



Bishop Simon Digby (c.1645-1720): a reappraisal of the nature and status of his artistic practice

CAROLINE PEGUM

BISHOP SIMON DIGBY IS REGARDED AS IRELAND'S EARLIEST NATIVE-BORN MINIATURE painter, precursor to the leading eighteenth-century exponents such as Luke Sullivan, Thomas Frye, the Hone family, et al. His situation within the history of this genre, however, has remained largely unresolved on account of the unusual particulars of his biography, practice and oeuvre. As an Anglican minister who progressed steadily through the ecclesiastical hierarchy, he enjoyed a privileged professional status which compounded the social and material advantages of his familial heritage. The origins of his artistic interest and training (if any) remain unclear, and the extent of his influence negligible. The nature of his known oeuvre seems to confirm Digby's status as a 'gentleman amateur', whose watercolours were the result of private recreation for personal satisfaction. But this definition conflicts with contemporary public recognition of his talent and the importance of his practice in advancing his primary career. This paper therefore seeks to examine these factors within a social and biographical context, and interrogate the bishop's post-mortem inventory of 1720, which makes important contributions to our understanding of his artistic motivations.

Digby's grandfather, Sir Robert Digby (d.1618) of Coleshill in Warwickshire, was a follower of the ill-fated 2nd Earl of Essex. During the expedition attempting to quell the disparate Irish septs in 1599, Digby received a knighthood in Dublin and established his foothold in Ireland with a marriage to Lettice FitzGerald (1580-1658), heiress to the immense estates of the Earls of Kildare. Robert and Lettice's eldest son Robert (1599-1642) was created 1st Baron Digby of Geashill, that townland in county Offaly being the heartland of the family's Irish landholdings into the twentieth century. A younger son, presumably named after his father's patron, was Essex Digby (d.1683), the painter's

*1 – Simon Digby, possibly a self-portrait
n.d., oil on canvas, 76 x 62 cm (private collection)*

father, who chose a clerical career. His earliest appointment, while still a student at Trinity College Dublin, was that of Prebend of Geashill, which was predictably in the gift of his family. Essex was Rector of Ballycommon (county Offaly) by 1641, when 'he was robbed and deprived of his goods, Stock, Cattle, etc. to the value of [£]1570 in the very beginning of the rebellion, and had his house burnt by the Dempsies, Dunns and Connors'.¹ He evidently retreated to Kilminchy (county Laois), home of his wife Thomasine's father, Sir William Gilbert (d.1654), as their son Simon Digby was born there c.1645. Essex held a ministry in Belfast during the Commonwealth period before progressing to the position of Dean of Cashel (1661) and finally Bishop of Dromore (1670/71).²

Simon began his BA studies at Trinity College Dublin in 1661, graduating three years later.³ On the strength of his family's connections with the Butlers of Kilkenny Castle,⁴ Digby joined the household of the 1st Duke of Ormond (1610-1688), who was then Lord Lieutenant, as a chaplain. Digby's prospects for preferment thereafter were considerable, given that family's prerogative in selecting candidates for a variety of the most desirable civil and ecclesiastical offices in Ireland. He was duly appointed Rector of Dunshaughlin, Rathregan and Trevet (all county Meath), by the Earl of Ossory (1634-1680), Ormond's son, in March 1668/69.⁵ Digby subsequently accrued or progressed to the positions of Prebendary of Kildare, Kilgobinet (county Waterford), and Geashill, Dean of Kildare (1677/78), Bishop of Limerick (1678/79), and finally Bishop of Elphin (1691/92).⁶

The see of Elphin was worth a handsome £1,200 per annum to the incumbent, with which he was obliged to defray the cost of building repairs, expenses and draw a personal income. A contemporary wrote that at Elphin, Digby had 'ye shell of a very good palace built by his immediate predecessor: But instead of finishing that, he lived his last eighteen years ... on a Lease-Hold, and has left nothing but a heap of Rubbish to his Successor.'⁷ This image of decrepitude ought not to imply material hardship, however. Digby chose not to live at the bishop's palace in Elphin (county Roscommon), which was indeed left untended, but rather kept homes at Abbert (county Galway), Lackan (county Roscommon, twenty miles south of Elphin) and Dublin. His household inventory of goods and stock at these properties equates with a standard of living necessitated by his professional and social seniority. Equally, Digby was in a position to enlarge his personal estate, purchasing a share of land on the Aran Islands in 1713 (but hardly on a scale to be called a 'land speculator'),⁸ and on his death, his eldest son, John (1691-1786), counted £1,217 in cash and £2,957 in (credit) bills at Abbert and Lackan.⁹

With the loss of his personal papers, and absence of a library inventory,¹⁰ a cohesive picture of Digby's personality is elusive. James Bonnell (1653-1699), Ireland's famously pious Accountant-General, wrote that Digby was 'of good family, a fine gentleman, and a serious and good man'.¹¹ Yet Archbishop William King depicted Digby as neglectful of more than just the episcopal demesne: '...he left the Diocese as I understand from every body that comes from thence, in a Miserable condition: Churches greatly wanting, and those that are, ill supplied. I am informed, that, though the diocese be large, there are only about 13 clergymen in it.'¹²

A later Bishop of Elphin, Robert Howard, frustrated at the unsatisfactory condition of the diocese and bishop's palace he inherited there, wrote in 1732 that Digby 'was an indolent man ... he did not much understand business either Spiritual or temporal.'¹³ As Toby Barnard has argued, a degree of resentment at Digby's social advantage and smooth career advancement under Butler patronage left him susceptible to personal criticism of this nature by the time of his death, when episcopal appointments in Ireland were highly politicised.¹⁴

Undoubtedly, the most turbulent period of Digby's ecclesiastical career was the Jacobite reign (1685-88) and subsequent conflict on Irish soil (1689-91). The fortuitous survival of a portion of diary covering just four months – 8th October 1688 to 8th February 1688/89 – provides a singular insight into his professional and personal concerns at this time, his familial and social milieu, and his sense of responsibility towards the Protestant congregation in Limerick, where he was then bishop.¹⁵ Unlike many Church of Ireland bishops who fled to Ulster or England, Digby remained in his diocese throughout and records the compound anxieties suffered by the small Protestant enclaves scattered throughout rural counties. Fears abounded of a co-ordinated Catholic uprising in the manner of 1641; for Digby the comparison had personal resonance given his own father's ordeal in that year. He and his wife and children retreated to Ballyvenoge (now Maidstown) approximately twenty miles south of Limerick city, and subsequently nearby Athlacca, to stay with his Ormsby cousins. Digby, in his capacity as one of the Lords Spiritual, attended King James's 'patriot parliament' in Dublin in May 1689 – one of only four Church of Ireland bishops who were able-bodied and present in Ireland. This, and Digby's presence at the Dublin parliaments of 1692-93 and 1695-99 at which the Lords Spiritual urged leniency towards the defeated Catholic army and office holders, have encouraged later historians to label him a 'crypto-jacobite'.¹⁶ When read within the context of his professional and social peer group, however, his position was in no way aberrant, and the comments arguably betray a residual suspicion of those senior Anglicans who remained in Ireland, and (unsuccessfully) advocated moderation towards the Catholic population at the Williamite parliaments.

