

REYNOLDS AT PORT ELIOT



Introduction

In early 2007, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery acquired 23 portraits from the Trustees of the Port Eliot Estate through the Acceptance in Lieu scheme. The works have remained in situ at Port Eliot.

The core of the acquisition is a group of 14 works by Sir Joshua Reynolds, one of Plymouth's most famous artists, with a further nine painted by some of his contemporaries.

Spanning the period from the start of his career in the 1740s up to the 1780s, the works represent an unusually good group of family portraits from this time.

Richard Eliot, the father of the first Lord Eliot (Edward Craggs-Eliot) was one of Reynolds' principal patrons. Over the years, Reynolds received many commissions to paint the Eliot family and their relations and remained on close terms with them throughout his life.



This leaflet is available in large print. Please ask for a copy.

See more works by Reynolds in the Cottonian Collection and discover more galleries and exhibitions, at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery.

Open 10am to 5.30pm Tuesday to Friday and 10am to 5pm on Saturdays and Bank Holiday Mondays. **Admission free.**

Call 01752 304774 or visit www.plymouthmuseum.gov.uk for more details.



There are three portraits in the Hall belonging to Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery.

1 Portrait: John, 1st Earl of St Germans (1761-1823) Artist: John Hoppner

The second surviving son of Edward, 1st Lord Eliot and his wife Catherine, John, 1st Earl of St Germans, enjoyed a distinguished political career during his 62 years.

He was a Member of Parliament for St Germans (1780-83), Liskeard (1784-1800 and 1801-4) and held a number of other important posts including His Majesty's Remembrancer in the Court of the Exchequer from October 1785.

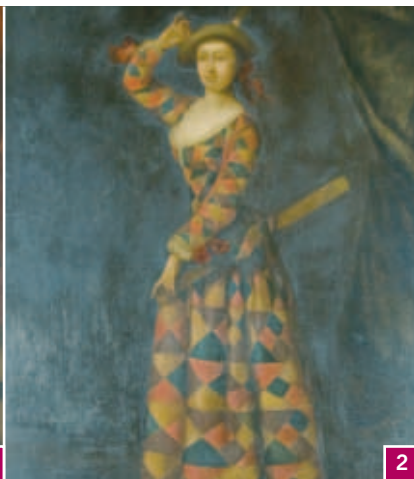
He became the 1st Earl of St Germans in 1815 - a newly created title which he assumed because his elder brother Edward had already passed away in 1797. He took a seat in the House of Lords in February 1816.

John married twice. He wed his first wife, Caroline Yorke, in 1790. She died in July 1818. Just over a year later he married for a second time to Harriet Pole-Carew.

Despite his two marriages he had no children and was succeeded by his younger brother William (portrait 16) when he died in November 1823.



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3 Portrait: Edward Eliot, 1st Lord Eliot and his wife (1727-1804) Artist: Benjamin Wilson

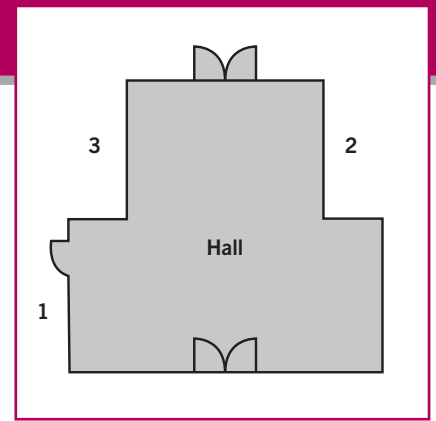
Also known as Edward Craggs-Eliot, Edward, 1st Lord Eliot was the eldest son of Richard Eliot and Harriet Craggs.

He was one of the principal patrons of Sir Joshua Reynolds and was even one of the pallbearers at his state burial in 1792.

Like his son John, he enjoyed a career in politics and was a Member of Parliament for St Germans in 1748-68 and 1774-5; Liskeard from 1768-74 and Cornwall from 1775-84.

Other important posts he held included Receiver General of the Duchy of Cornwall in 1751 and 1775 and a Commissioner of the Board of Trade and Plantations from 1760-76, upon which he resigned from the Government.

