



*1 – Michael Ford, PORTRAIT OF LORD CHIEF JUSTICE SINGLETON
1747, oil on canvas, 127 x 102 cm (courtesy St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin)*

Michael Ford's portrait of Lord Chief Justice Henry Singleton

DESMOND FITZGERALD, KNIGHT OF GLIN and WILLIAM LAFFAN

for Anne Crookshank

CHARLES SURFACE – Careless! – This, now, is a grandfather of my mother's, a learned judge, well known on the western circuit. – What do you rate him at, Moses?

MOSES – Four guineas.

CHARLES SURFACE – Four guineas! Gad's life, you don't bid me the price of his wig – Mr Premium, you have more respect for the woolsack; do let us knock his lordship down at fifteen.

SIR OLIVER – By all means.

CHARLES SURFACE – Gone!

– Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The School for Scandal*, Act 4; Scene 1

FOR UNDERSTANDABLE REASONS, THE ART MARKET HAS NEVER LOOKED favourably on portraits of judges; they have little commercial appeal and generally lack decorative quality. A similar lack of interest shown to the portrait of the learned judge in *The School for Scandal* seemed to be the fate of the present work when it came under the hammer at Sotheby's in September 2006. However, its correct identification provides for a fascinating, if minor, footnote to the study of Irish painting and printmaking, and it is pleasing to say that the portrait has returned home. If the framework for the study of Irish portraiture of the middle years of the eighteenth century has by now been accurately sketched, with the oeuvres of artists such as James Latham reasonably well defined,¹ Strickland and other sources record the names of many less familiar face painters who plied their trade in Dublin, including one 'virtually lost artist', Michael Ford (d.1765).² *Ireland's Painters* notes that 'his paintings, including one of Lord Chief Justice Singleton in judicial robes (1747), are now only known through engravings'.³ However, at the recent auction in

London, this very portrait of Singleton was discovered (Plate 1), and this note aims to set out the recorded facts about Ford, who hitherto had only been known as a printmaker. At the same time it discusses his sitter Henry Singleton, an important figure in politics, law and architecture of early and mid-eighteenth-century Ireland. The work shows Ford to have been a competent, rather than inspired, painter; nevertheless, he still deserves to be accorded his place in the history of eighteenth-century Irish portraiture.

Ford makes his first appearance in the Dublin press in *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* of January 1743, which notes his return to Dublin 'after ... many years in London'. The *Journal* gives his family background and artistic education: 'son of the Rev. Dr Ford, the Archdeacon of Derry [and] formerly a disciple of Mr. Mitchell, Limner of London'.⁴ In his biography of Ford, Strickland identifies his master as the portrait painter Michael Mitchell, another artist whose oeuvre is poorly defined.⁵ However, in his biography of Mitchell, Strickland seems to be on secure ground in noting that he was the son of Sir Michael Mitchell, formerly a lord mayor of Dublin, who is not known to have worked in England, and certainly would not have been described to a Dublin audience as a 'Limner of London'.⁶ According to Strickland, Ford also studied in France and Italy, making him – along with Hugh Howard and Charles Jervas – amongst the earliest Irish artist to embark on a Grand Tour. Also, like both Howard and Jervas, he acted on occasion as a picture dealer. The 1743 advertisement notes that Ford:

intends to teach young gentlemen and ladies to draw, and paint in oil, water-colours or crayons, and will wait on them if required; he cleans and mends old pictures in the safest manner, as done by the best hands in London, puts in good order any pictures intended for public sale, and gives a good price for old pictures that have not been offered for sale, and will act with the utmost secrecy for those who would not be known to buy or sell... He undertakes house painting, floor cloths, etc., and begs the interest of his friends; those who are pleased to favour him with their work may depend on its being done with the utmost care and the very best dyes and colours.

This account gives a vivid picture of the art business of the time, showing how little has changed: the importance of pictures fresh to the market and the primary need for confidentiality of transactions. It also shows the variety of work Ford was obliged to undertake to make a living. Clearly – at least at this stage in his career – printmaking and portraiture did not suffice; more humdrum tasks such as house painting were a staple part of the business of many artists. The matter of Ford's training in printmaking is unresolved. Chaloner Smith suggests that, like James MacArdell, Richard Houston, Richard Purcell and Charles Spooner, he was a pupil of John Brooks. Strickland considered Andrew Miller a more likely candidate.⁷ By 1758

