
Koopman Rare Art

Director's Choice – Timo Koopman An Elizabethan Tankard



There is no doubting the expansion of both the population of London in the Elizabethan period and the leap in the economy largely due to the increase in trade overseas; encouraged by the infrastructure put in place to harness this growth. This new wealth, as well as the reformation of the church under Henry VIII, influenced the activities of the goldsmith in England, creating a huge demand for new plate and in particular silver for the communion. However, the silver tankard together with other drinking vessels had a special place in the 16th century with the diversity at this period was much broader in range than in later centuries to come. David Mitchell's most recent book on the *Wider Goldsmith's Trade in Elizabethan &*

Stuart London certainly highlights this fact with an insight into the records at the goldsmiths' Company Court Books, 1560 -1679, pg. 170. Communion cups, Magdalen cups, Beer bowls, Cans, Tankards, Tavern bowls, Monsieur bowls and Tavern cups are listed to name but a few.

The owners social and political status also had a large part to play in the production of the tankards too. Our tankard was most likely part of the household's buffet. The buffet display of plate was an important feature of medieval and Renaissance banquets. Often made of oak or walnut, buffets usually stood at the side of a dining room, their shelves filled with tablewares. Gold and silver vessels were displayed to convey a sense of the owner's wealth. Normally these vessels were used for the service of food and drink, but on great state occasions they would be set out purely for display.



Henry VIII at Richmond Palace circa 1540 showing his buffet display of royal plate

British Museum

The ritual of dining and the fashion of the food that was served in the Elizabethan period would again have played a part in this treasure's creation. Taking your tankard from the buffet to your place at the table would have caught the attention of others and made them focus on your silver tankard or in this case, the even more opulent gilded silver used to create this tankard makes it all the more special. The fact that this was originally one of a pair of Elizabethan tankards together with its pristine condition makes this glorious object my Director's Choice for this week.



Buckingham Palace with its magnificent display of buffet plate.



An Important Elizabeth I Silver-Gilt Tankard

London, 1592

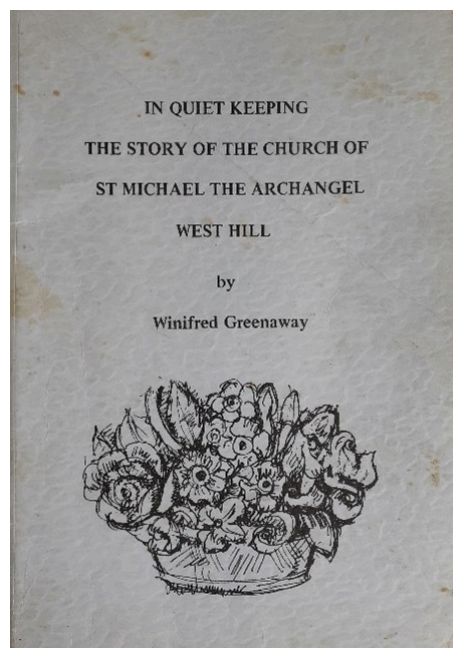
Maker's mark of I B with a rose below, flanked by pellets, in a shaped device

The maker's mark of I B with a rose below, flanked by pellets, in a shaped device has two possibilities. Either that recorded as John Brodie (Brode), see Jackson (reprinted 1996) page 103, however, the mark is also recorded as possibly John Bottomley.



Details of the cover of the tankard showing the petalled disc as part of the finial

The lidded tankard is with a plain cylindrical body, the lower part applied with a rope wire and below this and around the foot an ovolo and dart band. The spreading foot with similar ovolo and tongue ornamentation and a plain narrow rim in front of this. The hinged plain dome cover with a foliate rim which is repeated below the raised petalled disc, each with a notch, supporting a knop finial. The cast thumbpiece with a putto mask with scrolled outline. The handle with pin-prick engraved scroll-work above the initials 'RT' over 'HF', The underside of base is also engraved with the monogram '* WB *'



Provenance: Given to St Michael's Church, West Hill, on its consecration in 1846 by Lady Mary Coleridge (1788-1874); see Greenaway; In Quiet Keeping: The Story of St Michael the Archangel, West Hill; page 19.

The passage reads: 'Lady Coleridge, wife of Sir John, gave the small tankard flagon marked IB, with rose in base, London 1592. The handle is scroll shaped with angel's head as thumbpiece. Round the base of the lid and on top of the barrel is arabesque ornamentation; round the foot is a cable moulding; below this, egg and dart ornamentation with egg and tongue work at the base.'

A near identical silver-gilt tankard, with the same maker's mark and the same date was offered at Sotheby's on 25th October 1973, lot 173. As 'The property of Trinity Church, Upper Dicker' in East Sussex. In the catalogue description it is also noted that 'the underside is engraved with the same monogram W.B as our tankard.'



The angel's head thumb piece is clearly evident as described in Lady Colridge's passage

When this tankard and the *Sotheby's 1973 sale* tankard are compared it would seem that they were indeed once a pair. The height, weight date, maker and importantly the same monogram / initials to the

underneath of the base certainly support this. Pairs of tankards from this period, are extremely rare.

In the same catalogue footnote, it records 'A similar flagon, belonging to the Church of Mickleham (Meckleham), Surrey, maker's mark S. over W, 1614, which was included in the exhibition, Silver Treasures from English Churches, Christies, 1955 (cat. no. 87, pl. XVII)' but more importantly 'A pair of tankards, by the same maker, 1602, from the collection of Duke of Leeds, were sold Sotheby's on the 15th June 1961, lot 120, illustrated in the catalogue'



Pair of tankards in the Victoria and Albert Museum 1602 recorded as John Bottomley

This pair of tankards are now on loan at The Victoria and Albert Museum from The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection. Here the maker's mark is recorded as possibly John Bottomley as with our tankard. Although the pair of tankards at the Victoria and Albert Museum are later in date, it is very interesting to see the identical thumb piece and hinge in use together with the same round raised petalled disc. 'Another tankard, by the same maker, dating to 1602 is also recorded.



Pin pricked initials

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All works shown, unless otherwise indicated, are available to view and purchase in our gallery located in 12 Dover Street, London, W1S 4LL

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