

I am writing this on behalf of the Marple Local History Society. Samuel Oldknow was an important cotton entrepreneur in our district so we have a proprietorial interest in Samuel Oldknow.

When Stockport MBC first put their art collection on the BBC website (now Art UK) we contacted Heritage Services to discuss the attribution of the portrait E2135. Described as "Possibly Samuel Oldknow", we were confident that it was definitely not Samuel Oldknow. We based this assertion on a painting of Samuel Oldknow by Joseph Wright of Derby which is owned by Leeds Museums and Galleries (See below.)



As this was by an artist of the calibre of Wright of Derby I think we can assume that it was a reasonable likeness to Samuel Oldknow but, as you can see, it is nothing like the portrait owned by Stockport.

At the time Stockport Heritage Services were sympathetic to our argument but we had no alternative candidate to offer. We now believe we have identified the portrait as Aaron Eccles (1787-1856), a prominent local solicitor in Marple. We have been given a copy of his portrait by his family and I think you will agree it bears a remarkable similarity to the portrait on your website. Although considerably younger than Oldknow, he carried out legal work for him and he was a prominent resident in his own right,

For a quick comparison the two are placed side-by-side:



Unfortunately the Stockport portrait is in appalling condition (the white patch is a hole in the canvas) and there are no records with the portrait other than who gave it to them.

If you think there is a case for giving the portrait a new title we would be happy to loan you the copy we possess and, if it would be useful, we have brief details of his life and appearance described by contemporaries.

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