

## Frances Molesworth – Marchioness Camden

*Miss Molesworth*

She, with a maiden blush, resists command;  
Forgives without her kindred heart, her hand.  
Fortune and Title sue her both in vain,  
For Love alone, she thinks, is wedlock's chain.

This titled but anonymous quatrain, published in the *Westminster Magazine* of March 1779, shows the strength of Frances Molesworth's spirit, at the age of 21, within Georgian London society. Two years later, at the wedding of Frances' cousin Lavinia Bingham to George Spencer, Lord Althorp, the polymath William Jones wrote an ode including these lines:

First, I with living gems enchase  
The name of Her, who, for this festive day,  
With zone and mantle elegantly gay  
The Graces have adorn'd, herself a Grace,  
*Molesworth* – hark! a swelling note  
Seems on Zephyr's wing to float  
Or has vain hope my flatter'd sense beguil'd? <sup>1</sup>

Frances Molesworth did finally marry, to John Jeffreys Pratt, son of Earl Camden, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1785. (For continuity, they will be called Frances and John.)<sup>2</sup> He was Viscount Bayham at the time of their marriage, and was raised to Marquess Camden in 1812. Yet Frances is usually described rather briefly, for example in her obituary notice in *The Gentleman*, as 'heiress of William Molesworth of Wembury, Devon'. She receives just two pages in the standard history of the Camden family, and the material is mainly anecdotes about her marriage while most of the book records the politics of the men.<sup>3</sup> To form an account from Frances's side, it has been possible to examine new sources including records for the West Country, contemporary diaries, the Pratt family records deposited in Kent County archives and the London Metropolitan Archives.

[1] Frances Molesworth by Joshua Reynolds (1777).

### **A prospect of marriage**

Frances was nineteen when she was painted by Joshua Reynolds [1].<sup>4</sup> She had the attention, for marriage, of leading politicians of the day. Mrs Delany wrote in January 1778: "The match at present most talked of is Lord Shelburne to Miss Molesworth, Lady Lucan's niece; a fortune of £40,000, and a right to twice as much, but she is pretty, quiet, and young, and I believe will be obedient to his nod." Lord Shelburne, 41, living in Berkeley Square and recently widowed, had been Home Secretary and was shortly to become Prime Minister.

But the match was not to be. In the words of Isabella Elliot, writing gossip to her diplomat brother in Berlin: 'Your divine Miss Molesworth has surprised the world by breaking off from Lord Shelburne. She dined at his house and sat at the head of the table and was seen to cry all dinner-time. [Returning home she] ran upstairs to her room and sent Lady Lucan a letter to tell her she found she had an antipathy to Lord Shelburne, and begged she would break off the detested match; which was accordingly done, by showing his Lordship the letter. He was angry, as you will believe, to lose £40,000 and so pretty a wife, but put a good face upon it...' The diarist Horace Walpole reports the view of his friend Sir Horace Mann, who had met Frances and the Lucans when they were touring in Florence later that year: 'I cannot blame her for refusing the Lord who wished to marry her. With her figure and fortune she won't want younger admirers to choose from.'

Frances took her time. It was late 1785 when Harriot Elliot, sister of Prime Minister William Pitt and herself married in September that year, wrote from Downing Street where she played host for her bachelor brother, 'I must tell you that we left Mr Pratt at Brighton making love to Miss Molesworth. We are all sorry for him. It is a bad connexion.' Yet the Pitts and the Pratts were close families, and just a week later, she wrote to her mother with 'ye Earliest information of Mr Pratt's marriage which was announced in proper form by ye Family yesterday. I think that Ld Camden will be very happy to see his Son Establish'd.'

The Revd. Thomas Powys, who had been the tutor for Lord Camden's son, took the marriage service at Lord Lucan's house in Berkeley Square. His wife, Mrs Lybbe

Powys, 'reckoned it a good thing. Indeed a better thing' – although her diary continued: 'Are to be presented at the [Royal] birthday. Clothes all very superb; all from Paris. (That I think is wrong at an English Court.)'

