

An Introduction to
**The Francis Bacon Society's
Portrait of Sir Francis Bacon**

Researched and compiled by E J Roberts
for the Francis Bacon Society, 2026



Miss Ella Horsey, 1970. Unknown artist
Courtesy of the Findhorn Foundation, Isle of Erraid, Scotland

DEDICATION

This account of the history of the Francis Bacon Society's portrait of Sir Francis Bacon is dedicated to the memory of Ella Maud Horsey (1885–1982).

Had it not been for her rediscovery of the painting in 1949 and her subsequent generous bequest of the portrait to the Francis Bacon Society in her will, this extremely rare, contemporary artist's impression of Bacon could have been lost to history.

In appreciation of her trust in placing this, her most precious possession in the hands of the Society, the four-hundred-year-old portrait has recently been professionally repaired, cleaned and is now fully restored.

She would have been happy to know that her portrait of the man she loved the most currently hangs among other old master paintings in the Hall at Gray's Inn, Francis Bacon's home away from home for many years.



A rare image of the Society's portrait out of its frame soon after its restoration.
Image credit: Plowden & Smith, London

FOREWORD

The Journey of the Society's Francis Bacon Painting from Obscurity to Prominence: The Painting's Restoration

The Society's painting has travelled a long and winding road from obscurity into the full light, now proudly displayed once more at Francis Bacon's beloved Gray's Inn. This remarkable journey would not have been possible without the dedication and support of many individuals and organisations.

Acknowledgements and Gratitude

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Treasurer and Benchers of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn. In particular, we are deeply grateful to Master Timothy Shuttleworth and Sam Hutchinson, their excellent Chief of Staff, for their invaluable assistance throughout this process. Special praise must also be given to Katherine Gwyn, Archivist and Records Manager, whose skilful handling of the various technicalities has been instrumental in bringing the project to fruition.

Our appreciation is also extended to the Society's Trustee, Gary Keegan, who has been the painting's most careful and conscientious custodian in recent times. We are indebted as well to Plowden & Smith, whose beautiful restoration work has returned the painting to its former glory next to his sovereign in Hall at Gray's Inn, his former home.

**Sally Gibbins
Principal
The Francis Bacon Society**

PREFACE



Heraldic Badge of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn
Image credit: Tony Hisgett

The quatercentenary of the death of Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626), former Lord High Chancellor in the first Stuart reign and Treasurer of Gray's Inn (1608-1617), might have shed fresh light on his legal career or even revealed something new about Bacon as polymath, but the revelation that there exists a portrait of Bacon, long hidden or until now little remarked, is perhaps the most astonishing development of this celebratory year so far.

We at Gray's Inn owe a huge debt both to Eric Roberts, Art Historian at the Francis Bacon Society, for his impressive research and detective work and to the Francis Bacon Society for its considerable generosity in loaning this fine portrait to us for display in our Hall that Bacon would still recognise after four centuries.

To appreciate art that has merit, the observer must pause and really **LOOK** at what there is to see, doing so reflectively rather than glancing at it mechanically before moving on far too quickly. Without such quiet contemplation the camera behind the eye is left with little thereafter to conjure.

To "*look here on this picture*" of Bacon, "*a combination and a form indeed*", is surely what it demands as we stand before it today, beautifully restored.

Timothy Shuttleworth
Master of Pictures
Gray's Inn

INTRODUCTION

In late 2025, the monthly newsletter of the Francis Bacon Society informed members that the restoration of the Society's four-hundred-year-old portrait of Sir Francis Bacon was complete. The mending and cleaning of the canvas by the firm of Plowden & Smith in London had taken several months of painstaking work. Millimetre by millimetre, the picture began to sing again as it was gradually returned as close as possible to its original condition.

As we shall see, the story of this little painting is rich in historical associations and not without an unexpected plot twist or two. For most of its existence it has hung beside the portraits in the collections of several of England's stately homes. During much of the first half of the twentieth century, it went underground, only to surface in 1948 in a photography and art shop in Bury St Edmunds. For seven years during the nineteen-fifties, Francis Bacon's portrait hung on the wall of a workers' cottage on the tiny Isle of Erraid off the southwest coast of the Isle of Mull. Throughout the nineteen-seventies and early-eighties, it resided in a bungalow named St Columba's Cottage after the Christian saint, in Devon on the southwest coast of England. Those peripatetic days are now over. The portrait's installation in its new home in the Hall at Gray's Inn in 2026 has finally brought it out of hiding after four centuries of obscurity. There could be no more appropriate place to display this priceless original portrait of one of Gray's Inn's favourite sons.

Now that it is in pristine condition, hanging among other old master portraits where it can be properly seen and appreciated, it only remains for the painting to be officially attributed to a particular artist's studio. Herein lies the problem. The portrait is unsigned, there are no artist's marks on the reverse to provide any clues, and there are virtually no historical records pertaining to its past. Therefore, for the time being, any official catalogue entry must attribute the work as *artist unknown*.

[See Roberts, E J, *The Portraits of Sir Francis Bacon*, Appendix, *In defence of the traditional attribution of a prominent portrait of Francis Bacon in the Gorhambury Estate's collection to the studio of Paul van Somer*, The Francis Bacon Society, 2026]

Perhaps at some point in the future the painting will be scientifically examined using x-radiography, infrared reflectography, dendrochronology and other micro-imaging techniques of analysing works of art. This would reveal the painting's age to within a few years of its production; it would show the spectrum of the mineral content of the pigments; any underdrawing or changes to the composition would also be exposed. Such a forensic investigation could narrow the search for the identity of the artist considerably. In the meantime, historical research is all we have at our disposal to better understand the portrait.

This introduction to the Society's early-seventeenth-century portrait of Sir Francis Bacon is an attempt to provide a credible account of its history, as well as a context for further research. It will be suggested that the Society's portrait of Bacon is one of a set of at least seven related paintings, all apparently produced between 1618–21 during Bacon's chancellorship, and all based on the same pattern, or master drawing. This implies that they may well have originated from the same artist's studio as a *bulk order* commission.

Of these seven portraits of Bacon that have survived the previous four centuries, the version belonging to the Francis Bacon Society is one of the smallest. The largest of the set is the magnificent full-length, life-size portrait of Bacon as Lord Chancellor at Gorhambury House in Hertfordshire. Arguably, the artist with the most convincing historical claim as the *auteur* of this set of portraits is Paul van Somer (c. 1576–1621). In fact, when the Assistant Keeper at the National Portrait Gallery in London was shown a black and white photograph of the Society's portrait in 1949, his conclusion was that it was *probably by van Somer*. It is only since the late-nineteen-sixties that this attribution has been challenged by the same institution, without providing any conclusive evidence or an alternative attribution. Unfortunately, this situation has left all seven portraits in a state of academic limbo with no resolution in sight.

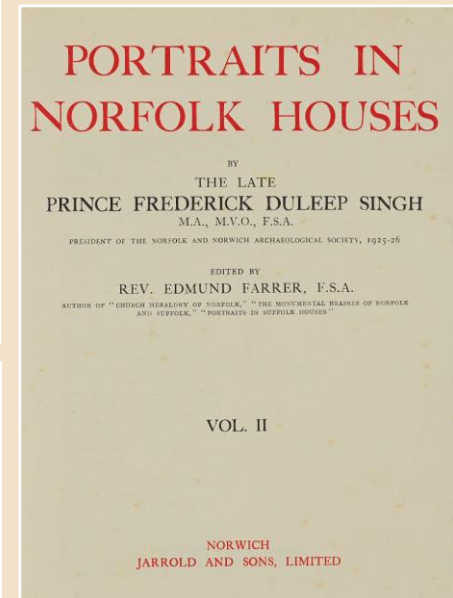
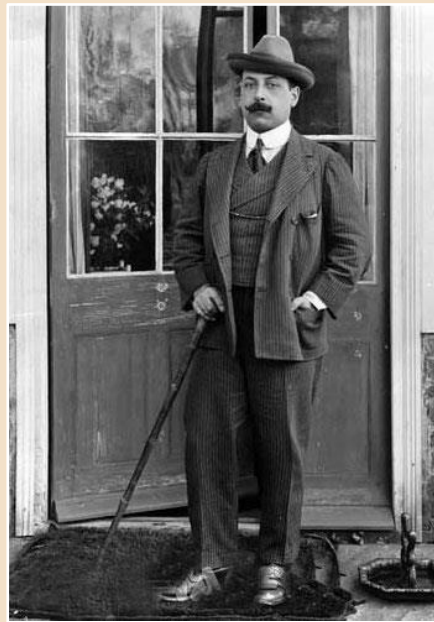
E J Roberts

PART ONE – REDISCOVERY

The history of the Francis Bacon Society's portrait falls into two distinct parts. For the first three hundred years of its existence, it was passed down the generations from one branch of the extended Bacon family to another. As a significant heirloom possession, it remained safe and secure, yet unknown to the outside world. The portrait's tranquil existence was abruptly terminated in the early-twentieth century with the sale of the entire contents of the stately home where it had resided since the late-eighteenth century. Thanks to this potentially disastrous disruption, a series of difficult to explain, yet timely coincidences eventually led to the portrait's public debut in the year of Francis Bacon's quatercentenary.

