

THE MORRIS TANKARD. A highly important queen anne britannia standard barrel tankard made in london in 1708 by ambrose stephenson.

£26,000



Description

This important piece is modelled in an unusual barrel form and stands on a stepped spreading foot decorated with reeded bands. The main body is engraved with bands and staves to simulate the hoops and staves of a barrel. The flat hinged cover has a shaped front terminating in a point, and is fixed with a single pin through the plain "D" shaped handle. The foot is engraved with "The value of this left EM by Lady EB as a legacy". The Tankard is in quite excellent condition and is fully marked on the side of the main body and with the maker's mark on the cover. The base is also engraved with its original scratch weight and this very fine piece has an excellent patina.

This Tankard has a fascinating provenance attached to it and was thought to have been lost. Up until being sold at Christie's in 1942 it was always accompanied by an identical Elizabeth I Tankard made in London in 1597. This Queen Anne example was made in 1708 to go with the earlier tankard to make a pair. With regard to the Morris family of London, they were wealthy merchants, citizens and skippers of London. Thomas Morris was admitted to the Skinners Company in 1634 and Robert was apprentice to him in 1638. A John Morris purchased the Loddington estate in Leicestershire, for Captain Robert Morris, as the latter is described as Lord of the Manor of Loddington on his death in 1676. When Robert died in 1676 he left a widow, Margaret Morris, who was left £ 250 and an annuity of £ 150 in her husband's will. His considerable wealth is demonstrated by the legacies of £ 1,500 he left to the second son Edmund and £ 1,250 to his third and fourth sons.

The eldest son Charles Morris (1662-1710) inherited the Loddington estate. He married Susannah, second daughter of Sir Edmund Bacon 4th Bt, by his wife Elizabeth, and had three sons, Edmund, Charles and Bacon. The "EM" referred to in the inscription on this tankard is for Edmund Morris (1687-1759). "Lady E.B" who left the legacy, was Elizabeth, Lady Bacon, Edmund Morris' maternal grandmother. Lady Bacon's will, which was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 21st January 1702/03, records the legacy.

This very unusual form of tankard is derived from wood and leather drinking vessels of the 15th and 16th century. The construction, which the simulated staves and reeding imitate, is directly related to the leather bound wood tankards which were commonly used throughout Europe as a domestic drinking vessel. Such a tankard was salvaged from the wreck of Henry VIII's flagship Mary Rose, which sank off Portsmouth in 1544. The bellied form of this tankard perhaps also owes something to the stoneware or leather "blackjack" flagons of the time, as illustrated in A.D. Burton, "The English Wine Bottle, Christie's Wine Review, 1981.

The maker of this tankard, Ambrose Stephenson, was a specialist in the production of mugs and tankards of fine quality. his first mark was entered on 1st February, 1707, in Barbican, London.

Height: 7.25 inches, 18.13cm.

Diameter, at the widest point: 4.2 inches, 10.5cm.

Length, handle to spout: 5.1 inches, 12.75cm.

Weight: 22oz.

The Elizabethan Tankard (which was the pa...