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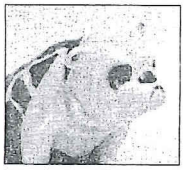
Auction Reports



British bulldog: Doulton rarities found at home

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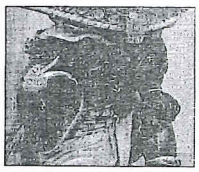

Supporting role: a £9000 Minton majolica garden seat at Shrewsbury

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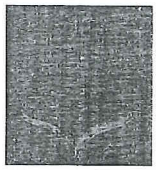

One becomes two: a second appearance for the coffin poison

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A £22,000 flagon and a third collection on market add to evidence of return to higher pewter prices

Glowing once, Glowing twice...

BY CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT

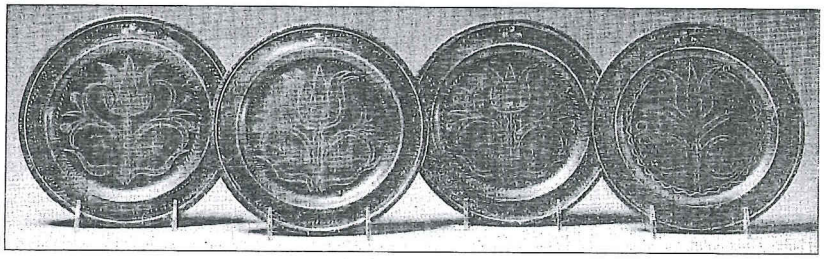
TWO of the traditionally poorer relations of the antiques world – oak furniture and pewter – have been pushing their way upstairs for some time and Sotheby's Sussex rooms have been among their champions. There was interest for enthusiasts in both areas at the June sales which, in particular, offered another signpost on what has been a fairly winding road for pewter.

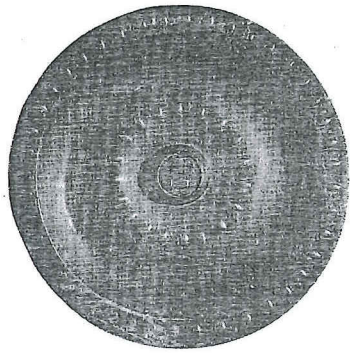
Above: from the John L. Boonshaft pewter collection sold at Sotheby's Billingshurst, this two-handled wriggle-work cup bearing the ownership initials *IH*, brought £5600 from a London dealer.
Right: from another source came this sale-topping early 16th century English pewter flagon which sold at £22,000 to an English dealer.

Sales Statistics

Sotheby's, Billingshurst,
Oak and Country Furniture, textiles, works of art, metalwork; June 16-17.
Number of Lots: 545
Lots sold: 409
Total: £426,500
Buyer's premium: 15/10 per cent

Below left: a set of four wriggle-work plates by Daniel Barton of London, c.1700, which sold above-estimate at £9800 at Sotheby's Billingshurst.
Below right: a pewter alms dish, embossed with an enamelled medal bearing the arms of Charles I, which brought £4000.





VALUES rose during the late 1960s and the '70s as Belgian and Dutch dealers made British pewter a particular target, then fell back during the early '80s when increasing numbers of 1920s fakes were identified and fewer pieces of real quality appeared in the salerooms. The rest of the '80s and early '90s saw prices fairly static with a concentration of important pieces in the hands of around half-a-dozen collectors who were not ready to part with their possessions.

Sadly it took the deaths of Kenneth Bradshaw and Sandy Shaw, both former presidents of the British Pewter Society, to change the picture, but pewter prices have a growing strength about them last seen more than 30 years ago.

In March 1997, 68 pieces from the Bradshaw Collection went under the hammer at Billingshurst and totalled £115,000; then last September 429 pieces of varying importance from the Law Collection totalled £250,0000 at Phillips Chester.

The third death in recent years of a pewter collector, that of American collector John Boonshaft, has resulted in more of the metal coming to market in the last two years than in the previous past 15.