He married Catherine Ellison, daughter and heiress of Edward Ellison of Southweald, Essex in September 1756. They had four children. The first, Edward James, was born in August 1757 but died the following month. A second son, also called Edward James, was born in 1758. Two more sons followed: John (portrait 1) in 1761 and William in 1766 (portrait 13).



2 Portrait: Hester Booth (1681-1773) Artist: John Ellys

Often described as 'England's first ballerina', Hester Booth (nee Santlow) certainly had an interesting life!

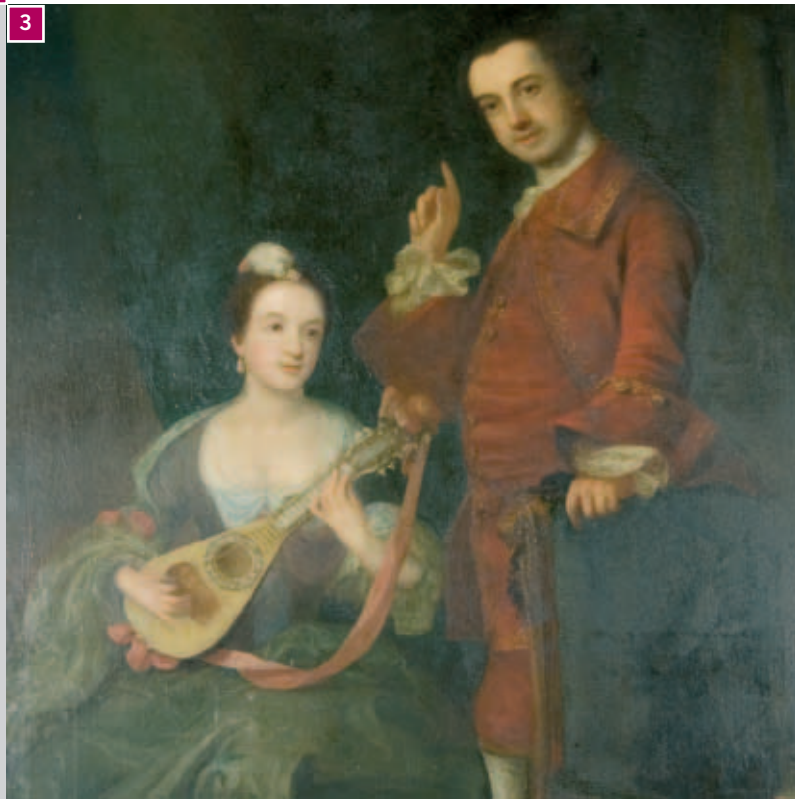
Originally a dancer at Drury Lane and the Queen's Theatre, Haymarket, she was the first person in England to write choreography and is also reputed to have danced 'privately' for the Kings of England and France.

She married Barton Booth, an actor manager in 1719 and this painting of her dressed as Harlequin, one of her earliest and most well-known roles, was created shortly after, circa 1722-25.

Before her marriage, Hester had been 'the friend' of a number of gentlemen. One of these was politician James Craggs the Younger (1686-1721) who held the posts of Secretary of War in 1717, Secretary of State for the Southern Department from 1718-21 and who was MP for Tregony from 1713-21. Around 1713, Hester bore him a child – a daughter called Harriet.

Prior to getting involved in politics James and his father had made a great deal of money from the South Sea Company, which had a trading monopoly with South America and became famous for the 'South Sea Bubble' – a price bubble that occurred thanks to much speculation about its shares. Upon his death in 1721 he left this fortune to Harriet. When she married Richard Eliot in 1726 she brought her wealth with her.

There are other portraits of Hester, belonging to the Port Eliot Trustees, in the Morning Room.



3

LOWER LOBBY >

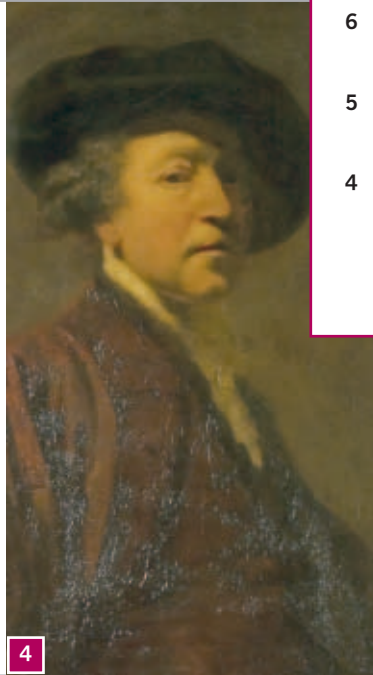
There are three portraits belonging to Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery on the left hand side of the lower lobby - just before the Broad Stairs.

