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THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH PAINTING

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This magnificent Thomas Gainsborough painting (oil on canvas 29¼" x 24") hangs in Gainsborough's birthplace Museum in Sudbury, Suffolk. Although referred to as the Cobbold Conversation Piece there remain some doubts as to who the sitters actually were. The most likely candidates are Mary (née Woodthorpe, died 1758) wife of Thomas Cobbold (1680-1752) maltster of Bury St Edmunds who founded the family brewery in Harwich in 1723 and their daughter Anne who married Robert Andrews, also a brewer.

Gainsborough (1727-1788) painted both portraits and landscapes often fusing these two genres within the same composition as in this picture. Landscapes had been seen as a more lowly branch of art and Gainsborough was the first British artist to consistently paint landscapes.

The painting came to Gainsborough's House from Glemham Hall but before that it was hanging at Holywells Park. Following the death of Patrick Cobbold (born 1934) in 1994 the painting was accepted by HM Government in lieu of inheritance tax and allocated to Gainsborough's House in 1998. It was the first painting to arrive at Gainsborough's birthplace by this method.

