

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, Case 28 (2022-23): 38 Original Drawings of Flowers at Kew by Simon Taylor	
Statement from Expert Adviser	Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the drawings meet Waverley criteria one, two, and three See below
Statement from the Applicant	Statement from the applicant referencing the three Waverley criteria. The Reviewing Committee will designate an object as a 'national treasure' if it considers that its departure from the UK would be a misfortune on one or more of the following three grounds: a) Is it closely connected with our history and national life? b) Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance? c) Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history? See below
Note of case hearing	See below
Press release	A press release was issued by the Secretary of State on 12 July 2023: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/collection-of-drawings-which-helped-develop-the-royal-botanic-gardens-at-kew-at-risk-of-leaving-the-uk
Recommended price	£17,640
1st Deferral period	11 September 2023
2nd Deferral period	15 January 2024
Note of outcome	

RCEWA – 38 Original Drawings of Flowers at Kew by Simon Taylor

Statement of the Expert Adviser to the Secretary of State that the drawings meet Waverley criteria one, two, and three.

Please note that images and appendices referenced are not reproduced.

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF OBJECT AND SUMMARY

An album of drawings of flowers at Kew by Simon Taylor

“38 original watercolour drawings of flowers at Kew by Simon Taylor (1742-1796). Late eighteenth century”.

One folio volume (607 x 450 mm) containing 38 watercolours on vellum, unsigned and undated. Latin binomial names of the plant subjects neatly written on each painting in ink. Contemporary binding in red Morocco gilt, with arms of John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute. Spine title reads “Plants by Taylor. Vol. XIII”.

Good condition but all vellums have various quantities of staining and surface dirt especially around corners and edges where attached to backing sheet. Occasional spotting on the backing sheets. Some artworks detaching from paper backing. Wear and scuffs to binding.

Simon Taylor (1742-1796) was educated at William Shipley’s art school and according to Tjaden (1971: 168) awarded prizes from the [Royal] Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce for consecutive years between 1756 and 1761. In 1760, at the age of seventeen, Taylor was employed by John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute (1713-1792) to paint botanical subjects, which it is believed he continued to do until around 1780.

This volume is one of a set of an original fifteen volumes comprising approximately 688 drawings of plants painted on vellum commissioned by the 3rd Earl of Bute around the 1760s and ’70s. The earliest record of their existence is an entry in the catalogue of the sale of the natural history part of Bute’s Library (Leigh & Sotheby; 1794), which followed his death in 1792. The entry (Lot 1246) lists the volumes and the sub-lots into which the drawings were divided and sold under the title “*Taylor’s Drawings of Plants and Flowers. This work contains 690 plants contained in 684 beautiful and highly finished drawings ... by Mr Taylor, from plants chiefly a [sic] Kew Gardens.*” (*NB. the discrepancy in the numbers arises from a recount of the plates as printed in the catalogue sub-lots and differs from that given in the auction lot title).

An annotated copy of the catalogue, with the prices achieved, is held in the British Museum (see references for link to digitised copy). In all, Bute’s collection contained 4,678 items and was valued at £7,486/= (Gillan; 2018, p.88). Although the sales demonstrate Bute’s broad interests and commitment as a patron of the

arts and sciences, his contributions, especially to botany and the development of Kew, to where this volume of drawings bears outstanding significance, have been undervalued and inadequately studied due to his contemporary reputation and perceived political failure.

The existence of this volume of drawings in the Broughton Library was “*effectively lost*” (Miller in Sotheby’s, 2022a), which has meant that these drawings, as with most of the Broughton Library, have remained unseen for up to 70 years. The volume therefore has never been exhibited or subject to scholarly study and much work is required to be undertaken on the drawings in this volume, to elucidate exactly where and when they were made, and how they fit with the original collection - of which less than 200 drawings are known to be held in UK institutions.

Additional research is also required on the work of the little-known Simon Taylor. Were the album to leave the UK, and risk being further broken up, the possibility of such studies being made would be seriously hindered, if not completely lost.

2. CONTEXT

- **Provenance**

John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute (1712-1792). His executor’s sale of the Bute Library, Leigh and Sotheby, 8 May 1794, lot 1246.

