Picture Frames at Ham House

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by Jacob Simon

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Introduction: Picture framing in London in the 17th century

The extraordinary changes in picture framing in London in the 1620s and 1630s, from simple designs, often painted or stained black, to a range of elaborately carved and gilt frames came about as a result of the collecting activities of King Charles I and members of his court. Some pictures collected abroad came with elaborate frames, notably from Italy, while most were framed here by craftsmen with close links to the Continent, especially the Netherlands, whether by migration or marriage or through the transmission of ideas through the import of engraved designs.

It was the Netherlands that inspired the auricular style, literally ‘of the ear’, a highly stylised free-flowing interpretation of organic forms, usually animal or marine in nature, sometimes married with foliage and scrolls or volutes. Framemakers working in London embraced this fashion with enthusiasm, using it in one form or another for pictures of almost all sizes from the 1630s to the 1680s. The term, ‘auricular’, is a modern one. In the later 17th century, some artists and craftsmen categorised the pattern as ‘leatherwork’, given the appearance of such frames as having been made out of material that could easily be cut, bent and rolled, like an animal skin.

There were other less demonstrative styles at the time, with repeating leaf or small-scale foliage patterns, whether used in architectural settings (at Ham House, the fixed overdoor frames and some of the overmantel frames) or as independent picture frames (at Ham House, the cushion and bunched leaf patterns).

To understand the framing of the picture collection at Ham House, the reader is encouraged to make three circuits of the house, to appreciate the contributions of William Murray in the 1630s, of his daughter, the Duchess of Lauderdale and her husband the Duke in the 1670s, and of her great-grandson, the 4th Earl of Dysart in the 1730s and 1740s.

For cautionary notes concerning this guide and for technical terms, see the Appendix on page 35 of this guide.
Ham House in the 1630s: Home of William Murray, later Earl of Dysart

Ham House was built in 1610 for Sir Thomas Vavasour (1560–1620), Knight Marshal to James I. Ham became the home of William Murray (c.1600–55) in 1626. He was a close friend of King Charles I, having been his ‘whipping boy’ when young, taking punishment on behalf of the young prince. He accompanied Charles, when he was Prince of Wales, to Spain in 1623, where the Spanish Royal collection excited the young prince’s interest in collecting.

Although not a leading collector, probably due to his financial circumstances, Murray played a significant part in the court culture of his time, giving or exchanging pictures with the King, arranging payment for the King to Van Dyck in 1637 and taking a leading part on the King’s behalf in negotiations with Jacob Jordaens for paintings to decorate the Queen’s Cabinet at Greenwich in 1639. Murray supported the Royalist cause in the Civil War, and was created Earl of Dysart for his loyalty. He died in 1655.

William Murray came into Ham in 1626. He remodelled the interior between 1637 and 1639, creating the Great Staircase and a suite of sumptuous state rooms on the first floor. He employed the little-known joiner, Thomas Carter, for some of the fixed carving in the house, including the overdoor picture frames, but the craftsmen responsible for the trophies and more elaborate work on the Great Staircase, the ambitious fireplace in the North Drawing Room (then the Withdrawing Room) and the carving in the Green Closet remain to be identified. The interiors were plastered by Joseph Kinsman and decorated and gilded by Matthew Goodricke (?1588–1645), best known for his extensive work for Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria. Goodricke charged the very considerable sum of £320 in April 1638 for painting and gilding work in various rooms at Ham.

As to the overall scheme at Ham, there are two theories, the one that the artist, Francis Cleyn (1582–1658), may have advised William Murray, given that paintings attributed to him remain in the house, the other that the craftsmen who worked for Inigo Jones and the Office of Works were perfectly capable of carrying out work at Ham under the supervision of Murray himself and his agent. It is worth noting that one of Carter’s bills was checked and initialled by an unidentified ‘D.C.’ in some sort of supervisory capacity.

1.1 The Great Hall

Ham’s front door, dated 1610, belongs to Sir Thomas Vavasour’s time. Inside, the Great Hall has undergone considerable changes over the years. In William Murray’s time, the room was single height and gave directly onto a terrace overlooking the garden at rear, probably through the door which now leads to the Marble Dining Room. The ceiling was opened up, perhaps around 1700 and the panelling altered (see 3.1).

Thomas Carter provided the chimneypiece for ‘the hall’ for £2.10s and in 1638 Matthew Goodricke charged for ‘painting lyke gray Marble the Chimney peece… and guilding two members of the Cornice thereof’ for £1.10s, but neither mentions a fixed picture frame over the chimneypiece. The present chimneypiece is made of black marble, meaning that it is a replacement, as presumably is the overmantel frame which has been reduced in height, as examination of the corner leaves suggests, and adapted with an inserted inner moulding. There was an unidentified picture above the chimney at the time of the 1655 inventory but
otherwise the room was not initially used for pictures.

The overmantel frame is almost identical in detail, but on a grander scale, to the overdoors in the first-floor Hall Gallery (1.3), known to have been carved by Thomas Carter in 1638. Indeed, so great are the similarities that one needs to ask whether this undocumented frame could have been brought down from the Hall Gallery. Either side are figures of Mars and Minerva, perhaps dating to the 1630s, but exactly when they came here is uncertain. For later frames, see 3.1.

Elsewhere on the ground floor, there were family rooms in William Murray’s time, now completely altered. It is the extraordinary sequence of richly decorated state rooms on the first floor which is the focus here. From the Great Hall, the visitor progressed by way of the imposing staircase to the Hall Gallery (then the Great Dining Room), following the Elizabethan and Jacobean practice of placing the Great Chamber or its equivalent on the first floor. As a Thames-side villa, rather than a grand country house, the sequence of rooms at Ham was compressed. From the Hall Gallery, the visitor withdrew to the North Drawing Room and could then progress to the Long Gallery as a room of parade, off which was the inner Green Closet to which the privileged might be admitted. Here, the sequence of state rooms came to an end at that time.

1.2 The Great Staircase

The staircase with its richly carved swags and military trophies is a rare surviving documented scheme from 1638, supplied in part by Thomas Carter, and originally painted in ‘walnut-tree’ colour and gilded by Matthew Goodricke for £64. It is now in a late 20th-century recreation of a 19th-century scheme. The ceilings are by Joseph Kinsman, 1637–38.

