

Rare 'recycled' coronation silver saved for the nation

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Today, the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF), the heritage fund of 'last resort', announced that its grant of £80,000 has helped to save for the nation an extremely rare piece of coronation silver.

Image



James II Coronation Cup

The James II Coronation cup, dating back to 1685, has been bought for £160,000 by the V&A. Coronation silver in any form is a rare reminder of our regal heritage. Only eight pieces are known to have survived in any form.

This coronation cup is made from the silver that supported and decorated the canopies held over the heads of King James II and his Queen, Mary of Modena, during their coronation ceremony. Traditionally these fittings, along with the 'cloth of gold' canopy, were given to the barons who held them in the coronation procession. Two of these barons - Cresheld Draper, Member of Parliament for Winchelsea 1678-1687, who held the King's canopy, and Gawden Draper, who held the Queen's - combined their share of the gifted silver and had it reformed into this cup in commemoration of their role in the coronation.

Carole Souter, Head of NHMF, said “This rare coronation silver is not only a reminder of our royal history but also has a lesson for the present - even seventeenth-century gentry did some recycling. The National Heritage Memorial Fund is delighted to have helped save this magnificent cup.”

Mark Jones, V&A Director, said “We are grateful for the donations that have enabled the V&A to acquire this important piece of British heritage so we can display it with later coronation canopy bells similar to those from which this commemorative cup was made.”

At 13cm tall, the cup also captures the fashions of the time. Its engraving of four Chinoiserie figures were inspired by oriental goods traded through the East India Company, which would go on to steer such a significant course through British history.

Other donors included The Art Fund (£25,000) as well as The Friends of the V&A; the Hugh Phillips Bequest to the V&A; The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths; and a generous gift from an anonymous donor.

Notes to editors

Image courtesy of V&A Images

A contemporary image of the ‘cloth of gold’ canopy held over King James II during his coronation process, from which the Coronation Cup was made, is available, as well as a photograph of the cup as it looks today.

The James II Coronation Cup will be displayed in the V&A’s Whiteley Silver Galleries, joining other British coronation memorabilia such as bells from canopies used at the coronations of Georges II, III and IV. The V&A’s collections also include part of the canopy held over George II, now shown in the British Galleries.

Further information

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