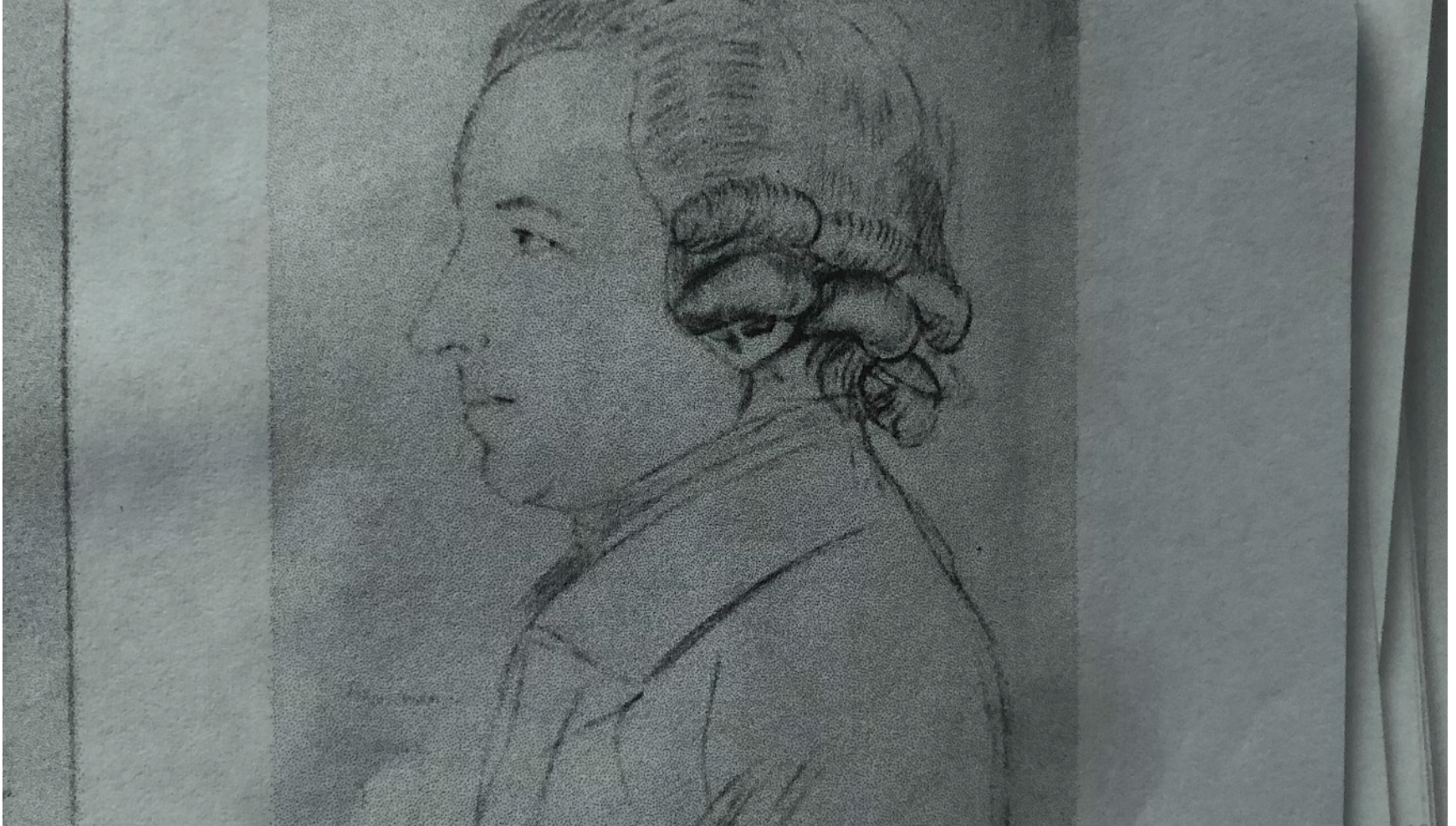
Head of Minerva (1779)

(Private Collection; Wright (2020), p. 19)



Mr. Lloyd Kenyon (27 December 1779, Devizes)

(Private Collection; Levey (2005), p. 35)



The Kenyons

- **The Kenyons (Lloyd and Mary) visit Black Bear Inn, 27 December 1779, known from Kenyon's diary**
- **Tom draws their profiles that day**
- **Lloyd (later Baron) Kenyon (1732-1802) became Master of the Rolls; later Lord Chief Justice**
- **Drawings similar to SAC's : profiles, size, rectangular shape, signature**
- **Very close in date (SAC's is c. 3 months later)**

Detective Work 2022-2023 (2)

