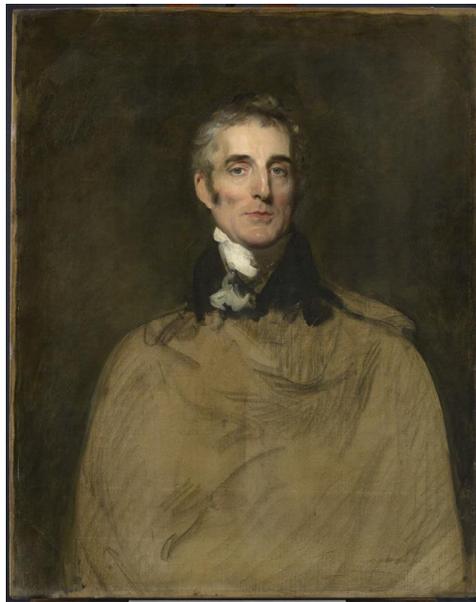


News Release

Thursday 6 April 2017

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY ACQUIRES LAWRENCE'S LAST PORTRAIT OF DUKE OF WELLINGTON FOLLOWING £1.3M PUBLIC APPEAL AND £180,000 FROM NATIONAL HERITAGE MEMORIAL FUND



Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington by Sir Thomas Lawrence, 1829 © National Portrait Gallery, London

The National Portrait Gallery has acquired Sir Thomas Lawrence's unfinished final portrait of Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, following a successful public fund-raising appeal, it was announced today, 6 April 2017.

Offered to the National Portrait Gallery for £1.3 million, the portrait's fund-raising appeal has just been completed with a grant of £200,000 from the G and K Boyes Charitable Trust and £180,000 from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, having been kick started by a donation of £350,000 from Art Fund in September 2016. This generous support was in addition to the Gallery's own funds, and donations from more than 500 supporters through a public appeal. Donations were received from throughout the UK and overseas.

The painting is an important acquisition for the Gallery which has no other significant portrait of the Duke of Wellington in its Collection, an omission of one of the most iconic and popular figures in British history. The Gallery has been seeking to secure such a portrait since it opened in 1856. This work by the leading artist of his age Sir Thomas Lawrence who made eight portraits of Wellington and was the Duke's definitive image maker, is one of only two world-class portraits of Wellington ever likely to come up for sale.

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'We are delighted to have acquired this remarkable painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence which will now be on permanent display and free for over two million

visitors to enjoy each year. We have been looking for a suitable depiction of the Duke of Wellington since our founding in 1856 so we are hugely grateful to Art Fund, the G and K Boyes Charitable Trust, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and all our visitors and supporters, who have given donations to help us acquire for the nation this magnificent portrait.'

Dr Stephen Deuchar, Art Fund Director, says: 'Congratulations to the National Portrait Gallery for running such a successful appeal, which our trustees were delighted to support. The Gallery is without doubt the ideal home for this compelling and important portrait.'

Dr Lucy Peltz, Senior Curator, 18th Century Portraits and Head of Collections Displays (Tudor to Regency), National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'Finally, after searching for more than 150 years, the National Portrait Gallery has been able to acquire a portrait that compares to the importance and reputation of the sitter it represents. Sir Thomas Lawrence's final portrait of the Duke of Wellington is an eloquent and powerful image of one of the most iconic and influential men of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.'

Dan Snow, historian, broadcaster and co-author of *The Battle of Waterloo Experience*, says: 'Wellington is a titanic figure in British history. Our only Field Marshal Prime Minister, a man of genius on and off the battlefield. This arresting portrait must sit in the national collection, and now following an outpouring of generosity, it will do. The artist has captured the Duke's legendary demeanour. Among his many contributions to British life he forged the masculine culture of unbending *froideur* in the face of adversity. It is as special as a work of art as it is as a primary source.'

Started in 1829, the year Wellington was appointed Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports and in which he fought a duel with Lord Winchelsea over the issue of Catholic emancipation, the unfinished portrait shows him in civilian dress with only his black collar and white stock visible. It was commissioned at the height of Wellington's political career when he was Prime Minister.