Tuesday, the nineteenth of March, 1912, was perhaps the most fateful day in the life of the Society's painting. As one of hundreds of rare and precious artefacts belonging to the Bacon Longe family of Spixworth Park Estate, near Norwich in Norfolk, the portrait was sold to the highest bidder. It was purchased for £72 by a scholarly gentleman by the name of **William M Safford**. Except for the following three facts, no trace of the mysterious new owner of the portrait can be found: (i) he was the Secretary of the Bacon Society, as it was originally known, (ii) he was an antiquarian with a special interest in the marginalia of books once owned or read by Francis Bacon and (iii) during his lifetime he amassed a two thousand volume collection of books relating to Bacon's life and works, which is now part of the Folger Shakespeare Library's collections. His main purpose in attending the auction at Spixworth Park would have been to purchase books from the renowned library of the Bacon Longe family's estate. However, as an ardent Baconian, the opportunity to own a small but authentic portrait of his intellectual hero must have been too tempting for Safford to resist.

For the next thirty-six years, Bacon's portrait remained out of sight in Safford's home in Suffolk until his death sometime in the late-1940s. If plans for a *Francis Bacon Memorial Library* within the University of London had eventuated as he had hoped, Safford would have donated his portrait of Bacon along with his valuable collection of books.



Above: Two photographs of Spixworth Hall, front and rear. Prince Freddy, as he was known to friends and associates, in the early 1900s. Cover of Singh's monumental study.

Eighteen months prior to the dispersal of the contents of Spixworth Hall, on October 27, 1910, a survey of the most significant portraits in the Bacon Longe family's collection was conducted by Prince Frederick Duleep Singh (1868–1926). He was in the early stages of his research on his invaluable two-volume catalogue, *Portraits in Norfolk Houses*, published posthumously in 1928. On page 304, a brief description of the painting now owned by the Francis Bacon Society was given by Singh, who also provided a short outline of its provenance. This is the earliest historical reference to the portrait that is currently known to exist. [See: Part Two – Provenance]

SPIXWORTH PARK,
NORFOLK.
(ABOUT THREE MILES FROM NORWICH.)

CATALOGUE
Of the Highly Valuable

Antique Furniture
Throughout the Mansion:

VALUABLE OLD CHIPPENDALE FURNITURE,
Early Orange-Stuart and Rare Hepplewhite Arm Chairs,
ELEGANT OLD SHERATON TABLES,
Louis XV. Fauteuils, and Set of Antique Gilt Chairs & Settee; the highly valuable
Purse of the Privy Seal of Queen Elizabeth, dated 1578,

VALUABLE OIL PAINTINGS,
Fine Circular, Mezzotint, and other Engravings,
Old China, Ornaments, Old Armour,

FINE ANTIQUE PLATE, OLD SHEFFIELD PLATE,
LIBRARY OF 3,000 VOLUMES,
THE BEDROOM APPOINTMENTS,
CARRIAGES, HARNESS, AND OUTDOOR EFFECTS;
WHICH

S. MEALING MILLS

Is favoured with instructions from the Exors. of the late Robert Bacon Longe, Esq., to Sell by Auction,
ON MARCH 19TH, 20TH, 21ST, & 22ND, 1912.

Arrangements have been made with Messrs. Wigg & Sons, Norwich, for Conveyances to meet the Trams opposite New Catton Church, Magdalen Road, Norwich, on the View Day at 10.30, and on each Morning of Sale at 8.30, 9.30, and 10.30, returning after the Sale. Fare 1/- each way.

The Effects may be viewed by Catalogues only, on Monday, March 18th, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and on the Mornings of Sale from 9 o'clock until the commencement of the Auction at 11 o'clock punctually.

Catalogues (5d. each) may be obtained at the Offices of the Auctioneer, 51, London Street, Norwich.

A. E. Soman & Co., St. Andrew's Printing Works, Norwich.

Cover of the auction catalogue of the sale of the contents of Spixworth Hall in March, 1912
Scans of the catalogue courtesy of the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library

12		Sale at Spixworth Park,		[1st day
LOT				
198	Pair of pencil drawings, portraits of "Thomas Church, Esq.," and "Rev. Joseph Church, Rector of Frettenham," by Ingres, Rome, 1816		22 feet	
199	Wax medallion, "Edmund Bacon, of Raveningham," in walnut and gilt frame			
200				
201				
	In Drawing Room—Oil Paintings.			
202	Portrait, "Sir Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, Viscount St. Albans, Lord High Chancellor of England," in carved gilt frame, by Janssens		72 feet	24 in. by 18 in.
203	A valuable original portrait of Queen Elizabeth, on panel, in very handsome antique carved gilt frame, with Coat of Arms (originally at Oxnead Hall)			6 in. by 6 in.
204	"View of Thorpe," by Alf. Stannard			18 in. by 26 in.
205	Interior — "Christ expounding the Scriptures to Matthew," by Peter Neefs, figures by T. Johnson, 1658, in carved gilt frame			30 in. by 44 in.
206	"The Madonna," by Sassoferrato (Giovanni Battista Salvi), in carved gilt frame			30 in. by 24 in.
207	"The Madonna," after Raphael, in carved gilt frame (circular)			6 in.
208	"The Garden of Armida," by Coypel, in carved gilt frame (a choice example)			48 in. by 54 in.
209	Pair of antique miniatures in oil, on copper, in carved gilt old Chippendale frames			2½ in. by 2 in.
210	Oil painting, "View of Postwick Grove," attributed to Vincent, in gilt frame			14½ in. by 21 in.
211				
212				
	In Library.			
213	A valuable half-length oil-painting portrait of "Sir Henry Wingfield," of Tickencote, Suffolk, attributed to Hans Holbein			34 in. by 28 in.
214				

The portrait now owned by the Francis Bacon Society is listed as Lot 202.
The Bacon Longe family believed that it was a work by Cornelius Janssens.



Above: Past and present views of Harry Jarmon's shop at 16 Abbeygate Street, Bury St Edmunds. Below: St Giles Church, Risby.

The portrait's new owner was a photographer named **Harry Isaac Jarmon** (1874–1961). His studio and art supplies shop at 16 Abbeygate Street in the town centre of Bury St Edmunds had been operating under his ownership since 1901. He was in his mid-seventies when he acquired the portrait of Bacon at the auction of William Safford's deceased estate in the late forties. With its impressive gilt frame and prominent inscription identifying the name of the sitter, he displayed the picture in his shop as a curiosity from the distant past.

One of Harry Jarmon's occasional customers was the **Rev. A. F. Webling**, rector of St Giles Church in Risby, situated four miles north of Bury St Edmunds. In October, 1948, on entering Jarmon's premises in Abbeygate Street, Webling spotted the portrait and asked the owner how he had come by it. A few weeks later, he wrote a short note to his friend, **Ella Horsey** (1885–1982), whom he knew was a great admirer of Francis Bacon, to inform her of his discovery.

I am writing because I want to tell you of something I have intended to pass on to you for some time but forgot. I was waiting in the shop of Mr Jarman, the photographer in Abbeygate Street, Bury, when I noticed three oil paintings hanging on the wall. I immediately recognised one as F.B. Looking closer I thought it looked really good and I questioned Mr Jarman about it...It had belonged to a well-known antiquary, [Safford] and Mr Jarman picked it up at the sale after his death...You must go and see it when next in Bury. *A Chant of Pleasant Exploration*, Ella Horsey, 1962

When Ella Horsey received Rev. Webling's letter in early December, 1948, she was sixty-three and living by herself in a cottage in the village of Great Cornard, twelve miles to the south of Bury. Her mother, whom she had nursed until the end, had passed away when she was in her late-eighties in 1943. She was now a woman of independent means, having been the main beneficiary of both her deceased parents' wills. Yet she lived modestly, for when she died in 1982, Ella left a legacy of over eighty-five thousand pounds. A brief sketch of the life of Ella Horsey is provided elsewhere. Here, it is only necessary to understand the reason why Rev. Webling wrote to Ella to urge her to visit Jarmon's in Bury to see the painting for herself.

