

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BARBER, Rupert

Dublin 1719–1791

Barber was the son of a Dublin woollen-draper, also Rupert, of Werbergh Street (he leased premises from the Goldsmiths Guild from 1710); his mother Mary was a poet and friend of Swift and of Mrs Delany (*q.v.*). Barber was apprenticed in London to Arthur Pond (a friend of his mother) between 1735 and 1739 (Pond's accounts record his mother's first payment of £7 10s. per half year, as well as the subsequent payments). He is recorded in Bath in a letter to Swift of 3.XI.1736 by his mother, who says that he "is learning to paint" there, and "if he be in the least approved of, in all probability he may do very well at Bath; for I never yet saw a painter that came hither, fail of getting more business than he could do, let him be ever so indifferent." Nevertheless Barber returned to Dublin in 1742, when (in March) he married Bridget Wilson, "an agreeable young lady with a handsome fortune", and the niece of Dr Patrick Delany. They had at least two daughters (Emilia, born 1743; Catherine, 15 years later). He was taken up by Mrs Delany; she introduced him to sitters such as Lord Massarene and Lord Chesterfield, and provided him with a house within the grounds of Delville, her house near Dublin. Barber was recorded in London in 1748; again in Bath in 1752; in both Dublin and London in 1760, and in Dublin in 1770. He experimented in glass-making, and in 1753 was awarded a premium of £20 by the Dublin Society. In 1770 he appears to have made a substantial loss in a distillery business which he set up with "a very artful person".

Little is known of him after a letter to Mrs Delany of 1772 (some sources assume he died in that year). He is mentioned in her will, made 1778, as having borrowed £100 from her without repayment; in the will Mrs Delany left the debt to her husband's niece, Bridget Barber, Rupert's wife. He witnessed a property transaction in Granby Row in 1784 (Irish deeds, no. 241326). Although the date of his death has hitherto (here published 2021) been unknown, he must be the "Rupert Barber, merchant" whose will was proved in 1791; the executors, whose names are found in the Court of Exchequer bill book for 1793, were "Bridget Barber Widow & Alexander Lynacre Esq".

Barber was principally an enamellist. A miniature of "Signora Rosalba" was in the Chauncey collection (London, Greenwood, 7.v.1790, Lot 63 part); it is likely to relate to the copy of the Accademia self-portrait made by Mrs Delany [J.263.102](#).

Some oil portraits by him inspired a few verses of praise in *Faulkner's journal*, II.1750. The striking image of his mother's famous correspondent is the only known pastel, although there are several versions of it, some incorporating surrounding oak leaves and books derived from A. Miller's 1744 engraving of Francis Bindon's full-length painting. Swift's face seems too young to have been taken from life by Barber, although its Roman cameo depiction may have been suggested by an onyx finger ring that belonged to Swift (now in the British

Museum, 1949,0503.1). The striking image may have influenced Zoffany's portrait of Garrick (Ashmolean Museum), and possibly Liotard's 1754 curious pastel of Sir Everard Fawkener (also perhaps inspired by Natter's cameo). Another portrait of Swift is in watercolour, apparently after Bindon.

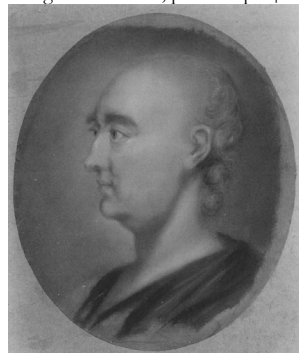
There is some confusion with his younger brother Lucius (1720–1767), who was also an enamellist working in Dublin and, between 1763 and 1766, London. Rupert's son was a pupil of West (*q.v.*) at the Dublin Society school where he encountered John O'Keeffe, who noted in his *Recollections* (1826, I, p. 212) that "At the house of Colombine Lee Carey, in Merion Square, I saw some most capital crayons-drawings, done by Barber." (Colombine Lee Carré was appointed secretary to the Dublin Society in 1762.)

