

HANS EWORTH

THE COMPLETE CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ

ON THE PORTRAIT OF AN UNKNOWN LADY IN THE COLLECTION OF CANON TIMOTHY RUSS
Compiled by Hope Walker, MPhil/PhD Candidate | The Courtauld Institute of Art

In August, 2009 *The Times of London* published an article describing a Tudor portrait that was for many years in the collection of the Huddleston Family at Sawston Hall, near Cambridge.¹ The portrait—a full-length portrait of an unknown lady dressed in black satin—is now owned by Canon Timothy Russ, who inherited the picture from a relative (Figure 1). The picture appeared in the news because Canon Russ has indicated his intention to sell the picture in order to raise funds for the purchase and restoration of Sawston Hall, which he intends to transform into a Catholic heritage center.²

Aside from the *Times* article, the picture has drawn the recent attentions of Tudor historians and art historians, primarily because of Canon Russ' stated desire to sell the picture and the many unanswered questions surrounding the picture's provenance, attribution, and sitter. Canon Russ has argued, for example, that the picture is a portrait of Queen Mary I and in that he has had some support.³ Still there is nothing within the picture, which is unsigned, undated and essentially devoid of clues, to conclusively prove Russ' view.⁴ Further, there are several scholars who disagree with him, particularly in terms of the sitter's identity.⁵

Yet there has been a dearth of modern scholarship on the Russ portrait that has problematized any greater understanding of the picture. There is, however, one noticeable exception: Karen Hearn's 1995 exhibition catalogue, *Dynasties; Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England*.⁶ Within the Russ picture's catalogue entry (#15) Hearn does briefly address the question of

¹ Simon Tait, "Could this mysterious woman in black be Mary Tudor?," *The Times of London*, 13 August, 2009, accessed online via The Times Online on 17 February, 2010.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. Among his supporters are Dr Jack Scarisbrick and writer Linda Porter.

⁴ In fact, the sitter bears no likeness to the portraits of Mary I by Master John, Hans Eworth and/or Anthonis Mor.

⁵ Ibid. Among them are Dr. Tarnya Cooper and Sir Roy Strong.

⁶ Karen Hearn, eds. *Dynasties; Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530-1630*, London: Tate Publishing, 1995, 53.

HANS EWORTH

THE COMPLETE CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ

provenance, suggesting that the claims of Huddleston ownership should be further investigated.⁷ Unfortunately it seems that since 1995 nothing else has been done to learn more about the picture's history. And although Canon Russ has recently developed his own website in order to more widely share his own views about the picture with the public, there he likewise seems to avoid a discussion of provenance.⁸

Today the working assumption appears to be that the picture has always resided at Sawston Hall and therefore has always been in the Huddleston family collection. The Huddleston family were linked with the Tudors since at least 1553 when Edward VI died. At that time Mary I was provided shelter by Sir John Huddleston at Sawston Hall during her efforts to evade capture at the hands of the Duke of Northumberland.⁹ No doubt this connection has furthered the argument, made by Canon Russ and others, that the picture is a portrait of Queen Mary I. Yet, instead of always being in the Huddleston collection, my research demonstrates that the portrait was added to the Huddleston collection sometime after 1914, prior to which it was in the Weston Collection at Sutton Place, Surrey.¹⁰

The first concrete evidence to support this claim comes from a postcard printed by Francis Frith in 1914. There the Russ portrait is clearly shown hanging in the Great Hall at Sutton Place (Figure 2). Working backward from 1914, in January 1910 *The Connoisseur* published an article

⁷ Ibid. Hearn notes that "The supposition that it had 'always' been with the Huddleston family of Sawston Hall remains to be proved, as does a recent family alternative suggestion that it may have been purchased at the start of the present century."

⁸ Canon Timothy Russ, 'Mary Tudor Painting - Sawston,' accessed online 12 April, 2010 via <<http://marytudorpainting-sawston.blogspot.com/>>.

⁹ For more on Sir John Huddlestone see S.T. Bindoff, *The House of Commons 1509-1558*, Vol. 4, London: Secker and Warburg, 1982, 401-403.

¹⁰ In 1919 a catalogue of pictures at Sutton Place was published that includes several Tudor portraits. Although the purpose of the catalogue is not entirely clear, it appears that there was a picture and tapestry sale at Sutton Place that same year and this catalogue was for that sale. And, in spite of the fact that the catalogue does not include the Russ picture, one can assume that either the picture had already been sold out of the collection by 1919, or that the picture was still in the collection and was simply not part of the catalogue. According to Christopher Wickham (personal communication, 14 April 2010) the picture may have entered the Russ collection in the early 1900s, although evidence of how this occurred has yet to come to light. For more on the Sutton Place sale see *Catalogue of the Pictures and of the Tapestries in Sutton Place* (London, 1919), 1-43.

