

Thomas Rowlandson



Oakhampton Castle looking towards the town of Oakhampton

Reference: 11142

Dimensions:

Height: 23.80 cm / 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ in

Width: 37.60 cm / 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ in

Signed and dated l.r.: Rowlandson 1795, pen and grey ink and watercolour over traces of pencil 23.8 x 37.6 cm; 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

Provenance: Spink, London; Private collection, UK, until 2018.

Rowlandson worked extensively in the West Country, where he made annual tours. He usually stayed with his friend and patron Matthew Michell, a banker, who had an estate at Hengar near Bodmin in Cornwall. Michell had collected several hundred drawings by the artist by the time of his death in 1807. A work entitled Oakhampton Town and Castle was included on the third day of the four-day sale of his drawings and prints at Sotheby's, 29 June to 2 July 1818, lot 186. This vigorous, picturesque drawing shows Rowlandson's facility with the pen to great effect. It seems likely that the figure in the castle ruins is a self-portrait; although it is not drawn with much facial detail, the hat, stance and general demeanour are reminiscent of Rowlandson, who often included himself in his drawings. Oakhampton is on the road from

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Exeter to Hengar and was thus an easy place for the artist to visit en route to Michell's estate. Okehampton Castle, overlooking the river Okement, was once the largest castle in Devon. The original Norman motte and bailey structure was converted into a grand home in the fourteenth century by Hugh Courteney, Earl of Devon. It fell into decline during the reign of Henry VIII, and by Rowlandson's time it was a ruin.