

## **Lot 1009 Portrait of a lady wearing a yellow dress 29 in x 24 in.**

There are no images of this portrait. All we have is a mention of a portrait in Esme Smyth's will that might be Lot 1009.

In Esme Smyth's will it is possibly one of her legacies:

'(23) To Group-Captain Joseph Ruscombe Wadham Smyth-Pigott of Brockley Somerset free of death duties the portrait of Florence Poulett who married Thomas Smyth being the portrait of a lady in a yellow dress which is now hanging in the front hall at Ashton Court.'

There are a number of unanswered questions.

Is Lot 1009 the portrait mentioned in Esme's will? If so why was it being sold?

When Esme mentions the front hall does she mean the Great Hall or the South Gatehouse?

Close scrutiny of the Hector Paterson black and white images of the Great Hall in the late 1920s show a couple of portraits where either the dress is light in colour or large light coloured collars are worn. Were one of these the 'lady in the yellow dress'?

Unfortunately the Paterson images are not always clear and in some details are lacking.

The 'hall' in question is unlikely to be the South Gatehouse as it is finished in stone and was decorated with stag's heads or similar and appeared to have no paintings hung on the walls.

This portrait is not specifically mentioned in either the 1901 or the 1915 inventories.

### **Who was Group-Captain Joseph Ruscombe Wadham Smyth-Pigott and how was he connected to Esme Smyth, Ashton Court and Florence Poulett?**

Florence Poulett was the daughter of John first Lord Poulett and his wife Elizabeth Kenn. Florence was married to Thomas Smyth of Ashton Court. After Thomas died in 1642 she married Thomas Pigott who had bought the Manor of Brockley for his new wife. This was the first of the Smyth and Pigott alliances. Hence by the time Joseph Ruscombe Wadham Smyth-Pigott was born in 1890, seven generations later, the Smyths and the Pigotts were thoroughly entwined.

Esme must have been aware of this connection and thought the portrait of Florence was an appropriate legacy for Joseph.

Coincidentally in 1947 Joseph's mother Mary Agnes Smyth-Pigott died and Group-Captain Joseph Ruscombe Wadham Smyth-Pigott and his nephew Lt. Colonel Bernard Smyth-Pigott donated all of their family portraits to the Borough of Weston-super-Mare, and several of them are on display in the Weston Museum. There is one portrait of Florence Smyth in this collection but she is not wearing a yellow dress.

Group-Captain Joseph Ruscombe Wadham Smyth-Pigott died in 1971 so it has not been possible to establish the whereabouts of the portrait left to him by Esme, or to establish if it is the same as the one sold as Lot 1009

7 when mother dies.