

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

POPE, Alexander

Cork 1763 – London 22.III.1835

Pope was a member of a family of artists including his father, Thomas Pope, his uncle, Justin Pope-Stevens, and his elder brother Somerville, who later adopted his uncle's surname. The standard sources all suggest that Pope was born in Cork in 1763, but there are a number of difficulties with this date: it makes it improbable for him to have been trained by Hugh Douglas Hamilton as tradition and eye suggest; it implies an unlikely age gap with his first wife, who would have been more than twice his age when they married; and it is contradicted by the earliest biographer (Pryse Lockhart Gordon, writing in 1830), who indicates that in late 1778 he had recently "come of age", which would usually have referred to the age of 25. A simple misreading of 1753 for 1763 is possible; but Gordon at the time was himself only 18, and may have regarded a companion of nearly 16 as mature.

Pope moved to Dublin early. From 1776 he was enrolled at the Dublin Society school as a pupil of West. He exhibited drawings and crayons at the Society of Artists in William Street, Dublin in 1777 and again (from 29 Bolton Street) 1780. In 1778 he was in Cork, charging an Irish guinea (£1 2s. 9d) for crayon portraits; he executed a series of these pastels of the officers of the 67th regiment stationed there (between 1775 and 1785), under the patronage of Charles Crosbie, lieutenant-colonel from 1778. They were "more gaudy than nature, and generally *beaux idéal* rather than *portraits*" according to Gordon 1830. If as is reported he was a pupil of Hamilton, he must have been in London at some stage before Hamilton left for Italy in 1779.

On 9.VIII.1785 in Dublin Pope married the actress Elizabeth Younge (1744–1797). Himself a talented actor, he played at Covent Garden from 1785. His success was such that he took up acting professionally, appearing in tragic roles at Drury Lane and the Haymarket, while continuing to send work as an honorary exhibitor at the Royal Academy between 1785 and 1821, from 5 Half-Moon Street (1791) etc. However, on 14.I.1791 the *Morning post* reported that—

The encouragement which Mr Pope's talents have secured him in the line of Portrait-Painting in Crayons, has confirmed the loss which the Stage must sustain by his absence.

On 24.I.1798, less than a year after the death of his first wife, he married another actress, Maria Ann Campion (1775–1803) in London, at St George's, Hanover Square. In the same church, on 25.VI.1807 he married his third wife, Clara Maria Leigh (1767–1838), the widow of Francis Wheatley (*q.v.*); she was also an artist, exhibiting a portrait of the singer Catalani at the Royal Academy in 1812.

Pope's pastel portraits are certainly influenced by Hamilton's rapid technique, but his figures tend to have disproportionately large heads, attenuated bodies and stylised, rosebud mouths (reminiscent of West and found also in Gardner's work) and he often adds natural sky backgrounds and shows heads resting on hands.

Most distinctive however is his use of a black chalk hatched grid to model faces, and the free use of such chalk in hair. According to J. T. Smith, keeper of prints and drawings at the British Museum, he produced "some excellent portraits in crayons, of persons of the first fashion, many of them little inferior in every respect to those of the celebrated Francis Cotes". Pope also worked in miniature, and after c.1800 almost exclusively made full-length watercolours in the mode made popular by Henry Edridge. His portrait of Grattan, which was engraved, was well known.

A group of watercolours, mostly nineteenth century, was in the Xavier Haas sale; New York, Anderson, 13–14.I.1927, Lots 197–205.

Bibliography

Bénézit; Breeze 1985; Crookshank 1969; Crookshank & Glin 1978; Crookshank & Glin 1994; Dublin 1969; Figgis 2014; Foskett 1987; Pryse Lockhart Gordon, *Personal memoirs*, London, 1830, I, pp. 323–30; part repr. in *Dramatic magazine*, 1830, II, pp. 368–70; Oxford DNB; Schildlof 1964; Sée 1919b; John Thomas Smith, *A book for a rainy day*, 3rd ed., London, 1861, p. 152; Strickland 1913; Waterhouse 1981

Salon critiques

Anon., "Exhibition of the Royal Academy", *Universal daily register*, 5–7.V.1785, p. 2:

8. Portrait of a Clergyman, whole length, By Russell. Charcoal drapery, and snuff coloured back ground, the dog stands like a gentleman, but the master like a puppy.

Anon., "Royal Academy", *Whitehall evening post*, 10.V.1787:

No. 119. *A Portrait of Mrs Couch, crayons*, by Pope.—Twenty years at least older than Mrs Crouch, and with a formidable ferocity of countenance very different from the interesting simplicity of that lady's face.

Anon., "The arts", *London chronicle*, 26.IV.1791:

Of the portraits there are, as usual, many, and some excellent: among those, two young artists are said to have peculiarly distinguished themselves; Mr Lawrence, and Mr Pope, late of Covent Garden Theatre. The former, though almost self-taught, is now in the first class of his profession, whilst the latter, who paints in crayons, has, in the similitude and character of near a dozen portraits, shewn a taste and ability rarely the portion of divided talents.

