

## Frank's Forages: No. 29

### **“The Inspiration of Cassandra?”**

The title of this painting in the Great Hall puzzled me because I couldn't understand where 'Inspiration' came in. According to National Trust Collections, the title is “Cassandra and Coroebus” and it depicts the capture of Cassandra and the death of Coroebus.<sup>1</sup>



Coroebus was the son of King Mygdon of Phrygia and he came to the aid of Troy during the Trojan War out of love for Cassandra. He tried to defend Cassandra, who was captured by the Greeks, from rape by Ajax the Lesser and was killed, either by Peneleos, Diomedes or Neoptolemus. The painting depicts his death.

There are several versions of the Cassandra story. This one is taken from Virgil's epic poem, “The Aeneid”.

Cassandra was the daughter of King Priam and Queen Hecuba of Troy. She was supposedly both beautiful and insane. The story goes that Apollo gave her the power of prophecy in order to seduce her, but when she refused him, he spat into her mouth cursing her never to be believed, the said cause of her insanity. She correctly foretold the fall of Troy among other things but was considered a madwoman and never believed.

The painting has previously been attributed to one of the Gennari brothers, Benedetto or Cesare but is now believed to be by their uncle, Lorenzo Gennari. The Gennari family of artists were from Cento in Northern Italy. According to National Trust Collections, the painting dates from circa 1615-1630. As Benedetto was born in 1633 and Cesare in 1637, it is reasonable to assume that Lorenzo, born in 1595 is the artist. Lorenzo Gennari was also known as Ariminese, an Italian Renaissance painter who worked in the workshop of Giovanni Barbieri, best known as Guercino. It was at one time thought that this painting was by Guercino. However, according to expert opinion, the painting is too 'clumsy' to be by Guercino but is probably based on drawings of his.

George Lucy purchased the painting belonging to Frank Hall Standish of Duxbury Hall, Lancs., at the sale by Phillips, London on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1827 as “GUERCINO a notable Historical CASSANDRA delivered from captivity”.

Note 1. <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/533863>

Note that the details of this painting are correct in the Room Folder for the Great Hall but the previous “Inspiration of Cassandra” description is still in the painting information laminates available for visitors to read!

*Frank Storr*