Oak furniture and delftware from the Boonshaft estate was dispersed by Sotheby's back in January. The 55 lots of his pewter collection were less eclectic than the Law collection and quite different from the hollow-ware orientated Bradshaw collection. The vast majority of Boonshaft pieces were Stuart period plates and pieces featuring multiple reeded rims or wriggle-work decoration. Between them they contributed £75,000 to the sale's overall total. However, the rarest, earliest and ultimately most expensive piece of pewter at Billingshurst was part of a small multi-owner assembly dispersed before the Boonshaft pieces. This was a pear-shaped flagon on a trumpet foot, measuring 14¾in (37cm) high and dating from the early to mid 16th century. One of the earliest known examples of an English flagon, this piece was reputedly purchased by a Dutch collector from the late Richard Mundey, fabled metalware dealer, at some point during the 1970s, and then acquired by the Continental vendor.

A similar flagon was found on the Mary Rose when the Tudor wreck was dredged from Portsmouth harbour, and a smaller, more squat, flagon dated c.1500 was salvaged from the Thames near Deptford in the 1980s.

The flagon at Billingshurst was estimated at £15,000-18,000, with many expecting it to bring more than £20,000, and not a few wondering if bidding would eclipse the £28,500 bid by a Belgian collector for the 14th century Tonbridge flagon from the Law collection. That price remains a record for English pewter although the world record was set across the Atlantic on the same day as the Billingshurst sale. This was the $130,000 (£77,845) bid for a Pennsylvanian ecclesiastical flagon marked for Christopher Heyne of Lancaster County (1715-1751) at Sotheby's dispersal of the Richard Von Hess collection in New York on June 16 (see *Gazette 1347*, July 18).

But at Summers Place there appeared to be only two serious biddders for the 16th century flagon and it went to a London dealer on behalf of an English collector at £22,000.

The preceding lot was a rare rosewater alms dish, 17¾in (45cm) diameter, c.1625, distinguished by two rows of perles (prunts) struck on the rim and well, gadrooned ribbing in the slope of the booge and a central raised boss section inlaid with a copper alloy enamelled medal bearing the arms of Charles I and initialed *CR*.

The joining of the boss to the dish was unusual, and this led auctioneer Mark Stephen to believe that it was not an original component, althought the dish was illustrated in Peter Hornsby's book, *Pewter of the Western World*. At Billingshurst it did not exactly take off, selling on the lower estimate to an English collector at £4000.

Leading the Boonshaft collection was a set of four wriggle-work plates by Daniel Barton of London, c.1700, each engraved with tulip within a wavy border and a single reeded rim, measuring 8½in (21.5cm) diameter.

It would be an understatement to say that this group was rare as no other set of four wriggle-

Continued on page 10

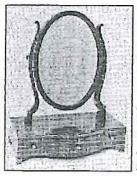
Decorative value of vases is £17,000

Left: evidence, if more were needed, of the commercial prowess of the late 19th century decorative school in today's marketplace was provided by lot 259 in the June 16 catalogue offered by **Phillips Gateshead (15/10% buyer's premium).** This was this pair of Vienna-style vases and stands which were entered fresh to St. Mary's via a Northumbrian client with hopes of £4000-6000. They were unattributed (marked with an underglazed blue shield) but had plenty of impact in terms of size – oviforms with everted rims and flared socle bases standing 3ft 5in (1.03m) high – and the decoration in the 18th century style was equally outstanding, painted with classical figure scenes (identified as Europa and Bacchus and Thetis and Apollo) within elaborate gilt and *bleu de roi* bands. Certainly auction precedent would suggest the estimate was cautious but the hammer price of £17,000 paid by a London dealer, quite substantial.

