

# The restoration of King Henry IX

## Identifying Henry Stuart, Cardinal York

*Bendor Grosvenor*



1 *Cardinal York* by Louis Gabriel Blanchet (1705-72), 1748. Oil on canvas. Private Collection. © The Scottish National Portrait Gallery



2 *Cardinal York*, here attributed to the Studio of Louis Gabriel Blanchet. Oil on canvas, 65 x 49 cm. Private collection. Photo © Philip Mould Ltd

In June 1747, Henry Stuart, Duke of York, the younger son of the exiled ‘Old Pretender’ James III, was made a cardinal by his godfather, Pope Benedict XIV. The last attempt to restore the Stuarts, the 1745 rebellion led by Henry’s brother ‘Bonnie’ Prince Charles, had been a romantic failure, and Henry now considered himself free to follow his true vocation. Charles, on the other hand, considered this public affirmation of Catholicism, always the main barrier to a Stuart restoration, to be a ‘dagger throw to my heart’, and the two did not speak again for almost twenty years.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, as the numerous portraits of Henry in Cardinal’s robes show, the new Cardinal York, as he was now known, felt no shame in this public declaration of faith, and was keen to publicise it.

Recently, however, the iconography of Cardinal York, or Henry IX to his Jacobite followers, has become confused, and a number of pictures have been mis-identified. One example appeared at auction in February this year in London, a head and shoulders portrait catalogued simply as ‘Portrait of a Cardinal’. Now cleaned, it is published here for the first time

(Pl 2). Subsequent research revealed that the portrait had been traditionally identified as Cardinal York, and was previously sold as such at Christies London, 2 February 1955 (lot 146, as by Batoni). It was bought by Father Cronin, Principal of St Mary’s University College, Strawberry Hill (for which he acquired a number of paintings), and there remained until this year.

The Strawberry Hill picture is well painted, and appears to be the best of several versions of varying quality, all of which are identified as Cardinal York.<sup>2</sup> As John Kerslake has noted, the head is seen in Louis Gabriel Blanchet’s signed 1748 full-length portrait of the Cardinal (Pl 1).<sup>3</sup> Given the traditional identification of all the examples, and the similarity in the features to other known portraits of a similar date such as those by Domenico Corvi, there can be no doubt that the sitter in the Strawberry Hill picture is Cardinal York.

The rediscovery of the Strawberry Hill picture allows us to question the identity of another Jacobite portrait. The Scottish National Portrait Gallery (SNPG) owns an important pastel by Maurice Quentin de La Tour (Pl 3, PG 2954) which



3 *Prince Charles Edward Stuart* [called], here identified as *Henry Stuart, Cardinal York*  
by Maurice Quentin de La Tour (1704-78), 1747. Pastel on paper, 61 x 51 cm.  
(PG 2954) © Scottish National Portrait Gallery



4 Detail of Pl 2, left, and Pl 3, right



5 Portrait of Charles Edward Stuart by Michel Aubert after La Tour, engraving. © Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

6 Portrait of Charles Edward Stuart by Jean Daniel Kamm (fl1722-90), gouache. Christie's, London, 25 May 2004 (63). © Christie's

is believed to show Prince Charles Edward Stuart, and is dated by the Gallery to 1748. But the head in La Tour's pastel and that in the Strawberry Hill picture are uncannily similar (see Pl 4). Despite the different mediums, it became evident during cleaning of the Strawberry Hill picture that in many areas it appeared to have been copied stroke for stroke from La Tour's pastel. The darks around the nose and eyes, and the shading of the face, are identical, as is the placing of the highlights. Furthermore, the artist of the Strawberry Hill picture seems to have used unusually dry pigments, carefully applied, in a conscious effort to follow the pastel as closely as possible. We must therefore look again at the identity of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery's pastel by La Tour – is it in fact Prince Henry, before he became a Cardinal?

This is not the first time doubts have been raised about the identity of La Tour's pastel, which was largely unknown until it was sold at auction in 1994 as Prince Charles Edward

Stuart.<sup>4</sup> Differences between the SNPG picture and the many copies supposed to have been after it, such as the inclusion of a fur-lined cloak and the omission of the medal of the order of St Andrew, have been noted, particularly in the engraving by Michel Aubert (Pl 5).<sup>5</sup> In a 1997 article in the *Burlington Magazine*, the Jacobite scholar Edward Corp attempted to settle the matter by concluding that 'the pastel now in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery does indeed show Prince Charles Edward Stuart, and any doubts about the correct identification are unfounded'.<sup>6</sup> Corp suggested that differences between the pastel and Aubert's engraving of Prince Charles after La Tour arose because the engraver, in the process of reversing the original image, caused the Garter sash to be worn not over the left shoulder, but incorrectly over the right shoulder, thus making Charles appear as if he was wearing the French order of the Saint-Esprit. To correct this heraldic *faux-pas*, Corp suggests,



7 *Prince Charles Edward Stuart*, possibly Circle of La Tour.  
Pastel on paper. © Lennoxlove House Ltd. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk



8 *'An Unknown Cardinal'* [called] here identified as *Cardinal York*,  
circle of Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-79), c1750.  
Oil on canvas. (NPG 129) © National Portrait Gallery, London

Aubert had to add a prominent Garter star behind the sitter, and thus introduced a fur-trimmed cloak on which to place it. All the subsequent copies of La Tour's portrait, Corp states, were taken from Aubert's engraving.

