THE LIMNER COMPANY



BRITISH SCHOOL

Portrait enamel of of King Charles I (1600-1649), the double-sided enamelled copper plaque, depicting a portrait of King Charles I to one side, counter-enamel with royal cipher 'CR' surmounted with a crown and enclosed by martyr's palms

Circa: Circa 1649

Enamel on copper or gold

Oval, 20 mm (0.8 inches) high

Mounted in gold locket, later leather presentation box from D.S. Lavender Antiques.

This double-sided memorial to the executed King Charles I is one of a handful to survive. Other examples can be found in museums, such as the V&A and British Museum. The palm fronds show that it was made after the King's execution in January of 1649.

Such tokens of loyalty and commemoration were also commissioned by Queen Henrietta Maria, on her return from the Netherlands in 1642, where she had been raising funds for the royalist army. She distributed inexpensive rings, lockets and slides with the king’s portrait to supporters who lent money. After his death, Charles I’s portrait was worn by royalists on many jewels, especially rings, but, before the Restoration in 1660, the portrait was sometimes concealed from prying parliamentary eyes under a flap or inside a locket. His execution was seen by his most fervent supporters as a sacrilegious act. In 1662, following the restoration of the monarchy, a service was added to the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England to commemorate the anniversary of his execution, ‘the day of the Martyrdom of the Blessed King Charles the First’.

A similar (damaged) example, using the same green ground as the present example (but without the decorative black pattern around the edge) was sold Bonhams, London, 'Knightsbridge Jewels',

21 November 2024, lot 30 (£12,800).

Bibliographic references:

Bury, Shirley, *Jewellery Gallery Summary Catalogue*, Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 1982);

Scarisbrick, Diana, *Jewellery in Britain 1066-1837. A documentary, literary, social and artistic survey* (Wilby, Norwich, 1994);

Phillips, Clare, *Jewels & Jewellery* (London, 2000, revised edn., 2008);

Dicks, Sophia, *The King's Blood: Relics of Charles I*, catalogue from the exhibition at Wartski, London, 2010;

Lincoln, Margarette, ed.,*Samuel Pepys: Plague, Fire, Revolution,* catalogue of the exhibition held 20 November 2015 - 28 March 2016 at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London (London: Thames and Hudson, 2015).