4 Portrait: The Artist (1723-1792) Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

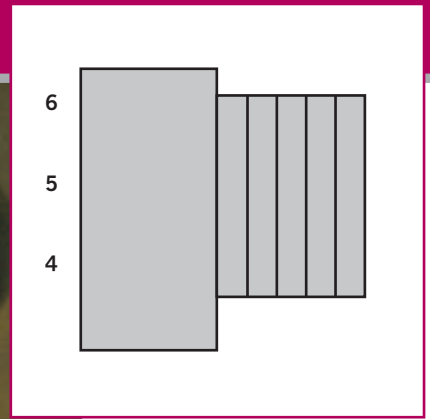
Born in Plympton in 1723, Reynolds' artistic talent was evident at an early age. In 1740 he was sent to London to be apprenticed by Thomas Hudson - another Devonian artist. After three years and a minor quarrel he left to set up on his own.

In 1745, upon the death of his father, Reynolds moved back to Plymouth with his two sisters. Although he continued to spend time in London, the majority of his work came from the gentry of the West Country - including the Eliots.

Reynolds specialised in portraits and was one of the most important and influential English painters of the 18th century. He was the first President of the Royal Academy and was knighted in 1769.



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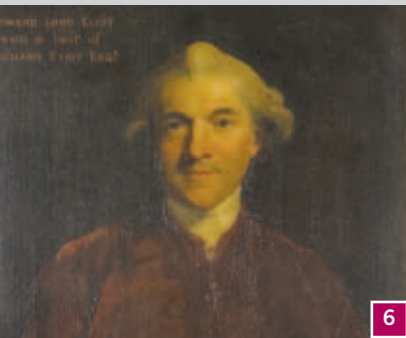
5 Portrait: Captain, the Hon. John Hamilton (1714-1755) Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

Captain John Hamilton was the second son of the 7th Earl of Abercorn and a British Naval officer who served in Guinea and the West Indies. He became Harriet Eliot's second husband, marrying her just a year after she was widowed by Richard Eliot. They went on to have two children - Anne, born in 1751 and John James, born in 1756.

Reynolds created this painting circa 1753. Two years later, Captain John Hamilton accidentally drowned in a storm off Portsmouth while he was commander of HMS Lancaster.



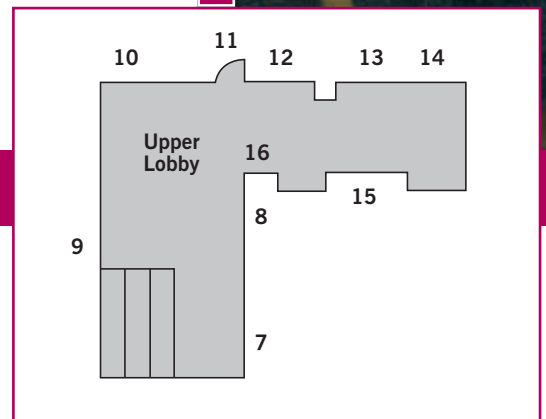
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6 Portrait: Edward, 1st Lord Eliot Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

For information about Edward, 1st Lord Eliot, please see portrait 3.



LOBBY >

Ten portraits belonging to Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery can be viewed in the lobby.



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7 Portrait: James Eliot (1718-1742) Artist: Attributed to Sir Joshua Reynolds

Little seems to be recorded about James Eliot. His death "...seems to have been due to a neglected cold and not changing his wet clothes." He died young and unmarried at the age of just 24.

8 Portrait: Edward, 1st Lord Eliot Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

For information about Edward, 1st Lord Eliot, please see portrait 3.

9 **Portrait: Sir John Eliot (1590-1632)**
Artist: The English School

Known as 'The Patriot', Sir John Eliot is considered to be one of the greatest speakers of all time in the House of Commons and has been described as 'a great orator, inspired by enthusiasm and high ideals'.

