

**Lot 1029 Portrait of an Unknown Lady and her Black Page. 26 in. x 22 in. In black and gilt frame.**



Image: K6225 ©Bristol Museums, Galleries, and Archives

This portrait now hangs in the Small Oak Room at Red Lodge. The 1947 purchaser is unknown but it was purchased in 2008 by Bristol Museums with the assistance of the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, Art Fund, Friends of Bristol Art Gallery, Peter John Blyth Art Fund and the Friends of Bristol's Museums, Galleries & Archives. It was previously held in private collections before being acquired by the Weiss Gallery in New York.

In the 1947 sale no attempt was made to identify the young persons in the portrait.

Bristol Museums catalogue describes it as:

*"a framed oil painting on canvas, showing: a supposed portrait of Florence Smyth, b.1634, the daughter of Thomas and Florence Smyth of Ashton Court, with an unnamed black attendant".*

It was painted c1640 by Gilbert Jackson.

Over the years various suggestions have emerged regarding the identities of the young girl in the portrait and her black attendant.

Traditionally the girl was identified as the heiress Arabella Astry (daughter of Sir Samuel Astry, she later became Lady Suffolk and was connected to the Smyths by her sister Elizabeth) and that the boy was 'Scipio Africanus'. However, Scipio Africanus was buried in Henbury churchyard in about 1720 and Arabella (b.1690) had not been born when the portrait was thought to have been painted. The clothes that they are wearing also date from about 100 years earlier.

Hence the portrait had previously been incorrectly identified as lot 951 which was indeed a portrait of Arabella Astry but with different dimensions.

Further investigation has arrived at the current suggestion that the girl depicted is most probably Florence Smyth (1634-1692), who was the second daughter of Thomas Smyth of Ashton Court and his wife Florence (nee Poulett). Thomas and Florence made many improvements to Ashton Court including a long gallery to exhibit paintings. He may therefore have commissioned a portrait of one of his daughters. Both children are dressed in expensive clothes which demonstrate the family's wealth.