

96

Seal Top, Barnstaple Decorated

LENGTH 18.8cm / 7.36in
 WEIGHT 52.8gm / 1.69oz
 MAKER John Quick
 MAKER'S MARK Berry mark and B R in monogram, with an M in a stylised rectangle
 DATE c.1615
 PERIOD James I
 TOWN Barnstaple
 COUNTY North Devon
 COLLECTION Private

DESCRIPTION

This spoon is in mint condition. It is a historically important James I silver-gilt seal top spoon, engraved with one of the decorations unique to Barnstaple. This particular spoon, when viewed with the stem towards you, depicts the heads and necks of a pair of scaly monsters that rise from the centre of the bowl.

In similar style to the monsters, on a magnificent spoon that features Aphrodite, round the outside of the bowl there are various leaves and other foliate design with a series of irregular struck punch marks to create a textured background. (The same effect is used on the berry mark to give it the texture of fruit.)

HONOR GOD is engraved in stylised format on the front of the stem, which has the same textured background as the bowl. There is a diamond between the words and, at each end, the pricked initials RB with scrolls above and below on a button. The spoon is struck in the bowl with the berry mark associated with

the Quick family workshop and twice on the back of the stem with the BARUM monogram mark. See also the mark that looks like B R in monogram with an M in a stylised rectangle. This is unusually well struck – often marks show that the Quick dies are very worn. Barum is an old name for Barnstaple, derived from the Latin form of the town name: Barnastapolitum.

(Other name variants are Sarum, the Anglo-Saxon name for Salisbury; and Shaston, an old name for Shaftsbury revived by the novelist Thomas Hardy.) John Quick, maker of this spoon, also made spoon no. 61, a magnificent Aphrodite with a centre knop. These are the only two spoons with engraved monsters in the bowls.

FURTHER INFORMATION

See How, *Silver Spoons* (vol. I, pp. 240–1; also vol. II (pp. 206–7), where this spoon is illustrated (centre) and discussed. Spoons in this famous group bearing an IQ maker's mark have been noted – for example, the





Aphrodite spoon no. 61 – and ascription to John Quick of Barnstable, c.1615–20, is valid. See also Kent, *Barnstable Silver* (pp. 12–15), where this remarkable group of spoons is fully discussed.

PROVENANCE

Private collection
 J.H. Bourdon-Smith Ltd (2003)
 Sanders collection (1963 for £400)
 How of Edinburgh
 Cookson collection
 Bought by Mrs How at the Ellis sale of 1935, lot no. 210, for £92
 Ellis collection



97

Seal Top, East Anglian Decorated

LENGTH	19.7cm / 7.7in
WEIGHT	97.6gm / 3.12oz
MAKER	Richard Chesten
MAKER'S MARK	RC mullet above and below in a circle, RI.CH in a serrated rectangle
DATE	c.1622
PERIOD	James I
TOWN	Beccles
COUNTY	Waveney Valley District of Suffolk
COLLECTION	Private

DESCRIPTION

A very interesting and magnificent James I parcel-gilt seal top spoon; at the time of writing (2015) it is the most decorated spoon from East Anglia. The slightly tapering hexagonal stem is decorated on the back and front with panels of engraved saltire decoration and is the only known example. Again this spoon is unusual as the front of the fig-shaped bowl is engraved with simple arabesques and lozenges. On the back of the bowl a plain escutcheon containing a donkey (probably a heraldic charge, a crest or possibly a badge) within a decorated border is engraved.

The seal of baluster form with extra adornment is joined to the stem with a lap-joint. On the top of the seal is pricked SF over 1622; the stem joins the bowl with a rudimentary rat-tail. On the back of the stem near the bowl is the maker's mark RC with mullet above and below in a circle – the mark of Richard Chesten of Beccles. See Hartop, *East Anglian Silver*, no. 69 (p. 91), where this spoon is illustrated.

COMMENT

This is an interesting type of seal top spoon known as East Anglian decorated owing to the engraved decoration on the back of the bowl. It takes in a number of designs. At the end of this section there are further examples. They all have an inscribed line round the border of the back of the bowl, filled with a continuous serration within which is a mixture of simple arabesques and lozenges and simple foliate designs, often hatched; sometimes there are initials and a date within the design. The entire back of the bowl may be covered, or approximately the half nearest to the rudimentary rat-tail.

This group is distinct from the Barnstable decorated group of spoons from the Quick workshops. Local correspondence from the early twentieth century refers to 'the old family spoon' in the Waveney Valley area with the RC and mullets bowl mark.

PROVENANCE

Private collection
 Jimmy Sanders collection
 How of Edinburgh