Ford had taken on his own apprentice, one Charles Fleetwood.⁸

Ford's documented career as a printmaker and publisher is compressed into the short period from 1745 (the date on a mezzotint of the Duke of Cumberland by Andrew Miller, published by Ford) to 1754, when he published an engraving of Emily, Countess of Kildare, after Reynolds. He seems to have performed every permutation of the painter/engraver's business: publishing prints engraved by other artists, engraving with his own hand after other painters' work, and finally, as here, producing engravings after his own oil paintings. Inscriptions on his prints allow us to trace Ford's activities and Dublin addresses. The Cumberland image, and another print after Miller, *Oliver Cromwell and General Lambert*, are inscribed 'sold by Michl. Ford Painter in Ann's Street near Dawson Street'. Ford's brother, who followed their father into the church, lived nearby in Molesworth's Field.⁹ Although only acting as publisher, it is to be noted that on both these engravings Ford specifically, perhaps rather proudly, identifies himself as a painter. In 1746 he advertised an engraving of Archbishop Cobbe, again by Miller (after an oil by Francis Bindon), from his premises 'at Vandyke's head on Cork Hill'.¹⁰ Ford had taken over the premises (previously known as Isaac Newton's Head) from John Brooks.¹¹ It may be presumed that the move was not just a question of relocating to a suitable premises – although it was later used as an auction house – but also involved an element of taking over the goodwill of Brooks' business after the latter moved to London in that year.

An advertisement of June 1746 marking the move gives further information about his stock: 'The said Ford sells a variety of landscapes and other paintings, so that gentlemen and ladies may have the houses or chambers fitted up in a few hours at any time.'¹² The paintings offered for sale would, no doubt, have included imported Italian and Flemish works, but perhaps also works by the emerging Irish landscape school; the earliest signed painting by the young George Barret (private collection), for example, dates from the following year 1747, and outlets such as Ford's would have been vital for artists to retail non-commissioned work. Several of the older generation of landscape painters were also still active, and may have consigned work to Ford for sale; in the very next issue of *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, for example, Joseph Tudor advertised his change of address.

Ford's advertisement continues by tempting prospective clients with the latest choice items, while salving their conscience by presenting shopping for luxury goods as a patriotic activity.

The shop will be always furnished with the newest things, and the undertakers hope that gentlemen will consider what a large sum of money will be saved to this nation, by having work done of the kind at home, a design which the nobility and gentry of this nation have of late strongly promoted.¹³

The wording of the advert reflects the exactly contemporaneous desire by bodies such as the Dublin Society to promote Irish-based design and manufacture for patriotic and economic as much as aesthetic reasons. The self-same impetus led directly to the creation of Richard West's drawing school, which was to be taken over by the Dublin Society. Ford seems to be reflecting, or – for good commercial reasons no doubt – capitalising upon this highly topical desire to promote the homegrown. In the same year, Thomas Prior presented a report to the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Chesterfield, urging the support of native design. Just a month before Ford's advertisement, in May 1746, the minutes of the Dublin Society note the 'benefit and honour [to] this kingdom' that a drawing school would bring.¹⁴ Henry Singleton, Ford's sitter here, was right at the heart of this 'intelligent patriotic coterie' that 'saw the schools as providing the artists and artisans needed to develop their country's infrastructure'.¹⁵ The conflict between the lure of the imported and the desire to support the native was a recurring motif in discussions of all sorts of material culture, from dress to furniture to painting; it emerges at several points in Ford's career. In November 1746 he notes his purchase of a group of prints from London, some of which he plans to have copied by an Irish craftsman who can engrave 'better than any foreigner'. A few years later, however, he advertises the arrival of an important collection of Italian prints from Rome.¹⁶

In 1747 Ford appears as an engraver under his own name for the first time, issuing several prints including portraits of Chief Justice Marlay, Lord Boyne (after Hogarth), and the subject of the present note, Chief Justice Henry Singleton (Plate 2). The latter is one of two prints by Ford which he notes were after paintings by himself; it is inscribed 'Ford Pinxt'. Even more specifically, in 1748, his portrait of Henry Boyle is inscribed 'Ford Pinxit et Fecit'. In addition to satisfying his evident desire to promote himself as a painter, there was a financial implication to this. The Hogarth Act of 1735 offered limited copyright protection to engravers, but only if they were also the designer of the original composition.¹⁷ Issues of copyright and pirating were vital to engravers and publishers like Ford, and slightly later in his career he was to complain that a print he had published, at great expense, of the Earl of Kildare had been copied, leading him to issue a second legitimate edition.¹⁸ However, Ford may not be above plagiarising the work of his fellow Irish engravers: his print of Elizabeth Gunning seems to have been a pirated copy after McArdell.¹⁹

Ford's portrait of Lord Boyne brought to a head a row which had been brewing since late 1746 with his former associate Andrew Miller, who Ford felt was trying to undercut him, thereby forcing him to drop the price of his print of David Garrick as Richard III.²⁰ The Boyne controversy was brought to the Dublin Society for resolution. The exact circumstances are disputed, but clearly the Society was seen at this date as an appropriate arbiter of taste. Miller had also produced an



2 – Michael Ford, PORTRAIT OF LORD CHIEF JUSTICE SINGLETON
1747, mezzotint (courtesy Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)

engraving of Boyne, and Ford inserted an advertisement in the *Dublin Courant* noting that:

at a general meeting of the Dublin Society two whole length mezzotint prints of the late Lord Boyne were produced to them for their judgement and approbation, which of them was most deserving and likest the original painting which was placed by them, one done by Mr Ford on Cork Hill by subscription, the other by one Miller; when on a full examination by many good judges it was unanimously given in favour of Mr. Ford's print.²¹

