

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

KEAN, Michael

Dublin 1761 – London 17.XI.1823

Miniaturist, trained at the Dublin Society school from 1771. He went to London in 1784, entering the Royal Academy Schools and exhibiting until 1790. On 4.VIII.1789 at St Anne, Soho, he married Jane Clublely; one daughter, Sophia, was born the following year (4.IX.1790). She must have died soon after (perhaps she was the “Joanna Clublely” of East Lane, aged 29, buried in St Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey, 9.V.1791). From this time he seems to have abandoned painting and devoted himself to ceramics, becoming a partner of the Derby porcelain factory with William Duesbury in 1795. In Derby on 29.X.1798 he married Duesbury’s widow, née Elizabeth Margaret Edwards (1767–1828) of a prominent Derby family, although they were separated for some years; Kean appears to have had a difficult personality – a “brutal” “ungovernable temper” which also led to difficulties with the workmen. In 1811 he withdrew from the business and retired to London.

He is said to have made some crayon portraits while in Dublin, although none is now known. Portraits in other media include miniatures of Lunardi the aeronaut, while Dr George Butt, the poet, is known from Nugent’s 1793 engraving.

Bibliography

Dictionary of Irish biography; Foskett 1987; John Haslem, *The old Derby china factory...*, 1876; McGuire 1939, p. 15; Myrone 2022; Oxford DNB; Strickland 1913; Waterhouse 1981