The Library Collection of Henry Rogers Boughton, 2nd Baron Fairhaven (1900-1973) established by him between 1927 and 1960, United Kingdom.

[REDACTED] acquired through descent from the above.

Key literary and exhibition references

The first, and to date, only study of any of the botanical drawings commissioned by Bute from Taylor was published by Tjaden (1971), in which there is no mention of the existence of the present volume. Tjaden’s research is devoted largely to a single volume from the collection that was acquired by Kew in 1933. The volume has not been previously exhibited.

No. of comparable objects by the same artist already in the UK, in both public and private collections?

Only those volumes and drawings in the collections of Kew, the Natural History Museum and the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society from Bute’s commissioned collection are referred to in Tjaden’s article, though it is possible that additional paintings might be held by the Fitzwilliam Museum from donations made by Boughton in 1966 and 1973.

Aside from those drawings, very few other examples of Taylor’s are known in the UK in either public or private collections. Tjaden described other individual drawings, including those from the Duchess of Portland’s sale in 1786, two of

which were signed by Taylor and form part of the Tankerville collection at Kew. Miller also used a drawing by Taylor for his engraved plate in Ellis's '*History account of coffee ...*' (1774).

Outside the UK, a volume of Taylor's works is known to have been acquired by the Oak Spring Library, Upperville, USA (the title description confirms the Bute binding, spine label "*Plants by Taylor*" and watercolour ruled borders). Drawings by Taylor, Georg Ehret, Frederick Miller and other significant botanical artists were commissioned by John Fothergill (1712-1780), after whose death they were purchased by Catherine the Great and which probably survive in St Petersburg.

3. WAVERLEY CRITERIA

This collection meets Waverley Criteria **One**, **Two** and **Three**.

Waverley 1 - Is it closely connected with our history and national life? If yes, please explain why?

According to the documentation the plants depicted were largely made at Kew, though further research is required to determine which. Some *may* have been made from specimens in Bute's own important garden at Luton Hoo in Bedfordshire, where he grew many new species of plants being introduced from all over the world, but no written records of the plants grown there has survived. The greatest potential importance of these volumes derives from the key role played by Bute played in the development of the royal garden at Kew for Princess Augusta, which he helped "transform into a national botanic garden of international repute" (Gillan, 2018: 90).

The early history and records (visual and written) of the plants grown there at this period is poorly represented in Kew's own collection and therefore the present volume forms a significant record of the plants in the garden prior to Banks's involvement after 1772. As one of the *major* gardens in the UK involved in the global plant exchange and development of botany, this visual record is inherently connected to British history and national life and therefore its departure would be a misfortune.

Waverley 2 - Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance? If yes, please explain why?

The drawings are in the tradition of fine botanical painting established in Britain by Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708-1770). 38 years his senior Taylor was inevitably aware of, and probably influenced by, Ehret's work as they worked together as summer guests of the Duchess of Portland at her home, Bulstrode (Tjaden, 1971: 68).

Some of the paintings possess the high finish of Ehret's work and acknowledgment of Taylor's skill was attested to by the naturalist John Ellis (1705-1776) who employed him following Ehret's death in 1770. In a letter to the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus, Ellis wrote '*I suppose you know Ehret is dead! We have nobody to supply his place in point of elegance. We have a young man, one*

Taylor, who draws all the rare plants of Kew Garden for Lord Bute; he does it tolerably well, I shall employ him very soon ..." (Ellis; 1770). The works of Taylor's on vellum that were sold in 1813 at the auction of the library of Ralph Willett (1719-1795) were described as "very fine" (Merly Library, 1813).

The outstanding importance of these drawings lie not only aesthetically in their style, composition and scientific accuracy. More importantly they are a unique record of what was growing in British gardens, especially Kew, undocumented elsewhere.

Waverley 3 - Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history? If yes, please explain why?