It would seem that several of the copies after Italian paintings came to William Murray in the 1630s by courtesy of the King, who owned the originals or had access to copies. The copies after pictures in the Spanish Royal collection may have been by Michael Cross, also known as Miguel de la Cruz (active 1633–60), Charles I’s leading copyist to whom two of the pictures were attributed in 1683, when all of the pictures listed below were included in an inventory. Cross was not the only copyist at work for the King. Richard Greenbury and Daniel Mytens copied pictures in London (Greenbury Correggio’s Venus, Mercury and Cupid in 1630/1 and Mytens Titian’s Venus del Pardo) and Charles I reportedly had another copyist working for him in Spain in 1635.

As one mounts the staircase, a rather bewildering variety of important and extraordinary auricular frames come into view, revealing a range of elaborate styles from the 1630s to the 1670s. None of them are now gilt, which sets them apart from most frames of this type, although a few have traces of gesso suggesting that they may once have been painted or gilded. The frames are of oak, generally with mortise-and-tenon pine back frames. As to their makers, there were workshops capable of such work like that of the carver, Zacharie Taylor, a close associate of Matthew Goodricke, but in the present state of knowledge it is not possible to attribute the outstanding early frames at Ham except to see them as the work of more than one leading London-based carver. Those pictures which are thought to have been framed for William Murray are discussed here in the order displayed, starting near the foot of the staircase. For the later frames, see 2.1.
ITALIAN SCHOOL
*The Battle of Lepanto*
NT1139664

A one-off pattern of exceptionally large dimensions but narrow in width, deeply carved and undercut, of pierced and stained oak. It may have been made to this width specifically to fit the space on the staircase. There are slightly uncomfortable cuts in all four sides of the frame, perhaps reflecting its construction or history. Whether the overlapping foliage and auricular forms really suggest the waves of the sea, as has been put forward, is a matter of debate. Note also the feathered wings towards the bottom of each side. Looking at the staircase frames described here, this one and that on *Venus and a Satyr* (page 8) stand apart from the ‘leatherwork’ frames on the next three pictures.

*After Correggio (original then owned by King Charles I, now in the National Gallery, London)*
*Venus with Mercury and Cupid*
NT1139671

The frame was clearly made for the picture and features Mercury’s winged helmet at top and Cupid’s arrows and quiver at bottom. It was presumably once gilt as gesso traces in the interstices would suggest. Unusually for a frame of this type, the sides are symmetrical about the horizontal axis, and centre on a highly stylised mask with vacant eye sockets. The rather flat organic forms, the inner edges of which are highlighted by a defining line, can be interpreted as dried animal skins, turning up at the edges.
Attributed to Michael Cross (original then in Spanish Royal Collection, now in Prado, Madrid)
*Venus and Adonis* (after Titian)
NT1139673

An ambitious pattern which was perhaps originally gilded in view of traces of gesso. The ornamental details were perhaps intended to reflect the theme of Adonis the hunter, with animal masks top and bottom, a lion’s head towards the top of each side, and rope tied corners accentuating the sense of ‘leatherwork’, as such organic carving was described. The use of masks and the repeated notched scrolls can be found on other early frames at Ham (see 1.3, 1.5).

Attributed to Michael Cross (original then in Spanish Royal Collection, now in National Gallery of Scotland and National Gallery, London)
*Diana and Actaeon* (after Titian)
NT1139669

A bold elongation of the standard ‘grimacing mask’ pattern of the 1630s and 1640s (see 2.3), but with a fantastic horned mask at bottom centre and expanded ornament on the sides, the forms weighty and ponderous. The bottom side of the frame can be viewed as a roughly cut flat skin, curling and scrolling at its extremities over itself.
Attributed to MICHAEL CROSS (original then owned by King Charles I, now in Louvre, Paris)

_Venus and a Satyr_ (The ‘Venus del Pardo’, after Titian)

NT1139666

Perhaps by the same hand as the frame on _The Battle of Lepanto_ but again a one-off pattern, clearly designed for the picture, with a carved satyr head at bottom beneath each satyr in the picture and winged cherub at top above Cupid in the picture. The bulbous and deeply undercut carving is leafy and fleshy in character. The cherub and the animal mask at bottom, with ribbon in mouth, are features found in some other frames on the Great Staircase.

1.3 The Hall Gallery (then the Great Dining Room)

William Murray’s Great Dining Room was remodelled in 1637/8 and hung with tapestries. The floor was later opened up to overlook the Great Hall. The door surrounds were painted like polished white marble, the richly carved doors in walnut-tree colour and the remaining woodwork blue, with the enrichments and carving gilt. The ceiling is again by Joseph Kinsman, 1637–38.

The overdoor frames have four rows of carving, with an inward curving top edge of flat gadroons and darts, set above a rounded frieze of ribbon-tied bundles of flat leaves separated by three flower heads. The profile and detailing recall some late 16th-century Florentine work. The frames match the pattern of the overmantel frame in the Great Hall (I.I). They were carved by Thomas Carter for £2.10s, and gilded by Matthew Goodricke for £4, or as he put it in his bill of April 1638, ‘wholly guilt over’, the only feature in the room which was not partly painted but completely gilt. Neither craftsman mentions a chimneypiece.

There were three landscapes by ‘Decline’ in 1683, giving rise to the attribution of the present paintings to Francis Cleyn, one over the then chimney and two over the doors, as in the 1679 inventory. _Naked Boys or Putti with Lions_, attributed to Francis Cleyn, is probably original to the room while the ill-fitting Adam Elsheimer copy, _Tobias and Angel_ is a later introduction. For later frames, see 2.2 and 3.2.
1.4 The North Drawing Room (then the Withdrawing Room)

Once more, the carving is the work of Thomas Carter, while the ceiling is by Joseph Kinsman, 1637–38. Certain decorative motifs are recurrent in this room: naked boys can be found in both the paintings and sculptures, and friezes of fruit-and-leaves feature in Kinsman’s plaster cornice and also in Carter’s carved overdoors. The origins of the elaborate chimneypiece are unknown. Carter’s rather French-style panelling was probably painted white from the beginning and the room was originally furnished with chairs in white satin. The walls were hung with tapestries of a different set to those seen in-situ today. The overdoors have frames carved by Carter, at a cost of £4, similar in section to the preceding room but much richer with ribbon-tied friezes of fruit-and-leaves and corners finished with prominent acanthus leaves. Note that the overdoor frame to the left of the fireplace, an insertion of the 1670s, has a different rhythm to the ribbon ties. As with the previous room, the fixed pictures were attributed to ‘Decline’ in 1683. There were also two oval perspective pieces in gilt frames in 1679.

