

# Lady Anne Conolly (1713-97): context and collection

# NICOLA FIGGIS

SEARCH FOR EDMOND GARVEY'S VIEWS OF CASTLETOWN IN THE CHRISTIE'S SALE catalogue of 1797 of Lady Anne Conolly's collection<sup>1</sup> piqued interest in this lesser known doyenne of Castletown House (Plates 1, 6). Eldest daughter of Thomas Wentworth (1672-1739), 1st Earl of Strafford, of Wentworth Castle, Yorkshire, she was to marry William James Conolly (1706-1754), nephew and heir of William 'Speaker' Conolly (1662-1729). On the death of Speaker Conolly, his widow Katherine (1660-1752) continued to live at Castletown, and it was not until she died in 1752 that William James and Lady Anne inherited Castletown, where they lived for a relatively short period, due to his untimely death two years later.

The attempt to delve further into Lady Anne's family history has proved somewhat challenging, with the repetition of family names over several generations. In addition, the succession of the earls of Strafford is acknowledged as particularly complicated, with the title being created three times in British history.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this short notice is therefore is to piece together preliminary research on Lady Anne and her family and to provide a brief overview of her collection, which was auctioned over two days, on 13th and 14th June 1797 by Christie's at No. 5 St James's Square, London.

Lady Anne's father Thomas Wentworth (1672-1739) was a grand-nephew of the more illustrious Sir Thomas Wentworth (1593-1641), 1st Earl of Strafford. In the late 1630s the latter was captured strikingly in armour by van Dyck in several portraits, after which numerous copies were produced (Plate 2) (including one at Castletown). A staunch royalist, and minister of Charles I, Lord Strafford served unpopularly in Ireland both as Lord Deputy in the 1630s and in 1640 as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in the year before his execution. Fifty-five years later, in 1695, Thomas Wentworth inherited from his uncle William the baronetcy of Raby, another family title, but the estates were left instead to Thomas Watson, his aunt's nephew. However, as a reward for his own diplomatic efforts

<sup>1 –</sup> Artist unknown (circle of Thomas Bardwell), LADY ANNE CONOLLY date unknown, oil on canvas, 217 x 151 cm (Wrotham Park Collection; photo: Castletown Foundation)



2 – after Sir Anthony van Dyck, Sir Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford c.1633, oil on canvas, 124.5 x 108 cm (National Portrait Gallery, London; on display at Lyme Park, Stockport)

as British Ambassador Extraordinary to The Hague, in 1711 Thomas Wentworth was elevated in the peerage as 1st Earl of Strafford of the second creation. To balance his lack of inherited funds, on 6th September 1711 Thomas Wentworth married Anne (d.1754), the heiress of Sir Henry Johnson of Bradenham, Buckinghamshire, a wealthy shipbuilder with estates in Suffolk and Bedfordshire. With new money from this Hogarthian marriage à la mode, the Earl and Countess shortly afterwards bought a prestigious London



3 – Gawen Hamilton, Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, and his family c.1732, oil on canvas, 94 x 84 cm (private collection / Bridgeman Art Gallery)

residence at No. 5 St James's Square, dating to 1676, immediately adjacent to houses owned by the Earl of Portland and the Duke of Kent. As discussed at length by Hannah Greig, the newlyweds attempted to ensure their place in polite society.<sup>3</sup> The Countess set about equipping the house, their wealth and status emphasised by the inclusion of the family crest on many objects.<sup>4</sup> She had to haggle over the furnishings of the previous owner, Sir Richard Child, in respect of wall-glasses, marble tables, over-door pictures

and the fittings of one room 'hung with Giult Leathere the Handsomest I ever see'.5

The couple subsequently had one son William (1722-1791) and three daughters; the eldest, Lady Anne, who was born on 5th March 1713, is the subject of this short notice. Like her mother, she became a devotee of fashionable life and attended court.<sup>6</sup> A group portrait by Gawen Hamilton painted in c.1732 (Plate 3) shows the Strafford family in a grand reception room, presumably at No. 5 St James's Square, with Thomas Wentworth resplendent on his gilded armchair, the top rail surmounted by an earl's coronet. While the devoted son and heir is the centre of attention, Lady Anne and her two sisters, albeit dressed in their finery and taking tea, are clearly relegated to one side.<sup>7</sup>