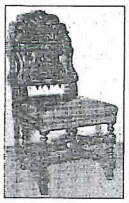
AUCTION REPORTS

SALEROOM selection: Furniture

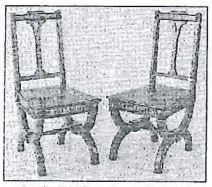
19th century Dutch rosewood veneered and box wood strung fold over swivel top card table, Phillips, Higham Park, Kent, June 22 – £550 + 15%



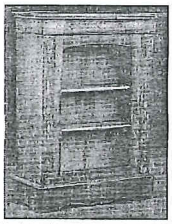
George III Hepplewhite mahogany toilet mirror, 20in (51cm), high, Cumbria Auction Rooms, Carlise, June 29 – £460 + 10%



One of six Jacobean Revival carved oak dining chairs, Crows Auction Gallery, Dorking, June 24 – £1600 + 10%



A pair of 19th century walnut and ebonised hall chairs, Phillips, Higham Park, Kent, June 22 – £580 + 15%

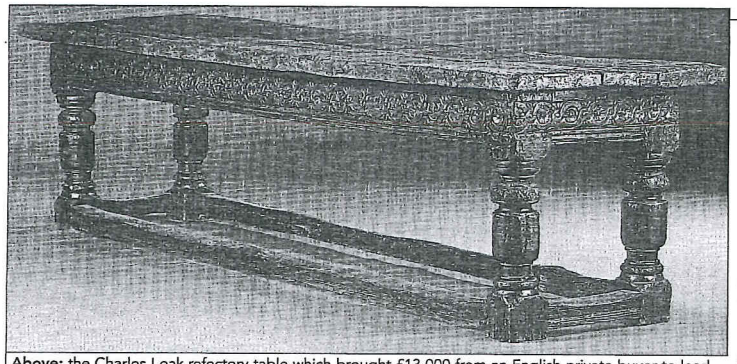


Victorian walnut and marquetry inlaid side cabinet 29in (73cm), Sotheby's, Sussex, June 30 – £420 + 15%

Mahogany bergère library chair, c.1830, Durrants, Suffolk, July 10 – £1800 + 6%

Victorian walnut framed nursing chair, c.1850-60, Cumbria Auction Rooms, Carlisle, June 29 – £700 + 10%

Georgian mahogany secretaire chest of drawers (for restoration), Crows Auction Gallery, Dorking, June 24 – £800 + 10%



Above: the Charles I oak refectory table which brought £13,000 from an English private buyer to lead Sotheby's oak and country furniture sale at Billingshurst on June 16.

SOTHEBY'S BILLINGSHURST

Continued **from page 9**

work plates is known to exist. With an ownership triad *HsA*, the set attracted an above-estimate £9800 from the London trade.

A wriggle-work bowl with a smooth rim, deep rounded sides and a central domed boss struck for the maker *WS*, bearing the initials *IH* in the well and the later ownership triad *IhM*, was significant for bearing the arms of the Barbers and Surgeons Company inside a primitive border of flowering plants. Measuring 9½in (24.4cm) wide, the bowl was knocked down to a London dealer at a double-estimate £4800.

A tapering cup with twin loop handles, struck with the same *IH* mark, and decorated with wriggle-work flowers, which had been sold as part of the Fell collection at Sotheby's Billinghurst in 1993 for £5600, was purchased by the same London dealer below estimate at £5600. Wrigglework is one of the more popular pewter styles and brought a number of strong prices at Billingshurst.

Two of these were Dutch beakers. One, decorated with scenes from the life of Jesus Christ bearing the makers mark *PP* for Pieter Ploegman of Amsterdam, dated 1711 and measuring 6¾in (17cm) high, brought £1900. The other, with two oval portraits of King William and Queen Mary, bearing the touch of maker *B* within a crowned rose and measuring 5½in (14cm) high, went at £1050.

