

For Immediate Release

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PIECES OF MEDICAL HISTORY FROM PENICILLIN'S UNSUNG HERO OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S IN OCTOBER



Scientific Instruments and Engineering Works of Art
Thursday, 28 October 2004

South Kensington – A unique opportunity to acquire rare pieces of medical history from the collection of penicillin's unsung hero, Dr Norman Heatley, OBE DM (1911-2004) will be offered at Christie's *Scientific Instruments and Engineering Works of Art* sale on 28 October 2004. The collection features five lots devoted to the development of the 'miracle' drug including scarce off-prints from the *Lancet* (estimate: £1,500-2,000) and a rare ceramic vessel which Dr Heatley designed for the large scale production of penicillin of which there are only ten still in existence (estimate: £1,200-1,500).

Dr Heatley was a key member of the Oxford University team of scientists, led by Nobel prize winner Professor Howard Florey, which carried out the pioneering research work in the early 1940s that led to the large-scale production of penicillin. Born in 1911 in Suffolk and with a doctorate from Cambridge, Heatley joined Florey's research team at Oxford in 1936. Soon after the start of World War II, work began on penicillin after Sir

Ernst Chain read Sir Alexander Fleming's 1929 paper on penicillin and thought the subject worthy of further research.

Heatley was responsible for many of the technical innovations for carrying out the extremely difficult process of purification and extraction of penicillin and became an expert at growing mould from which penicillin is extracted. Initially all kinds of containers were used ranging from bedpans to biscuit tins, however it was Heatley in 1941 who designed the solution, a stackable rectangular ceramic vessel, which led to larger-scale production of penicillin (offered in three lots with estimates from £1,000 to £2,000). Proceeds from the collection will be donated to The Norman Heatley Memorial Fund, The Sir William Dunn School at the University of Oxford.

Also offered in the sale is a rare complete individual Sikhote-Alin meteorite which fell to earth during one of the most spectacular falls of recorded history in February 1947 in Russia (estimate: £10,000 – 12,000). Reported as a fireball that was brighter than the sun, the meteorite left a trail of smoke and dust that was 20 miles long. Entering the atmosphere at about 31,000 miles per hour, the meteorite broke up in a violent explosion scattering fragments over a square kilometre. This 22kg piece exhibits the crust in the original form and is an outstanding and rarely seen example.

Images available on request
Visit Christie's at www.christies.com

Notes to Editors:

Interest in the art of science and scientific instruments has created a very specialized, yet increasingly popular collecting category. Christie's offers all types of scientific and medical instruments and apparatus, including globes and planetaria, engineering and maritime models. Sales take place throughout the year in London. Notable results include the auction of the extraordinary William Bonardo Collection of Wax Anatomical Models that sold for £203,463 (2001); a unique 1.5in. scale model of Stephenson's locomotion no.1; and the Gaunless Bridge model built in 1875 that realized £109,038 (2001).