

## TEA CADDY MADE FROM TREE IN SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN

### To be sold by Sotheby's

A CHARMING tea caddy believed to have been made from a mulberry tree that grew in William Shakespeare's garden in Stratford upon Avon is one of the rare delights to be found in Sotheby's sale of important English furniture on Wednesday, November 29, 2000.

The George II caddy, which is carved with a bust of the bard, is stamped 'George Cooper Stratford upon Avon maker 1759'. In an 18th century account by the antiquarian John Jordon, Cooper is recorded as one of the purchasers of the tree. A similar caddy, bearing the same inscription, is among a number of objects carved from the tree and is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Shakespeare's bust is carved within a niche on the front of the caddy, while a coat of arms is carved on the lid. Sprouting mulberry branches form a brass swing handle and inside are three removable caddies, each also carved and decorated with mulberries. It is estimated at £6,000-8,000.

Fergus Lyons, Head of Sotheby's English furniture department said: "The caddy offers an intriguing link to the most English of literary figures and is certain to attract a great deal of interest, both from British and foreign collectors."

Amongst other important pieces in the sale is a pair of unusual George I carved gilt and gesso stools attributed to James Moore (1670-1726) the Royal cabinet-maker, who worked at Nottingham Court, Short's Gardens, St. Giles-in-the-fields, London. Moore is thought to have been an apprentice to John Gumley, also a Royal cabinet-maker, becoming his partner in a number of Royal commissions during the 18th century. He later became cabinet-maker to George I and other clients such as Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington and Ralph, 1st Duke of Montagu.

The distinctive elements attributing the stools to Moore are the swirling tendrils attached to long flowing leaves, characteristic of his work alone. Flowers and acanthus leaves, leafy scrolls and flowers feature on three of the four sides of the stools, confirming that they were made to stand against a wall. The pair is recorded as having been in the white drawing room at Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire in 1949, when the house was in the possession of the Earl of Wilton. Dating from c. 1725, they are estimated to fetch £50,000-80,000.

An outstanding George II bureau cabinet bears the trade label of one of the most important cabinet-makers of the 18th century: John Belchier, who is recorded as having had a workshop at The Sun, on the south side of St. Paul's Church Yard in London. A more informative label with an ornamental sun, symbolising his workshop, appeared on a bureau cabinet sold at Sotheby's in 1980. The label noted that Belchier was a maker of 'fine Peer and chimney-glasses and glass sconces, likewise all cabinet makers goods'.

Belchier received his most significant commission from John Meller at Erdigg, North Wales, in the 1730s and he also carried out important work for the Purefoy family at Shalston, Buckinghamshire. In addition to his cabinet-making skills, Belchier produced clear and mirrored glass. Records show that he supplied a quantity of glass for St. Paul's Cathedral in the 1720s. Christopher Gilbert, author of *A Pictorial Dictionary of Marked London Furniture* 1840, notes: 'Belchier owes his high reputation to a distinguished series of bureau cabinets decorated in green and scarlet japan or veneered with fine cuts of burr walnut'. Belchier died in 1753.

The bureau cabinet in the sale features japanned decoration in scarlet and gold and is complemented with detailed chinoiserie scenes of oriental figures and landscapes. The cabinet was once in the collection of the Pleydell Bouverie family, who as the Earls of Radnor were resident at Longford Castle, Wiltshire and Coleshill, Berkshire. Dating from 1735, it is estimated to fetch £250,000-350,000.

A beautiful George III satinwood, marquetry and gilt-brass mounted bonheur-du-jour is a fine example of craftsmanship combining French elegance with English taste. The floral marquetry on the bonheur-du-jour closely relates to the work of the Royal cabinet-maker John Cobb of St. Martin's lane, London (c.1715-1778) who married the daughter of the celebrated cabinet-maker Giles Grendey.

The design of the bonheur-du-jour relates to a version by French cabinet-maker Mathieu-Guillaume Cramer. The example in Sotheby's sale demonstrates exquisite marquetry, a mounted frieze, amaranth bandings and shaped

brass feet which add to its charm and highlight the beauty of its construction. The bonheur-du-jour dates from c. 1775 and is estimated to fetch £50,000-80,000.

A George III mahogany and gilt-brass-mounted tambour top writing desk, with its original leather writing surface and reading slope belongs to a group of desks thought to have been made in the workshop of the leading London cabinet-makers John Mayhew and William Ince, who were active between 1758-1804. The gilt-brass handles on the writing desk can be related to pattern book designs preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Mayhew and Ince are known to be the only cabinet-makers to have developed a successful relationship with Matthew Boulton, the celebrated ormolu manufacturer who had a workshop in Birmingham. The writing desk dates from 1775 and is estimated at £40,000-60,000.

**Sotheby's press office contact :**

Sandie Maylor, Tel : 020 7293 5162 Fax : 020 7293 5947

Sotheby's, London

34-35, New Bond Street

London W1A 2AA

[Sandie.maylor@sothebys.com](mailto:Sandie.maylor@sothebys.com)

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