

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

WORLIDGE, Thomas

Peterborough 1700 – Hammersmith 1766

Portraitist and engraver. The son of a lawyer, Richard Worlidge (of a Catholic family, explaining the absence of baptismal records), Thomas Worlidge became a pupil of the Genoese refugee Alessandro Maria Grimaldi (1659–1732), whose 16-year old daughter Arabella he married in the Fleet prison, 24.VIII.1725 (he was described as an engraver on glass in the clandestine register); she died perhaps in 1740.

Worlidge started his career in Bath making plumbago miniatures. He then moved to King Street, Covent Garden (1740) where he is said to have made portraits in pastel as well as oil, but as these met with little success he turned to etching. He continued to maintain his contacts with Bath, and in particular with the seal engraver, John Wickstead or Wicksteed, whose family ran the celebrated Toy Shop in Orange Grove, Bath, where Worlidge's engravings were sold. He exhibited at the Free Society (1762–66) and the Society of Artists in 1761 and 1765.

There is widespread confusion over Worlidge's subsequent marriage: he married his second wife Mary Wickstead (*q.v.*, *s.v.* Ashley) in Bath Abbey, 12.VI.1743 (she has been confused with a Mary Giles, married in Widcombe, near Bath on 12.III.1743); but statements (from Foskett and other sources, widely repeated) that he had a third marriage, to an Elizabeth Wickstead in 1763, are incorrect, and disproved by documents including his will, made 22.XI.1764 and proved 26.IX.1766 in which his wife Mary is sole beneficiary. His widow M. Worlidge and an M. Wickstead are named on the title-page of the first complete edition of Worlidge's *Collection of drawings from curious antique gems* which appeared posthumously.

By his first marriage he had a son, Samuel (1726–1766). His second produced Sally (baptised 6.V.1744 in Bath Abbey), Thomas (1745, Bath Abbey), Giles Edward (1748, Bath), Frances (1750, St Paul Covent Garden), Rosealba (1752, St Paul, Covent Garden), Francis Correggio (1756, Bath), Thomas James King (1757, Bath) and Rubens (1759, Bath). There is a memorial in St Paul's Hammersmith.

Bibliography

Bryan 1905; Charles Dack, *Sketch of the life of Thomas Worlidge, etcher and painter, with a catalogue of his works*, Peterborough, 1907; Foskett 1987; Grove; Howard 2010; Oxford DNB; Sloman 2002; Sloman, "An eighteenth-century soncarver's diary...", *British art journal*, VII/3, 2006, pp. 4–13; Strange 1907; Walpole 1828; Waterhouse 1981; Wright 2006; Index of Bath artists