The paintings are a significant surviving part of a once much larger (and now largely dispersed) collection of outstanding importance for the study of plant introductions into the UK, in addition to the development of Kew Gardens and Bute's own garden at Luton Hoo. In the volume held by Kew, several paintings are of plants that were undescribed and new to science when they were depicted and the same may apply to those in the current volume. The first edition of William Aiton's *Hortus Kewensis* – a catalogue of the plants growing in the gardens – was published in 1789 and includes records of the first introduction of the species grown to the UK. A detailed study will allow further information to be discovered about the sources of many of the plants first illustrated by Taylor.

As the details of the plants illustrated in this volume have till now been unknown, it has not been possible to study them in relation to the history and development of botany in the UK and their significant association to Lord Bute. They are of outstanding significance in the branches of horticultural, artistic and scientific history.

4. DETAILED CASE

Who painted the drawings

Very little is known about Taylor as, unlike other botanical artist contemporaries, he does not appear to have corresponded with the leading naturalists of his day. The quality of his work was appreciated by the most discriminating of patrons – not only Lord Bute, but other major horticulturists and commissioners of botanical drawings including Dr John Fothergill, the Duchess of Portland and Ralph Willett.

Significance of figures associated with the object: maker/client/owners

John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute (1713-1792) was the eldest son of James Stuart, 2nd Earl of Bute, and Anne Campbell, daughter of the 1st Duke of Argyll. Educated at Eton, he succeeded his father in January 1723. He married Mary, only daughter of Edward Wortley Montagu in 1736, which following the death of her father in 1761 and her inheritance of his vast fortune, made Bute one of the richest men in Britain. This turn of fortune enabled Bute to purchase and renovate estates in Luton Hoo and Highcliffe in Dorset, using his botanical expertise to develop the

extensive gardens at the sites while also devoting himself to the patronage of science and the arts, and authorship of his famous 'Botanical Tables'.

Bute studied botany and agriculture and corresponded with other naturalists including the Dutch botanist, Johan Frederik Gronovius (1686-1762) and the English gardener and botanist Peter Collinson (1694-1768). He devoted a large amount of time to his studies, amassing a significant botanical library and acquiring seeds and plants from around the world to cultivate in his gardens. A chance meeting in 1747 with Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707-51), marked the beginning of a long-term friendship and saw him appointed as tutor to the Prince's eldest son, the future George III. Following Frederick's death, Bute became heavily involved in the development of the gardens at Kew in association with his widow, Princess Augusta - and without his input the gardens, arguably, would not be the globally scientifically gardens they are today.

The extent of Bute's extensive collecting is well documented due to the various sales of his collections which took place between 1793 and 1794. There were two auctions of his library on 30 May 1785 and another on 5 May 1794 - the latter covering his natural history collection comprising paintings and prints spread over a period of 16 days. An exhibition of Bute's collection of paintings held at the Hunterian, University of Glasgow, and Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute in 2017, showed that he was instrumental in introducing the taste for Dutch and Flemish paintings to Britain; he also had a fine collection of Italian paintings and major portraits commissioned from Allan Ramsay, Joshua Reynolds and other contemporaries.

Significance of subject-matter

The subject matter is significant as it represents a visual record of the plants grown in Kew Gardens, and potentially at Luton Hoo. They were created at a time when Britain was becoming a leading colonial power and from a botanical perspective a leading country in terms of plant exchange, with Kew at its heart. In a letter of 1761, Peter Collinson wrote of the significance of Bute's plant collecting activities and his crucial role in introducing many rare exotic trees and flowers to British gardens (Armstrong; 2002). Bute was actively involved with Kew for more than 20 years, however his contributions to the gardens have been overshadowed by those of Sir Joseph Banks, who appointed Franz Bauer (1758-1840) as Kew's first official plant illustrator, though not until after 1788. Taylor's drawings therefore remain the first visual account of the flowers and plants grown at Kew prior to 1772. The accuracy of Taylor's illustrations is such as to allow the identification of the species: each drawing includes analytical floral details alongside the main portrait of the subject.

Local/regional/national importance of the volumes

Little documentation exists regarding the plants grown at Kew until Sir John Hill, Bute's botanical workhorse, published the first inventory in his 1768 *Hortus Kewensis*. This included 3,389 species in the botanic section of the Dowager Princess of Wales's garden. By the time of William Aiton's 1789, *Hortus Kewensis*

(after the completion of Taylor's drawings) the number of plants had risen to 5,535. The drawings are therefore significant in tracing the plants growing in the gardens at Kew during a crucial stage of the garden's development and understanding their introduction to the UK.

