

Wednesday, 13th May, 2015
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Jacobite, Stuart & Scottish Applied Arts



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**The Four Peers ring - an important mid 18th century
Jacobite gold and enamel ring**

the shaped rectangular head of white enamel with four initials and coronets to corners with dates surrounding an executioners axe to centre in gold, the shoulders formed as a rose and thistle in green, white and pink enamels, the interwoven shank with gold detailed initials and dates on a white enamel ground

Provenance:

Commissioned by Lord Francis Oliphant of Gask
Gifted to Judge James Graham of Airth or his son William Graham of Airth.
By direct descent to Mrs Ann Graham of Airth (nee Stirling of Ardoch)
By direct descent to her great grandson Colonel Stirling of Kippendavie
By direct descent

£15,000-25,000



The 'Four Peers Ring' is perhaps one of the most iconic and romantic examples of Jacobite jewellery and contemporary relic. While relic normally denotes a fragment or part of a revered place, person or object these important rings were created at a contemporary moment as a commemorative memorial for the Peers and high ranking Officers who gave the greatest sacrifice for the cause they so staunchly upheld. The execution of these men was not only a defining moment in the aftermath of the uprising and Jacobite history but shows the fear and recrimination of the Scots and the Clans which the Hanoverian dynasty dealt after the defeat of Culloden. The aftermath of the battle was not the only recrimination for the nation, the butchery on the field of battle, the humiliation of the Prince and Stuarts, and the seizing of lands and titles from those involved was not enough. A public face had to be put to the defeat and in the absence of a Stuart the closest thing were his most trusted and closest advisors and supporters.

Those who had not fled and were captured were punished to varied degrees but those of the 'Four Peers' no doubt the harshest.

This important ring is one of only four recorded examples, the only in private hands and of the them, arguably, the finest in survival and provenance.

Three others are known to survive, all within institutional collections, National Museums Scotland (H.NJ 154), two within the British Museum (1418 and 1490, the latter Ex Sir A. W. Franks Collection).

Although unmarked, it has long been considered within the Jacobite families who owned these rings that they originated from Oliphant of Gask family and were presented to surviving and staunch Jacobite families for their work and effort within the cause.

It has long been considered, although never proven, that these rings were commissioned from Ebenezer Oliphant, Goldsmith in Edinburgh, by Lord Francis Oliphant of Gask. While not proven a more likely candidate cannot be considered. Ebenezer Oliphant's place within the Jacobite establishment as brother of the Laird of Gask, cousin to Laurence Oliphant, Goldsmith and Aide de Campe to Prince Charles Edward Stuart, and his own place as renowned Jacobite Goldsmith all make him the likely, if not the only, candidate. Indeed, the production of such rings supporting the Jacobites would have been a very dangerous offence and so close to the defeat at Culloden could only have been made by the staunchest of supporters. It is not surprising that the ring is unmarked as any 18th century hallmarked Scottish jewellery is scarce. Also advertising the maker of such a piece, if it were found by Hanoverian supporters, would surely have guaranteed problems and re-crimination for the craftsmen.

The Oliphants had been key supporters of the Stuart claim and had been vocal opposition to the Act of Union in 1707. They had been with King James in the uprising of 1715 and played an active role in support, funding and propaganda for the '45. The 10th Lord escaped after Culloden to Sweden and latterly lived in France. He bought his amnesty in 1763 and returned to Scotland but did not stop his staunch and open Jacobite support.

The original owner of this example of 'The Four Peers Ring' could not have been closer to the uprising and its aftermath, John Graham of Airth being not only a supporter but self-proclaimed defender of the Jacobites after the defeat in 1715.

James Graham worked on behalf of the Peers and other captives at their trials in 1716 trying to provide some defence for the prisoners and while his duty seemed destined to fail, with the full weight of Hanoverian monarchy and hierarchy against him, the case he fought was considered a victory. Although appealing for leniency, and not the death penalty, was obviously his goal the likelihood of winning such terms was minimal.

Some consider the precedents he set in 1716 as the cornerstone for the treatment of prisoners after the '45, in particular the Peers, nobleman of the nation,



Engraving of Francis Towneley and George Fletcher's heads on spikes by unknown artist. Published 20 September 1746. © National Portrait Gallery, London.

were only hung rather than their original sentence that to be hung, drawn and quartered.

The Manchester Regiment

The men immortalised on the shank of the ring show the variety of classes, regiments and geographical origins of the officers fighting under Prince Charles. This group of men were somewhat overlooked on their executions after those of the Peers whose involvement was even more political. The executions were staged in three batches, all commemorated on the shank.

