

A UNIQUE ENGRAVED PEWTER BOSSED DISH CIRCA 1640

From the Stanley Shemmell Pewter Collection sold at Bonhams October 26th 2006.

Acquired by Stanley Shemmell in perhaps 1975 and subject of an article in the December 1975 Journal of The Pewter Society. As I do not have a copy of this these details are taken from a follow up article written for Spring 1986.

This 15" Dish he decided on good evidence represented the 'Sovereign of The Seas' which was launched in

c 1638 and was a restatement of the Royal English claim to be Sovereign of the Seas made by English Kings since the time of King John. This at that time was the largest gun ship ever built. She was never defeated in battle but in 1696 due to an accident on board it was destroyed by fire (a home goal).

She was built by Phineas Pett at the Chatham Shipyards with his son Peter Pett who is shown in the portrait with the ship below. Never had a finer or bigger gun vessel been built, perhaps in the world, at that time.



The engraving has been considered 'very accurate'. Stanley Shemmell considered that the only identification marking on the plate an SS surmounted by a Roman II perhaps indicated it was the number 2 pewter dish on board ship. His theory was that this was decorated by a procedure similar to scrimshaw work by a seaman whiling away long hours off duty and days of becalmed inactivity.

This was decorated by being chased with a hammer and chisel. Pewterers never used this method as it weakened any such article to the point of uselessness and this plate shows signs of old repairs to the reverse of the art work.

His sources for this theory included the National Maritime Museum and Bell and Hyman who wrote the Diary of Samuel Pepys. When sold it came with three related books and a Charles 1st medal cast by Nicholas Briot dated 1639.

It is perhaps unique. Its condition is not as best. The expression 'Dominion Of The Seas' derives from a letter written by Charles I to Sir William Boswell his Ambassador at the Hague stating. "His majesty finds it necessary for his own defence and safety to re-assume and keep his ancient right in the dominion of these seas" (presume the North Sea and English Channel also referred to as the 'narrow seas')



