

Lot 1038 Portrait of Sir Hugh Smyth, Kt., married Elizabeth Gorges, 1575-1627. 76 in. x 42 in. In black frame.

This portrait now hangs in the Great Oak Room at Red Lodge.



Image: K2921©Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives, photography FAM volunteer

This portrait was purchased at the 1947 sale by G.R. Stanton, the curator of archaeology at Bristol Museums, who donated it to the Museum in 1965.

The portrait can clearly be seen in Hector Paterson's images of the 1920s in the Great Hall on the fireplace wall.



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The caption in the top left hand corner reads:

'Sir Hugh Smyth, Knight. Son of Matthew Smyth Esqr. Married the eldest daughter of Sir Thomas Gorge, Knight. By his wife Lady Helena, Marchioness of Northampton'.

Who was Sir Hugh Smyth and how was he connected to Ashton Court?

Sir Hugh was the son of Mathew Smyth and his wife Jane (nee Tewther). He was the grand-son of John Smyth, died 1556, and great-grand-son of Mathew Smyth, a hooper from the Forest of Dean.

Sir Hugh inherited the Ashton Court Estate at the age of 8 after his father's death in 1583. His father, Matthew, having inherited after the death of his elder brother, Hugh, who had died childless in 1580.

Sir Hugh married Elizabeth Gorges, who was a goddaughter to Queen Elizabeth, and descended from a family of Swedish nobility and an Elizabethan courtier. Her marriage to Sir Hugh, a year after the Queen's death, brought him great wealth, influence and high office. They had six daughters and one son, Thomas Smyth, who was sent to St John's College Oxford at the age of thirteen. In the early 17th century Hugh significantly added to the purchase of local Manors begun by his mother and was knighted by James I.

It is unlikely that life was easy for Sir Hugh's wife, Elizabeth, who when writing to her son of her life at Ashton Court said: *'God increase my patience to endure it still'*. Hugh is said to have been interested in horse breeding and London fashions but was also a difficult, melancholy man, mean with his money, reluctant to receive visitors and preoccupied with his own health.

After Sir Hugh's death in 1627 Elizabeth remarried and outlived him by 31 years.

Hugh and Elizabeth's seventeen year old son Thomas, who had married fifteen year old Florence Poulett of Hinton St George in 1626, inherited the Ashton Court Estate the following year.