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A COMMEMORATIVE PLATE DATED 1658

A very ordinary plate 9 3/8 inches wide 1 1/8 inches single reeded rim.

This engraver or for whom it was engraved likely knew - that in 1658 Cromwell terminated the second parliament after they had refused his 11 Major Generals their Decimation taxes for local forces and the taxes to fight the Spanish war.

Cromwell was also offered the crown of England - which he refused. Cromwell died on Sept 3 1658 and less than 1 year later son Richard was finished and in exile overseas never to see his wife again.

We have no idea who did the engraving and when.

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An experienced collector suggests –

One possibility is that it was done when the plate was new to commemorate the centenary of the event. That would fit in well with Giffin I or II. I would hazard a guess that it is copying some contemporary broadsheet or cartoon rather than a painting. If so, the original is probably in the British Library, but whether you can track it down in their catalogue is another matter altogether!



Another collector comments -

I would think that the engraving is contemporary to the plate. Compare the even much more busy style of Hogarth satirical engravings of the same (1768) or even earlier time. I suggest the plate commemorates the centennial. More likely that of Oliver's death than Richard's assumption (of Lord Protector) given that 100 years later it was known that the latter was a failure.

I can't quite interpret the meaning.

Two aggressive geese and helmets at the top and a relaxed goose and relaxed foliage at the bottom suggest conflict at the top and peace at the bottom.

Some of the helmets can be associated with the panels of the shield. The second helmet (feathers) agrees with the decoration of the rim. The third has a flag of two colours, agrees with the lower left shield.

The person with the fool's cap agrees with its adjacent shield.

During the monarchy acts of parliament were published with a royal watermark.

The Rump Parliament substituted the royal arms watermark with a fool's cap watermark, so the fool's cap is associated with the parliamentary acts during the protectorate. The appearance of the person would be favourable to Protestants in the way that similar figures on Bellarmine jugs are meant to ridicule the cardinal.

The two lions rampant are normally associated with Scotland. The feathers around the rim are associated with quills, writing, and learning.

I think the plate is a commemoration to Oliver Cromwell and his accomplishments, issued at the centenary of his death.



This maker was Thomas Giffin the second working 1759-1779 (died 1791) so 100 years after the events celebrated on his plate.



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A collector from the Netherlands suggests –

About your plate.

There is a period in the mid 19th century in Europe (1850), that 18th century pewter plates were engraved with historic events.

This period of redecoration is most of the time unknown by collectors.

These pieces were made/engraved just as a decoration piece for on the wall.

Events like: burning the last witch, historic engagements/marriages, coronations, historic events, etc.

This correspondent fits with the often correct saying – “it is younger than you think” (or similar words).

All comments welcomed to – johnsbank@me.com