## **Early times**

John's father, Charles Pratt, was Lord Chancellor in England from 1765 to 1771 and chose his title as Lord Camden from the name of the family house he had bought – Camden Place, at Chislehurst in Kent (itself named after the Elizabethan antiquarian William Camden).<sup>5</sup> His wife Elizabeth Jeffreys' family owned land in England and Wales, including the demesne land of Cantlowes, 220 acres of meadows stretching across the River Fleet in St Pancras parish that from 1789 was built upon as Camden Town. In 1965, the London Borough of Camden was so named because of Camden Town.

Frances' mother was born Elizabeth Smyth, the eldest of four daughters of Grace Dyke and James Smyth. Both families had gained their wealth as merchants through the port of Bristol. James Smyth had bought St Audries House in the Quantock hills, and was Sheriff of Somerset in 1743. But his wife Grace died in 1746 and their only son died in infancy in 1744. When James died in 1748, all four daughters, all aged under 21, became co-heiresses.

Further down the north Cornwall coast, at Pencarrow near Bodmin, lived the Molesworths. A long-established family, their baronetcy and wealth came from Hender Molesworth, a planter and Governor in Jamaica who had died in 1689. Frances' grandfather, Sir John Molesworth, the 4<sup>th</sup> baronet, married Barbara Morice, and had two sons, John and William (and daughter Catherine, who had died young). William was Frances' father.

The brothers John Molesworth and William Molesworth married two of the orphan Smyth sisters, Frances Smyth and Elizabeth Smyth, in double family marriages in 1755 and 1756. John Molesworth, the older son, stayed at Pencarrow, inheriting the title and property when his father died in 1766. Of the other, younger, two Smyth sisters, Margaret Smyth broke away, marrying Sir Charles Bingham, a rising politician from County Mayo, Ireland, who she met in Bath in 1760. The fourth sister, Lavinia Smyth, remained at St Audries, until in 1768: the house was sold when she married William Fellowes, later a member of parliament, and moved to Lincoln's Inn in London.

**[2]** Wembury House, eighteenth century by Edmund Prideaux

Younger brother William married Elizabeth Smyth and went to live at Wembury House, twenty miles away, near Plymouth on the south side of the peninsular. West Devon archives show that William Molesworth bought Wembury House **[2]** from Elizabeth Chudleigh in 1756.<sup>6</sup> Frances' older sister Barbara was baptised there in 1757, and Frances on 15 May 1758. Yet it was soon to be a place of mourning

rather than life. Frances' mother, Elizabeth, died on 19 December the same year (her tombstone remains in the church **[3]**) and Frances' father, William, died in early 1762. Equally catastrophic, Frances's aunt, wife of John Molesworth, had died at Pencarrow in 1758 (after childbirth to a living son who later became Sir William Molesworth, sixth Baronet) and Frances' older sister Barbara died, age 5, in June 1762.<sup>7</sup> John Molesworth remarried (at St George's Hanover Square, in London) in September 1762, to Barbara St Aubyn from another Cornwall gentry family, and went on to have five further children (one gained adult life). Pencarrow continued as the country home of the Molesworths.

**[3]** Tombstone of Elizabeth Molesworth, mother of Frances

The livestock and fine library at Wembury were sold in 1766 by John Molesworth as William's executor, and the house and lands rented out. A land tax assessment of 1780 shows Wembury Manor belonging to 'Mrs Molesworth' (that is, Frances, as William's heir), and it is named in her marriage settlement with John in 1785. By 1797 'it was in ruins' and was sold – to Thomas Lockyer – in 1802 for £28,000. Lockyer pulled the old building down and built the late Georgian manor that stands today.<sup>8</sup>

There are other unexpected links between the Molesworth and Pratt families. Frances' grandmother, Barbara was from another merchant family, the Morices. Barbara's first cousin John Morice, a Cornwall MP, had married Ann Jeffreys, daughter of the rich City merchant Sir Jeffrey Jeffreys – who was the grandfather of

Elizabeth Jeffreys, Lord Camden's wife. So the future inheritance of the land to be Camden Town was already linked through the Morices.

