

### *The Classical Taste of William Ponsonby, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bessborough (1704-93)*

Considering the acclaim he received during and after his life time, particularly in artistic circles, we have very little information on the early life of William Ponsonby, Earl of Bessborough,(1) apart from the basic facts printed in the various Peerages, on which all subsequent references and biographical accounts are based. He was born in 1704, the eldest surviving son of Brabazon Ponsonby (Second Lord Viscount Duncannon), and his first wife, Sarah Margetson.(2) His place of birth is never stated in the records, though we can assume he was born at the family seat of Bessborough,(3) in County Kilkenny, an estate bestowed upon his grandfather, Sir John Ponsonby, in recognition of his services to Cromwell.(4) Since Bessborough House was only completed in the 1740's, and we know nothing about the building that preceded it, we cannot form a picture of the type of home life experienced by William as a child and an adolescent. In fact, no mention is made of his childhood, adolescence or early adulthood in any of the literature or surviving family records.(5)

The question of his education is equally vague, though it is likely that he was educated privately at home, and certain that he did not attend university.(6) However, as I have argued in another study,(7) the contents of William's private library show that he was a learned and eager scholar, whose widespread and life-long interests in classical literature, art, antiquities, ancient history and travel rank him high as one of the leading exponents of the Irish classical tradition.

How William occupied himself between the completion of his studies (presumably at around the age of eighteen) and embarking on his travels in 1736, is similarly vague, though it is obvious (despite assertions to the contrary)(8) that he stayed in Ireland for at least part of this time. Records suggest that he must have been based either at home, or in and around Dublin in his early to late twenties. In politics, he was returned as MP for Newtownards, County Down, from 1725-1727, and for Kilkenny from 1727-58, which means that from the age of twenty-one, he must have attended at least some of the regular sessions in the House of Commons at the Irish Parliament in Dublin. Similarly, his involvement in the activities of the Dublin and Galway Masonic Lodges (he was appointed as one of the Senior Grand Wardens of the Dublin Lodge on 7 July, 1733)(9) further establishes his continued presence in Ireland at least up until the year 1733.

However, there is little evidence to indicate how else he might have occupied himself until the end of 1736, when he set out on what is often regarded as his official Grand Tour.(10) Sadly, he left us no record of his sojourn abroad, though it is possible to piece together various phases of his tour from other documentary sources.(11) While the first part followed the customary pattern of visiting the main cultural centres of Italy, the second was more unusual, for that period, reaching into Greece and Turkey.

As is well documented, the Grand Tour was usually made by a young man as a means of 'finishing' his education and was, therefore, normally taken at around the age of seventeen to twenty.(12) However, at thirty-two, not only was William far in advance

of the traditional age when he set sail for France, but he had just been elected, in 1736, as a Member of the Society of Dilettanti. Such an honour (at least in the early days of the Society) was conferred only upon those who had already 'made their pilgrimages to the treasures of the Mediterranean'.(13) It seems likely, therefore, that, he must have completed an earlier, undocumented, Grand Tour, perhaps confined to Italy. However, in the absence of any evidence to support this, it might also be suggested that his reputation as a connoisseur and collector of antiquities had been sufficiently established by 1736 to warrant his election to that esteemed society. This theory is borne out by the number of relevant books dating from this period in his private library (on, for example, Greek and Roman art, architecture and antiquities, particularly carved gem stones), and from the fact that he was known to (and thirty years later, remembered by) Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692-1779),(14) reputedly 'the most enthusiastic and spendthrift of eighteenth-century Roman art patrons',(15) and probably a spy.(16)

Whether or not William visited Italy again is unclear, though he was certainly considering it in later life, as testified by a letter from Thomas Jenkins in 1769, who says he 'should be very happy if your Lordships trip to Italy takes place'.(17) Again, the number of guide-books to Italian museums and art galleries listed in his Library Catalogue suggests a continued link with the country.

Whatever the case, sadly his known travels are undocumented by him (or at least no memoirs relating to any trip have survived), though there is evidence, reported in an Irish newspaper, that he got into bad company while in Florence in August, 1737:

'Private letters from Florence advise that a Quarrell happen'd lately there, among some English Nobleman and Gentleman, and that Captain Ponsonby, Son to the Earl of Duncanan, and Mr. Wright an English Gentleman, were killed on the Spot...' (18)

A week later, when more reports had been received, the same newspaper announced:

'There are Letters in Town which inform us, that Mr. Ponsonby, Son to the Rt. Hon. The Lord Viscount Duncannon, is not dead at Florence, but dangerously ill, and that Mr. Wright died on the Spot.'(19)

Thus the story ends, since there is no further reference made to the event (or to the recovery of Ponsonby) in any further issue of the newspaper. There is no doubt that William was present at the time of the incident (as was his friend Lord Middlesex, a constant companion of Denys Wright), but it seems likely that some confusion of identity must have arisen. Local reports note that the victim was killed by a fellow Scotsman, John Fotheringham, in a drunken brawl at a public dinner, over a game of cards. The culprit, who was forgiven by Wright before he expired, was wounded, and attended by Dr. James Tyrrell, but there is no record in this source of William's involvement.(20)

There is also evidence that William, while on his travels, joined John Montagu, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich, on the latter's first voyage around Greece and Turkey.(21) In common with others who made this trip, Montagu wrote an extensive account of his Levantine voyage, which was posthumously edited and published by Rev J. Cooke, in 1799, under the title: *A Voyage performed by the Late Earl of Sandwich round the Mediterranean in the years 1738 and 1739, written by himself.*(22) Curiously, though, considering that they had journeyed together for six whole months, this travelogue neglects to mention by name William, or indeed any other member of the party.(23) In fact, apart from a single document mentioned in Ingamells,(24) the

only other first-hand source referring to the pair's Levantine expedition is a biographical account of the Swiss painter, Jean-Etienne Liotard (Plate 1). (25) According to an account dictated to, and recorded by, the artist's son,(26) their chance meeting arose when Liotard came across a group of English gentlemen in a café at Rome admiring a miniature of the Venus de Medici (his own, in fact), which they considered to be the best copy they had ever seen. This led 'le Chevalier Ponsomby' (sic), some months later, to persuade him to accompany them on their Greek and Turkish voyage.(27)

Ponsonby, Sandwich and company set sail from Naples a month later (on 3 April, 1738) in a ship variously named the *Anne Gallery*,(28) the *Clifton* (29) and the *Cliston*,(30) visiting Elba, Corsica, Sardinia, Capri and several ports in Sicily on route to Greece. Here, having explored the major temples and ruins of Athens, they investigated several Greek islands, including Milos, Zephyros, Antiparos (where they climbed six hundred feet into a huge cave), Paros and Chios, before arriving at Constantinople. They remained here for some months, throwing themselves enthusiastically into Turkish life by adopting the national costume (including a beard for Liotard) and (at least in Montagu's case) learning to speak the language. Finally, they returned to Leghorn in October of that year, and while Ponsonby then departed for England on 19 November, 1738,(31) Sandwich continued his travels, making a return visit to the East in July, 1739, which included an extended trip to Egypt.

In spite of the regrettable lack of documentation about his travels, William's two years abroad were to have a major impact on many areas of his life, particularly in the acquisition of antiquities and paintings for his famous collection.(32) As is well documented, he was to become Liotard's most important patron, accumulating, during his life-time, a collection of more than seventy-two of his works.(33) A spectacular example of these is a portrait of William in Turkish dress, dating from 1742-43,(34) one of the many family portraits rescued from the devastating fire of Bessborough House in 1923.(35) (Plate 2) Almost identical to a three-quarter length portrait of Lord Sandwich (also by Liotard),(36) it depicts a jaunty and confident man, looking considerably younger than his forty years, and sporting a turban, an ermine-trimmed jacket of dark green silk and a bright red silk tunic (matching his head-dress) set off by an elaborately decorated cummerbund in which is placed a bejewelled dagger.(37)

Brian de Breffny, in his study on "Liotard's Irish Patrons", notes the difficulty in dating the artist's sitters portrayed in Turkish costume and argues that it is wrong to assume they necessarily date from his four-year sojourn in Constantinople. While he believes that Liotard began his portrait of Sandwich during their journey to Turkey, and completed it when based in Constantinople, he maintains that the portrait of Ponsonby was not executed until Liotard's first trip to London, between 1753 and 1755.(38) I see no reason to believe that Liotard delayed the portrait of his host for fifteen years, and presume that de Breffny's reluctance to date Ponsonby's portrait to the early 1740s (as is commonly held)(39) is because there exists a *pendant* portrait of his wife, Carloline, in "Venetian" dress.(40) Admittedly, since she did not marry William until 1739, and did not accompany him to the Levant, Liotard could not have

painted the portrait at that time, but he could easily have executed this at some later period, such as his first trip to London, when he would have met her for the first time.

