

AUTHENTICATION OF PAINTINGS ATTRIBUTED TO HENRY MUNDY

Jenny O'Connell, Senior Conservator (Painting)

Project supported by the Keith Clarke Foundation



Keith Clarke Foundation

In 2020, TMAG was thrilled to receive the generous support of the Keith Clarke Foundation to conduct conservation and research on a selection of paintings.

Keith Clarke was the ABC's wardrobe supervisor for many decades, and designed costumes for Opera Australia and the Australian Ballet. He recreated historical clothing, casual wear and full evening gowns.

The Trustees for the Keith Clarke Foundation believe that his memory and commitment to the creative arts is honoured well by the donation to the conservation of paintings in the TMAG collection.



Authentication Project – Grimwade Conservation Services

- Microscopy
- UV light
- Infrared light
- XRF – x-ray fluorescence analysis
- Costumes analysis
- Canvas analysis
- Detailed macro documentation of the materials



Jenny O'Connell Painting Conservator, and Lisa Charleston, Conservation Technician, packing the painting to send to Grimwade Conservation Services in Melbourne for an authentication report.

Authentication

Provenance, which is the ownership history of a work, is immensely important as evidence of its authenticity.

A complete provenance supplies a documented history that can prove previous ownership and attribute the work to the artist, thus establishing the work's authenticity.

[Getty Research Institute](#)



Artist



Materials and
Techniques



Subject

Artist - Henry Mundy 1798 - 1848

1831 Henry Mundy, an English painter and lithographer, arrived in Van Diemen's Land as a free settler.

Mundy moved to Tasmania to take up the position of teacher at 'Ellenthorpe Hall', a private school for young ladies near Ross.

1838 Mundy moved to Launceston and established himself as an artist.

1842 Mundy relocated to Hobart, where he opened a school for painting. Mundy received favourable notice for his work and during the early **1840s** and completed a number of portrait commissions.

Mundy rarely signed or dated his Tasmanian works.

1848 Despite his success as an artist, an economic depression led to a decline in his practice and he ended his life in a Hobart pub "Ship Inn", leaving behind his wife and five daughters.

1980s Mundy's significance as an artist starts to be recognised



Stacey, Wes (Wesley) (1968).
Ellenthorpe Hall, Ross, Tasmania, ca.
1970.

Subject - Portrait of an unknown woman

- AG8204 Unknown, *Portrait of an unknown woman*
- Oil on canvas, framed c.1840.
Dimensions: 88.5 x 78.0 x 10.5cm
(framed)
- The purported sitter, if indeed the wife of Mr William Gore Elliston (1798 – 1872), is Margaret De Vaux (1807 - 1873)



Provenance – Donation by descendant

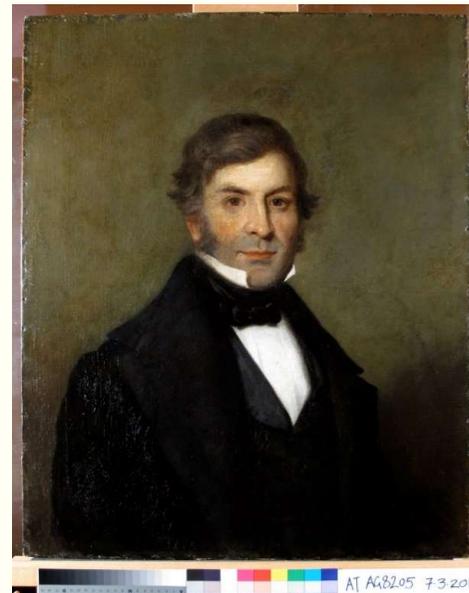
Henry Mundy *Portrait of Mr Gore, the father of Elizabeth Gore*