Ella had been friends with the unconventional vicar of St Giles ever since they had literally bumped into each other outside the entrance to his church ten years earlier. The bond that grew between them was based on a shared grief over the deaths of much-loved family members, as well as a firm conviction in the continuation of human existence in the afterlife. For Ella, her faith in conventional Christianity had been profoundly shaken when her younger brother was killed during World War I. Similarly, Webling had lost both his beloved sons, one to a childhood illness and the other to enemy action in the Second World War. Both he and Ella were convinced that there was no such thing as death and that communication with spirits of the dead was not only possible, but something they had personally experienced on a number of occasions. In fact, for Ella, Francis Bacon had never died. She firmly believed that his immortal spirit was still actively guiding her and humanity in subtle ways.

About the same time that Webling discovered the portrait in Harry Jarmon's shop, Ella had attended a seance in London and received a clairaudient message to the effect that Bacon wanted to inform her about a little-known portrait of himself. As she explains in the first of her two spiritual autobiographies, written in 1962, *A Chant of Pleasant Exploration*:

[Francis Bacon] *told me through Mrs. Flavell in October, 1948, that he would try to show me a portrait of himself hitherto unknown to me. I thought that I had seen reproductions of all the extant portraits, and was not much interested.*

A month later, she received another psychic communiqué in London at a séance with the famous medium, Mrs. Osbourne Leonard, confirming that: [Francis Bacon] *thinks there is a picture of himself you haven't seen yet, he told you this before, he says. He is trying to bring it about that you shall see it.*

When Rev. Webling's news about the portrait arrived, she must have been filled with anticipation, even though she was unwell.

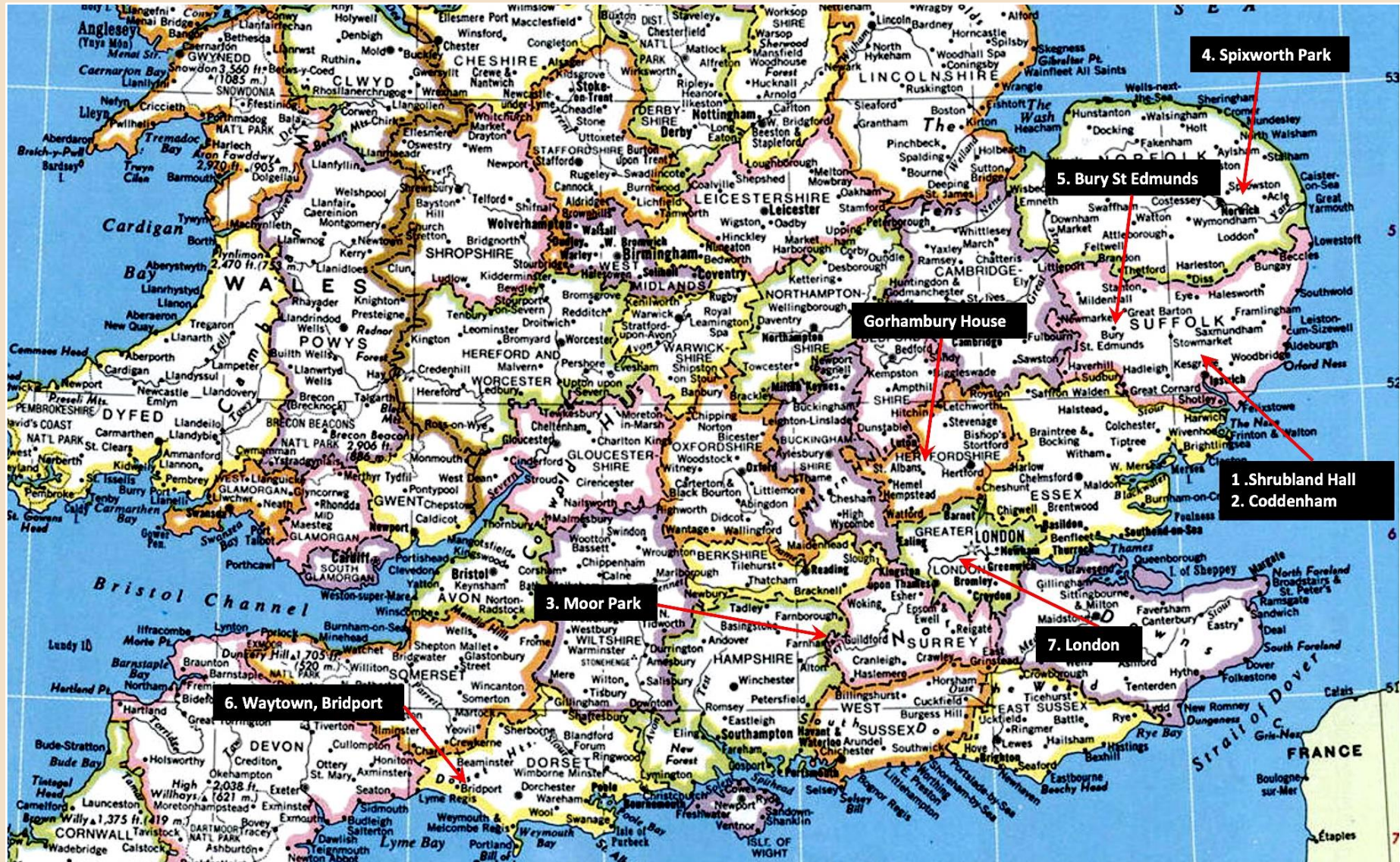
It wasn't until mid-January, 1949, that Ella was able to take the bus into Bury St Edmunds from her home in Great Cornard, a distance of less than twenty miles. When she finally entered the shop of Mr Jarman, she was *more than pleased to find the portrait unsold. I had never seen a reproduction of it, and I liked it better than any of those with which I was familiar.*

On enquiring about the portrait's price, she found that she had brought just enough money with her and promptly bought the painting. She caught the bus home to Great Cornard in triumph, balancing the portrait on her knees to cushion the bumps.

Later that year, curious to know more about the portrait, Ella had it photographed, possibly by Harry Jarmon, to show the National Portrait Gallery in London. On seeing the monochrome image, the Assistant Keeper at the NPG told her that he was *interested to see it, as they had lost touch with the portrait since it was sold at Spixworth Park, near Norwich, in March, 1912, for £72. I was told that the painter was most probably Van Somer.*

Following her visit to the National Portrait Gallery, Ella wrote a short article about the painting which was published in *Baconiana*, the Francis Bacon Society's journal, titled *A Little-Known Portrait of Francis Bacon*. For the next thirty-three years until her death in 1982, Ella Horsey kept her precious portrait of Sir Francis Bacon with her wherever she lived.

The sequence of events that brought this small but precious contemporary portrait of Francis Bacon from Spixworth Park to Gray's Inn can be interpreted in two alternative ways. Either it was simply a matter of the vicissitudes of chance and fate, or it was somehow intentional in a way that cannot be rationally understood. After reading both of Ella Horsey's spiritual autobiographies, there seems no reason to doubt that she was anything but utterly honest and sincere in her references to the portrait and how she came to be its caretaker. It is left to the spectator to gaze upon Francis Bacon's portrait and wonder.



Map of the movements of the Francis Bacon Society's portrait of Francis Bacon, from c.1620 to the present.

PART TWO – PROVENANCE

3. SIR FRANCIS BACON, VISCOUNT ST. ALBANS. H. and S. Body and face turned to the sinister, brown eyes in an opposite direction, wavy brown hair to the collar, pointed fair beard and moustache, tall black hat on the head. *Dress* : Brown doublet, the sleeves of which are visible from beneath, the black and gold Chancellor's gown which is over all, outstanding, pleated, lace-edged all round ruff, with long strings and tassel. Red curtain behind. M. Age about 50. By Cornelius Janssens(?). Inscribed on frame: "Sir Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, Viscount St Albans, Lord High Chancellor of England." It came from Shrubland Old Hall to Coddendam Vicarage, and was at Moor Park in 1730. No. 202. Smith, £72. Now the property of the Secretary of the Bacon Society.