By 1762, at the age of four, Frances had lost both parents, her sister and her aunt, and her uncle had remarried. What next happened in these years for Frances is unclear.<sup>9</sup> Sir John Molesworth, Frances' widower grandfather, in his 1766 will, made his son, John Molesworth, Frances' guardian – suggesting she was taken into the family at Pencarrow. The Wembury estate accounts show payments to John Molesworth 'as administrator of William Molesworth, his brother' up until 1774, when Frances would have become 16. That year, her aunt Margaret and uncle Charles Bingham (soon to become Lord Lucan) received the accounts 'as curatrix or guardian legally assigned'. And by November 1775 Frances was in London: in his diary, the Earl of Pembroke wrote, 'I saw Lady Bingham and Miss Molesworth at the Club Ball the night before last, the latter dancing, looking very pretty.'<sup>10</sup>

### **At the Lucans**

Charles Bingham's family were landlords in Mayo, on the north-west coast of Ireland, since arriving with the Protestant armies in the seventeenth century.<sup>11</sup> Charles was a successful member of the Irish Parliament and gained an Irish peerage in 1775. Margaret, who had married him in 1760 and had five children (three living), was lively and talented – celebrated by Horace Walpole among others. She painted miniatures that remain valued, such as the illustrations to Shakespeare in five volumes at Althorp library. And she also published a poem in 1768, in both Dublin

and London, which shows strong political concern for Ireland. The footnotes of the poem include these paragraphs:<sup>12</sup>

The situation of these miserable people in the province that I am most acquainted with, is truly lamentable. The lower class never eat meat or bread, not even on Christmas Day, (when the poor of all other countries make a feast) but are confined to potatoes for food, and to water for their drink. ...As to their cottages, such is their wretched poverty, that it is a known fact, the cottage frequently pulls it down to exempt himself from paying the hearth tax, which is two shillings only, but which he is absolutely unable to pay...

... these unfortunate people are deprived of the rights of free-born subjects; they can neither take lands, purchase lands, nor enjoy paternal estates, nor can they lend money on mortgages with any security; they cannot keep arms to defend their houses, nor wear them to defend their persons, or to appear like a gentlemen; they cannot keep a horse without being liable to be deprived of him; they cannot send their children abroad for education, nor are they allowed schools to educate them at home. ... my opinion is, that if the Parliament of England wish that the Parliament of Ireland should make any alteration in their popery laws, they ought to begin with repealing those which exist here against papists ...

Frances would therefore have encountered progressive views with the Lucans, at their home in Charles Street near Berkeley Square, Mayfair. James Boswell described



being invited to the Bingham's in 1785: 'Lady Lucan exceedingly entertaining. His Lordship hospitable. No company there, only his son and Miss Molesworth, his niece. Was pleased to see an Irish family that goes home every year, yet comfortable...'

Margaret Bingham, as Lady Lucan, was also a leading member of the blue-stocking salons of the times, such as those led by Mary Montagu and Hester Thrale where Samuel Johnson and Joshua Reynolds were also to be seen.<sup>13</sup> The social diarist Frances Burney records Lady Lucan and Frances Molesworth at one such party on 8 January 1785.