The primary research source for Digby's artistic career has hitherto been the tiny number of surviving examples of his works, mainly in public collections. Introducing the inventory of his personal estate made at the time of his death in 1720, however, immediately challenges the established comprehension of his oeuvre.¹⁷ He is regarded as a miniaturist who practised in watercolour, and occasionally pastel. The inventory, however, includes numerous *oil* portraits of Digby's immediate family and contemporaries, without any artist attribution. Needless to say, this alone does not imply that Digby was the originator of these works, and a small number could not possibly be by him: '2 Dutch pieces', '1 Old history piece', 'the Bishops own [portrait] & his Lady By Mr. Gervais' [Charles Jervas (c.1675-1739)], and probably also 'Ld. Simon Digby the old picture'. However, there is internal evidence to suggest that Digby may have produced these portraits. Most importantly, one of the paintings is listed as 'Dean Marshs present wife only ye head not finished' – an incomplete condition being unlikely had the portrait been com-

missioned. Secondly, the unattributed oil portraits depict (sometimes in multiples) Digby himself and his closest family members – his wife, parents, siblings, offspring and their spouses. How likely is it that Digby, a competent artist himself, would have commissioned this volume, particularly given the dearth of portrait painters in rural Ireland? And finally, listed in the study at Lackan in 1720, among the volumes of books, spectacles, snuff box, sundial, desk and chairs are ‘1 Wooden Man Colours & tools for painting’ and ‘5 oyl Cloiths for linning’.¹⁸ The latter are not conclusively painting canvases, but this is a credible interpretation given their proximity to his pigments and brushes. No oil painting has yet been attributed to Digby, and remains unlikely without a signed example. However a surviving half-length portrait of the bishop in a private collection is *possibly* a self-portrait (Plate 1).

Apart from the range of media employed by Digby, the posthumous inventory also challenges the belief that he was exclusively a portrait painter. ‘2 History pictures unfinished’ in watercolour were almost certainly by his hand, while five landscapes in oil must remain unattributed.¹⁹ The history paintings and landscapes are all untraced and, again, are unlikely to be identified until the discovery of securely attributed examples. Of the portraits included in Digby’s 1720 inventory, 111 are executed in watercolour and forty-three in oil. The former may be assumed to be his own work; the latter will be considered likewise from this point onwards on the basis of the evidence described above. When discussing individual works, however, the medium will be noted in order to maintain a distinction.

2 – *Simon Digby, SELF-PORTRAIT*

n.d., watercolour, 13.7 x 10.4 cm [oval] (private collection)

3 – *Simon Digby, ESSEX DIGBY, BISHOP OF DROMORE (d.1683), the artist’s father*

n.d., watercolour, 12.5 x 10.1 cm [oval] (private collection)



Digby's sitters can be broadly classified as self-portraits and family (the largest grouping), clerical peers and patrons, and famous contemporaries. He himself is the subject of two oil paintings – one at Abbert, another 'to the Knee' at Lackan – and five watercolours, two of which were 'set in gold lockets'. The self-portrait miniature now in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery may be from this last group.²⁰ Another surviving self-portrait, an oval watercolour, includes tentative interior motifs – a classical column and drape in the background, and an open book on a table top to the figure's left (Plate 2). Colour fading and areas of paint loss in the white rochet have drained the original effect, but the vestiges of sensitive facial characterisation remain. The artist has clearly taken pains to convey the effect of light on the black chimere robe. The final known self-portrait is almost certainly that listed in the inventory as 'The Bishops [portrait] his wife & 3 Children in one piece',²¹ and is a fortunate and remarkable survivor (Plate 9).

The artist's wife Elizabeth Westenra (d.1720) was the subject of three other paintings listed, two in watercolour and one in oil, a second oil being of her and one of their children 'to the Knee'.²² Her father, Warner Westenra (d.1676), was a Dutch national who settled in Dublin and bought land in county Offaly in the 1660s. He and his wife, Elizabeth Wybrantz, were the subjects of paintings by their son-in-law, Simon Digby, in oil (one each) and watercolour (one each). A miniature of Warner survives in the collection of his descendant Baron Rossmore of Rossmore Park, Monaghan.²³

Unsurprisingly, Digby's inventory also includes portraits of his own parents, Essex (one oil, two watercolours) and Thomasine Gilbert (one oil, one watercolour in a gold locket). One of Essex has survived, and is comparable to the three-quarter-length self-portrait already discussed. Essex too is shown in his clerical robes with a brimless black cap before an open book (Plate 3). Also part of Digby's collection were multiple portraits of his children in oil and watercolour, and of their spouses, such as Jeremy Marsh (1667-1734), Dean of Kilmore (two oils, one watercolour), husband to daughter Elizabeth. Digby's sister, Lady Waddington, who is mentioned in his diary, was the subject of three portraits (two oils, one watercolour). Among the wider web of family members are found portraits of nephew Duke Giffard (c.1660-1707) (one oil), and cousins Colonel Edward Ormsby (one oil) and Catherine FitzGerald, Lady Grandison (c.1662-1725) (one watercolour).

Among the portraits of friends and clerical peers is Bishop John Hough (1651-1743) (one watercolour). Hough became an unwitting champion of his Church in 1687 when the fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford, elected him president in protest at King James's (Catholic) candidate. The inclusion of Hough's portrait in Digby's collection is due to more than this notoriety. Around the time of Digby's appointment to Limerick (1678/79), Hough became a chaplain to the Duke of Ormond, and though he spent little time in Ireland, the two clerics would have become acquainted through their mutual patron. Hough would later claim that he was 'instrumental' in securing Digby's transfer to the bishopric of Elphin in 1691/92, as he had become a member of the committee for Church of Ireland appointments the previous year.²⁴ The correspondence does not survive to demonstrate what was likely to have been an ongoing friendship, but Hough was certainly a lifelong



4 – *Simon Digby after Edmund Ashfield, JAMES BUTLER (1610-1688), 1ST DUKE OF ORMOND*
n.d., pastel on paper, 25.5 x 21 cm (private collection)

opposite

5 – *Simon Digby, HENRY CAPEL (1638-1696), 1ST BARON CAPEL OF TEWKESBURY, LORD DEPUTY OF IRELAND 1695-96*

n.d., watercolour, 12.3 x 9.8 cm

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6 – *Simon Digby, HENRY SIDNEY (1641-1704), 1ST EARL OF ROMNEY, LORD LIEUTENANT OF IRELAND 1692-93*

n.d., watercolour, 12.6 x 9.4 cm

(© National Museum of Ireland, DA:1908.203)

These two paintings were owned by George Petrie and subsequently Henry Dawson, Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral. They were purchased by the National Museum of Science & Art from Mrs P.M. Mollan of Clontarf in 1908 for £6 6s each.

friend of Simon's cousin, William Digby (1661-1752), 5th Baron Digby.²⁵

Three successive archbishops of Canterbury – Gilbert Sheldon (1598-1677), William Sancroft (1617-1693) and John Tillotson (1630-1694) (Plate 7) – are the subjects of individual watercolour miniatures. Contemporary luminaries of the Church of Ireland were also considered worthy of depiction: Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713) held episcopal seats from 1683, including that of Armagh from 1703 until his death. Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690) (one watercolour) had come to Ireland as chaplain to the new Lord Lieutenant, John, Lord Roberts, in 1669, was appointed Bishop of Raphoe two years later, and translated to the bishopric of Derry in 1681. And Jeremy Taylor (c.1613-1667) (one watercolour), prolific author of devotional texts, was consecrated Bishop of Down and Connor in January 1660/61. Taylor's grandson was the aforementioned Jeremy Marsh, Digby's son-in-law. Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715) (one watercolour) was another famous author, renowned for tackling often controversial theological issues of the day and Church of England history. He was chaplain to Charles II and joined the household of the Prince and Princess of Orange in The Hague in 1686. He accompanied the new monarchs to England and preached their coronation sermon in 1689.