Unknown, artist *Portrait of an unknown woman (possibly Mrs Gore)*



Henry Mundy *Portrait of Jesse White Snr*

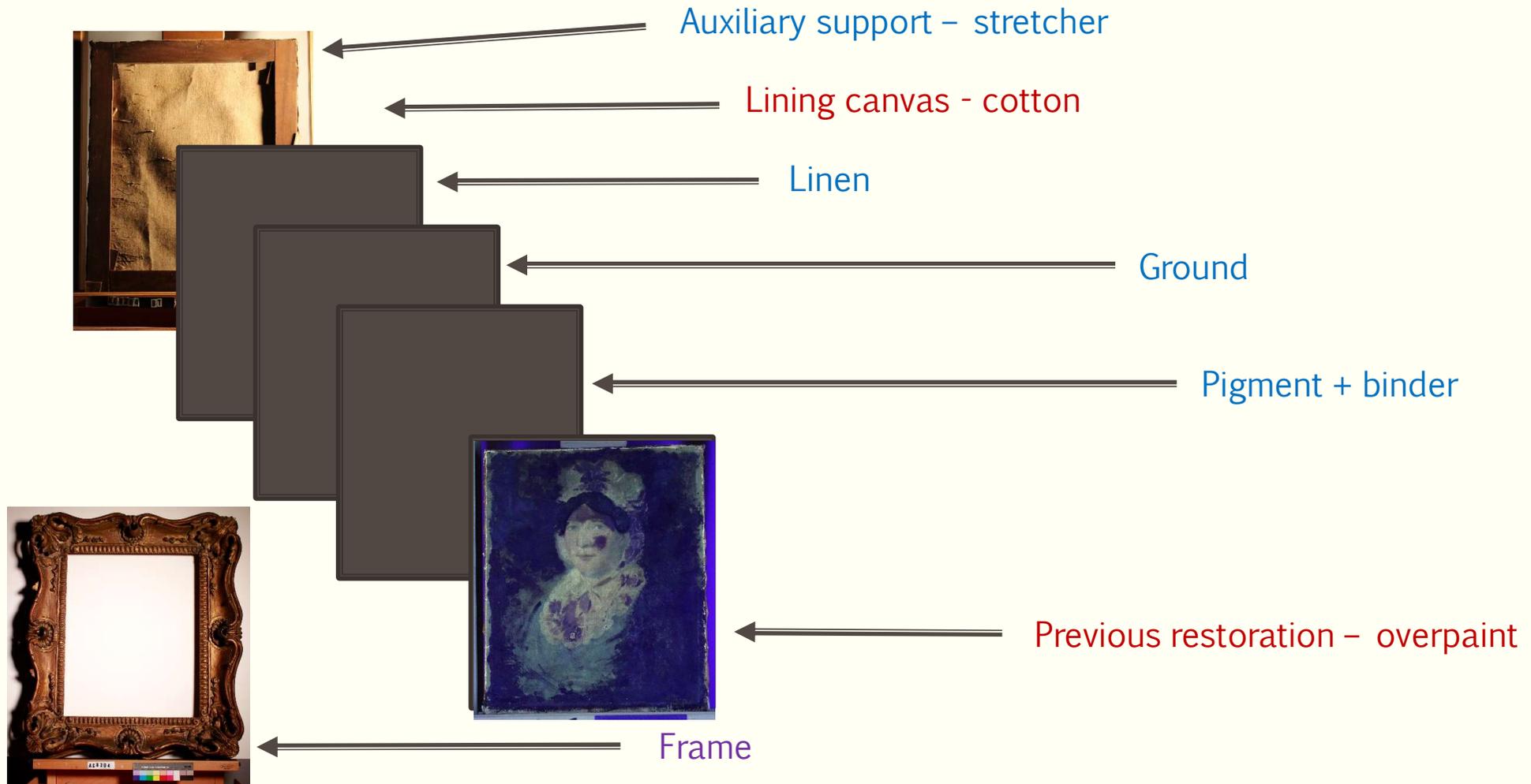


Henry Mundy *Portrait of Elizabeth White (nee Gore)*



Presented under the Cultural Gifts Program by Sky de Jersey in memory of her uncle, Barrie de Jersey, to celebrate the Tasmania he loved, 2008