Margaret's eldest daughter, Lavinia Bingham, at whose wedding William Jones had composed his ode, was the closest in age to Frances. Lavinia was perhaps brighter, but Frances better looking.<sup>14</sup> There is a drawing of Frances by Lavinia, signed and dated 1780 [2]. She wears a feathered hat, as in the Reynolds portrait, holds a folded letter and sits opposite a feathered parrot – a symbol perhaps of her freedom, her readiness to take on the world.<sup>15</sup>

[4] Frances Molesworth drawn by Lavinia Bingham

### **Political life**

Lavinia married George Spencer, son of the first Earl Spencer, in a love-match that his parents did stop. The Earl had built a palatial house in Arlington Street looking

on to Green Park, at the heart of political London and when Lord Spencer died shortly after the marriage of George to Lavinia, the couple took on the role of society hosts.<sup>16</sup>

The political round at the end of the eighteenth century was family work.<sup>17</sup> The tone was notoriously set by Georgiana, Lady Devonshire, George Spencer's sister, who had secured the Westminster parliamentary seat for opposition politician Charles Fox by kissing a butcher. In a later election, Lord Spencer was 'much obliged' to his sisters for their political assistance, but doubted that his wife Lavinia 'had the mettle to engage so directly'.

Frances, once married, similarly had political work to perform with her husband. Morning visits undertaken by lords and their ladies were often co-ordinated as shared political projects. The lady's assembly was run in a similar fashion to a minister's levée.<sup>18</sup> Frances' equal contribution in formal settings is suggested in a silver dinner service, auctioned at Sotheby's in 1964, which is engraved with the joint crest and coat-of-arms of Pratt and Molesworth **[3]**.<sup>19</sup> There is also a small aside from Horace Walpole, when Charles Bingham was elevated to an English peerage in 1795, suggesting Frances's influence also at Court: "– no wonder. Lady Camden, the Vice Queen, is you know Lady Lucan's niece."<sup>20</sup>

**[3]**. Silver tableware with heraldic arms of Pratt and Molesworth

Lord Camden, John's father, had been a close friend of the William Pitt the Elder. Pitt's son, as Prime Minister in 1794, asked John Jeffreys to take the role of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, head of the government, representing the Crown. John Jeffreys accepted and for three turbulent years, to 1798, he was in Dublin. Ireland was in ferment and the British military force was stretched. A French naval invasion was defeated at Bantry Bay by atrocious weather rather than the outnumbered British troops.

Frances appears to have been an active diplomatic partner. In 1796 she wrote to Lady Louisa Conolly, wife of the chief political leader of Irish independence. Frances 'Hopes that political differences will not prevent them meeting'. Lady Conolly likewise looks forward to meeting Frances 'at some of our friends houses. ... the steady duty I consider myself bound to with respect to Mr Conolly's politics does not in the least diminish the personal respect and regard I entertain for His Excellency and Your Ladyship ...'<sup>21</sup>

In a later historical novel, Lewis Wingfield reimagines a night at Crow Street Theatre in Dublin when 'the lady-Lieutenant herself had commanded the performance at the theatre, and all *bon ton* was there...Ladies of highest rank rustled up and curtseyed, then formed into a parterre of shot silks and wavering plumes behind my Lord Camden. It was a magnificent spectacle of brilliancy and wealth'.<sup>22</sup> Yet with the uprising against English rule in December 1796, Lady Castlereagh (a cousin through marriage) took refuge with Lady Camden, who was 'stitching flannel jackets to be sent to the freezing troops as they made their way to the south-west coast'. And

together they 'joined a flood of refugees on the first packet to Holyhead' and to widespread dismay at the 'leaving of the ladies'.<sup>23</sup>

### **Social life**

Frances left regrettably few letters. There is a short correspondence, in the British Library, written in her hand in 1802 to Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore in County Down (the area of her cousin Lady Castlereagh). Percy had edited a book of 'Miscellaneous Works' of Oliver Goldsmith and was donating the proceeds to support Goldsmith's niece, who still lived in some poverty in Ireland. Frances accepted to buy two copies, for three guineas together: it is quite a brief letter but written with gentleness, not at all formal in style.<sup>24</sup>