The oriental masquerade costumes featured in Liotard's portraits of the two noblemen (Ponsonby and Sandwich) are identical to those in which they were depicted by George Knapton (1743 and 1745), in his role as official portrait painter to the Society of Dilettanti,(41) and it has been suggested that this was the official garb of the short-lived Divan Society, established by Lord Sandwich in 1744.(42) Interestingly, Knapton's portrait of Bessborough, now in the possession of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of London, is almost a carbon-copy of Liotard's piece, depicting Ponsonby not only in exactly the same costume, but also with identical facial features and expression. The only real difference is in the pose. It is possible that, for the sake of expediency (fines were imposed on members for failing to have their official portrait painted, at their own expense), William allowed the artist to make a copy, or near copy of Liotard's original, which he had only just received and with which he was clearly very pleased. Eight years later, he commissioned Spencer Gervase to paint a miniature of the portrait, displayed in a diamond-set gold frame (Plate 3).

Though Liotard was the only member of the group to talk about the composition of the touring party, all their paths were to cross in later life, particularly in artistic and intellectual circles. With the exception of the artist, all became members of the Divan Club,(43) and most were (or had already been) elected as members of the more lasting and influential Society of Dilettanti.(44) The latter organisation is generally accepted as having been founded earlier, in 1732, though J. Brewer puts it at 1734.(45) While

the artist Knapton, at the time of his election,(46) had already spent seven years in Rome (from 1725-32), William, as we have seen, was only just embarking on his Grand Tour.

When William returned from his travels at the end of 1738, he seems to have taken up permanent residence in England. The following year was a very momentous one for this young nobleman: on 5 July he married Lady Caroline Cavendish, eldest daughter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Devonshire (then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland),(47) whereupon he began functioning as an assistant to the Chief Secretary,(48) and in October, his father was created Earl of Bessborough, at which point William acquired the title of Viscount Duncannon. Two years later, in the summer of 1741, his father-in-law offered him the appointment as his Chief Secretary (which he accepted), as well as recommending him for a place on the Irish Privy Council.(49)

To judge from details of his surviving correspondence, William had, at least by 1742, taken up residence in a house in the fashionable Cavendish Square, in Marylebone.(50) It is likely, however, that he had gone there earlier, presumably on his marriage.

Whether or not this is the same house leased by the Earl in later life, and inherited by his heir Frederick, is uncertain. While correspondence to William between the 1760s and 70s is addressed to him simply as 'Lord Bessborough' at 'Cavendish Square', we know that the precise address was Number 2, a very substantial and comfortable town house with a library.(51) Cavendish Square was clearly a favourite location for generations of Ponsonbys, since number 17 was also used as an address until the early 1920s.(52)



In 1748, the couple bought an estate called Ingress Abbey, situated on the banks of the River Thames, and 'commanding a beautiful view of that river'.(53) (Plate 4) This elegant and picturesque seat, unusually adorned with a domed portico, had originally been the site of Dartford Priory until confiscation by Henry VIII. Ingress was to be William's family home until the untimely death of his wife on 20 January, 1760, whereupon he sold it to John Calcraft, MP for Rochester, who, in much the same way as William was to do in his next home, adorned the grounds with 'a valuable collection of Roman altars ... statues, and other specimens of Roman sculpture'.(54) Although there are no records relating to the William's twelve years there,(55) he is recorded as having 'greatly improved the Mansion and surrounding grounds',(56) including commissioning Capability Brown to landscape the grounds

During his residence here, William was very active in his political career, but his great passion in life continued to be the collection of antiquities and art. A possible indication that he regarded himself as the embodiment of classical taste is to be found in the pastel portrait he commissioned Liotard to execute between 1750-60 (Plate 5). Still recognisable as the character in the turban from several years earlier, the subject is consciously represented in the typical style of a 'Roman head', reminiscent of those from his own extensive collection of carved antique gems (see below).(57)

In 1758, William succeeded his father, Brabazon, as 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bessborough, inheriting his estates in Ireland (notably in Counties Kilkenny and Carlow) and in England. The elaborate memorial sculpture erected by William for his parents in the Bessborough family chapel at Fiddown was executed by William Atkinson, in 1758

(Plate 6).(58) By commissioning a London-based artist (as is clear from a Latin inscription at the base of the monument), the newly elevated Lord Bessborough would have been able to oversee the work right up to the end, even if he was never actually to see the finished product *in situ*. The style of this impressive sepulchral monument reflects not only the bereaved son's own classical taste, but clearly that of his father, too.(59) The marble busts of the deceased couple are represented in the style of a Roman grave-relief, with formal pose and classical drapery, and are placed on top of a large classical-style funerary urn with lions' feet, while eight magnificent Ionic columns support an elaborate pediment and cornice incorporating a carved family crest.(60) The whole marble edifice stands 369 cm high and 253 cm wide, dominating the small chancel, the only surviving structure from the original private chapel. Given William's life-long obsession with collecting classical statuary (and in particular, from around the 1760s, anything with a funerary theme), it is not surprising that he commissioned for his parents ('not as a necessary Memorial of them, but as a Testimony of Gratitude and Respect owing from their son') a monument in this style.

Two years later, Lord Bessborough found himself having to commission another funerary monument, this time for his beloved wife, Caroline, who died on 20 January, 1760. As suggested in an extract from the family papers (although the word is never actually mentioned), cholera may have been responsible for death:

'The sanitary condition of London must have been at that day frightful, for scarcely a household escaped from the dread visitation of a malignant fever. Twice had in entered Lord Bessborough's house and carried off its victims. The first time four servants; the next two young and lovely daughters. He then fell ill, himself; and his Countess in nursing him caught the horrible disease, and died. For four days they concealed her death from him; and when at last the broke it out, he piteously

asked, when his first great agony was over, "How many children have I left?"(61)

The answer was three: his two teenage daughters Catherine and Charlotte,(62) and his infant son, Frederick, born 1758.

Lady Bessborough was buried in the family vault of the Dukes of Devonshire, in All Saints Church, Derby (not in Fiddown),(63) where she was eventually joined by her husband in 1793 (see Plate 15). Her monument, depicted in Plate 7, consists of a 'bust of the Countess on a bracket, and a figure of a woman reclining on a sarcophagus, a cushion under ther left elbow, and holding a book in her right hand'(64) (Plate 7) The inscription claims that the monument is 'only to be considered as an Endeavour to preserve the Memory of a departed Friend, and as an Instance of true Affection and Tribute paid by her most afflicted Husband'.(65)

The sculptor chosen to execute the monument was John Michael Rysback, an artist from Antwerp (1694-1770), who worked in England from the 1730s onwards. He was noted for his classical style, in for example, his bust of Sir Robert Walpole as a Roman senator in a toga. We do not know precisely when the sculpture was made, but I would like to suggest that William did not act immediately, and waited until he had found an appropriate Roman model on which to base his memorial. This might help to explain his intense interest, from this date, in such works. In 1763, as discussed and depicted below (see Plate 13), he bought a 'sepulchral antiquity' representing Trajan's widow supporting a bust of her husband. A comparison between the two works shows that the Roman monument was clearly an inspiration for Rysback's piece, especially in

details such as the drapery, the pose, the cushion, and the literary motif, where one lady holds a scroll and the other a book.

Lord Bessborough had been acquiring land in Roehampton, then a small village in Putney, at the other side of London, and decided to build a new home there. With this in mind, he commissioned Sir William Chambers to design a 'villa'(66) built in the English neo-Palladian tradition.(67) It has been suggested that Bessborough may have met Chambers in Italy,(68) but records indicate that they could not have overlapped, unless the former had made an undocumented visit to Rome from 1750-55, when the architect was based there.(69) Another theory that he may have heard of Chambers through his father-in-law, who had a subscription copy of his *Treatise on Architecture* (1759)(70) is improbable, too, as it is clear, from Bessborough's library catalogue that he actually had his own copy of this book, together with a copy of *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, &c.* (1757). In fact he continued to collect Chambers' books, later acquiring, for example, his *Plans, Elevations Sections and Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew* (1763).

The grounds of the estate, as can be seen from the following map, were extensive, with the stately entrance gates in keeping with the owner's taste in antique art (Plate 8). Two large stone lions which, from this sketch, appear almost in the form of sphinxes, surmount the main pillars, complete with classical motifs in relief (Plate 9). The following architectural drawings show Chambers' original plans and front elevation of Roehampton Villa (Plates 10-11). The house was later depicted in *Vitruvius Britannicus*, where very slight changes to the detail of the exterior are visible.(71) The resemblance between this house and Bessborough House in County

Kilkenny, (particularly in its 'restrained classicism'), has been noted elsewhere;(72) and it is clear, both from the overall design of the house, and from certain aspects of its interior decor, that the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl followed neo-classical fashions almost as rigidly as did his son, with, for example, the original hall containing a 'screen' of huge Ionic columns of Kilkenny marble (Plate 12).

