

EUP

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Living

Collector who turned his semi into museum for four centuries of living

A man of iron

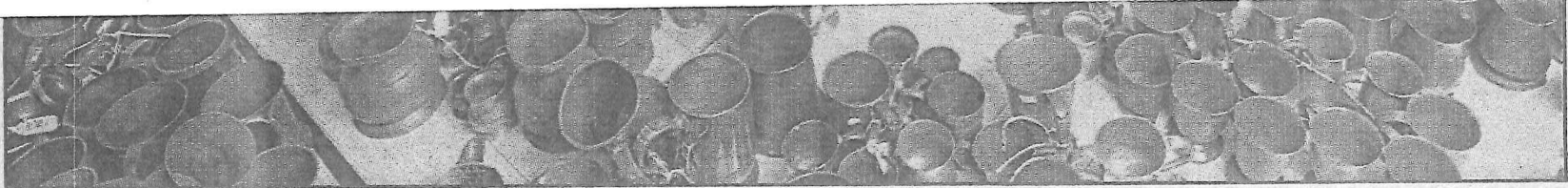


Caroline Banks of Phillips with part of the collection. Inset: Derrick Bradbury

Main picture: KEVIN HOLT

By PAUL HARRIS

Crammed from



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By PAUL HARRIS

YOU could sometimes catch Derrick Bradbury in the shadowy light, leaving home to drive into the dawn.

Hundreds of miles from his unimposing semi, he would be first through the door of some village antique fair or junk sale, eager to collect even the smallest household gadget or artefact from a bygone age.

It may have been a rusting lark spit, for roasting birds over a fire, a tinderbox, perhaps, or a towering metal jelly-mould which might once have produced a wobbling birthday treat for a party of children.

To the previous owners it would simply have been any old iron. To Mr Bradbury it was pure joy.

The retired accountant devoted a lifetime to collecting the metal objects of his desire, filling his house with every imaginable household item or piece of bric-a-brac.

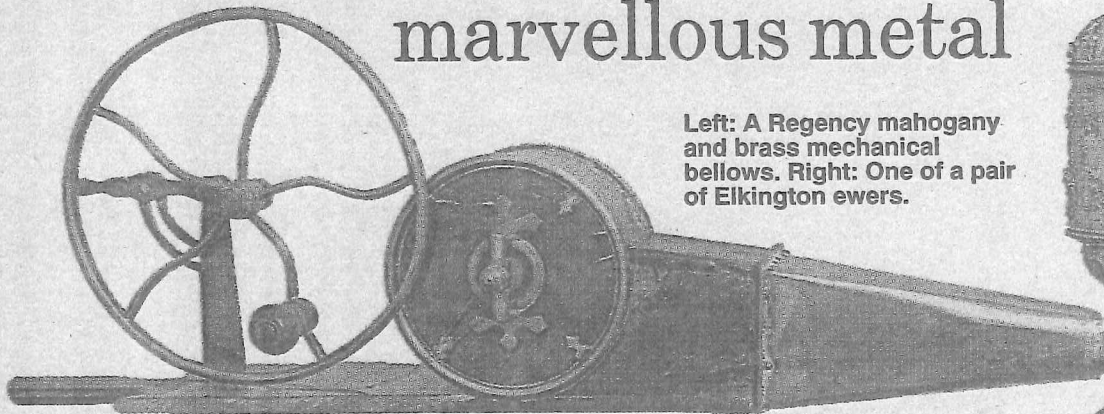
So much so, in fact, that when he died in September aged 66 he left eight tons of the stuff crammed from floor to ceiling in every room — an antique paradise of little metalwork miracles which could recreate the flavour of a working kitchen from virtually any era over the last four centuries.

The extent of the collection was discovered after Mr Bradbury's death and it is now being offered for sale.

Among the most valuable items is a 300-year-old lidded Stuart pewter tankard, expected to fetch up to £1,200. But the interest of the collection lies less in financial value than in nostalgic charm.

Antony Bennett, who is handling the sale for Phillips the auctioneers, said: 'There's all you could ever

Crammed from floor to ceiling, eight tons of marvellous metal



Left: A Regency mahogany and brass mechanical bellows. Right: One of a pair of Elkington ewers.



need here for everything from making tea and snuffing candles to pulling teeth.

'We are dealing with a veritable museum of English household life.'

Mr Bradbury stored the entire collection in his home in the Manchester suburb of Burnage.

It took two weeks for specialists to catalogue 4,000 items into 700 lots, aside from the horse brasses and furniture, for the sale in Chester on May 13. Two furniture vans spent three days taking it away.

Included are between 200 and 300 candlesticks, 1,500 pieces of pewter and large collections of coins, candles, matchboxes and domestic artifacts from tools to copper, brass

and iron kitchen equipment. Mr Bradbury was treasurer of the Pewter Society and a founder member of the Antique Metalware Society and the National Horse Brass Society. He lived in the pre-war semi for much of his life and was married with three daughters.

One of them, Mrs Sarah Bridgman, 38, a district nurse from Yatton, near Bristol, said: 'My father had a real love for the past. He was born on a farm and began collecting when he was 14. I think his passion for it must have started because he was surrounded by old furniture and machinery.'

'We used to live among boxes containing his collection. We had a

garage built but I don't remember the car ever being inside it. It was always full of his collection, as was the attic.

'Even when we went on holiday, he was still looking for antiques. We used to stay in Abersoch in North Wales, but he would leave us on the beach and go looking for them.'

Associates of Mr Bradbury said he was well-read, had a considerable knowledge of his subject and a canny eye for a bargain. 'I doubt if he paid more than a few pence for a lot of the stuff — but to him it was priceless,' said one.