1.5 The Long Gallery

The panelling was remodelled by Thomas Carter in 1639, who introduced new mouldings, 20 Ionic pilasters and the ‘pedestal’ panelling running around the lower part of the room, at a cost of some £68. Evidence as to the early picture hang is limited but the room would have been an obvious place for William Murray to hang paintings. Now, it is hung throughout with portraits in carved and gilded auricular or similar frames. Two frames dating to the late 1630s are discussed here. They are of a quality to have been made by leading London framemakers of the time. For the numerous later frames from the 1640s onwards, see 2.3.

Sir Anthony van Dyck and Studio

King Charles I

NT 1139944

Very probably the portrait of ‘Le Roi vestu de noir… avec sa mollure’ [The King dressed in black… with its frame], as it was described by Van Dyck in his bill to the King of about 1638. It is thought that the portrait was a gift from Charles I to Murray. The rare and outstanding frame, if not chosen by the artist presumably met with his approval. The scrolls and foliage, the fantastic masks, perhaps a lion at top, and the tied tripartite corners centring on a pomegranate, are features found on other frames of the period but rarely to this exceptional quality. Note the delightful detail of the impression of rope beneath the flat of the frame which then emerges to act as a tie to the bottom corners, continuing the conceit of a largely hidden rope running round the frame from top to bottom, holding the leatherwork of the four sides together.

(shown on page 2)
After Anthony van Dyck, 1637
Queen Henrietta Maria
NT 1139955

The frame with its paired volutes at all four centres and dense scrolling foliage running to the rope-tied triple-bud corners is a good example of a classic 1630s frame type. It is found elsewhere on a larger scale (e.g. two full-length frames at Knole, now housing the Van Dyck studio Countess of Dorset and Sir Peter Lely’s Duchess of Cleveland). This is a distinctive English frame style which is distantly indebted to ‘Sansovino’ and other Venetian frames, characterised by the sculptural use of large-scale scrolls and volutes, often with festoons of fruit.
1.6 The Green Closet

The Green Closet was already finished in green by 1655, when described as ‘the closet within the gallerie’. The unusual ogee cornice, reset in places, with a flat formalised leaf-and-anthemion pattern, is so different to other carving in the house that it is presumably from a workshop other than that of Thomas Carter. The Green Closet was probably hung with small pictures from an early date, on the model of cabinet rooms elsewhere. In 1679 there were 14 pictures with gilt frames, 38 in black ebony and one with a round carved frame.

Some 35 of the pictures and miniatures now in the room can be identified as being at Ham in 1683, and many of them may have been here ever since William Murray’s time (see downloadable catalogue on the National Trust website). Mention is made here of a limited number of ebony frames, for the later limewood frames, see 2.4, and for the later gilt pine frames, see 3.3.

In the top row on the long wall, all the works have ebony frames of fine quality, many of which are original or fairly close in date to the pictures. The most elaborate, either side of centre, are those on Jacques Stella’s paintings on slate, *Salome with the Head of St John the Baptist*, dated 1637, and *Virgin and Child with St John the Baptist and Child Angels*, both with flat frames in ebony-veneered pine, with ripple mouldings in ebony on the sight and back edges, of a sort found in Europe for much of the 17th century. Very dense and black, ebony was an expensive wood which was imported from India and Ceylon from the late 16th century.

In the second row on the long wall, the little copper after Hans Rottenhammer, *Danaë and the Shower of Gold*, relates closely to a picture formerly in Charles I’s collection. It is housed in an ebony frame made up of a series of mouldings and exceptionally the frame sides are veneered in ebony, lending the picture a particular distinction.

The first-floor circuit of Ham House in the 1630s would have ended here. Until the rooms on the south front were added in the 1670s, Ham was relatively small in scale for a grand house.

**Jacques Stella**

*Salome with the Head of St John the Baptist*

NT 1139900
Ham House in the 1670s: Home of the Duke and Duchess of Lauderdale

Ham passed to Murray’s eldest daughter, Elizabeth Murray (1626–98), when she inherited as Countess of Dysart in 1655. Beautiful, learned, ambitious and greedy, she married twice and had numerous children. In 1648, she married Sir Lionel Tollemache (1624–69), of Helmingham Hall in Suffolk. It was to the Tollemache family that Ham passed after her death. Her second marriage was to John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale (1616–82), Secretary of State for Scotland. In the decade between their marriage in 1672 and the Duke’s death in 1682, they extended and refurbished Ham, at a cost of at least £10,000, adding a sequence of rooms facing onto the garden on the south side, and furnishing the house as a palatial villa, reflecting the Duke’s status as one of the most powerful ministers of King Charles II. John Evelyn in 1678 described the house as ‘furnishd like a greate Princes’.

2.1 The Great Staircase

In 1677, in the earliest Lauderdale inventory, there were nine pictures with carved frames on the Great Staircase, at least two of which were gilt. At some stage, whether then or later, the decision was taken to avoid gilt frames on the staircase altogether, an unusual but effective arrangement which may in some way be influenced by the taste for elaborate carving without gilding used in so many Wren City churches and in carving done under the influence of Grinling Gibbons.

Perhaps four of the staircase frames were introduced in the 1670s as part of the refurbishments at Ham. They are rather different to other picture frames of the period. While each frame has its own character, they may all four come from the same workshop. They are recognisable by their dark wood finish and sometimes rather open grain, by their elongated curving sweeps, whether of foliage or plainer leatherwork scrolls, by their use of winged cherub heads or eagles, and by their rather fussy but insistent festoons. In some ways, they have more in common with the carved work found in Wren churches than with the gilt auricular frames of the period, such as found in the Long Gallery (2.3).

The only evidence as to their maker comes from the payment of £10 to Heinrick Dominick, the ‘German carver’, as authorised by the Duchess of Lauderdale in June 1673, for ‘two great carved Picture Frames’. While her authorisation makes no reference to Ham, a contemporary bill submitted by the framemaker, John Norris, dated 29 July 1673, refers to going to Ham and putting the two great pieces upon stretching frames at a cost of 15s (stretching pictures was one of Norris’s specialities), while Henry Harlow the joiner charged 35s for two straining frames for two great pieces on the great stairs in March that year, as well as for supplying two back frames and fitting the carved frames to them for 25s. This would suggest that at least two of the large pictures at Ham were prepared and framed in 1673.

