

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BIROCHON, Guillaume

fl. The Hague 1696–1726

There remains considerable uncertainty about the biographical details of Birochon. He appears to have been Guillaume Birochon, fils de Guillaume Birochon, Brodeur du roy, who was parrain at a baptism in Paris in 1689 (of Guillaume-Joseph Mathieu, dit Dupuis, officier de Mademoiselle). He was probably either the son or grandson of the maître brodeur of the same name, originating in Lyon, the husband of Ennemonde Maritain, active in Grenoble in 1627, and died c.1672. In 1632 he sold five paintings, “les quatre elements et la vertu” for 300 livres to a printer in Lyon (E. Maignien, *Les artistes grenoblois*, 1887, p. 52). In 1635 this Birochon received a sum of money from an Anne de La Croix, veuve du seigneur de Simiane in connection with her late husband’s funeral. He had a son, Barthélemy, also a maître brodeur, who married a Jeanne Marquet in 1640 – possibly the artist’s father or uncle. It seems likely that the artist was born in Grenoble c.1650.

The pastellist must be the Guillaume Birochon, who, with his sister Elisabeth, had left France “for religious reasons”; professing as Protestants, their half-brother, Louis de La Croix (–1731), conseiller du roi, contrôleur des rentes, trésorier de Mademoiselle de La Roche-sur-Yon, obtained a warrant for possession of their goods in the French courts on 9.VII.1709. Apparently Birochon later renounced Protestantism and returned to claim his property c.1711, but La Croix again successfully obtained judgment against him (AN Y4224, 13.IV.1712). (This Louis de La Croix, who married Elisabeth Le Doull and died 1731, does not seem to have been related to Mme de Simiane, a member of the La Croix de Pisançon family in Grenoble.)

The earliest mention of the artist is as a member of the Haagsche Teekenacademie, or Accademie van de Teycken-Const in The Hague (founded in 1682): according to their archives, Birochon was a pupil of the Huguenot painter Jean-Henri, or Jan Henrik, Brandon 1696–98 (Brandon also taught Hendrik van Limborgh, *q.v.*). A Susanna Birochon from The Hague married a merchant, Jan Garach, in Leeuwarden in 1712.

Various sources mention Birochon’s involvement with the opera in The Hague from before 1706 (he or his father seem to have lent money and supplied costumes, and was accused of financial irregularities, together with his wife) to around 1718 (when he was granted a three year monopoly on the production of French plays). The clearest account is given in the *Mémoires... de M. Duliz*:

Le Sieur Birochon peintre, & Brodeur, exerçant une commission à Auxerre, se sentit épris des charmes d’une Religieuse, avec laquelle il passa en Hollande, où il l’épousa. Ce fut son pere de la même profession réfugié à la Haye qui avança à Deschaliers tous les habits de theatre, & qui dans la suite devint propriétaire en partie du lieu. Le Sieur Birochon en herita après sa mort, & des effets que, faute de payement, Deschaliers fut contraint d’abandonner.

(The story of the elopement with a nun is confirmed by decision in parlement of

17.VII.1711, granting a “prise de corps” in response to a complaint by Jean Marie, grand pénitencier of the cathedral of Auxerre against Sœur de Varennes, religieuse professe de l’Abbaye royale des Isles, Birochon, the abbess and Sœur Marie-Therese Andry, dite de Sainte-Marie, also a religieuse professe.)

It seems that Duliz lent Birochon money to reopen the theatre, particularly wishing to advance the actress Mlle Rochois. Birochon was also dependent on the financial support of a M. Baude who favoured a rival actress, Mlle Vanderlinde. In the ensuing dispute, Birochon was set upon by armed thugs acting for a powerful government minister who had the Birochon enterprise shut down. Burdened by debts, Birochon sold his licence to Mme Fondpré.