An important group of Digby's portraits acknowledges the lifelong favour of the powerful Butler family. The 'Old Duke of Ormond', so described in 1720, must refer to the 1st Duke, the subject of two watercolours. The 'Duke of Ormond', the 'Duke of Ormond with a boy' and another of 'his Dutches' (one watercolour each) presumably depicted the 2nd Duke (1665-1745) and his second wife, Lady Mary Somerset. A further watercolour of 'Ld. Arran' could refer to the 1st Duke's son, Richard Butler (1639-



1685/86), 1st Earl of Arran. These are now untraced, but an intriguing documentary reference records the artist's ongoing connection with the Butlers, and, crucially, his use of pastels. This is a letter from William Butler to Sir Donough O'Brien dated 2nd May 1711 in which it is noted that 'The Duchess of Ormonde sent his Grace's picture to the old bishop to be repaired. He returned it 'amended', and two nice new copies in return.'²⁶ A pastel in a private collection has been identified as one of Digby's 'nice new copies' (Plate 4), and is a slightly inferior copy after Edmund Ashfield's (fl.1669-90) pastel of the 1st Duke of Ormond, executed in the 1670s.²⁷ Digby's inventory of 1720 also lists '7 Croine [crayon] pictures', the subjects (and artist) unrecorded.²⁸

Leading protagonists in Irish affairs in the tumultuous decade from 1685 form the penultimate section within Digby's oeuvre, and collection. Among the politicians who served in Ireland, and would have been known to the bishop due to his attendance at the Dublin parliaments, were Charles Porter (c.1640-1696), Lord Chancellor of Ireland 1686-87, 1690-96; Henry Capel (1638-1696), Lord Deputy 1695-96 (Plate 5); and Capel's supporter, Robert Rochfort MP (1652-1727) Attorney-General and Speaker of the House of Commons 1695-99. Each is the subject of one watercolour portrait. Williamite military heroes of the period, Godard van Reede-Ginckel (1644-1703) (one oil) and Henry Sidney (1641-1704) (Plate 6), Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1692-93, were also represented. Finally, several (but not all) contemporary monarchs, James II (one watercolour), William and Mary, and George I (one oil each), featured.

Examination of Digby's post-mortem inventory confirms the prior assumption that his customary genre was portraiture, and his predominant medium was watercolour. His

chosen subjects each bear a specific connection, demonstrating lines of affection, familial pride, professional achievement, proximity to famous contemporaries, and loyalty to patrons and the crown. The collection forms a de facto graphic autobiography, encompassing networks of figures significant to the artist. In addition to this rhetorical function, the collection fulfilled other roles; the volume of works produced for Digby's private collection undoubtedly speaks to a personal pleasure in their execution. It also appears a deliberate statement of a cultured, 'polite' lifestyle which was increasingly nurtured by the aristocracy and gentry in Ireland and Britain in the seventeenth century. This last motivating factor warrants deeper investigation in order to determine the relationship between Digby's artistic activities and his professional career.

From the start of the century, a practical understanding of drawing and limning was recognised as a desirable skill for young gentlemen, as advocated in Henry Peacham's *The Compleat Gentleman* (first published 1622), and many other texts.²⁹ This was just one element of a broader educational philosophy which argued that the upper echelons of society ought to adopt new signifiers (select 'refined' pastimes, courteous manners, moral values, etc) to shore up social distinctions. 'Solid' education, referring to mathematics, history, languages, etc, was increasingly balanced by 'accomplishments', which included an appreciation of the arts.³⁰ Investing such cultural pursuits with greater cachet would contribute to the recognition of connoisseurship as a highly prized attainment in the eighteenth century.

While this trend (and related publications) was current during Digby's lifetime, he does not conform to the paradigm of amateur artistic endeavour in pursuit (or affectation) of social polish. His artistic practice was not an end in itself, but served an important ancillary function. Archbishop King, in the previously quoted letter at the time of Digby's death, wrote of him, 'He was a great Master of Painting in little water colours [and] by that greatly recommended himself to men in power & Ladys, & so was early made a Bishop.'³¹ The sardonic tone is deliberate and in keeping with King's other remarks on the recently deceased Bishop of Elphin, but the comment is significant. The patronage of the social elite, who controlled or influenced many appointments, was crucial to preferment within the Church of Ireland. The same was true of most other contemporary professions, and ingenuity in exploiting potential patronage networks was fundamental to success. Given that this same demographic was conspicuously fostering an interest in the visual arts, it becomes evident that Digby's artistic talents would indeed have been attractive to 'men in power & Ladys'. In effect, this unusual aptitude gave Digby additional capital in the contemporary patronage economy. Digby's only known patrons were the Butlers, with whom his connection can be documented from the 1660s until at least 1711, and one can assume that he gratefully reciprocated their favour by executing portrait miniatures and small-scale copies, and conceivably providing informal lessons and artistic opinion.

The documentary evidence and provenance of surviving works indicate that Digby's paintings were to be found in only two collections during his lifetime – his own private collection and that of the Butlers,³² though it would be safe to assume that he also

gifted works to family and personal acquaintances. This pattern confirms the status of Digby as neither a private amateur nor commercial artist, but rather one who harnessed his artistic talent to appeal to those in a position to further his primary career. However, his reputation (and possibly his work) extended beyond these confines, as evidenced by his inclusion in Bainbrigg Buckeridge's (1667/68-1733) *An Essay towards an English School of Painters* (1706). His entry on Digby is worth quoting in full;

The Reverend Lord Bishop of Elfin in Ireland, may very well find a Name in this Account of the English Painters, since he has [?sic] deservedly rais'd one in that Kingdom, where he is arriv'd to be a Spiritual Peer. His Limnings have much of Beauty and Justness of Draught in them, and are to a great Degree Elaborate, with a due regard to the graceful part of Nature. He is a single Instance of any Person of that Robe, that has made so sufficient a Progress in this Art, as to be voted a Master, either in that Kingdom or this, how soever 'tis in other Nations for the Clergy to apply themselves to Painting.³³

The *Essay* is an important early contribution to English art historiography. Its aim was to foster pride in a distinct national 'school', and highlight the want of access to exemplary collections and professional training for artists: 'Had we an Academy we might see how high the English Genius would soar...'³⁴ How Buckeridge was aware of Digby's work, and which examples he had seen, remains unclear. No visit to Ireland or connection with the Digby or Butler families is recorded. Neither is any work by the bishop known to have been in Buckeridge's personal collection,³⁵ or those of his patrons Sir Robert Child (1674-1721) and John Sheffield (1647-1721), 1st Duke of Buckingham and Normanby. It is plausible that, given their mutual Tory sympathies, Buckeridge may have known the 2nd Duke of Ormonde and had access to the Butlers' magnificent London home, Ormonde House in St James's Square.

Digby's entry in the *Essay* is a remarkable public recognition of a relatively private artistic practice. But more extraordinary still is the fact that Digby can claim the distinction of being the only *living* artist included, in spite of Buckeridge's statement that 'I would not meddle with those Masters that are living, as well knowing that's a tender Affair, and not to be touch'd without running the Risque of giving general Offence.'³⁶ Digby's inclusion, therefore, is only permissible because his minor status, and safe distance from the competitive London artistic scene of Kneller, Dahl, Closterman, Verrio et al, would cause no friction. Yet he was not sufficiently minor to be ignored; further research into Buckeridge's biography may provide stronger reasoning for his knowledge of and interest in promoting Bishop Digby's talents.³⁷ The answer may simply lie, as suggested in the final sentence of his entry, in Digby's novel status as an artist-bishop.