The earlier frames have already been described (1.2). Later frames are examined here in the order displayed, from the first near the foot of the staircase to the others much further up.
Copy after ABRAHAM BLOEMAERT
The Angel appearing to the Shepherds
NT 1139663

This is a frame of the 1670s, with winged cherub heads on the sides and at bottom, picking up on the flying figures in the painting itself, with fruit-and-flower festoons running through the scrolls and sweeps. The nearest parallel is the carved-and-gilt frame now seen on John Michael Wright’s painting Charles II (National Portrait Gallery, London), with its winged cherub heads, similar corner detailing and festoons.

DIRCK VAN BERGEN
Landscape with an Old Herdsman and Young Market Girl, 1670s
NT 1139667

This frame, presumably the original, is perhaps intended to evoke the riches of the land and farming in response to the picture’s subject matter, with fruit-and-flower festoons of grapes and flowers, intertwined with foliage and scrolls, running around the frame from the mask at top centre, with winged cherub heads on the sides, to be held by eagles at bottom and finishing in paired cornucopia at bottom centre. Like the previous frame, it appears to be made of oak, with a heavy, hot-coloured varnish, perhaps of relatively recent date.
Roger de Gheyn II
*Julius Caesar on Horseback* (?from De Gheyn’s visit to London in 1622).
NT 1139674

Quite different to other frames on the staircase, this is a cushion frame, a standard mid-century pattern, later than the picture but apparently made for it. Carved from pine, with standard lap joints, it is characterised by the half-open buds on a twisting rope reversing at clasped centres. The type is usually gilded (there is an example in the Volury, see 2.10), but here it is painted or ochred. Perhaps this frame reflects the taste for ‘sad lute’ colour (dark warm yellow/orange), a finish used for painted frames in the 1630s.

Attributed to Michael Cross (original then in Spanish Royal collection, now in Prado, Madrid)
*Venus and Organ Player* (after Titian)
NT 1139670

(continued on the following page)
Probably a frame of the 1670s, it can be compared with that on *Landscape with an Old Herdsman and Young Market Girl* (page 13), in view of the rather similar eagles, here at the side centres, and cornucopia-like forms. Other features such as the paired volutes recall earlier frames and, indeed, the carver may have had such earlier frames in mind if the commission specifically related to providing frames for additional pictures on the staircase at Ham.

**Adriaen van Nieulandt**  
*Diana with Nymphs*, 1615  
NT 1139668

A frame of the 1670s, the top with winged cherub, scrolls and foliage, the sides nearly symmetrical with exceptionally long sweeps from centre to corner (somewhat like the previous frame), the corners tied, the bottom with a fantastic mask head holding in its mouth a cloth draped to each side in swags.
2.2 The Hall Gallery

The room continued to be hung with tapestries in the late 17th century. Only one movable picture, the Lely described below, was listed here in the 1679 inventory. It was not until after the floor had been opened up to form the present Hall Gallery, perhaps about 1700, that the room came to be used for pictures. The focus here is on the 17th-century frames on the double portraits at either end of the room. For some of the later frames, see 3.2.

Cornelius Johnson’s William Hamilton, 2nd Duke of Hamilton with John Maitland, Earl (later) Duke of Lauderdale, painted in Holland in 1649, presumably did not come to Ham until after Lauderdale married Elizabeth Dysart in 1672. The oak frame appears to be the original, made in England rather than Holland. It can be read as four pieces of leatherwork, tied together at the corners, onto which are imposed festoons running from below the winged cherub at top centre, behind the adjoining volutes, forward and then out to the triple bud-and-leaf corners, down the sides in heavy festoons, running behind the foliage and scrolls, to the corners and then to the shield at bottom centre. Note in particular how the swags seem to emerge from the surface of the frame at the bottom close to the corners, as if tied through the ‘leatherwork’. The frame’s perished surface suggests regilding over an unstable substrate and raises the possibility that its original finish may have been rather different, perhaps even partly painted.

Sir Peter Lely’s John Maitland, Duke of Lauderdale and Elizabeth Murray, Countess of Dysart and Duchess of Lauderdale, painted c.1675 and hung here by 1679 has its original carved-and-gilt frame of bunches of leaves, reversing at ribbon-tied centres, a later 17th-century pattern which can here be linked to the almost contemporary architectural decoration in the Queen’s Closet and the Marble Dining Room (2.7, 2.12). Although re-gilded, the frame is a particularly fine boldly carved example, made of mitred-and-keyed pine, the wood used for most post-Restoration frames. This is a French inspired pattern, much used in picture framing in the late 17th century. More modest examples of this frame style can be found in rooms on the ground floor (2.9, 2.14).
2.3 The Long Gallery

By the 1670s, the Long Gallery was established as a space for hanging pictures in gilt frames, what Horace Walpole a century later described as ‘an old brown gallery full of Vandycks and Lelys’. The Gallery as now displayed includes various portraits from the Commonwealth and the Restoration but the collection’s growth is not well documented except by a payment in 1666 to Sir Peter Lely by the future Duchess of Lauderdale of £20 for a portrait of her sister, Katherine. The room itself underwent alterations, with the loss of the ‘two great frontish peeces’ that Thomas Carter had supplied in 1639. The painter and decorator, Nicholas Moore, undertook extensive gilding work in the Gallery in 1673 (and gilded an unidentified picture frame in the room for £2).

The Long Gallery is a showcase for carved-and-gilt auricular frames. The various types coexist happily and create a remarkable spectacle, their intricate forms catching the available light. The two earliest frames have already been described (1.5). The other frames are discussed here in two groups, firstly the styles belonging to the 1640s, 1650s and 1660s, with straight sight edges, and secondly the frames in the so-called Sunderland style, from the 1660s and 1670s, distinguished by their irregular sight edges. These patterns could be scaled up or down according to the size of the picture. They are mostly of oak with pine back frames, some with their original pegged mortise-and-tenon joints intact, but further research is needed to be confident about materials and also about the precise status of each frame. Researchers have suggested that various of the Sunderland frames may be later in date.

Auricular Frames

Among the earlier auricular patterns, with straight sight edges, three differing frame types can be readily distinguished, despite the complexity of the carving.