The Manchester Regiment was formed during the end November 1745 as a regiment of foot under the command of Francis Towneley. In response to the advancing Jacobite army and success they had seen, they joined Prince Charles' army marching south to Derby on 1st December. However, they were almost immediately forced to retreat to Carlisle. Their support of the Jacobite cause would ultimately lead to execution or transportation for many of the regiment.

The regiment had been started by a deserter from the Hanoverian troops who had been captured at Gladsmuir. He began recruitment in the city and, although reports vary, his successes were obvious, enlisting around 180 men (some reports suggesting upwards of 600, one as few as 30). This success was hardly guaranteed as he arrived in Manchester with only his mistress and drummer as support, some reports suggesting the whole affair was against superior's orders and one of his own invention. The process, official or otherwise, in the number of 30 or 600 must have been a sight.

"Within an hour of his arrival he began to beat up for recruits. The populace did not at first interrupt him, conceiving that the whole army was near the town.....they surrounded him in a tumultuous manner, with the intention of taking him prisoner. Dickson presented his blunderbuss, which was charged with slugs, threatening to blow out the brains of those who first dared to lay hands on himself or the two who accompanied him; and by turning around, continually, facing in all directions, and behaving like a lion, those of the inhabitants of Manchester who were attached to the house of Stuart took arms, and flew to the assistance of Dickson, to rescue him from the fury of the mob; He now triumphed in his turn, and putting himself at the head of his followers, proudly paraded,

undisturbed, the whole day with his drummer, enlisting all who offered themselves....., 'to each of whom a white cockade was given, and a bounty of five guineas promised.

There were nine officers from the Manchester Regiment executed on 30th July 1746. While many regiments, families and men felt the force of Hanoverian recrimination those laid down on the Manchester regiment were ferocious, a regiment of English men in the service of the Scots (as was seen by the Hanoverians) had to be punished. It is said "This unit indeed was treated with a ferocity which indicated that its degree of culpability was held to be higher than that of any other in the Jacobite army".

FT - Francis Towneley - immortalised with George Fletcher with their decapitated heads on a spike in an anonymous contemporary engraving.

AB - Andrew Blood

TD - Thomas Theodore Deacon

TS - Thomas Sydall

DM - David Morgan

JD - James Dawson

GF - George Fletcher

TC - Thomas Chadwick

JB - John Bewick

22nd August 1747

JN - James Nicolson who was an owner of a coffee house in Leith, and held a commission as Lieutenant in the Duke of Perth's regiment. It was stated at his trial that he was an uncle of Donald McDonald.

D McD - Donald McDonald or McDonell was a Captain in Keppoch's regiment.

WO - Walter Ogilvie was a Lieutenant in Lord Lewis of Gordon's Regiment.

28th November 1746

JW - Sir John Wedderburn, Bart., of Blackness, was captured in arms at Culloden. He had also acted in the capacity of Collector of Excise for the Jacobites in Perthshire and Forfarshire. He appealed for mercy at the end without success.

JB - James Bradshaw was serving in Elcho's Life Guards at the time he was captured, although he had originally been in the Manchester Regiment, which likely was the reason he was executed.

JH - Colonel John Hamilton raised a considerable number of men in the Gordon country, and was Governor of the Castle of Carlisle at the time of its surrender.

AL - Alexander Leith was a Captain in Glenbucket's regiment. Although he was said to be old and infirm he was still executed.

AW - Andrew Wood was a shoemaker from Glasgow and Captain in Roy Stuart's regiment. He made a speech on the scaffold stating that he raised a company at his own expense.

The belief they had in their cause is seen in the final moments in Thomas Theodore Deacon's speech to the assembled crowd.

"I am come here to pay the last debt to nature, and I think myself happy in having an opportunity of

Image of the 'Four Peers' ring adapted to show the full naming on the shank.





James Radclyffe, 3rd Earl of Derwentwater. © National Portrait Gallery, London.

dying in so just and so glorious a cause. The deluded and infatuated vulgar will no doubt brand my death with all the infamy that ignorance and prejudice can suggest. But the thinking few who have not quite forsaken their duty to God and their King, will I am persuaded look upon it as being little inferior to martyrdom itself, for I am just going to fall a sacrifice to the resentment and revenge of the Elector of Hanover and all those unhappy miscreants who have openly espoused the cause of a foreign German usurper and withdrawn their allegiance from their only rightful, lawful and native sovereign, King James the 3rd....."