Surviving examples of Digby's work permit some analysis of his artistic technique, influences and sources. His training is unknown; he may have received rudimentary instruction or encouragement as part of his childhood education, or was quite possibly self-taught with the aid of manuals. His watercolours demonstrate technical confidence

and a competent understanding of this unforgiving medium. With some surviving examples, allowance must be made for later overpainting in the name of restoration and light-related fading, which has inevitably distorted his original colour balance. Those works which have escaped retouching demonstrate Digby's use of opaque colour washes, to which darker tones and highlights are added with either controlled brushwork or stippling to model the figures.

This technique aligns Digby with the long tradition of limning as practised in England since the early sixteenth century. The emerging educational philosophy which encouraged a knowledge of drawing and painting among young men prompted a host of practical textbooks, such as Thomas Jenner's *A Book of Drawing, Limning, Washing or Colouring* (1647, and reprints),³⁸ William Sanderson's *Graphice* (1658), and Alexander Browne's *Ars Pictoria* (1669, 1675). These set out the means of making brushes, and preparing the raw pigments for limning by laborious processes of washing, steeping or grinding. The practice of limning portraits was described in detailed steps, beginning with a 'flat primer, which must be of the lightest part of the complexion you intend to make, so that you may not need to heighten, or lay a lighter [shade] upon it'. Over three sittings, the student is given direction on the best colours to use to model flesh and drapery.

That characteristic of portraiture – physical likeness – was its 'principal aime',³⁹ but also the most elusive to the student. Sanderson recommends the artist, in the final portrait sitting, to 'cause the party [sitter] to be in action, or to regard you with a Joviall merry and discursive aspect. Wherein you must be ready and apprehensive to steal observations, and to express them with a quick bold and constant hand.'⁴⁰ A contemporary verdict on only one of Digby's portraits is recorded – that of John Hough, the Duke of Ormond's chaplain from around 1677. Hough's own chaplain in his final years recorded that Bishop Digby 'had a fine art of painting in miniature, in which he drew one of the best likenesses of my Lord [Hough]'.⁴¹ The verisimilitude of his other work remains unrecorded, but success is certainly inferred by Buckeridge's biographical entry of 1706 and Archbishop King's reference of 1720. Digby's better-preserved portraits, such as *John Tillotson* (Plate 7) and *Ecclesiastic from Glastonbury* (Plate 8) demonstrate a strikingly subtle facial characterisation which is notably more successful than some inanimate passages in other works.⁴²

The degree of semblance (and its relative importance) raises questions about Digby's *modus operandi*. Family members were presumably drawn from life. Contemporary statesmen, military commanders and royalty listed in Digby's inventory must have been derived from portrait engravings which were widely available and of differing quality. The art manuals of the time all recommended that students learn to draw by copying prints. Peacham advised that 'by imitating the choicest printes and peeces of the most judicious masters, with your own observance you will very easily attain the skill.'⁴³ While the authors were counselling students to copy printed designs in order to perfect their drawing skills, it was a natural progression for amateurs (and even contemporary professionals)⁴⁴ to replicate passages from engravings and incorporate them into



7 – *Simon Digby, JOHN TILLOTSON (1630-1694), ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY*
n.d., watercolour on vellum, 9.3 x 7.2 cm (© National Gallery of Ireland, 2012; purchased by the National Museum of Science & Art from Mr R.B. Bennet of Kingstown in 1895 for £1 10s; transferred to the National Gallery in 1969)

8 – *Simon Digby, ECCLESIASTIC FROM GLASTONBURY*
n.d., watercolour, 5.5 x 4.3 cm (courtesy Sherborne Castle Estates, Dorset)

their own compositions. An iconographic examination of Digby's surviving oeuvre illustrates the extent to which he invented or borrowed designs.

Self-portrait with family (Plate 9) is Digby's only extant portrait of his wife and children (among the many listed in the inventory), and his only surviving group portrait. The artist places himself in the background of the scene, wearing casual indoor dress – a soft cap, banyan robe and plain muslin cravat. In reading the open volume on his desk, he has turned to his wife Elizabeth Westenra to (literally) point out a passage. Elizabeth is the compositional and psychological focus of the group, placed in the foreground centre and drawing the attention of her husband and three infant children.⁴⁵ Internal evidence, such as the costumes, hairstyles and approximate ages of the sitters, suggest a date of c.1685-90, coinciding with Digby's episcopal posting in Limerick. It would be convenient, though rash, to interpret this image as foreshadowing the eighteenth-century genre of the conversation piece, with which there are obvious parallels. Instead, Digby is here drawing on the familiar trope of the *sancta familia*. Elizabeth, in Marian blue, and the seated infant are cast as the Virgin and Child, Digby himself as St Joseph, and the two older children, holding lilies and a small puppy, are *en rôle* as gift-bearing shepherds or kings. Though Digby has assumed the subordinate position (physically and iconographical), his engagement with the open book acts as a counterbalance, signifying his occu-



9 – Simon Digby, *SELF-PORTRAIT WITH FAMILY*
probably c.1685-90, watercolour on paper, 20 x 15.4 cm (private collection)

pations beyond the sphere depicted. If one considers the book to be a bible or other religious tract, he is demonstrating his personal and professional responsibility to administer spiritual guidance. The colours have deteriorated due to light exposure, and the children appear particularly spectral, but the formal cohesion, convincing handling of draperies, and individual characterisation mark it out among Digby's surviving oeuvre as a uniquely successful image. Indeed, beyond the context of his own practice, it is a rare domestic image from this period in Ireland.

The model of the holy family no doubt struck the artist-bishop as an appropriate model for his family portrait, but a more contemporary image may have proved the catalyst. The French artist Nicolas de Largillière's (1656-1746) mezzotint print, known as a self-portrait with his family, was published in London in 1686 (Plate 10). The two images share obvious, though only approximate, formal qualities – and the motif of a spaniel puppy – but also a common language of informal familial unity and playfulness within a cultured and patriarchal context. Largillière's work is an unusual published example of this intimate subject matter, and its date of publication, coinciding with the assumed production of Digby's *Self-portrait with family*, makes it possible that Digby was aware of the image.

Digby's access to another portrait mezzotint is, however, certain, as it provides the exact model for Elizabeth's figure and costume. It depicts the future Queen Anne when Princess of Denmark, and was published in London between 1683 and 1688 (Plate 11). In the original painting by Willem Wissing (1656-1687), Anne is shown in the grounds of Windsor Castle, and toys with a pearl necklace. Substituting this accessory for his youngest child and so obscuring Elizabeth's other arm, Digby nonetheless reproduces the figure's posture and drapery (in reverse) with such precision that he can only have been working from a copy of the mezzotint.⁴⁶

Two of Digby's portraits of Williamite leaders survive, those of Henry Capel, 1st Baron Capel of Tewkesbury (Plate 5), and Henry Sidney, 1st Earl of Romney (Plate 6). Sidney is depicted in an indistinct landscape, wearing full armour and sword, a luxuriant wig and lace cravat, and wielding a commander's baton in his right hand. A similar (but not identical) pose and apparel is adopted in Sidney's portrait by John de Medina, now in the UK Government Art Collection.⁴⁷ This image is not known to have been engraved in Digby's lifetime, and no surviving print can yet provide a definitive model for this watercolour. Capel's portrait contrasts in employing quasi-historical armour. He wears an antique-style cuirass with protective leather strips attached to the waist and shoulder. A lion-masked shoulder plate is seen under the purple cloak (*paludamentum*) which was the privilege of Roman generals. In contrast, the plain muslin cravat, full wig and long-sleeved shirt are appropriate to the 1680s and early '90s. Capel's head appears closely related to a miniature of this sitter by Peter Cross;⁴⁸ the latter may have been the basis for a now-lost engraving. The guise of Roman general was adopted by many other male sitters of the time, and the mezzotint after Wissing and van der Vaart's *King William III* (c.1688) is notably close to Capel's attire (Plate 12). These and three other Digby head-



10 – Isaac Beckett after
Nicolas de Largillière, *NICOLAS
DE LARGILLIÈRE WITH HIS FAMILY*
1686, mezzotint (published by John
Smith), 37.1 x 27.1 cm [plate size]

opposite

11 – Isaac Beckett after Willem
Wissing, *QUEEN ANNE WHEN
PRINCESS OF DENMARK*
1683-88, mezzotint (published by
Edward Cooper), 32.6 x 25 cm [plate
size] (detail)

12 – John Smith after Willem
Wissing and Jan van der Vaart,
KING WILLIAM III
c.1688, mezzotint (published by
Edward Cooper), 41.5 x 25 cm
[paper size] (detail)

(all illus © National Portrait Gallery,
London)

and-shoulder portraits draw heavily on Williamite-era iconography of the soldier-statesman (for example, Plate 13). The incongruous mixture of body armour (authentic or fantastical) and luxury fashions sought to evoke the personal qualities of physical bravery, intelligent leadership and social elitism.