Frances and John had three daughters – Frances Ann, Caroline and Georgiana – and their one son Charles was born in 1799.<sup>25</sup> After their marriage, John Pratt, John's uncle, had made over to Lord Camden the Pratt family's country residence at Wilderness Park, near Sevenoaks in Kent. John inherited this on his father's death in 1794, and from 1805 he also gained Bayham Abbey, to the south of Tunbridge Wells from his cousin. A glancing view of Camden family life is given in the correspondence between Sarah and Robert Spencer, the children of Frances' cousin Lavinia. Arriving as a guest in 1811, Sarah described Wilderness as 'almost the prettiest and cheerfulest [place] I know ... we were greeted with as much kindness, to be sure, as ever was used towards anybody. They are good creatures, all of 'em'.

Frances Pery Calvert, who was from an Irish political family and whose husband was English Member of Parliament, records her meeting with Frances in 1805 less generously: 'We went to see Lady Rossmore, and met Lady Camden there. How altered she is, from a very pretty, round-faced girl, which I remember her, with an elegant little figure, and beautiful teeth, she is now a little hump-back wizened woman, with black teeth, and yet she is not much above forty.' A pencil drawing [4], which may be of her at this time, is more appealing although she has a stare (or resignation?) that some might have found intimidating.<sup>26</sup>

[4] Portrait of Frances, Countess Camden.

After the return from Ireland, Frances lived in the Pratt family houses at Wilderness and at Bayham Abbey, where she died in 1829, seventy-one years old. Yet while there are few records reflecting her family life, there are strong traces in the *Morning Post* of her success as a hostess of London society, at their house at 22 Arlington Street, Piccadilly.<sup>27</sup>

In March 1805 'The Countess of Camden commences her fashionable parties next week'. In 1806 three balls, in January, May and June, took place, each with more than 300 guests.<sup>28</sup> (This would also have been near the time of her daughters' 'coming out'.) In 1807 the Earl and Countess of Camden, with their 'amiable and accomplished daughters' were among a 'select company' of guests of the Duchess of Windsor at her house in Blackheath. In February 1808, in an early opening to the

season at Arlington Street, 'Lady Camden means to surprise her friends by the splendour of her illuminated vases and Grecian lamps', while in October 1809 Lady Frances Camden and her eldest daughter were reported among 'fashionables of distinction in their brouche-landaus-and-four' at Margate.

In February 1811, the 'superb residence of the fashionable lady in Arlington Street, Piccadilly, was thrown open to the gay world...The only amusement was cards: *whist* was *the game*'. In March 1814 for The Marchioness's Assembly, 'A splendid suite of rooms, (thrown open on Tuesday night, at Camden House, in the Green Park, for the reception of a select proportion of the Fashionable World,) were objects of general admiration.' And in the depression following the return of British troops from the Napoleonic wars, in celebrating the 1816 Royal Marriage of Prince William and Princess Mary, 'hitherto Lady Salisbury and Lady Camden have been the only people who ventured on the expenditure on a dozen pounds of Sperm Candles'. The same year, as 'entertainments at Camden House' for 'a portion of the Cabinet Ministers, &c. [a] sumptuous banquet was served up soon after six o'clock.'

Frances fulfilled her role. Under the headline 'Ladies Dresses at the Queen's Drawing Room', the *Weekly Entertainer* in 1816 reported the Queen in orange satin, with superb black Chentilla lace and, following three princesses, Marchioness Camden is next in order, wearing a contrasting 'elegant dress of blue satin, drapery of blue crape, richly trimmed with blond'. In May 1819, 'The Marchioness of Camden's Party ... was attended by a crowd of Fashionables, among whom were – The Foreign Ministers, Duchesses of Richmond and Marlborough; Marchionesses of Salisbury and

Winchester, and about 100 other leaders ...' And as late as June 1824, when Frances was in her sixties, the 'Marchioness Camden's Assembly' was still on the diary.