Although strongly in favour of the monarchy, he disagreed with Charles I's claim to rule by 'Divine Right' and strongly defended the right to free speech.

He was educated at Blundell's School in Tiverton and Exeter College, Oxford. After leaving university he studied law and then spent some time travelling throughout Europe. In 1614, at the age of just 24, he began his parliamentary career as Member of Parliament for St Germans. Like his son after him (portrait 11), he also became Vice Admiral of Devon in 1619. It was a post that he held until 1626. This marked the mid point in a period of turmoil for the Eliot family, during which Sir John was imprisoned in various places (including the Tower of London) for speaking out against the King and his supporters.

In February 1629 he was imprisoned in the Tower of London for the final time. Three years later he became ill. He died from tuberculosis on 27 November 1632.

Sir John was married to Radigund, the daughter of Richard Gedic of Trebursye, and together they had nine children. Peregrine Eliot, the tenth and current Earl of St Germans is descended from their youngest son, Nicholas.



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10 **Portrait: Harriet Eliot (one of a pair) (1713-1769)**
Artist: Sir Godfrey Kneller

As already noted, Harriet Eliot was the illegitimate daughter of Hester Booth (portrait 2) and James Craggs the Younger. Married at 13, she became a widow at the age of 35 when Richard Eliot (portrait 12) passed away in 1748.

The following year she married Captain Hon. John Hamilton (portrait 5). Having had eight children with her first husband, she went on to have two more children with her second - Anne and John James who became the 1st Marquis and 9th Earl of Abercorn, Scotland.

11 **Portrait: John Eliot (1612-1685)**
Artist: David Beck

The eldest son of Sir John Eliot and Radigund Gedic, John Eliot (portrait 9) was Vice Admiral of Devon - a post which carried considerable power for the defence and control of commerce within the county. In addition, he represented the borough of St Germans in parliament for many years.

During the reign of Charles I, the Eliot family endured much suffering when John's father was incarcerated in the Tower of London. In 1668, at the time of the restoration of Charles II, John received compensation from the Crown as a result of this and his father's conviction was deemed to be 'an illegal judgement.....against the freedom and privilege of Parliament'.

12 **Portrait: Richard Eliot (one of a pair) (1694-1748)**
Artist: Sir Godfrey Kneller

The great grandson of Sir John (portrait 9), Richard Eliot represented St Germans and Liskeard as MP in a number of parliaments. He was also Auditor and Receiver General to the Prince of Wales for Cornwall. In March 1726 he married 13 year old Harriet Craggs, the illegitimate daughter of James Craggs and Hester Booth. They had eight children: Edward (portraits 3, 12 and 14), John, Anne (portrait 22), Harriet and Elizabeth lived to adulthood. Three of their children - Richard, Catherine and Hester sadly died young.



12

13 **Portrait: The Hon. John Eliot, 1st Earl of St Germans**
Artist: George Romney

For information about John, 1st Earl of St Germans, please see portrait 1. This particular portrait by Romney shows him as a young man.



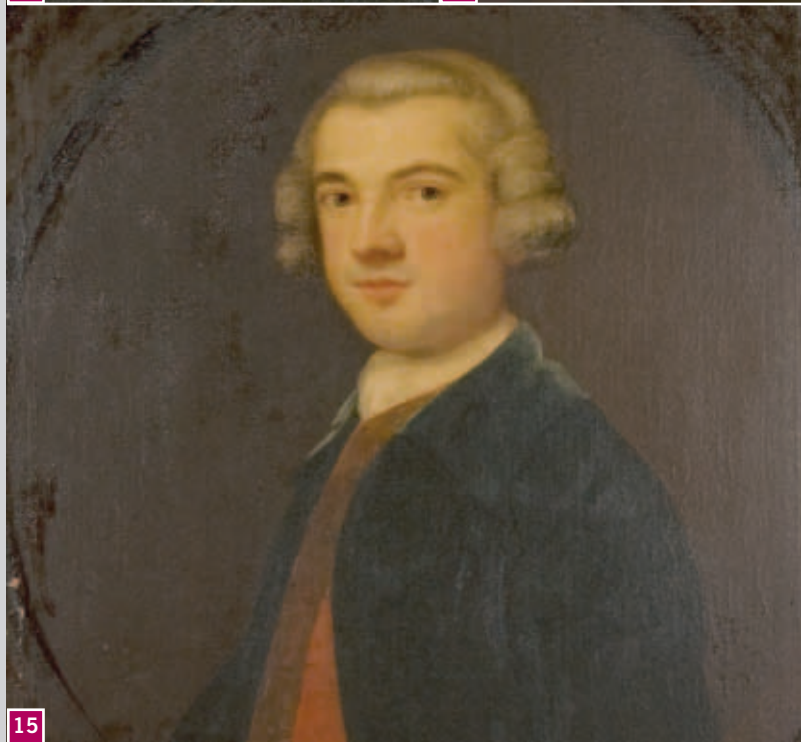
14 **Portrait: The Hon. Edward James Eliot (1758-1797)**
Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

