

Lot 496 Painting of Helena, relict of William Parr and 4 others



Current location unknown. Sold in the 1947 sale for £0-14s.

This portrait was located in Room 21. It is not possible to know which room this was but it was not one of the state rooms of the mansion. The portrait was clearly considered unimportant by the auctioneers as it was sold as a lot with 4 other unspecified paintings.

Western Daily Press of the 5th June 1947 reported:

'Chief mourner in 1603 – her picture sold by auction.

Quaintest relic of the second day's sale of the contents of Ashton Court yesterday revealed its roots hidden deep in Elizabethan history.

By no means the most valuable antique, this picture was auctioned with others for £8 10s, but its historical value must be considerable. The painting – a large cracked faded oil of a lady in full Elizabethan costume – bears in the top left hand corner of the dark canvas these words:

"Helena, Relic of William Parr, Marquis of Northampton, and wife of Sir Thomas Gorge of Longford, Near Salisbury. Daughter of Wafangus Snacenburg of Sweden. She was chief mourner at the Funeral of Queen Elizabeth, April 28th, 1603".

For information about another similar painting of Helena which was sold at the sale please see Lot 926.

Who was Helen of Snakenborg and how was she connected to Ashton Court?

Briefly, she was born in Sweden in 1548 or 9.

Her first marriage was to William Parr, Marquess of Northampton. She was chief mourner at the funeral of Elizabeth I.

After William died she married Thomas Gorges. Helena and Thomas's eldest daughter was Elizabeth Gorges (1578-1659). Elizabeth's first marriage was to Sir Hugh Smyth and her second marriage was to Ferdinando Gorges.

Helena died in 1635 and is buried in Salisbury Cathedral.