Bibliography

Crookshank & Glin 2002; *Dictionary of Irish biography*; Dublin 1969; Sir Frederick Falkiner, "Of the portraits...of Swift...", in Temple Scott, ed., *The prose works of Jonathan Swift, DD*, London, 1908, XII, pp. 39f, 53f; Figgis 2014; Robert Folkenflik, "The Rupert Barber portraits of Jonathan Swift", in Brian A. Connery, *Representations of Swift*, Newark, 2002, pp. 117ff; Foskett 1987; João Fróes, ed., *Remarks on the life and writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift*, 2000, p. 31; Hofstetter 2008; Ingamells 2009b; Lippincott 1983, pp. 78, 95; Marks 2001; William Monck Mason, *The history and antiquities of the collegiate and cathedral church of St Patrick...*, Dublin, 1820, p. 444; *Memoirs of Laetitia Pilkington*, ed. A. C. Elias, Athens, Georgia, 1997, pp. 391ff; Saur; Sloman 2002, p. 200; Strickland 1913; Irish church records

Pastels

[J.1246.101](#) Jonathan SWIFT (1667–1745), Dean of St Patrick's, Dublin, pstl, c.1745 (desc.: Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, novelist; his nephew, T. P. Le Fanu, Abington, Bray 1913). Lit.: William Monck Mason, *The history and antiquities of the collegiate and cathedral church of St Patrick...*, Dublin, 1820, p. 445; Marks 2001, p. 46 repr.; Ingamells 2009b, p. 278 repr. ϕ



~grav. Benjamin Wilson 1751, for Lord Orrery, *Remarks on the life and writings of Dr Jonathan Swift*, 1751, frontispiece

~cop., pnt. (Slane Castle, Adams, 18–19.X.2013, Lot 746, as by Barber)

~grav.: Simon-François Ravenet, 1752

[J.1246.105](#) ~repl., with added books and oak leaves, pstl/ppr, 59x48.9 (Bryn Mawr College.

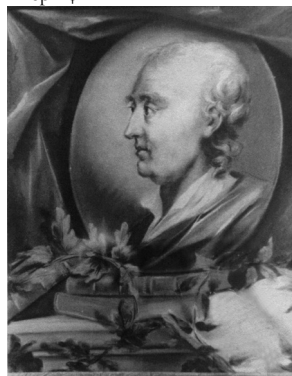
Dr Richard Mead, Great Ormond Street, London; London, Langford & Baker, 20.III.1754, Lot 38, 4 gns. Mrs T. G. Winter 1936; Conaghi; acqu. 1941 Mrs Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. Pickering & Chatto; Charles Sessier Inc; acqu. 1958 Mary K. Woodworth; don 1960). Lit.: Marks 2001, pp. 35, 77 repr.; Brian A. Connery, *Representations of Swift*, Newark, n.d. [2002], repr. cvr; Crookshank & Glin 2002, repr.; Figgis 2014, p. 162 repr. ϕ



[J.1246.107](#) ~repl., pstl/ppr, 58.5x40, inscr. with lines from Swift's poem, *Journal of a modern lady in a letter to a person of quality*, 1728 (London, NPG 6961. [Hector James Charles] Toler-Aylward [(1839–1918), antiquary], Shankill Castle, Paulstown, Co. Kilkenny. Roy Davids; London, Bonhams, 8.v.2013, Lot 450 repr., est. £10–15,000, £13,750) ϕ



[J.1246.109](#) ~version, with collar, pstl, 58.5x48 (Nathan; London, Christie's, 20.IV.1928, Lot 4 repr., as by John Russell, 22 gns; Royds. Professor & Mrs Robert Folkenflik, University of California at Irvine). Lit.: Marks 2001, p. 48 repr. ϕ



- J.1246.111 ~cop. Sir Thomas Alfred Jones (1823/24–1893), pstl (London, V&A, P.66). Lit.: Falkner 1908, repr. opp. p. 54
- J.1246.112 Jonathan SWIFT, [=?Toler-Aylward version above or a/r Bindon], pstl, watercolour/ppr, 33x23 (Dr [Edward] Hill [(1741–1830), regius professor of physic at the University of Dublin, bibliophile], Dublin, 1820; desc.: his great-granddaughter, Miss Curtis, of Clodagh Lodge, Portlaw, Co. Waterford, by 1904; sold, London, 1913). Exh.: Irish National Portrait Gallery 1904. Lit.: Sir Walter Scott, *Memoir of Swift*, 1814, “one of the best likenesses in existence...by Bindon”; Monck Mason 1820, “There is a small portrait of Swift, done in crayons if I recollect right, in the possession of Dr Hill, of Dublin; Mr Scott says it was executed by Bindon, but I apprehend he is mistaken, as Bindon did not work with those materials.”
~~?repl., miniature
~?repl., min. (Duke of Buccleuch)
- J.1246.113 ~=?one of above, pstl (?Dublin, NGI, 1937; not traced 2017). Exh.: Dublin 1937, no. 37 n.r., as in NGI