The eldest son of Edward, 1st Lord Eliot (portraits 3, 6, 8 and 14) and his wife Catherine, this painting dates from 1778 and shows the Hon. Edward James at the age of 20. As such, this painting shows him at the mid point of his life - he died 7 years before his father at the age of just 39.

In September 1785 he married Lady Harriet Pitt, the youngest daughter of William Pitt the Elder, 1st Earl of Chatham and former Prime Minister of England (1766-8). A year after they married Harriet gave birth to the couple's only child - a daughter named Harriet Pitt Eliot. Five days later she died.

After her death Edward took up residence near Clapham, London and became good friends with the British politician and philanthropist, William Wilberforce. He also became part of the Clapham Sect - a group of evangelical reformers who lobbied for reforms such as the abolition of the slave trade, poor relief and prison reform.

Edward James went on to become joint commissioner for Indian Affairs and an investor in the British East India Company. A chronic stomach complaint made it impossible for him to take up the post of Governor - General of Bengal and he passed away at Port Eliot in September 1797.



15 **Portrait: Edward Eliot, 1st Lord Eliot**
Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

For information about Edward, 1st Lord Eliot, please see portrait 3.



16 **Portrait: William, 2nd Earl of St Germans (1766-1845)**
Artist: Sir Thomas Laurence

Another long serving Eliot MP, William, 2nd Earl of St Germans was an accomplished European diplomat and also served as Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1804 to 1805.

The youngest son of Edward, 1st Lord Eliot (portraits 3, 6, 8 and 14) and his wife Catherine, and a grandson of Richard Eliot (portrait 12) and Harriet Craggs (portraits 10 and 17), he succeeded his older brother John (portrait 1), who died childless. This painting dates from the end of the 18th century.

In addition to his political endeavours William had a busy personal life and was married four times! His first marriage in 1797 was to Georgina Augusta Leveson-Gower (1769-1806), the daughter of the 1st Marquis of Stafford. They had four children - Edward Granville (3rd Earl of St Germans), Caroline, Susan and Charlotte. In 1809 he married Letitia Ashe A'Court (1778-1810) but she died less than a year later in January 1810. Two years later he married for a third time to Charlotte Robinson (1790-1813). The following summer she died in child birth. Finally, in August 1814 he married Susan Mordaunt (1780-1830) but was widowed for a third time when she passed away in 1830.

William's only son, Edward Granville Eliot followed in his father's footsteps and also became a prominent politician holding such offices as Chief Secretary for Ireland, Postmaster General, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland and Lord Steward of the Household.

MORNING ROOM >

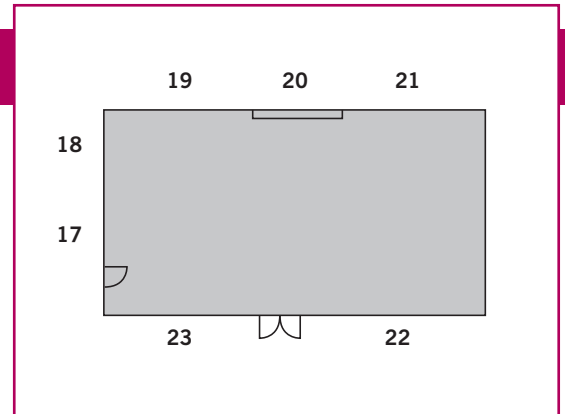
Although there are no paintings belonging to Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery in this much loved room, there are a number of works of art which give you a real idea of how Port Eliot's art collection has evolved.

