



# A LATE STUART PEWTER FLAT LID TANKARD

by Iona Cairns  
Sotheby's

Christmas is a time of dreams, some fulfilled, but sadly, for the most part, unfulfilled. This is probably just as well, for if they were all fulfilled, what would one dream of the following Christmas?

My dream, which, it must be admitted, is unlikely to come true, would be to receive, carefully wrapped within the obligatory frills and bows, the William and Mary wriggled-work tankard illustrated in figures 1 and 2.

It has everything one could possibly desire: majestic portraits engraved at the front within a spray cartouche with lion and unicorn supporters; it is by a known maker, Richard Donne of London (c.1676-96), and is in almost faultless

condition, having miraculously escaped the normal pressures of three hundred years of man's use. Even the quality of the wriggled-work is far above the naïve style normally seen at this period.

The last time a similar tankard was seen at auction was in 1949, which is an indication of the rarity of the object. It was sold at Sotheby's on 31st October, estimated at £4,000-£5,000, although the competition a piece of pewter of this quality engendered raised the actual price to £14,495.

I would be hard pressed to show any spontaneous joy, however, if someone presented me with the tankard illustrated in figure 3. At first sight it appears to be a poor, but roughly contemporary,

relation to the William and Mary tankard. On closer inspection, it is, without doubt, a reproduction.

As reproductions go, it is more successful than most, but still betrays itself by small inconsistencies. It is engraved with a crowned lion within leafy sprays on the body and has a very weakly denticulated lid rim, almost as though someone started to make the denticulations and then thought lunch would be a better idea. The handle is also very weak, lacking the strength of design a Stuart pewterer would have given it. The wriggled-work is very wooden and mechanical, and was probably copied straight from a genuine example, of which there are many with



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



this design. Most puzzling of all is the "feel" of this tankard, which somehow gives the impression of a late Georgian example. All very peculiar on what should be a Stuart tankard. At auction one would expect this tankard to fetch around £150-£250.

The William and Mary tankard can expect to be bought by a serious, and reasonably well-funded, pewter collector, and can look forward to being much cherished by all keen pewter collectors who see it. The Stuart "style" tankard, however, will probably find a home with someone who is looking for a purely decorative object, or a pewter collector whose passion has depleted his funds to the extent that the tankard can, from the top of a dusty Welsh dresser, complete an otherwise honest collection of Stuart pewter.

The ironical fact is that the William and Mary tankard was bought, some twenty years ago, at Salisbury market, for 15s., as sheer decoration, and has for many years been used as a vase. The Stuart "style" tankard, on the other hand, was bought for its "antique" value and investment potential.

Perhaps innocence does have its own rewards — wouldn't that be a nice thought for Christmas?

Figure 3.



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Heywood Hardy  
signed and dated 1868

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Benjamin D. Sigmund. Ex. 1880-1904  
"The Young Angler". Watercolour, signed, 8 1/2 ins. x 13 1/2 ins.



Henry J. Stannard. Ex. 1844-1920  
"On the Ouse". Watercolour, signed, 12 ins. x 23 ins.

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