Anon., "Royal Academy", *General evening post*, 30.IV.1791:

Mr Pope, late of Covent-garden Theatre, in a smaller size of Crayon Painting, claims *uncommon merit* for the little time he has practised in his profession, as may be seen by his portraits of the Lord-Mayor and Lady-Mayoress, Lord Cremorne, Captain Morris, Mr Cooke, Mr King the Comedian, and several others.

Anon., "Royal Academy", *Public advertiser*, 17.V.1792:

In a variety of crayons, Russell still keeps up his former fame; and we must look to Pope for his successor, as we never witnessed a more rapid improvement than this artist has made in a few portraits; they all reach excellence, both in point of likeness and general finishing.—(If lost to the Stage, the sister art has found him.)

Pastels

J.598.101 SELF-PORTRAIT, pstl/ppr, 25.5x20.5 ov., sd v "A Pope/1791" (London, Sotheby's, 4.VII.2002, Lot 124, est. £3–4000, b/i. Gorry Gallery, exh. 5–19.II.2003, no. 1; PC 2015).

Exh.: Comerford 1999, no. 63, pp. 32, 39 repr., 49; Chicago 2015, no. 100, repr. p. 151. Lit.: Strickland 1913, II, pp. 253–56; Ashton 1997, pp. 41, 354–57; Figgis 2014, p. 428 repr. ☐



Photo courtesy Sotheby's

J.598.104 John, Baron BOWES (1690–1757), lord chancellor of Ireland, crayons (Royal Dublin Society. Justin Pope; acqu 1800, £12/10/-). Lit.: Strickland 1913, n.r. [?posthumous portrait/?attr.]

J.598.105 John BOYDELL (1719–1804), engraver and print-seller, Lord Mayor of the City of London 1790, pstl, 25.5x20 ov., sd 1791, Royal Academy 1791, no. 163 (Sir Edward Coates; London, Sotheby's, 22.VI.1922, Lot 4 with pendant, n.r., 60 gns; Lee; London, Sotheby's, 25.VI.1930, £16; Hammond. =?London, Christie's, 16.XI.1965, Lot 181). Lit.: Ingamells 2004, p. 68 n.r.

~grav. J. Condé 1792, "Lord Mayor of London 1791", *European magazine*

J.598.107 Mrs BOYDELL, in a white dress with red trimmings, pstl, 25.5x20 ov., sd 1791, Royal Academy 1791, no. 162 (Sir Edward Coates; London, Sotheby's, 22.VI.1922, Lot 4 with pendant, n.r., 60 gns; Lee) [If of Mrs John Boydell, née Elizabeth Lloyd (–1781), this would be posthumous]

J.598.108 Harvey Christian COMBE (1752–1818), of Cobham Park, MP, alderman and mayor of London, crayons

~grav. John Baker 1798. Lit.: *Gentleman's magazine*, 1848, p. 201 repr.

J.598.11 Mr COOKE, pstl, Royal Academy 1791, no. 247 or 251 [identified in review]

J.598.111 Thomas Dawson, Viscount CREMORNE (1725–1813), pstl, Royal Academy 1791, no. 86 [identified in review]

J.598.112 Colonel Charles CROSBIE, of the 67th Foot, c.1778

J.598.113 Mrs [Rawlings Edward] CROUCH [née Anna Maria Phillips (1763–1805), singer], pstl, Royal Academy 1787, no. 119

~grav. Ridley, *European magazine*, .XI.1805, opp. p. 323

J.598.115 George DAUNT (1712–1786), surgeon, pstl, 56x35.5, 1780 (Royal Dublin Society. Sitter; son-in-law, Thomas Pleasants (–1818); legs) ☐



J.598.117 Lady DUCIE [née Lady Frances Herbert (1775–1830)], watercolour, p.1800 (London, Christie's, 20.XII.1918, Lot 8 n.r., m/u, as 35.5x26.7, of Lady Frances Ducie, dau. of 1st Earl of Carnarvon, in white satin dress, standing on a terrace, 28 gns; Meyer Sée). Lit.: Sée 1919, repr., as pstl; Crookshank & Glin 1978, fig. 161 φ



J.598.119 Robert GORDON (c.1720–1784) of New Grove, County Cork, son of John Gordon of Kernborough; & pendant: J.598.12 spouse, née Anne Cunninghame (1721–1786), pstl, 23.5x19 ov. (Cork, Crawford Art Gallery. London, Christie's South Kensington, 2.VI.2009, Lot 616 n.r., with two others, est. £1200–1800) φσ



J.598.121 John N. Ross; London, Christie's, 2.VII.2019, Lot 160 repr., with pseudo-pendant, brother, Lord Rossmore by

Hamilton, J.375.1839, est. £3–5000, £2400 [=£3120] [new attr.] φσ



Gordon, v.g. Gun; Norcott

J.598.124 Mrs George GUN-CUNNINGHAM of Mount Kennedy, née Jean Gordon (–1831), daughter of Robert Gordon, pstl/ppr, 22.8x18.8 ov., inscr. verso 1783 (London, Christie's South Kensington, 2.VI.2009, Lot 616 repr., with three others, est. £1200–1800. The Gorry Gallery, Dublin, exh. 20.V.–2.VI.2012, no. 2/3) φσ