Sir Peter Lely

*Elizabeth Murray, Countess of Dysart with black servant*

NT 1139940

The frame is likely to be original to the portrait since its unusual size, wider than standard, makes it unlikely that this frame has been swapped from another picture. It is an example of a standard frame type characterised by the highly stylised lion mask and paws at the top, the frame sides like a flat skin, the edges of which are irregular and curling over. Other frames of this type on Lely’s work can be found on the adjoining portrait of the Countess’s younger sister, *Lady Margaret Murray, Lady Maynard*, c.1670 (oak frame; pine back frame with well-preserved pegged joint), and on those called *Sir Henry Vane* and called *Lionel Tollemache, 3rd Earl of Dysart*.

(pictured overleaf)
Above

Sir Peter Lely
Elizabeth Murray, Countess of Dysart with black servant
See page 17
**UNKNOWN ARTIST**  
*An Unknown Lady in Red, 1630s*  
NT 1139938

The portrait is likely to retain its original frame since it is to a non-standard narrow format. This particular frame type is recognisable by the grimacing mask at top centre crested by a wavy scroll. A scaled-down version is to be found on Cornelius Johnson’s *John Maitland, 2nd Earl (later Duke) of Lauderdale*, c.1642-3? (later incorrectly inscribed as Earl of Dysart).

**After Sir Peter Lely**  
*King Charles II, 1660s*  
NT 1139949

The frame is possibly earlier than the portrait. It is the only one at Ham in the sea-monster-and-shells standard pattern sometimes favoured by Lely in the 1650s and early 1660s but also found on works by other artists. It could be scaled up or down to suit the size of the picture as a comparison with Lely’s *Earl and Countess of Essex and Earl of Sandwich* (both National Portrait Gallery) shows. The type is readily identifiable by the stylised nautilus shells at the corners, scallop shells near the side centres and fantastic masks of sea monster at top centre and winged monster at bottom.

**SUNDERLAND FRAMES**

Sunderland frames, fashionable from the 1660s until the 1680s, are a further development of the auricular style. They take their name from the 2nd Earl of Sunderland, many of whose pictures at Althorp are framed in the style, but the name is probably a late 19th-century one. The frames are bewilderingly complex in appearance, incorporating highly stylised patterns of flowing stalks, leaves and scrolls, centred at top on a shield and at bottom on a grotesque mask. In no other English frame type does the sight edge cut into the space of the picture in such an irregular way.

In the 1670s, the pace of work at Ham increased with the enlargement of the house. One of those active was the leading carver and gilder, John Norris (1642–1707), who worked for the Crown and many notable patrons. He visited Ham to strain pictures in the Gallery and on the Great Staircase for the Duchess of Lauderdale, and he provided pictures, frames and stretchers for movable pictures. In 1673 he received £30 for a set of copies after Polidoro da Caravaggio on 18–24 April (now in the
Marble Dining Room, see 2.12), £14 for picture frames and straining frames etc on 4 July, £17 for picture frames and work at Ham on or after 9 October, and £3.10s for a single picture frame on 18 October. In 1675 he was paid £8 on 19 July and £13.10s on 27 October for unspecified work.

**Cornelius Johnson**

*William Hamilton, 2nd Duke of Hamilton*

NT 1139948

Sir Peter Lely’s *Duke of Lauderdale* (to left of Charles II) has an oak frame attributed to the leading carver and gilder, John Norris, who charged £3.10s in 1673 for a frame for a portrait of the Duke. Norris billed for five other half-length carved and gilded frames at £3 each so it is likely that some of the numerous examples in the Gallery are his work. The pattern could be scaled up or down, as can be seen from Cornelius Johnson’s *William 2nd Duke of Hamilton*, painted in Holland in 1649 but framed in England.
Sir Peter Lely’s Sir William Compton (opposite the Green Closet), from the 1650s, is housed in an 18th-century variation on a Sunderland frame, with rosettes at the top corners. It has already been pointed out above that several of the Sunderland frames are likely to be later copies.

The sequence of new rooms built by the Lauderdale in the 1670s begins at the far end of the Long Gallery. The work was supervised by the gentleman architect, William Samwell (1628–76). The London carver, John Bullamore (b. c.1641) undertook much of the carved woodwork, and the Dutch painter, Dirck van Bergen (1640–95), previously employed by King Charles II, provided various overdoor paintings.

2.4 The Green Closet

While the room dates to the 1630s (see 1.6), some of the frames and much of the furniture belongs to the time of Elizabeth Dysart, including the silver-mounted ebony table, which is datable to 1655–72 from her coronet and monogram.

Whether for works in the Green Closet, the Duchess’s Private Closet (2.8) or elsewhere, William Naylor, ‘Ebony frame maker’, received payments from the Duchess of £7.1s in May 1675 and a further £1.12s for a single ebony picture frame in October the same year.

Attention is drawn to two oval portrait heads, in elaborate limewood frames, perhaps dating to the 1670s (the portraits were at Ham by 1683 and possibly by 1679). They are by unknown carvers in the style of Grinling Gibbons (such frames were being described as ‘Gibbons manner’ as early as 1690).

The frame on the portrait, Gerrit Dou’s Head of an Old Man, was made for the picture sometime after it was painted, whereas the rather better frame on the copy of Hans Holbein’s Desiderius Erasmus was apparently made for another work and then adapted for this picture.
2.5 The Queen’s Antechamber

This room became the antechamber to the Queen’s Bedchamber as plans evolved in the 1670s. It is grained to resemble olivewood or similar, and hung with faded blue silk. While there were 13 or 14 movable pictures in the room in 1679, some in gilt frames, others in ebony, these were moved elsewhere, leaving the three fixed landscapes by Dirck van Bergen, which were installed between 1677 and 1679 and remain to this day, framed in simple gilt mouldings. More elaborate are the richly carved and gilt swags and festoons attributed to John Bullamore, complete with ducal coronet, around the chimney painting.
2.6 The Queen’s Bedchamber

In the 1670s, the Queen’s Bedchamber was prepared in anticipation of a visit by Catherine of Braganza. It was designed as the climax of the sequence of state rooms, with a magnificent state bed standing on a raised dais at the far end of the room, set behind a balustrade. This arrangement was abandoned by the 1740s (see 3.4). The room had winter and summer furnishings, including in summer the Queen Mother’s picture in a carved and gilt frame, presumably the Van Dyck, Queen Henrietta Maria, now in the Long Gallery (1.5). Also in the room in 1683 were the two pictures in frames in the style of Grinling Gibbons, now in the Green Closet (2.4).

The simple nature of the fixed framing is in contrast to the portrait frames of the Long Gallery but nevertheless the ribbon moulding forms an effective framing device. The ornament is the product of a division in labour between Henry Harlow the joiner, John Bullamore the carver and Nicholas Moore the gilder, Harlow providing the basic structure, Bullamore the ornamental carving and Moore the gilding and painted work.

