



Christopher Clarke Antiques

Dealers in Campaign Furniture
& Travel Items

General Sir Richard Bourke, Governor NSW

£1,650



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REF: 82310

Height: 32.7 cm (12.9")

Width: 27.93 cm (11")

Depth: 1.9 cm (0.7")

Description

An important watercolour portrait of Richard Bourke, the Governor of New South Wales from 1831 to 1836.

Bourke was born on the 4th of May 1777 in Dublin and educated at Westminster School and Oxford. He graduated in 1798 and was gazetted an Ensign in the Grenadier Guards by purchase, in November of that year. He soon saw action in the Napoleonic Wars and was badly wounded to the jaw in the Netherlands in 1799. In the same year he rose to Lieutenant and Captain, again by purchase. In 1803, he joined the 47th Foot and in 1804 he became a Major and Superintendent at the Royal Military College. In September 1806 he received the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and saw action, whilst serving as Quartermaster General, in the South American expedition at Montevideo and Buenos Aires. In December 1807 he went on half pay until May of 1808 when he joined the staff of the Foreign Service. He served in the Peninsula in 1809 in Portugal and with the Spanish Army under General Cuesta. He then became the Military Resident for Galicia at Corunna between 1812 and 1814, for which he was promoted to Colonel. He was promoted to Major General in 1821 and became a Companion of the Order of the Bath in January 1835.

After Napoleon's defeat, Sir Richard retired on half pay to his estate in County Limerick, Ireland. With a need for a greater income and a better climate for his wife's health he was appointed Major General on the staff at Malta in 1825. After only a month, he was posted to the Cape of Good Hope as Acting Governor whilst Lord Somerset returned to Britain to answer charges against him. He remained there with his family until 1828. His success in South Africa led to his appointment as Governor of New South Wales in 1831. Bourke's natural liberalism has generally viewed him as a success with economic growth and his work considered to have paved the way for the end of transportation. He did face opposition to his reforms and had enemies amongst the 'old guard' in the colony. This eventually led to his resignation in 1836 and on his departure the crowds showed his popularity and donations for a statue of him were quickly raised. It was the first statue of a public figure in Australia.

He was offered the Governorship of the Cape, and then of Jamaica and the command of the forces in India but declined them all. Back in Ireland, he was appointed High Sheriff for Limerick but rejected the offer to stand as MP in 1841.

The provenance of this picture has been traced back to Spencer Perceval's family. Perceval was the only British Prime Minister to be assassinated, killed by John Bellingham in 1812. Dudley Montague Perceval, Spencer's 5th son, married Sir Richard's daughter Mary Jane Bourke in 1827. He was a Clerk of the council for the Cape of Good Hope and Sir Richard was Acting Governor for both the eastern and western districts of the Cape. This picture, along with a print of Spencer Perceval's assassination and items of Cape silver were all consigned to auction by a solicitor acting for the Percival family estate. Also auctioned were four portraits attributed to the artist James Holmes (1777-1860) of both Dudley Montagu Perceval and his wife Mary, Frederika Elizabeth Perceval and a double portrait of Isabel Perceval and her sist...