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Michael Baggott's Legacy in Silver

Woolley & Wallis will sell the private collection of the late TV expert and silver specialist Michael Baggott over three auctions at its Salisbury salerooms. Michael was a much-loved expert and TV personality, having starred in BBC's *Flog It!*, *Bargain Hunt*, and *Antiques Roadshow*. He was also the author of *An Illustrated Guide to York Hallmarks 1776-1858* (2012) and *As Found: A Lifetime in Antiques* (2024) as well as writing regularly for the journal of the Silver Spoon Club of Great Britain, *The Finial*.

My first meeting with Michael was during work experience as a viewing assistant at a provincial saleroom. Fresh out of university and instantly hooked by the excitement of the saleroom, I was eager to help in any way I could. On viewing duty, and placed behind the silver cabinets, I was completely blown away by his incredible knowledge of the subject. This awe very much continued over the years, as I progressed into cataloguing and valuing – I would nervously check his Twitter feed as catalogues went online and sales took place – had I missed anything? Were my group lots really what I had thought them to be – or was he in possession of another of his astutely procured finds, courtesy of my

cataloguing? As we know in this incredible industry, there is always something new to learn and Michael in particular left no stone unturned, yet was so generous with his knowledge.

Likely to be the most comprehensive collection of York silver to ever reach the open market, Michael's collection also features examples from Liverpool, Chester, Dundee, Newcastle, Bristol, Exeter and Aberdeen.

The first part of Michael's collection was sold on 16th July, with 152 lots on offer, including a large selection of flatware, salvers, nutmeg graters, card cases, snuff boxes, sauce boats and many more unique items, such as medicine spoons, tipstaffs, and a tongue scraper! The top selling piece unsurprisingly was a York item, a rare George III provincial silver tontine



A rare George III provincial silver tontine chamberstick and snuffer

chamberstick and snuffer, by Hampston and Prince, York 1793. Commemorating a Tontine agreement between twelve subscribers, and detailing their names and dates of death. This piece was offered with an estimate of £1,000-1,500, and reached a total of £8,190 (inclusive of Buyer's Premium).



George IV silver mounted naval snuff box.

Another piece from the collection with an extraordinary history and provenance was a George IV silver mounted naval snuff box. This piece was inscribed 'Made of the wood from Northern Discover Ships by Michael Jones at Deptford, 5th May 1824.' It is thought that this refers to the 16th century English ships of the same name, sent to discover a northern sea route to Asia. This intriguing snuff box sold for £5,670 (inclusive of Buyer's Premium).



Ceremonial silver spade

One of the conversation pieces of the sale was a ceremonial silver spade. Not only for its shape and size, but the assay date letter. Assayed in York anywhere from one to five years after the Assay Office officially closed, this spade has a date letter of a 'Y'. In Michael's own notes on the piece, "this is a previously unknown date letter and is arguably one of the rarest pieces of York silver known."

The spade was made by John Bell of York, and "presented to the Lady Mayoress of York, Mrs W. Fox Clarke, on the occasion of her planting a tree in St. George's Field in commemoration of the marriage of H.R.H the Prince of Wales with Princess Alexandra of Denmark, March 10th 1863." Estimated modestly at £1,000-2,000, this piece sold for £4,032 (inclusive of Buyer's Premium).



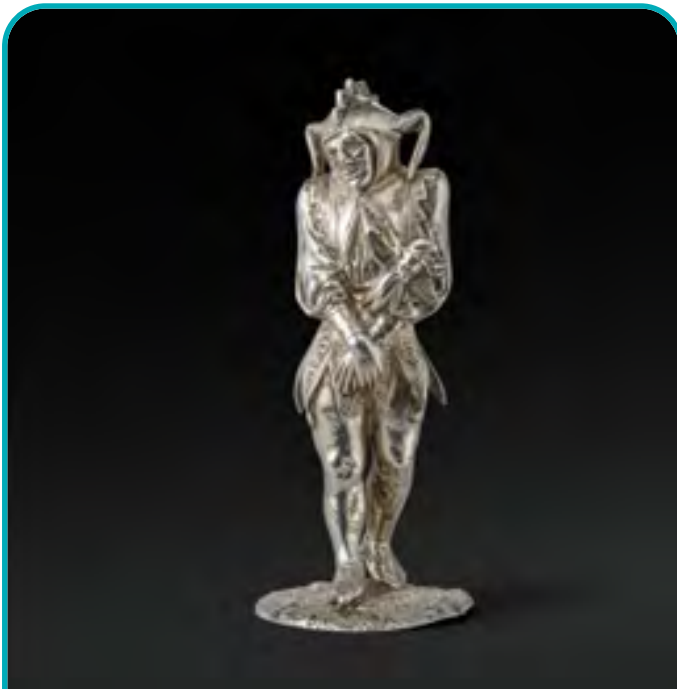
George IV silver-gilt sideboard dish by Edward Thomason of Birmingham

Another piece that serves to demonstrate the width and breadth of the collection is a George IV silver-gilt sideboard dish by Edward Thomason of Birmingham, assayed in 1826 and engraved with a scene of The Drunken Silenus given wine by a satyr. This lavishly decorated dish was based on the Drunken Silenus design for the Tazza Farnese circa 1599-1600. This piece totalled £5,040

(inclusive of Buyer's Premium) against an estimate of £2,000-3,000.

Michael Baggott's remarkable collection of silver will be split over three sales at Woolley & Wallis, with the final two auctions taking place on 21st & 22nd October and in late January / early February; the date for next year is yet to be confirmed. It certainly will be interesting to glimpse the remaining pieces in this wonderfully curated collection, and undoubtedly witness more fantastic results.

Further Sale Highlights:



A Victorian novelty silver Jester pepper pot by Robert Hennell, London, 1868. Sold for £1,890.



A collection of eight pairs of antique provincial cast silver sugar tongs. York, various dates and makers. Sold for £1,512.



A William IV provincial silver-mounted tipstaff, maker's mark N?, Chester, 1836. Sold for £2,016.



A Swiss Art Deco silver motor racing trophy cup and cover by Baltensperger, Geneva, circa 1929. Sold for £1,512.