Materials and Techniques – Portrait of a unknown woman



Verso - Portrait of an Unknown Woman



Lining canvas -
cotton



Images 24 and 25: Fibre identification of lining canvas – cotton by characteristic twist in fibre – see blue arrows (177x magnification)

Original painting
support - linen



Image 23: Fibre identification of original canvas– bast fibre – likely linen by characteristic nodes – see blue arrows (192x magnification)

Photographs by Grimwade Conservation Services

Ultraviolet – Portrait of an unknown woman



“The sitter is wearing a woollen day gown which would be considered respectable and good quality, however not expensive or particularly fashionable. Her neckline lace is simple, and her cap also of simple materials. The earrings and silk ribbons are decorative, however over-all she is not elaborately or expensively dressed by the standards of the day. A young or single woman would be less likely to have a portrait painted with indoor headwear such as this.” Marion Parker, Textile Conservator, Grimwade Conservation Services

The brooch appears to be a later overpainted addition, and is therefore discounted from the discussion.

Infrared – Portrait of an unknown woman

- Painting photographed using infrared
- No underdrawing found



Photograph taken by Grimwade Conservation Services

XRF Spectra – Pigment analysis done by Grimwade Conservation Services



Image 32: Locations of XRF Spectra analysis

XRF (X-ray fluorescence) is a non-destructive analytical technique used to determine the elemental composition of materials.

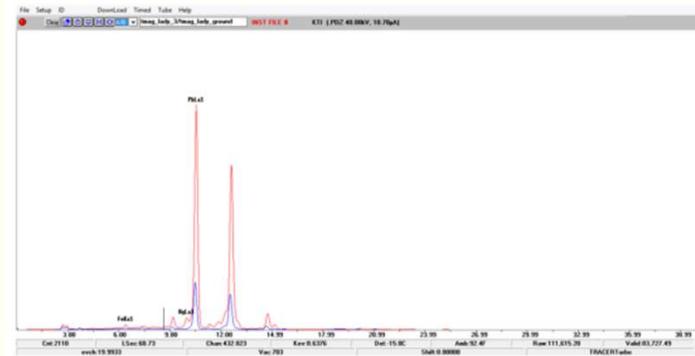


Image 35: XRF Spectra cheek (Sample site 3) [red spectra] overlaid with spectra of ground layer [blue spectra]

Inorganic pigment analysis using XRF identified a limited palette, with the artist using

- lead white (Pb identified – all samples),
- vermilion (Hg identified – areas of pink – lips and cheeks) and
- iron-oxide pigments (Fe identified)

Subject – Costume analysis

- The type of lace work on the collar is typical of a Scottish or Irish technique, known as Broderie Anglaise.
- The cap is for indoor daywear - most likely a fine linen or cotton muslin.
- There is a 'knot' of ribbons which appear to be silk, extending into silk bow tied beneath the chin.
- The choice to have the ribbon displayed at the centre front neck creates a 'Victorian' appearance suggesting **post-1837**.
- Together with the dress, the cap suggests the woman is simply and modestly dressed, as may fit an older woman.
- The sleeves are full at the sleeve head and may possibly slope to fit at the wrist (lower arms not depicted). The sleeve cap appears slightly dropped below the shoulder line. These features suggest **1830s onwards**.
- The gown is dark green with a non-reflective surface, probably wool.

Analysis completed by Marion Parker, Textiles Conservator, Grimwade Conservation Services



Conclusions - Portrait of an unknown woman



- **Materials and Techniques Consistent with 1831 – 1848**
- **Subject** Further research required to determine the sitter.
- It is possible that the sitter was painted overseas.
- **Provenance** The painting was presented under the Cultural Gifts Program by Sky de Jersey in 2008. There has been no further information provided that verifiably links this work directly to the attributed artist, Henry Mundy (c. 1798 – 1848). Additionally, there has been no documentation provided that can be used to identify the existence of this work prior to the artist's death in 1848.

Portrait – purchased by TMAG

Attr H Mundy, *Portrait of James Ebenezer Bicheno*, n.d.
Oil on canvas, framed, n.d.