In 1739 Thomas Wentworth, the 1st Earl, died, and Lady Anne's brother William succeeded him as 2nd Earl of Strafford. He went on to make lavish changes to the house, including rebuilding to the designs of Matthew Brettingham in the late 1740s.8 Among his circle, he could boast as a friend the art historian Horace Walpole, who, in his *Anecdotes of Painting*, recorded that a French painter, Clermont, had decorated Lord Strafford's 'eating room' with grotesque decoration, after Raphael's designs for the Vatican loggia.9 One can assume that William would have consulted Walpole, an arbiter of eighteenth-century taste in Old Master paintings and author of *Aedes Walpolianae* (London, 1747, concerning Robert Walpole's collection at Houghton Hall), on any additions that he may have made to augment the Wentworth family picture collection.

William's sister, Lady Anne (Plates 1, 6), at the age of twenty, on 28th April 1733, married William James Conolly (1706-1754), MP for Ballyshannon, son of Speaker Conolly's only brother, Patrick. In 1731, two years earlier, William had purchased Leixlip Castle (Plate 4), which became their Irish home. William Conolly and Lady Anne had one son, Thomas (Tom) (1738-1803) and seven daughters, among them Frances, Anne, Harriet and Caroline. Lady Anne clearly wished to continue in the style to which she had become accustomed (Plate 5), and in October 1733 attended Dublin Castle. Clearly amused by the viceroy's wife, she wrote 'I like Queen Dorset much better than Queen Caroline'. In general, however, she was disdainful of what she perceived as the provincialism of Ireland, looking down in particular on country house architecture. According to Barnard, 'even Castletown barely passed muster'. In June 1733, soon after his marriage to Lady Anne, William purchased Stretton Hall, Staffordshire, for £15,000, to give her an English home. In his own words, Stretton Hall was 'quite a half-way house ... to rest at [being] 130 miles from London [and] 136 miles from Holyhead'. In

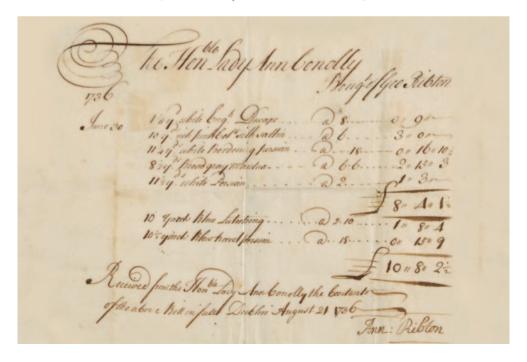
Not until September 1752, on the death of Speaker Conolly's widow Katherine, did they move to Castletown House, but their residency there was to be short lived due to the untimely death of William Conolly in 1754. Lady Anne returned with her children to London, leasing rooms at No. 6 Grosvenor Square from 1755 until 1796, the year before her death. In this elegant house, with its grand entrance hall and stairway, 12 she had space to entertain friends in London society, such as Lady Mary Coke, and, like her, would have been a regular attender at court. 13

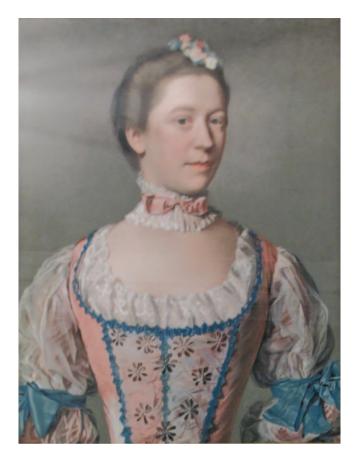
In 1759, when Tom Conolly reached his majority, he inherited Castletown, along



4 – Joseph Tudor, View of Leixlip Castle with the Salmon Leap c.1752, oil on plaster, 157.5 x 157.5 cm (detail)