Summary of related objects in public/private ownership in the UK

Kew Gardens: 69 Drawings by Taylor.

One volume comprising 48 unsigned botanical flower drawings on 47 sheets of vellum, mounted on card and framed by a double green watercolour border. Each drawing is consecutively numbered from 341 to 388 and bears a binomial Linnean name, which in some instances is followed by a page reference to *Species Plantarum*, queried, or denoted "New Species". The binding has the arms of John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute; the spine is lettered "Plants by Taylor" but lacks a volume number.

Natural History Museum: 106 Drawings by Taylor.

Purchased at the Bute sale by the West India merchant and naturalist George Hibbert (1757-1837). Three volumes with the Earl of Bute's stamp and 106 drawings on vellum framed by a double green watercolour border. An additional 73 drawings with double borders in a slightly different style. Nearly all drawings have binomial Linnean name in ink on the drawing.

Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society: 11 Drawings by Taylor

Acquired via the Cory bequest in 1936. Each drawing has an inscription and is numbered but lack watercolour borders.

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[AhV4SKEAHYqxBIgQ6AF6BAgXEAM#v=onepage&q=Earl%20of%20Bute.%20including%20His%20Lordship's%20noble%20collection%20of%20coloured%20drawings%20in%20natural%20history%20By%20Taylor&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ZddhAAAacAAJ&pg=PP1&lpg=PP1&q=Earl+of+Bute.+including+His+Lordship%27s+noble+collection+of+coloured+drawings+in+natural+history+By+Taylor&source=bl&ots=RzxoKhZfVf&sig=ACfU3U3sIWvdaFeyEuAkC1QljR7CRm5jPA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjW-KOw1Pf-AhV4SKEAHYqxBIgQ6AF6BAgXEAM#v=onepage&q=Earl%20of%20Bute.%20including%20His%20Lordship's%20noble%20collection%20of%20coloured%20drawings%20in%20natural%20history%20By%20Taylor&f=false) Accessed 13/05/2023

Merly Library (1813) A catalogue of the well known and celebrated library of the late Ralph Willett A very choice selection of botanical drawings by Van Huysum, Taylor, Brown, Lee, &c. ... which will be sold at auction by Leith and Sotheby ... <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/r76fafpu/items?canvas=7>
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RCEWA – 38 Original Drawings of Flowers at Kew by Simon Taylor

Applicant's statement

Please note that images and appendices referenced are not reproduced.

Is the item closely connected with our history and national life?

This is volume 13 only of an original set of 15 volumes, which comprised a total of 684 botanical drawings on vellum by Taylor; as such this volume is only a fragment, and not a complete body of work. The set of 15 volumes was originally sold in lots in our rooms on 8 May 1794, at the auction of Bute library. Work by Taylor is well represented in UK institutions. There are significant holdings of his work at Kew, the Natural History Museum, the RHS Lindley Library, and the Natural History Museum.

Is it of outstanding aesthetic importance?

Although his work is good, Taylor is not among the greats of botanical illustration. As W.L. Tjaden notes "He published nothing and there is no evidence that he had any competence as botanist apart from his abilities as a draughtsman. He did not, as did Ehret, correspond with the leading naturalists of his time, nor was he Ehret's equal as an artist".

Is it of outstanding significance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history?

In terms of rarity, scholarly importance in the field, and aesthetic value, there seems little about this incomplete volume to suggest that an export block is desirable.