Corp's argument seems to the present author to be unduly complicated. It seems unlikely that the many copies of La Tour's pastel of Charles were copied from this single engraving. And would Aubert not simply have altered the position of the Garter sash, rather than compound his error by falsifying La Tour's portrait with extra details such as the cloak, and further small changes to the wig and the double black bow? We must instead ask whether Aubert's engraving is in fact derived from the SNPG pastel at all.

Here we must look at the other copies of La Tour's original pastel of Charles, for it seems that not all of the many miniature, pastel and oil reproductions were copied from Aubert's engraving. Charles probably sat to La Tour shortly after his return to Paris in 1747. The La Tour pastel of Charles was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1748, as 'Prince Edouard'. After Charles was forcibly ejected from Paris in December 1748, the pastel remained in the possession of his banker, Waters, until at least March 1752, when Charles requested it be 'packed up carefully by La Tour himself'.<sup>7</sup> And it is from Waters' correspondence with the Prince that we learn of copies being made from La Tour's original, and not from engravings.<sup>8</sup>

One instance must be the copy in miniature by Jean Daniel Kamm, which is known in a number of versions, a fine example being that sold at Christie's, London, 25 May 2004 (Pl 6). In 1749 Waters wrote to the prince about copies of his portrait being made by Kamm.<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to imagine that Kamm's miniatures, apparently officially sanctioned, were copied not from La Tour's original, but from Aubert's engraving and then *re-reversed*. Instead, the differences between Kamm's miniature and the SNPG pastel, most

notably the inclusion of the fur-trimmed cloak and the Garter star, the prominent green ribbon of the order of the Thistle, the shorter wig and its double black bow, and, crucially, the more angular nose and rounder face, must imply that Kamm was copying a different pastel, which remains lost. And it must be this lost pastel that Aubert faithfully engraved.

Here it may be worth looking again at a pastel portrait in the Duke of Hamilton's collection, traditionally identified as Prince Charles (Pl 7). The author has not yet had a chance to examine it in person, but it may be good enough to come from La Tour's circle, perhaps even his studio. According to the Hamilton provenance, this pastel was given by Charles to Lady Mannock, and then found its way into the Hamilton collection in the 19th century. The head fits well with that seen in the Aubert engraving, the Kamm miniature, and other copies of La Tour's original. Curiously, the Garter sash is missing, though the picture may, given the Prince's abrupt departure from Paris, be unfinished.

Strangely, the fact that Prince Henry was also painted by La Tour appears to have been overlooked. This is important, since the belief Henry did not sit to La Tour has been used as an argument in favour of the SNPG pastel showing Charles. But Henry's portrait was exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1747. Although the official Salon catalogue states simply that La Tour entered 'Plusieurs portraits au pastel...' [No. 111], annotations in contemporary copies confirm that Henry's portrait was amongst them.<sup>10</sup> Henry had been in France from late 1745, and would thus have sat to La Tour before he became a Cardinal. In her unpublished transcript of the Stuart Papers in the Royal Archives, Helen Stuart Wortley made the plausible suggestion that Henry's introduction to La Tour came through the Princesse de Conte, who had lent a house to Henry and whose brother the Comte de Clermont was painted by La Tour in the same year.<sup>11</sup> Stuart Wortley also notes that Henry paid La Tour the same amount for his

portrait as Charles had, 1200 *livres*.<sup>12</sup>

The present author concludes therefore that the pastel in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery shows Henry, and not Charles. On his appointment as Cardinal in 1747, it was simply copied and the costume updated for immediate use. We know too that the SNPG pastel was in Henry's possession, at least by the time of his death.<sup>13</sup> Since Louis Gabriel Blanchet, who had been regularly patronised by the Stuarts, seems also to have used La Tour's portrait as the basis for his full-length of 1748, it may be reasonable to suggest that the Strawberry Hill picture was painted in Blanchet's studio.

Henry's admittance into the Catholic Church has led some to question whether he would have been painted in armour, as seen in the La Tour pastel. But Henry was in France with the express purpose of assisting Charles's military campaign. He was eager to help his brother, and took seriously his role as the nominal head of a French invasion fleet intended to support Charles' march into England. Henry remained at Dunkirk with the fleet until after Culloden in 1746, and then served with the French army at the siege of Antwerp. Henry clearly saw himself in a martial role, and the armour seen in the SNPG pastel would therefore be appropriate.

It is of course easy to see why Henry's portrait was misidentified as his more romantic brother Charles in the 19th century. As Donald Nicholas wrote in his survey of Charles Stuart's portraiture, 'Except perhaps for the portrait of him by La Tour the Prince could not be called handsome.' History has required a good-looking picture of the Bonnie Prince. The SNPG pastel is now reproduced on postcards and book covers, and is the main illustration of Charles' entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. But whether or not we consider Charles or Henry the more handsome Jacobite, the rightful attribution of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery's pastel as Henry Benedict Stuart can hardly be doubted.