Many of the diplomats in The Hague were involved in supporting one or other theatre. Among them was Beretti-Landi, the Spanish ambassador to Switzerland (1703–16), The Hague (1716–21) and Brussels, who took up the pastellist and brought him in 1724 to the conference at Cambrai which had been running from 1721 in an attempt to settle the differences between Spain and Austria. The ambassador and his painter stayed in Cambrai for a year, until the conference ended in 1725. Here among the leisure activities, portrait painting vied with versification from Voltaire. Birochon travelled to Brussels with Beretti-Landi, who died suddenly in .VI.1726, and was buried in the church of the Récollets. Birochon returned to The Hague, where his wife was still living. Beretti-Landi’s posthumous sale took place in The Hague (according to Lugt; Pinchart has Brussels), 30.VII.1726, and included (as well as Birochon’s own portrait of him) a number of pictures restored by Birochon. These details emerge from the papers concerning legal proceedings which Birochon took against the mortuary officials for non-payment of his fees.

It has been suggested that the group of pastels which came on the market in 1797 were commissioned by Beretti-Landi, and bought at the 1726 sale by Lord Polwarth, who became 2nd Earl of Marchmont in 1724, and was one of the British representatives at Cambrai. In fact the discovery (published here in 2023) of the invoice for the series of “portraits in pastelle at Redbraes” makes it clear that the series was commissioned by Polwarth as originally assumed. He is known to have been interested in acquiring portraits of his contemporaries (for example a portrait of the Queen of Denmark was dispatched from Copenhagen via Hamburg in 1724, according to his papers, which however do not mention the Birochon series). The Earl returned home to Marchmont with “a curious memento of his labours in the form of a series of pastel portraits representing the envoys of the different countries” (Warender 1894; they descended via his son-in-law Sir William Purves to Sir John Hume-Campbell, who sold the Marchmont estates in 1912).

The Redbraes invoice is for some 20 pastels. Seventeen are first listed, each priced at 50 livres tournois, a total of 850^l; payment on account of

22 louis of 16^l amounting to 352^l left a balance due of 498^l. A further three pastels are listed below in the invoice, without prices (perhaps gratuities or afterthoughts). Three more, including that of Marchmont himself, were in the group of 23 that appeared for sale in 1797; no doubt these had already been commissioned and paid for by the time of the invoice.

The Marchmont series remains a remarkable testimony to the conference at Cambrai, where limited diplomatic progress was achieved, and the delegates probably welcomed portraiture as a diversion. Birochon was influenced by the baroque sobriety of Vivien (as well as by Brandon, to judge from his 1701 painting of Jacques Vulson de Saint Maurice at Kasteel Zypendaal) as well as by the smaller, more intimate format of Carriera’s compositions. Heads are often attached to bodies in improbable combinations, reminiscent of English 17th century portraiture. Nevertheless these portraits have a liveliness and distinctive character; colours are strong and vivid, and used with no hint of the limited palette (although the same purple, pink, ochre and blue recur). The dynamic and varied compositions include several which are repeated.

Of the pastels in Lord Marchmont’s collection, only that of Beretti is signed. They are uniformly framed, probably locally, and divide into two groups: some (Beretti-Landi, the Whitworths, Vincenti etc.) show a softer, less polished finish, while those in the other group have characteristic elongated eyes, tightly drawn mouths and luminous flesh tones. This has led to speculation that the works are not all by one hand, and, in view of the reports that Maurice-Quentin de La Tour was in Cambrai at the time, it has plausibly been suggested that he is responsible for one group – presumably the second. With the possible exception of the Saint-Quentin preparation for Voltaire, there is nothing in La Tour’s secure œuvre (which starts in the mid-1730s) to link him stylistically with the Marchmont series. (Distinctions can be made from several apparently similar pastels: among them the pastels of the comte de Maniss and of “Marivaux”, *v. Ec. fr.*) In any case, the discovery of the invoice for twenty pastels at a stage when part only had been paid makes it highly improbable that more than one artist was involved.