Reference: W.L. Tjaden, "Drawings at Kew by Simon Taylor", Kew Bulletin, 1971, 26:167-169

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, note of case hearing	
Meeting date	Wednesday 7 June 2023
Object	38 Original Drawings of Flowers at Kew by Simon Taylor
Expert Adviser's objection	The Library Special Collections Manager, Head of Special Collections and Archives Division, Natural History Museum had objected to the export of the drawings under the first, second and third Waverley criteria on the grounds that their departure from the UK would be a misfortune because they were so closely connected with our history and national life; they were of outstanding aesthetic importance and they were of outstanding significance for the study of the history and development of botany in the UK.
Committee Members & Independent Assessors	Six of the regular eight Committee members were present and able to inspect the drawings. They were joined in person by three independent assessors, acting as temporary members of the Committee
Value on the licence	The value shown on the export licence application was £17,640, which represented the hammer price at auction (£14,000) plus the buyer's premium (£3,500) plus the overhead premium (£140).
	<p>The applicant was informed that there was currently an interim process in place for Committee hearings. The Committee was still holding hybrid meetings but any Committee members, including the independent assessors, were required to inspect the object under consideration prior to discussing the case and voting. Any permanent Committee members or independent assessors who were not able to view the object were not able to vote.</p> <p>The applicant confirmed that the owner understood the circumstances under which an export licence might be refused.</p>
VAT	The applicant confirmed that the value did not include VAT and that VAT would not be payable in the event of a UK sale.
Private treaty sale	The applicant confirmed that there would be a benefit from a tax-free private treaty sale to a UK institution.

Expert Adviser's comments	<p>The expert adviser stated that they did not have anything further to add to their submission.</p> <p>When questioned about the other volumes by Simon Taylor from Lord Bute's collection, they clarified that the three volumes held in the Natural History Museum had the exact same binding and tooling on the cover and that Taylor's drawings in the volumes were distinctive despite being unsigned. However, the 15 volumes from the collection had been dispersed globally and the locations of many were unknown.</p> <p>They noted that the aesthetic significance of those drawings was inherently due to them being visual representations of plants growing at Kew Gardens at the time as opposed to them being the finest botanical drawings, compared to those of Georg Ehret. They also noted the importance of the drawings to the development at Kew Gardens specifically, as well as national garden development, including Lord Bute's garden at Luton Hoo, at the time.</p>
Applicant's comments	<p>The applicant stated that they did not have anything further to add to their submission.</p> <p>When questioned about the binding of the album, they stated that it was not unusual for drawings on vellum to be mounted on paper and bound in this manner. They noted that the binding was probably contemporary to the drawings and this book was likely the first time the drawings had been bound together.</p>
Committee's discussion	<p>The expert adviser and applicant retired and the Committee discussed the case.</p> <p>They noted the importance of the drawings within the Lord Bute collection and recognised the research potential that would emerge from piecing together other drawings and volumes from that collection.</p> <p>They agreed that although the drawings were well made, the comparison to Ehret's work highlighted that they were not aesthetically of the same calibre. The botanical relevance of the drawings was much more prominent than the aesthetic importance.</p>

	<p>They noted that from a historical perspective, it was incredibly valuable to have accurate visual representations of what certain plants looked like at the time before the development of hybrid plant cultivation. Additionally, as this was a complete and intact album of drawings, it would open further research avenues into the connection with Kew Gardens and Lord Bute and the historical context of the objects.</p>
Waverley Criteria	<p>The Committee voted on whether the drawings met the Waverley criteria. Of the nine members, six members voted that they met the first Waverley criterion. Two members voted that they met the second Waverley criterion. All nine members voted that they met the third Waverley criterion. The drawings were therefore found to meet the first and third Waverley criteria for their outstanding significance to the study of history of development of botany in the UK and at Kew Gardens in particular.</p>
Matching Offer	<p>The Committee recommended the sum of £17,640 as a fair matching price.</p>
Deferral periods	<p>The Committee agreed to recommend to the Secretary of State that the decision on the export licence should be deferred for an initial period of two months. At the end of the first deferral period, if the Arts Council received notification of a serious intention to raise funds with a view to making an offer to purchase the drawings, the owner will have a consideration period of 15 Business Days to consider such offer(s). The Committee recommended that there should be a further deferral period of three months that would commence following the signing of an Option Agreement.</p>
Communication of findings	<p>The expert adviser and the applicant returned. The Chairman notified them of the Committee's decision on its recommendations to the Secretary of State.</p> <p>The expert adviser agreed to act as champion if a decision on the licence was deferred by the Secretary of State.</p>