

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S TO OFFER THE FINEST COLLECTION OF EARLY ENGLISH PEWTER EVER TO COME TO AUCTION

Important Early English Pewter, The 'Little' Collection

Christie's King Street

1 May 2007



London – A private pewter collection comprising only the best and rarest 16th and 17th century pieces will be offered at Christie's King Street in the *Important Early English Pewter, The Little Collection* on 1 May 2007. Assembled over the past thirty years by David Little, the 150 lots feature unique items of exceptional quality many with interesting provenances. Deliberately, the collection includes only one or two pieces of each form, size or capacity. Estimates range from £500 to £100,000 and the sale is expected to realise around £800,000.

The top lot of the sale is an enormous broad-rimmed charger, *circa* 1650 (estimate £60,000-100,000) with charming engraved hunting scenes around the rim depicting groups of huntsmen chasing deer, rabbits, stags and hares. A further highlight is a pair of important English pewter befeater flagons by Samuel Billings of Coventry, inscribed 1685 (estimate: £25,000-35,000) made for Queniborough parish church in Leicester and referred to in the parish accounts of the same year. While exceptionally early and rare pear-shaped flagons, *circa* 1550 (estimate: £25,000-30,000) also feature.



The sale also includes two broad-rim plates, one engraved with the arms of Sir Edward Lake who fought for Charles I at Edgehill, *circa* 1650 (estimate: £7,000-10,000) while the other of similar date features the family arms given to Sir Francis Drake showing the crest of the golden hind (estimate: £8,000-12,000) and thought to have been made for a descendant. A flat-lid tankard displaying a twin portrait of King William and Queen Mary, *circa* 1690 (estimate: £18,000-25,000) is another star lot of the sale and is one of only eighteen known examples.



A pewter and enamel rosewater bowl, *circa* 1600 (estimate: £12,000-18,000) showing the arms of James I of England and James VI of Scotland, is thought to be one of the earliest dateable pieces of Scottish pewter. It is rivalled by a pair of pewter dishes, one of which forms part of the Neish Collection in The Pewter Museum, Stratford-upon-Avon, the other in the Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.



David Little's interest in pewter began in 1975 with the purchase of The Manor House, Bramcote, described in Pevsner (*Buildings of England- Nottinghamshire*, 1951) as 'one of the best brick-built buildings in Nottinghamshire'. The surviving will and inventory of the first occupant, Henry Hanley, dated 5 June 1600, revealed a full inventory of pewter, as well as oak furniture and other valuables. The Littles extensively restored and refurbished The Manor House with appropriate items of the period using the Hanley inventory as a guide and in May 2001, Christie's successfully sold the contents. Since moving to a cottage near Stratford-Upon-Avon, David Little has been unable to display his pewter collection appropriately and so has decided to offer this outstanding collection to other discerning collectors.

Much of the collection has featured in specialist journals and books, including Peter Hornsby *Pewter of the Western World*, 1983 as well as various exhibitions including the highly successful *Pewter: a Celebration of the Craft 1200-1700* at the Museum of London (1989), where a large part of the collection formed the core of the exhibition.

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