Looking at the ribbon around Van Bergen’s two overdoors (there were once three) and the copy over the chimneypiece of Andrea del Sarto’s Virgin and Child with St John, we can identify that Harlow charged for 61½ ft of picture frames at 1s a foot, Bullamore for 60 ft of ‘Ribband about ye picture frames’ at 1s a foot, and Moore for gilding inch-wide mouldings at 3d a foot. More expensively, the overmantel painting is surrounded by carved and gilt festoons and a coronet, for which Bullamore charged £6.10s and Moore £5.10s.

2.7 The Queen’s Closet

This inner sanctum survives in much its original form with richly ornamented woodwork, carved by Bullamore in 1673 at a cost of some £35 and gilded and decorated by Moore for about £50. One of the most prominent features is the run of bunches of leaves about the arch which with adjoining mouldings cost some £2.11s, centred on a cherubim’s face at 10s, above which is a shield at £1. Bullamore also charged for the foliage to either side of the shield at £4, the large raffle leaves over the fireplace at 18s and for the ribbon mouldings around the pictures and panelling, respectively at 1s and 6d per foot.

Shown: The alcove in the Queen’s Closet with its gilded decoration carved by John Bullamore

2.8 The Duchess’s Private Closet

This is the second remarkable cabinet room at Ham, but a generation later than the Green Closet (1.6). In 1679, there were four pictures with carved and gilt frames, two small in size, a picture of the Duchess’s mother in an ebony case and 17 other pictures in ebony frames of several sizes. Many of the works in ebony frames here in the Duchess’s time probably remain in the room to this day but it is not possible to link them with confidence to the ebony frames that the Duchess obtained from William Naylor in 1675.
John Hoskins

*Catherine Bruce, Mrs William Murray*

NT 1139682

John Hoskins’s portrait of the Duchess’s mother, *Catherine Bruce, Mrs William Murray*, 1638, retains its original ebony case with folding doors (the ensemble now housed within a larger modern frame).

The family portrait drawings by the Scot, David Paton, together with his old master copies, here and in the Green Closet, some dated 1668 or 1669, were at Ham by 1683. They appear to retain their original or early ebony frames of reverse section, probably made for them at the time the drawings were completed, although a more detailed examination of the frames would be required to distinguish whether some may be of fruitwood rather than ebony and whether indeed they are all 17th century in date.

Edmund Ashfield

*John Maitland, 2nd Earl and 1st Duke of Lauderdale*

NT 1140137

Edmund Ashfield’s superb pastel, *John Maitland, 2nd Earl and 1st Duke of Lauderdale*, 1675, has a remarkable carved and gilded frame, apparently of oak, perhaps the finest on any English pastel of the period and surely specially commissioned by the Duke or his wife from a leading craftsman. To understand the language of the frame, it is necessary to read the unusually shaped corners as leatherwork, as it was called, overlaid by foliage held by the eagle in its claws and, ornamented with acorns, flowers and berries, running out behind the corners, down the sides of the frame to meet in a flower at bottom centre.

(pictured opposite)
Above

EDMUND ASHFIELD
John Maitland, 2nd Earl and
1st Duke of Lauderdale
See page 24
2.9 The White Closet

By 1679 there were five pictures in ebony frames here together with an old man’s head in a gilt frame, perhaps Benedetto Gennari’s *Head of St Paul*, c.1675, which retains its lap-jointed bunched leaf frame, with original pale gilding. But the frame breaks convention, since the leaves point upwards (in contrast to the more usual arrangement in the fixed carving in the Marble Dining Room, 2.12).

Benedetto Gennari
*Head of Saint Paul*
NT 1140136

2.10 The Volury

A tapestry hung bedroom in the mid-17th century, the room became the Volury, or what Norris the framemaker in 1673 described as ‘the Birde Cage Roome’. Indeed, Henry Harlow charged a considerable sum of £56 for four exterior bird cages, suggesting quite substantial or elaborate constructions.

The English school portrait, *John Maitland, 1st Earl of Lauderdale*, whether painted c.1640 or slightly later, probably did not come to Ham until the 1670s or later. Its mid-century carved and gilt cushion frame in pine is of a type we have met with on the Great Staircase (2.1).

2.11 The Withdrawing Room

Thomas Wyck’s *An Alchemist*, c.1674, a choice small panel painting on chamfered oak, has a carved and gilt reverse-section lap-jointed pine frame of a very fine leaf pattern (much more finely carved than the raffle leaves ornamenting the overdoor frames in the next room). Thomas Wyck and his son, Jan, also supplied overmantel and overdoor pictures for Ham in the 1670s. *An Alchemist* is one of the pictures which Jan Wyck valued for the Duchess of Lauderdale in the 1680s and it still bears his number, 46, on a square of paper on the reverse, and his valuation, *A Chymists Shop. G... Wick £8: pret: [=price].*

For the 18th-century frames, see 3.6.

Thomas Wyck
*An Alchemist*
NT 1140060
2.12 The Marble Dining Room

John Bullamore's bill for carving in what he called the 'great parlor', dated 23 April 1673, provides an illuminating insight into contemporary terminology and the cost of carving. He worked in oak which was left unpainted. He charged for 127ft 9ins of 'bunches of leaves' around the doors (of which there are six including the alcoves). Note how the bunches hang on ropes with their leaves pointing downwards, as was usual. Bullamore also charged for 6ft 9ins of 'great Raffe leaves' as a frieze over the chimneypiece. Raffle leaf frames of reverse or bolection section were one of the standard framing devices of the period, as we shall see again in the Duchess's Bedchamber.

The chimney picture itself was framed in leaves and guilloche at 1s.8d per foot, totalling £1.8s.10d (larger-scale guilloche mouldings, in the form of a continuous band of two interwoven spirals, forming a series of circles, were later added at the sides when the original picture was replaced by The Presentation of a Pineapple to King Charles II, a copy made by Thomas Stewart in 1787). The overdoor frames are on a slightly smaller scale, hence the reduced cost of 1s.4d per foot, totalling £3.18s.5d for 58ft 10ins of leaves and guilloche. Four of the overdoors, copies from paintings by Polidoro da Caravaggio in King Charles I's collection, can probably be identified with the '6 Peeces after Polydore', bought from the carver, John Norris, on 18 April 1673 for £30 (the other two can be found in the previous room).