5 – Manuscript bill to Lady Anne Conolly for fabrics (both illus courtesy OPW / Castletown Foundation)





6 – Jean-Étienne Liotard (1702-1789), LADY ANNE CONOLLY c.1754, pastel

7 – Anthony Van Dyck, Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Cleveland (1591-1667) with HIS FIRST WIFE, Anne, Countess OF Cleveland (d. 1638) and THEIR TWO CHILDREN c.1636, oil on canvas, 156 x 246 cm

(both illus courtesy Wrotham Park Collection)

with debts amounting to £36,000.<sup>14</sup> In the same year Tom married Lady Louisa Lennox, the Duchess of Leinster's sister. Far from being the marriage of convenience of his maternal grandfather, it was the match of neighbouring sweethearts. Between structural and decorative changes to the house which cost £25,000, and the expenses involved in running and maintaining his properties, including Leixlip Castle, Tom's annual income of £27,000 (in 1799) from estates in Ireland, was to prove inadequate.<sup>15</sup>

In 1791 Lady Anne's brother, William Wentworth, died childless, and his effects were left to her for her life, including the family property at No. 5 St James's Square. In spite of verbal promises to the cash-strapped Tom Conolly, whom the 2nd Earl had subsequently criticised for want of discipline, Strafford's last will stipulated that on Lady Anne's death, the effects should be passed to George Byng Junior (1764-1847) of Wrotham Park, Middlesex, Lady Anne's grandson. Lady Anne was so outraged at her brother's will that she took legal proceedings in January 1792 to nullify it. This seems to have had the effect of allowing her executors to sell the contents of the house, including the paintings, rather than passing them on directly to George Byng.

Over five years later, on 17th February 1797, Lady Anne herself died. After only

four months, on 13th and 14th June 1797, a sale was held by Christie's at her 'late mansion' at St James's Square. The catalogue reveals that in scale this was a relatively modest collection of paintings for a London house compared with those of the long established Devonshire, Bedford, Northumberland and Spencer dynasties. The portraits would appear to have descended through her family, such as the large family group by Anthony van Dyck (lot 38), showing Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Cleveland (1591-1667) with his first wife, Anne, Countess of Cleveland (d.1638) and their two children, Thomas, later 5th Lord Wentworth (1613-1665) and Anne (1623-1697) (Plate 7). At the sale this portrait sold for £231, acquired by 'Byng', undoubtedly George Byng Jr, the future owner of the house, along with six other paintings of lesser value, including a half-length portrait by van Dyck of the 1st Earl of Strafford in armour (lot 34), and a full-length portrait of Queen Anne by Godfrey Kneller (lot 30a).

Also included in the same sale were several copies after portraits by van Dyck. Documents relating to a group of portraits commissioned by Thomas Wentworth (1593-1641) reveal that along with the original works, replicas by other artists could be ordered simultaneously. The rates recorded were £20 for a half-length and £30 for a full-length, an opportunity clearly availed of in Wentworth's case given the large number of copies which are known to exist after his portraits by van Dyck (National Portrait Gallery, London; Rockingham Castle, Northamptonshire; Euston Hall, Suffolk; Castletown House).<sup>20</sup>

Apart from family portraits by van Dyck and royal portraits by Peter Lely (lot 32) and Godfrey Kneller (lot 30a), Lady Anne Conolly's sale catalogue reflects the prevail-



ing taste of the eighteenth century for Italian mythological and religious pieces by artists like Guido Reni and Titian (lot 35), as well as seventeenth-century Dutch landscapes. It also serves as a reminder of the acceptability of collecting copies such as those included in the sale after Raphael, Veronese and Carlo Maratta. It is interesting to note that there is no work by any of the great British portraitists of the second half of the eighteenth century in the sale which William Wentworth or Lady Anne might have commissioned. The two views of Castletown by the Irish artist Edmund Garvey (lot 7) appear to have been commissioned by Tom Conolly as a gift for his uncle (as discussed by Jeanne Meldon, pp.156-60).

