

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH and PHILIP THICKNESS

January 2019

Gainsborough's House in Sudbury, Suffolk merits top slot on every tourist's bucket list and rightly so. There was never a better time to visit than right now but you will have to be quick because their magnificent exhibition *Early Gainsborough: From the obscurity of a Country Town* closes on 17th February this year. There remains much to see thereafter.

Gainsborough House has just been awarded £4.5m by the Heritage Lottery Fund which will see the Labour Exchange building next door demolished and replaced with a three-storey gallery to house a permanent collection of the world famous 18th century artist's work and provide much needed space for temporary exhibitions.

The Cobbold Family History Trust is a 'friend' of Gainsborough House where hangs the painting of *Mrs. Mary Cobbold with her daughter Anne in a Landscape with a Lamb and Ewe* which used to be at Holywells and later Glemham Hall. It was accepted by HM Government in lieu of Inheritance Tax in 1998.

The catalogue for the 'Early Gainsborough' exhibition yields another interesting connection with the family. **Mark Bills**, the Director of Gainsborough's House identifies *A Sketch of the Life and Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough Esq* by **Philip Thicknesse** (1719-1792), published in London in 1788, as one of the earliest biographies of Gainsborough. Thicknesse, desirous of identifying himself with Gainsborough, claimed "I can with truth boast, that I was the first man who perceived; though through clouds of bad colouring, what an accurate eye he possessed".

This is the same Philip Thickness who, despite his eccentric reputation, had become a Captain-Lieutenant in a Marine Regiment in 1740 and held the post of Lieutenant Governor of Landguard Fort in Suffolk from 1753 to 1766. At that time his summer residence was Felixstow Cottage, later bought by the Cobbold family and much enlarged by **John Chevallier Cobbold** (1797-1882) (#114 on the web family tree) and **Felix Thornley Cobbold** (1841-1909) (#201) to become The Lodge, Felixstowe. It stands on what is now known as **Cobbold Point**.

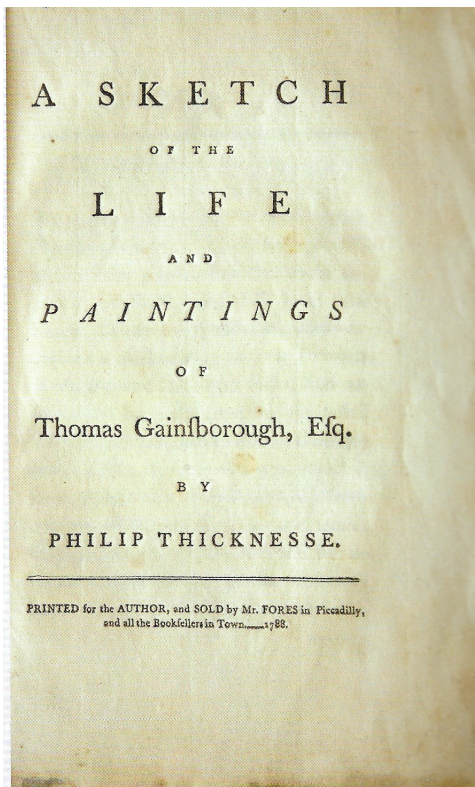


Thomas Gainsborough



Philip Thicknesse

The Trust has long wondered why a little print of Felixstow Cottage by J Swaine published by J Nichols & Co in 1816 should be described as *copied from one of the earliest Productions of GAINSBOROUGH*. Now we know.



Thicknesse' biography of Gainsborough



Felixstow Cottage 1816



The Lodge, Felixstowe, 2018