- I consult Lucinda Lax (Scottish National Portrait Gallery); ‘certainly plausible’, but SNPG have insufficient experience of handling early Lawrence drawings
- I learn that Holburne Museum (Bath) was to hold ‘Coming of Age’ exhibition, curated by Amina Wright; but cancelled because of COVID-19 lockdown; catalogue available
- Similarities between SAC drawings and some known drawings

Detective Work 2022-2023 (3)

- I write to Amina Wright, send photographs of SAC drawings
- She replies encouragingly, with fuller information and speculation; further messages exchanged
- Not self-portraits (self-profiles very difficult) but older boy (dressed hair, formal costume, covered neck)
- Lawrence 'juvenilia' doesn't often pass through expert hands; early Lawrence drawings 'very rare'

Amina Wright: More Information (1)

- **‘The two portraits are definitely of the same boy’**
- **‘As the 1780 period is a very transitional, experimental one, it’s hard to pin down what would have been typical, but we do know that before arriving in Bath, and perhaps for a little time after, his standard commercial product was a small 3” profile in graphite on vellum, often (but not always) oval. Some were copied from prints, some from life, some from his own imagination or a combination of prints and fantasy (like the Minerva). A common feature is the exaggeratedly large and prominent signature. Your drawing seems to be a step beyond this very safe type of drawing.’ (correspondence from Amina Wright 12/11/22)**

Amina Wright: More Information (2)

- Lawrence often uses same signature in early drawings
- SAC drawings (probably March 1780) and Kenyons (27 December 1779) rare portrait survivors from Devizes period, possibly only ones in larger style before Lawrence does more fashionable pastels in Bath
- Lawrence possibly influenced by work of Giles Hussey (1710-1788) that he could have seen at Lulworth Castle on visit to Dorset; Hussey known as portraitist of Charles Edward Stuart
- Lulworth Castle, home of Weld family (co-incidentally, Thomas and Mary, who have 15 children); friend and neighbour of Hussey; collector of artworks; Lawrence draws several portraits of Weld family members

An Engraving by Giles Hussey (1701-1788)

[1773; published 1814]

meisterdrucke.uk

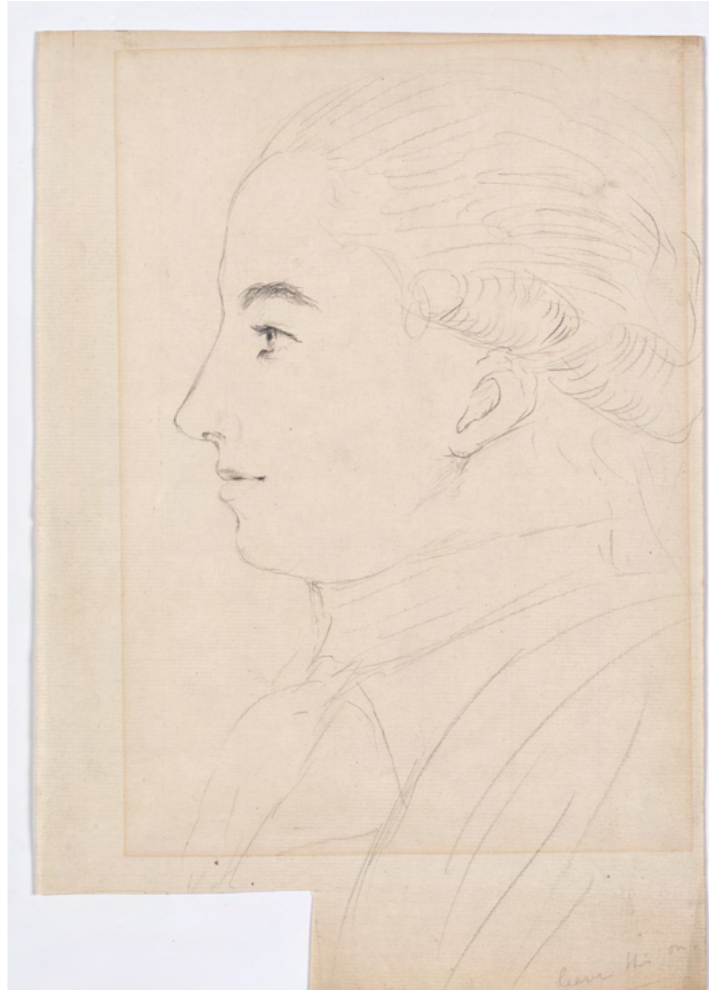


GILES HUSSEY, ESQ. AETAT. LXXIII.