First conceived by the architect Francis Bindon before 1733, it appears that work on Bessborough House did not begun until 1744.(73) However, even taking into account the aesthetic deterioration it has continued to suffer since the fire in 1923, it was never recognised as being one of Bindon's greatest achievements.(74) Whether or not William had made any contribution to the overall vision of Bessborough House (or, conversely, whether his father's house had influenced the style of his own) is unclear, but both buildings share the same basic design of a centre block of two storeys over a basement (the basement in both cases being rusticated), a pedimented facade (the essential difference, of course, being the inclusion in Roehampton Villa of a hexastyle portico), and a perron and double stairway leading to the central doorway. (75) However, it must be remembered that such features are characteristic of architecture from this period.

Roehampton Villa was featured in contemporary books on English topography, such as Lysons's *Environs of London*, where it is mentioned as being 'among those of principal note' in Richmond Park.(76) It also generated a considerable amount of praise from Lord Bessborough's guests, including his agent in Rome, Thomas Jenkins, who, after visiting him during a trip to England in 1769, wrote a letter in which he

referred to his host's 'elegant taste' and his 'Charming Villa'.(77) More noteworthy, perhaps, than the architecture (and having a more lasting impact on the visitor) was its décor, in particular the impressive collection of classical statuary with which it was adorned, both inside and out. This is reflected in an anonymous poem entitled 'On the Earl of Bessborough's Villa at Roehampton', which reads:

'Here Genius Taste & Science stand confest  
And fill the minds of each transposed Guest ...  
Wheree'r (sic) we turn, where'er we look around  
We seem to breathe & tread on Classic Ground...  
Ask ye, from whence these various Treasures came  
These Scenes of Wonder? Need I Bessborough name?'"(78)

The extent of his collection can best be gauged from the surviving correspondence between William and his two agents abroad, and from the Christie's auction catalogue of April 7th, 1801,(79) at which most of the marbles were sold. While the former gives full descriptions of the antiquities themselves, together with details of their provenance and their price (often including the cost of restoration, the Bill of Lading, carpenters' fees and the fee charged by the agent), the latter document is a useful source in that it not only describes the individual statues and urns being sold by his son, Frederick, but - since the sale took place on the premises, rather than in Christies' own sale rooms - it also indicates their original position in the Villa. From this source we learn, for example, that the house contained Pleasure Grounds, two Temples and a Green House, all of which were decorated with statues and other pieces of antique statuary. The main area for displaying marbles inside the house was the extensive Hall (measuring 32 by 26 feet, see Plate 10, above), which contained 52 lots.

The fact that the original Christie's catalogue has survived in such good order is also invaluable in that it allows us to see who purchased each lot, and for what sum. Interesting and recurring buyers include Sir John Soane, who bought ten lots (including the famous marble statue of the Ephesian Artemis or Diana),(80) the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Carlisle (of Castle Howard), who bought five lots (including the Altar of Taurus) amounting to £219 9s, the great antiquarian and collector Charles Townley, the architect and collector Thomas Hope, the sculptor Nollekens, for whom the sale must have been a poignant experience, since he had been a close personal friend of the late Earl, as well as having executed his funerary monument (see below), and the Duke of Saint Albans, who was married to William's daughter, Charlotte. Space does not permit a full examination of Bessborough's art and antiquities in the present study, but the following examples will serve to give an idea of his classical taste and his method of collecting.

The correspondence between Bessborough and his two agents runs concurrently, with both collections beginning in 1763. The most extensive of these is from the well-known dealer, Thomas Jenkins (1722-98), who, being based in Rome throughout his career, became extremely wealthy through supplying Europe's nobility and gentry with antiquities and art. Bessborough's other agent was his friend and fellow-countryman James Hamilton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Clanbrassill (of 2<sup>nd</sup> creation), 1730-98, who happened to be based in Paris for a number of years.(81) He had much in common with Lord Bessborough (and regarded him as having 'more knowledge & taste than anybody), (82) both having a considerable collection of antique carved gem stones, many of which were published.(83) As with other contemporary collectors of this genre, both

Bessborough and Clanbrassill allowed Josiah Wedgwood to model cameos and intaglios for his famous Jasper Ware from their own gems, though Bessborough eventually sold his collection to Lord Marlborough.(84) In addition, Bessborough is described by Wedgwood as a:

'fine old Gentleman' who 'admires our vases & manufacture prodigiously, says he sees we shall exceed the Antients, that friezes & many other things may be made, that I am a very ingenious man... & that he will do me every service in his power.'

He also noted that Bessborough introduced his vases amongst the Irish nobility, who became enthusiastic patrons.(85)

An interesting item listed in the Earl's *Catalogue of Books at Roehampton, 1762*(86) is *Recueil de Sculptures Antiques dans la Collection de Cardinal Polignac*.

Clanbrassill had promised Bessborough this prized volume, which was not offered for sale in the library auction of 1848,(87) as an extra, when supplying him with a number of marbles from 'the remains of Cardinal Polignac's collection'.(88)

In a letter dated 20 January, 1768, Lord Clanbrassill states,

'All the statues, &c, are engraved which makes a small book Cardinal Polignac used to make presents of it is now very rare but the man has one & whatever your Lp may choose to buy I shall take care you shall have the print of.'(89)

Several items which Lord Bessborough bought from Clanbrassill emanated from this collection, which had come onto the Parisian market very cheaply because the owner 'took them for a bad debt, wants money very much, & understands nothing about



them'.(90) One was a statue of Flora, whose 'head & arm I believe to be modern but the Drapery is in my opinion very good', (91) and which he managed to acquire for 10 guineas (though the original asking price was 16). This was eventually sold to Bessborough's son-in-law, the Duke of Saint Albans, for £19 19s (Lot 85). Another was a statue of Minerva, 'a good deal restored but far from bad'(92) (price unknown), also sold to the Duke of Saint Albans (Lot 84, £20). A third was a statue of Esculapius (sic), 'not bad or dear', (93) which was also offered to 'Ld Pl:m', (94) who did not take up the offer. Again, we do not know the price originally paid for this piece, but it was sold to Soane (Lot 80) for £15 15s. Two other marbles supplied by Clanbrassill were a Pallas and a Venus (together with the Aesclepius they came to 65 guineas), but because they are not specified in the auction catalogue as having come from the Polignac Museum, we cannot distinguish them from the many other statues of that name.

Another book in Bessborough's library is the *Catalogue of Mr. Lyde Brown's Collection of Busts, &c*, which is not dated, but could be either of those published in 1768 (depicting eighty-one pieces) or 1779 (depicting 230 pieces).(95) The catalogue provides a link with Thomas Jenkins, since it was Lyde Brown who first recommended Lord Bessborough to his him as a potential patron. In a letter dated 30 March, 1763, Jenkins writes:

'Sir, In my last I mentioned to you the sense I had of your kindness in having been so obliging as to recommend to to my Lord Bessborough..... If this antiquity should not suit you, if you think it proper to propose it to My Lord Bessborough, I shall be much obliged to you, for I presume his Lordship cannot disaprove (sic) of my having made you the first offer of it, as it was you that was so obliging as first to recommend me to him'(96)

We know that Bessborough bought the antiquity in question (a large sepulchral urn with a lid that was not original, but whose 'bass-relievo' was 'the most elegant thing you can imagine, and is the more interesting as it proves the form of an antique carriage'),(97) from a later letter to Bessborough, in which Jenkins is 'vastly glad of it, hoping it will be very acceptable, and to find so large an antiquity in such preservation would be exceedingly difficult supposing this occasion to have been missed'.(98)

A sketch is included in the original letter (forwarded to Bessborough by Lyde Browne), where, as can be seen, the hunting scene is clearly discernable (Plate 13). What is not shown in this sketch, however, is the pair of 'Lyons' included to serve as supports. While giving advice on how to position these, Jenkins adds, in what must surely be a reference to Chambers:

'and if you decide to raise them higher to accompany the sphinxes, it may easily be done. Your Lords's own good taste, and that of your ingenious Architect will doubtless adjust those matters to the most advantage.'(99)

While the whole piece (the urn, the lid and two 'Lyons') were originally offered to Mr. Lyde Browne for four guineas (presumably Lord Bessborough was charged the same price), the lid alone fetched £105 at the auction, being sold as Lot 7 to a Mr. Lamoureux. The description of this piece, located in the Pleasure Grounds, is as follows:

'The Top of an Antient Sarcophagus, embellished with beautiful small Basreliefs of Figures returning from a Chase; and the corners ornamented with the *Larva* and *Lotus*, the contrasted Emblems of Decay and Reanimation.'(100)

Since there is no mention here of the lions (and we may assume from the context of Jenkins' description that they must have been life-size), it is tempting to imagine that

Lord Bessborough used them to adorn the entrance gates of Roehampton Villa, as depicted in Plate 9, above.

