

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

REILY, James

?Dublin ?c.1738 – Rochestown, Co. Meath 1778
Also Riley, Reilly, Riely etc. He was educated at the Blue-Coat school, Oxmantown (now a suburb of Dublin), 1745–48, before being apprenticed to Samuel Dixon, for whom he coloured prints; Reily lodged in Dixon's house in Capel Street, with other pupils, Gustavus Hamilton (*q.v.*) and the actor John O'Keeffe's brother Daniel. He was then sent to Robert West. On 15.II.1753 at the Dublin Society, in the premium awards for drawings by under-16-year-olds, he was placed in the third class (£1); the following year, 14.II.1754, he was in the fourth class (½ guinea); as the age limit was strictly enforced, this implies a latter date of birth than most sources suggest. On 13.IX.1760 at St Paul's, Dublin (Church of Ireland), he married a Jane or June Blackney or Blakeney of Co. Meath; the announcement in *Sleater's public gazetteer* described him as “a celebrated portrait painter”. He was mainly a miniaturist, exhibiting in Dublin (from “a fine house” in Grafton Street, where he practised after first establishing a studio at Capel Street) from 1765 to 1779. He is said also to have painted portraits and history subjects, the latter without success.

One record of a pastel is known. A rather fine pastel from the following year (although the date is scarcely legible and appears to be 1749) is inscribed with initials; it has been given both to Reily and to John Russell; neither attribution seems convincing, although there are similarities with the expression in Reily's miniatures.

Pasquin's erroneous date for his death, 1780, is corrected by an entry in *Faulkner's Dublin journal* for 27–28.VIII.1778, extravagantly praising him as the “most excellent painter in miniature this country has produced.”

Bibliography

Bénézit; Breeze 1985; Dublin Society council minute book (1750–1757); Figgis 2014; Foskett 1987; John O'Keeffe, *Recollections*, 1826; Strickland 1913

Pastels

J.614.101 Gentleman, crayons, Dublin 1768, no. 62

J.614.102 Gentleman in a red coat, pstl, 73x58 ov., sd → “JR pix./17[?6]9” (Sotheby's sale, 1980s, details n/k, as by John Russell; PC; Nottingham, Mellors & Kirk, 9.IX.2010, Lot 605 repr., as by Reily, est. £4–6000; Grantham, Golding Young, 3–4.XI.2010, Lot 1046 repr., est. £1500–2000. Glandford, Norfolk, Bishop & Miller, 13.XI.2024, Lot 153 repr., Engosh sch., as sd 1749 illegibly, est. £1500–2000) [?attr.] φ?α

