**Unknown naval commander by William Dobson**, oil on canvas 38 x 30 ½ in: NMM BHC3133

(Abstract of old notes from NMM picture file: MSR=Michael Robinson, NMM Keeper of Pictures to 1969)

**Original record card reads [acq. No. 44/12/3]:**

“A Naval Commander ? Sir George Carteret”

‘cf. Duke of Newcastle at Clumber, Collins Baker I, 98’[MSR]

Possibly from Broughton Castle (Lord Say and Sele) acc. Ellis Waterhouse, May 1946

[Note by MSR from information apparently received from Jack Spink, June 1946]:

‘Picked up at a seaside resort, either Eastbourne or Brighton by Spiller the frame dealer. Sold to [Arthur] Tooth; to Sir George Leon [Bt] as an unknown man. [Lent to] Burlington Fine Arts Club [who] identified it as Sir Thomas Lucas for exh. of 1938 [no.10]. Sold back to Tooth who offered it to Spink. Sold to Sir James Caird 20 Jan 1944 as Unknown naval Commander’. [It was in fact an NMM Caird Fund purchase, not directly by Sir James, dated 24 January 1944]

Tate/ Arts Council Dobson exh. 1951 (no 22) p.6 Ill. Pl IV

[MSR noted that Sir John and Sir Charles Crisp – two other suggestions – were both soldiers , but with no known naval connection]

**Other past suggestions:**

**Col H.C. Fitzgerald (1950)** suggested a likeness to Sir Charles Lucas from a small image shown among about 20 others surrounding a portrait of Charles I in ‘Lord Birkenhead’s book on Strafford’ [MSR adds as ref: ‘O’Donoghue Groups p.68’]

**MSR List of names and comments up to December 1951:**

[these are clearly just a ‘who’s who’ rather than all realistic ‘possibles’]

Carteret, b. about 1610: ’Royalist. Sent by Charles I to Jersey 1643 BUT see portrait by Lely c 1665, V&A negative 5365’

Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick, 1587-1658: ‘Parliamentarian. Not unlike prints but see copy of Vandyke. Too old’

Sir John Mennes b. 1599. Knighted 1642. Appointed by the King as Vice Admiral to succeed Penington 1645. [no comment added]

Sir William Batten b. about 1605. ‘Parliamentarian under Warwick. See watercol copy of the Hengrave portrait – fair hair’

Nathaniel Butler Born ?1577. Governor of Bermudas 1619 [certainly too old: PvdM]

‘Sir Robert Mansell b. 1573. Captain John Smith 1573-1631. Sir Henry Mainwaring b. 1587- 1635’

Sir Thomas Button, entered navy ab. 1589. d. 1634

Sir Thomas Roe b. ?1581-1644

Sir John Wolstenholme 1562-1639

‘Capt Luke Fox 1586-1635 NW Passage 1631 in [the] Charles

Capt James ?1593-1635? [ditto]……………. in [the] Maria]

Robert Bylot Sailed with Hudson 1610-11

William Baffin To Greenland 1612’

G. Monck b. 1608 Cadiz Exp 1625. With Royalists. Taken Prisoner at Nantwich 1644’ [certainly not Monck, Duke of Albemarle, PvdM]

‘Slingsby, Sir Henry 1602-1658 created Nova Scotia bt 1658’

Slingsby , Sir Robert 1611-1661 Comm. Squadron in Channel 1640-2. Imprisoned by Royalists 1642. Mission to Paris & Amsterdam 1644. Comptroller of the Navy 1660-1. No reference to any portrait of him in NPG 12/ [19]51’

**1952 MSR note** that the portrait of Sir George Carteret formerly in the collection of John, Lord Thynne, was then in Carteret family possession in Jersey; ‘photo in NMM file’: [no comment, but implication is they don’t match, and the print is probably still there in the reference boxes in store: PvdM]

**May 1963**: Sir Nicholas Crisp, (dismissed by David Piper, NPG, on lack of likeness to a reasonably authenticated portrait of him)

**May 1963**: Margaret Toynbee (Oxford) provided a list of possible names selected from one of ‘Strangers’ of ‘aristocratic’ type known to be in Oxford for the Parliament of January 1643, though based on very partial records and an assumption of sitter age of about 40:

Sir Charles Vavasour and his brother Sir William

Sir Robert Lee of Billesley, Warwickshire

Sir George Lisle: ‘(not very aristocratic though)’

Sir William Leighton

Sir Richard Cave

Sir Richard Cornwallis

Sir Henry Huncks

Colonel David Scrymgeour

Sir William Howard

Sir Philip Percival – dismissed by her, since he was in Ireland until 1644; cf Faber portrait engraving 1743

**In 1982** a member of the public suggested that a now lost portrait of John Weddell, an early East Indies sea commander (1583–c.1642) is mentioned in his wife’s will and that Weddell was of national significance, moving in the same circle as Buckingham, Endymion Porter and William Courteeen, all (he believed) painted by Dobson. He enclosed Weddell’s DNB entry but the ODNB update shows Weddell was lost at sea in late 1639 or early 1640, and there is no other known image of him. ODNB simply notes there was one, still lost.

**Note:** that a miniature by Henry Bone from the NMM portrait was reproduced in *Country Life*, 29 April 1955

PvdM

5. 3. 2019