A triple-reeded broad rimmed charger by William Gilly, c.1680, measuring 20in (51cm) wide, wriggle-work decorated with a repeating bird and flowering vine motif attracted £2700 and the same amount of money was bid for the largest charger in the sale, a 2ft (61cm) wide, multiple reeded example by Richard Smith of London, dating to around 1695.

Best of the spoons was a hexagonal knopped example with a fig shaped bowl, marked *RG1637* and measuring 6¾in (17cm) long, which brought £330; the only piece with a plain rim, a boss bowl struck *WS* and measuring 14½in (37cm) wide, brought £1200; an English trencher salt, of cylindrical form with a flared foot, took a double-estimate £540; and the two early 19th century pear shaped nursing bottles managed £440.

ALTHOUGH pewter provided the main talking point, there was also an important stock-taking exercise for the country furniture trade at Billingshurst when the vernacular furniture and related works of art, including 48 lots removed from Horton Priory in Kent, were offered.

No longer the preserve of academic collectors and seasoned dealers – and thus no longer quite such a poor relation of the mahogany and walnut sector – the stock of the oak furniture market is increasingly dictated by the decorative whims of house-furnishing private buyers and this was evident at Billingshurst.

An English private buyer was prepared to go that crucial step further than the trade to secure the top seller. This was a Charles I oak refectory table, 10ft 5in long by 2ft 9in wide (3.18m x 84cm), with a guilloche carved frieze centred by stylised flowerheads, each bulbous baluster and block turned leg stamped *1637* with the initials *RD*.

Despite a later central plank and minor restorations, the table attracted a lower-estimate £13,000.

Inflated oak prices in the Low Countries and easy access from Northern Europe to Britain via the Channel Tunnel has been attracting Continental private bidders to Billingshurst over the past couple of years.

On this occasion Belgian private buyers took three of the better selling pieces. A late 18th century tridarn, 6ft 10in high by 4ft 9in wide (2.09 x 1.44m), with a triple panel middle section and a base of two frieze drawers and two arched panel cupboard doors, made £4000; a George III oak cupboard on chest with two apron drawers, 6ft 6in high by 5ft 7in wide (1.98 x 1.70m) made a mid-estimate £3900; and a George II oak dresser, the base with three frieze drawers and one central small drawer flanked by two dummies, 5ft 8in high by 4ft 11in wide (1.72 x 1.49m) went at £3500.

The Dutch trade secured a George III oak dresser base mahogany crossbanded in the Lancashire style, measuring 7ft 4in (2.24m) wide, at £3700.

Prominent English trade acquisitions included a George III oak dresser of three shelves and three drawers, 6ft 10½in high by 5ft 3½in wide (2.10 x 1.61m) at a top-estimate £5000, a set of ten Victorian walnut dining chairs in the Charles II style with openwork scroll and bellflower carved backs and cane seats at a double-estimate £5000; and a Charles II oak side table measuring 2ft 7in (79cm) wide, which brought a triple-estimate £3500 from the London trade.

Unearthing Doulton rarities the key to Potteries success

SALES STATISTICS

Louis Taylor, Stoke-on-Trent, June 15-16.
Number of Lots: 1155
Sale Total: £225,000
Buyer's Premium: 10 per cent

BY ROLAND ARKELL

THE substantial level of business currently enjoyed by the Potteries auctioneers (this aggregate was the third best in the company's history and second only to two sales they held last year) is due in no small part to two factors: the general strength of the collectable ceramics market and particularly the continued ability of the auctioneers to find vendors for the rarest of the rare in the Doulton market.

Finding buyers is a less challenging occupation.

The 400-plus Doulton entries which (with Moorcroft and Beswick) comprised the first day of the sale posted many significant results – particularly the unexpected response to a rare variant of *Blighty* HN323, an early figure designed by E.W. Light and produced between 1918-1938 offered here with an unrecorded Titanian glaze.

Rare figures in rare glazes can spring remarkable prices, This example was pursued to £3000 (estimate £500-700) while also at this sale, a 6in (15cm) high flambé study of a jester resting on one knee with arms folded cost £1650.

