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LAUR AINE • DIGGINS • FINE • ART



JOHN GLOVER 1767 – 1849

Conway Castle
oil on canvas
61 x 65.5 cm

Provenance:

Thomas David Chapman, MLC, of Sunnyside, Newtown, Hobart (1812 - 1884) (Premier of Tasmania 1861 - 63)
thence by descent
Phyllis Young, by descent
Mr White
Sotheby's, Melbourne, November 2003, lot 62 (mentions the work believed to have been owned by Arthur Young (1816 - 1906) first speaker of the Tasmanian parliament)
Masterpiece Fine Art Gallery, Hobart
private collection, Victoria

Exhibited:

possibly *John Glover*, London, 1835, no.42 Conway Castle

Literature:

Morris, Andrew, The Man in the Blue Jacket. John Glover's Van Diemen's Land Paintings: a clue or just coincidence?, *Australiana*, August 2007, pp. 13 - 17, illus. p.15

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Conwy or Conway¹ Castle is a stone fortress in North Wales with eight impressive towers, constructed for the English monarch Edward I between 1283 and 1289, which sits dramatically on a rocky ridge above the Conwy Estuary and amongst the surrounding hills. By the end of the eighteenth century the ruined castle was a picturesque magnet for artists, including Glover's contemporary Turner. Glover is known to have depicted Conway Castle on several occasions, including in oil paintings, watercolours and drawings.² In 1809 he exhibited four views at the Society of Painters in Water Colours. In this version, Glover has reduced the imposing and dramatic castle to a romantic backdrop for the intimate pastoral scene in the foreground, in the manner of a Claudian idyll.

A strong case has been made for this painting to be dated from Glover's Australian period (he arrived in Van Diemen's Land on 18th February 1831) considering the intense blue sky; the frame by William Wilson, a Van Diemen's Land colonial framer; and its history in a Tasmanian collection,³ as cited in the provenance above.

It is possible the work was included in the exhibition of paintings consigned to London in 1835 of which 30 of the 68 were of British or Italian scenes with the remainder "descriptive of the scenery and customs of the inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land."⁴

Another intriguing pointer to this having been painted in Australia is made by Morris through his investigations into the blue-coated figure and his faithful dog depicted in the lower centre of the composition for *Conway Castle*. His examination points to a series of paintings⁵ which contain a similar blue-coated figure with brown trousers and a black hat and his stock-keeper's dog, including both European and Australian scenes, all of which have been dated to his Van Diemen's Land period and posing the tantalising question, "Could the man in the blue jacket be a representation of Glover himself?"⁶

1. named after the family Conway who owned the castle in the 17th century

2. for example *Conway Castle*, watercolour on paper 55.6 x 76.5 cm in the UK Government Art Collection; *Sketch of Conway Castle* 1813 in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia

3. Morris, A., 'The man in a blue jacket. John Glover's Van Diemen's Land paintings: a clue, or just coincidence?', *Australiana*, August 2007, pp. 13 - 17

4. Morris, A., 2007, p.14

5. See *Patterdale Landscape with Rainbow* c.1832, watercolour, 21 x 32.4 cm (NGA); *Landscape with Piping Shepherd (after Claude)* 1833, oil on canvas, 72.5 x 111.5 cm (private collection); *Patterdale Farm* c.1840, oil on canvas, 76.6 x 115.2 cm, (AGNSW)

6. Morris, A., 2007, p.15