Thomas Stewart
The Presentation of a Pineapple to King Charles II (after Henry Danckerts)
NT 1139824
2.13 The Duke’s Dressing Room

As finished in 1679, the room was hung with crimson damask and included Henry Danckerts’s overdoors, *River Landscape with Classical Ruins and a Castle* and, *The Gardens at Pratolino*, 1673, as well as Jan Wyck’s *A Battlepiece* over the fireplace, all three still in position. The room also contained seven pictures with carved-and-gilded frames, no longer here. Now, it is hung with two pictures in black-and-gilt frames of the 1630s, described below, and others in frames of the 1730s (see 3.6).

The delightful early black frames decorated with applied gilt carving on two pictures probably formed part of the collection of William Murray. Francesco Bassano the younger’s *Orpheus Charming the Animals*, and Bartolomeus Breenbergh’s *Classical Ruins with Christ and the Woman of Samaria*, 1635, were both apparently hanging in the Antechamber to the Queen’s Bedchamber in 1683. While these frames are unique, their design and ornament would suggest that they date to the 1630s.

The Bassano is characterised by the shields and scrolls at top, from which run festoons of fruit, acorns and foliage, hanging on ribbons with ruched ribbon ties and bows, meeting at a bowl of fruit at bottom, the edge of the black frame waved. The Breenbergh has tied paired volutes at the centres, a common feature in the 1630s, and on a small scale at the corners, with trailing vines and grapes (there is no obvious reason for the choice of ornament). Their flat black surfaces have been repainted, in the case of the Bassano comparatively recently, with no trace of gilding beneath. For the later frames, see 3.6.

**Bartolomeus Breenbergh**
*Classical Ruins with Christ and the Woman of Samaria*
NT 1139802
2.14 The Duchess’s Bedchamber

A nursery in the mid-17th century, the room then became a panelled bedroom, grained to resemble walnut with gilt detailing. The most prominent carving in the room is the run of ‘great rafe leaves’ framing the alcove, provided by John Bullamore at 1s.8d a foot in 1673, while the simple overdoor mouldings were supplied by Henry Harlow.

It seems that by 1677 the Duchess had decided to swap bedrooms with the Duke, hence the odd arrangement by which her bedchamber is sandwiched between the Duke’s dressing-room and his closet. Willem van de Velde’s four overdoor Sea-pieces, dated 1673, had been painted for the room when it was intended for the Duke’s use. These she kept, adding her husband’s picture over the chimney, perhaps Edmund Ashfield’s crayon portrait (see 2.8), together with a few other pictures in gilt frames.

Now, it is her own portrait, an early work by Sir Peter Lely, perhaps dating to the late 1640s when she would have been in her early twenties, that hangs over the fireplace, in a carved-and-gilt bunched leaf frame (for this type, see 2.9, 2.12). The frame is rather later in date than the portrait.

Ham House in the 1740s: Home of Lionel Tollemache, 4th Earl of Dysart

The 18th century is treated here more simply. Following the Duchess’s death in 1698, the house passed to her son, Lionel Tollemache, 3rd Earl of Dysart (1649–1727). His grandson, another Lionel Tollemache, 4th Earl (1708–70), inherited Ham in 1727 and on his return from the Grand Tour in 1729, he repaired the fabric of the house and set about refurnishing the interiors in a conservative manner, remodelling the Queen’s Bedchamber, the Volury and the Marble Dining Room. He added to and restored the picture collection, especially in the 1730s and 1740s, reframing some of the old masters.

Payments by the 4th Earl for frames cannot always be linked with confidence to Ham, let alone to individual pictures. Paul Petit, known for his contemporary work for Frederick Prince of Wales, was paid for seven gilt picture frames and various black print frames, 1732–5, including exceptionally a large tabernacle frame for £4.14s in 1734. John Hele, a lesser figure, undertook many repairs at Ham and Helmingham, 1736–45, and supplied nine or ten new picture frames, as well as some print frames with gilt sight-edge mouldings. Also working for Lord Dysart were John Green and James Dryhurst as framemakers, William Bradshaw and George Nix as cabinet makers, and John Arnold as a picture restorer and occasional supplier of peartree frames. In the 1750s and 1760s, William Watts provided further frames, mainly for prints.

3.1 The Great Hall

In the Great Hall, the ceiling was opened up sometime around 1700 and the panelling renewed. Perhaps dating to this campaign are the three blind overdoor frames, without pictures, of reverse section with a narrow inner husk moulding, a running leaf-and-scroll frieze and an outer triple-bead-and-reel, with variations between frames.
John Vanderbank’s full-length state portrait, *Lady Grace Carteret, Countess of Dysart*, dated 1737, retains what may be its original showy carved-and-gilt Kent frame, densely ornamented, with outset corners, side scrolls and festoons and crowning female mask set between large-scale scrolling foliage. The adjacent paired portrait of her husband, *Lionel, 4th Earl of Dysart*, has been reframed in a much simpler later Maratta frame. On the window wall, Godfrey Kneller’s *Hennetta Cavendish, Lady Huntingtower, c.1715*, is also housed in a Kent frame but of much plainer style and presumably a reframing of the 1730s. What we call a Kent frame, named after the architect, William Kent, was often known at the time as a tabernacle frame (this term is used in bills to Lord Dysart in the 1730s from John Green, John Hele and Paul Petit). The later frames in this room fall outside the scope of this guide.

**JOHN VANDERBANK**

*Lady Grace Carteret, Countess of Dysart*

NT 1139647

(pictured opposite)

### 3.2 The Hall Gallery

Upstairs in the Hall Gallery, some portraits have more ordinary carved-and-gilt Kent frames, presumably dating to the 1730s or 1740s, including Godfrey Kneller’s *General Thomas Tollemache* and the adjacent *Lady Grace Carteret, Countess of Dysart* with a child and servant, a matching frame but of lesser quality and with side festoons misfitted to face side on. On the window wall, the anonymous *Wilbraham Tollemache, 6th Earl of Dysart as a Boy, c.1750*, has an unusual rococo frame with double sweeps between the centres and corners.