Detective Work 2022-2023 (4)

- **Amina Wright suggests I contact Susan Sloman, another leading expert**
- **I write to Susan Sloman; subsequent correspondence informative, very encouraging**
- **She suggests removal from glass frame to look for more information; none found, but paper seems in good condition; inscription on card mount ('T. Lawrence / 1780/ done in March - /10 ys. old. / in May') had been cut from right-hand drawing, lower left corner**

Profile Drawing, Showing Original Location of Label



Susan Sloman: Authentication

- February 2023: I take drawings to London for inspection by Susan Sloman**
- We meet at Royal Academy; she examines drawings, indicates authenticity**
- She writes analysis and expert appraisal: ‘The drawings are...of significant interest as works of a fledgling artist on the brink of a remarkable career.’**
- Left-hand drawing (3/4 view) likely an early transitional experiment, thus of interest (Amina Wright: ‘the earliest example I have seen of him stepping away from the security of a strict profile’); he also continues with some profiles in 1780s**

Lawrence Drawings (1780) in SAC Permanent Collection



Susan Sloman Writes... (1)

- **‘Perhaps the most interesting aspect...is the fact that one drawing demonstrates a tentative move away from a standard profile towards a three-quarter view of the face. Profile portraiture in the eighteenth century commonly involved mechanical aids and there are hints that an aid may have been used here to produce the right hand profile. The firmest parts of the drawing are the outline from the hairline to the collar and the delineation of the eye. The section of the profile from the bridge of the nose to the chin seems to have been traced and then used as the beginnings of the left hand drawing. This explains the awkwardness of the three-quarter face drawing; it also confirms that we are looking at two depictions of the same person.’**

'Teen-age' Career

- **Works in Bath, 1780 – 1787; pastels, drawings; earns money**
- **'Lawrence graduated successfully from child wonder to adult star' (Susan Sloman)**
- **Within two years (1782) draws Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire in pastel; many others as career flourishes**
- **Other subjects as well, including 'history' / religious**
- **Moves to London, 1787; works in oils**
- **Many portraits, many commissions**
- **The great, the good, the beautiful (and not so)**
- **Within nine years from date of SAC drawings, paints large portrait of Queen Charlotte (1789)**
- **Some other examples from 1780s.....**

Miss Anne Lawrence (1781)

[elder sister]

(London, The British Museum)



Miss Hammond, Cousin of the Artist (1781)

(London, The British Museum)



Self-Portrait (c. 1781-2)

(The Vyne, National Trust, Hampshire; Wright (2020), p. 28)



Transfiguration of Jesus

Raphael (1483 – 1520), 1516-20

(Wikipedia/ Artist Hideout)



Drawing after The Transfiguration (from a copy after Raphael) 1782

(Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund)

Pastel on paper

Lawrence never sees original, which is in Rome; works from a copy in Bath

1784: Recognising the excellence of his picture, Society of Arts (London) awards Lawrence silver palette and 5 guineas (Wright (2020), p. 36)

Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire (1782)

(Chatsworth, The Devonshire Collections; Wright (2020), p. 22)



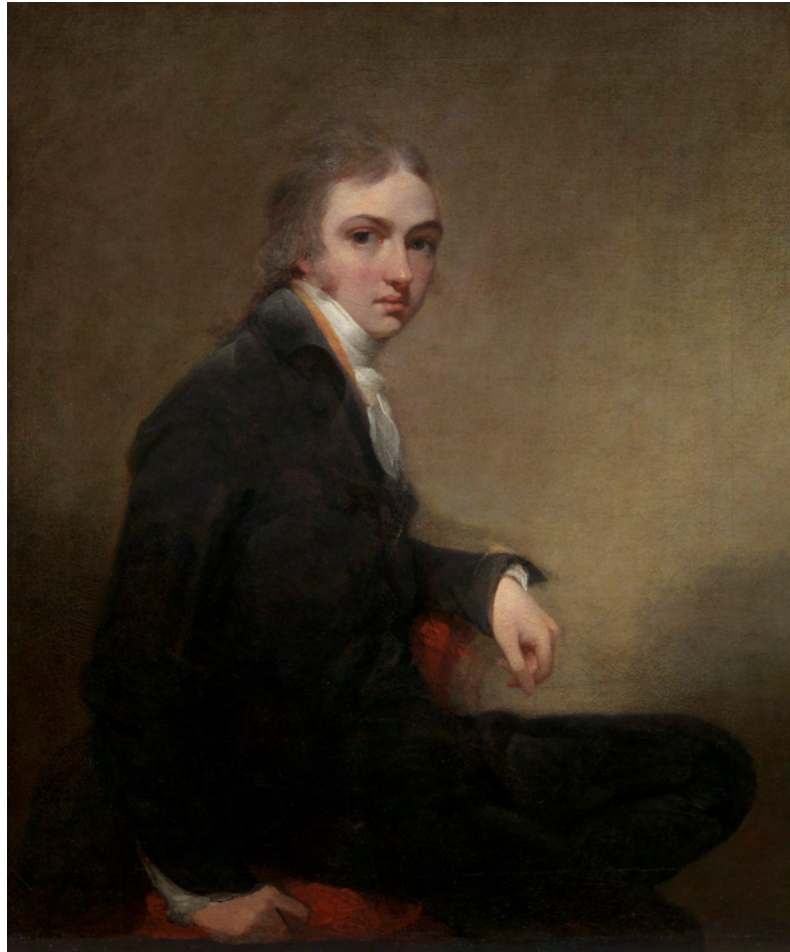
Abel Rous Dottin and Samuel Dottin (c. 1784)