Another interesting piece acquired from Jenkins, for which a further sketch is supplied (Plate 14),(101) is a 'sepulchral Antiquity' described as a 'Groupe',(102) which consists of several pieces: a statue of a Roman matron supporting in her right hand a bust of a man, together with two sphinxes and a decorative centre-piece as supports. The total bill for the antiquity (including Jenkins' commission of £23) was £287 (Plate 14).

At the end of the letter in which the piece is described, he identifies the figure:

'P.S. After the most diligent examination the portrait of the female seems to be Marciana the sister of Trajan, who being left a widow probably she is here represented as supporting the Bust of her Husband, whose ashes I presume were (sic) deposited in the small urn that is on the side of the female, and it has the advantage of being very singular.'

It is this antiquity that may have inspired Rysback's monument to Caroline, as argued above.

Although there is a gap of six years in the correspondence (from 1763-69), it is likely that Bessborough continued to buy from Jenkins, though, if there had been a slowing down, the latter's visit to Roehampton Villa in December 1769 may have served to prompt a new wave of sales. In his letter of thanks, in which he praises both Lord Bessborough and his home,(103) Jenkins encourages his client to think about what he really needs for his house, and suggests:

'fine Sculpture for your elegant Villa, or Garden ornaments, in the latter are comprehended Urns, fonts of Urns, Columns, Capitols. I think you have no such thing as an antique Column in your Garden it's a sort of object either in the front of a House or in many parts of a Garden that makes an elegant form, on a Piedestal, with a Vase or other object on it...'(104)

He then goes on to interest him in a pair of Florentine 'Granite Columns' which Bessborough, in his reply, claims would not be worth his while purchasing, since they are ill proportioned and would cost too much to put right.(105). However, in the same letter, he agrees to the offer of two marbles (Diana and Apollo), which he considers to be a bargain at 60 zechinas. He then explains (picking up on Jenkins' earlier suggestion):

'You know I have not room in my house for many things, it is you know pretty full, so that what I want most, are such as I can put out into my garden, & they should not be of any great price, for it would be wrong to put fine marbles out, in our English air. Pieces ... such as you mention. All these sorts of things, that come cheap.'(106)

That Jenkins eagerly took him up on his request is clear from the amount of lots of similar description found in the 1801 auction. Subsequent letters also signify this, one announcing that he has just:

'sent to the care of Mr. Francis Jermy at Leghorn three Cases of such articles as follows... four Corinthian capitols found on the Calian (sic) Hill...a piece of ornament in three parts found in the Villa of Lucullus at Frascati the ancient Tusculum, the Friars who proferred it made use of it as the Back part of a Seat in the gardens - in the same case are a Basso Relievo representing a tree with a Bird, ditto an Eagle with a Serpent, ditto a Cow, or Horse, a Tiger, and the front of a small Urn... and half all those pieces ... ware (sic) found in Hadrians Villa... [and] ten pieces of ornaments chiefly sepulchral...all found near the Via Appia,'(107)

and another acknowledging its arrival in London, stating: 'as in General things of that kind are esteemed in proportion as they are judiciously placed, I am confident those at Roehampton will appear with every advantage'.(108)

A piece of sculpture very much desired by Lord Bessborough, but which he eventually failed to acquire, was one of a Dog. Though no further details of the piece itself are given (it is not even clear whether it was Classical or Renaissance), much was written about it during the course of ten months, thus giving us an insight into Jenkins' business practices. Bessborough first asked Jenkins to try and buy it for him in the January, for 100 guineas,(109) and up until February, was encouraged to believe it would 'fall to' him.(110) Three months later, its fate was still 'not yet decided...and must remain in suspense (sic)',(111) though by August, it was suggested that the Pope himself had set his heart on it, for which 'there is no remedy', other than increasing his offer to £120.(112)

Jenkins wrote a week later, confirming that the Pope had indeed taken it, together with about ten of the 'Best Antiquities', and intended to display them, together with a number of other pieces, in a Gallery in the Vatican.(113) In a subsequent letter, Jenkins still found it necessary to justify to his patron his failure in acquiring the Dog, stating that it was no fault of his, but depended on particular circumstances, 'the Pope by granting some indulgences to the Nuns who were (sic) Proprietors, got all their Antiquities for much less than I had offered'.

One of the last lots in the 1801 auction (Lot 117, sold to Herd for £37 16s) is described as 'A beautiful Head of a Female Saint in Mosaick, done at the Vatican in

the same Manner as the Pictures in St. Peter's.(114) This piece is first mentioned in the letter of 6 December, 1769, where Jenkins notes that 'on my arrival here I found the mosaik carefully packt up'. In his reply, over a month later,(115) Lord Bessborough mentions that it has not yet arrived, but hopes that it soon shall. There then follows,(116) an elaborate and highly convoluted explanation of the delay, apparently caused by a row which had developed over the Bill of Lading (which Jenkins considered to be a 'downright imposition' ), amounting to an extortionate £17. He concludes this section of the letter by admitting that he wished he had simply paid the excess freight, rather than having caused Lord Bessborough such trouble. In a letter sent two months later, by which time the mosaic had still not arrived, Jenkins notes, in a post-script, that 'Your Lordp will please to recollect that the picture in Mosaick is to be seen at the distance to have its proper effect'. He also mentions a letter, which was due to arrive in the same post, from Mr. Hewetson - 'an ingenious sculptor and your countryman here...a deserving man [with] considerable merit in his profession'.(117)

The next mention of the mosaic is in a letter from Jenkins in response to one from Bessborough confirming its eventual arrival.(118) He is 'hurt at the accident which befel (sic) [it] which presumably must have been ocasioned (sic) by some uncommon jolt or tumbling of the Case', and hopes that 'when properly placed the defect will not be visible.' Bessborough is then given a description of the piece (rather belatedly for him, but for us informative), in which Jenkins explains:

'The subject of it is the head of Judith painted by Carlo Maratt (sic) for one of the small cupolo's in St Peters, where it is copied in Mosaick, and the original painting is in the great Hall called La Sala Reggio in the Popes Palace at Monte Cavalle.'

The last we hear of the mosaic is at the end of an amusing letter from Lord Clanbrassill to Bessborough, sent after a gap in the surviving correspondence of five years (from 1768-73).(119) He has now returned from Paris to Ireland, where he is based in his estate in Dundalk, County Louth.(120) Bessborough has obviously ordered him to write, and Clanbrassill asks, 'what amusement can you possibly have from any letter I can write from this place?', claiming that 'people retired to a remote corner of a country, not only remote, but thinly inhabited, contract bounded and local ideas'. He continues, 'I do it worse than any body. You know it impossible to pour wine out of a vessell (sic) that contains nothing but water,' jokingly offering, once he has received orders, to 'give ... a full account of plows (sic), oxen, turnips, cabbage, pruning & planting, guns and woodcocks'.

Turning, at last, to a subject of mutual interest (Bessborough's antiquities), Clanbrassill notes:

'I have found out where the white stone is found the same as the white parts of the Antique Mosaic. Hayward told me he had a bit from Ireland but could not say where it came from.(121) I discovered it in the mountains in the County of Derry.(122) It is a thick, cream, white, when polished, very good for mosaic & I should imagine

pretty for inscriptions if your Lordship cares for some of it I can very easily send it to London'.

Although there is a great deal more to be said about Lord Bessborough and his artistic interests (he was a Trustee of the British Museum, for example, from 1768 until he died), we shall move on swiftly to the subject of his death and subsequent memorials.

(123) When he died, on 11 March, 1793, at the age of 89, his daughter-in-law Henrietta Spencer (mother of Carloline Lamb), writing to her sons from Rome, referred to 'the sad loss you have had in your dear grandpapa', and confessing that, 'the shock I received from this terrible news made me so ill, I could not write before.'(124)

Dying of natural causes, though almost blind, Lord Bessborough was buried (on 22 March) alongside his wife in All Saint's Church, Derby. As can be seen from the following illustration (Plate 15), in contrast with the elaborately conceived monuments which he erected for his parents and wife (see Plates 6 and 7, above), the monument dedicated to his memory is simple and unadorned (Plate 15). It consists of a bust placed on a funerary urn, below which is a coat of arms between two 'feet' in the form of Corinthian capitols. There is some classical reference in his clothing, too, though nothing as mannered as in the busts of his parents.