HANS EWORTH

THE COMPLETE CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ

concerning Sutton Place that includes a clear and unambiguous photograph of the painting¹¹, again hanging in the Great Hall; the article also included the suggestion of an artist (Figure 3).¹² Continuing backward, in 1905 Robert Dell published an article on Sutton Place in *Burlington Magazine*.¹³ Although the portrait is not mentioned in the text, there are two photographs of the Great Hall that clearly include the Russ portrait (Figures 4 & 5).¹⁴ And even further backward, in 1893 Frederic Harrison published his *Annals of an Old Manor House: Sutton Place*, which includes the following reference to the picture: "Queen Mary (on panel)-Full length, about 70 by 45 inches; standing in black robe, holding a miniature in frame, apparently after Antonio More."¹⁵

During the time when this picture was created (c. 1550) Sutton Place was owned by Nicholas Statham and, soon afterward, was inherited by Sir Walter Denys, whose brother-in-law Sir Francis Weston was executed for his adulterous affair with Anne Boleyn in 1536.¹⁶ And aside from the 1542 inventory of Sutton Place, which gives no hint of the Russ portrait, there is little archival evidence prior to 1893 to further the provenance.¹⁷ As a result we may never know if the picture originated with the Denys, the Westons or the myriad of other owners and tenants at

¹¹ Leonard Willouby, "Sutton Place, Guilford: A Surrey Manor House-Part II," *The Connoisseur* 26(101), January 1910, 3-16.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³ Robert Dell, "A Tudor Manor House: Sutton Place," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 7(28), July 1905, 289-301.

¹⁴ Dell, "A Tudor," 295-296.

¹⁵ Frederic Harrison, *Annals of an Old Manor House: Sutton Place, Guildford*, London: MacMillan, 1893, Chapter 6 (188-198). Harrison indicates that Mr. Sidney Harrison was the lessee of the estate during this period and that Harrison brought with him many of the object d'art and tapestries found within the house (189). However, he specifically indicates that the pictures belonged to the owner of the house rather than the current tenant (195).

¹⁶ W.H. Ireland, *A New and Complete History of the County of Kent, Vol. 4*, London, 1830, p. 372. For more on Sir Walter Denys see S.T. Bindoff, *The House*, 36-37. According to Bindoff, Denys' relationships at Court were "unaffected" by Weston's execution.

¹⁷ For the 1542 inventory of Sutton Place see J.O. Halliwell-Phillipps, eds., *Ancient inventories of Furniture, pictures, tapestry, plate etc.*, London, 1854, Appendix and Harrison, *Annals of*, 1893, 206-12. The inventory specifically mentions 'hangyngs' of varying (primarily religious) motifs although these seem related to bed hangings rather than decorative wall hangings of which there are none. For more on Tudor and Stuart household inventories see Maurice Howard, "Inventories, Surveys and the History of Great Houses 1480-1640," in *Architectural History* 41, 1998, 14-29. For more on inventories specific to Tudor paintings see Susan Foister, "Paintings and other works of art in sixteenth-century English inventories," *The Burlington Magazine* 123, 1981, 273-82.

HANS EWORTH

THE COMPLETE CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ

Sutton Place prior to the late nineteenth century. It is entirely possible that the picture started out at another house altogether and was purchased into the Sutton Place collection sometime prior to 1893.

HANS EWORTH
THE COMPLETE CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ



Figure 1

Unknown Lady in Black

Unknown Artist

c. 1550

Oil on panel

70 ¼ X 37 ½ in. | 178.4 X 95.3 cm

Collection of Canon Timothy Russ

HANS EWORTH

THE COMPLETE CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ



Figure 2

Francis Frith [Photographer and Publisher]
Great Hall, Sutton Place
1914
Postcard Number 67045¹⁸

¹⁸ It is possible to date Frith postcards by their print numbers. This card is number 67045, which places it within the 1914 window of 66516 through 67714. For more on dating Frith postcards see the *Old Postcard Postcards Archive* at <http://www.oldpicturepostcard.co.uk/dating-frith-postcards.htm>, accessed online 4 May, 2010.