The following week this version of events, perhaps unsurprisingly, was contested by Miller:

the Dublin Society came to no determination on that head, those prints being laid before them without their order or desire, and that it was never the desire, and that it was never the design of the Society to engage or interfere in any party quarrel between any persons whatsoever – I think it needless to say any more concerning the merit of the prints since Mr. Ford had found it necessary to have recourse to falseness to establish the credit of his. Andrew Miller.²²

The Boyne affair, and the ongoing price war, demonstrate the competitiveness of print publishing in Dublin at the time, with Ford and Miller 'each endeavouring to forestall the other in the publication of portraits of prominent persons'.²³ As in most discussions of portraiture in the eighteenth century, the issue before the Dublin Society was 'likeness'. However, in addition to an artist's ability to capture features on canvas or a copper plate, strategies for success in this hard-fought environment were more complex, and often involved wooing influential individuals and institutions. Ford's dedication of prints to the Dublin Society and to the 'connoisseur' Singleton may, perhaps, be seen as part of this marketing drive. Evidence is tentative, but it seems that the characters – and, indeed, politics – of Ford and his rival Miller differed markedly, which again may have had some bearing on their business practices and respective success. Ford, son of an Anglican cleric and a 'man of approved probity', would have appealed as a printmaker and seller to elements of the loyal Dublin establishment (such as Singleton) in comparison to Miller – 'of irregular habits and given to drink', but more specifically a supporter of the radical Charles Lucas and author of 'scandalous and seditious' material which saw him confined to Newgate.²⁴

Given this competitive market place, and differences of political persuasion, it is not surprising that the prints engraved or published by Ford give an accurate snapshot of what appealed to the print-buying public (or at least a sector within it) in the decades flanking the mid-century. With exceptions of obvious commercial appeal, such as an image of the celebrated beauty Elizabeth Gunning, there is a dis-

tinct focus on subjects and personages associated with the different professions which made up the Protestant establishment, even, although this is more difficult to quantify, the Castle side of it. This gives a context for the portrait of the celebrated Judge Singleton. As noted above, a further member of the bench to be the subject of a print by Ford was Thomas Marlay, Chief Justice of the King's Bench. Unsurprisingly, given his own family background, Ford also published prints of leading figures of the established church. In addition to the image of Archbishop Cobbe, noted above, there is the portrait of Hugh Boulter, Archbishop of Armagh, which he published after Slaughter. He also seems to have engraved an image of Dr Richard Baldwin, Provost of Trinity, as well as the British naval hero Lord Anson.²⁵

At the same time, the specific circumstances of Ireland's politics and history led to the unusual juxtaposition for sale in Ford's shop of prints of the monarchs William III and George II, and the regicide Cromwell. The foundation myth of Protestant Ireland was celebrated by an image of the Battle of the Boyne (advertised as 'in hand' in June 1747),²⁶ while Ford also catered to more immediately pressing political concerns. The only personage of whom Ford published two different images was the hero of the hour (to some at least), the Duke of Cumberland, whose image, especially after Culloden, was much in demand.²⁷ One of these was advertised in April 1746, before the split with Miller:

now engraving and will be published the 15th by Andrew Miller, Engraver on Hog-hill and Michael Ford, Painter in Anne Street, near Dawson Street. A whole length mezzotint of his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland on horseback at the surrender of Carlisle, done from the original picture painted by Thomas Hudson in London. The size of the print is 20 inches long and 14 inches wide. Price 5 shillings and 5 pence.²⁸

In addition, the list of artists after whose work Ford published engravings gives a flavour of the painters whose portraits were circulating in reproduction in Dublin at mid-century. In addition to the Irish artists Bindon and Slaughter were images after the leading London artists, both contemporary and from earlier in the century, Hogarth, Hoare, Hudson and Cotes. Clearly what mattered most to Ford's clientele was the sitter rather than the artist; engravings after Kneller would have looked distinctly old fashioned when displayed side by side with the latest productions of Reynolds.

As well as his documented association with Brooks and Miller, Ford can be further located in the artistic milieu of mid-century Dublin. The printmaking and dealing communities were closely interlocked, and Ford collaborated in different ways with most of his fellow Irish engravers. Both Miller and McArdell were pupils of Brooks, whose premises in Cork Hill Ford took over. Brooks engraved a portrait of Speaker Boyle after a painting by Ford, while after McArdell left for London,

Ford acted on occasion as his agent in Dublin, publishing his prints of the Earl and Countess of Kildare after Reynolds. He also published at least one work by his fellow Irish engraver Charles Spooner. These enormously talented Irish mezzotint engravers, known as the Dublin Group, were to take London by storm, so much so that by 1775 Dr Campbell could write ‘all the scrapers have been Irish except one’.²⁹ However, Ford, having moved in the opposite direction from his younger contemporaries, returning to Dublin in 1743, missed out on the subsequent opportunities that brought such fame to artists like McArdell.