The sculptor commissioned to carry out this bust and monument was Nollekens, who was a personal friend of Bessborough.(125) Coincidentally (though it may have been a common style of the sculptor), the monument itself is almost identical to one made by Nollekens for Richard Barwell, who died at Stansted (later home to the Bessbough family) in 1804.(126)



Presumably, it was Bessborough's son and heir, Frederick (up until then Lord Duncannon), who commissioned this monument, though there is no mention of this in the inscription, which is predominantly factual, the only eulogy being in the two lines:

'He was beloved and respected by all:  
In Liberality and Charity He was surpassed by none.'(127)

Ironically, since this is the same son (though himself an avid collector of prints) who regrettably decided to sell off his father's collections of art and antiques only eight years after his death, a more fitting eulogy is to be found, perhaps, on the covers of the catalogues for the two Christie's auctions of 1801,(128) which describe Lord Bessborough as:

'A NOBLE EARL, DECEASED,  
(Not less distinguished for his exquisite Taste and Judgement  
in the Fine Arts, than for his Liberality in Collecting.)'

## ENDNOTES

The following abbreviation is used:

Ingamells            John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800* (Yale 1997)

1 In order to avoid confusion, he shall be referred to here simply as William or Lord Bessborough, even though he did not attain this title until 1758. In the sources, he is generally named, up until this date, as Hon Ponsonby or (after 1724) Lord Duncannon.

2 She also had family connections with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Charlemont, which means that her son was closely related to James Caulfield, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Charlemont, another Anglo-Irish Grand Tourist of note.

3 As is well known, in 1662 Baron Ponsonby re-named the Kildalton estate Bessie Borough, or Bessborough, after his second wife, Elizabeth Folliott. This was regarded with scorn by later critics, such as Swift, see Mark Bence-Jones, *A Guide to Irish Country Houses* (revised edition 1988) 41.

4 *English Peerage*, 1790.

5 Typically, even the Bessborough Papers in the possession of the present Earl contain only a half-page handwritten list of brief biographical notes, moving speedily from his date of birth and political appointments, to the year of his death (File 20). I am most grateful to Myles Ponsonby, 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bessborough, for giving me access to his family papers, and for allowing me to quote, and reproduce material, from the following three files: File 20 (Biographical Notes on 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl), File 77 (2<sup>nd</sup> Earl's Correspondence with Lord Clanbrassill), and File 157 (2<sup>nd</sup> Earl's Correspondence with Thomas Jenkins). I also wish to acknowledge the kind assistance of Peter Wilkinson, former Assistant Archivist, and Alison McCann, Assistant Archivist, of the West Sussex Public Record Office in Chichester, who arranged access and permission for me.

6 At least it has been established, from examining the records, that he did not enter the three main universities in these isles: Trinity College, Dublin (attended by his grandfather and his two younger brothers), Cambridge (attended by his only surviving son, Frederick) or Oxford.

7 See R. Finnegan, "The Private Library of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bessborough", in *Hermathena*, forthcoming. This study is based on an analysis of a manuscript entitled *Catalogue of Books at Roehampton, 1762*, in the Library of Stansted Park, Hampshire. This house, former home of the Bessborough family, who moved there after being burned out of Bessborough House in County Kilkenny in 1923, is now run by the Stansted Park Foundation.

8 The diariest Thomas Creevey wrongly claims, in relation to a visit to the Ponsonby family in September, 1828, that William 'left Ireland when eighteen years old, and having never seen it more, died in 1792', quoted in *The Knight of Glin*, David J. Griffin and Nicholas K. Robinson, *Vanishing Country Houses of Ireland* (The Irish Architectural Archive 1989) 24.

- 9 See John Heron Lepper and Philip Crossle, *History of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ireland* (Dublin 1925) 82.
- 10 As recorded, for example, by G. O'Brien, *Dictionary of Biography* (Oxford 2004), and The Earl of Bessborough with Clive Aslet, *Enchanted Forest: The Story of Stansted in Sussex* (London 1984) 104.
- 11 See, for example, N.A.M. Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl: A Life of John Montagu, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich 1718-1792* (HarperCollins 1993) 4ff.
- 12 For the educational purposes of the Grand Tour, see Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad: the Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (Sutton Publishing Ltd., paperback edition 2003) 318-21, and 327.
- 13 See John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London 1997) 257.
- 14 In a letter to Lord Bessborough, dated 6 December, 1769, Thomas Jenkins mentions that this celebrated antiquary 'remembers you exceedingly well, and was vastly glad to receive your kind compliments, and makes you a thousand offers of his services' (Bessborough Family Papers, File 157). All subsequent references to the Jenkins-Bessborough Correspondence are referred to by the date of the letter.
- 15 See Francis Haskell & Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900* (Yale University Press 1981) 63.
- 16 For a fascinating study on Albani and the theory that he was a spy (based on his correspondence with, among others, Horace Mann), see Lesley Lewis, *Connoisseurs and Secret Agents in Eighteenth Century Rome* (Chatto & Windus (London 1961) *passim*.
- 17 Jenkins to Bessborough, 6 December, 1769. However, the ensuing correspondence does not suggest that such a trip materialised.
- 18 *Dublin Journal*, 13-17 September, 1737, Number 1166 (National Library of Ireland).
- 19 *Dublin Journal*, 17-20 September, 1737, Number 1167 (National Library of Ireland).
- 20 See Ingamells, 1021, and John Fotheringham, 376. For further details of Wright's occupation as a spy, see Lesley Lewis, *Connoisseurs and Secret Agents in Eighteenth Century Rome* (Chatto & Windus (London 1961) 96 and 103.
- 21 See Ingamells, under the entries for William Ponsonby and Lord Sandwich, 781 and 839-40, respectively.

22 Given the extent of his memoirs, and the fame he was to achieve in later life, it is surprising that no mention is made of John Montagu in David Constantine's book, *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (Cambridge 1984), in which the author sets out to 'describe the transmission of facts and enthusiasm among the travellers', 5.

23 The same is true of the unedited manuscript version of this work, the original of which is in the private collection of the current Earl of Sandwich (also John Montagu) at Mapperton. I am grateful to Lord Sandwich for verifying the absence of any references to William in this document. There is also a copy of the manuscript in the National Maritime Museum, London, Ref. NMM (SAN/F/50), and I wish to thank Kate Jarvis for similarly checking this document for references to the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl.

24 Ingamells, 781, n 3, and 840, n 10, which refer to the fact that the party (consisting of Lord Sandwich, James Nelthorpe and John Mackye) were reported in the *Florence Newsletter*, 20 October, 1738, as having arrived back from Leghorn (where they had performed their quarantine) to Florence.

25 I am grateful to Mr. J.E.T. Cooper, F.R.I.C.S., Director of the Stansted Park Foundation, for permission to reproduce this illustration, together with other material from the Foundation, as mentioned below. I am also truly indebted to Captain John Cunningham, Heritage Volunteer at Stansted Park working on behalf of the Portsdown Decorative & Fine Arts Society, whose extreme generosity and expertise have been invaluable to me throughout the duration of my research.

26 See L. Geilly, 'La Biography de Jean-Etienne Liotard, ecrite par son fils', in *Geneva*, xi (1933)195.

27 The story is also related by Jaynie Anderson, 'Fixing Pastels: a Letter from Liotard to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bessborough in 1763', in *The Burlington Magazine*, vol 13 (1090) 23.

28 N.A.M. Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl: A Life of John Montagu, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich 1718-1792* (HarperCollins1993) 4. The author of this biography, however, uses as his source Lord Sandwich's *A Voyage performed by the Late Earl of Sandwich round the Mediterranean in the years 1738 and 1739, written by himself* (1799), which, according to Ingamells (840) 'seems inaccurate on several counts'.

29 As recorded in Francois Fosca, *La Vie les Voyages et les Oevres de Jean-Etienne Liotard, Citoyen de Geneve, dit Le Peintre Turc* (La Bibliotheque des Arts, Lausanne, Paris 1956) 194-96.

30 Ingamells, 840, and L. Geilly, "La Biography de Jean-Eteinne Liotard, ecrite par son fils", in *Geneva*, xi (1933) 195.

31 Ingamells, 781, n 4.

32 That collecting was one of the motives for this (or any subsequent undocumented) trip is illustrated on the cover of a Christie's sale catalogue: *A Catalogue of the Capital, Well-known and Truly Valuable Collection of Antique Statues, Bustos, Aegyptian, and other Vases, Bas-Reliefs, &c. ...the Property of A Noble Earl, Deceased...* (7 April, 1801), in which it is stated that a great part of 'this valuable assemblage' was formed 'during his travels and residence in Italy' (Christie's Archives, London).