## **A visible life**

The tradition of history has favoured men – women are often considered only as partners. That is partly true also for Frances, who was wife to a marquess. And yet history is the combination of circumstance with personality. Frances was at the centre of élite life in London for four decades at the turn of the nineteenth century. Other élite women have gained historical recognition, including two who were acquainted with Frances through family – the politically active Georgiana Spencer, Countess of Devonshire, who was her cousin Lavinia's sister-in-law, and the rich heiress Frances Anne Vane-Tempest who married Lord Charles Stewart and became Lady Londonderry, half-brother to Lord Castlereagh.<sup>29</sup>

But Frances is not included among 200 élite women in England (over five centuries) recently studied.<sup>30</sup> It has been said that '... in the archives of landed families can be found some of the best-documented and most articulate accounts of women's lives in all of British history.'<sup>31</sup> Frances, however, has left almost no documentation. In contrast with other substantial correspondence in the Camden family papers, including political letters of John Jeffreys, there are no letters from or to Frances. It seems unlikely that someone else selectively removed them – there is no suggestion of family embarrassment.

Yet, in contrast with her absence of writing, Frances is significantly known to us through the painting of Joshua Reynolds. Reynolds portrayed Frances twice in her youth.<sup>32</sup> One painting hangs in the Huntington, in California, USA. The second is currently loaned by the Camden Estate Trust to Tunbridge Wells Museum with portraits of Ann and Caroline, two of Frances' daughters, as well as husband John. Reynolds was a friend of Lord Camden, was at Lady Lucan's bluestocking evenings and later, as Royal Painter, would have attended at the balls and assemblies of the leading families and Society. He had painted Lord Camden as Lord Chancellor in the 1760s, and Lavinia Bingham three times: the gallery of the Spencers at Althorp has several of his portraits.

There were earlier connections also. Reynolds was from the West Country: his father was schoolmaster in the small town of Plympton to the east of Plymouth, nearby Wembury. The Molesworths were early patrons: in 1755, Reynolds painted both William Molesworth and 'Mrs William Molesworth' – that is Elizabeth, Frances' mother – and later John Molesworth. These three paintings hang in Pencarrow.<sup>33</sup> At much the same time Reynolds had also painted Mary and Anne Barnardston,<sup>34</sup> the nieces of Mary Morice (who had married Jeffrey Jeffreys and would be the aunt of John). Sadly, no picture survives of Frances's mother-in-law, Elizabeth Lady Camden.<sup>35</sup>

## **Memorials**



Because the word 'Camden' is now used so much in relation to a place, it is easily forgotten as belonging earlier to a person, Charles Pratt, who took it for his baronetcy. The developers of the aristocratic estates of eighteenth century London frequently gave names associated with their noble owners, although the families lived elsewhere. It is chance that Lincoln's Inn, where Lord Camden lived for thirty years (and where John was born) is now in the Borough of Camden.

Lord Camden moved his London house to Mayfair in 1775 (his country house, Wildernesse, was near Sevenoaks, Kent). The Bingham's lived near Berkeley Square in the same period and as political families may have known of each other. Although his mother died in 1779, it was not until 1785 that John gained his inheritance, when his spinster aunt Frances Jeffreys, the last of his mother's generation, died in Welbeck Street.<sup>36</sup> This was perhaps the prompt for his marriage proposal to Frances.

The Jeffreys name was incorporated into the Pratt/Camden family both in the name 'John Jeffreys Pratt' and also in new areas of the Camden Town built after 1800 – there was first a Jeffreys Terrace on the road towards Kentish Town and subsequently Jeffreys Street. John's active interest in the development of Camden Town at the time is recorded in correspondence from the land agents Claridge and Iveson, who would have overseen setting out the roads.