Bishop Hough (Plate 14) now in the National Portrait Gallery, London, may have been painted from life, or at least *ad vivum* sketches. Presumably a life sitting took place at some point to produce the portrait claimed to be ‘one of the best likenesses’. For *John Tillotson* (Plate 7), Digby may have been reliant on printed sources, which were numerous. A variety of line engravings of Tillotson were published – all head and shoulders in an oval frame – derived from Mary Beale’s three-quarter-length portrait of c.1692, now at Lincoln’s Inn. The head is close to Digby’s, and is a credible source, while Digby has chosen a frontal pose for the body, as with the miniature of Hough and his father Essex Digby (Plate 3). The final clerical portrait is enigmatically called *Ecclesiastic from Glastonbury* (Plate 8). The Anglican priest’s attire and long hair would suggest a date of c.1650-80, the artist demonstrating finesse in relieving the sober costume with curling locks of silver hair and the gown’s fur trim.



Having established the fundamentally private nature of Digby's painting practice and the narrow distribution of his work, the question of Digby's artistic influence or following is a slender topic. The pastellist Henrietta Johnston, alias Dering (c.1674-1729), has, in the past, been tendered as a possible pupil on stylistic grounds and the fact that her second husband was a Church of Ireland clergyman.⁴⁹ The theory has justifiably failed to withstand recent scrutiny.⁵⁰ The present author has previously suggested that Digby may have fostered the talents of the painter Charles Jervas on the basis of long-established familial connections.⁵¹ It can be stated with certainty, however, that Digby did teach his daughters to draw and paint. William Butler's previously mentioned letter of May 1711 notes that in gratitude for Digby's repair and copies of 'his Grace's picture', the Duchess of Ormonde 'sent pencils and rules to the young damsels who as it is believed will exceed their father in that particular'.⁵² It is noteworthy that his *daughters* are the beneficiaries of this gift, and obviously their father's tutorials; beyond the pleasure of sharing his own talents with his children, drawing and watercolour painting was, by this date, increasingly appropriated as a genteel *female* pastime. The only known work by one of the Digby daughters can be here identified. It is a portrait of the 2nd Duke of Ormonde by the thirty-



year-old Mary Bertles, née Digby, in 1723 (Plate 15).⁵³ Not only is the format and subject matter in keeping with her father's oeuvre, but her design sources are too: the painting is a clever splicing of two print portraits (of other sitters) after paintings by Van Dyck and Kneller.⁵⁴

Simon Digby received a glancing reference in Horace Walpole's magnum opus *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762-71),⁵⁵ but scholarly awareness of his work, and artistic appreciation of an important segment of his private collection, is to the credit of antiquarian George Petrie (1790-1866). Prior to 1830, Petrie purchased seventy Digby paintings, 'of persons of note ... [from] a Broker in Henry Street who had bought them at a Sheriffs sale at the mansion of the then Digby Family in county Kildare'.⁵⁶ Petrie then gifted the paintings to various acquaintances, all now unrecorded apart from Henry Dawson (1792-1840), Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, who received a tranche of thirty. In a series of essays entitled 'On the past and present state of the Fine Arts in Ireland' (1830), Petrie refers to Digby, 'who painted miniature portraits with the hand of a master'. He cites as examples only those works owned by Dawson ('they could not possibly be in better hands'), while omitting the fact that he himself purchased the group and gifted them to Dawson:

They are chiefly of his [Digby's] own family, or of distinguished persons with whom he was intimate; as among the former, two of his father, (one very admirable,) and one of his mother; among the latter, Sandcroft Archbishop of Canterbury; Tillotson; Hoff Bishop of Winchester [sic]; Narcissus Marsh; the Duke of Tyrconnell; Lord Capel, &c. &c.⁵⁷

When Dawson died intestate, his widow sold his outstanding collection of antiquities to

15 – *Mary Bertles, née Digby (b.1692/93),*

JAMES BUTLER (1665-1745), 2ND DUKE OF ORMONDE

1723, oil on vellum, 15 x 12 cm, signed and dated on rev. (Office of Public Works, Kilkenny Castle. Acquired late 20th century; earlier provenance unknown.)

opposite

13 – *Simon Digby,*

JOHN DIGBY (1634-98), 3RD EARL OF BRISTOL

n.d., watercolour, 6.7 x 5.6 cm [oval] (courtesy Sherborne Castle Estates, Dorset)

14 – *Simon Digby,*

JOHN HOUGH (1651-1743), BISHOP OF WORCESTER

n.d., watercolour on vellum, 7.9 x 6.4 cm [oval]

(© National Portrait Gallery, London. Gifted to Winchester City Museums in 1928 by their honorary curator, and presented to the National Portrait Gallery in 1950. Its pre-1928 provenance is unrecorded.)



the Royal Irish Academy for £1,000. Digby's paintings were not among the group, and they were presumably dispersed on the open market. At least two from this group are in public ownership (Plates 5, 6), but most are untraced. Meanwhile, other surviving examples of the bishop's work have remained in private hands since their execution.

This paper has sought to clarify the interplay between Digby's clerical career and artistic practice, and explore the technical and formal sources of his oeuvre. However, two further factors currently hamper more precise definition within the history of Irish art, one scholarly, the other archival. The work of non-professional visual artists in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century awaits inquiry, and the absence of nuanced research has resulted in Digby's promotion to near-professional status within the accepted canon of painting. But closer scrutiny in the present case study reveals a duality which provides broader insights into the professional patronage system. Secondly, the absence of Digby's library inventory and the loss of his personal papers leaves unanswered questions regarding the nature of his scholarly pursuits. Could they have revealed the extent, or limits, of his artistic interests, source material, manuals and print collection, as well as his broader cultural interests? Seeking to evaluate his scant surviving oeuvre in isolation may invite inaccurate assumptions and interpretations. Nonetheless, the quoted entry in Buckeridge's *Essay* provides an important contemporaneous illustration of the co-dependency of Digby's primary career and artistic talents. The latter proved an attractive accomplishment and material means of acknowledging valuable patronage for this ecclesiastical career, while his episcopal status made him noteworthy among his artistic contemporaries.