HANS EWORTH

THE COMPLETE CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ

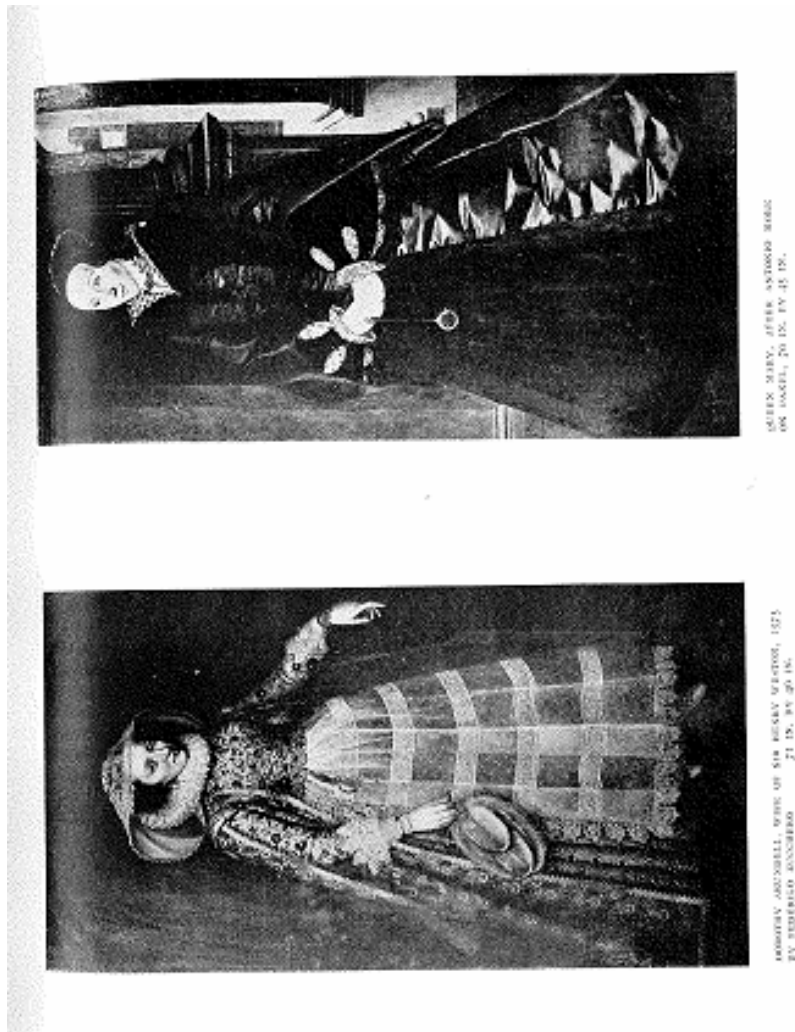


Figure 3

Extract from Leonard Willouby's "Sutton Place, Guilford: A Surrey Manor House-Part II," *The Connoisseur* 26(101), January 1910, 5.

HANS EWORTH

THE COMPLETE CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ



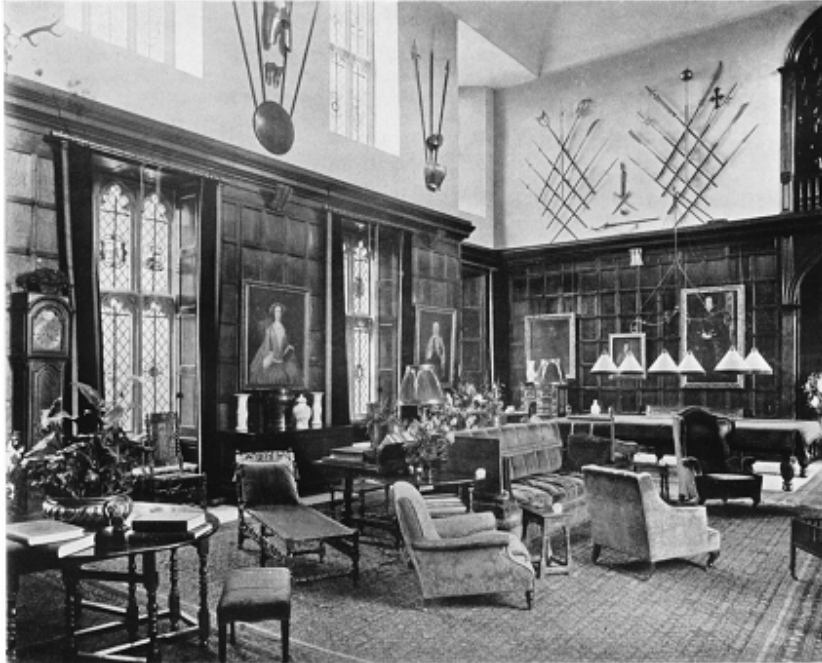
PLATE III. THE GREAT HALL,
SUTTON PLACE BY SURREY

Figure 4

Extract from Robert Dell's "A Tudor Manor House: Sutton Place," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 7(28), July 1905, 297.

HANS EWORTH

THE COMPLETE CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ



THE GREAT HALL

Figure 5

Extract from Robert Dell's "A Tudor Manor House: Sutton Place," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 7(28), July 1905, 298.