There is no record that Frances ever came to what is now Camden, apart from her presence with John at the ceremony for consecration of the new St Pancras Church at Euston in 1822. Most of the streets and terraces of Camden Town were named

after the Pratt family. Molesworth is invisible, except in archives. The Camden Town Estate map of 1832 shows, at the corner of Jeffreys Street and Kentish Town Road, a group of houses built by Samuel Collard between 1808 and 1810, when they were named Molesworth Place (Figure, M1 – M4).<sup>37</sup> The buildings were Grade II listed in 1977.

**[7]** Molesworth Place on Camden Town Estate map, 1832

**[8]** Molesworth Place

Frances was an active and powerful person, fulfilling a role equal, in the times, of her husband John. She remains in lines of poetry, contemporary diaries and the sightings of admiring Fashion. We know a little of her parents and short life at Wembury. But as an orphan, the greatest influence was her aunt Margaret, Lady Lucan, who brought her into Society. Perhaps a plaque might be placed at the corner of Jeffreys Street as a visible memorial to Frances Molesworth – Marchioness Camden.

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<sup>1</sup> William Jones, *The Muse recalled* (Strawberry Press, 1781).

<sup>2</sup> There were other John Pratts in the family. In letters, Lord Camden wrote of him as 'Jack'..

<sup>3</sup> Henry Eeles, *Lord Chancellor Camden and his Family* (Philip Allan, 1934).

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- <sup>4</sup> There are two existing portraits, respectively at Tunbridge Wells Museum and the Huntington Art Gallery, California, USA, although only one completed payment in Reynolds' pocket book. Reynolds also painted Lavinia Bingham, who became Lady Spencer.
- <sup>5</sup> John Winter-Lotimer, 'The Chislehurst connection: Camden Place & Camden Town', *Camden History Review*, vol. 23, (1999), pp. 5-8.
- <sup>6</sup> Wembury House picture in John Harris (ed), 'The Prideaux collection of topographical drawings, *Architectural History*, Vol. 7 (1964), p 76. Elizabeth Chudleigh, sometime Countess of Bristol, had inherited it from her mother. Her life included being tried for bigamy by the House of Lords. See Claire Gervat, *Elizabeth: The Scandalous Life of an Eighteenth-Century Duchess*, (Century, 2003).
- <sup>7</sup> I am grateful for advice from local historians at Wembury and Pencarrow
- <sup>8</sup> A.G. Collings, *A Wembury History*, (Wembury Local History Society, 2008).
- <sup>9</sup> The records for Pencarrow were among those destroyed in Exeter in the last war.
- <sup>10</sup> Henry Herbert, *Pembroke papers, 1780-1794* (Cape 1950).
- <sup>11</sup> Theresa Bingham-Daly, *The Mayo Bingham* (Pentland Press, 1997).
- <sup>12</sup> Margaret Bingham (Lady Lucan). *Verses on the Present State of Ireland in Dublin*. The publication is considered at <http://orlando.cambridge.org>
- <sup>13</sup> The mixed debating societies were an important part of London intellectual life until William Pitt the Younger stopped them in 1793, with the Revolutionary wars on the Continent, for being 'political'.
- <sup>14</sup> Lord Sheffield, in the 1790s, described Lavinia '... in force of character and brilliancy of conversation, she was surpassed by few'. But Horace Mann, in letters to Walpole, said of Lavinia and her sister Louisa, 'I wish they were as handsome as their cousin Frances Molesworth', see John Doran, *Mann and manners at the Court of Florence* (Bentley 1876), p. 346.
- <sup>15</sup> Provenance unknown. <http://jot101ok.blogspot.com/2015/09/a-rare-drawing-by-lavinia.html#more>
- <sup>16</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, George Spencer: 'Both at Althorp and Spencer House in London the Spencers delighted in entertaining the foremost intellectual and political leaders of their time.'
- <sup>17</sup> Amanda Vickery (ed), *Women, privilege and power: British politics 1750 to the present*, (Stanford, 2002).
- <sup>18</sup> Elaine Chalus, *Elite women in English political life , c.1754-1790*, (Clarendon Press, 2005).
- <sup>19</sup> [sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2017/ballyedmond-collection-l17324/lot.405.html](http://sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2017/ballyedmond-collection-l17324/lot.405.html)
- <sup>20</sup> Horace Walpole, *Letters to Miss Berry*, 25 August 1795.
- <sup>21</sup> British Library, Western Manuscripts MS 34922, ff. 22 - 23, 6/7 June 1795.
- <sup>22</sup> Lewis Wingfield, *My Lords of Strogue*, 1879, vol 2, p21.
- <sup>23</sup> John Bew, *Castlereagh: a life*, (Oxford UP 2012).
- <sup>24</sup> British Library, Western Manuscripts MS 42516, ff. 131-139, 9 June - 30 Dec. 1802.
- <sup>25</sup> He became the third Earl of Camden in 1840.

