**Francis Alleyne, 1740–1815 DRAFT 2**

The portrait painter Francis Alleyne was baptised under the surname ‘Alleyn’ at the Church of St Mary Magdalene, Richmond, Surrey, on 25th January 1740. He was one of the eight children of Henden (or Hendon) Alleyn and his wife Mary.

Henden Alleyn (1703–1788) was a barber and a ‘peruke [wig] maker’ in Richmond. A baptism record shows that he was the son of Thomas Alleyn, a farmer, and his wife Margaret. Thomas Alleyn, Gent. [sic] was married to Mrs. Margaret Pilcher at St Mary, Crundale, on 23rd April 1685. They were both from Fordwich (a town on the other side of Canterbury from Crundale). That Thomas was noted as a gentleman is of interest. It suggests that the Alleyns were or had been a minor gentry family. Henden married Mary King at the Church of St Mary Magdalene, Richmond, on 16th February 1727.

The Alleyn siblings were baptised at Richmond in the following order: Henden [junior] (1728–1748), Elizabeth (1731), John (1733–1791?), Thomas (1735–1801), Mary (1737), Francis (1740), Ann (1743), and Margaret (1751). At Thomas’s death in 1801 probate on his will was granted to Francis and his namesake nephew – Thomas’s son Francis, a linen draper in Richmond.

Francis the artist married Elizabeth Harris on 14th December 1767 at St Paul’s, Covent Garden. She probably died at Richmond in March 1773. Her husband’s surname was first recorded as ‘Alleyne’ when, as a widower, he remarried to 25-year-old Elizabeth Roth at St Giles in the Fields, Camden, on 18th May 1774. It has been suggested that she was probably daughter of the drapery painter George Roth (who worked with Van Loo, Hudson and Ramsay) and sister of the artists George (junior) and William Roth. Certainly, Francis and his second wife Elizabeth were witnesses to the marriage of George Roth junior and Ann Baas at St Giles in the Fields, Camden, on 18th April 1775. Elizabeth probably died at Compton Street, Soho, in April 1807.

Francis Alleyne’s only exhibited work at the Royal Academy, a ‘Small whole length. Portrait of a person running’ was no. 1 there in 1774. In the same year ‘A portrait of a young lady’ was also no. 1 and his sole exhibit at the Free Society, with another ‘Portrait of a lady’ as no.7 at the Society of Artists in 1790. Alleyne reportedly favoured three-quarter length portraits in oval formats, often fairly small (c.37 x 30 cm). Ellis Waterhouse, in his dictionary of British artists, surmised that he ‘probably moved around Kent in 1786, going from family to family to paint portraits’, but his exhibited work was from London addresses: his 1774 submissions to both RA and Free Society were from ‘Mr. Handy’s, Porter Street, Newport Market’ (which no longer exists, the site later being occupied by Sandringham Buildings, to the east of Charing Cross Road). In 1790 his submission address to the Society of Artists was ‘Compton Street, Soho’. He was still there two years later, when a London insurance record dated 28th July 1792 (TNA MS 11936/389/603097) identifies him at 44 Old Compton Street as a ‘portrait painter’, and was again stated as resident in the street in 1799, when named as co-executor of his brother Thomas’s will.

Art UK lists ten portraits by or attributed to Francis Alleyne, of which eight are in United Kingdom public collections. The other two, in the Yale Centre for British Art and dated 1786, are of William Wheatley (1743–1807) and his wife Margaret [not Margot] (née Randall, c.1751 1824), who married in London in 1768 and lived at Lesney House, Erith, Kent.

In 1962, *Country Life* (vol. 131) reported that Alleyne’s portraits from 1786 of the Wheatley family had been sold at auction. “Each portrait is 14 ins. By 11 ins. The mother busy tatting and the father holding documents were sold in one lot for £850. Two boys found an appreciative home for £800 and three other children for £1,050, so these seven very English portraits by a near-unknown, realised £2,700.”

One of these portraits would have been Alleyne’s portrait – not on Art UK – of their eldest son as a boy holding a cricket bat is in the MCC collection at Lord’s: this was also painted in 1786. He later became Major-General William Wheatley of the 1st Foot Guards (1771–1812) and died of illness in Spain during the Peninsular War.

Two portraits on Art UK depict Captain Thomas Conway (d. India 1794?) and his wife Sophia Conway (née von Schramm) (1742-1785) [not 1742-1786] of Morden Park, Sussex. Their daughter Frances Conway (1777-1847) married Charles Cobbe of the wealthy land-owing Cobbe family in Ireland. One of their children was Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904), the noted writer and feminist.

Alleyne also had a link to the Austen family. Deirdre Le Faye’s book *A Chronology of Jane Austen and her Family: 1700–2000*’ (2006), p.61, notes for 1774: ‘It may be this year that Mr JLP [Jane Austen’s uncle James Leigh Perrot] has his portrait painted in oils by Francis Alleyne – small oval, three-quarter length, seated, wearing blue coat and buff breeches”.

Alleyne died at ‘Vine Row’ in Richmond and was buried in the churchyard of the Church of St Mary Magdalene on 24th December 1815.

*From the Art UK discussion ‘Is this portrait of Rowland Holt by Francis Alleyne or Henry Walton?’*

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