Singh's entry in *Portraits in Norfolk Houses* Vol. II, p. 304 [1928] for the portrait now owned by the Francis Bacon Society.

As previously mentioned, Prince Frederick Duleep Singh visited Spixworth Park in October, 1910, in order to catalogue the portraits in the Bacon Longe family's private collection for his magnum opus, *Portraits in Norfolk Houses*. His brief notes on the portrait of Francis Bacon were a combination of accurate visual description, guesswork and advice received from the family, possibly directly from his host, Robert Bacon Longe, who had been the Squire of Spixworth since 1890. Robert's death the following year would precipitate the fire sale of everything the family owned – rare manuscripts and books, antique furniture, old master paintings, etc. – in March, 1912.

The following outline of the portrait's provenance is entirely based on a single sentence in Singh's notes which gives the briefest possible provenance for the Francis Bacon Society's portrait for its first three centuries of existence. First, however, two inaccurate details need to be addressed. Singh failed to recognise the significance of the chancellor's robe that Bacon is wearing, and was unaware that this detail dates the portrait to 1618–21, when Bacon was in his late-fifties. His estimation of Bacon's age was simply based on his impression of the painting.

The other difficulty is with the attribution of the portrait to Cornelius Janssens, which is followed by a question mark. This implies that Singh was not entirely convinced that the painting was by Janssens, as family tradition purported.

It came from Shrubland Old Hall to Coddendam Vicarage, and was at Moor Park in 1730. If Spixworth Park is added to Singh's bare-bones provenance, it provides an unbroken chain of ownership by the extended Bacon family up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

A complete ancestral chart or pedigree of the descendants of Francis Bacon's father, Sir Nicholas Bacon (1510–1579) would be so vast, and the repetition of certain Christian names so baffling, that the assistance of an expert genealogist would be required to interpret it. Here, it is only possible to identify a few of the main protagonists in the transmission of the portrait from one stately home to another. Let us start at the beginning.

Sir Francis Bacon reached the apogee of his climb to the summit of success with his appointment as Lord High Chancellor of England on January 7, 1618. An archival record tells us that, nine months later on the 12th September, *£33 was paid to the picture drawer for his Lordship's picture*. Frustratingly, the entry doesn't specify who the artist was, or which specific portrait was paid for. All that is certain is that Bacon must have commissioned someone to paint his portrait that year.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that he subsequently ordered a number of smaller versions of the original painting. In part three, images of all seven versions of the same portrait are displayed in support of the theory that they are based on the same pattern. Of particular interest in this set of portraits of Bacon is a small version that is almost identical to the portrait owned by the Francis Bacon Society. So similar is this privately-owned copy in its dimensions and composition to the Society's portrait that it could be said to be its twin. Logically, this implies that they were painted around the same time and came from the same artist's studio in London.

SHRUBLAND OLD HALL, SUFFOLK

According to Singh's catalogue entry, the original home of the Francis Bacon Society's portrait was Shrubland Hall in Suffolk. Built in the early-1500s by Sir Philip Bothe, Shrubland Old Hall became the seat of one branch of the Bacon family through the marriage in 1581 of Edward Bacon (1548-1618), Sir Nicholas Bacon's fifth surviving child and third son, and Helen Little. Helen Little was the daughter and sole heiress of Thomas Little, who purchased the Shrubland Estate in the parish of Coddensham from Philip Bothe.

Although Edward Bacon was thirteen years older than Francis and grew up at Redgrave in Suffolk, his career paralleled that of Francis in several particulars: both went to Trinity College, Cambridge; both studied law at Gray's Inn; both went to France in 1576 in the train of Elizabeth I's ambassador to France, Sir Amyas Paulet; both were parliamentarians and were knighted by King James I in 1603.

Edward was especially dear to Francis's heart because of the extraordinary generosity he had received from his half-brother. Having returned from France in 1579 on the death of Sir Nicholas Bacon, only to find that he had been left out of his father's will, Francis was in dire financial need. Edward came to Francis's rescue by offering him the use of his house in Richmond.

The Queen had granted Edward the lease on New Park of Richmond, later known as Twickenham Park, in 1574. Following Edward's marriage in 1581, the eighty-seven-acre property became superfluous to his needs, since he preferred to live at Shrublands. Bacon made good use of the property as a private research centre with its own scriptorium, assisted by his brother, Anthony. When Edward's lease expired, it was transferred by the Crown to Francis in 1593, which he retained until 1608. In all, he spent twenty-seven years living at Twickenham Park on and off. Recalling those productive years in a note that was discovered after his death, Bacon wrote: *Let Twickenham Park, which I sold in my younger days, be purchased, if possible, for a Residence for such deserving persons to study in. I experimented there for the trial of my philosophical conclusions.*



Shrubland Old Hall c. 1789, by Humphry Repton (1752–1818). Suffolk Archives

In view of Bacon's debt of gratitude to his older half-brother, it is plausible to suggest that, on his becoming Lord Chancellor, Francis commissioned a modest duplicate portrait of himself, specifically to give to Edward and his family at Shrubland Old Hall as an ancestral heirloom. However, Sir Edward Bacon died in September, 1618, in the same year that Francis sat for his portrait, so it may have been Edward's widow, Lady Helen, who was the first recipient of the picture now owned by the Society.

For the next four generations at Shrubland, Francis Bacon's portrait was handed down from father to son, each successive heir bearing the name of Nicholas Bacon: Nicholas I (1589 –1658), lord of the manor from 1618 until his death in 1658; Nicholas II (c. 1622 – 1687), lord of the manor from 1658 until his death in 1687; Nicholas III (1655 –1697), lord of the manor from 1687 until his death in 1697; Nicholas IV (before 1686 – c. 1767), lord of the manor from 1697 until his death in 1767.

It is this last of the four Nicholas Bacons of Shrubland whose marriage to Dorothy Temple of Moor Park in 1710, established a union between the two estates. However, before the painting of Bacon entered the art collection of Moor Park, Singh tells us that it went from Shrubland Old Hall to Coddensham Vicarage, a distance of about one mile.

CODDENHAM HOUSE, SUFFOLK

Surrounded by rich pastures on the outskirts of the ancient village of Coddendam, Coddendam House, or vicarage, as we see it today is not as the Bacons of Shrubland would have known it. In 1771, its proportions were doubled in size by architect-builder, James Paine, for the last of the Bacons of Shrubland, Rev Nicholas Bacon (1630–95). At the time, Paine was building a grand new house for Nicholas's older brother, John Bacon of Shrubland. Paine was also employed by Basil Bacon, the other brother of John Bacon of Shrubland, who inherited Moor Park in 1770. However, at the turn of the eighteenth century, the vicarage was a modest, single-storey structure. A significant remnant of the original vicarage is a small tile or plaque on a wall in the service wing at the rear with an image of a boar passant, the heraldic crest of the Bacon family, and the date, 1630.

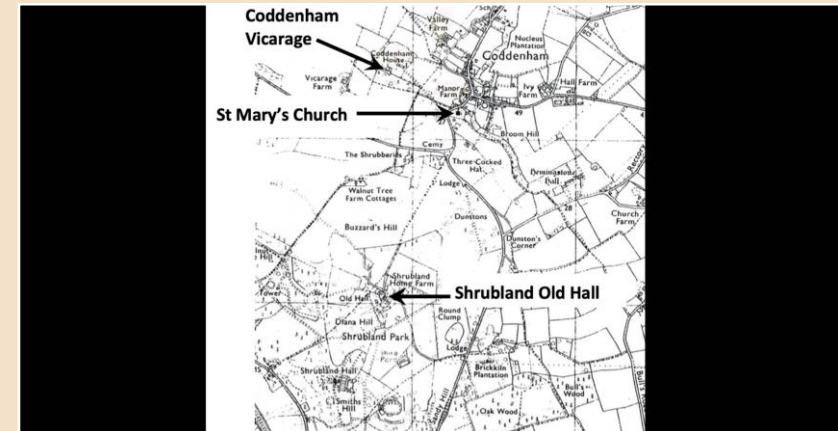


Coddenham House and, nearby, the ancient church of St Mary's, Coddenham

Three hundred yards from the vicarage stands the nine-hundred-year-old church of St Mary's, where ten members of the Bacon family are interred. Memorials to various family members are displayed inside the church, serving as reminders that, from the 1580s to the 1780s, the Bacons of Shrubland were lords of the local manor and masters of Coddensham and its surrounds.