In Dublin, Ford was also in contact with the better-known portrait painter Stephen Slaughter, publishing his portrait of Lieutenant-General Richard St George, as well of that of Archbishop Boulter, noted above. The plate for the St George print (as well as that for a portrait of the Earl of Harrington) was mislaid, and an advertisement in *Sleator’s Public Gazeteer* of November 1765 (shortly after Ford’s death) offered a reward of 2s 6d for its return. Mishaps such as these were presumably rare, and in general Ford’s practice seems to have been quite successful. To hedge the risk of the expensive business of engraving, he operated on the subscription model and kept his public informed of progress through advertisements in the press, such as one relating to his portrait of King William and General Schomberg:

..as he has taken care to perform his first engagement of this print with more expedition than subscriptions of this kind hitherto have been done, [he] humbly hopes for encouragement for this. Subscriptions for each print is two schillings and eight pence halfpenny at subscribing and the same at delivery.³⁰

Newspaper advertisements such as this had been pioneered by Hogarth in London, and this and several of Ford’s other business practices echo those of Arthur Pond, his most successful English contemporary, whom Ford certainly would have known, if only by repute, having engraved his portrait of Lord Anson.³¹

It is difficult even to guess at a typical print-run for Ford’s work. However, several of his works, including that of Singleton, are today exceedingly rare, suggesting that relatively few were produced, or alternatively that the very specific nature and appeal of many of his sitters had little interest to collectors of subsequent generations, and hence they were not treasured and have been lost or destroyed.³² As noted, his use of the press, dedications to influential sitters, and his aggressive tactics in the Miller stand-off suggest a keen awareness of the importance of self-promotion and marketing. Certainly he shows himself attuned to issues of framing and display. In an advertisement of September 1745 he notes the pairing of the King William and Cromwell prints, adding that they were the same size ‘for the convenience of furniture’.³³

Ford produced a relatively small body of mezzotints, nothing like the 250 that McArdell scraped before his untimely death, and it seems that he acted more as a

publisher and print-seller than engraver. He was certainly more successful in this retail trade than Mrs Laetitia Pilkington, his Irish contemporary and possible acquaintance. (An image of her husband's patron, Archbishop Cobbe was for sale in Ford's shop.) Pilkington gives a vivid account of the vagaries of the print-selling market:

...having met with a very great bargain of prints, which were sold under distress, and having some knowledge in that way, I resolved to deal in them; so having decorated out my windows with them to best advantage, early on Monday morning entered my new employ.³⁴

Business prospered for a while until her clothes were stolen and the ever-unfortunate Mrs Pilkington's stock was commandeered by her landlord in lieu of rent.

In later life, Ford suffered a great tragedy: his wife drowned when the ship in which she was crossing the Irish Sea sank in October 1758.³⁵ The suggestion in Chaloner-Smith and Benezit that Ford also perished is, however, incorrect.³⁶ He died on 6th March 1765, having given up his premises in Cork Hill at least three years earlier, perhaps suggesting a lingering illness. Equally, however, the fact that his son and executor, James, was described as a 'gentleman' rather suggests that by the time of his death his father had come into an inheritance, perhaps from the Archdeacon, which enabled Ford to quit the mechanical task of engraving and the suggestion of trade involved in running a shop.³⁷ Ford was buried two days after his death at St Andrew's Church. His obituary, quoted in part above, noted how he was 'greatly esteemed for his many social virtues which endeared him to all his friends and acquaintances'.³⁸

Opinions as to the quality of Ford's prints vary, but he was an important figure in the formation of the Dublin Group. He is omitted from discussion in David Alexander's survey of Irish mezzotint engravers, ironically because unlike McArdell, Frye, Spooner, Fisher and Watson who found success in London, all his engraving was done in Dublin. Ford's work was, however, praised by John Gilbert in his 1854-59 *History of Dublin*, which assembled his oeuvre for the first time.

The engravings published in Dublin by Brooks and Ford ... will bear honourable comparison with the best works of any artists of their time. In general, these Dublin engravings excel in softness, depth and finish, the productions of Faber, John Smith and Valentine Green, and can scarcely be considered inferior even to the works of MacArdel [sic].³⁹

The, albeit impressionistic, snippets of information, gathered above of Ford's print-making, publishing and selling give the sense of a busy trade in mid-century Dublin.

This is in marked contrast to Gandon's description a few decades later: 'in traversing a city of such large extent, the capital of a kingdom, I was greatly surprised to find but one print shop. There were two others in which prints were sold, but their trade was that of glaziers.'⁴⁰ Different accounts give differing impressions of the quantity of prints and other works of art in circulation in mid-century Dublin. However, as Toby Barnard has recently concluded after surveying the subject, 'painted and printed images adorned eighteenth-century Ireland more widely than has usually been supposed'.⁴¹ Perhaps also a difference in print-selling activity can be detected from around 1750 to Gandon's arrival in 1781. By the latter date the most active Irish engravers had long left for London; indeed, most were dead. Certainly at mid-century, when Ford was active, there was a ready market for enterprising artists and dealers to exploit; the key was finding patrons to commission and buy their work. Gentlemen printmakers needed to attract suitable clients, and one such figure looming large in the political, social and artistic milieu in which Ford worked was Henry Singleton, subject of the portrait here discussed.