APPENDIX

A transcription of the art works listed in Digby's post-mortem inventory, made shortly after his death in April 1720. Each sitter's relationship to Simon Digby [SD], and their identity, are noted in square brackets. (National Library of Ireland, French of Monivea manuscripts, box PC17 (1-30), envelope 26)

— [f.1r] —

a Cobby of an Inventory taken of the P[er]sonal estate belonging to
ye late BP. of Elphin & his Lady⁵⁸ as given me by Wm. Digby in Dublin

The pictures in oyl at Abert

oyle Pictures – note ye value of these pictures ought to be ascertained
by Painters or competent Judges

The Bishops own picture	[SD]
his Ladys	[wife, Elizabeth Digby née Westenra (d.1720)]
Mrs. Marsh	[?daughter Elizabeth, who married Jeremy Marsh (1667-1734)]
King George	[King George I]
Mr Simon Digbys	[?son of this name, who died young, or one of his grandsons]
Dean Marshs present wife only ye head not finished	[?daughter Elizabeth, as before]
Ld. Simon Digby the old picture	[?cousin Simon Digby (1657-85), 4th Baron Digby of Geashill]
Mr John Digby	[?eldest surviving son and heir (1691-1786)]
Dean Marshes	[son-in-law Jeremy Marsh (1667-1734) treasurer of St Patrick's Cathedral and Dean of Kilmore]
Mrs. Lettice Digbys	[?daughter of this name who died young]
3 Land Skips in the hall –	

[oils] at Lackan

Councillor Ffrenches	[?son-in-law Patrick French of Monivea, county Galway (c.1681-1744)]
his Wifes	[?daughter, married Patrick French MP in 1713]
Mr Gilbert Digbys	[?son of this name (d. after 1720)]
Mrs Lettice Digby	[?daughter of this name who died young]
Mr Benjamin Digby	[?son (d.1769) of this name who was appointed prebendary of Geashill in 1743/44] ⁵⁹
Mrs Mary Digby	[?daughter of this name (b. 1692/3), married Edward Bertles (d.1765)]
Mrs Abigail Digby	[?daughter of this name, married the Rev Joseph Graves in 1721]
Mrs Rebecca Digby	[?daughter of this name, married John King in 1721]
Mr John Digbys	[?son, as before]
his Wifes	[?daughter-in-law Mary Marsh (d.1731), married John Digby in 1717]
Ld Simon Digby	[?cousin, as before]
Ld William Digby	[cousin William Digby (1661-1752), 5th Baron Digby of Geashill]
Ld Cross	
Mr Westenra	[?father-in-law, Warner Westenra (d.1676)]

his Lady to ye knee [*?mother-in-law, Elizabeth Westenra, née Wybrantz*]
 Ld Athlone to the knee [*Godard van Reede-Ginckel (1644-1703),*
1st Earl of Athlone, celebrated Williamite military leader]
 King William to the Knee [*King William of Orange (1650-1702)*]
 the Bishops own to the Knee [*SD*]

28 pictures – 3 Landskips

— [f.1v] —

His Wives with a Child to the Knee [*wife, as before, and unnamed child*]
 Lady Digby
 Mr Duke Giffard [*nephew (c.1660-1707), MP for Philipstown, county Offaly, 1692-92 and 1695-99*]
 Jerry –
 Dean Marsh [*son-in-law, as before*]
 Essex Digby Bishop of Dromore [*father*]
 his Wives [*mother, Thomasine Gilbert*]
 Mrs Mary Ormsby [*?an Ormsby cousin through his maternal aunt's marriage to Robert Ormsby (d.1664)*]
 Lady Waddington – [*sister, married to Sir Henry Waddington*]
 2 Dutch pieces –
 1 Old history piece –
 Mrs Barcleys [*'Ab. Berkeley' (?Abigail), as mentioned in SD's diary, in the company of Lady Waddington*]
 Mrs. Marsh w[i]th Little
 Colonell Edwd. Ormsby [*?an Ormsby cousin*]
 An old one of Mr Will Digbys –
 4 Gilt pictures
 7 ~~Creal~~ Croine pictures [*crayon aka pastel*]
 2 Land Skips
 Mr William Digbys
 Queen Marys picture [*Queen Mary II (1662-94)*]
 Mrs –
 the Bishops own & his Lady by
~~his Lady~~ By Mr. Gervais [*SD and wife by Charles Jervas; both now untraced*]
 Lady Waddington [*sister, as before*]

14: – besides ye 2 du[t]ch, ye old hist. piece & Lady Wad[d]ington
 4 gilt, 7 Croine & 2 Land skips

In oyle: 28

14

lot: 42

Pictures in Water Colours

Essex Digby Bishop of Dromore [*father, as before*]
 the Bishops own [*SD*]
 Ditto

Ditto
 his Wives [wife, as before]
 Ditto
 the Bishop his wife & 3 Children in one piece [almost certainly Plate 9]
 Dean Marsh [son-in-law, as before]
 his Wives [daughter Elizabeth, as before]
 Mr John Digby [?eldest son, as before]
 Councillor Ffrench [?son-in-law, as before]
 his Wives [?daughter Jane, as before]
 Mr. Westenra [?father-in-law, as before]
 his Wives [?mother-in-law, as before]
 Lady Waddington [sister, as before]
 Mrs. Barclay [as before]
 Mrs Moore [?relation of Rev John Moore, mentioned in diary of 1688-89,
 when Moore was 'Preb.[endary] of Tullybrochy & Minister of Killmallock']⁶⁰
 Mrs Coates

18 –

— [f.2r] —

Lady Blany unfinished [?Mary Caulfeild (c. 1659-1724),
 daughter of William Caulfeild, 1st Viscount Charlemont (1624-71), who married William Blayne
 (d.1705/06), 6th Lord Blayne, Baron of Monaghan in 1686. Like SD, William Blayne was a member
 of the Irish House of Lords]
 Lady Grandison [cousin Catherine FitzGerald (c.1662-1725),
 widow of the Hon Edward FitzGerald (d.1693). She was granted the title Viscountess Grandison
 of Limerick by royal warrant in January 1699/1700. SD's cousin via his paternal grandmother
 Lettice FitzGerald (c.1580-1658), Baroness Offaly]
 King James [James II (1633-1701)]
 Ld. Tyrconnell [Richard Talbot, 1st Earl of Tyrconnell (1630-91)]
 Ld. Chief Barron Rotchford [Robert Rochfort (1651/52-1727),
 Attorney-General, and Chief Baron of the Exchequer 1707-14]
 Duke of Ormond [?James Butler, 2nd Duke of Ormonde (1665-1745)]
 his Dutches [?Mary Somerset (1664-1733), married James Butler in 1685]
 Ld. Arran [? Richard Butler (1639-1686), 1st Earl of Arran, fifth son of the 1st Duke of Ormond]
 ye Old Duke of Ormd [James Butler, 1st Duke of Ormond]
 Ditto in a Gilt Fframe
 Ld. Sidney to ye Knee [Henry Sidney (1641-1704) 1st Earl of Romney,
 a Williamite officer at the battle of the Boyne, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1692-93 (probably Plate 6)]
 Ld Capell to the knee [Henry Capel (1638-96)
 1st Baron Capel of Tewkesbury, Lord Deputy of Ireland 1695-96 (probably Plate 5)]
 ye Duke of Ormond w[i]th. a boy [?2nd Duke]
 Lady Ffrances Shane [cousin Frances FitzGerald, daughter of the 16th Earl of Kildare.
 She married Sir James Shaen (before 1629-1695) of Kilmore, county Roscommon, in 1650. SD's
 cousin via his paternal grandmother Lettice FitzGerald (c.1580-1658)]
 Judge Cott [or Coff] [unidentified; ?Maurice Cuffe (1681-1766) MP for Kilkenny City,

who was called to the Irish bar in 1712, and created KC in 1716. His wife Martha FitzGerald (m.1718) may have been one of SD's FitzGerald cousins. Or possibly the soldier John Cutts (1661-1707), created Baron Cutts of Gowran, county Kilkenny and Lord Justice of Ireland for the final two years of his life]

