

Rome and connections with items in the Burrell

On a recent trip to Rome I was on the look out for connections with the Burrell Collection. I outline below some information which may be of interest:

Borghese Gallery.

This is one of the most beautiful palaces in Rome. Camillo Borghese, who became Pope Paul V in 1605. built the Palace to house his magnificent art collection.

In Room XIX of the Gallery four of the panels in the ceiling were painted by Gavin Hamilton. He was the Scottish artist who discovered the pieces of marble, which were incorporated into the Warwick vase. Hamilton had been excavating the ruins of Emperor Hadrian's villa at Tivoli when he drained a nearby lake and found the pieces of marble.

In the Gallery there is a painting by Giovanni Belloni of the Madonna and Child painted in 1510. The painting is similar to the Bellini in the Burrell but appears to lack the crispness and clarity of the painting in the Burrell. This may be because the Borghese Bellini was painted when Bellini was 84 years old.

Palazzo Barberini.

Maffeo Barberini became Pope Urban VIII in 1623 and built this Palace to house his art collection. He left his art collection to his descendants and to ensure the collection was retained in the family he passed legislation which forbade the sale of any items in the collection.

Much of the collection remained in the wider family until 1934 when the two families which owned most of the collection told the Italian Government that they were unable to meet their fiscal and other obligations without selling some of the collection. A deal was done under which:

- One third of the collection passed to the Italian Government.
- One third remained in the family subject to the usual laws regarding tax and export restrictions.
- The family was permitted to sell the final third free of any tax liabilities or export restrictions.

The Giovanni Bellini painting, of the Madonna and Child, in the Burrell was bought by Burrell about this time and we know that it had been in the Palazzo Barberini for over four hundred years. It is possible that this painting was one of the paintings in the third category.

Henry VIII.

In the Palazzo Barberini there is a magnificent painting by Hans Holbein of Henry VIII when he was 49 years of age. The Barberini portrait depicts Henry in the same costume that he wore when he married Anne of Cleves in January 1540