Mid-eighteenth-century Ireland saw a sometimes surprising element of social mobility. If Ford had perhaps come down in the world (the sons of archdeacons did not usually advertise for house-painting jobs), his sitter Henry Singleton had a dazzling career in politics and the law, rising from a relatively obscure provincial background to the pinnacle of the legal profession. At his death he was estimated to be worth £100,000.

Singleton's father was an alderman of Drogheda, county Louth, reaching the position of town clerkship, which he passed onto his son who was elected MP for the town in 1713.⁴² A friend and colleague of Thomas Conolly, Singleton was himself considered for the speakership in 1733. Being passed over in favour of Henry Boyle, he returned to his lucrative career at the bar.⁴³ Appointed Prime Serjeant in 1726, he became Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in 1740 and Master of the Rolls in 1754. While keeping his house in Drogheda, he also bought an estate, Shercock, in county Cavan, and acquired a townhouse in Jervis Street, but based himself primarily at Belvedere in Drumcondra (Plate 3).⁴⁴ In his recent study of that house, James Kelly persuasively argues for Singleton as the most likely candidate for its rebuilding and development in the 1720s.⁴⁵ Singleton occupied Belvedere on a lease from Marmaduke Coghill, a fellow Tory and political ally from Speaker Conolly's circle.⁴⁶ He busied him developing the gardens, and added a large panelled drawing room, taking advice from his close friend William Bristow, one of the revenue commissioners. Bristow was also a member of the Wide Streets Commission, which ironically in time caused the destruction of Ford's premises on Cork Hill, demolished when Parliament Street was opened up.

Singleton's and Bristow's efforts at building and gardening were dismissed, witheringly, by Mrs Delany, who visited Belvedere in 1750.

He has given Mr Bristow full dominion over house and gardens, and like a conceited connoisseur he is doing strange things, building an absurd room, turning fine wild evergreens out of the garden, cutting down full grown elms and planting twigs!⁴⁷

Mrs Delany was also, rather surprisingly, critical of an unfinished grotto in the grounds 'a clothe bathe that opens up like an arch like a cave', although she did agree to help to 'adorn and make something of it'. James Kelly has recently been kinder to Singleton's time at Belvedere. Reviewing the evidence, he notes that at his death Singleton 'left behind an attractive if somewhat architecturally problematical villa, in a maturing, larger and more regular demesne than that which he had rented thirty-five years previously'.⁴⁸

In contrast to Mrs Delany, Dean Swift, another great gardening enthusiast of the period, was a friend and admirer of Singleton, describing him in a letter to John Barber as 'one of the first among the worthiest persons in this kingdom; of great honour, justice, truth, good-sense, good nature, and knowledge in his faculty'.⁴⁹ A decade later Singleton returned the compliment by serving as one of the executors of Swift's famous will. In the same letter Swift gives an indication of the purpose, or at least one of the purposes, that engraved portraits could serve and, indeed, the responses they could evoke: 'I received lately a very acceptable present which you were pleased to send me, which was an engraved picture of you, very handsomely framed, with a glass over it.'⁵⁰ The giving of gifts between friends, colleagues and political allies was an integral part of the social round, cementing relationships, starting new alliances and healing rifts; engraved portraits – relatively inexpensive, but highly personal – were perfect for the purpose. A little later, Goldsmith wrote to his brother: 'I will shortly send my friends over the Shannon some mezzotinto prints of myself and some more of my friends here, such as Burke, Johnson [and] Reynolds.'⁵¹ No doubt Swift's friend Singleton similarly circulated Ford's engraved portrait of himself as a present for his friends, colleagues at the bar, and influential constituents in Drogheda.

In addition to his friendship with Swift, Singleton was closely acquainted with many of the most senior members of the established Church, notably Theophilus Bolton, Archbishop of Cashel, and Edward Synge, Bishop of Elphin.⁵² He was also close to Bishop Berkeley, one of the most discriminating of all Irish collectors and patrons of the art. The rather dry picture that emerges of Singleton from political and legal records (and, indeed, Marmaduke Coghill's recently published letters) is occasionally punctured by stray references to more human, and humane, events – the gift of some melons from Bishop Synge or his spending £400 on oatmeal to alleviate the inhabitants of Drogheda from the effects of the 1740-41 famine.⁵³ With Singleton's connections to such eminent divines, it may be reason-



ably assumed that Ford's own clerical family background facilitated access to his patronage. With Philip Hussey, James Latham, Stephen Slaughter and Robert Hunter all active, and all rather better painters, there would have been stiff competition in Dublin for this prestigious commission.