- Ditto
- Sr. Constantine Phipps *[Sir Constantine Phipps (1656-1723) spirited tory lawyer; knighted and appointed Lord Chancellor of Ireland 1710-14]*
- Chancellor Porter *[Sir Charles Porter (c.1640-1696), Lord Chancellor of Ireland 1686, 1690-96; Lord Justice of Ireland 1690-92]*
- Arch bishop Sheldon *[Gilbert Sheldon (1598-1677), Archbishop of Canterbury 1663-77]*
- Arch Bishop –
- Bishop Hopkins *[Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690), Bishop of Raphoe 1671-81, Bishop of Derry 1681-90]*
- Dr. Huff Bishop of Worcester *[John Hough (1651-1743) Bishop of Oxford 1690-99, Lichfield and Coventry 1699-1717, and Worcester 1717-43]*
- Auditor Bridges *[Sir Brook Bridges (1679-1728) 1st Baronet Bridges of Goodneston, Kent. Auditor of the Imprest of the Treasury]*
- Mr. –
- One Marked [or Masked]
- Dr. –
- Dr. –
- Mr Waller ye poet *[Edmund Waller (1606-1687) poet and MP in the English parliament]*
- one Lady
- one Lady
- one Lady
- Lady Ffrances Shane to ye Knee unfinished *[Frances FitzGerald, as before]*
- Mr Sances unfinished
- Lady Wesmoreland unfinished *[?Dorothy Fane (1650-1740), wife of Charles Fane (1634/35-1691) 3rd Earl of Westmorland]*
- Essex Digby Bishop of Dromore *[father, as before]*
- Ditto Rosamond
- Lady Postcoat
- Rosamond and Locket
- Bishop Burnet unfinnished *[Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715), Scottish theologian and prolific historical author. Bishop of Salisbury 1689-1715]*
- Bishop Taylor unfinished *[Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667) author of devotional works. Bishop of Down and Connor 1661-67]*
- Miss Betty Marsh unfinished *[daughter Elizabeth, as before]*
- 9 finished pictures unknown
- 6 more not quite finished unknown

– 56 –

— [f.2v] —

- Lady Allen unfinished *[?cousin Mary FitzGerald (b.1666), sister of Robert FitzGerald (1675-1743/44), 19th Earl of Kildare, married John Allen (1660/61-1726) of Stillorgan, county Dublin in 1684. He was created Baron Allen of Stillorgan and Viscount]*

Allen in 1717. SD's cousin via his paternal grandmother Lettice FitzGerald (c.1580-1658). She was also connected to SD by marriage; Viscount Allen's sister Eleanor married Henry Westenra in 1700, SD's brother-in-law]

12 ~~almost~~ the faces almost finished unknown
 13 not Near finished
 7 only ye out Lines Done
 2 History pictures unfinished 35

[watercolours on f.1v]	18	[total number watercolours]	109
[watercolours on f.2r]	56	[total number oils]	42
[watercolours on f.2v]	<u>35</u>	[total number set in gold locketts]	<u>4</u>
	109	[grand total]	155

Pictures Sett in Gold Locketts

The Bishops own [SD]
 Ditto
 Mr John Digby [?son, as before]
 Mrs Thamosin Digby – 4 – [mother, as before]
 All the beforementioned pictures are Valued at [blank]⁶¹

Tot 155

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ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

NLI National Library of Ireland
 NLI, Monivea NLI, French of Monivea manuscripts, box PC17 (1-30), envelope 26, Inventory of Simon and Elizabeth Digby's personal estate, 1720

- ¹ John Lodge and Mervyn Archdall, *The Peerage of Ireland*, 7 vols (Dublin, 1789) VI, 284.
- ² Henry Cotton, *Fasti Ecclesiae Hibernicae*, 5 vols (Dublin, 1845-50) III, pt. 8, 281-82.
- ³ G.D. Burtchaell and T.U. Sadlier (eds), *Alumni Dublinenses* (London, 1924) 229. Digby's entry record at TCD in May 1661 gives his age as sixteen, confirming a date of birth of c.1645. His place of birth, Kilminchy, is also noted there.

- ⁴ In a letter from the Duke of Ormond to Sir Richard Rainsford (19th July 1670), the writer notes, ‘my friendship with that Family [the Digbys] being long & great’. Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Carte 219, f.110r.
- ⁵ Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Carte 173, f.33v. Digby is here described as a ‘clerke and one of our Chaplains’. Secondary sources vary as to whether Digby was chaplain to Ormond or his son Ossory. The distinction may not have seemed relevant at the time and his chaplaincy might have been attached to the Lord Lieutenancy in general, as Ossory assumed the responsibility of this role from his father (under the title of Lord Deputy) in the same month as Digby’s appointment.
- ⁶ Cotton, *Fasti*, I, pt. 1, 70; pt. 4, 329; II, pt. 5, 238, 261; IV, 128-29. James Ware, *The whole works of Sir James Ware concerning Ireland*, 3 vols (Dublin, 1739-46) I, 516.
- ⁷ William Nicolson, Bishop of Derry, to William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury, letter dated 3rd May 1720. Francis Godwin James (ed.), ‘Derry in the time of George I: selections from Bishop Nicolson’s letters, 1718-1722’, *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, third series, 17, 1954, 173-86: 179.
- ⁸ Denis A. Cronin, *A Galway Gentleman in the Age of Improvement. Robert French of Monivea, 1716-79* (Dublin, 1995) 14. Repeated in Edith Mary Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish Parliament 1692-1800*, 6 vols (Belfast, 2002) IV, 248, and in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 9 vols (Cambridge, 2009) III, 1108. These entries assume that Digby’s ‘land speculation’ caused him to neglect his diocesan duties.
- ⁹ NLI, Monivea, f.114r-v.
- ¹⁰ The inventory of 1720 records the books at Abbert as ‘74 folios’, ‘76 Quartos’, ‘215 Octavos’ and ‘121 Duodecimos’, valued at £37. In the study at Lacken, with Digby’s painting equipment, were ‘77 folio books’, ‘66 octavos’ and ‘95 Duodecimos’ valued at £35. No itemised inventory is known. NLI, Monivea, f.3v, 11v.
- ¹¹ Letter to Revd John Strype dated 5th August 1690. ‘Some Letters of Toby and James Bonnell’, *The English Historical Review*, XIX, 74, 1904, 299-306: 302.
- ¹² Trinity College Dublin, MS 8189, f.59. Letter to William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury, dated 12th April 1720. The letter is signed off as ‘W. D.’, representing William King, Archbishop of Dublin, as was the epistolary convention. The author of this letter was mistakenly given as Bishop Henry Downes in *The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland*, fourth series, II, 2, 1873, 247-61: 253. This misattribution has been repeated subsequently. Downes was Digby’s immediate successor as Bishop of Elphin.
- ¹³ NLI, MS 12149, p.60. Letter dated 9th September 1732. Robert was writing to his brother, the artist Hugh Howard.
- ¹⁴ Toby Barnard, ‘Improving clergymen, 1660-1760’, in A. Ford, J. McGuire and K. Milne (eds), *As by Law Established. The Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995) 136-151: 142. Patrick McNally, ‘“Irish and English Interests”: National Conflict within the Church of Ireland Episcopate in the Reign of George I’, *Irish Historical Studies*, XXIX, 115, 1995, 295-314.
- ¹⁵ Lambeth Palace Library, MS 3152, f.6-29. The diary was purchased by the Friends of Lambeth Palace Library in 1981 ‘at a sale in the west country’. Lambeth Palace Library Annual Report 1981-82, 6.
- ¹⁶ Francis G. James, *Lords of the Ascendancy. The Irish House of Lords and its Members, 1600-1800* (Dublin and Washington DC, 1995) 140. James Anthony Froude, *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, 3 vols (London, 1872-74) I, 254-55. An anecdote in *Laois Yearbook* (1989) of Digby visiting the defeated King James near Paris in the 1690s, where ‘the King thanked him for his loyalty to him and his country’ is unsubstantiated, and most doubtful.
- ¹⁷ NLI, Monivea. See Appendix.
- ¹⁸ *ibid.*, f.11v.

- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, f.2v.
- ²⁰ Stephen Lloyd, *Portrait Miniatures from the Daphne Foskett Collection* (Edinburgh, 2003) 68.
- ²¹ NLI, Monivea, f.1v.
- ²² *ibid.*
- ²³ Richard Walker and Alastair Laing, *Portrait Miniatures in National Trust Houses. vol. 1: Northern Ireland* (London, 2003) 11.
- ²⁴ Richard Congreve, 'Table-Talk of Bishop Hough', Montagu Burrows (ed.), *Collectanea*, second series (Oxford, 1890) 387-402: 394.
- ²⁵ [Richard Smalbroke], *Some Account of the Right Reverend Dr. John Hough, Late Lord Bishop of Worcester* (London, 1743) 15-16. John Wilmot, *The Life of the Rev. John Hough D.D.* (London, 1812) 81-83, 86-88.
- ²⁶ NLI, Inchiquin MS 2621, quoted in Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin, *The Watercolours of Ireland* (London, 1994) 301. Toby Barnard, 'The worlds of a Galway squire: Robert French of Monivea, 1716-79', in Gerard Moran (ed.), *Galway History and Society* (Dublin, 1996) 271-296: 294 n85.
- ²⁷ Now NGI (no. 6292).
- ²⁸ NLI, Monivea, f.1v.
- ²⁹ Characterised by the use of richly pigmented opaque watercolour, or bodycolour, on vellum or card.
- ³⁰ Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting. The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768* (New Haven and London, 1988) 4-14, 181-84.
- ³¹ Trinity College Dublin, MS 8189, f.59. King to Wake, dated 12th April 1720.
- ³² National Archives, Kew, Forfeited Estates Commission 1/876, An Inventory of the Goods of the late Duke of Ormond at the Castle of Kilkenny taken in December 1716 and Appraised the 7th of October 1717. In the duchess's closet were *The old Duke of Ormond in Water colours* and *The Earle of Ossory in Water Colours* by Digby, each valued at £3.
- ³³ Roger de Piles [transl. John Savage], *The Art of Painting, and the lives of the painters ... to which is added, An Essay towards an English-School, with the Lives and Characters of above 100 Painters* (London, 1706) 414.
- ³⁴ *ibid.*, 'The Dedication', unpaginated.
- ³⁵ The National Archives, Kew, Prob 11/656. Buckeridge's will.
- ³⁶ de Piles, *Art of Painting*, 'The Dedication', unpaginated.
- ³⁷ Buckeridge is believed to have had Catholic and Jacobite allegiances. By singling out the bishop as a unique example, he may have sought to demonstrate how, as he saw it, the Protestant faith tended to stifle artistic creativity when compared with other nations. With thanks to Caroline Good, PhD candidate, University of York and Tate Britain ('The Making of a National Art History: British writers on art and the narratives of nation 1660-1735'), for sharing her knowledge of Buckeridge.
- ³⁸ Jenner, *A Book of Drawing, Limning, Washing or Colouring* (1666 edition) 20.
- ³⁹ Sanderson, *Graphice* (London, 1658) 67.
- ⁴⁰ *ibid.*
- ⁴¹ Congreve, 'Table-Talk', 394. One portrait of Hough by Digby survives and is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London (Plate 14).
- ⁴² *Self-portrait* (Plate 2) and *Essex Digby* (Plate 3) both display areas of weakness.
- ⁴³ Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman* (London, 1622) 108.
- ⁴⁴ For example, see Gandy's borrowings from Wissing's mezzotint of John, Lord Burleigh, published 1686. Jane Fenlon, 'The Talented and Idle Mr. William Gandy of Ireland', *Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, 12, 1996, 130-38: 134.

- ⁴⁵ Simon and Elizabeth had a large family of nine sons and eight daughters, of whom eight died in childhood or adolescence. While the three children presumably represented the full brood at the time of the painting, it is not possible to identify them equivocally.
- ⁴⁶ Wissing and his studio reused this pose and exact drapery for other sitters, but only *Princess Anne* is known to have been published as a print, and therefore must be Digby's source. Interestingly, two Wissing studio portraits now in the Kilkenny Castle collection reproduce this same pose and drapery; that of Anne Hyde (1669-1685), first wife of the 2nd Duke of Ormonde is believed to have been in Butlers' London residence by 1689 (Jane Fenlon, *The Ormonde Picture Collection* (Dublin, 2001) 40, 74-75, 77). It is not impossible that Digby would have seen it, but his precise reproduction of this portrait model would suggest that he was copying directly from the print.
- ⁴⁷ See online catalogue, GAC ref. 758.
- ⁴⁸ Sold at Christie's, London, 12th July 1988, lot 22, catalogue illustration.
- ⁴⁹ Anna Wells Rutledge, 'Who was Henrietta Johnston?', *Antiques*, LI, 3, 1947, 183-85: 183-84. Margaret Simons Middleton, *Henrietta Johnston of Charles Town, South Carolina. America's First Pastellist* (South Carolina, 1966) 1-4.
- ⁵⁰ Anne Crookshank, 'Johnston, Henrietta (c.1674-1729)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004). Available at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/59669> (accessed 16th April 2012).
- ⁵¹ Caroline Pegum, 'An Ingenious Painter': new factors in the early career of Charles Jervas', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, XIII, 2010, 78-95: 89
- ⁵² See endnote 26.
- ⁵³ Fenlon, *Ormonde*, 112.
- ⁵⁴ *Henry Howard (1608-52), Earl of Arundel, Surrey and Norfolk* by Pierre Lombart after Van Dyck, line engraving, published c.1660. *George, Prince of Denmark (1653-1708)* by John Smith, after Kneller, mezzotint, published c.1690 or c.1704-08. See National Portrait Gallery online catalogue for both.
- ⁵⁵ Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, vol. 3 (Strawberry Hill, 1763) 135.
- ⁵⁶ A note dated 29th June 1862 attached to the reverse of the two works now in the National Museum of Ireland (Plates 5, 6), based on provenance received directly from Petrie. The bishop's son and heir John (1691-1786), who inherited his father's collection (see endnote 61), and his descendants lived at Landenstown, county Kildare.
- ⁵⁷ *Dublin Literary Gazette*, 22, 29th May 1830, 337-38. The essay was reprinted in the *Dublin Penny Journal*, I, 45, 4th May 1833, 354-55, when Petrie was the *Journal's* editor, and the essay is initialled 'P'.
- ⁵⁸ The bishop died on 7th April 1720 at Lackan, his wife Elizabeth eight days later. They were both buried on 20th April in Mount Talbot cemetery, seven miles west of Lackan.
- ⁵⁹ Cotton, *Fasti*, II, pt. 5, 262.
- ⁶⁰ Lambeth Palace Library, MS 3152, f.6-29: f.22r (2nd-3rd February 1688/89). Cotton, *Fasti*, I, pt. 4, 357.
- ⁶¹ A contemporaneous document entitled 'John Digby Accts of his fathers Assets' mentions 'that ye Pictures & Frames were valued at [£]450'. The collection was bequeathed to the bishop's nine surviving children, who either gifted or sold their share to the eldest son, John. Same document reference as inventory.