SALON >

The final seven portraits belonging to Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery can be seen in the Salon. Working in a circle from the portrait on the right of the door, they are as follows:

17 Portrait: Harriet Eliot
Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

For information about Harriet Eliot, please see portrait 10.



18 Portrait: Hope Nursing Love
Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

This portrait dates from the 1760s and was sold at a Sir Joshua Reynolds sale in 1796. The model was called Miss Morris, the daughter of Valentine Morris of Porterfield, Monmouthshire.

19 Portrait: Jemima, Marchioness Cornwallis (Unknown-1779) and Lord Brome (1774-1823)
Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

Born Jemima Tulikens Jones, the Marchioness Cornwallis sat for this picture in 1770. The portrait of her son, Charles, Viscount Brome was added in 1778 - just a year before her death.

She married famous military commander General Charles Cornwallis (portrait 21) on 14 July 1768. In addition to their son Charles, they also had a daughter.

Charles, Viscount Brome went on to have five daughters of his own. One of these was also called Jemima. The connection with the Eliot family came when she married Edward Granville Eliot, 3rd Earl of St Germans and son of William, 2nd Earl of St. Germans (portrait 16).

20 Portrait: Richard Eliot and Family
Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

This painting dates from 1746 and shows Richard Eliot (portrait 12), many members of his family and some acquaintances. Classed as one of Sir Joshua Reynolds' important early works it paints an informal picture of the family with Richard Eliot positioned to the side and his eldest son Edward (portraits 3, 6, 8 and 14) in the middle.





21

21 Portrait: Charles Lord Cornwallis (1738-1805)
Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

Educated at Eton and Cambridge, Lord Brome (later General Cornwallis), was born into a privileged life. He joined the army just before his 18th birthday and was quickly promoted through the ranks with a reputation for being skilled at handling his troops.

This painting dates from the 1760s - a decade in which he took his seat in the House of Lords upon the death of his father, became Aide de Camp to King George III (1765) and purchased the rank of Colonel (1766).

Two years after this he married Jemima Tulikens Jones (portrait 19). A further two years later he took up the posts of Constable of the Tower of London and Vice Treasurer of Ireland.

In 1775 his military and diplomatic talents were once more required - this time in the American colonies - and he accepted a military command as a Major General. After several successful battles against the 'Yankees' he was forced to retreat to Yorktown on the coast. Failed by his superiors and the British Navy he was obliged to surrender his forces. In the 2000 Mel Gibson film 'The Patriot' which portrays the American Revolutionary War, he is played by the well-known actor, Tom Wilkinson.

Despite events in the American colonies, Cornwallis went on to distinguish himself further as a military commander in India, where he defeated Tippu Sultan, the last of the Mogul to hold out against the The East India Company. In 1805 he became Governor General of India. Just a few months after arriving he died of a fever. Today, his grave overlooks the Ganges.

22 Portrait: Lady Anne Bonfoy (1729-1816)
Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

This painting by Reynolds dates from the 1750s and features the eldest daughter of Richard Eliot (portrait 12) and Harriet Craggs (portraits 10 and 17). Anne Eliot became Lady Bonfoy when she married Captain Hugh Bonfoy (portrait 23) and they had one daughter. She was widowed twice - firstly by Hugh in 1762 and again in 1783 when her second husband, Henry, Earl of Ely, passed away. She was Lady of the Bedchamber to the daughters of King George III.

23 Portrait: Captain Hugh Bonfoy (c1720-1762)
Artist: Sir Joshua Reynolds

A Naval Officer and Colonial Governor of Newfoundland from 1753-4, Captain Hugh Bonfoy was described by a contemporary as "...a man of strict honour, just, generous and as good natured a creature as ever was born".

He entered the Royal Navy in 1739 as a Midshipman before being promoted to Lieutenant in 1744. He became a Captain in 1745 and commanded the Greyhound, Augusta and Berwick - mainly in home waters.

During his time as Colonial Governor of Newfoundland he upheld British penal laws in order to manage tensions with the Irish Catholics who outnumbered the English people living on the island.



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