Birochon would not be the first artist to work in several styles, and the confusing differences may have arisen because the artist had fewer sittings in some cases, while other pastels may be drawn from existing portraits rather than taken from life. Corsini relates to a pastel (by a different hand) in the Palazzo Corsini which has been (not wholly convincingly) attributed to Tempesti (*q.v.*); he is shown however wearing only a cuirass rather than the full armour of a capitano della guardia dei trabanti. The unknown sitter in a red mantle looks as though he derives from a lost portrait by Rosalba; the portrait of Beretti-Landi, which is dated 1725, corresponds to an engraving of 1720 (which might itself derive from an earlier Birochon portrait, perhaps the one in the 1726 sale if that is not

Marchmont's); the Tyninghame painting of Marchmont himself, although not as accomplished as the pastel, may indicate a common source which served as a model: this would explain the angry nocturnal sky background (varied backgrounds in the others may have similar explanations).

Some of the reproductions were incorrectly captioned in various publications, including Jeffares 2006 and the 1979 sale catalogue, where only eight of the 23 were reproduced. To avoid confusion pastels grouped in a single lot in that sale are here assigned suffixes a–d. Apart from the possible duplicate Berretti-Landi pastel, all have the same provenance, at Redbraes and by descent to 1912 when purchased by James Swinton and later auctioned in 1979.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Edwin Buijsen, *Haagse schilders in de Gouden Eeuw*, 1998, p. 287; Burns 1997; Christie's 1979 catalogue; [Barthélemy Hus, dit Desforges], *Mémoires, anecdotes pour servir à l'histoire de M. Dulz*, 1739; Michel du Perray, *Notes et observations sur l'Edit de MDCLXXXV*, 1723, II, pp. 327ff; Lapauze 1919, pp. 12f; La Tour 2004a, pp. 67ff; Maskill 2004, p. 60; Obreen 1877–1890, IV, p. 167, 172; Alexandre Pinchart, "Archives des arts...", *Messenger des sciences historiques de Belgique*, 1868, pp. 349f; Jean-Jacques Quesnot de la Chénée, *L'Opéra de La Haye*, Cologne, 1706; Pierre Rosenberg, in Debré 1991; Saur; Margaret Warrender, *Marchmont and the Humes of Polwarth*, Edinburgh, 1894, p. 85; "Note of portraits in pastelle at Redbraes", National Records of Scotland, Papers of the family of Hume of Polwarth, ref. GD158/2482

Pastels

J.155.101 Lorenzo Verzuso BERETTI-LANDI, marchese di Castelletto Scazzoso, comte de Cereto, marquis de Saint-Philippe (1655–1725a), secrétaire d'État et premier ministre des Gonzaga de Mantua, puis à Venise, Pologne, Allemagne et Rome, ambassadeur de Philippe V en Suisse 1703–16, puis en Hollande 1716–21, de l'Académie de Crusca, chev. Sant'Iago 1702, collectionneur (the subject; The Hague, 30.VII.1726)

J.155.102 =/?repl., pstl, 53.5x43, sd 1725 (comm. Lord Polwarth, later Earl of Marchmont (1675–1724); desc. at Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 151a, £480. Heidelberg, Kunstantiquariat Arno Winterberg, Auktion 22, 10–11.IV.1981, Lot 957, est. DM 3200, b/i). Lit.: Jeffares 2006, p. 59C, as of San-Estevan Φ



Photo courtesy Christie's

~grav. Picart 1720, in reverse

~grav. anonyme, "Laurentius Verzuso/Marquais de Beretti Landi./Königl. Spansicher Ambassadeur im Haag", p.1716

J.155.107 Le chevalier de Camilly, ministre de Malte à Cambrai [Pierre BLOUET DE CAMILLY (1666–1753), chevalier de Malte, grand bailli de l'ordre de Malte, grand-croix de Saint-Louis, ambassadeur au congrès de Bade en 1714, à celui de Cambrai en 1723, premier vice-amiral de France], pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 152b, as Birochon; London, 5.VII.1983, Lot 18, attr. La Tour)

J.155.108 Abate marchese Neri Maria CORSINI (1685–1770), cardinal 1730, collector, in a cuirass, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 152a, one repr., as Birochon; London, Christie's, 5.VII.1983, Lot 18, attr. La Tour, £750) Φ