### 3.3 The Green Closet

In the Green Closet, there are several pictures with richly carved 18th-century frames. On the end wall at top, the unused fan painting with a story from Rinaldo and Armida has a very fine Kent frame (pictured overleaf), while the pair of gouaches, below, attributed to Joseph Goupy, telling the story of Germanicus from Roman history, have richly carved straight sided centre-and-corner frames. Both frame styles coexisted in the 1730s. There may be a link to a payment of £8.8s to John Hele in 1737 for ‘Two neat frames Carvd and Gilt in Burnish Gould with Sand frames and Glases’. On the fireplace wall, the copy of Daniel Mytens’ *James I* was presumably reframed when it was relined in 1736. Almost identical proto-rococo centre-and-corner frames in pine can be found on two adjacent portraits, richly carved, with leaf sight edge, sanded frieze, leaf corners running into C-scrolls, foliage and flowers, bosses at the centres, and short gadrooned sweeps on the top edge.
3.4 The Queen's Bedchamber

The Queen's Bedchamber was converted into a drawing room by the 4th Earl. While the structure of the room remained intact, he commissioned the Watteau tapestries and much of the present furniture from William Bradshaw, a leading cabinet maker and upholsterer who owned his own tapestry works in Soho Square. The tapestry borders are not unlike contemporary picture frames in some details. In June 1743, Bradshaw supplied the splendid pair of pier glass and console tables, specifying '2 Rich carved and gilt oval Glasses' at £28.10s the pair. The glass frames, with their cresting feathers, fruit festoons, curving brackets, oakleaf cushion moulding and shell bases, are unlike contemporary picture frames but respect the room's earlier decoration.

Shown: detail of part of the oval pier glass in Queen's Bedchamber. The pier glass is one of a pair by William Bradshaw c.1743, with carved and gilded frames.
3.5 The Volury

The Volury was transformed by the 4th Earl from a bedroom into a drawing room, probably in the 1740s, installing second-hand tapestries and commissioning pier glasses. The work may have been carried out by William Bradshaw but is not documented.

3.6 The Withdrawing Room

In the Withdrawing Room, there are various old master paintings in fine centre-and-corner frames by unidentified London framemakers, probably supplied when the pictures were relined in the late 1730s. The boldly carved frame in the French taste with prominent double leaf corners and leaf centres, hollow sides, sanded frieze and gadrooned sight edge on the *An Unknown Young Man* can be compared with the more standard centre-and-corner frame on Abraham Bloemaert’s *Baptism of Christ*. The little landscape, *Hagar and Ishmael* (above table), a copy after Mola, was possibly acquired in 1748, perhaps in its present early 18th-century gadrooned frame.

**Abraham Bloemaert**

*The Baptism of Christ*

NT 1140058
3.7 The Marble Dining Room

In the Marble Dining Room, the pier glasses are 18th-century introductions. But for their open scroll pediments and cresting, they are similar in form to contemporary Kent picture frames. Lord Dysart's approach to this room was conservative, respecting the earlier carving but replacing the leather wall coverings in 1756 and apparently laying the marquetry floor at the same time. However, the pier glasses are rather earlier. They have been associated both with the cabinet maker, George Nix, who charged for two pier glasses at £12 in 1729, and with William Bradshaw who supplied a pair of large glasses for £17.17s in 1737, in both cases for unspecified locations. What we do know is that Bradshaw was certainly at work in the room in 1737, when he charged for altering curtains.

Shown: Giltwood pier glass, one of a pair, in the Marble Dining Room

3.8 The Duke's Dressing Room

In the Duke's Dressing Room, there are further works in particularly fine carved-and-gilt centre-and-corner frames of the 1730s. Several of the pictures were relined in 1736 and probably reframed at the same time, including Jacob de Wet's *The Hosts of Pharaoh engulfed by the Red Sea* and the Bassano *Israelites gathering Manna* and *Daniel in the Lion's Den*.

*Francesco Bassano*  
*The Israelites gathering Manna*  
NT 1139800
Appendix: cautionary notes and technical terms

By the mid-17th century, there were two standard portrait sizes, a head-and-shoulders format at 762 x 635mm (30 x 25 in) and the half-length at 1270 x 1016mm (50 x 40 in), making it relatively easy to swap frames from one portrait to another. On the other hand, pictures which are not in one of these standard formats are more likely to have retained their original frames.

Pictures have been moved from one family home to another, meaning that the collection has changed considerably. In 1672, 108 pictures, 63 of them described as great pictures and others as lesser or little, all but four in gilt frames, were taken to Scotland from Ham and Lauderdale House in Highgate. In about 1679 six gilt frames from the wardrobe store at Ham were given away.

It can be difficult to link references in 17th-century bills and Ham inventories to individual pictures with confidence. Nevertheless, an inventory of 1683 is a key document in establishing the hang of the collection after the many changes of the 1670s.

Many frames have been regilded and others altered. It has not been possible to examine the reverse of frames in workshop conditions, necessary for a fully informed judgement.

**back edge:** the outer edge of the frame, furthest from the picture.

**gadroons/gadrooning:** a series of convex shaped ridges in a repeated decorative pattern.

**lap joint:** a corner joint with the wood of one side overlapping the adjoining side.

**mortise-and-tenon:** a joint where a tenon or tongue of one timber is fixed through a matching shaped mortise or hole in another timber.

**mitre joint:** a diagonal joint used in the corner of frames with the adjacent sides abutting.

**reverse section:** a frame with the most prominent moulding nearest to the picture.

**sight edge:** the inner edge of the frame nearest to the picture.

**volute:** a spiral scroll.

Further Reading


See also *Ham House, Surrey,* National Trust guide book, 1995 and subsequent editions.
Acknowledgements

The National Trust gratefully acknowledges a generous bequest from the late Mr and Mrs Kenneth Levy that has supported the cost of preparing this publication.

Jacob Simon extends his thanks to Christopher Rowell, who invited him to participate in the Ham House anniversary conference and who provided the opportunity to examine the staircase pictures off the wall. To Victoria Bradley who joined him in examining some frames in the Green Closet. To all those who have studied the frames at Ham including Alastair Laing, Timothy Newbery, Nino Strachey, Peter Thornton and Maurice Tomlin. To Sue Pritchard and Malcolm Smuts for access to documentation.

For further information about paintings and frames featured please visit http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/.

Illustrations: National Trust Images/John Hammond pp.5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38; National Trust/Bill Batten p.26; National Trust/Christopher Warleigh-Lack pp.22, 25, 27, 31, 35, 37.

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Registered charity no. 205846

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Edited by Sarah Okpokam

Designed by LEVEL Partnership

Front Cover: UNKNOWN ARTIST, An Unknown Lady in Red, 1630s (see page 19)

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