Given his building activities, interest in gardening and Mrs Delany's description, albeit mocking, of Singleton as a connoisseur, it is not surprising that he was something of a patron of the arts, although the lack of surviving evidence makes it difficult to quantify to what extent. In addition to the portrait here published, he was also portrayed in a mezzotint by Ford's colleague John Brooks.⁵⁴ Involved in the Dublin Society from its inception, he may well have been one of those 'good judges' who assessed the respective merits of Ford's and Miller's engravings of Lord Boyne. No record has as yet been identified as to the furnishing of Belvedere House during Singleton's occupancy, or indeed evidence of other pictures in his possession. However, in his building and landscaping, as well as his commissioning of Ford's portrait, Singleton was following the example of his clerical friends Berkeley and Swift, but, not surprising given his wealth and position, more specifically that of his close political allies and fellow grandees, the Conollys at Castletown and his particular friend, colleague and landlord Marmaduke Coghill. After leasing Belvedere to Singleton, Coghill developed his own estate at nearby Drumcondra House (possibly with the assistance of his protégé Edward Lovett Pearce), furnishing it with pictures supplied from London by Hugh Howard, and



4 – John Hickey, MONUMENT TO LORD CHIEF JUSTICE SINGLETON, St Peter's Church, Drogheda
opposite 3 – Belvedere House, now St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin
(both courtesy Irish Architectural Archive)

commissioning a portrait of himself by Charles Jervas.⁵⁵ If Mrs Delany's epithet of 'conceited connoisseur' had any basis in truth, it may be the case that the wealthy lawyer Singleton was prone to parroting the genuine appreciation of the visual arts which he could well have imbibed from his more intellectual and knowledgeable friends such as Bishop Berkeley, or indeed his near neighbours, the Cobbes of Newbridge.

Ford's portrait of Singleton is well modelled and has a certain authority. It can be compared directly with similar institutional portraits by Ford's contemporaries, such as Stephen Slaughter's portrait of Singleton's rival for the speakership, Henry Boyle, who was also painted by Ford (private collection), or, indeed, Philip Hussey's image of Judge Blennerhassett (also private collection).⁵⁶ Even allowing for the generic similarities that institutional, perhaps particularly judicial, portraiture engenders, the very close similarities between Ford's portrait of Singleton and Jacopo Amigoni's portrait of Sir Thomas Reeve (Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield) suggest a connection. Reeve was painted in 1736, the year before his death, wearing the robes of Chief Justice of the Common Pleas.⁵⁷ The image was engraved by B. Baron, and hence would likely have been known (for their differing professional reasons) to both Singleton and Ford. Amigoni himself had briefly entered the print-selling business in London in the late 1730s when it seems likely that Ford was in the metropolis. Either Singleton or Ford may have decided upon Amigoni's image as a suitably austere and magisterial model to adapt.

Judicial portraiture aims to capture the dignity of the office as much as the character of the man; certainly Singleton's reported 'amiability' is not immediately apparent in the portrait.⁵⁸ Instead, as befits his office, it is a sober, hieratical image. However, it is not unknown for years on the bench to lead to a certain stiff pomposity, for a public persona to mask inner feelings, and perhaps Ford's achievement is in capturing this very ambivalence which was noted by contemporaries: '...although to those who did not enjoy a close acquaintance he appeared proud and haughty he was far from deserving that character'.⁵⁹ Judicial inscrutability does not always make for happy portraiture, and the commission may have been a difficult one for Ford. This may explain the changes he made between oil and engraving.

It was a common complaint of painters that reproductive engravers could impair certain qualities of their pictures in the transference to copper; certainly not all practitioners had the same mutually beneficial and reinforcing relationship as Reynolds and McArdell. Engraving a print after his own painting, the differences between oil and print (Plates 1, 2) are clearly of Ford's own design. In addition to altering background details such as the shape of the chair-back, Ford has very much reworked Singleton's features. Rather bland and complacent in the oil, they are brought to life in the print, with the vacant eyes now confronting the viewer with the acute and quizzical glance of an experienced judge. The curl of the mouth has been

exaggerated from the pursed lips of the oil, although in neither medium does Ford attempt to disguise Singleton's pronounced double chin. Instead of the loose hand which, in the painting, almost caresses the book, the legal tome, source of his authority, is held in the print with a talon-like grip. If the print conveys the quiet majesty of the law, the print is more suggestive of its coercive, and at times brutal force, making for an altogether more compelling image.