However, such impassioned pleas and the work of the Jacobite lawyers could not save the Officers and the Newgate Calendar describes their final journey and final act for the Stuart cause.

"After the sentence of the law was passed, the convicts declared that they had acted according to the dictates of their consciences, and would again act the same parts, if they were put to trial. When the keeper informed them that the following day was ordered for their execution, they expressed a resignation to the will of God, embraced each other, and took an affectionate leave of their friends.

On the following morning they breakfasted together, and having conversed till near eleven o'clock, were conveyed from the New Gaol, Southwark, to Kennington Common, on three sledges. The gibbet was surrounded by a party of the guards, and a block; and a pile of faggots, were placed near it. The faggots were set on fire while the proper officers were removing the malefactors from the sledges.

After near an hour employed in acts of devotion, these unhappy men, having delivered to the sheriffs some papers, expressive of their political sentiments, then underwent the sentence of the law. They had not hung above five minutes, when Townley was cut down, being yet alive, and his body being placed on the block, the executioner chopped off his head with a cleaver. His heart and bowels were then taken out, and thrown into the fire; and the other parts being separately treated in the same manner, the executioner cried out "God save King George !"

The bodies were quartered and delivered to the keeper of the New Gaol, who buried them: the heads of some of the parties were sent to Carlisle and Manchester, where they were exposed; but those of Townley and Fletcher were fixed on Temple-Bar, where they remained many years, till they fell down."

Charles Radcliffe, 5th Earl of Derwentwater (1693-1746)

Of the four Peers commemorated on the ring, Charles Radcliffe was the only one to be executed for his part in the 1715 uprising along with that of his involvement in 1745.

The connection of the Radcliffe family and the Stuarts was close from an early time. Their titles had been bestowed by King James II and made them amongst the most feared Jacobite families in England. Charles, along with his brothers Francis and James, were sent to the Stuart court at St Germain at the request of Queen Mary, widow of James II, to be companions and fellow pupils of Prince James Francis Edward.

Charles and his elder brother James were involved in the uprising of 1715 and both surrendered at Preston. Charles was tried on 18th May 1716 and found guilty and sentenced to death. This sentence was deferred until July and he latterly obtained a further stay of execution because of the change in public mood. The success of the '15 had been limited and the defeat so definite the public mood seemed not to demand public retribution. Eventually, with several other Jacobites he escaped Newgate prison in December and fled to the continent, living in Urbino. He was appointed the Chevalier's agent in Paris and was presumably an important and ever present member of the Stuarts inner circle and court.

Charles participation in the '45 seems never to have been in doubt and indeed he was involved in the organisation from the continent. He, along with his son James, were captured before their part could be played. In 1745 they were travelling aboard the French privateer ship, *Esperance*, enroute to Scotland with arms for the Jacobite army. On this voyage they were captured by the British ship *Sheerness* and sent directly to the Tower of London where he was retried and condemned to death for his involvement and escape of the '15h and his obvious support and involvement in the '45.

William Boyd, 4th Earl of Kilmarnock (1705-1746)

Boyd's career as a Jacobite is marred with conflicting sides and evidence. He appears to have been perhaps a soldier chasing fortune, not the complete political or religious ideal. In the uprising of 1715 he followed his father, the 3rd Earl of Kilmarnock, into battle under their own regiment in support of the government.

His father died in 1717 and he succeeded him to lands and titles. Sadly, his land by this point was encumbered and Boyd later confessed his was a 'careless and dissolute life' marked by 'vanity, and addictedness to impurity and sensual pleasure'. He played an active part in the peer's elections and rarely, if ever, voted against the ministry and establishment. In the hotly contested 1734 election, it was noted by the opposition, he was brought back from France by the government, indeed at their expense, and both he and his wife received pensions of £200.

However, by the time Walpole left office his pension had been withdrawn and his leanings change markedly to becoming a high profile Jacobite – for which he will forever be remembered. He is quoted as telling the Duke of Argyll "for the two Kings and their rights, I cared not a farthing which prevailed; but I was starving, and, by God, if Mahommed had set up his standard in the Highlands I had been a good Mussulman for bread, and stuck close to the party, for I must eat".

He was relatively late in joining the cause, in October of 1745, and had no part in the planning of the uprising. He was one of the few lowland Peers who followed Prince Charles and it can still be debated if this was with the view to restoring his fortunes alone.

After joining he quickly rose through the ranks and was named to the Privy Council. Although an advisor he generally followed the will of Charles and was not as outspoken as many other important figures. He commanded a troop of Horse Guards and led their march south into England. His local knowledge helped him distinguish himself on 17th January 1746 at the battle of Falkirk.