If, as Singh tells us, the portrait of Francis Bacon was already at Moor Park by 1730, all we can do at this late date is to allude to historical circumstances which may have facilitated the transmission of the picture from Shrubland Old Hall to Coddtenham Vicarage in Suffolk to Moor Park in Surrey.

During the first three decades of the eighteenth century, Coddendam Vicarage seems to have stood unoccupied, since the vicar of St Mary's Church did not reside there as tradition would normally have dictated. This is because, not long after the death of Nicholas Bacon III of Shrubland Hall in 1697, his widow, Lady Catherine, nee Montagu (c. 1660–1757) married the vicar of St Mary's. They lived together at the Old Hall for forty years, dedicated to performing acts of charity for those most in need within the local Coddendam area. Their good works continue to this day as the Gardemau Charities.



Meanwhile, Nicholas Bacon IV of Shrubland had inherited the estate on his father's death in 1697. In 1710, he married Dorothy Temple, granddaughter of Sir William Temple of Moor Park, Farnham. On his death in 1699, Temple had left his entire estate to Dorothy and her sister, Elizabeth, who would subsequently bequeath Moor Park to her nephew, Basil Bacon, the son of Dorothy and Nicholas Bacon of Shrubland. So it was that a descendant of Edward Bacon came to acquire one of the most beautiful properties in England. While we cannot explain how the portrait came to Coddensham Vicarage, there appears to have been ample opportunity for its transfer to Moor Park, due to the union of the two great houses through intermarriage.

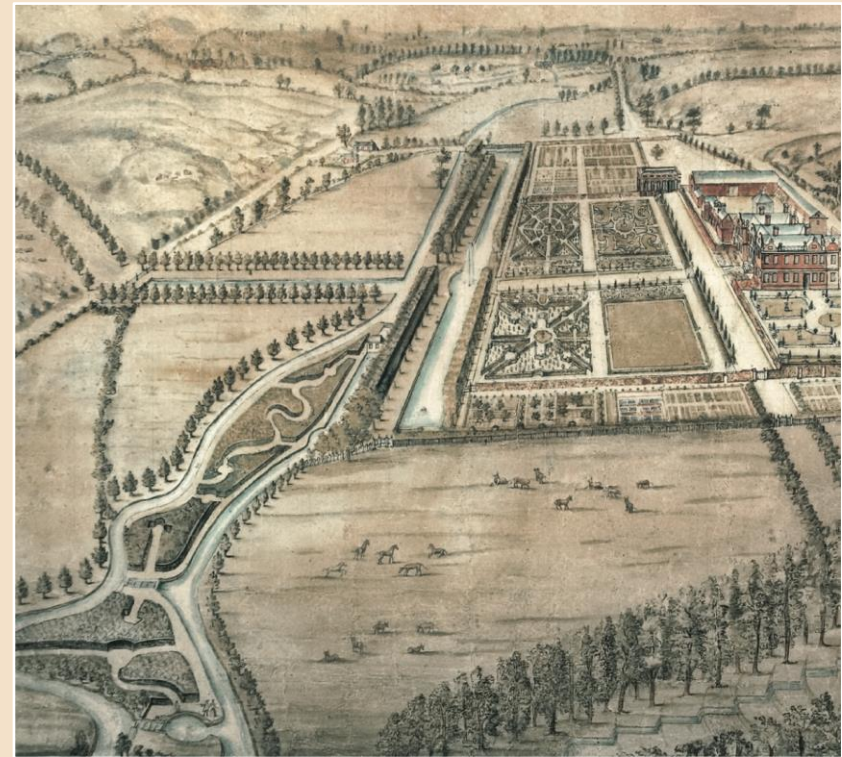
MOOR PARK, FARNHAM, SURREY

Situated just outside the town of Farnham in Surrey, Moor Park was originally known as Compton Hall. The estate was purchased in 1684 by its most notable owner, diplomat and essayist Sir William Temple. He renamed it Moor Park after the Hertfordshire estate owned by his cousin, the magnificent garden of which he had admired and written about in his lengthy and influential essay, *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus*. Temple devoted his later years to cultivating his own ideal five-acre garden at Moor Park, which became one of the most famous gardens in England.

Sir William Temple was also a connoisseur of art, as noted by Julia Longe, wife of Robert Longe of Spixworth Park, in her book about Temple's sister, *Martha Lady Giffard. Her Life and Correspondence (1664-1722)*, published in 1911: *In the older parts of the house [Moor Park] were massed the treasures collected by Sir William, pictures and statues and beautiful cabinets filled with china, and books galore. There were Vandykes, Titians, and Lelys, Van der Moulens, Holbeins, Janssens, Momperts and Le Bruns.* Among such illustrious company could also be found the Francis Bacon Society's portrait of Francis Bacon.

As previously noted, the son of Nicholas Bacon IV of Shrubland Hall, Basil Bacon, inherited Moor Park from his aunt, Elizabeth Temple in 1770. Before he died five years later, he employed James Paine to enlarge and remodel the house, which he left to his son, Charles, on the condition that he adopt the surname of Bacon. Moor Park remained in this branch of the extended Bacon family until the end of the 1850s, when they sold it to John Bateman.

Could Frederick Duleep Singh have been misinformed by the Bacon Longe family during his visit to Spixworth Park in 1910? From the previous discussion, it is evident that the most favourable time for a transfer of property from Shrubland, including the vicarage, occurred forty years after the date given by Singh of 1730, during Basil Bacon's occupancy. Although we can only surmise how it came to be at Moor Park, we can better appreciate the cultural milieu in which it was once displayed.



Above: [Detail] Moor Park, painted by Johannes Kip, 1690s, Surrey County Council Below: Moor Park at the turn of last century

SPIXWORTH PARK, NORFOLK

Singh provided no clues as to how or when the Society's portrait of Francis Bacon arrived at Spixworth Park and became part of the Bacon Longe family's art collection. All we can do at this point is to outline the ancestral interconnections between the Bacons of Shrubland, the Temples of Moor Park and the Longes of Spixworth Hall.

The union of the Bacon and Longe families dates back to 1656, with the marriage of Elizabeth Bacon (1626–1659) and Robert Longe of Reymerston (1619–88). Elizabeth was the daughter of Sir Francis Bacon of Norwich (1587–1657), a Judge of the King's Bench and a distant cousin of Francis Bacon of Gorhambury. After only three years of marriage, Elizabeth died at the age of thirty-three after giving birth to her second child, Francis Longe (1658–1734). As he was the younger son, Francis did not inherit Reymerston when his father died in 1688. Fortunately, a few years later his Bacon family relatives on his mother's side provided him with the capital to purchase the estate of Spixworth Park in 1693 from the grandson of William Peck who built Spixworth Hall in the early-seventeenth century. Francis proceeded to modernise the house before moving to Spixworth with his wife, Susan Frere and their young son, also named Francis.

A hundred years later, in 1795, the Longe family of Spixworth and the descendants of Edward Bacon were brought closer together by the last in the line of the Bacons of Shrubland, Rev Nicholas Bacon of Coddendam. Having inherited the Shrubland estate from his older brother, John Bacon, Nicholas promptly sold the hall and grounds to a wealthy landowner from South Carolina, Sir William Fowle Middleton.

Despite the immense wealth he now possessed, augmented by the many properties he still owned in and around Coddendam, Rev Nicholas Bacon continued to live in the vicarage, performing his duties as the vicar of St Mary's until his death in 1795. The youngest son of Nicholas Bacon IV of Shrubland and Dorothy Temple of Moor Park, he was the last male descendant of the Shrubland branch of the Bacon family.

Rev Nicholas had married Anna Marie Brown in 1780. When she died five years later, the reverend never remarried, leaving him without an heir. A new curate arrived at St Mary's in 1790. Twenty-five-year-old Rev John Longe (1765–1834) had come from Norwich, where he had been ordained the previous year. He had been living at the rectory at Spixworth with his father, also named Rev John Longe (1765–1834), a former chaplain of George III. He served as his father's curate for two years after coming down from Cambridge in 1787. In 1790, less than twelve months after his arrival, Rev John Longe married Rev Nicholas Bacon's sister-in-law, Charlotte Browne (1761–1812). The vicar and the curate of St Mary's were now brothers-in-law.