At the time he was closely involved in the legislation around Catholic emancipation and deeply opposed to the reform of the House of Commons. Earlier in the decade he had been involved in the delicate negotiations between the Prince Regent and the Prince's estranged wife, Queen Caroline. He also represented British interests at the Congress of Verona in 1822, one of a series of conferences on European affairs after the Napoleonic Wars.

The large oil-on-canvas portrait was commissioned a year after Wellington had become Tory Prime Minister by Sarah, Countess of Jersey, a leading political hostess and supporter of the Tories in the 1820s. Initially dedicating her social gatherings to the cause of the Whig party, in the late 1820s Lady Jersey switched her allegiance to the Tories, with Wellington becoming one of her favourites. She believed herself to be one of his *confidantes*, but he mistrusted her ability to keep a secret: earlier in life her loquacity had earned her the nickname "Silence."

At Lawrence's death in 1830 the portrait remained unfinished. But unlike many other clients, Lady Jersey refused to have it finished by a studio assistant. On hearing that the Duke of Wellington had fallen from power in 1830, Lady Jersey burst into tears in public. She reportedly 'moved heaven and earth' against the Reform Act 1832 which Wellington had also opposed.

The painting was lent to the National Portrait Gallery's exhibition ***Wellington: Triumphs, Politics and Passions*** staged in 2015 to mark the bicentenary year of the Battle of Waterloo. Prior to its loan to the Gallery from a private collection for a short period of display just before the exhibition opened, the portrait, which is in excellent condition, had not been on public view for any significant period since it was painted.

THE PORTRAIT:

NPG 7032: Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (1769-1852)

Oil on canvas, 943 x 743 x 25mm

Head and shoulders, slightly to right, unfinished (1829)

By Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830) © National Portrait Gallery, London

IMAGE CAPTION Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington by Sir Thomas Lawrence, 1829 © National Portrait Gallery, London

For further Press information, please contact: Neil Evans, Press Office, National Portrait Gallery: Tel. 020 7 312 2452 (not for publication) / Email nevans@npg.org.uk

To download press releases and images, please go to: npg.org.uk/press

National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place WC2H 0HE, opening hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday: 10am – 6pm (Gallery closure commences at 5.50pm) **Late Opening:** Thursday, Friday: 10am – 9pm (Gallery closure commences at 8.50pm) **Nearest Underground:** Leicester Square/Charing Cross **General information:** 0207 306 0055 **Recorded information:** 020 7312 2463 **Website** npg.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

The portrait is unfinished and is in excellent condition remaining much as it would have looked when it was freshly painted by Lawrence. For example, unlike most works of the period, this painting has remained unlined. Nor was it completed by studio assistants as so many of Lawrence's unfinished works were, after his death. This reflects Lady Jersey's vision for the painting and is a great stroke of luck as Lawrence's Wellington has been allowed to shine. It is noteworthy, that the Gallery does have another important and fine Lawrence portrait, of William Wilberforce, that Sir Robert Inglis, the patron, refused to have finished by studio assistants and it is the unfinished nature of this portrait which has contributed to making it one of the most popular historical portraits in the Collection.

Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830)

Beginning his career as a child prodigy working in pastels, the gifted Thomas Lawrence succeeded Sir Joshua Reynolds as Britain's greatest portrait painter. Lawrence's virtuosity lay in his strong feeling for individual character, his dazzling brushwork and his innovative use of colour to evoke mood. With the temperament and flair to capture the glamour of the age, Lawrence created the image of Regency politics and high-society. His international reputation was ensured when the Prince Regent commissioned portraits of all the foreign leaders involved in the downfall of Napoleon. He travelled throughout Europe to prepare this gallery of heroes for the 'Waterloo Chamber' (Windsor Castle), and these works established his position as the leading painter of the age. The tour also ensured that Lawrence became the first British artist to achieve a significant international reputation – even painting the Pope. Moving through the ranks of his profession, Lawrence was appointed President of the Royal Academy in 1820.

Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington (1769-1852),

The first Duke of Wellington rose to become a Field Marshall and a Prime Minister. He was hailed as the national hero whose defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 saved Europe from tyranny. Along with Nelson and Byron his name and his reputation still stand for the age in which he lived.

Born to a poor Irish aristocratic family, he began his political apprenticeship in the Irish parliament in 1790 and his military career in India in 1798. Involvement in the Second Mahratta War trained him to command large armies, honed his military strategy and taught him diplomacy. In 1809 he became Commander-in-Chief on the Iberian Peninsula, and he went on to campaign almost continuously until the Allies defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in June 1815. This victory led Wellington to be feted as the man who finally achieved the peace of nations. His success lay in his conservatism, his logistics and his luck. He was respected by his men for his coolness and courage, but he did not court personal popularity and privately scorned his officers and troops for their coarseness. Nevertheless, during the Peninsular Wars he was showered with British and foreign honours becoming as much a symbol of British national identification as Nelson before him and attracting a similar wealth of gifts, heroic paintings and public commemoration.

National prestige, and the need to find a public role for this hero, witnessed Wellington's immediate post-war elevation to the Tory government and his role as diplomat and ambassador. In the 1820s he was involved in the negotiations between George IV and his estranged wife, Caroline, during the 'Delicate Investigation' and in acting on behalf of Britain at the peace congresses of Verona and Aix-la-Chapelle. After resigning command of the army in 1828, Wellington was Prime Minister between 1828 and 1830. To avoid unrest he reluctantly pushed through the Catholic Emancipation Act, thereby costing him the support of the right wing of his own party and leading to defeat by Earl Grey's reforming government in 1832. Wellington spent the rest of his political career resisting political reform. Such was his extraordinary and enduring reputation, and the public sense of debt, that his splendid state funeral, in 1852, was attended by over a million mourners.

The Portrait

This is the last of Thomas Lawrence's iconic portraits of the Duke of Wellington. His heroic victories in the Napoleonic Wars still underpin Britain's place in Europe and his reputation and fame continue to characterize the period in which he lived. Wellington had a long and sustained relationship with Lawrence, whose stunning portraits of the sitter characterize the power and brilliance of both men in their respective fields. Among the three most powerful of these works, the unfinished 'Jersey' portrait offers the deepest insight into the Wellington's personality and Lawrence's approach to portraiture.

Painted a year after he took office as Prime Minister, this portrait depicts Wellington as statesman rather than soldier. This was a troubled time for the Tories who were facing agitation over Catholic emancipation – which Wellington reluctantly supported – and increasing demands for electoral reform – which he firmly opposed. Wellington's imperious gaze and commanding presence in Lawrence's portrait evokes the sitter's firm resolve in facing down his critics and consolidating his party. But there is also an intimacy and vulnerability about this portrait, perhaps due to its arrested state. This befits its original destination, having been commissioned by Sarah Sophia Child-Villiers, Countess of Jersey. She was the hostess of regular political gatherings: a key figure in Regency politics, and one of Wellington's strongest and most influential supporters and friends. After Lawrence's death, Villiers was unusual in refusing his executor's offer to have the portrait finished by a studio assistant – the often unlucky fortune of the many unfinished works left in Lawrence's studio. Villiers' decision turned out to be inspired – the work's unfinished state increases the emphasis on the sitter's features offering an insight into Wellington's personality and psychology. It also documents Lawrence's working practices at the end of his life.

About Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In the past five years alone Art Fund has given £34 million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. It also helps museums share their collections with wider audiences by supporting a range of tours and

exhibitions, and makes additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators. Art Fund is independently funded, with the core of its income provided by 123,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions and subscription to Art Quarterly magazine. In addition to grant-giving, Art Fund's support for museums includes Art Fund Museum of the Year (won by the V&A, London, in 2016) and a range of digital platforms. www.artfund.org

Cost

Total cost of work (after any discount or tax remission): £1,300,000

Breakdown of funding

Art Fund £350, 000

The G and K Boyes Charitable Trust £200, 000

National Heritage Memorial Fund £180, 000

Public Appeal and Gallery's own funds including the Portrait Fund £570,000

Total funding package £1.3m