33 See J. Anderson, 'Fixing Pastels: a Letter from Liotard to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bessborough in 1763', in *The Burlington Magazine* vol 13 (1090) 23, and F. Fosca, *La Vie les Voyages et les Oevres de Jean-Etienne Liotard, Citoyen de Geneve, dit Le Peintre Turc* (La Bibliotheque des Arts, Lausanne, Paris 1956) 59-60, for an account of the paintings then (at the date of publication) in the Bessborough family collection.

34 If this is indeed the date, as suggested, then Liotard must have begun it in 1739, while travelling with Bessborough, since the artist was to remain in Constantinople for a further five years after the rest of the party had left.

35 Vere, 9<sup>th</sup> Earl, lists a number of works of art which he 'got away from Bessborough before it was burnt, and ... [which] were saved from the flames at the time of the fire by the devoted efforts of Michael Power the Clerk of the works aided by others in the employ of the estate'. See "Reminiscences", or "Memoirs", a manuscript in Stansted Park Library.

36 The Earl of Sandwich wore similar attire for portraits attributed to Joseph Highmore and James Northcote. See N.A.M. Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl: A Life of John Montagu, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich 1718-1792* (HarperCollins1993) Figs 1-3.

37 This costume is described by Aileen Ribeiro, in an article entitled "Turquerie: Turkish Dress and English Fashion in the Eighteenth Century (in *The Connoisseur* vol. 20, May, 1979, 21), as the "kind of semi-Turkish dress worn by Englishmen travelling in the East".

38 In *Irish Arts Review* (Summer 1987), Vol 4, 31 and 32-33.

39 See, for example, The Earl of Bessborough with Clive Aslet, *Enchanted Forest: The Story of Stansted in Sussex* (London 1984)109.

40 Also in Stansted Park. See A. Ribeiro, 'Turquerie: Turkish Dress and English Fashion in the Eighteenth Century (in *The Connoisseur*, vol 20 (May 1979) n10, who rightly describes her costume as being a version of a Turkish (rather than a Venetian) dress.

41 For a general discussion of the Dilettanti portraits (though the author does not actually refer to those of Lords Bessborough and Sandwich), see A. Shearer West, 'Libertinism and the Ideology of Male Friendship in the Portraits of the Society of Dilettanti', in *Eighteenth-Century Life* 16 (May 1992) 76-104.

42 See Bruce Redford, "'Seria Ludo': George Knapp's portraits of the Society of Dilettanti", in *British Art Journal*, 2001, vol 3, no 1, 66, and N.A.M. Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl: A Life of John Montagu, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich 1718-1792* (HarperCollins 1993) 7 and 118. Lysons' *Environs of London* notes that in the breakfast room of Bessborough's Roehampton Villa 'are several [portraits] in crayons of English gentlemen, principally in Turkish dresses, by Liotard', quoted in The Earl of Bessborough in collaboration with A. Aspinall, *Lady Bessborough and her Family Circle* (London 1940) 292.

43 Bessborough was a founder member of the Divan Society, among whose other members were Frolich, Mackye and Nelthorpe. Membership to this exclusive dining club was open only to those who could prove they had travelled to Turkey. The only surviving record of this society is the Minute Book ('Al-Koran'), in the possession of Lord Sandwich of Mapperton, and I am grateful to him for allowing me to quote from this and for kindly transcribing part of the rules, or 'Laws' for my work on a related study (forthcoming). A copy of the manuscript is in the National Maritime Museum, London, ref: NMM, SAN/V/113.

44 According to the Appendix of L. Cust and S. Colvin, *History of the Society of Dilettanti* (London 1914), Bessborough was elected in 1736 (as was Lord Middlesex), the Earl of Sandwich in 1740 (and re-elected in 1775), Mr. Nelthorpe in 1740, and Mr. Mackye in 1740/1 (Nelthorpe was re-elected in 1744).

45 John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London 1997) 256.

46 As with Bessborough, he was elected in 1736, see Appendix of L. Cust and S. Colvin, *History of the Society of Dilettanti* (London 1914).

47 Caroline was born on 22 May, 1719, and was goddaughter of George II. See *The Complete Peerage of England Scotland Ireland Great Britain and the United Kingdom Extant Extinct or Dormant*, vol ii (St Catherine Press 1912).

48 See Robert E. Burns, *Irish Parliamentary Politics in the Eighteenth Century*, vol ii (USA 1989) 42-43, for an account of the political consequences of this marriage.

49 *ibid.*, 53, and *The English Peerage, 1790*.

50 See, for example, the postal address given on letters dated from 4 May, 1742 to 13 July, 1744, in the Wilmon-Horton of Osmaston and Catton collection, Derbyshire Record Office, ref. D3155/C590 to C650.

51 See D. Howell-Thomas, *Duncannon: Reformer and Reconciler, 1781-1847* (Michael Russell 1992) 17-18.

52 The house was sold in October, 1920, by Edward, 8th Earl, because it had 'now become too big & cheerless', as described by Vere, 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bessborough, in "Reminiscences", or "Memoirs", a manuscript in Stansted Park Library.

53 This mansion is described and illustrated in Edward Wedlake Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales; or Original Delineations, Topographical, Historical, and Descriptive, of Each County*, vol vii (London 1808) 575-76.

54 *ibid.*, 576.

55 Apart from the births and untimely deaths of many of the eleven children born to the couple between their marriage and Caroline's death in 1760. According to the family tree ('A Genealogical Table of the Noble Family of PONSONBY, Baron Ponsonby, &c.', a manuscript pasted into a scrapbook, in the Library of Stansted Park), four of their six daughters (Caroline, Sarah and two unnamed) died young, while the first four boys (William Brabazon, William John, Henry, and one unnamed) also died young. The only surviving son was Frederick, born 1758, who succeeded his father in 1793

56 See Edward Wedlake Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales; or Original Delineations, Topographical, Historical, and Descriptive, of Each County*, vol vii (London 1808) 576.

57 According to a Catalogue of Pictures compiled by C. Fairfax Murray, in 1893 (Nottingham Archives: Portland of Welbeck, 6<sup>th</sup> Deposit, ref. DD/P6/19/1/3), the original portrait (held at Welbeck Abbey) was presented by Lord William Bentinck to Madame Adelaide of France who, by her will, bequeathed it to the Duke of Portland. To judge from the surviving family correspondence (particularly between him and his wife Dorothy), William Bentinck was on very friendly terms with Lord Bessborough. Further evidence of the relations between the two families is provided in a letter from Lord Clanbrassill to Bessborough, dated 28 March, 1768, when it is suggested that the latter should visit him in Paris: 'We might then make Mr Bentinck a visit together which I have promised to do in (sic) my way home'. Fairfax Murray's Catalogue further states that a duplicate portrait was bequeathed by Maddie Listard to the 'Amsterdam Gallery, Catalogue No. 858', and it is this that it depicted in Plate 5.

58 Members of the Irish Georgian Society will know that the preservation of the 'Mausoleum' in which this monument is housed has continued to be of great interest and concern to the Society since the 1960s. See, for example, *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*, vol ix, nos. 3 & 4, 103, where a photograph of the monument is published.

59 As is apparent from the architectural and interior design of Bessborough House, see below.

60 The richness of this monument is described in Samuel Lewis' *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* (London 1837), in the entry for Fiddown, as 'consisting of half length figures of the earl and his countess, on a sarcophagus of Egyptian marble,

under a pediment supported by four Corinthian columns and four pilasters of Sienna marble.'

61 Extract made by Lady Charlotte Schreiber, mother of Blanche Vere Guest (wife of 8<sup>th</sup>

Earl), from *Walpole's Letters*, Cunningham, ed., ii, 281, in the Bessborough Family Papers, File 20.

62 Catherine (1742-89) married the Duke of Saint Albans, while Catherine (1747-1822) married William, Earl Fitzwilliam.

63 As erroneously stated in many sources, including the family tree in Stansted Park (see n 55, above). The last input to this document is William's resignation from the position of Joint Postmaster General in 1766. It is curious, since this is only six years after the death of his wife, that such an error should have been made.

64 As described by Rev J. Charles Cox and W.H. St. John Hope, *The Chronicles of the Collegiate Church of All Saints*, Derby (London and Derby 1881) 129.

65 A mark of his true affection for Caroline is apparent in the fact that Lord Bessborough had worn his wife's diamond buckles ever since her death. See J. T. Smith,'s scathing biography of his master, *Nollekens and His Times* (1828, reprinted by Turnstile Press 1949) 57.