As we have already seen, Rev Nicholas Bacon inherited Shrubland estate in 1788 from his brother, John. Without an heir and as the last in his family's line, Nicholas decided to liquidate most of the Shrubland estate, becoming a wealthy gentleman parson practically overnight. When it came time to preparing his will, Nicholas chose his curate, Rev John Longe, as his main beneficiary. Longe succeeded his benefactor as the vicar of St Mary's and now owned the much-improved Coddendam Vicarage, as well as numerous local properties.

After thirty-seven years of service to the local community, Rev John Longe died in 1834 in Coddendam and was succeeded by his son, Rev Robert Longe (1800–1890). He had inherited the right to choose who was to succeed his father as the next vicar of St Mary's, and so he chose himself. Robert served the parish of Coddendam for the next fifty-five years. This is despite the fact that, when his older brother, John, died childless in 1872, Robert inherited Spixworth Park estate. Now over seventy years of age, he preferred to reside in his *beloved* vicarage. Rev Longe gave his son, Robert Bacon Longe, his permission to take up residency and manage the Norfolk estate until he became the Squire of Spixworth on his father's death in 1890. His efforts to preserve the estate came to nought, since the year after his death in 1911 the family's treasurers were dispersed, including the Society's portrait of Bacon.

PART THREE – ATTRIBUTION

As we know, when Ella Horsey took a photograph of her portrait of Bacon to the National Portrait Gallery in 1949, the Assistant Keeper told her that, in his opinion, it was by Paul van Somer. It can be inferred from his remark that he did not rate the Bacon Longe family's attribution of the portrait to Cornelius Janssens. Seen in isolation, the Society's painting could be mistaken for a work by Janssen, but when shown beside its other variations, it becomes evident that it is part of a group of pictures based on the same pattern. At least one of these versions, the Royal Society's copy, is clearly attributed to the studio of Paul van Somer.

However, as mentioned at the beginning of this investigation, since the late-nineteen-sixties, the traditional attribution of the Francis Bacon Society's portrait of Lord Chancellor Bacon to the studio of Paul van Somer has been placed under a cloud. This is because of its association with the full-length portrait of Bacon at Gorhambury House, whose authenticity Roy Strong cast doubt upon in his catalogue for the National Portrait Gallery, *Tudor and Jacobean Portraits*.

Until science and art historical expertise are brought to bear on the attribution problem pertaining to this distinctive group of portraits of Francis Bacon, as spectators, we must rely on our own judgement. A visual comparison between the seven paintings presented on the following page reveals that they are not all by the same hand. If, as seems to be the case, they came from a busy London studio of one of James I's leading court painters, it would have been standard practice for apprentices to assist the master. And yet the composition remains essentially the same in each version. This is because they were almost certainly traced from the same pattern or master drawing.

Given that these seven portraits of Sir Francis Bacon are the prototypes of most of the countless reproductions of Bacon's features – having descended over four hundred years from fine art to global visual memes – their importance as depictions of perhaps the greatest philosopher of the Western world cannot be overstated, and they deserve closer scientific scrutiny.



The Francis Bacon Society's portrait awaiting installation at Gray's Inn.
Image credit: Gary Keegan

THE SEVEN KNOWN PATTERN B PORTRAITS



Gorhambury House
Hertfordshire



Francis Bacon Society
Gray's Inn, London



Private collection



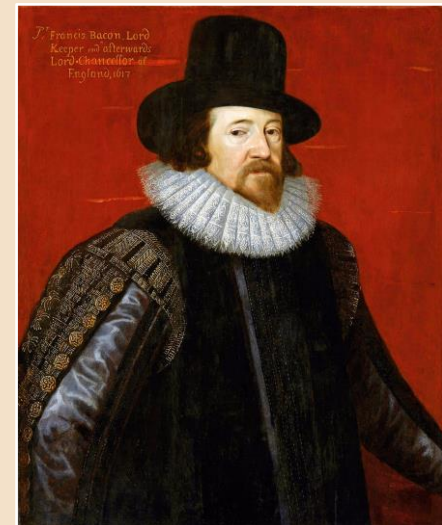
Gorhambury House
Hertfordshire



Royal Society, London

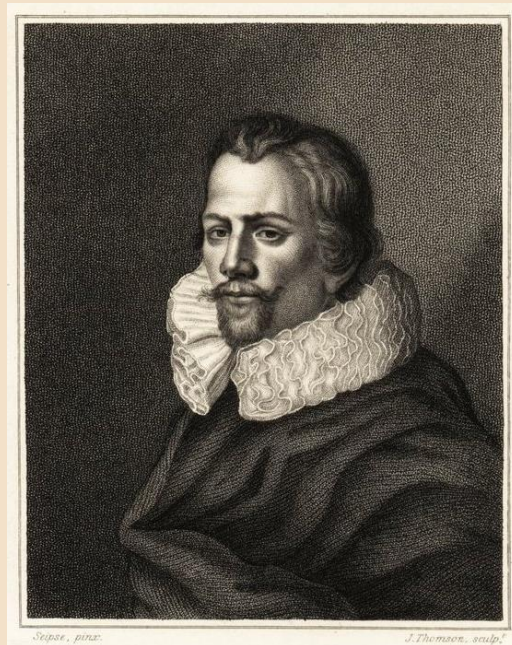


Gainsborough Old Hall, Lincolnshire



Lazienki Palace, Warsaw, Poland

PAUL VAN SOMER (c. 1576–1621)



Paul van Somer, engraving by James Thomson
(mid-eighteenth century)

The arrival of Paul van Somer at the court of James I from Antwerp in late 1616 coincided with Sir Francis Bacon's elevation by the king to Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal in March, 1617. Being so close to the royal family, Bacon may have met van Somer soon after his arrival and witnessed the Dutch artist's courtly rapport with the Queen Consort, Anne of Denmark, as they conversed in several shared languages. She commissioned two huge portraits from the Dutch maestro in 1617, both of which are in the Royal Collection at Windsor Palace.

The more impressive of the two is titled, *Anne of Denmark in Hunting Costume with her Dogs*. It was revolutionary in that it portrayed the queen consort in a way which had never been seen before – as the equal of men. At the same time, Van Somer also produced two portraits of James I, who famously hated sitting for artists. One is a version of the other, so as to avoid the king's having to sit for his portrait a second time.

While these two portraits of James I are more conservative than the two pictures Paul van Somer painted of his consort, they provided a prototype for the portrait that Francis Bacon commissioned from the same artist. The version of James's portrait in the Royal Collection which hangs in the Throne Room at the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh is especially relevant here, as it provided a model not only for the pose, but for the colour scheme as well. Painted only months apart, these two full-length portraits have much in common. This supports the attribution of the full-length portrait of Bacon at Gorhambury House to the studio of Paul van Somer. It was surely this large canvas that Bacon paid the sum of thirty-three pounds for in September, 1618, when a shilling a day was the average wage.



James I & VI, Paul van Somer, 1618
Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh



Francis Bacon, Paul van Somer, 1618
Gorhambury House, Hertfordshire

In both pictures, the subject is standing beside a table covered in expensive plush fabric on which their respective emblems of authority are similarly arranged. King James is shown more frontally, whereas Bacon is standing in a typical three-quarter pose. In his full-length, gold-embroidered chancellor's robe, Bacon appears almost as regal as the king.



Anne of Denmark in Hunting Costume with Her Dogs
Signed and dated by Paul van Somer, 1617
Windsor Castle, Royal Collection Trust



Anne of Denmark by Paul van Somer, 1617-18
Queen's Drawing Room, Windsor Castle
Royal Collection Trust



King James I by Paul van Somer, c. 1618
Yale Centre for British Art

Just as James I only sat for one of the two portraits that van Somer painted of him in 1617-18, the artist seems to have used the same pattern or master drawing for the face in both portraits of Anne of Denmark. Multiple copies of the king and his consort's portraits were required as gifts for various royal houses. Francis Bacon appears to have followed suit by commissioning not just one painting, but a set of portraits for his closest relatives. The observation that the Francis Bacon Society's portrait of Bacon appears to have been traced from the same pattern used for the full-length portrait of Bacon at Gorhambury supports its attribution to van Somer's studio.