Attributed to Knut Bull (1811 – 1889) at time of
purchase

Curatorial advice: *certainly not Bull ... possibly a Henry
Mundy portrait listed in Bicheno's posthumous sale of
1851*

File note, AG8801 TMAG conservation file



Artist's Style - National Portrait Gallery, ACT



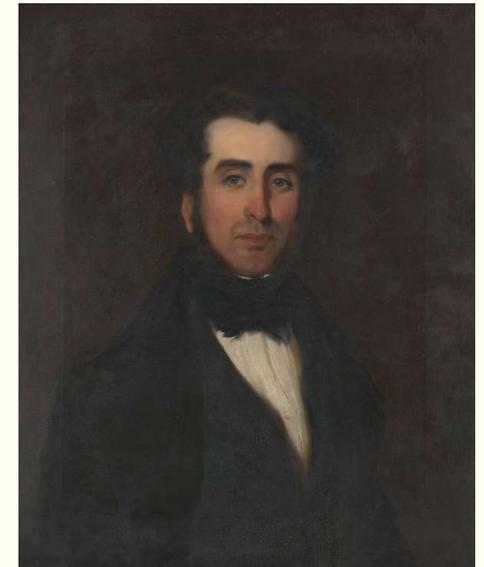
SUSAN LORD
c. 1840
Henry Mundy
oil on canvas
(frame: 96.5 cm x 84.0
cm, support: 76.0
cm x 63.5 cm)



MAJOR THOMAS LORD
c. 1840
Henry Mundy
oil on canvas (frame: 96.5
cm x 84.0
cm, support: 76.0
cm x 63.5 cm)



MARTHA KERMODE
c. 1840
Henry Mundy
oil on canvas
(support: 76.5 cm x 63.5
cm)



ROBERT KERMODE
c. 1840
Henry Mundy
oil on canvas
(support: 75.5 cm x 63.0
cm)

Subject – James Ebenezer Bicheno (1785-1851)

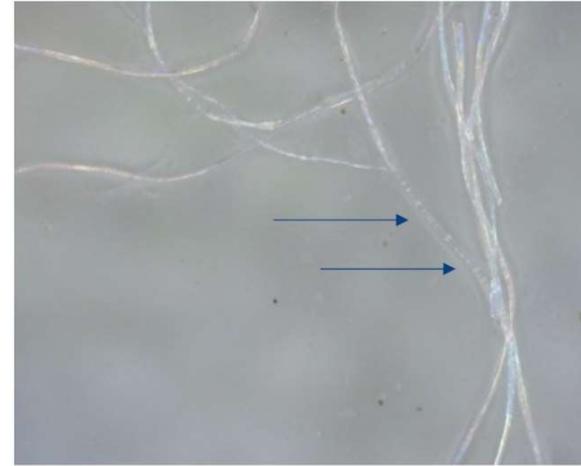
- Born 25 January 1785 in Newbury, Berkshire, England.
- In September 1842 Bicheno was appointed colonial secretary of Van Diemen's Land at a salary of £1200.
- Arrived April 1843 at Hobart Town.
- In 1844 he became president of the committee that planned the first public exhibition of paintings in Australia.
- After a short illness Bicheno died in Hobart on 25 February 1851.



James Ebenezer Bicheno (1785-1851), attributed to Thomas Bock, c. 1851, Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania

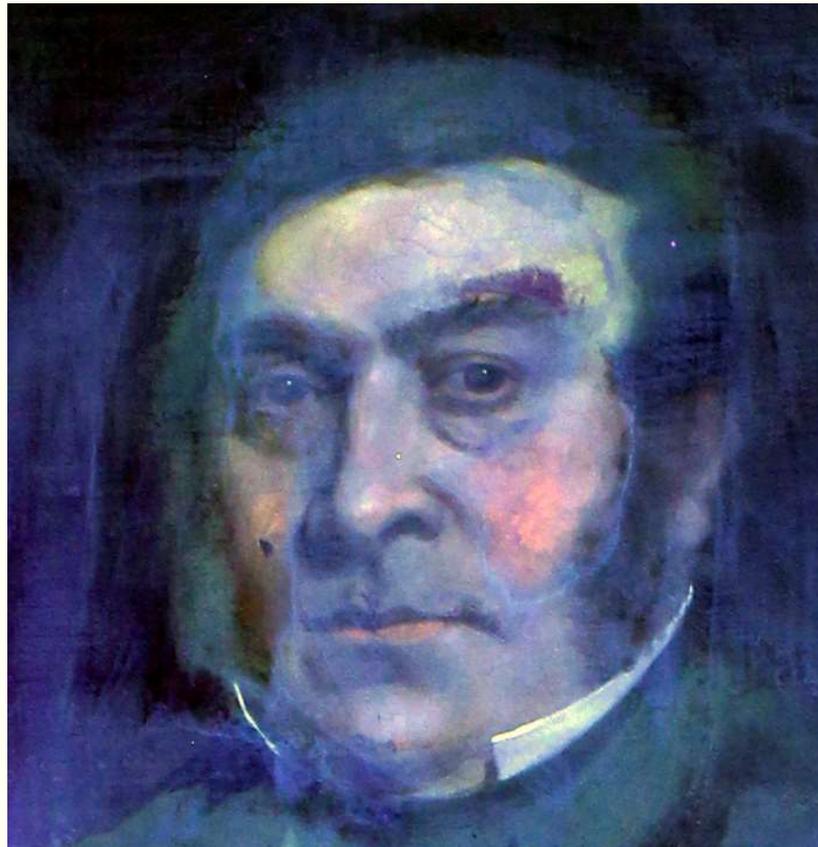
Mr Bicheno – Materials and techniques

- Materials align to those commonly used by artists in the early-mid 19th century
- Commercially made stretcher aligns with auxiliary supports used by artists working in the early-mid 19th century
- Linen canvas is a plain, close weave canvas
- Use of tacks to attach the canvas aligns to materials of the period
- Off-white ground layer



Images 20: Fibre identification of lining canvas – linen by characteristic visible nodes – see blue arrows (189x magnification)

