

Thomas Gainsborough – The River Trent at Kings Bromley – Philadelphia Art Museum

It used to be a mystery why Thomas Gainsborough painted this view taken from the grounds of Kings Bromley Manor. However we know that John Newton of Kings Bromley bought No.9 The Circus, Bath freehold between June and December 1768 from the Marquis of Caernarvon and put it up for sale in December 1782 after his divorce. Research by Bath historian Susan Sloman, shows that Gainsborough lived at No. 17 The Circus between 1768 and 1775. It seems likely that John Newton at No.9 the Circus might commission him to paint this picture (dated 1768-70) as a commercial transaction or possibly he invited his neighbour to his family home. At the time John Newton's father was Lord of the Manor at Kings Bromley, he himself inheriting in 1776. Although Gainsborough is better known as a portrait painter he actually preferred to paint landscapes and regarded them as his most important work. The full story of John Newton is outlined in Kings Bromley Historians' publication 'The Scandalous Divorce of John Newton'.