In addition to paintings and sculpture, which appear here in the Appendix, the catalogue also included 'verd antique slabs, large glasses, library of books, household furniture, &c.', indicating a major clearance of the house contents before the arrival of George Byng, who was forced to pay for anything from the sale that he wished to retain. One can only speculate on Tom Conolly's mild satisfaction at the price of the large van Dyck group portrait (Plate 7), as having sold at £231 it appears to have increased substantially in value. Lord Cleveland's Schedule of Debts includes '£100' owed to van Dyck, which was most likely for the same portrait.<sup>21</sup>

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful thanks are due to Jane Fenlon, Mary Heffernan, Christopher Moore, Charles Dace and Elizabeth Mayes, as well as to Jennifer Downey for generously sharing her research on the Conolly portraits. I am also indebted to Conor Lucey for suggesting useful sources and for his most helpful comments.

# **ENDNOTES**

- Getty Provenance Index Databases, http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb?path= pi/pi. web, accessed November 2017. Original catalogue at Christie Manson & Woods, London. Some editorial modifications have been made to the appended catalogue on pages 152-55 for clarity.
- <sup>2</sup> Hannah Greig, The Beau Monde: fashionable society in Georgian London (OUP, 2013) 271, n.8.
- This attempt was ultimately unsuccessful as in 1715 the Whigs attempted to have Thomas Wentworth impeached for apparent treachery with the French in the course of his diplomatic work on the unpopular Treaty of Utrecht. Greig, *Beau Monde*, 37-47.
- <sup>4</sup> Greig, Beau Monde, 43.
- <sup>5</sup> 'St. James's Square: No 5', in F.H.W. Sheppard (ed.), *Survey of London: Volumes 29 and 30, St James Westminster, Part 1* (London, 1960) 99-103. British History Online, http://www.british-history. ac.uk/survey-london/vols29-30/pt1/pp99-103, accessed 12th January 2018.
- <sup>6</sup> In October 1733 Lady Anne visited her aunt, Anne Donelan, to give her a preview of her dress and jewels before being presented at court. Greig, *Beau Monde*, 119.
- As the eldest daughter, it is likely to be Lady Anne on the extreme right in charge of pouring the tea.
- <sup>8</sup> 'St. James's Square: No 5' and British History Online (see note 5).

- 9 ibid.
- For references to Dublin Castle, see Toby Barnard, Making the Grand Figure: lives and possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770 (Yale, 2004) 3, 50. On 21st August 1736 she purchased silks and a 'Broad gray Mantua' gown from George Ribton in Dublin (Plate 5). In Elizabeth Mayes (ed.), Castletown: Decorative Arts (OPW, Trim, 2011) 226, cat. FC136, a facsimilie of the document appears on the verso of the dustjacket.
- A.P.W. Malcomson, 'The fall of the house of Conolly 1758-1803', in Allan Blackstock and Eoin Magennis (eds), *Politics and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland*, 1750-1850: essays in tribute to Peter Jupp (Belfast, 2007) 123.
- Grosvenor Square: Individual Houses built before 1926', in F.H.W Sheppard (ed.), Survey of London: Volume 40, the Grosvenor Estate in Mayfair, Part 2, The Buildings, (London, 1980) 117-66.
  British History Online http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol40/pt2/pp117-166 accessed 10th January 2018.
- Greig, Beau Monde, 198. In 1768, over dinner, they discussed the scandal that was brewing about her daughter-in-law's sister, Lady Sarah Bunbury, who was about to abscond with the father of her illegitimate child.
- James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography: from the earliest times to the year 2002*, 9 vols (Cambridge, 2009) II, 774-75. These debts were incurred after the death of Speaker Conolly who was reputed to be the wealthiest man in Ireland in 1729, with an annual income amounting to £17,000, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, www.oxforddnb.com.
- <sup>15</sup> McGuire and Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 775.
- <sup>16</sup> Son of her daughter, Anne Byng (d.1806), married to George Byng Senior (b.1735).
- <sup>17</sup> Malcomson, 'The fall of the house of Conolly', 123.
- <sup>18</sup> See Giles Waterfield, 'The Town House as Gallery of Art', London Journal, vol. 20, no. 1, 1995, 47.
- <sup>19</sup> See Susan J. Barnes et al, *Van Dyck*, *A Complete Catalogue of the Paintings* (Yale, 2004) 491-92. The provenance states that the portrait passed from William Wentworth to Anne Conolly.
- <sup>20</sup> Oliver Millar, Van Dyck in England (National Portrait Gallery, London 1982) 69.
- Barnes et al., Van Dyck, fig. IV.78. On 21st October 1633, Lord Wentworth paid £40 for a full length portrait of Queen Henrietta Maria, ibid., 524. The larger sum of £100 for a work painted in the same decade, is likely to indicate a group portrait.