If Michael Ford has largely been forgotten, and certainly he never achieved the acclaim of his Dublin Group colleagues, Henry Singleton's postmortem legacy has also been mixed. Almost twenty years after his death, a fine monument by John Hickey was constructed in St Peter's Church in Drogheda, its completion noted in *The Freeman's Journal* in July 1787 (Plate 4).⁶⁰ It was erected by his nephew Sydenham Singleton, and stands in the building towards the construction of which Singleton had given £500.⁶¹ The monument is crowned by a bust of the judge, while below a personification of Justice mourns his passing. Singleton's library, including notes on his cases in the Irish chancery and Irish exchequer from 1716 to 1734, survives in the University of Columbia.⁶² His house in Drogheda, however (later the town's grammar school), has had a less happy recent history. It was demolished illegally, and although its façade was rebuilt by court order, its staircase was destroyed and its magnificent panelled interiors dispersed.⁶³ It is pleasing then to report that the portrait of Singleton by Ford was purchased at Sotheby's for St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, which has been housed since 1883 in Belvedere, Singleton's home of thirty-five years. It will hang above the fine carved chimney piece in the extension he built – the same 'absurd room' that Mrs Delany mocked. In the year that the history of Belvedere House and St Patrick's has been written, it is a fitting outcome to this footnote to Irish art history.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ See A. Crookshank and D. FitzGerald, Knight of Glin, *Ireland's Painters, 1600-1940* (New Haven and London 2002) 25-50, 93-118; A. Crookshank, 'James Latham, 1696-1747', *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* (Dublin 1988) 56-72.
- ² Crookshank and Gin, *Ireland's Painters*, 25.
- ³ *ibid.*
- ⁴ *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 28th Dec 1742-1st Jan 1743). In general, see W.G. Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists*, 2 vols (London 1913; new ed. 1969) I, 367-72, and R. Munter, *A Dictionary of the Print Trade in Ireland, 1550-1775* (New York 1988) 106.
- ⁵ For Michael Mitchell see Strickland, *Dictionary*, II, 119-20, and Crookshank and Gin, *Ireland's Painters*, 25 and fig. 29.
- ⁶ It is conceivable that Ford's master in London was a relation of the artist Thomas Mitchell (1735-1790), who himself visited Ireland in the 1750s. See Crookshank and Glin, *Ireland's Painters*, 73-75; N. Figgis, 'A View of Kilkenny', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, V (Dublin 2002) 199.
- ⁷ J. Chaloner Smith, *British Mezzotint Portraits...*, 4 vols (London 1883) II, 510; Strickland, *Dictionary*, I, 369. More recently David Alexander tentatively follows Strickland's hypothesis, D. Alexander, 'The Dublin Group, Irish Mezzotint Engravers in London, 1750-1775', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*, XVI, July-Sept 1973, 73.
- ⁸ Strickland, *Dictionary*, I, 354.
- ⁹ *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 28th Dec.1742 – 1st Jan. 1743.
- ¹⁰ For the Cobbe portrait see W. Laffan, "'Through Ancestral Patterns Dance": the Irish Portraits at Newbridge House', in A. Laing, *Clerics and Connoisseurs, The Rev. Matthew Pilkington, the Cobbe Family and the Fortunes of an Irish Art Collection through Three Centuries*, exhibition catalogue, Kenwood House (London 2001) 80-81 and fig. 16.
- ¹¹ J.T. Gilbert, *A History of the City of Dublin*, 3 vols (Dublin 1854-59; new ed. with introduction by F.E. Dixon, Shannon 1972) II, 21.
- ¹² *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 14th-17th June 1746.
- ¹³ *ibid.*
- ¹⁴ Strickland, *Dictionary*, I, 580.
- ¹⁵ Crookshank and Glin, *Ireland's Painters*, 83.
- ¹⁶ Both quoted in M. Pollard, *Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade, 1550-1800* (London 2000) 222.
- ¹⁷ L. Lippincott, *Selling Art in Georgian London, The Rise of Arthur Pond* (New Haven and London 1983) 145.
- ¹⁸ Pollard, *Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade*, 222.
- ¹⁹ Strickland, *Dictionary*, I, 371.
- ²⁰ Pollard, *Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade*, 222.
- ²¹ *Dublin Courant*, 8th-12th March 1748, quoted in Strickland, *Dictionary*, I, 369.
- ²² *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 12th-15th March 1748.
- ²³ Strickland, *Dictionary*, II, 110.
- ²⁴ Strickland, *Dictionary*, I, 370, quoting Ford's obituary; for Mitchell, *ibid.*, II, 100. For a full discussion of the subject in the busier and better documented context of London, see the important chapter 'The Composition of the Market' in Lippincott, *Selling Art in Georgian*

