

# Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

## Online edition

### **BENWELL, Mary, Mrs Robert Codd**

1739– London p.1800

Little is known of Mary Benwell's origins or training. She is said to have been a pupil of John Russell, who was her junior by six years, but was more probably taught by Katherine Read (*q.v.*), whose style is reflected in the prints that are all that remain of her early work. She exhibited prolifically at the Society of Artists from 1762 to 1774 and again in 1791 and at the Royal Academy from 1775 to 1791, although she did not become an academician. She was however made an honorary member of the Society of Artists in 1769 (a response to the RA's appointment of Angelica Kauffman and Mary Moser), along with pastellists Katharine Read and Mary Black (*qq.v.*) and painters Mrs Grace and Miss Gardiner. According to Edwards, she "supported a respectable character as a painter of portraits in oil colours, crayons and miniature". Her address was given as Warwick Court in Warwick Lane; 10 Duke Street, Portland Place, 1784–87 and as 49 Charlotte Street in 1791; from 1784 she appears as Mrs Code (some sources have Coode or Coade): As Edwards explained, she married an army officer for whom she purchased a superior commission, and that he was subsequently stationed in Gibraltar. In fact the marriage took place at Christchurch, Newgate, London, on 31.VIII.1782, and her husband was Robert Codd, not Code, a captain in the 59<sup>th</sup> regiment of foot. He had been recently promoted from lieutenant to captain-lieutenant (3.XI.1781). It appears that soon after his regiment's arrival in Gibraltar (8.X.1782) during the siege he was shot while in his boat, without any apparent reason, and that "full satisfaction was however given by the Spanish authorities." He evidently survived, and was back in London after the siege. In 1785 he acted as surety for the portrait painter Francesco Renaldi, who required the East India Company's permission to travel to Bengal. Codd appears in the army lists between 1791 and 1805 he as a captain of the 98<sup>th</sup> Foot on half-pay, the regiment having been disbanded in 1785, after service in India. According to Edwards she was living in retirement in Paddington in 1800.

She worked in miniature and oils as well as in pastel (a miniature self-portrait, signed and dated Maria Benwell 1779, was presented to the Uffizi by the polymath Giovanni Fabbroni in 1780). Her celebrity was indicated by a mezzotint of Miss Benwell by Henry Kingsbury published in 1779 (a later portrait by Hoppner engraved as Mrs Benwell may not be of the same sitter). Her work is occasionally signed with her initials MB in monogram. Benwell's image of Queen Charlotte became celebrated through the Houston engraving. Many of the works at the London exhibitions are merely described as "portrait of a lady; in crayons" (one of these was identified as of the Queen in an annotated copy) and, while some are no doubt re-exhibited, they are grouped together below indiscriminately. The typical variations are the addition of either a greyhound or a dove, and

some of the portraits appear to be repeated in miniature.

#### **Bibliography**

Bénézit; Edwards 1808, p. 95; Foskett 1987; Florence 1971, p. 133; *Lady's magazine*, 1782, p. 504; Oxford DNB; Pilkington 1852; Saur; Sée 1911; John Spilsbury, *A journal of the Siege of Gibraltar, 1779–1783*, 1908, p. 112; Waterhouse 1981; Whitley 1928, p. 238

#### **Pastels**

Miss Rose BERRY, a country girl with a basket of eggs, pstl, 71x58, Royal Academy 1786, no. 324 (Mr Johnson 1911. London, Christie's, 13.VII.1928, 75 gns; Pawsey & Paine). Exh.: Paris 1911, no. 5. Lit.: Sée 1911, p. 203 repr. **Ⓢ**



?Lady BURRELL, née Sophia Raymond (1750–1802), writer, half-length, in white dress, pstl, 66x53.5 (Westhorpe Hall, Southwell, Nottinghamshire; London, Christie's, 19.XI.1985, Lot 196 n.r., with St Cecilia, est. £300–400, £702). Exh.: London 1986, no. 30 repr. **Ⓢ**



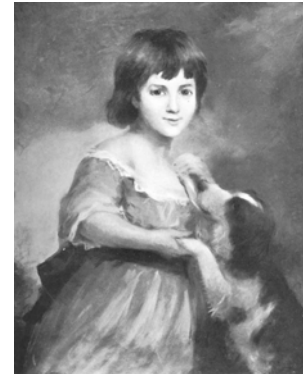
Queen CHARLOTTE (1744–1818), crayons, Society of Artists, 1772, no. 4

~grav.: Richard Houston, head and shoulders, in an ermine-trimmed cloak, ropes of pearls, jewelled choker and earrings, a lace veil over the hair, c.1770

?Queen CHARLOTTE

~grav.: Charles Spooner, as The studious fair c.1765

Miss Jane HOWARD, 68x55 ov., Royal Academy 1787, no. 427 (Mr Howard 1911). Exh.: Paris 1911, no. 6. Lit.: Sée 1911, repr. p. 197 **Ⓢ**



Miss LADBROOK, Society of Artists 1765, no. 7  
Countess of LINCOLN, née Lady Frances Seymour-Conway (1751–1820), crayons, Royal Academy 1784, no. 46  
Child playing with a greyhound, crayons, Society of Artists 1769, no. 6  
Boy, with his hand on a greyhound, crayons, Society of Artists 1770, no. 15  
Child with a dove, crayons, Society of Artists, 1772, no. 42  
Young gentleman, crayons, Royal Academy 1782, no. 108  
Lady, crayons, Society of Artists 1763, nos. 10, 11; 1764, nos. 8, 9; 1765, no. 7; 1770, no. 14; 1773, no. 8; 1774, nos. 37, 38; 1791, no. 43  
Young lady, crayons, Society of Artists 1766, nos. 11, 12; 1767, no. 9; 1771, nos. 14, 15; Royal Academy 1775, no. 22  
Young lady, with a lamb before her and a basket of flowers on her arm, crayons, Society of Artists 1768, no. 6  
Young lady, with a greyhound, crayons, Society of Artists 1773, no. 10  
Boy, with his hand on a greyhound, crayons, Society of Artists 1770, no. 15  
Lady in black, crayons, Society of Artists 1769, no. 5  
Lady, crayons, Royal Academy 1776, no. 22  
Lady, crayons, Royal Academy 1777, no. 22  
Young lady, crayons, Royal Academy 1778, no. 15  
Two young ladies, crayons, Royal Academy 1781, no. 92  
Venus nursing Love, crayons, Royal Academy 1778, no. 16  
Madonna and child, crayons, Royal Academy 1779, no. 15  
Portrait in the character of St Caecilia, crayons, Royal Academy 1780, no. 323  
=?Head of Saint Cecilia, crayons, 38x29.5 (Westhorpe Hall, Southwell, Nottinghamshire; London, Christie's, 19.XI.1985, Lot 196 n.r., with Lady Burrell, est. £300–400, £702. London, Bonhams, 25.XI.2003, Lot 129 n.r., £150)  
Meekness, crayons, Royal Academy 1781, no. 120  
Venus with doves, crayons, Society of Artists 1791, no. 42  
Girl making lace, crayons, Society of Artists 1791, no. 44  
Four heads, Society of Artists 1762, no. 4  
Lady and child, crayons, Society of Artists 1772, no. 41