APPENDIX

CHRISTIE'S SALE, London, 13th-14th June 1797

overleaf

# NICOLA FIGGIS

# APPENDIX

# CHRISTIE'S SALE, London, 13th-14th June 1797 (reproduced courtesy of the Getty Provenance Index)

the following abbreve Bessborough		riations are used: Frederick Ponsonby, 3rd Earl of Bessborough Michael Bryan	Slade Spackman Strange Smith	Thomas Moore Slade Charles Spackman John Strange [?] Smith, Oxford Street	
Christ	ie	James Christie (II)	Vulliamy	Benjamin Lew	is Vulliamy
lot	artist / title			sold (13.6.1797)	buyer
1	Anonymous Two portraits	s, and flight into Egypt, small	[paintings]	£0 19s	Seguier
2	ITALIAN SCHO	OOL ying on a violin [painting]		£0 17s	Seguier
3	Anonymous Two, a night	scene, and one of fruit and still	ll life [paintings]	£0 12s	Thwaites
4	VERELST (Du Three, pictur	atch) res of flowers, door pieces [pa	aintings]	£2 2s	Seguier
5		f Wentworth castle, quarter portraits [paintings]		£0 6s	Lewis
6	Anonymous A portrait of half length	Thomas Earl of Strafford in hi	is robes,	£0 14s	Thwaites
7		MUND (British) aken on Mr. Connolly's estate,	in Ireland	£3 10s	Ewen
8		ARLO (Italian), copy after eda, a pair, after [paintings]		£2 6s	Price
9		PAOLO CALIARI) (Italian), copy ematical, after [paintings]	after	£2 5s	Seguier
10a		O (DOMENICO ZAMPIERI) (Italiang the sacrament to St. Jerome	<i>'</i>		
10b	ROCCA, MICI	HELE (PARMIGIANINO) (Italian) In the Cross [painting]	[pamung]	£3 5s	Slade

# LADY ANNE CONOLLY'S COLLECTION

11	ITALIAN SCHOOL A Madonna and child, and two Italian sea-ports [paintings]	£2 10s	Price
12	Anonymous Two of school-masters with their pupils, and 2 flower pieces [paintings]	£1 18s	Thwaites
13[a]	Anonymous A small picture of the portraits of Lord Strafford and Bishop Laud [painting]		
13[b]	ANONYMOUS A drawing of a boy's head, and 2 drawings of a bridge [drawings]	£4 0s	Bessborough
14	GIORDANO, LUCA (Italian) Two, representing the annunciation [paintings]	£3 3s	Slade
15	GIORDANO, LUCA (Italian) Two, subjects from Ovid [paintings]	£2 12s	Wood
16	ANONYMOUS A half-length portrait of Ann Campbell, Countess of Strafford [painting]	unknown	unknown
17	Anonymous A pair of views of Wentworth Castle [paintings]	£0 10s	Strange
18	Moucheron (Dutch) An upright landscape [painting]	£12 1s	Byng
19	ITALIAN SCHOOL Diana with her nymphs reposing [painting]	£4 8s	Bryan
20	Reni, Guido (Italian) A Madonna and child, after, and a half length portrait of a lady [paintings]	£1 10s	Price
21	RAFFAELLO SANTI (Italian), copy after The Holy Family, a copy [painting]	£7 7s	Bryan
22	VERONESE (PAOLO CALIARI) (Italian) A pair of allegorical subjects [paintings]	£3 3s	Wood
23	KNELLER, GODFREY, BART. (British) A whole-length portrait of Lady Strafford [painting]	£1 5s	Spackman
24	VELDE, WILLEM VAN DE (Dutch) A sea storm, with shipwreck [painting]	£2 2s	Thwaites