- London, 55-74. For the career of a slightly later Irish printmaker, dealer and connoisseur, also now see N. Butler 'William Baillie, a man of many parts', pages 166-225 in this volume.
- ²⁵ Strickland, *Dictionary*, I, 370.
- ²⁶ *ibid.*, 371.
- ²⁷ Cumberland was painted by Charles Jervas, David Morier, Jacopo Amigoni, Joseph Highmore, Arthur Pond, Carlo Francesco Rusca, Thomas Hudson, John Wooton, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sawrey Gilpin. See Lippincott, *Selling Art in Georgian London*, 69. For the celebration of Cumberland in Ireland, see W. Laffan, 'From Paper to Pillar, Miscelanea Structura Curiosa and the Cumberland Column', in W. Laffan (ed.), *Miscelanea Structura Curiosa* (Tralee 2005) 9-34.
- ²⁸ *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 12th-15th April 1746.
- ²⁹ Quoted, Alexander, 'The Dublin Group', 73.
- ³⁰ *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 24th-28th September 1745.
- ³¹ Lippincott, *Selling Art in Georgian London*, 50.
- ³² Although see Alexander, 'The Dublin Group', 79.
- ³³ *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 24th-28th September 1745.
- ³⁴ *Memoirs of Mrs. Laetitia Pilkington Wife of the Rev. Mr. Pilkington*, 3 vols (London 1748) II, 240-42.
- ³⁵ Pollard, *Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade*, 222.
- ³⁶ Chaloner Smith, *British Mezzotint Portraits*, II, 510; E. Benezit, *Dictionary of Artists* (Grund 2006) 876
- ³⁷ Strickland, *Dictionary*, I, 370.
- ³⁸ *ibid.*
- ³⁹ Gilbert, *A History of the City of Dublin*, II, 21.
- ⁴⁰ Quoted in H. Duffy, *James Gandon and his Times* (Cork 1999) 124.
- ⁴¹ T.C. Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure, Lives and Possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven and London 2004) 151.
- ⁴² T.C. Barnard, *A New Anatomy of Ireland, The Irish Protestants, 1649-1770* (New Haven and London 2003) 171.
- ⁴³ E.M. Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish Parliament*, 6 vols (Belfast 2002) VI, 276-77. See also F. Elrington Ball, *The Judges in Ireland, 1221-1921* (London 1926) 205, and C.J. Smyth, *Chronicle of the Law Officers of Ireland* (London 1839) 73, 121, 189.
- ⁴⁴ For the Drogheda house, see W.M. Glynn 'Some Notes on the Building of Drogheda Grammar School', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society*, 12 (1949) 5-8. It was included as one of the ten architectural vignettes in Joseph Ravell's 1749 map of the city. See C. Casey, J. Ravell's Map of the Town and Suburbs of Drogheda in 1749', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society*, 22 (1992) 361.
- ⁴⁵ 'J. Kelly, 'Belvedere House: Origins, Development and Residents, 1540-1883' in J. Kelly (ed.), *St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, 1875-2000* (Dublin 2006) 21-28. We are greatly indebted to James Kelly for allowing us to consult a typescript of his book prior to its publication. See also J.P. Campbell, 'Two Memorable Dublin Houses', *Dublin Historical Record*, II (1929-40) 141-45.
- ⁴⁶ See D.W. Hayton (ed.), *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill, 1722-1738* (Dublin 2005) xv.
- ⁴⁷ Lady Landover (ed.), *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany*, 3 vols (London 1861) II, 555.
- ⁴⁸ Kelly, 'Belvedere House', 27.

- ⁴⁹ H. Williams (ed.), *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, vol. IV (Oxford 1965) 300.
- ⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 299-300. For the exchange of portraits in Swift's circle, see J. McMinn, 'Images of Devotion: Swift and Portraits', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, VIII (Dublin 2005) 161-81: 168-69.
- ⁵¹ Quoted in M.C. Salaman, *Old English Mezzotints* (London 1910) 32.
- ⁵² A.P.W. Malcomson, *John Foster, The Politics of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy* (Oxford 1978) 10.
- ⁵³ M.L. Legg (ed.), *The Synge Letters, Bishop Edward Synge to his Daughter Alicia, Roscommon to Dublin 1746-1752* (Dublin 1996) 294; Ball, *The Judges in Ireland*, 181, quoting the *Dublin Evening Post*, 14th June 1740. For this famine in general, see D. Dickson, *Arctic Ireland, the Extraordinary Story of the Great Frost and Forgotten Famine of 1740-41* (Belfast 1997).
- ⁵⁴ A. Le Harivel (ed.), *National Gallery of Ireland, Illustrated Summary Catalogue of Prints and Sculpture* (Dublin 1988) 42. Gilbert also notes a portrait of Singleton, engraved by Ford after Francis Bindon. However, as he does not mention in his list the portrait by Ford after his own work, it seems possible that this is an error, see Gilbert, *History of Dublin*, II, appendix iv, viii.
- ⁵⁵ E. McParland, *Public Architecture in Ireland, 1680-1760* (Dublin 2001) 12; Hayton, *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill*, xxi.
- ⁵⁶ The latter is conveniently illustrated in Crookshank and Gin, *Ireland's Painters*, 40, fig. 51.
- ⁵⁷ The Amigoni portrait is conveniently illustrated in E. Waterhouse, *British 18th Century Painters in Oil and Crayons* (Woodbridge 1981) 28.
- ⁵⁸ Quoted in Kelly, 'Belvedere House', 24.
- ⁵⁹ *Dublin Evening Post*, 14th June 1740.
- ⁶⁰ H. Potterton, *Irish Church Monuments, 1570-1880* (Belfast 1975) 49.
- ⁶¹ G. H. Bassett, *Louth County Guide and Directory* (Dublin 1886) 81
- ⁶² See W.N. Osborough, 'Puzzles from Irish Law Reporting History' in P. Birks (ed.), *The Life of the Law, Proceedings of the Tenth British Legal History Conference* (London and Rio Grande 1993) 100.
- ⁶³ *Irish Times*, 24th August 1989.
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