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<sup>26</sup> Nathaniel Dance, Fine Art Museums of San Francisco. Other images of Lady Camden are reproductions of earlier work, including an engraving reproducing Reynolds by Charles Waltner, in the Royal Collection.

<sup>27</sup> The house is described in David Watkin, *A house in town: 22 Arlington Street, its owners and builders*, (Batsford, 1984). Most of the quotations are from the *Morning Post*.

<sup>28</sup> This would also have been near the 'coming out' of her three daughters, Anne, Georgiana and Caroline. Nevertheless, they all remained unmarried until Caroline finally married cousin Alexander Stewart in 1825. Earlier, newspapers regularly reported 'the ladies Pratt' accompanying one or both parents.

<sup>29</sup> Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, (HarperCollins 1998). Diane Urquhart, *The ladies of Londonderry*, (IB Tauris, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> Kimberly Schutte, *Women, rank and marriage in the British aristocracy, 1485-2000*, (Palgrave 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Peter Mittler, *Reviews in History*, no 69, (Institute of Historical Research, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Huntington Art Gallery (USA), [emuseum.huntington.org/people/3331/frances-molesworth-later-marchioness-camden](http://emuseum.huntington.org/people/3331/frances-molesworth-later-marchioness-camden) (object no. 24/32). Reynolds' notebooks show a 'first' payment for Miss Molesworth of £37 10s in November 1777 and 'second' payment of £40 in January 1778: however, this indicates only one painting commercially.

<sup>33</sup> Sam Smiles. *Joshua Reynolds: the acquisition of genius*.

[www.artcornwall.org/features/Sir\\_Joshua\\_Reynolds\\_Sam\\_Smiles.htm](http://www.artcornwall.org/features/Sir_Joshua_Reynolds_Sam_Smiles.htm)

<sup>34</sup> The Barnardiston family were City merchants who had bought property in Suffolk. The painting of Mary (1755) is in the Victorian and Albert museum.

<sup>35</sup> Tantalisingly, a letter in 1765 from Lord Camden in Bath to his daughter described 'Lady Camden sitting for her portrait to Mr. Hoare in Crayon'.

<sup>36</sup> Not, as others have stated, Mrs Frances Jeffreys, his grandmother, who died in January 1780, age 96.

<sup>37</sup> Map: London Metropolitan Archives, *E/CAM* series. Photograph, *Survey of London*, vol. 19 (pt2), plate 26b.

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## Figures

[1] Frances Molesworth by Joshua Reynolds (1777). Permission Marquis of Camden.

[2] Wembury House, eighteenth century by Edmund Prideaux

[3] Tombstone of Elizabeth Molesworth, mother of Frances

[4] Frances Molesworth drawn by Lavinia Bingham

[5] Silver tableware with heraldic arms of Pratt and Molesworth

[6] Portrait of Frances, Countess Camden

[7] Molesworth Place on Camden Town Estate map, 1832

[8] Molesworth Place, view from Kentish Town Road