(Bath, The Holburne Museum; Wright (2020), pp. 44-45)



Self-Portrait (c. 1787-8)

(Private Collection; Wright (2020), p. 51; Wikimedia Commons)



Self-Portrait (1787)

(Bath, Victoria Art Gallery)



Queen Charlotte (1789)

(London, National Gallery)



Elizabeth Farren (1790)

[actress; later
Countess of Derby]

(New York, The Metropolitan Museum
of Art)



Double Portrait of a Figure in Male and Female Attire (1792)

(Yale Center for British Art)

- **Susan Sloman writes: ‘A decade later, when he was well on the way to becoming a famous painter in London, Lawrence played games with a traced profile, turning the same outline into a languid young woman and a foppish young man.... These are probably sophisticated doodles made to entertain and amuse friends. In making them, his mind surely went back to childhood and his earnest efforts at profile portraiture.’**



Re-framing

- I take drawings to Edinburgh's Fine Art Society for high-quality re-mounting and re-framing by Susan Heys; near-contemporary Georgian gilt frame
- Inscribed labels ('T. Lawrence / 1780/ done in March - /10 ys. old. / in May'; Billiard Room label) now re-attached on backboard
- Good quality drawing papers; excellent condition
- Papers show (different) watermarks; of interest?

Watermark Similar to Profile Drawing's Paper

(Source: Ogierman, L, (2017) in BIBLIOTHECA NOSTRA. ŚLĄSKI KWARTALNIK NAUKOWY NR 1 (47), p. 92)

**Watermark on three-quarters-view drawing shows a fleur-de-lys diadem on a shield
Both styles very common on papers made in various countries**



Most Mysteries Still Unsolved

- **Why ‘hiding in plain sight’?**
- **Why mis-labelled?**
- **How, when, why did they get to SAC?**
- **Who was the sitter?**
- **Who owned them?**
- **How can we find answers?**
- **And...who made Lawrence’s drawing papers?**

Sources

- Artvee. 'Sir Thomas Lawrence' (<https://artvee.com/artist/sir-thomas-lawrence/>)
- Buchanan, B. 'The Great Bath Road, 1700-1830', History of Bath Research Group, *Bath History*, 4, 5
- Foskett, D. *A Dictionary of British Miniature Painters, Volumes I and II*, London, Faber and Faber Limited, 1972
- Garlick, K. 'Notes on Sir Thomas Lawrence', *The Burlington Magazine*, 93, 581, 1951, pp. 249-254
- Garlick, K. 'A Catalogue of the Paintings, Drawings and Pastels of Sir Thomas Lawrence', *The Walpole Society*, 39, 1962-1964
- Layard, G.S. (ed.) *Sir Thomas Lawrence's Letter-Bag*, London, George Allen, 1906
- Levey, M. *Sir Thomas Lawrence*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2005
- Levey, M. *Sir Thomas Lawrence 1769-1830*, London, National Portrait Gallery, 1979
- Lloyd, S. *Portrait Miniatures from the Daphne Foskett Collection*, Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 2003
- Lloyd, S. and Sloan, K. *The Intimate Portrait: Drawings, Miniatures and Pastels from Ramsay to Lawrence*, Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland, 2008
- Ogierman, L. 'Phenomenon of Pro Patria paper expansion', *Bibliotheca Nostra. Śląski Kwartalnik Naukowy*, nr 1, 2017, s. 90-97.
- Sloman, S. 'The "infant" drawings of Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830)', *British Art Journal*, 29, 1, 2020/21
- Sloman, S. 'Artists' Picture Rooms in Eighteenth-Century Bath' History of Bath Research Group, *Bath History*, 6, 8
- Wright, A. *Thomas Lawrence – Coming of Age 1780-1794*, Philip Wilson Publishers, 2020

Acknowledgements

- **I am greatly indebted to Susan Sloman, Amina Wright and Lucinda Lax for their advice and expert knowledge about Lawrence and the drawings; to the helpful staff of the Central Library, Edinburgh; to Susan Heys of the Fine Art Society; and to Joyce Campbell, John Young, Marilyn Jeffcoat, David Lyle, Glenys McLaren and Andy Jeffcoat of the Scottish Arts Club for their encouragement and assistance**

Some pictures shown here are taken from sources listed; for use in this presentation only

THE END

(C. Raab Fecit 2023)