66 John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530-1830* (Yale University Press 1953, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 1993), places it as the first of Chambers' 'classical country houses' in the 'villa revival', 386.

67 See Giles Worsley, *Classical Architecture in Britain: the Heroic Age* (Yale University Press 1995) 245, for a discussion of the influences on this house, which is described as a 'reinterpretation without the dome of Campbell's Mereworth, Kent, or as an adaptation of Isaac Ware's Fooks Cray, Kent'.

68 Joan P. Alcock, 'Sir William Chambers and the Building of Parkstead House, Roehampton', in *Surrey Archaeological Collection*, lxxii (1980) 198.

69 See Ingamellis,194-95.

70 See Joan P. Alcock, 'Sir William Chambers and the Building of Parkstead House, Roehampton', in *Surrey Archaeological Collection*, lxxii (1980) 198, who mistakenly refers to the Duke as William's 'brother-in-law', rather than his father-in-law.

71 Campbell, Woolfe, and Gandon, *Vitruvius Britannicus, or the British Architect, containing the Plans, Elevations and Sections of Buildings in Great Britain* (1715-71) 11-13.



- 72 See D. Howell-Thomas, *Duncannon: Reformer and Reconciler, 1781-1847* (Michael Russell 1992) 110.
- 73 The Knight of Glin, 'Francis Bindon: His Life and Works', in *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*, x, no. 2, 11, n 26.
- 74 See Mark Bence-Jones, *A Guide to Irish Country Houses* (revised edition 1988) 41, and Maurice Craig, *The Architecture of Ireland from the Earliest Times to 1880*, (Dublin 1982, revised edition 1997) 189.
- 75 Neither of these two features (the pediment or the stairway) is evident in Plate 12, since this is a rear view of the house. However, they are present in photographs from the early twentieth century, for example, The Knight of Glin, 'Francis Bindon: His Life and Works', in *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*, x, no. 2, pl 4, and the National Library of Ireland, ref. PI199A (circa 1900-10).
- 76 Rev. Daniel Lysons, *Environs of London* vol 1, part 3 (London 1791-96) 433-34.
- 77 Jenkins to Bessborough, 6 December, 1769.
- 78 Bessborough Papers, File 20.
- 79 Reproduced by permission of Christie's Archives, London.
- 80 For further details on this piece, see Peter Thornton and Helen Dorey, *A Miscellany of Objects from Sir John Soane's Museum* (London 1992) 71.
- 81 Clanbrassill was elected as Member of the Society of Dilettanti in 1760 (see L. Cust and S. Colvin, *History of the Society of Dilettanti*, London 1914). Brian De Breffny, 'Liotard's Irish Patrons', in *Irish Arts Review* (Summer 1987), vol 4, 38, tentatively suggests that 'The 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bessborough would have been acquainted with' Clanbrassill, but was obviously unaware of the actual extent of their friendship.
- 82 Letter from Lord Clanbrassill to Lord Bessborough, dated 14 June, 1763 (Bessborough Papers, File 57). All subsequent references to the Clanbrassill-Bessborough Correspondence are referred to by the date of the letter.
- 83 In, for example, L. Natter, *Treatise on the Ancient Method of Engraving on Precious Stones* (London 1754), L. Natter, *Catalogue des Pierres Gravees de Comte de Bessborough* (printed by J. Haberdorn, London 1761), and T. Worlidge, *A Select Collection of Drawings from Curious Antique Gems, most of them in the possession of the Nobility and Gentry of this Kingdom, etched after the Manner of Rembrandt* (London 1768-1770).
- 84 See Carol Macht, *Classical Wedgwood Designs: The Sources and Their Use and the Relationship of Wedgwood Jasper Ware to the Classical Revival of the Eighteenth Century* (New York 1957) 11.

85 Eliza Meteyard, *The Life of Josiah Wedgwood from his Private Correspondence and Family Papers with an Introductory Sketch of the Art of Poetry in England*. 2 vols (London 1866), quoted in the Bessborough Family Papers, File 20.

86 Manuscript in the Library of Stansted Park, see n 7, above.

87 A five-day auction at Christie's, from 3 April, 1848, see *Catalogue of the Valuable Library of the Late Right Hon. Frederick Earl of Bessborough*, Christie's Archives, London.

88 Cardinal Melchior de Polignac (1661-1742) was French Ambassador to Rome for eight years, from 1732-40, during which time he added to his collection of antiquities, including the famous statue of the Nymph with a Shell (now in the Louvre). See Francis Haskell & Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900* (Yale University Press 1981) 280 and fig 148.

89 Clanbrassill to Bessborough, 20 January, 1768.

90 *ibid.*

91 Clanbrassill to Bessborough, 19 May, 1768.

92 Clanbrassill to Bessborough, 20 Jan, 1768.

93 Clanbrassill to Bessborough, 19 May, 1768.

94 Clanbrassill to Bessborough, 6 July, 1768.

95 This gentleman was Director of the Bank of England from 1768, but in 1784, when he sold off part of his collection to Catherine the Great in St. Petersburg, the bankruptcy of his agent meant that he received less than half the sum they sold for.

96 Jenkins to Lyde-Brown, 30 March, 1763, the first letter in the collection of Bessborough/Jenkins correspondence.

97 *ibid.*

98 Jenkins to Bessborough, 7 May, 1763.

99 *ibid.*

100 Christie's Catalogue, 1801, 1.

101 There is talk in the correspondence of two separate sketches: one designed to interest Bessborough (sent some time in March or April, 1763 - probably the one shown in Plate 14), and the other to illustrate how the final product would look, following restoration (sent on 7 May, 1763). Whatever the case, Jenkins apologises

for the quality of the sketch, assuring him that it is nothing like the real thing, which is already in transit.

102 Jenkins to Bessborough, 23 April, 1763.

103 Jenkins to Bessborough, 6 December, 1769.

104 *ibid.*

105 Bessborough to Jenkins, 15 January, 1770

106 *ibid.*

107 Jenkins to Bessborough, 19 May, 1770. In his previous letter (15 January, 1770), he mentions that 'your friend' Cardinal Albani 'has adopted numbers of them in his Villa, by setting them into the walls, he avoids the expence (sic) of restoring them and well disposed have an excellent effect...'

108 Jenkins to Bessborough, 1 August, 1770.

109 Bessborough to Jenkins, 15 January, 1770.

110 Jenkins to Bessborough, 3 February, 1770.

111 Jenkins to Bessborough, 19 May, 1770.

112 Jenkins to Bessborough, 1 August, 1770. This was Pope Clement XIV, for whom Jenkins purchased antiquities. He is described by Jenkins as having a great 'love for the Arts ...[and being] a man of too much honor to touch the publick money even in his acts of munificence, what purchases he makes tho' for the use of the State is all done out of his Privy Purse'. At the time of writing this to Bessborough (19 May, 1770), Jenkins' position as a supplier of antiquities had become somewhat precarious, owing to the enforcement of more stringent regulations concerning the exportation of Italy's heritage. Interestingly, Jenkins confides in his correspondent, explaining his rather questionable business dealings with the Pope, as follows: 'my convention with him being, to give him the refusal of such antiquities as I purchase at the first count, in confirmation of which he assures (sic) me the liberty of sending away what he does not take, by this means I gain such points as it would be otherwise impossible to surmount.'

113 Jenkins to Bessborough, 8 August, 1770. By placing these in the more spacious Vatican, rather than in the Capitol, from which he was moving other famous pieces, like the Laocoon, the Pope was ensuring that they would be viewed to their best advantage.

114 Christie's Sale Catalogue, 7 April, 1801, 8

115 Bessborough to Jenkins, 15 January, 1770.

116 Jenkins to Bessborough, 3 February, 1770.

117 Jenkins to Bessborough, 19 May, 1770. Christopher Hewetson, from Thomastown, County Kilkenny (1737-98), was in Rome from 1765 until his death, during which time he befriended Jenkins and had a very successful career. See Ingamells, 494-95.

118 Jenkins to Bessborough, 1 August, 1770.

119 Clanbrassill to Bessborough, 9 December, 1772.

120 His other estate was at Tollymore, County Down.

121 Presumably Richard Hayward the sculptor (1728-1800), described by Jenkins, who had met him on his Grand Tour of 1753-4, as 'a deserving young man... [who] behaved well'. Ingamells, 478.

122 He gives no further details of the location of this stone. There is, however, a townland in Derry called An Chloch Fhionn (Cloughfin), which means 'the white stone'.

123 A shorter study on the engraved prints executed in memory of Lord Bessborough is in progress.

124 Letter dated 10 April, 1793, quoted in *The Earl of Bessborough in collaboration with A. Aspinall, Lady Bessborough and her Family Circle* (London 1940) 80.

