

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

HARRINGTON, Mrs Thomas, née Sarah Carter

London 13.VIII.1745–brd 15.XII.1819

According to Foskett, the miniaturist Mrs Harrington was from Birmingham; but very little of her biography has hitherto (until .VII.2021) been established, despite a number of clues. She was the author of *New and elegant amusements for the ladies of Great Britain*, published in London in 1772 with an extravagant dedication to Princess Amelia. Further such contributions included *A new introduction to the knowledge and use of maps* of which early editions appeared under the name of her husband Thomas Harrington. He was (perhaps) solely responsible for a similar tome, *Science improved; or, the theory of the universe*, issued by the same publishers in 1774.

Mrs Harrington (described as Sarah, wife of Thomas Harrington of Hercules Buildings, Lambeth) received a royal patent for a pantographic device for taking profiles on 24.VI.1775 (no. 1100). However improbable it seems, this allows us to identify her husband as the “factor commerce” at 4 Hercules Buildings listed in *Kent’s Directory* for 1775. “Thomas Harrington of Battersea, flower factor” [i.e. flour factor], widower, married Sarah Carter of St Giles-in-the-Fields, spinster, according to the allegation of 13.II.1769; the wedding took place on 16.II.1769 at St Mary’s, Battersea, according to church records. In 1797 he was left an estate in Waltham by a relative. He died in a fit of apoplexy in Green Park in 1802 (*Gentleman’s magazine*, .VII.1802, p. 690).

We can further identify her as the Sarah Harrington, widow, of 2 Brompton Row, Knightsbridge, whose 1818 will (proved 24.XII.1819) left most of her estate to her unmarried sister Elizabeth Carter. A bequest to her nephew Richard Carter, consisting of £1000 of stock originally issued to presumably his grandfather, Richard Carter (1715–1789), late of the parish of St Giles-in-the-Fields, a very wealthy baker. That Richard Carter died in 1789, his will revealing four children: Richard, Elizabeth, unmarried, Sarah, Mrs Harrington (to whom he left £2000 of the 4% stock), and Ann, who on 9.V.1781 married a coal merchant, Jacob Life: Sarah signed the register with her husband. They also signed the register for the marriage of another sister, Mary Ann Carter, to Richard Payne, a physician and property developer in Kensington.

Sarah Carter was born 13.VIII.1745 and christened six days later at St Giles-in-the-Fields, to Richard Carter and his wife, Ann Harrison. This would be consistent with her age (74) disclosed in the burial entry at St Mary Abbots, Kensington, 15.XII.1819: she was last living in Michaels Place (a terrace on Brompton Road). Two of her sisters were buried there as well.

Lloyds evening post (28.VI.1775) reported the award of the patent to “the Lady who has long taken Miniature Profiles in the utmost perfection”, noting “her ingenious method of reducing shadows”. Her advertisements appear in the *Oxford journal* from 1.VII.1775, and she was surely the “Lady who is come to town and

who takes great likenesses” to whom James Woodforde sat “not above a minute” on 13.VI.1775 (*Diary of a country parson 1758–1802*, Norwich, 1999, p. 78). She was probably the anonymous “lady” advertising in similar terms from 34 or 33 Tavistock Street in the *Morning chronicle* and elsewhere from 4.III.1774). When she arrived in London she advertised repeatedly, in the following terms (*Morning post*, 9.II.1778):

The most striking likenesses, highly finished in crayons, at one Guinea each; by Mrs Harrington (removed to No. 62, South Moulton-street, Grosvenor-square) improved miniature profiles, at 2s. 6d. each, by virtue of His Majesty’s Letters Patent: time of sitting a few minutes only. Those Ladies and Gentlemen, who have friends at either the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, or Glasgow, may be accommodated with their likenesses: Mrs Harrington having had the honour of taking likenesses of nearly the whole of the above Universities; as also the first personages, and most distinguished Nobility, with most of the genteel families in England, and Scotland; accurate copies of all which may be seen to the amount of more than 30,000 approved likenesses; so that almost every person in genteel life may be accommodated with his friend’s likeness.

The patent, which seems to have been awarded in 1775, evidently excited some controversy. Threatened litigation involving a rival artist, a Sgr Risso, was mentioned in the Leeds newspapers in 1776. Mrs Harrington’s assistant, a Mrs Collins, advertised in the *Norfolk chronicle* on 30.X.1784 announcing that she had paid her 60 guineas for a half share of the patent, which still had four years to run.

Some idea of the work of Mrs Harrington may be gleaned from the 1779 portrait of Master Crotch, an infant prodigy shown playing the organ, taken from life at the age of 3 years 7 months (a print is reproduced in Highfill & al. 1975, *s.v.* Crotch). It is little more than a silhouette profile. It is probably safe to assume that most of her 30,000 works were not in pastel, but possible that she may have been responsible for some pastel profiles of the kind sometimes attributed to Bermingham, Bateman or Towne (*qq.v.*).

Bibliography

Foskett 1987; Sue McKechnie, *British silhouette artists and their work, 1750-1860*, London, 1978; Nevill Jackson 1938; Brian Wellings, private communication, 17.IX.2021