The same argument can be applied to the portrait of Bacon in the Royal Society's collection, which is unambiguously attributed to Paul van Somer's studio. Both the Francis Bacon Society's portrait and that of the Royal Society are reframed versions of the same picture.

Further support for the attribution of the Society's portrait to Paul van Somer's studio comes from the Grimston family at Gorhambury House, who discretely maintain the traditional attribution of their full-length portrait and its companion painting, in which Bacon is seen without a hat, to van Somer's studio.

IN MEMORIUM - ELLA HORSEY (1885 – 1982)



Most of the little we know about the life of Miss Ella Horsey can be gleaned from her two autobiographies: *A Chant of Pleasant Explorations* (1962) and *Erraid – Seven Years on a Scottish Islet* (1967). However, neither book has much to say about the external events of her life. Rather, she recounts only as much information about herself as is needed to explain to the reader the circumstances through which she became convinced that death is not a termination, but a transition, or a return to our essential state of being. She wrote about her experiences, not to make money or out of self-importance, but to demonstrate the existence of what for her was deeply meaningful communication from the *other world*. For Ella, conventional Christianity did not sufficiently address the fundamental question of what happens to us after we die. In this sense, her two books are a testament to her life's journey towards a Christian form of Spiritualism that embraces death instead of avoiding the subject.

Ella Maud Horsey was born on the 11th of September, 1885 in Islington, North London. Her father, George Mather Horsey (1845-1925), a Harley Street dental surgeon, was comfortably well-off. In 1883, he married Sarah Jane Ogden (1855-1943), a former debutante who had been presented to Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace when she was eighteen. For much of Ella's childhood and youth, the Horseys lived at 1, Compton Terrace in Highbury, Islington, a short walk away from Canonbury Tower where Sir Francis Bacon had lived. The only information that Ella provides about growing up in upper-middle class North London is that she had been *an ardent church-goer in childhood and early youth* and that she spent the annual summer holidays on the Isle of Skye where her family owned a cottage.

A pivotal moment in her life occurred in 1917 when she was in her early-thirties. Her younger brother, Arthur, was a probationary naval surgeon serving on the destroyer, *Recruit*, when it was torpedoed by a German U-boat in the North Sea killing fifty-four of those onboard, including her brother. On learning of this tragedy, Ella was overwhelmed by despair until, one day, she clearly heard Arthur's familiar whistle outside the house where she was staying, as if announcing his presence. Ella subsequently began to question conventional religious dogma on death, and to simultaneously develop a life-long belief in the existence of an afterlife. In *A Chant of Pleasant Exploration*, she describes in detail the process of her gradual conversion to Spiritualism through much study and direct experience.

The sincere conviction with which Ella Horsey wrote about her experiences suggests that she was conscious of contributing in the affirmative to the broad debate on Spiritualism which had been growing in England since the 1850s. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Elizabeth Browning were among the many converts to the belief in the afterlife and the continuation of incorporeal human existence.

Fascination with Spiritualism and psychic phenomena reached a high point in Great Britain in the late nineteenth century. A rich diversity of people during that period shared the fascination, formed organizations to pursue the subject systematically, and patronized a spiritualist press that served to publicize the activities of spiritualist circles around the country.

[*Victorian Spiritualism*, Dr Andrzej Diniejko, The Victorian Web]

In the early-nineteen-thirties, Ella was given a book, *Something Beyond – A Life Story*, written by the Rev. A. F. Webling, rector of St Giles Church, Risby, thirty miles from where she was living with her elderly mother at the time. Webling's novel was a thinly veiled autobiography which told the story of a devout priest who lost his faith, only to find it again through the study of psychic research and conviction in *man's survival after death*. Hoping to meet the author, in the Summer of 1934, Ella and her mother drove to Risby to attend a Sunday service at St Giles, where she almost literally bumped into Rev. Webling outside the church. After a brief conversation, he invited Ella to tea with his wife the following week to discuss psychic subjects.

So began a spiritual friendship between Ella and Rev. (later Canon) Webling, which lasted until Webling's death in the early-1960s. In addition to frequent consultations on psychic matters, Ella volunteered to transcribe the uncorrected proofs of Archibald Webling's next two books: an historical novel, *The Last Abbot* (1944) and *Risby* (1945), a history of the village and in particular, St Giles church. He also wrote the foreword to Ella's first book, passing away just before its publication in 1962. As we have already seen in part one, in 1948, Rev. Webling was instrumental in bringing about Ella's ownership of the *lost* portrait of Francis Bacon. Her own account of her discovery of the painting in a shop in Bury St Edmunds in January, 1949, was published that same year in the journal of the Francis Bacon Society, *Baconiana*.

Ella's short article is reproduced in full below because it reveals as much about her as it does about the picture's recovery. It need only be born in mind by the reader that, following the Great War, there was a resurgence of interest in Spiritualism around the world, due to the profound need for families everywhere to come to terms with the loss of sons, fathers and close family members who died in battle. It was this need for consolation following deaths of loved ones that united Ella and Archibald Webling in their refusal to accept death as final. The depth of her conviction that the dead are not dead, but *disincarnate*, can be seen in her mater-of-fact descriptions of paranormal events that most people, especially today, may find unbelievable, if not unhinged. Yet, however sceptical we may feel towards her claim that the eternal spirit of Francis Bacon communicated with her through *sensitives* [mediums] in order to bring about her acquisition of the picture, it must be admitted that the circumstances of its recovery are hard to explain in rational terms.

A LITTLE-KNOWN PORTRAIT OF FRANCIS BACON

By Ella M Horsey

An oil painting of Sir Francis Bacon has just come into my possession in a rather curious way.

Readers of Mr. Alfred Dodd's enthralling book, *The Immortal Master*, will remember that in it he claims to have received several communications from Bacon through various channels. In some of them he was told that a link forged in a previous life on earth had facilitated the present contact. I am well aware of the hostility aroused in many minds both by the idea of repeated earth lives and also of communication with the discarnate, nevertheless I am prepared to make a similar claim.

Until I learnt of my earthly association with him three hundred odd years ago, I hesitated to believe that so great a mind and soul as Francis Bacon's would stoop to concern himself with anyone so insignificant as I am. It seemed rather less incredible that he should still retain an interest in a person he had known intimately during a former life on earth. The cumulative evidence of the last five years has convinced me that, within the limits of the physical instruments he is bound to employ, he is able to communicate some of his simpler thoughts to me as well as to others with whom he has had links in the past.

It would be too long a story to describe how the association began; it is enough to say that, since he first made his presence known to me, Francis has attempted, with varying degrees of success, to give me verifiable evidence of his identity through nearly every sensitive (professional or amateur) with whom I have sat.

The two sittings with which the portrait is concerned took place in London last year, the first in October, the second on November 4th [1948]. They were held at the homes of two sensitives who have neither met nor corresponded; it will suffice to quote an extract from my notes taken during the November sitting. After saying that Bacon had written through my brain and hand, the sensitive continued:

[Medium:] He says there is more of this to do. He has spoken through someone else—not here—about your work, about the things he has to do with you. [Ella] Yes. Did he say anything at the same time about a picture of himself? [Medium] Yes, a short time ago. He thinks there is a picture of himself you haven't seen yet, he told you this before, he says. He is trying to bring it about that you shall see it. That is exactly what he told me before.

A great deal more was passed on from him at this time and the previous sitting, but the above is all that concerns us here. About seven weeks later, I received a letter from a fellow member of the Francis Bacon Society [Rev. Webling], it ran as follows:

I am writing because I want to tell you of something I have intended passing on for some time but forgot. I was waiting in the shop of Mr. Jarman, the photographer in Abbeygate Street, Bury, when I noticed three old oil paintings hanging on the wall. I immediately recognised one as F.B. Looking closer I thought it looked really good and I questioned Mr. Jarman about it . . . It had belonged to a well-known antiquary, and Mr. Jarman picked it up at the sale after his death . . . You must go and see it when next in Bury.

I was unable to visit Bury St. Edmunds until January 14th, when I was delighted to find that the picture was still in its place. The previous evening, while I was writing impressionally, [i.e., automatic writing] F.B. had expressed a wish that I should possess it if my purse would stretch far enough. I hastily assured him that, unless he could help in the matter, it most certainly would not. He promised to come to my assistance, but in spite of my faith in him, when I saw the portrait, I despaired. I am no judge of art, but even my untrained eye could see that the painting was good and I wanted it desperately. I asked the price with little hope of its being within my reach, but F.B. or the friends and helpers he probably employs now (as he did his *good pens* in his earth days) had been equal to the occasion, and the purchase was concluded.

