



CURATOR'S CHOICE

## An eighteenth-century engagement book

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ONE OF THE INCLUSIONS IN THE BOOKBINDINGS GALLERY OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF Chicago's exhibition *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840* is a small engagement book published by Samuel Watson in Dublin for the year 1779.<sup>1</sup> Bound in silk and with a gold-tooled red goatskin case with paper lozenge onlay, *Watson's compleat memorandum book for the year 1779, adapted to the use of the nobility, gentry and traders of this Kingdom* is typical of Irish engagement books of the period, containing spaces for daily appointments as well as the kind of 'useful information' found in almanacs – listings of Irish peers, port towns, Knights of St Patrick, births of the royal family of Great Britain – in abbreviated form (Plate 1). This example was particularly compelling to the exhibition's curators as it had not only been partially filled in, but recorded meetings with such luminaries as Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mary Delany, Lord Harcourt and the Duke of Grafton, among others (Plate 2).

Further adding to the engagement book's intrigue was a long-held Carton House provenance.<sup>2</sup> It had been suggested that the book had belonged to the 1st Duchess of Leinster (by then Dowager Duchess), Emily FitzGerald, formerly Lady Emily Mary Lennox (1731-1814), or to her daughter-in-law, the 2nd Duchess, Emilia Olivia FitzGerald, formerly Hon Emilia Olivia Usher St George (1759-1798), though ownership had not been established with any certainty. Carton House and the FitzGerald family figure prominently in *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design*; there are nearly twenty objects included in the exhibition that have a connection to the house and family. As the 1st Duchess sat to Reynolds in 1779, she seemed the more likely candidate, though her residence at Aubigny in France for at least part of that year indicated that the book may instead have belonged to the 2nd Duchess (Plate 3).

The survival of correspondence and diaries relating to the 1st Duchess and other

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1 – WATSON'S COMPLEAT MEMORANDUM BOOK FOR THE YEAR 1779

red goatskin with paper onlay and gold tooling, slipcase 12.4 x 7.3 x 1.3 cm (private collection / photo: Dara McGrath)



2 – Pages from WATSON'S COMPLEAT MEMORANDUM BOOK, showing appointments with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mrs Delany and others (private collection / photo: Dara McGrath)

3 – Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808)  
EMILIA OLIVIA FITZGERALD, 2ND DUCHESS OF LEINSTER

c.1780, oil on panel, 25 x 21 cm (collection of Peter Mark)

individuals named in the engagement book meant determining ownership could be approached in a number of ways: one could look to Reynolds' pocket books now in the collection of the Royal Academy of Arts (RA), or to David Mannings' two-volume catalogue raisonné of Reynolds' works; one could refer to the autobiography and letters of Mrs Delany to see if she mentioned with whom she visited on 10th January or 22nd February 1779; or one could begin with the *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, published by the Irish Manuscripts Commission (3 vols, 1949-57), and made popular by Stella Tillyard's *Aristocrats* (1995).

A narrow timeline guided the research, as the handwritten entries began on 3rd January and ended abruptly on 16th March 1779. Furthermore, it is clear that all of the meetings took place in England. In consulting the letters from Lady Louisa Conolly (1743-1821) and Lady Sarah Lennox (1745-1826) to Emily, it was immediately obvious that neither of the duchesses could have been the book's owner. The 1st Duchess was still in France at the beginning of 1779 (having moved there in 1774 with her children's tutor, William Ogilvie). She would not set foot in England again until April 1779.<sup>3</sup> She sat for her final portrait by Reynolds beginning in May of that year. Nor could the 2nd Duchess, Emilia Olivia, be the owner. She was in Ireland in early 1779, apparently being driven mad at Carton by her sister-in-law Charlotte. Moreover, in a letter of 18th January from Castletown, county Kildare, Louisa noted that Emilia Olivia was 'breeding again' and was 'often quite sick'.<sup>4</sup> She was certainly not travelling at that time, and indeed Lady Geraldine-Mabel was born to the 2nd Duchess on 27th August 1779.<sup>5</sup>

Who, then, was the diary's owner? Mannings' catalogue raisonné of Reynolds' work provided information on one name that appeared no less than eleven times in Mason's book: Richard Stonhewer (1728-1809).<sup>6</sup> The entry described Stonhewer as 'private secretary to the Duke of Grafton; friend of William Mason and Thomas Gray'.<sup>7</sup> Gray died in 1771, so he could not have been the diary's owner. Mannings' entry for the Rev William Mason, however, revealed a social visit to Reynolds on 16th January 1779 at four o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>8</sup> This is confirmed by Reynolds's pocket book for that date, which records two appointments: 'Children' at nine in the morning, and in the afternoon at four o'clock, 'Mr. Mason'.<sup>9</sup>

