

PRESS RELEASE

Results from Morton & Eden's auctions of 20-21 May 2003

Ancient Coins

A number of top quality Greek coins fared especially well. The top price of the sale was the £29,835 paid for an early 5th century BC electrum stater from northern Greece (lot 14, estimate £10-15,000). It is thought to be only the second known example, the other being in the British Museum. An extremely rare archaic stater from the Cycladic island of Keos realised £23,000 (lot 56, estimate £10-25,000). Some coins were re-appearing for the first time on the market since featuring in the important "Kunstfreund" sale in Zurich in 1974: a tiny but exceptionally well preserved silver litra from Katane in Sicily, c. 460 BC, realised £7,820 (lot 5, estimate £2000-2500) and a tetrobol from the island of Zakynthos, c. 360 BC, sold for £7,015 (lot 55, estimate £1000-1500). A tetradrachm from Samos, c. 390 BC was bought by a private collector for £8,970 (lot 63, estimate £3-4000).

Islamic Coins

Despite the current political situation, the Islamic coin section saw some strong prices and consistent bidding. An extensive collection of 222 Arab-Sasanian drachms, offered as a single lot, sold to a private collector for £20,700 (lot 180, estimate £20-30,000). A rare Umayyad dinar of 102h from al-Andalus (Andalucia in Spain) sold to a collector from the Middle East for £3,680 (lot 183, estimate £2500-3000). Amongst a large series of Fatimid coins, a previously unpublished dinar from Halab (Aleppo) struck by al-Mustansir in 432h, apparently only the second known example, sold for £1,610 (lot 270, estimate £1200-1500).

British Coins

Strong prices were paid for coins in the best condition. An unusually well preserved gold pound of Elizabeth I realised £5,290 (lot 398, estimate £3000-3500) and a proof crown of William IV of 1834 sold for £7,015 (lot 510, estimate £6-8000). The important collection of 17th century tokens of Hertfordshire formed by Stanley Andrews (sold as a single lot) was purchased for £4,140 (lot 526, estimate £3-4000).

Banknotes and Share Certificates

The most significant lot here was an original share certificate of 1777 for the Iron Bridge Trust – the company that built the first iron bridge in the world, over the river Severn – which sold for £6,325 (lot 662, estimate £3-5000). A Bank of England £20 note issued in London, 1916, signed by the chief cashier, J.G. Nairne, realised £ 517 (lot 642, estimate £400-600).

Renaissance and Baroque Medals

The collection of Florentine baroque medals formed by the German art historian Professr Dr. Klaus Lankheit saw selective bidding with some high prices but leaving a number of medals unsold. A portrait medal of the medallist and sculptor Massimiliano Soldani-Benzi by his pupil Antonio Selvi, dated 1715, realised £5,290, a record price for a Florentine baroque medal. Elsewhere there were a number of purchases made by museums: the British Museum bought a fine German 16th century silver medal of Georg der Bartige, Duke of Saxony, by Christoph Weiditz for £920 (lot 847, estimate £700-1000), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, purchased a medal of Cosimo III de Medici by Soldani for £1,955 (lot 710, estimate £700-1000) and the Musée d'Histoire d'Art of Luxemburg paid £12,650 for a very interesting group of early 17th century lead medals recently discovered in the Low Countries (lot 901, estimate £10,000-12,500).

War Medals, Orders and Decorations

This section saw much competitive bidding. One of the first DCMs gazetted for the Great War to the Northumberland Fusiliers, that awarded to Sergeant S.E. Bentley of the 1st Battalion realised £5,520 (lot 1024,

estimate £1200-1500). A rare silver Life Saving medal of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem awarded to Fred Adamson for heroism at the Cadeby Main Pit disaster in 1912 realised £3,680 (lot 1011, estimate £600-800). Among the foreign orders a first class sash badge of the Russian Order of St Anne, hallmarked 1864, sold for £7,820 (lot 1005, estimate £2500-3000).

British Historical Medals

Presented in a companion catalogue, this collection comprised the finest offering of British historical medals to appear on the market for many years. Both the high quality and the fact that the medals were being offered without reserve attracted collectors and dealers to the sale and there were a number of telephone lines open to the USA and elsewhere throughout the entire proceedings.

The first lot, a very rare bronze medal of John Kendal, the English Prior of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, dated 1480 (and therefore the earliest attested portrait medal of an Englishman) caused a bidding battle between several telephone lines and a strong commission with the auctioneers, finally selling to the commission for £20,700 (lot 1101, estimate £5-7000). A unique oval silver medal of Lucy, Duchess of Bedford by Nicholas Briot, dated 1625, was also the subject of strong competition, finally selling for £17,250 to Christopher Eimer acting on behalf of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (lot 1133, estimate £10-15,000). There were a number of superbly preserved early 17th century silver portrait medals by Simon de Passe, struck in imitation of engraving. One depicting James I, Anne of Denmark and Prince Charles (later Charles I), realised £8,050 (lot 1125, estimate £4-5000) whilst another, of Maria, the Infanta of Spain, sold for £7,820 (lot 1130, estimate £4-5000). An apparently unique uniface silver medal of Charles I, dated 1649, the year of his execution, by the French medallist Jean Warin, sold to a US collector at £6,440 (lot 1156, estimate £4-6000). An excessively rare Dutch medal of Henry, Duke of Gloucester, circa 1660, by Peter van Abeele, sold for £9,775 (lot 1192, estimate £4-6000). Finally, a very rare complete set of Dassier's "Illustrious Men" of 1740-44 sold for £2,760 (lot 1362, estimate £800-1200).

All prices quoted are the hammer price plus the 15% buyer's premium.