# NICOLA FIGGIS

lot	artist / title	sold (13.6.1797)	buyer
25	DYCK, ANTHONIE VAN (Flemish), copy after A three-quarter portrait of Lord Strafford, after [painting]	£9 9s	Bryan
26	Bassano (Italian) A large picture of the Creation [painting]	£2 12s	Wood
27	RENI, GUIDO (Italian), copy after David, with the head of Goliath, after [painting]	£2 14s	Wood
28	CARRACCI (Italian), copy after The Descent from the Cross, after the capital picture in the Orleans collection [painting]	£5 15s	Christie
29	Anonymous Two portraits, three-quarters, brothers of Lord Strafford [paintings]	£0 10s	Strange
30	Anonymous Two ditto [portraits], a young lady and gentleman [paintings]	£3 13s	Byng
30[a]	KNELLER, GODFREY, BART. (British) A whole-length portrait of Queen Anne [painting]	£1 1s	Byng
31	KNELLER, GODFREY, BART. (British) Two portraits of ladies, 3-quarters [paintings]	£0 15s	Jolley
32	Lely, Peter (British) Two ditto [portraits], King Charles the Second, and King James [paintings]	£1 1s	Jolley or Spackman
33	Lely, Peter (British) Two, a 3-quarter of Lady Apsley, and half-length of a lady at a fountain [paintings]	£1 3s	Breadan
34	DYCK, ANTHONIE VAN (Flemish) Half-length portrait of Thomas Earl of Strafford in armour [painting]	£25 4s	Byng
35	TIZIANO VECELLIO (Italian) Ditto [half-length] of a knight of the Golden Fleece [painting]	£22 1s	Byng
36	Walker, Robert (British) A three-quarter portrait of Oliver Cromwell [painting]	£12 1s	Byng
37	MARATTI, CARLO (Italian) A large picture representing the Judgement of Paris [painting]	£4 4s	Price

# LADY ANNE CONOLLY'S COLLECTION

38	DYCK, ANTHONIE VAN (Flemish) A remarkable and very capital family piece of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Cleveland, with his lady, son, and daughter Ever esteemed one of the finest pictures painted by this celebrated artist [painting] (Plate 7)	£231 0s	Byng
39	Anonymous, copy after Five basso relievos, in imitation of the antique [sculptures]	£1 8s	Price
40	no entry		
41[a]	ANONYMOUS Four small bronzes, various figures, one of a dragon [sculptures]		
41[b]	Anonymous 2 small heads, profiles in wax [sculptures]	£3 3s	Smith
42	Anonymous A large bronze of the Venus de Medici, and one of the piper, large and capital, on pedestals [sculptures]	£5 15	Heath
43[a]	Anonymous Three statues, and 6 sphinxes [sculptures]		
43[b]	ANONYMOUS 2 small figures plain [sculptures]	£0 7s	Bucking- hamshire
44	COOPER, SAMUEL (British) A fine miniature portrait of Oliver Cromwell [miniature]	_	bought in
45	Veronese (Paolo Caliari) (Italian) Jupiter and Europa [painting]	£4 14s	bought in
46	Lely, Peter (British) Lady Sutherland [painting]	£2 12s	Toode
47	Lely, Peter (British) Lord Arlington [painting]	£1 16s	Smith
48	DYCK, ANTHONIE VAN (Flemish) King Charles II [painting]	_	bought in
49	PACE, MICHELANGELO (MICHELANGELO DA CAMPIDOGLIO) (Italian) A fruit piece, very capital [painting]	£6 6s	bought in
50	Anonymous A statue of Henry the Eighth [sculpture]	£6 16s	Vulliamy

155