William Mason (1725-1797) (Plate 5) was an Anglican cleric, poet, garden designer and amateur painter, as well as a frequent correspondent with Horace Walpole, but he is perhaps best known for his friendship with the poet Thomas Gray.<sup>10</sup> In exploring the life of Reverend Mason, it became evident that many of the names in the engagement book were among his immediate circle of friends.<sup>11</sup> Lady Mary Holderness (1720/21-1801), who appears ten times, was the wife of Mason's first patron, Robert D'Arcy, 4th Earl of Holderness (1718-1778), who had been responsible for Mason's appointment to the rectory of Aston in West Yorkshire in November 1754 (though Mason and the 4th Earl later became estranged). Mason designed a flower garden at Nuneham House, Oxford, at the request of his friend George Simon Harcourt, Lord Nuneham (later 2nd Earl Harcourt), whose name appears four times in Mason's book.<sup>12</sup> Mrs Delany discussed

for ever. unless I be in self defence forced to  
 Duce it.  
 Pray is this triumph of the Minority any triumph  
 at all? and what say you to Mr Macaulays  
 late Volume, to whom also you gave recommenda-  
 tory Letters to France. I beg your Pardon I  
 believe it was Lord Harcourt & not you.  
 If you will please to send the Garettes Letterises  
 to Mr Stonehewer, with directions to Charles Carter

Tuesday 12  
 Lord Harcourt d  
 Wednesday 15

4 – Example of Mason's handwriting in a letter to Horace Walpole, dated 13th March 1778, compared with Mason's entries for meetings with Lord Harcourt and Mr Stonehewer (see Plate 2) (courtesy Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University)

Thursday 21  
 Mr Stonehewer  
 Friday 22  
 Lady Mary Coke

5 – Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792)  
 REVEREND WILLIAM MASON, 1774, oil on canvas,  
 76 x 63 cm (Pembroke College, Cambridge)

6 – Self-portrait by William Doughty given by the artist to Mason as a gift, c.1776, oil on canvas, 23 x 19 cm (National Portrait Gallery, London)



Mason frequently in her correspondence after she returned to England following the death of her husband in Ireland.<sup>13</sup> The connections with the names in the book are neither obtuse nor tangential – they fall neatly into place with even the most cursory research (see Appendix). Perhaps the most exciting confirmation of the attribution to Mason, however, occurred when comparing the handwriting of his letters to Walpole with that in the engagement book (Plate 4).<sup>14</sup>

While there are references to Irish political affairs in Walpole and Mason's correspondence, Mason does not appear to have travelled to Ireland.<sup>15</sup> One cannot say with any certainty, therefore, how or why he acquired the Dublin memorandum book. However, when looking for his connection to Ireland, there is an interesting link around 1778/79 worthy of consideration. In 1775, Mason recommended that Reynolds take on the young artist William Doughty (1757-1781/82) as a pupil.<sup>16</sup> Reynolds agreed, and Doughty enrolled as a student at the Royal Academy on 8th April 1775.<sup>17</sup> He lived with and studied under Reynolds for three years. During this time, Mason visited Doughty's studio and admired a self-portrait by the artist. He asked Doughty to make him a copy, but Doughty instead gave him the original (Plate 6).<sup>18</sup>

In 1778, Reynolds sent a letter to John Hely-Hutchinson, then Secretary of State in Ireland, announcing that Doughty would be moving briefly to Ireland and recommending his work.<sup>19</sup> In fact, it is likely that Mason underwrote Doughty's trip to Ireland.<sup>20</sup> Doughty painted two portraits of Mason in 1778, so the two certainly would have been in frequent contact at that time (Plate 7).<sup>21</sup> Doughty arrived in Ireland in the spring or summer of 1778, stayed for a 'few months' as he intended, and left Ireland at the end of the year, a time when this engagement book would have been available for sale.<sup>22</sup> Is it possible that Doughty brought home a gift – a finely tooled Irish book – to his friend and patron Mason? In any case, Mason most likely would have received the book as a gift, and would not have purchased it in England. The means by which this fine example of Irish eighteenth-century bookbinding reached the Rev Mason may remain unclear, but his ownership is now certain.



