

Lot 956 Portrait of the Hon. John Ashburnham, Groom of the Bedchamber to Charles I, and Father of Dame Elizabeth Anne Smyth, died 1671. 30 in. x 24 in. in carved and gilt frame. Attributed to Lely School.



The current whereabouts of this portrait is unknown.

In the 1947 sale the portrait was sold for £42.

Esme Smyth insured this portrait with the Royal Insurance Company in Bristol in June 1935 for £100.

Who was John Ashburnham?

John Ashburnham (b.1603), who was married to Frances Holland, was the father of Elizabeth Anne Ashburnham (b.1637) who married Hugh Smyth (b.1632) in 1654.

John was the brother of William Ashburnham whose portrait (lot 1042) also used to hang at Ashton Court.

Both brothers were loyal royalists and were well known and well connected at the royal court. John became Groom of the Bedchamber, a position very close to Charles I who affectionately called him 'Jack'. William became Cofferer of the Household. Advantageous marriages and their court positions helped the brothers to regain their ancestral estate at Ashburnham in East Sussex.

During the Civil War John played an important role. As Treasurer he received and spent money according to the King's orders. John helped Charles I to escape imprisonment at Hampton Court and accompanied him on his journey to the Isle of Wight.

After the King's execution the Ashburnham's suffered for having backed the losing side. Imprisoned during the Commonwealth era they had to pay large fines. The authorities, who wanted to know who had provided money to the King, constantly harassed John. When the monarchy was restored in 1660, the brothers' loyalty was not questioned by the new king, Charles II. Their court appointments were reinstated and they were rewarded by the Treasury.

John Ashburnham died in 1671.