

John Partridge



Portrait of Lord Colbourne

Reference: 11078

Dimensions:

Height: 16.10 cm / 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ in

Width: 20 cm / 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ in

Half-length, seated holding a picture, wearing a black coat with Sir David Wilkie's *The Parish Beadle* hanging behind.

Watercolour, bodycolour and gum arabic over pencil on buff coloured paper, laid down on original card with colour trials, corners cut.

16.1 x 20 cm

Nicholas William Ridley-Colbourne, 1st Baron Colbourne (1779–1854) of West Harling, Norfolk was a financier and

KAREN TAYLOR

FINE ART

statesman. He was a Whig MP from 1805 for six different seats. He was perhaps best known as a promoter of the arts, supporting the establishment of the British Museum and the National Gallery, of which he was an active Trustee from 1831. He married Charlotte Steele in 1808.

Colborne sat on the Committee of the Fine Art Commissioners in 1846. The Commission had been appointed in 1841 to consider the decoration of the newly rebuilt Houses of Parliament, with a view to encouraging and promoting the fine arts in the country at large. In 1846 Partridge sketched and painted a group portrait of the twenty-eight Fine Arts Commissioners (National Portrait Gallery nos. 342, 343a, 343b and 343c). The oil sketch on paper (NPG 343a measuring 47.6 x 86 cm) is similar in technique to the present sketch. Partridge placed the subjects in an idealised setting with sculpture and paintings arranged around the room. The artist donated the oil (which measures 188 x 368.3 cm) to the National Portrait Gallery in 1872.

Partridge painted an oil portrait of Colbourne in 1846, the year of the group portrait, and an inscription on the label on its reverse suggests that it was based on a sketch taken for the group portrait, presumably the present work. (This oil portrait, left to his daughter Lucy, wife of Sir Francis Boileau, at Colborne's death, and measuring 73.7 x 94.3 cm, passed through Christie's, London, 22 July 1988, lot 227.)

Colbourne was an active collector who commissioned Wilkie's *The Parish Beadle* (Tate 241) from the artist and gave it to the National Gallery in 1854, together with a group of seventeenth-century Old Masters (NG237-244) which included a work by Rembrandt (NG 243). The Wilkie was presumably given to the Tate Gallery upon its establishment in 1897 and appears in its 1909 catalogue