

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

LEIGNES, John Charles

London 1763–1800

“Master Leignes” was a precocious amateur artist in chalk and (Graves infers) pastel; exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1776, aged 12, and at the Free Society in 1776 and 1780, from 30 Northumberland Street, the address of the clockmaker, Charles Peter Leignes (1729–1813), his father. (It was given also in 1776 for the artist Nathan Theodore Fielding, *q.v.*, who may have offered lessons.) John Charles Leignes was christened on 20.III.1763 at St Martin-in-the-Fields, making him a year older than the claim in the catalogue. His father was educated at Westminster school from 1737, leaving aged 12 to be apprenticed to a William King in London (9.XII.1741); he married Louisa Belliard at St Ann’s, Westminster, in 1759, and was admitted to the St Pancras poorhouse in 1810 as “Charles Pierre Leignes, membre de l’église helvétique”, unable to work on account of his age. Despite the Swiss reference, the family probably came from La Rochelle (a Jeanne Leignes, born there in 1702, was admitted to the same institution in 1769). Presumably neither the son nor his daughter Louisa (*q.v.*) was able to support him, nor it seems could they be traced by the executors of a will as they appear in Chambers’s *Index to heirs-at-law...*, 1857. On 16.VI.1786, John Charles was still living in Northumberland Street when he rescued a young lady from drowning (she was revived by Dr Hunt of the Humane Society). He was commissioned as a lieutenant in the East Regiment of the London Militia 30.V.1794, but is not heard of again until his replacement was promoted on 2.IV.1800 “vice Leignes, deceased”.

Bibliography

Charles F. A. Marmoy, ed., “The French Protestant Hospital: extracts from the archives relating to inmates and applicants for admission”, *Huguenot Society quarto series*, LIII, 1977; St Martin-in-the-Fields baptismal records; Waterhouse 1981; *Reports of the Humane Society*, case 554