

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

GEEKIE, Alexander

Baldowrie 4.VII.1655 – London .VII.1727

The celebrated surgeon was a fellow of the Royal Society from 1710 (contributing astronomical observations from a ship in 1716 to the *Proceedings*), and a member of the Society of Antiquaries. He was master of the *Cardigan* masonic lodge at Charing Cross. On 29.XI.1689 (at St Benet Fink, City of London) he married Jane Churchill, sister of Awnsham Churchill (1658–1728), MP and bookseller. Their son William was born the following year; he became archdeacon of Gloucester. Seven more children were baptised at St Bride's Fleet Street until 1699; Jane died in 1702: Geekie added a footnote to a letter of 20.IV.1702 to his patient John Locke "I labor under the unexpressible loss of my dearest friend and Wife". Geekie had been treating Locke unsuccessfully for the ear infection that led to the philosopher's deafness.

Geekie was also a known art collector and philanthropist. In 1684 he gave a portrait of Sir Edmond Bury Godfrey (a Protestant magistrate murdered by Catholics after the Titus Oates affair) to St Martin-in-the-Fields, as well as two frames divided into four compartments containing representations of Catholic cruelties against Protestants, "neatly painted and original". A pastel copy of the Godfrey painting (London, NPG; *v.* English sch.) might be Geekie's own work.

Geekie was master of the Barber's Company in 1719, and donated to them a portrait of Inigo Jones (school of Van Dyck; he also seems to have owned, and copied, a portrait of the same sitter by Dobson). His will (in addition to charitable bequests etc.; proved 15.VII.1727) lists a large number of pictures by Sir Godfrey Kneller to be divided among his children. These included five portraits all "drawne by the late incomparable Sir G Kneller Barrt", viz. King William "of glorious memory"; the staunch anti-Catholic Bishop Compton (perhaps NPG 2952); a portrait of John Locke acquired from the artist (it later belonged to Sir Robert Walpole; see Geekie's letter to Locke of 26.II.1703); a portrait of "My sonne drawne in a periwig"; and one of "his mother my deare wife". He also owned a Van Dyck, of Sir Theodore de Mayerne's dead son, and a Breugel panel of the Blind leading the Blind.

Geekie himself subscribed Kneller's Queen Street Academy in 1711: Bignamini 1988 (who transcribes the name as Geikie) assumed this was in order to train as an anatomical draughtsman, but it rather seems that portraiture was his focus.

A 1697 pastel of an unknown man (which presents striking similarities to Mayerne, and might be a posthumous synthesis of his iconography) bears Geekie's signature *verso* (it was catalogued in 2016 as false, but the writing corresponds with Geekie's signature on the 1708 apprenticeship indenture of his homonymous son (to the father, as surgeon, for 7 years: the son was bankrupt in 1737). The accomplished technique seems similar to that on a 1698 pastel said to be of "Mr Geekie Chirurg" and previously attributed to Henrietta Johnson and, more plausibly, to Edward Gibson; but it seems

possible that it too is by rather than of Geekie (the age of the sitter in 1698 corresponds to neither father nor son).

The same signature appears in a rather weaker copy after Kneller's portrait of John Locke now in the Hermitage. That painting was sold by Kneller to Geekie in .II.1703 and engraved while in his collection by Vertue in 1713 (Ingamells 2009, p. 153). The pastel went unremarked until 2017.

Geekie's son John, who died in Tellicherry in 1747, bequeathed to his own son John "my father's picture by Sr Godfrey Kneller...three crayon portraits of Erasmus Dr Needham and Mr Locke and his own picture when a boy." It is possible that the three pastels were the group catalogued as of Erasmus, Locke and Newton in Francis Cotes's posthumous sale (*v.* English school; lost); it is also plausible that they were the work of Alexander Geekie.

Bibliography

R. A. Berman, *The architects of eighteenth century English Freemasonry, 1720–1740*, Ph.D. thesis, 2010, University of Exeter, p. 188; Bignamini 1988, pp. 74, 79; Dukelskaya & Moore 2002, pp. 298f; Craig Ashley Hanson, *The English Virtuoso: art, medicine, and antiquarianism in the age of empiricism*, Chicago, 2009, p. 153; James Peter Malcolm, *Londinium redivivum*, London, 1807, IV, p. 196; *London gazette* for 21.V.1737

GENEALOGIES [Geekie](#)

Pastels

J.3419.101 Mr Geekie Chirurg [??Alexander GEEKIE (1655–1727), surgeon, FRS 1710, art collector; or ?his son, Alexander Geekie, surgeon p.1708], cr. clr, 28x20, 1698 (London, Sotheby's, 24.VII.1980, Lot 86. London, Christie's South Kensington, 1.VII.2004, Lot 12 repr., attr. Henrietta Johnson, est. £200–300, £500). Lit.: Ingamells 2009b, p. 98 n.r., as by Gibson [new attr., ?] ☐



J.3419.1013 Inigo JONES (1573–1652), architect, cr. clr, 41x30.5, inscr. "Inigo Jones Architect / 17 after Dobson by A. Geekie 21" [1721] (PC 2018). A/r Dobson pnt., c.1642 (versions at Chiswick House; National Maritime Museum) ☐



J.3419.1013 John LOCKE (1632–1704), philosopher, pstl/ppr, 31x24.8, inscr. *verso* "Mr Lock by A Geekie, 1696" (PC Scotland; Miles Wynn Cato, cat. 2022, no. 3 repr., as mentioned in artist's will misread as "John Lock, My Own [for Sonne], Drawne in a Periwig" – these refer to two paintings by Kneller of Lock and Geekie's son) ☐



J.3419.1015 John LOCKE, pstl/pchm, 37x28, sd *verso* "A Copy of John Lock Esq/after Sr Godfrey Kneller/Drawn by AG: 1704" (Penzance, David Lay, 2.IV.2009, Lot 291 repr., est. £100–150. Penzance, David Lay, 27.IV.2017, Lot 387 repr., est. £50–100. Lowell Libson & Johnny Yarker Ltd, *The spirit & force of art*, exh. 20.VI.–6.VII.2018, no. 68). A/r Kneller pnt. (Hermitage. Kneller; acqu. Geekie 1703)[new attr. 2017] ☐



J.3419.102 Man [?Sir Théodore TURQUET DE MAYERNE (1573–1655)] in a brown cloak, lace collar, pstl/?pchm, 29x23.7, inscr. *verso*

“A Geekie fecit 1697” (Donnington Priory, Dreweatts & Bloomsbury, 13.vii.2016, Lot 27 repr., anon. . Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker Ltd, *The spirit & force of art*, exh. 20.vi.–6.vii.2018, no. 9) [new attr.; ?identification]
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