The Mirror HN1852 – a scarce figure designed by Leslie Harradine and produced c.1938-1949 – offered here with restoration to hand and face mirror sold above hopes at £1500; there was the expected £1500 response to HN76, Charles Noke's interpretation of an Indian *Carpet Vendor* (1917-38) while a pilot figure – a young lady in yellow and blue bustle dress carrying a black hat with pink ribbons – cost £1250.

Among the rarest of the Royal Doulton animal studies is HN202, *Cat with Mouse on Tail,* issued between 1920 and c.1946 in a number of colour and glaze variations including flambé, sung, tabby or black. A late entry to this catalogue – an example in black – was competed to £1750.

Equally commercial was an advertising bulldog draped in a Union Jack and seated on a square yellow base printed with the logo, *Louis Wearden & Guy Leed Ltd. British Marvel Drill Chuck Bradford.*

The 3in (7.5cm) figure had sustained some minor chips to the base but made four times its low estimate at £1950.

One could guess upon which side of the fence the auctioneer sits on the Bunnykins love/hate debate.

This catalogue included 70 figures including an example of *Clown Bunnykins* DB129 produced in a limited edition of 250 in 1992 (estimate £500-700) and a variation of *Santa Bunnkins* DB62 produced in 1987 as a limited edition Christmas tree decoration (estimate £700-1000). They sold at £1250 and £1000 respectively.

A Beswick offering which included a *Sussex Cockerel,* 7in (17cm) high decorated in black, white and pink sold at £630 also recorded serious competition for a figure of a *Huntsman,* made to the standard Arthur Gredlington model No.1501 but here decorated with a colour variant: a green jacket with yellow breeches. Such factors are important: it was not expected to exceed £250 but climbed to £1250.

Four from 104 Moorcroft entries are illustrated here – including the Claremont pattern vase, 6¾in (17cm) high decorated with toadstools to a blue-green ground which sold in perfect condition for £1400 – but also in this substantial group was one of the much-coveted miniature Florianware pieces.

This vase c.1903 decorated with deep blue flowers to a pale blue ground, 3in (7.5cm) high, had been chipped but was pursued past its £100-150 estimate to £620.

Furniture on the second day was a mere 80 lots —the dearth of period cabinetmaking in this area is difficult to deny – but this section did include a mahogany serpentine chest of drawers, 3ft 2½in (98cm) wide, made to a typical George III design sometime in the 19th century which climbed to £2100.

There was also a pair of good quality George IV mahogany carvers with scroll arm terminals and sabre legs in the Regency style which cost £1750 (estimate £400-600) but it was perhaps fitting in the context of the sale that a ceramics entry should lead proceedings.

At ten times the estimate, this accolade fell to a fine Victorian majolica jardinière, 14in (25cm) high, moulded in high relief with white lilies and swallows in flight against a pale blue ground. Damage had seen expectations curtailed to a token £300-400, but this is a well-known George Jones model for which the market reserved a better reception. Bidding climbed to £4400.

Above left: despite damage which limited hopes to £400, this George Jones majolica jardinière brought £4400 at Louis Taylor's sale where, **above right,** this rare Titanian variant of the Doulton HN series figure *Blighty* made £3000.

Above: a selection of Moorcroft pottery sold by Louis Taylor from the Potteries in June. **From left to right:** a *Claremont* pattern blue/green ground vase, 6¾in (17cm) high – £1400; a footed bowl with a *Fish* design c.1930, 6½in (16cm) diameter; a *Claremont* pattern dish, 8½in (21cm) diameter, (firing crack and underglaze chips) – £760; a commemorative match striker, 5in (12cm), decorated with the national flowers, the Royal insignia and inscribed *King Edward VIII Coronation 1937* – £640.

Above: a Royal Doulton advertising bulldog – £1950 at Louis Taylor.