

PRESS RELEASE

Sale Results of Morton & Eden auctions on 13-14th December 2005

The sale of Coins, Historical Medals and Banknotes realized a total of £309,815 with approximately 10% unsold.

The Ancient series included a fine collection of Greek coins formed some twenty years ago by a US collector with an eye for quality. There was a particularly attractive Syracusan decadrachm of c.400 BC by Euainetos, well-centred and with a complete rendering of the artist's signature which sold for £20,700 (estimate £15-20,000). The coin illustrated on the front cover of the catalogue, a tetradrachm of Ptolemy I of Egypt, again in unusually fine condition and of excellent style realized £2,530 (estimate £1,000-1,500). A rare 4th Century BC tetradrachm from Cnidus in Caria bearing the head of Aphrodite and a particularly fine lion's head on the reverse made £3,680 (estimate £2-3,000). Roman coins featured an aureus of Hadrian selling for £1,092 (estimate £1,000-1,500). The sale also included an important group of Aksumite coins from ancient Ethiopia where the highlight was a rare gold unit of King Ousanas (c. AD 400) selling for £2,070 (estimate £1,800-2,200).

In the section devoted to English coins, a slightly impaired 1826 proof five-pounds of George IV realized £4,830 (estimate £3,800-4,200) and a similarly impaired proof sovereign of the same date fetched £1,265 (estimate £600-800). There was strong competition for a top quality 1726 crown of George I which doubled expectations when it sold for £4,600 (estimate £2,200-2,500). An intriguing item was the pattern or trial crown of 1828 which had been "cancelled" by means of a cut in the flan at 9 o'clock. Possibly the only crown of this date available to collectors, it came with an impressive pedigree dating back to L.C. Wyon whose collection was sold at Sotheby's in 1901, followed by Murdoch (1904), Wakly (1909), Thellusson (1931) and Lingford (1950) and now sold for £8,050 (estimate £8-12,000).

Foreign coins produced the top price of the auction when an extremely well preserved example of an American Continental dollar of 1776 struck in tin was knocked down at £39,100 selling to the New York dealer Stack's – this was greatly in excess of its estimate (£5,000-7,000) and confirmed the very strong emphasis that collectors of American coins place on the combination of condition and rarity.

Medals included a number of early Renaissance pieces highlighted by a portrait medal of Isotta degli Atti, mistress of Sigismondo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini by Matteo de' Pasti which sold for £12,650 (estimate £4,000-6,000). In the Gaines sale held in the previous week an impaired example had fetched £8,400.

An unusual and extremely rare item was a bronze 'cockett' or custom seal matrix of the Duchy of Cornwall probably issued by Henry of Monmouth, the future king Henry V. Bearing a portrait of the reigning monarch Henry IV, an impression taken from it exists in the British Museum. After much competition in the room versus a telephone bidder, the latter was the successful buyer at £3,450 (estimate £1,500-2,000).

Islamic coins generally fared well in an offering of over 300 lots. A rare Arab-Sasanian drachm realized £2,070 in spite of being clipped and showing traces of mounting; with an apparently unpublished combination of Arabic and Pahlawi legends this piece represented an important step towards the establishment of a purely Islamic coinage. Among the post-Reform Umayyad silver the highest price was achieved by a dirham of Ramhurmuz 81h, believed to be only the second known example of this mint and date, which brought £3,220. Abbasid coins were also well represented, ranging from an extremely rare dinar of the ephemeral caliph al-Zahir struck at the mint of Daquq in 623h (sold for £3,680) to an attractive copper fals from the rare mint of Jibal al-Fidda ("the silver mountain"), so named because of the snows which crowned its summit (sold for £300). Of the later dynasties, Fatimid coins continued to sell well, with highlights including a rare early dinar of al-Qayrawan 299h (sold for £2,070) and a later issue of Barqa 448h in unusually good condition (sold for £3,910). The highest price of the Islamic section, however, was achieved by a fractional dinar issued by the Batinite Assassins of Alamut. Struck in their mountain fortress of Kursi al-Daylam in 546h, this rare piece was particularly desirable in bearing a clear mint and date, and after strenuous bidding finally sold for £4,600 (estimate £1,000-1,500).