

Portrait of a lady

Jane (Whitgift) Bradbury

In the *History and Antiquities of Surrey*, by Manning and Bray,¹ the authors say: 'In the chapel [of the Whitgift Hospital at Croydon] is a portrait of a lady with a ruff, dated 1616, *aetat* 38, probably one of the Archbishop's daughters'.

This guess at the identification is patently wrong. Archbishop John Whitgift was not married and left no children, as is clear from his will of 1602, proved 1604.² Subsequent writers have repeated this bad guess, not bothering to make the simplest investigation. Who then was the lady in this portrait? It seems obvious that her presence in the Whitgift Hospital Chapel implies some connection with the hospital or the Whitgift family.

The Archbishop had three nieces who survived him, Elizabeth, Jane and Bridget, the daughters of his brother William. In 1594 Jane married Matthew Bradbury of Wicken Bonhunt, Essex.³ He was a witness to John Whitgift's deed of gift to his hospital in 1599.⁴ Of her we find on 4 May 1633, 'Jane Bradbury of the age of fifty fower years was sworne & admitted a sister of the Hospitall'.⁵ Her age at this time corresponds with that given on the portrait. Neither of the other nieces qualifies chronologically. She apparently did not reside there but took her stipend (as Founder's kin) until her last at Michaelmas 1659.⁶ She was then about 81 and must have died shortly thereafter. She accepted other allowances such as 'gown money' – 20s at Christmas 1646, and 2s 6d in December 1657.⁷

Furthermore, the portrait shows her wearing a black hat and dress, although the ruff and cuffs are white. This suggests mourning garb. Her husband died 22 September 1616.

Jane is said to have remarried to Henry Bradbury, junior, of Littlebury, a relative of her late husband.⁸

Her sister Elizabeth married (as her third husband) Wymond Bradbury, younger brother of Matthew. Thus, the portrait is that of a sister of the mother of Thomas Bradbury who went to New England in 1634, and from whom so many Americans descend.

The positive identification of the portrait was made possible by Frederick H G Percy, Honorary Archivist to the Whitgift Foundation, who found the evidence about her age in the Foundation's archives.

NOTES

These notes have kindly been provided by F H G Percy, Honorary Archivist to the Whitgift Foundation, Whitgift School, Croydon.

1 The statement quoted from O Manning & W Bray (*History and antiquities of the County of Surrey*, 2 (1809), 553) may be traced to A C Ducarel, *The history of Croydon* (Appendix XXIII, 105), pt XII of *Bibliotheca typographica Britannica* (1783), except that there is no suggestion of any connection with the Founder.

2 The PRO reference to Whitgift's will is PCC 45 Harte. An accurate transcript is published in full in *Croydon Old Church parish register and the Whitgift Charity*, by J Corbet Anderson (1878).

3 Her marriage to Matthew Bradbury was celebrated on November 12th 1594 (Clavering-Essex-Parish Register).

4 Whitgift Archives, Deed no 413.

5 Whitgift Archives Ledger Book I, F15.

6 She received her first allowance at mid-summer 1633 and her last in 1659.

7 Her allowances of 'gown money' are recorded in Ledger Book I, F48, and Ledger Book II, F87.

8 There is no reference to her being married after the death of Matthew Bradbury in the Whitgift archives.



Fig 1. Artist's copy of a portrait of Jane Bradbury, now in Whitgift Hospital Croydon. (The background of the original painting is too dark to reproduce satisfactorily in photographic form)