Bicheno Portrait - Ultraviolet

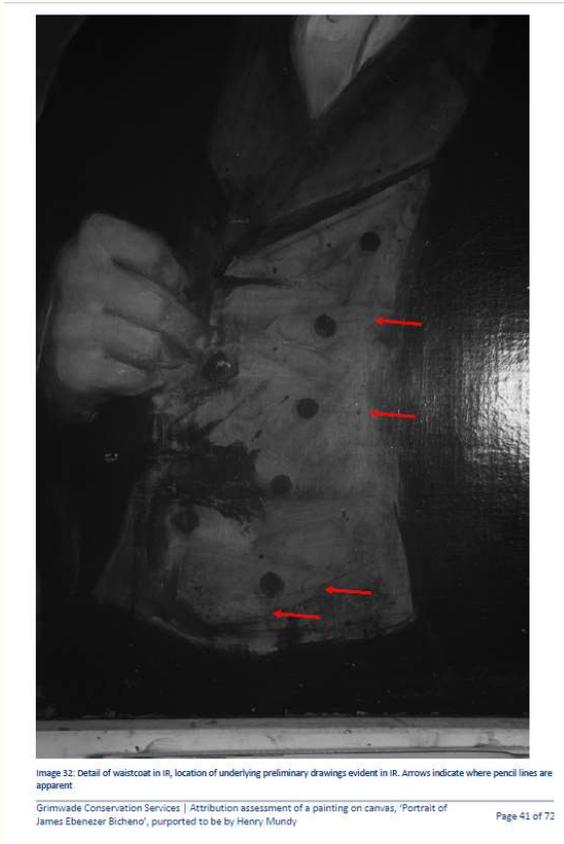


Rose madder fluorescence, overpaint evident

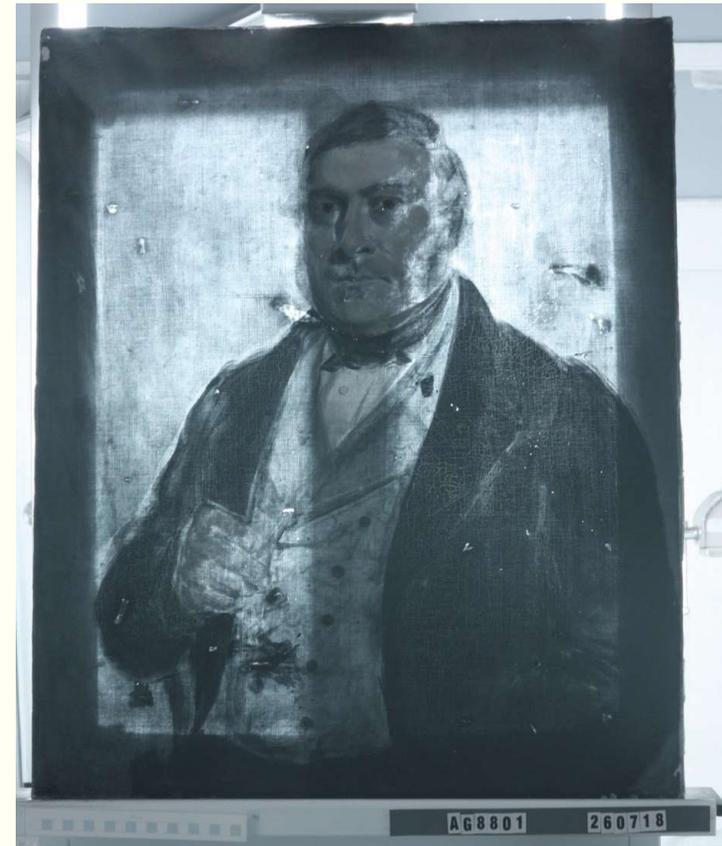


Natural resin coating yellow / green fluorescence
Synthetic coating bluish fluorescence

Bicheno Portrait - Infrared



Infrared photograph by Grimwade Conservation Services



Transmitted light infrared photograph by TMAG

Further research - Pigment analysis by Grimwade Conservation Services

- The Grimwade Centre report did show some manganese in the Bicheno portrait, which could potentially date it after 1871 (and therefore too late to be Mundy).
- The samples that indicated a strong signal for manganese and were consistent in areas of dark brown paint in the waistcoat
- Use of manganese black would date the painting after 1871
- It can occur in other materials, such as drier in oil binder
- Scanning Electron Microscopy / Energy Dispersive Spectroscopy (SEM-EDS) analysis is a non-destructive analytical technique (to the sample), but SEM-EDS does require sample removal.
- This technique is able to characterise individual paint layers or individual particles within a sample



Source: [Manganese Facts - Mn or Element Atomic Number 25 \(sciencenotes.org\)](https://www.sciencenotes.org/manganese-facts-mn-or-element-atomic-number-25/)

Conclusions - Portrait of Mr Bicheno

- Materials and Techniques - Most materials are of the time
- The manganese and zinc white raise questions
- Zinc white could date the painting after 1845
- Zinc white in an oil binder became available to artists in 1845
- Synthetic manganese could date the painting after 1871



Not the same artist?

Mr Bicheno

- Underdrawing
- Palette – rose madder
- Zinc white and manganese could date the painting to after 1845 or 1871
- Varnish present
- Composition consistent with other Mundy portraits

Portrait of an unknown woman

- No underdrawing
- Different colour palette – vermilion
- Overpainting makes some analysis difficult
- Varnish present
- Composition slightly different to other portraits

NEXT STEPS

- Further research
- Treatment of the paintings



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is made possible by the Keith Clarke Foundation

Thank you to Vanessa Kawolski, Cushla Hill and Marion Parker at Grimwade Conservation Services for their research

Thank you to the Friends for the opportunity to share the research









A6B204 'Portrait of female ancestor of Barre & Jersey' unknown c. 1850