125 It is recorded by his pupil, T.J. Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* (1828, reprinted by Turnstile Press 1949) 56, that Bessborough was such a frequent visitor at his house that the dog 'immediately welcomed the visitor, who always brought a French-roll in his blue great-coat-pocket purposely for him, with which his Lordship took great pleasure in feeding him.' Other anecdotes about Bessborough's generosity, in particular, are recorded. See also n 127, below.

126 This monument, erected in his memory in Westbourne parish church, is depicted in *The Earl of Bessborough with Clive Aslet, Enchanted Forest: The Story of Stansted in Sussex* (London 1984) 65.

127 His father's generosity is testified elsewhere (see n 125, above), but is most obvious from his personal correspondence. In a letter to Lord Bessborough dated 6 December, 1769, for instance, Thomas Jenkins praises the 'curious and elegant Derbyshire vase' recently sent by Bessborough and promises to show it first to Cardinal Albani, 'tho' I am pretty confident he will keep it.' In his reply of 13 January, 1770, Lord Bessborough notes, 'In case he likes the alabaster vase, I gave you, I will send him one of the best I can get, or should his Emminence like our English thorny (?) Beer, I will send him a Hogshhead for his acceptance.' Clearly both gifts arrived

safely, as several months later (1 August, 1770 and 24 October, 1770, respectively), Jenkins encloses letters of thanks and gratitude from the Cardinal's Secretary. Bessborough was reimbursed by the Cardinal for the transportation costs of the beer.

128 The three-day sale of paintings, on 6 February, and the one-day sale of marbles, on 7 April, 1801.

## LIST OF PLATES AND CAPTIONS

1. Thomas Worlidge, JEAN-ETIENNE LIOTARD, 1754, included in a collection of prints bound into a copy of *Lysons's Environs of London*, in the Library of Stansted Park, Hampshire. (Courtesy of the Trustees of the Stansted Park Foundation, photo: John Cunningham)

2. Jean-Etienne Liotard, WILLIAM, 2<sup>nd</sup> EARL OF BESSBOROUGH, c. 1742-43, oil on canvas, 124.5 x 99.7 cm. (Courtesy of the Trustees of the Stansted Park Foundation, photo: John Cunningham)

3. Spencer Gervase, after Liotard, MINIATURE OF WILLIAM, 2<sup>nd</sup> EARL OF BESSBOROUGH, signed with initials, oval, 3.5 cm (Courtesy of Sotheby's Picture Library)

4. Miss Helen Havelock, INGRESS PARK, KENT, THE SEAT OF W<sup>m</sup> HAVELOCK ESQ<sup>r</sup>, engraved by J. Storer, for *The Beauties of England and Wales*, 1812. (Courtesy of the Trustees of the Stansted Park Foundation, photo: John Cunningham)

5. Jean-Etienne Liotard, SIR WILLIAM PONSONBY, LATER EARL OF BESSBOROUGH, c. 1750-60, pastel on paper, 60 cm x 48 cm (Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, ref. SK-A-237)
  
6. William Atkinson, MONUMENT TO THE EARL AND COUNTESS OF BESSBOROUGH, 1758, in the chapel at Fiddown, County Kilkenny (Courtesy of Rev George Cliffe, photo: David Kane)
  
7. John Joseph Briggs, MONUMENT TO THE COUNTESS OF BESSBOROUGH, ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, S.E. CORNER (4), Watercolour, from a manuscript volume entitled "The Sepulchral Monuments of Derbyshire" (Courtesy of Derbyshire Record Office and Derby Diocesan Record Office, ref. D4626/1 (4))
  
8. Estate Map attached to Lease (Courtesy of London Borough of Lambeth, Archives Department, ref. 4765, photo: Alan Robertson)
  
9. Unknown artist, PUTNEY ROEHAMPTON, KINGSTON ROAD, EARL BESSBOROUGH, Sketch in sepia, accompanying the Lease Map (Plate 10), c. 1800. (Courtesy of London Borough of Lambeth, Archives Department, Ref. SP26/188/BES.1, photo: Alan Robertson)

10. Sir William Chambers, 'THE EARL OF BESSBOROUGH'S HOUSE AT ROEHAMPTON', ground plan. (Courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum, ref. 43/4/10, photo: Jeremy Butler).
  
11. Sir William Chambers, 'THE EARL OF BESSBOROUGH'S HOUSE AT ROEHAMPTON', drawing of front elevation. (Courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum, ref. 43/4/11, photo: Jeremy Butler)
  
12. J. P. Neale, BESSBOROUGH HOUSE, from an original drawing by the Earl of Bessborough (Frederick, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl), engraved by H. Hobson, London, 1819. (Courtesy of private owner, photo: David Kane)
  
13. Thomas Jenkins, LARGE SEPULCHRAL URN WITH SCENE OF A CHASE, sketch on paper, 1763. (Courtesy of Myles, 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bessborough, photo: the author)
  
14. Thomas Jenkins, SEPULCHRAL ANTIQUITY, sketch on paper, 1763. (Courtesy of Myles, 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bessborough, photo: the author)



15. John Joseph Briggs, MONUMENT TO LORD BESSBOROUGH, ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, S.E. CORNER (3), Watercolour, from a manuscript volume entitled "The Sepulchral Monuments of Derbyshire". (Courtesy of Derbyshire Record Office and Derby Diocesan Record Office, ref. D4626/1 (3))

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is grateful to the following (further details are also given in the notes):

Lord Bessborough and Lord Sandwich, for permission to use and reproduce material from their family papers; Mr. James Cooper, Director of the Stansted Park Foundation, for his assistance and advice on visits to Stansted Park; Captain John Cunningham (volunteer at Stansted Park) for being so generous with his time and his knowledge of the Bessborough family history; Mr Peter Wilkinson (former Assistant Archivist) and Ms Alison McCann (Assistant Archivist), of the West Sussex Public Record Office, for their valued advice, and for liaising with Lord Bessborough; the staff of Christie's Archives, London, for their assistance and for permission to reproduce material from the sale catalogues; Ms. Susan Palmer, Archivist at Sir John Soane's Museum, for her kind help; and Ms Kate Jarvis of the National Maritime Museum, London, for her advice on the Sandwich Papers. The following must also be thanked for permission to reproduce material for the illustrations: the Trustees of the Stansted Park Foundation, Sotheby's Picture Library, the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Derbyshire Record Office and Derby Diocesan Record Office, London Borough of Lambeth Archives, and the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum. Finally, thanks are due to Mr David Kane, for his help with photography.

Bessborough (sq); William Ponsonby, Il conte di Bessborough (it); William Ponsonby, 2. hrabě z Bessborough (cs); William Ponsonby, 2nd Earl of Bessborough (en) filantropo britannico (it); politician in Britain and Ireland (en); britsk½ politik (cs); Brits filantroop (-1793) (nl) ă,|ă,£ăfă,çăf ăf»ăfăfă,½ăfăfă"ăf¼ (ç¬¬. 2ă»£ăf™ă,1ăfăfă@ă¼ç^μ), ă,|ă,£ăfă,çăf ăf»ăfăfă,½ăfăfă"ăf¼ (ç¬¬2ă»£ăf™ă,1ăfăfă@ă¼ç^μ) (ja). Media in category "William Ponsonby, 2nd Earl of Bessborough". The following 4 files are in this category, out of 4 total. Liotard - 2nd Earl of Bessborough.jpg 550 Å— 700; 136 KB. Jean-Å%tienne Liotard - Sir William Ponsonby.jpg 2,070 Å— 2,592; 2.44 MB The Classical Taste of William Ponsonby, 2nd Earl of Bessborough, in Irish Architectural and Decorative Arts. Rachel Finnegan. 2005. Using previously unpublished material, this study examines the classical taste of the second Earl of Bessborough in terms of his travels, collection of antiquities and design of his homes. Cite. Save. The Grand Tour Correspondence of two Eighteenth-Century Clergymen from the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore. Rachel Finnegan. 2013. The correspondences of Dr Richard Pococke and his cousin Jeremiah Milles, tracing in detail their eighteenth century travels throug â€ç The Classical Taste of William Ponsonby, 2nd Earl of Bessborough, in Irish Architectural and Decorative Arts. late Earl, as well as having executed his funerary monument (see below), and the Duke of Saint Albans, who was married to William's daughter, Charlotte. Space does 7 See R. Finnegan, â€œThe Private Library of the 2nd Earl more. late Earl, as well as having executed his funerary monument (see below), and the Duke of Saint Albans, who was married to William's daughter, Charlotte. Space does 7 See R. Finnegan, â€œThe Private Library of the 2nd Earl of Be...