J.598.126 John Philip KEMBLE (1757–1823), holding a volume labelled Hamlet, pstl, 27.3x21.5, sd verso 1783 (Royal Collection RCIN 452379). Lit.: Crookshank & Glin 1978, fig. 160, ?Kemble φ



J.598.128 ~version pstl/ppr, 25.4x20.3 ov. (London, Garrick Club, 387. ?Charles Mathews). Exh.: ?London 1833b, no. 313. Lit.: Ashton & al. 1997, no. 387 φ



~version, min./ivory, 6.2x5.2 ov. (London, Christie's, 29.XI.2011, Lot 115, as unknown sitter by Henry Edridge & John Miers)

J.598.131 A celebrated comedian [Thomas KING (1730–1805), actor and dramatist], pstl, Royal Academy 1791, no. 215 [identified in review]

J.598.132 Captain Morris [?Captain Thomas MORRIS (1732–1808), officer and writer], pstl, Royal Academy 1791, no. 218 [identified as Captain Morris in review; new identification, ? as Thomas Morris]

=?grav., for *Miscellanies in prose and verse*, 1791, frontispiece [new attribution, ?]



J.598.135 Mrs Amos NORCOTT (∞ a.1777), later Mrs James Nathaniel Taylor, née Henrietta Gordon (1758–1827), daughter of Robert Gordon, and her son, the future General Sir Amos Godsill Robert Norcott (1777–1838), pstl/ppr, 22.8x18.8 ov., inscr. verso 1783 (London, Christie's South Kensington, 2.VI.2009, Lot 616 n.r., with three others, est. £1200–1800. The Gorry Gallery, Dublin, exh. 2012, no. 2) φσ



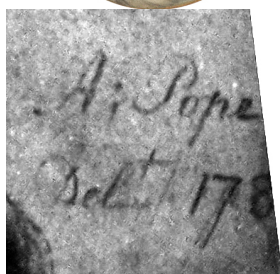
J.598.137 Mrs Jane PENROSE, pstl, 24x19, sd → "A. Pope/Del' 1782" (Prinknash Abbey Park, Gloucestershire, Simon Chorley, 26.VI.2008, Lot 78 repr., as of Jane Penro; Gloucestershire, Simon Chorley, 17–18.X.2023, Lot 1012 repr., est. £300–500) φ



- J.598.149 Wife of an officer, crayon, sd 1781
 J.598.15 Lady with a white bonnet, pstl/ppr, 25x20 ov., sd "Alex Pope 1783" (Dublin, NGL, inv. 7474. Stanhope Shelton Pictures Ltd, London; acqu. 1972). Lit.: Le Harivel 1983, repr. φ



- J.598.152 Lady in white and brown dress, pstl, 25.5x20 ov., sd √ "A Pope/1790" (London, Christie's, 18.III.1913, Lot 34, 17 gns; Edward Gallery. ?=London, Sotheby's, 8.XI.1961, Lot 62/1. ?= Driffield, Dee Atkinson & Harrison, 15.IX.2006, Lot 424 n.r., est. £40–60) Φ



- J.598.14 Mrs Thomas RAIKES, née Sophia Maria Bayly (–1810), crayons, p.1802. Lit.: Thomas Raikes, *Journal...*, London, 1856, II. p. 161

- J.598.141 [?]Mrs William SIDDONS, née Sarah Kemble (1755–1831), actress, full length, facing half right, pstl, 27x21.5, 1785, Royal Academy 1785, no. 112 (Royal Collection RCIN 452378). Lit.: Highfill & al. 1982, XIV., pp. 48f n.r., as 1783, "bears little resemblance to Mrs Siddons"; Ingamells 2004, p. 435 n.r. φδ



Photo courtesy Sotheby's

- J.598.153 Girl in white dress, pstl, 25.4x20 ov., sd √ "A Pope/1790" (PC) φ



- J.598.143 Anna Maria TREE (1801/2–1862), actress [olim ??Mrs Alexander Pope, née Clara Maria Leigh], pstl, c.1820 (London, Garrick Club, inv. 301. Legs Mrs Pope 1838). Lit.: Sée 1919b, repr., as of Mrs Pope; Adams 1936, as of Tree φσ



- J.598.155 Lady, pstl, 28x20, 1805 (London, Christie's, 21.III.1919, 70 gns)

- J.598.156 Small portraits in crayons, Dublin 1777

- J.598.157 Small portraits in crayons, Dublin 1780, no. 142



~grav. as Miss A. M. Tree, for *La Belle Assemblée*

- J.598.146 An officer, crayon, sd 1781

- J.598.147 Gentleman, pstl, Royal Academy 1791, no. 251 or 247

- J.598.148 Gentleman, pstl, Royal Academy 1792, no. 125; 127; 161; 170; 432