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Trefid with a Mask

RAT-TAIL	Reeded
LENGTH	19.2cm / 7.51in
WEIGHT	60gm / 1.92oz
MAKER	Adam King
MAKER'S MARK	AK over escallop between pellets in a shield
DATE	1677/8
PERIOD	Charles II
TOWN	London
COLLECTION	Private

DESCRIPTION

This rare mask trefid is unusual for two reasons: the front of the terminal has the crisp die-struck embellishment of a mask with a beard on top of a flower and surrounded by an acanthus leaf design, finishing with three engraved tendrils; and the two ears of the trefid terminal are incorporated within the design. The back of the stem is inscribed MV over MB over 1678.

On the back of the ovoid bowl there is a reeded rat-tail flanked by a symmetrical acanthus leaf pattern which is slightly raised, creating the effect of cut-card work. On the back of the stem is a very good maker's mark AK over escallop between pellets in a shield for Adam King, crowned leopard's head, lion passant and date letter for 1678/9.

COMMENT

Adam King, a specialist spoon-maker, is noted for his mask spoons, a style for only a small number of spoons. This spoon is intriguing because the mask decoration on the front of the terminal is very clear

and well struck whereas the acanthus decoration on the back of the bowl is only relatively lightly struck (or quite worn). This gives rise to some interesting questions.

Did Adam King come across one of John Smith's acanthus spoons on a trip home to Bremhill in Wiltshire, and return to London with it; or did he copy the pattern on it into his note book, later making a die and then a spoon or spoons? The pattern is sufficiently different to tell us that it was not struck in the John Smith die.

Why is the terminal so good and the acanthus decoration mediocre? While experimenting with a new terminal design, did he pick up an old spoon he had in stock to try out the new die?

Did his brother John King see this design, decide to improve on it and create the London flame back?

We shall probably never know the answers; however, speculation sometimes leads us into another line of thought. The mask decoration has been used on spoons bearing the marks of Edward Hulse and Thomas Allen.





EXHIBITED

London, Burlington Fine Arts Club,
Exhibition of a Collection of Silversmiths'
Work of European Origin, 1901, E72, lent
by Mr E.W. Stanyforth
London, St James's Court, Old Silver Work
Chiefly English from the XVth to the
XVIIIth Centuries, 1902, G49, lent by Mr
E.W. Stanyforth

LITERATURE

E.W. Stanyforth, *A Collection of Early
Spoons of the 15th, 16th and 17th Century,
Formed by the Rev. Thomas Staniforth,
the property of E.W. Stanyforth*, 1898
*A Collection of Silversmiths' Work of
European Origin*, Burlington Fine Arts
Club, London, 1901, p. 50, case E, no. 72,
pl. XXI
J. Starkie Gardner, ed., *Old Silver Work
Chiefly English from the XVth to the
XVIIIth Centuries*, London, 1902, no. D21,
pl. LXXIII

PROVENANCE

Private collection
Christie's, King Street, 26 November 2014,
lot 464, £3,500 hammer
Runnymede Collection
John Bourdon-Smith Ltd
Revd Thomas Staniforth (1807–87) of
Storrs Hall, Windermere, then by
descent to his great-nephew
Edwin Wilfrid Stanyforth