

HARRIETT MELLON DUCHESS OF ST ALBANS. aN IMPORTANT PAIR OF gEORGE IV Wine Coolers made in London in 1823 by William Bateman.

Sold



Description

The Coolers are modelled in the everted pear shaped form and stand on four cast lion paw feet, attached to the main body with double shell mouldings, flanked by acanthus leaves. The main body rises to an everted rim decorated with lobing and each reeded side handle is decorated with spirals and raying shells. The handles are attached to the main body with acanthus mouldings. Each has a plain central bottle cylinder and plain collar, both of which can be removed. The front of the main body, and the collar, is engraved with the monogram of Harriett, Duchess of St. Albans, below a Ducal Coronet. The Coolers are in excellent condition and are very well marked on each piece. The quality of design and production is exceptional, as would be expected from this silversmith and demanded by this Peeress. Height: 9.5 inches, 23.75 cm. Length, handle to handle: 12 inches, 30 cm. Diameter at the rim: 8.75 inches, 21.88 cm. Weight: 222oz the pair. Provenance Harriet Mellon, Duchess of St Albans

Sotheby's, London, 9 November 1999, lot 122 Sotheby's New York, Collection of Carl De Santis, 4th November 2011. Harriet Mellon Duchess of St. Albans. The fact that these coolers, like many of her other possessions, are initialled and not engraved with the full St Albans armorials is a testimony to Harriet Mellon's strength of character. Harriet Mellon, who was a famed actress, married firstly a fabulously wealthy banker and secondly a Duke. When she died in 1830 most of her lavish collection of silver was placed in a vault at Coutt's Bank where it remained until 1914. The monogram is that of Harriet, Duchess of St Albans, wife of William Aubrey de Vere, 9th Duke of St Albans, widow of Thomas Coutts, the banker. She made her first appearance on the stage at Ulverstone, 16 October 1787, in a farce The Spoiled Child. Her debut in London was as Lydia Languish in Sheridan's Rivals, 1795, and her last appearance as Audrey in As You Like It, 1815. She married Thomas Coutts, 18 January 1815 at St Pancras and as this marriage was, it seems illegal, they were married by license at the same church last on 12 April. On his death, 24 February 1822, Coutts left her his universal legatee. The Morning Post recorded that "some time previous to his death he settled upon Mrs C the sum of £600,000 with the house in Stratton Street, all the plate, linen & c. the service of plate is said to be the most valuable in any of the country- together with the house in Highgate, and all its appurtenances...the whole makes her the richest widow in the United Kingdom". The Duchess was renowned for her extravagance and also for her generosity to the poor and needy, though the popular press continually attacked her. When she married the Duke of St Albans on 16 June 1827, he was 26 and she was 50. On her death she left the bulk of her property to Angela, her stepdaughter, 5th and youngest daughter of Sir Francis Burdett Bart, by Sophia, 3rd daughter of Thomas Coutts by his first wife, and afterwards suo jure Baroness Burdett-Coutts (died in 1906). She left, however, £10,000 per year, the house in Piccadilly, and Holly Lodge to her 2nd husband. Much of her 35,000 ozs. of silver was in the Coutts Heirlooms...