A letter pasted to the back of the picture gives the information that it was purchased by the writer at Spixworth Hall near Norwich. It is signed Wm. M. Soflard [*sic*. Safford]. With a copy of this letter and a photograph of the picture I went to the National Portrait Gallery, where the Assistant Keeper kindly looked up a description of my portrait in a book by Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, published in 1912. Under the heading *Spixworth Park, Sale 19th—22nd March. 1912*, the following description is given:

H & S. [head and shoulders] Body and face turned to sinister, brown eyes in an opposite direction, wavy brown hair to collar,

pointed fair beard and moustache, tall black hat on head. *Dress*: Brown doublet, the sleeves of which are visible from beneath the black and gold Chancellor's gown which is overall, outstanding pleated laced-edged all round ruff, with long strings and tassel. Red curtain behind. Age about 50. By Cornelius Janssens (?) Inscribed on frame *Sir Francis Bacon, Viscount St. Albans, Lord High. Chancellor of England*. It came from Shrubland Old Hall to Coddensham Vicarage, and was at More Park in 1730. No. 202, £72. Now the property of the Secretary of the Bacon Society.

The Assistant Keeper of the National Portrait Gallery gave it as his opinion that the portrait is almost certainly not by Janssens, but is most probably by Van Somer.

Editorial note: Miss Horsey recounts the remarkable manner in which she was, as she says, influenced by Francis Bacon himself to discover and ultimately purchase the portrait of him then in a shop in Bury St. Edmunds. The series of strange coincidences which have led to her being able to acquire this picture—our frontispiece in this number—are indeed amazing in the records of psychic contact, especially the two messages given to her, *He is trying to bring it about that you shall see it*, and the second that she should acquire it if possible.

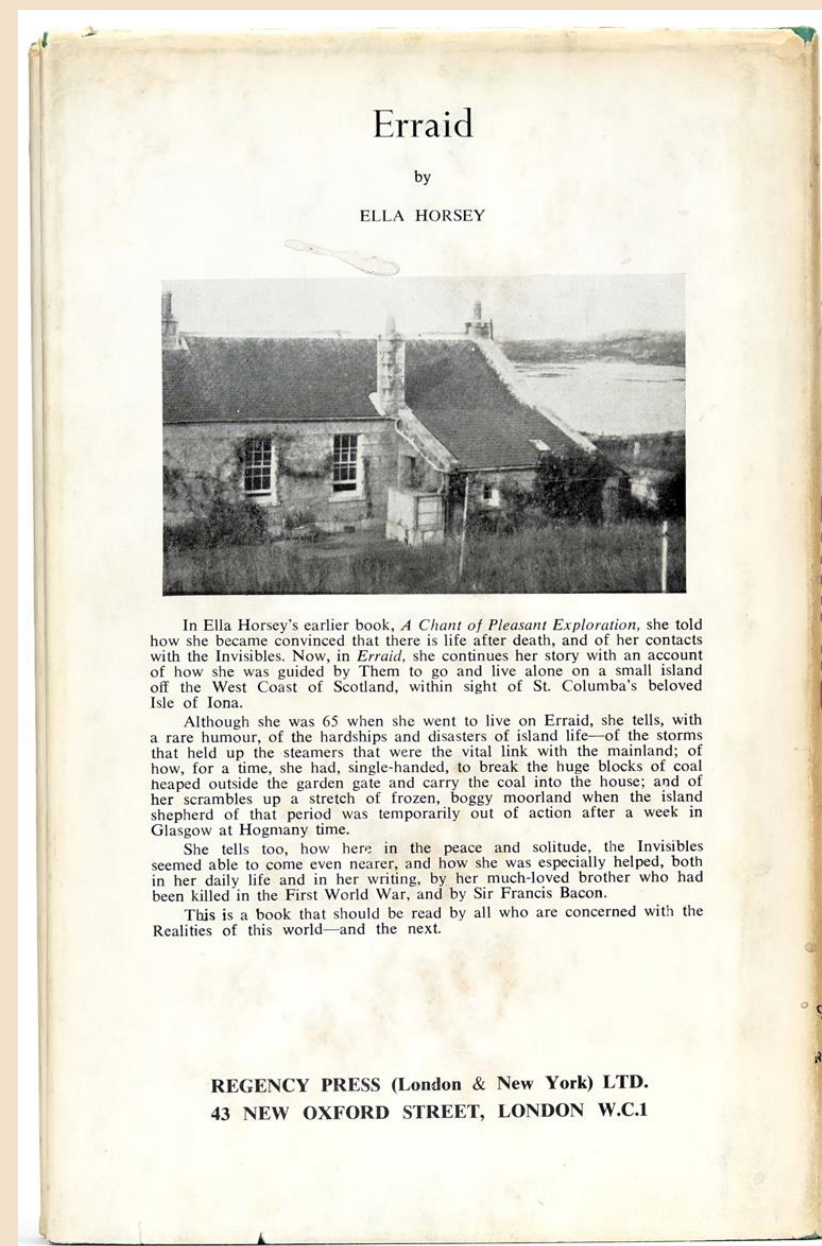
The picture is believed to be a Van Somer. A member of the Bacon Society, and an authority on ancient works of art has recently examined the portrait and believes it to be absolutely genuine, probably a Van Somer, and certainly not a copy. It has been a little over-restored and the expression from the setting of the eyes gives it somewhat an enigmatical expression. There is a note on the back to the effect that it came from Spixworth Hall, signed Safford. Mr. Safford, a well-known antiquary and collector, who was some forty years ago Hon. Secretary of the Bacon Society, was obviously its owner. Mr. Alfred Dodd, who has seen a photograph of the portrait, says that it is unlike the Van Somer of 1616 [?], and thinks it must have been painted about 1621, as Bacon was only created a Viscount in that year. He appears to assume the Viscountcy from the frame but that cannot be very ancient, as its design and lettering are quite modern. [*Baconiana*. Vol 33, No. 131, 1949, p: 69–70]

Such was the attraction that Iona exerted on her consciousness that in 1952, at the age of sixty-seven, she decided to leave the comfort and security of her life in England for a more contemplative life on the *sacred isle* of St Columba, the burial place of scores of Scottish kings.

However, the construction of a modest stone house on Iona proved too difficult and expensive, so she seized an opportunity to purchase two of the eight cottages on the nearby island of Erraid, recently vacated by the workers who maintained the lighthouse on the Dubh Artach Rock, fifteen miles off shore. Once renovations were completed, her possessions, including the portrait of Francis Bacon, were brought over from the mainland. In her second book, *Erraid - Seven Years on a Scottish Islet*, published in 1967, Ella describes her hermit-like existence on the one-square-mile tidal island, inhabited by only a handful of rugged, self-reliant people. Since 1978, Erraid has been in the custodianship of the Findhorn Foundation, and still today Ella Horsey's portrait hangs in the community meeting room on the island.

By the late 1950s, Ella's semi-solitary existence on Erraid was becoming increasingly impractical. Now in her mid-seventies, she reluctantly began to consider relocating to a less challenging corner of England where she could write and continue to commune with nature and the *Invisibles* who guided her. Eventually, she found a bungalow just outside the village of Waytown, near Bridport in Devon, and renamed it St Columba's Cottage. Her portrait of Francis Bacon naturally took pride of place in her new abode. Sometime in the early-1960s, she commissioned a copy of the portrait and donated it to the Francis Bacon Society, then based in Canonbury Tower in Islington, close to where Ella grew up.

Ella Horsey died on the 17th of April, 1982 in Dorset at the age of ninety-seven. In her will, she left most of her estate to her great nephew, Brian Wakefield, a master at Bembridge School on the Isle of Wight, who was also one of her two executors. Her bequest to the Francis Bacon Society of her original, early-seventeenth century portrait of Francis Bacon was an act of trust. Although it has taken forty-four years to bring about, the recent restoration of the painting and its installation in the Hall at Gray's Inn vindicates her generosity and would have pleased her enormously.



Rear cover of the dust jacket of *Erraid – Seven Years on a Scottish Islet*, 1967



The Francis Bacon Society's portrait on display in the Hall, Gray's Inn.
Image credit: Katherine Gwyn