



Charles Sackville, 6th Earl of Dorset
(1643–1706)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1697
NPG 3204



Richard Lumley, 2nd Earl of Scarborough (1688?–1740)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, 1717
NPG 3222



Thomas Hopkins (d.1720)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, 1715
NPG 3212



John Tidcomb (1642–1713)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1705–10
NPG 3229



Charles Lennox, 1st Duke of Richmond and Lennox (1672–1723)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1703–10
NPG 3221



Charles Howard, 3rd Earl of Carlisle (1669–1738)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1700–1712
NPG 3197



John Dormer (1669–1719)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1705–10
NPG 3203



Abraham Stanyan (c.1669–1732)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1710–11
NPG 3226



Charles Mohun, 4th Baron Mohun (1675?–1712)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, 1707
NPG 3218



Algernon Capel, 2nd Earl of Essex (1670–1710)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, 1705
NPG 3207



Further Information

If there are other things that interest you, please ask the Room Steward.

More information on the portraits can be found on the Portrait Explorer upstairs.



William Walsh (1662–1708)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1708
NPG 3232



Charles Dartiquenave
(1664?–1737)
after Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, after 1702
NPG 3201



Charles Montagu, 1st Duke of Manchester (c.1662–1722)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1710–12
NPG 3216



Charles Cornwallis, 4th Baron Cornwallis (1675–1722)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1705–15
NPG 3200



John Vaughan, 3rd Earl of Carbery
(1639–1713)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, 1700s
NPG 3196



James Stanhope, 1st Earl Stanhope
(1673–1721)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1705–10
NPG 3225



William Cavendish, 2nd Duke of Devonshire (1673–1729)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1710–16
NPG 3202



John Montagu, 2nd Duke of Montagu (1690–1749)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, 1709
NPG 3219



Jacob Tonson the younger
(1682–1735)
by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)
Oil on canvas, c.1720
NPG 4091

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This Dining Room would probably have been known as the 'Great Parlour' when Beningbrough was built around 1716. Chairs would have been arranged formally around the walls when not in use. Gate-legged tables were brought in when needed and then folded up and stored away. In the early eighteenth century, dinner was taken at about 2pm. It comprised two to three courses, each with a number of dishes laid out together in a symmetrical pattern: the grander the occasion, the greater the number of dishes.

Sir Godfrey Kneller



Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723)

by Sir Godfrey Kneller, c.1706–11
NPG 3214

The Kit-Cat Club, and seventeen other portraits at Beningbrough, are by the German-born Sir Godfrey Kneller, who dominated English portraiture for more than forty years. He settled in England in 1676 and was appointed Principal Painter to the Crown in 1689. Serving three further monarchs, he was in constant demand to paint aristocrats and society figures. His success was attributed to his ability, charm and talent for capturing a sitter's likeness. He was also an astute businessman, running a 'busy portrait factory' where assistants were responsible for completing the lesser elements – drapery, backgrounds, animals – of most portraits.

The Kit-Cat Club



Charles Cornwallis, 4th Baron Cornwallis (1675–1722)

by Sir Godfrey Kneller, c.1705–15
NPG 3200

These portraits show a group of influential Whigs committed to upholding the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 and the Protestant succession to the throne. The Kit-Cat Club began meeting in Christopher Cat's tavern near Temple Bar, and took its name from his mutton pies known as Kit-cats. Despite their comical name and their reputation for drinking the Club, which included politicians, landowners and writers, was extremely influential in politics and cultural life.

From around 1697 to 1721, their artist-member, Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723), painted nearly forty club portraits in a special 'kit-cat' size (36 x 28 inches). This made the figures nearly life-size and allowed space to include one or both hands. Though many are similar, no pose is repeated. When hung together, the overall effect is of a unified club made up of equals, though each retains his individuality through distinct gestures, props and costumes. The easy formality and mask-like features of Kneller's portraits summed up the ideals of early eighteenth-century civility.

Further Information

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Whigs in Wigs



The Five Orders of Perriwigs

by William Hogarth, 1761

Engraving

NPG D21370

Wigs dominated male costume from half way through the seventeenth century until the 1790s. The 'fullbottomed' wigs worn by the Kit-Cats were made of curled and frizzed human hair sewn into net caps. Such expensive items displayed the wearer's wealth and status as they needed daily combing and powdering by a barber or valet.

Fashions in wigs changed over time. Compare the Earl of Carbery's flat-topped, long wig (c.1705–10) (long wall, second from screen) with the Earl of Scarborough's shorter, higher arrangement (1717) (by door to Hall). As men shaved their heads, when at home they swapped their wigs for soft caps like those worn by Tidcombe, Hopkins and Tonson. Being painted wearing a 'nightcap' was the height of confident informality.

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Mohun the Murderer



Charles Mohun, 4th Baron Mohun (1675?–1712)

by Sir Godfrey Kneller, 1707

NPG 3218

The soldier, Charles Mohun, 4th Baron Mohun was notorious. He fought his first duel at fifteen and a few days later was involved in a brutal murder although he was acquitted. Over the next six years he fought more duels and killed another two men, one in a drunken brawl. Found guilty, he was saved by the King's pardon. He finally met his end in a duel, but not before killing his opponent.

Prints and Publicity



Jacob Tonson Senior (1655/6–1736) by John Faber after Sir Godfrey Kneller, 1733

Mezzotint engraving

NPG D19395

The powerful publisher Jacob Tonson (1655/6–1736), illustrated here, was Secretary of the Kit-Cat Club. It was to him that the members presented their portraits between 1697 and 1721. When he retired, in 1720, he passed his business and collection of Kit-Cat portraits to his nephew, also named Jacob Tonson (over mantelpiece). Although the Club no longer met, the younger Tonson wanted to capitalise on their fame – especially as the Whigs had then come to power. He paid John Faber over £108 to engrave the plates and published a luxury series of mezzotints after the Kit-Cat portraits (on Dining Room table and in Closet).