We must therefore look again at Cardinal York's iconography. The present author hopes to publish a fuller study in due course. But a number of errors may be easily addressed. For example, a portrait at Holyroodhouse called 'Cardinal York', in the bedchamber of Mary, Queen of Scots, is almost certainly not him. Confusion particularly surrounds

the portraits of York that appear to be based on La Tour's likeness, most notably the fine oil half-length in the National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG 129) (Pl 8). Identified as Cardinal York from the middle of the 19th century, and catalogued as such by Kerslake in *Early Georgian Portraits*, the status of this picture has recently become very muddled. It is now reduced to 'Portrait of an Unknown Cardinal'.

But the case for NPG 129 being Cardinal York is strong. Like so many mid-18th-century Roman portraits, it was previously believed to be related to Pompeo Batoni and his circle, but the latest suggestion that it is by Anton Raphael Mengs or his circle has given rise to uncertainty over the sitter. Mengs's other portrait of Cardinal York, an oil sketch of c1756 (Musée Fabre, Montpellier), shows a different interpretation of the features from that in NPG 129. It has thus been suggested that the sitter of NPG 129 is not York, but possibly Cardinal Archinto (1698-1758), who was also painted by Mengs, and in a similar pose (Lyons, Musée des Beaux Arts).<sup>14</sup>

And yet, we must note again the physiognomic similarity between the Strawberry Hill picture, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery's pastel by La Tour, and NPG 129. Is it possible that Mengs was among those many artists commissioned to paint a portrait of the newly elected Cardinal York, and that this, like Blanchet's 1748 portrait, was based on the recently taken likeness by La Tour?

The Stuart iconography is full of instances where one artist has had to copy another's likeness, for neither James III nor his sons sat for their portraits as often as we might think. Sitting for a royal portrait was an arduous task – in one instance, in 1744, Henry sat for 'about 14 Ours' – and the Stuarts instead favoured repetitions of what Prince Charles referred to as 'the likest portraits'.<sup>15</sup> It may also be relevant that Mengs was a pastellist, and may have been keen for the chance to work from one of La Tour's brilliant new pictures. If this hypothesis is correct, Mengs' Montpellier sketch of Cardinal York must be taken from a different, later sitting. It seems to the present author that there is no sound reason to doubt the traditional identification of NPG 129 as Cardinal York, and that this, like the Scottish National Portrait Gallery's pastel by La Tour, should now be considered to be among the best portraits of 'Henry IX', the Cardinal King.

1 Charles later converted to Anglicanism on a secret visit to London in 1750 at St Mary Le Strand.

2 For example, Christie's, London, 1 July 1953 (lot 27, as by Batoni) from the collection of CA Cooke.

3 Formerly in the Hamilton collection, and now in a private collection. See John Kerslake, *Early Georgian Portraits*, London, 1977, I p327, II pl 938.

4 Christie's, London, 10 June 1994 (25); acquired by the SNPG with the assistance of the Art Fund.

5 See for example the correspondence file at the SNPG.

6 Edward Corp, 'Maurice Quentin de La Tour's portrait of Prince Charles Edward Stuart', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXXIX (May 1997), p325.

7 Helen Stuart Wortley, 'Portraits of the Stuarts in Exile', an unpublished transcription of a selection of the Stuart Papers in the Royal Archive, edited after

Helen Stuart Wortley's death by Henrietta Taylor, 1948, Section IV, p9. Unfortunately, the present author has not been able to examine the Stuart papers personally in the Royal Archives. However, a copy of Stuart Wortley's invaluable transcription is in the Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery, London.

8 'Portraits of the Stuarts in Exile', Section IV, pp4-5 & p9.

9 Donald Nicholas, *The Portraits of Bonnie Prince Charlie*, London 1973.

10 Albert Besnard, *La Tour; La Vie et L'Oeuvre de l'Artiste*, Paris, 1928, pp37-8. Various other references in the La Tour literature are made to La Tour's having painted Prince Henry, eg, Adrian Bury, *Maurice Quentin de la Tour: The Greatest Pastel Portraitist*, London, 1971, p10.

11 'Portraits of the Stuarts in Exile', Section IV, p15. The Comte de Clermont's portrait was exhibited

alongside Prince Henry's at the Salon of 1747.

12 'Portraits of the Stuarts in Exile', Section IV, p3a.

13 On Henry's death in 1807 the pastel passed to his executor, Count Malatesta; thence by descent the Marquis Malatesta, from whom it was purchased in Rome during 1842 by Blayney Townley Balfour. Thence by descent through the Townley Balfour family.

14 See the correspondence file on NPG 129, available in the Heinz Archive, at the National Portrait Gallery, London. The Archinto portrait is reproduced in Steffi Roettgen, *Anton Raphael Mengs 1728-1779*, Munich, 1999, I, p262.

15 'Portraits of the Stuarts in Exile', Section III, pp4, 7.