Present at Culloden and in the rear guard, but in the heat of the closing stages of the battle they mistook the Hanoverian Royal Dragoons as a Jacobite regiment and were captured.

Imprisoned at Inverness he was transported to London and tried for High Treason at the House of Lords, with Earl Cromarty and Lord Balmerino. While he pled guilty he repented for his part in the Jacobite actions, however to little avail. Even with supporters such as the Duke of Hamilton and Lady Townshend making pleas for leniency he was sentenced to death.

As with Lord Balmerino, he was accused of acting upon Prince Charles's, apparent order to 'give no quarter', he and Balmerino opposed this view and were publicly interviewed of the facts. Although repenting his part in the '45 he and Balmerino (staunch to the end) ended their lives together and as friends.

Dressed in black, he met his final moments bravely and in his statement said that "his punishment was just".

Unlike many others executed in London, Boyd's head was not displayed and was reunited with his body in the coffin, buried within the Tower of London, perhaps allowed due to his attempt to repent his part in the uprising or as a small gesture to the fact he was the highest-ranked peer to be executed for these crimes.

Arthur Elphinstone, 6th Lord Balmerino and 3rd Lord Coupar (1688 - 1746)

Arthur Elphinstone was a member of a family with the tradition of 'fierce Episcopalian nationalism', his father before him had been an opponent to the Act of Union in 1707, however Arthur wrestled with his beliefs and accepted (as many other Jacobite did) a commission under Queen Anne in Lord Shannon's regiment. Fighting in the '15 for the Hanoverians he deserted to the Jacobites and on the eventual defeat of the uprising had to flee to Avignon where he appears as a Lieutenant Colonel in the refugee lists.

By October 1745 he joined Prince Charles Edward Stuart as an Honorary Colonel commanding forty horse in the Life Guards. He was present on the march south to England and was the first commander to take his troops into Derby.



William Boyd, 4th Earl of Kilmarnock (1702- 1746).

At Culloden he was at Prince Charles side and as the battle led to defeat, he helped Charles away from the field and to his eventual escape.

After the defeat, and against Lord Elcho's advice, Balmerino gave himself up to the Hanoverian troops. His thinking behind this is unclear, as a nobleman so closely involved in the '45 and in '15 (and worse as a deserter to the Hanoverians). He was charged on 29th July with high treason and pled not guilty. He conducted his own defence and, unlike Kilmarnock and Cromarty, he did not request mercy.

He is perhaps best remembered, along with Kilmarnock, as the two voices which stood beside Prince Charles and defended the Hanoverian claims that Charles had ordered no quarter be given to Hanoverian prisoners or soldiers. Not only did Balmerino refute this in a public interview with Kilmarnock but also in his final moments from the gallows before his death.

On the gallows he wore a plaid cap under his wig, showing his loyalty to Scotland to his final moments. He also handed the executioner, John Thrift, 3 guineas requesting he carry his work out professionally and swiftly. It however still took three blows to sever his head.

His final words upon the gallows of Tower Hill were a prayer. Adamant to the end, he ended his support for the cause in such staunch manner no doubt to his commitment could be levied,

"O Almighty God, I humbly beseech Thee to bless the King, The Prince, and Duke of York, and the dutiful branches of the Royal Family. Endue them the Holy Spirit, enrich them with them thy heavenly Grace, prosper them with all happiness and bring them to thine everlasting Goodness, all my benefactors and the faithful adherents to the Cause for which I am about to suffer..... God preserve my friends, forgive my enemies, restore the King and have Mercy upon my Soul'

At the end of this prayer he immediately gave the signal for the executioner to compete his task.

Simon Fraser, 11th Lord Lovat (1667/8-1747)

Simon Fraser came from a line of Jacobites including his father, Thomas, who had played a powerful role in the Jacobite rising under John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, in 1689, for which he suffered imprisonment. In 1690 Thomas Fraser served with the



Effigies of the late Earl of Kilmarnock, and the late Lord Balmerino.

Jacobite general Thomas Buchan, and six years later he allied with James, Lord Drummond (later second Duke of Perth) and other nobles in an attempt to capture Edinburgh Castle for James VII and II.

Simon had a rather colourful and, in some cases, unseemly early life, trying to bribe family members to change inheritance and lands to his benefit. Trying to force his cousin to marry him when his bribery failed, however marrying her protector under duress in her stead, only to call the marriage a sham joke years later when its value was not apparent – having married two other women while not divorced from her.