7 – William Doughty (1757-1781/82)

REVEREND WILLIAM MASON

1778, oil on canvas, 74.5 x 62 cm (York Museums Trust)

## APPENDIX – TRANSCRIPTION OF ENTRIES IN WATSON MEMORANDUM BOOK FOR 1779

|                  |          |           |                      |                       |           |                    |
|------------------|----------|-----------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|
|                  |          |           |                      | 13 <sup>th</sup>      | Saturday  | Lord Strafford     |
|                  |          |           |                      | 14 <sup>th</sup>      | Sunday    | Lady Holdernessee  |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup>  | January  | Sunday    | Mr Fraser            | 15 <sup>th</sup>      | Monday    | Lord Harcourt      |
| 9 <sup>th</sup>  |          | Saturday  | Lord Harcourt        | 16 <sup>th</sup>      | Tuesday   | Mr Stonhewer       |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> |          | Sunday    | Mrs Delany           | 17 <sup>th</sup>      | Wednesday | Do.                |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> |          | Tuesday   | Lord Harcourt. d     | 18 <sup>th</sup>      | Thursday  | Do.                |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> |          | Thursday  | Lady Holdernessee. d | 19 <sup>th</sup>      | Friday    | Mr Hull            |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> |          | Friday    | Mr Stonhewer. d      | 20 <sup>th</sup>      | Saturday  | Lady Holdernessee  |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> |          | Saturday  | Sir Joshua Reynolds  |                       |           |                    |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> |          | Sunday    | Sr Gisborne          |                       |           |                    |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> |          | Monday    | Dow. Lady Gower      | 21 <sup>st</sup>      | Sunday    | Duke of Grafton    |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> |          | Tuesday   | Col Harcourt         | 22 <sup>nd</sup>      | Monday    | Mrs Delany         |
| 21 <sup>st</sup> |          | Thursday  | Mr Stonhewer         | 23 <sup>rd</sup>      | Tuesday   | Lady Holdernessee  |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> |          | Friday    | Lady Mary Coke       | 24 <sup>th</sup>      | Wednesday | Lord Jersey        |
| 23 <sup>rd</sup> |          | Saturday  | Bishop of Litchfield | 25 <sup>th</sup>      | Thursday  | Duke of Grafton    |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> |          | Sunday    | Lady Holdernessee    |                       |           | Mss Pott's Concert |
| 26 <sup>th</sup> |          | Tuesday   | Duke of Grafton      | 27 <sup>th</sup>      | Saturday  | Mr Wedell          |
| 27 <sup>th</sup> |          | Wednesday | Mr Stonhewer         | 28 <sup>th</sup>      | Sunday    | Col Harcourt       |
| 28 <sup>th</sup> |          | Thursday  | Lord Jersey          |                       |           |                    |
| 29 <sup>th</sup> |          | Friday    | Mr Stonhewer         | 1 <sup>st</sup> March | Monday    | Duke of Grafton    |
| 30 <sup>th</sup> |          | Saturday  | Mr Stonhewer         | 2 <sup>nd</sup>       | Tuesday   | Mr Stonhewer       |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> |          | Sunday    | Sr Gray Cooper       | 3 <sup>rd</sup>       | Wednesday | Mr Wordsworth      |
|                  |          |           |                      | 4 <sup>th</sup>       | Thursday  | Dr Haberdon        |
| 1 <sup>st</sup>  | February | Monday    | Mr Wordsworth        | 5 <sup>th</sup>       | Friday    | Mr Stonhewer       |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup>  |          | Tuesday   | Lord Harcourt        | 6 <sup>th</sup>       | Saturday  | Duke of Grafton    |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup>  |          | Wednesday | Lord Stafford        | 7 <sup>th</sup>       | Sunday    | Lady Holdernessee  |
| 4 <sup>th</sup>  |          | Thursday  | Lady Holdernessee    | 8 <sup>th</sup>       | Monday    | Do.                |
| 6 <sup>th</sup>  |          | Saturday  | Duke of Grafton      | 10 <sup>th</sup>      | Wednesday | Lady Holdernessee  |
| 8 <sup>th</sup>  |          | Monday    | Mr Kent              | 11 <sup>th</sup>      | Thursday  | Lady Holdernessee  |
| 9 <sup>th</sup>  |          | Tuesday   | Mr Pott              | 12 <sup>th</sup>      | Friday    | Mr Stonhewer       |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> |          | Wednesday | Duke of Grafton      | 14 <sup>th</sup>      | Sunday    | Duke of Grafton    |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> |          | Thursday  | Mr Stonhewer         | 16 <sup>th</sup>      | Tuesday   | Lady Brinton       |

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Private collection.

