

DANIEL GARDNER or GEORGE FROST?

April 2025

When I first met **Lady Blanche (1898-1987)** #449 at Glemham Hall in the 1980s she showed me the family portraits which included those of **John Cobbold (1745-1835)** #56 and **Elizabeth Cobbold née Knipe (1765-1824)** #58, both painted, probably at about the same time, by **Daniel Gardner (1750-1805)** and both identified as being his work.

As time went on, I became aware that on many occasions when these portraits were reproduced, they were said to be by **George Frost (1754-1821)**. As recently as Valentine's Day this year the **Ipswich Star** used the image of Elizabeth Cobbold, and quoted it as being by artist George Frost and in the public domain.

A year or two ago I set out to resolve the issue by consulting the admirable **Emma Roodhouse**, the Art Curator for Ipswich Museums. She thought that copies may have been made by George Frost. Investigating Frost more closely myself I observed that most of his paintings were of places and I learned that Frost was a keen admirer and copier of **Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788)**. I found no specific evidence of Frost being in touch with the Cobbolds.

Two books printed by **E. Shalders of Ipswich** (*Poems* by Elizabeth Cobbold and *Valentine Verses* by Richard Cobbold), both about 1827, contained black & white prints of the portraits clearly identified as 'Gardiner pinx' (meaning 'painted') and 'Worthington sculp' (meaning 'engraved'). This lent weight to my belief in Gardner but I noticed that his name had been misspelled!

I had known for some time that Daniel Gardner had portrayed '**The Three Misses Cobbold**', being three of the eight daughters of John Cobbold of Holy Wells [sic], by his first Elizabeth. It is difficult to know which three daughters they were but my best estimate is that they are **Anne (1784-1806)** #89, **Harriet (1785-1877)** #91 and **Sophia (1787-1832)** #96.

Recently, I was able to purchase a copy of the catalogue for the Daniel Gardner Exhibition staged by the Greater London Council at **Kenwood House** in 1972 in which The Three Misses Cobbold was displayed. In her description of the exhibits **Helen Kapp**, the Curator mentions that May 25th 1793 was the date on which Mrs. Cobbold, Gardner and **John Constable (1776-1837)** 'sat sketching under the lime trees which then fronted the small dwelling house

adjoining the more lofty buildings of the brewery.' 'A warm friendship grew up between these two – so distant in age – which later became significant to Constable. Possibly to Gardner too. Certainly, the friendship was close enough for Gardner to have painted Constable's portrait' which was also exhibited.

Gardner's family was well respected in Kendal and his mother was a talented amateur draughtsman and painter in watercolours, all of which supports the widely-held view that Daniel's family was well known to the Knipes, even from before the time of Elizabeth's birth. With so much contact between families I am now convinced that those two all-important portraits were indeed the work of Daniel Gardner.

Anthony Cobbold