Trouble followed him most of his early life and it took a pardon from King William, only after he had been found guilty of High Treason. However, this plea to King William was for personal gain only and he was still harboring his Jacobite feelings. Shortly after he made two trips to the Jacobite Court in St Germaine. To further cement his relationship in the Stuart court, and after King William's death, he converted to Catholicism and met with Mary of Modena and the titular James VIII and III. He aligned himself with the Duke of Perth's factions and was promoting an uprising from as early as 1703.

By 1715 he had bought his pardon and return to British soil and was based in London. By this time the Duke of Argyll had convinced him to support King George I. He headed north towards Inverness and took and held the city on behalf of King George. His fortunes now changing for the better, he appeared a Hanoverian. However, the disbandment of his forces and the city handed to others meant his income fell and his rise was short lived. This likely helped push him away from the Hanoverians and before long back to the Jacobites.

This toing and froing of side to side was as blatant as it was regular and it appears it was only his highly regarded charm that kept him out of trouble. This renowned charm got him not only into, but more often out of, some rather tricky situations between King George and King James on both sides.

By 1745 it was clear that his Whig allegiances had not given him the power, land and full title he had expected and this seems to have sent him back, for a final time, to the Stuart cause. As early as 1690 King James had promised him reward for his support such as Lieutenant-General of the Highlands; furthermore, the Pretender might be willing to elevate him to a Dukedom. In 1739 Lovat was the first to join the association formed to invite the Pretender to land in Scotland; his allegiance was secured.

Although a player from the outset in the return of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, Lovat was not at Glenfinnan in August, in part due to feigned sickness possibly in part as the promised patent of Dukedom had not reached him. This countered with the non-arrival of the French troops, part of the original party's plans perhaps caused him some points of thought. Even throughout the campaigns, once he had pledged the Lovat Frasers and himself to the cause, he was keeping all avenues open and wrote regularly to the Whig hierarchy, with them still hoping that if they could not turn him they could at least secure his neutrality.

By 1746 Lovat was in his 80s and hardly a player on the battlefield. This fell to his son and heir who was threatened by disinheritance not to take part. He indeed was captured and imprisoned in Inverness, only to escape with help from local friends.

After the defeat of Culloden, Prince Charles fled and sought shelter from Lovat, who urged him on and promised men for another battle, presumably seeing his hopes, land, fortune and life slipping from his grasp. Charles declined and left, and Lovat fled his home too. In his escape he was captured by Hanoverian troops sailing up Loch Morar as he hid in a hollow tree to evade capture. However, the tree could not hide him and he was spotted and captured and taken prisoner to Fort William.

Transported to London, he was interviewed and famously sketched by William Hogarth. Lovat at this



Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat (1667-1747). © National Portrait Gallery, London.

time was described by the Gentleman's Magazine:

"Lord Lovat makes an odd figure, being generally more loaded with clothes than a Dutchman with his ten pair of breeches; he is tall, walks very upright considering his great age, and is tolerably well shaped; he has a large mouth and a short nose, with eyes very much contracted and down-looking, a very small forehead, almost all covered with a large periwig; this gives him a grim aspect, but upon addressing anyone he puts on a smiling countenance".

He was tried for High Treason before the House of Lords and gave his own defence. At the end of his case, in inimitable fashion and charm he replied "Nothing except to thank your lordship for your goodness to me. God bless you all, and I wish you an eternal farewell. We shall not meet again in the same place; I am sure of that".

While public executions always attracted crowds, that of Simon Lord Lovat attracted a huge crowd by any measure. Perhaps the larger than life character, his life story and advanced age convinced more to turn out for this. Due to this popularity the crowds were huge and too much for the erected scaffolding platforms to hold, resulting in their destruction under the weight of the crowd, killing 20 spectators. In his larger than life character, Lovat found this implausibly funny and was seen to laugh heartily and loud all the way to the executioner's block. It is reputed that this is the origin of the saying to 'laugh your head off'. Lovat apparently laughing till his final moments. This seems a little extension of the truth as his final words are recorded, taken from Horace, 'Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori' ('It is sweet and proper to die for one's country'), then turned to moralising by quoting Ovid's 'Nam genus et proavos, et quae non fecimus ipsi, Vix ea nostra voco' ('For those things, which were done either by our fathers or ancestors, and in which we ourselves had no share, I can scarcely call our own').

Among the Four Peers and 120 Jacobite executed he was last and indeed the last person to be publicly beheaded in Britain.

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