Photo courtesy Christie's

~pstl, with full armour (Palazzo Corsini, Florence), v. Tempesti

J.155.112 Il conte Annibale de MAFFEI (1666–1735), patrizio di Modena, gentilhomme de la chambre du roi de Sardaigne, vice-roi de Sicile 1714, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 155a; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1981, Lot 252 part n.r.; London, Christie's, 4.VII.1984, Lot 269 part n.r., all as Birochon; London, Christie's, 3.VII.1990, Lot 247 part n.r., attr. La Tour, est. £200–400)

J.155.113 Alexander Hume, Earl of MARCHMONT (1675–1740), KT 1725, in armour, wearing the ribbon of the Thistle [?faded from green], pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 157d n.r.; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1981, Lot 252 part n.r.; London, Christie's, 4.VII.1984, Lot 269 part n.r., all as Birochon; London, Christie's, 3.VII.1990, Lot 247 part n.r., attr. La Tour, est. £200–400, all as sitter unknown; English PC 2011). Lit.: Ford 1989, p. 118 n.r., as by La Tour; Jeffares 2006, p. 60Bii, as by Birochon, unidentified; Francis Russell, "Dictionary of pastellists before 1800", *Country life*, 8.VI.2006, p. 143 n.r., identified as Marchmont Φσ



Photo courtesy owner

~pnt., 75x62, in painted ov., inscr. *verso* with identity (desc.: John George Baillie-Hamilton, Earl of Haddington, Tyninghame, East Lothian; Sotheby's, 28–29.IX.1987, Lot 546 repr., attr. John Alexander)

J.155.117 L'abate [Giovanni Battista] Paretty [PARETI, of Genoa, envoy of the duca di Guastalla to Cambrai, resident of the duca di Modena in Madrid and London 1727–46, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 156a, with Vincenty. London, 8.VII.1980, £420, with Vincenti English PC 2011) Φσ



Photo courtesy owner

J.155.12 [Johann Christoph] Penterrieder [von PENDTERRIEDTER Freiherr auf Adelshausen (1678–1728), Reichshofrat], envoyé de l'Empereur, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 153a) Φ



Photo courtesy Christie's

J.155.122 [=J.155.15] [Mr RENNELL], officer in blue uniform, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 157b repr., unidentified; English PC 2011). Lit.: La Tour 2004a, p. 69, relates to miniature, fig. 9 (Saint-Quentin, musée Lécuyer, inv. LT 90) [?]; the resemblance coincidental; here identified as Rennell by a process of elimination] Φδσ



Photo courtesy owner

J.155.123 Conrad Alexandre, comte de ROTTEMBOURG [Rothenbourg] (1684–1735), plénipotentiaire français à Cambrai, mécène de Chardin, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43, with study of a lady, *verso* (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 155b n.r.; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1981, Lot 252 part n.r.; London, Christie's, 4.VII.1984, Lot 269 part n.r., all as Birochon; London, Christie's, 3.VII.1990, Lot 247 part n.r., attr. La Tour, est. £200–400; English PC 2006). Lit.: Rosenberg 1983c, p. 68, fig. 42, as sd 1723; Jeffares 2006, p. 60Bi, unidentified Φσ



Photo courtesy Christie's

J.155.126 Dominic-Claude Barberie de SAINT-CONTEST (1668–1730), conseiller d'État, plénipotentiaire à Cambrai, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 154a; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1981, Lot 253 part n.r.; London, Christie's, 4.VII.1984, Lot 269 n.r., all as Birochon; London, Christie's, 3.VII.1990, Lot 247 part n.r., attr. La Tour, est. £200–400)

J.155.127 Mme de SAINT-CONTEST, née Marie-Françoise Le Maistre (1670–1736), pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 154b; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1981, Lot 253 part n.r.; London, Christie's, 4.VII.1984, Lot 269 part n.r., all as Birochon; London, Christie's, 3.VII.1990, Lot 247 part n.r., attr. La Tour, est. £200–400)