<sup>2</sup> Provenance provided by a previous owner.

<sup>3</sup> Brian FitzGerald, *Emily, Duchess of Leinster, 1731-1814; a study of her life and times* (London, 1949) 158.

- <sup>4</sup> Brian FitzGerald (ed.), *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster (1731-1814)*, 3 vols (Dublin 1949, 1953, 1957) III, 348.
- <sup>5</sup> The 2nd Duke and Duchess had, in fact, planned a trip to England in early 1779: Lady Sarah noted in a letter of 16th January to Mr. Ogilvie that the Duke and Duchess were expected at Goodwood House on 1st February; however the trip was cancelled because 'the Duchess [was] with child'. Lady Sarah notes, perhaps with humour, 'as if she could lie in nowhere but in Dublin! But I suppose the Marquis must be an Irishman.' FitzGerald, *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, II, 272, 278.
- <sup>6</sup> Also frequently spelled 'Stonehewer', but included here as it appears in the engagement book and Mannings' catalogue raisonné.
- <sup>7</sup> David Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: a complete catalogue of his paintings*, 2 vols (New Haven, 2000) I, 436.
- <sup>8</sup> Reynolds had painted a half-length portrait of Mason in 1774. The picture was given to Stonhewer by Mason, and Stonhewer bequeathed it to Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1809; *ibid.*, 328.
- <sup>9</sup> I am very grateful to Nick Savage, Head of Collections and Library at the Royal Academy of Arts, for his assistance with this query.
- <sup>10</sup> When Gray died in 1771, he willed his papers to Mason, which Mason in turn willed, along with his own papers, to Richard Stonhewer.
- <sup>11</sup> Mason biographer John William Draper noted that Mason 'was acquainted with almost everyone of distinction in his generation. With Gray, Walpole, and Reynolds he was intimate; and he knew Johnson Boswell, Warton, a host of eminent divines, and a whole galaxy of stars and garters.' John William Draper, *William Mason: a study in 18th century culture* (New York, 1924) viii.
- <sup>12</sup> The entries for Lord Harcourt are distinct from the entries for his brother William, created 3rd Earl in 1809, who, in 1779, appears in the diary as 'Col. Harcourt'.
- <sup>13</sup> Mason also became estranged from Delany, as well as from his dear friend Richard Hurd, and even Walpole in the years around the American Revolution, often because of his strident Whig sentiments.
- <sup>14</sup> Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, Horace Walpole's correspondence, William Mason to Horace Walpole, letter dated 13th March 1778.
- <sup>15</sup> Mason apparently considered a trip to Ireland in 1755 but did not go. Draper, *William Mason*, 49.
- <sup>16</sup> Doughty was born at York and likely first came into contact with Mason there.
- <sup>17</sup> John Ingamells, 'William Doughty: A Little-Known York Painter', *Apollo*, July 1964, 33.
- <sup>18</sup> National Portrait Gallery (NPG), *Mid-Georgian portraits, 1760-1790* (London, 2004) 152 (NPG 2513).
- <sup>19</sup> There is some uncertainty as to whether the letter was written in 1778 or 1780, though according to Ingamells, 1778 is 'a far more feasible date'. See discussion in John Edgcumbe and John Ingamells (eds), *The Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (New Haven, 2000) 90-91; and Ingamells, 'William Doughty', 36. Original letter in the collection of the Yale Center for British Art, Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Joshua Reynolds Collection, MS Reynolds 6, Sir Joshua Reynolds to John Hely-Hutchinson ?1780.
- <sup>20</sup> In a letter of 28th July 1776 to James Northcote (1746-1831), Doughty states, 'Mr. Mason told me he would send me to Rome as soon as I chuse after leaving Sir Joshua.' Quoted in Ingamells, 'William Doughty', 35. Doughty did not go to Rome, but rather to York and then to Ireland. If Mason had been the one to underwrite Doughty's trip to Rome, it seems likely he would have paid for this trip instead.
- <sup>21</sup> The York Museum example (accession number YORAG: 510) was included in the RA exhibition of 1778. The other portrait is now in the National Portrait Gallery, London (accession no. NPG 4806).
- <sup>22</sup> Again, there is a question of when Doughty returned from Ireland. Strickland states Doughty returned in 1779, but Ingamells asserts that he was back in London in late 1778. One of Doughty's few Irish commissions, *Portrait of Miss. Sisson, 1778*, is now in the National Gallery of Ireland (NGI 787).