

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastelists before 1800*

Online edition

ASTLEY, Mrs Edward, née Rhoda Delaval

Dissington, Northumberland 1725 – Bath 1757
Daughter of a naval captain who had inherited the Vanburgh mansion Seaton Delaval from an uncle, Rhoda Delaval was celebrated for her beauty and accomplishments, among them her flair as an amateur portraitist in pastel. In 1744 she began taking lessons from Arthur Pond (*q.v.*), who was already fashionable in court circles; she paid 4 gns a month (presumably for four sessions, a remarkably high price) from 1.II.1744 until .VIII.1744, with further payments for .v.1745, .II.1747, .IV.–.VI.1747, .IV.–.VIII.1748, .IV.–.VI.1749, and a month and a half payment in .VI.1750. Pond was commissioned by her parents to paint numerous family portraits (among them one of Rhoda and three of her brothers, an oil commissioned for 80 gns: see Lippincott 1983, fig. 7), to a total value of some £300. Lippincott 1983 reports that one of her younger brothers, George Delaval, was apprenticed to Arthur Pond the artist (on 24.XII.1753 for five years for a premium of £300, although inexplicably Pond is described as an “attorney of the parish of St Giles in the Fields” in the records, which consistently record that Delaval was “articled”, not “indentured” as would apply to painter’s apprentice). George died before competing his term.

A painting attributed to Pond (London, NPG) shows Miss Delaval executing a pastel portrait; her self-portrait (medium unspecified) was engraved by MacArdell. Some of her works are said to have survived in the family. In 1751, she married Edward Astley of Melton Constable (he was later made a baronet). Their London residence was 11 Downing Street. Astley bought prints from Pond to a value of some £1500. She was portrayed by Reynolds in 1756 shortly before her death, said to be as a result of the loss of her two eldest children. Although she had 11 siblings (among them the notorious MP Sir Francis Blake Delaval, KB, a younger brother, created Baron Delaval in 1783, and Sarah, Countess of Mexborough), it was her surviving son Sir Jacob Henry Astley that eventually inherited the family estates.

Bibliography

Lippincott 1983, p. 42; Lippincott 1988; Manning 2000; Sloan 2000, pp. 230f; PRO, apprentice index, IR 1/19/71

Portraits

J.114.101 SELF-PORTRAIT, m/u
~grav. MacArdell

