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# PEWTER

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The difficulties of finding pewter worthy of collecting seem to increase. If you are dressing a Welsh dresser then there are plates in abundance waiting to be bought. If you want a range of bulbous lidless tavern measures or a group of tavern mugs, again they are not difficult to find. It was, therefore, a welcome sight in a sale at Sotheby's earlier this year to find numerous articles of the quality and rarity that appear so infrequently on the market nowadays.

There were no less than five "wriggle-worked" tankards up for sale when normally you would be lucky to find one a year. The tankard on the right of figure 1 is interestingly engraved with a mythological scene possibly representing the rape of Ganymede. The dark colour of this piece does not appeal to every collector which might, perhaps, be the reason for the price of £1,800, which was not excessive. The exceptional Charles II broad rimmed plates, on the other hand, made £1,600, a price well in excess of expectations. The condition was near perfect, they are part of a much bigger well-known garnish and a tempting lot that any collector would be proud to own. The tall lidless tavern pot was also a good quality piece and was bought by the Colonial Williamsburg Fund for £1,700.

The rare James I relief cast wine cup illustrated in figure 2 is part of a group of about a dozen known examples of English ornamented pewter all made during the first quarter of the 17th century — five of them being wine cups.



Figure 1. Left to right. A rare Stuart lidless tavern pot, last quarter 17th century, 5¼ins. high — £1,700. One of an exceptional set of six Charles II broad-rimmed plates made by William Matthews of London c.1675, 9½ins. diameter — £1,600. A Stuart "wriggled-work" tankard by the maker R.S., c.1680, 6¼ins. high — £1,800. All sold at Sotheby's on 28th March 1980.

This example bore an amusing inscription well worth quoting: "Though Wine Bee Good Too Much of That Wil Make One Lean Though He Be Fatt" (*sic*). It is further decorated with the armorials of the Pewterers' Company and the City of London. As yet the origins of this group of items are unexplained but they are thought to date from around 1616 and may have been some special ceremonial order. The British Museum bought the cup for £4,200, a price which reflected its rarity even though the condition was not good.

There were many other items in the sale which sold for under £500 so collectors of modest means need not be put off. I hesitate to make predictions in an area of the market where so few are involved. I can only stress that if something is in good condition and/or rare it is likely to be a good medium term investment, but if you are a new buyer try to obtain good advice from "an old hand".



Figure 2. An exceptional James I relief-cast wine cup c.1616, 5¼ins. high — sold at Sotheby's on 28th March 1980 for £4,200.



George Charles Haite, RA, RBA, RI. 'Dutch river scene', signed and dated '95

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