J.155.128 Le comte de San-Estevan-Del-Puerto [Manuel de Benavides y Aragón, X conde y 1. duque de SANTISTEBAN DEL PUERTO, 5. marqués de Solera (1682–1748), plénipotentiaire de Philippe V à Cambrai, grande de España, chev. Saint-Esprit 1729], pstl/ppr, 53.5x43, inscr. *verso* "Mr. Comte de Saint Estevan" (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 151b, £480. Heidelberg, Kunstantiquariat Arno Winterberg, 17.X.1980, Lot 723, est. DM1600, DM1500). Lit.: Jeffares 2006, p. 59Bi, as of Beretti-Landi Φ



Photo courtesy Christie's

J.155.131 Ottavio, conte di SANSEVERINO D'ARAGONA (–1725), ministre de Parme, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 152a, as Birochon; London, 5.VII.1983, Lot 18, attr. La Tour)

J.155.132 Le comte de Spylleberg [Pomponius Graf von SPILLENBERG], representative of the duca di Guastalla at Cambrai, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 155a n.r.; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1981, Lot 252 part n.r.; London, Christie's, 4.VII.1984, Lot 269 part n.r., all as Birochon; London, Christie's, 3.VII.1990, Lot 247 part n.r., attr. La Tour, est. £200–400)

J.155.133 Robert SUTTON of Scofton (1699–1776), nephew of Sir Robert Sutton (1671–1746), KB, diplomat, secretary to the British Embassy at Cambrai, pstl/ppr, 54.0x43.5, c.1724 (London, NPG 5419. Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 150c, with Lord and Lady Whitworth, £650; Martin Edwards, Ludlow; acqu. 1981). Lit.: Ford 1989, p. 118 n.r., as by La Tour; Ingamells 2009b Φσ



Photo courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London

J.155.134 [olim J.155.154] Mrs Robert SUTTON, née Mary Levinz (1703–1778), dau. of William Levinz of Grove, Nottinghamshire, dame en robe bleue, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 157c n.r., as Birochon, unidentified; English PC 2011) φδσ



Photo courtesy owner

J.155.136 M. Vincenti [Giovanni Maria VINCENTI (1671–1746), residente veneto, cancellier grande 1726], pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 156b n.r. London, 8.VII.1980, £420, with abbé Paretti; English PC 2011) φσ



Photo courtesy owner

J.155.139 Charles, Baron WHITWORTH (1675–1725), diplomat, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (London, NPG 5417. Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 150a repr., with Lady Whitworth and Sutton, £650; Martin Edwards, Ludlow; acqu. 1981). Lit.: Ford 1989, p. 118 n.r., as by La Tour; Ernst Schütz, *Die Gesandtschaft Grossbritanniens am immerwährenden Reichstag zu Regensburg...*, 2007, fig. 1 Φσ



Zoomify

Photo courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London

J.155.142 Lady WHITWORTH, née Magdalena Jacoba de Sallengre, comtesse de Vaulgramont (–1734), pstl/ppr, 54.6x43.5, c.1724 (London, NPG 5418. Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 150b n.r., with Whitworth and Sutton, £650; Martin Edwards, Ludlow; acqu. 1981). Exh.: London 2012a. Lit.: Ford 1989, p. 118 n.r., as by La Tour; Burns 1997, p. 12 repr. Φσ



Photo courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London

J.155.145 Leopold Victorin Reichsgraf von WINDISCH-GRAETZ, Baron Waldstein u. Imthal (1686–1746), envoyé de l'Empereur, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 153b n.r.)

J.155.146 Reichsgräfin von WINDISCH-GRAETZ, née Marie Ernestine zu Strassoldo (1695–1766), pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont;

sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 153a n.r.)

J.155.147 Homme en manteau rouge, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 157a repr., as a/r Carriera; English PC 2011)



Photo courtesy owner

J.155.148 Man in armour, pstl/ppr, 53.5x43 (Lord Marchmont; sold 1912; James Swinton; London, Christie's, 11.XII.1979, Lot 155d n.r.)