

Fine Scottish Silver

Wednesday 13th February 2008
33 Broughton Place Edinburgh



**Edinburgh, Glasgow (post 1818)
and Hallmarked Silver**

288

A Victorian presentation tea pot

by John MacKay, Edinburgh 1864-1865, the egg shaped body with embossed and chased foliate scroll and shell decoration with ovoid cartouches, the domed lid with bud finial, the heavily swag fluted spout and C scroll silver handle with ivory insulators, resting on a simple spreading foot rim, the cartouche engraved with conjoined script initials to one and to the opposing cartouche 'Part of a Public Presentation of £5000 and Silver Plate to the Rev Thomas Guthrie DD 1864

25cm high 26oz

Provenance:

After the presentation to Reverend Guthrie in 1864, this teapot stayed within the Guthrie family. It passed to Guthrie's nephew and subsequently down the family line.

Note:

The Rev. Dr. Thomas Guthrie was a great leader and visionary within the social reform of Scotland in the nineteenth century.

Born in 1803 in Brechin, Guthrie was the son of a merchant; he started to attend University of Edinburgh in 1815 from the age of twelve. His education lead him to Paris where he studied natural philosophy, chemistry and comparative anatomy.

Although originally a minister of the Church of Scotland, he became a very enthusiastic supporter of the movement within Scotland that lead to the disruption and his name is now more commonly associated with the Free Church. In his role within the Free Church, Guthrie is most famous for campaigning to owners and landlords who would not supply land for the setting up of Free Church parishes and churches. He also famously collected over £116,000 in eleven months between July 1845 - 46 to support the building of manses for the ministers of the Free Church.

But even with all these activities, he is mainly remembered for the setting up of the 'Original Ragged Schools'. The idea at the time was based upon a similar one set up by John Pounds, a shoemaker from Portsmouth in 1818. His basic idea had been simply to teach poor children without charging fees, Guthrie then started his plea for the 'ragged schools'; he did however expand on the original idea. The Ragged Schools was to school, feed and give basic industrial training to the disadvantaged children of working class families, and all without charging fees. The 'Original Ragged School' was opened in 1848 on Castle Hill Edinburgh.

While founded by Guthrie and the Church, a great amount of fundraising and subscription was needed from the public to continue the work of the school and collections around the city were a common sight, including fine jasper ware collection 'tins' in shops and taverns around the city.

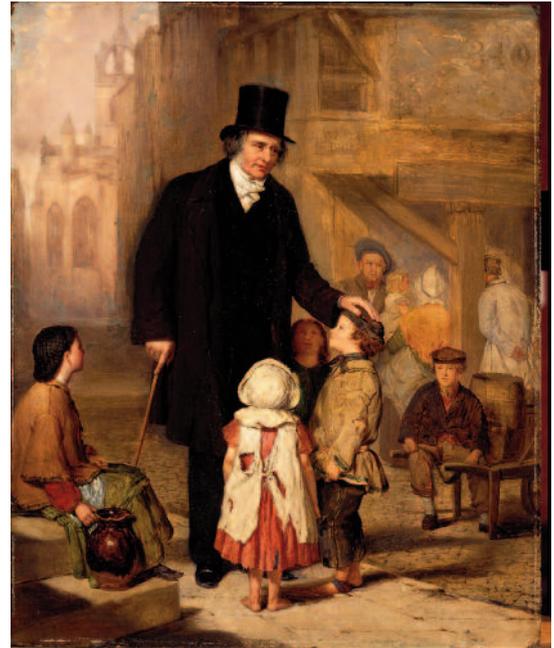
Lyon & Turnbull recently sold an example and this was subsequently donated to The National Museum of Scotland.

The Ragged Schools were however not without controversy, a stipulation of attendance at the schools that all the pupils be brought up and educated as Protestants. This religious interference did create some controversy within the education system and those who staunchly disagreed with Guthrie would later go on to set up the United Industrial School. The main difference the education given, combined secular and separate religious teachings.

On the 17th May 1864 aged 61, Thomas Guthrie resigned from public work, due to serious ill health. He was presented by his congregation and the local community with £5000 and silver plate as a mark of their appreciation for his tireless work for the community and Scotland as a whole; this teapot is part of that presentation.

A statue now stands in his honour towards the west end of Princes street, Edinburgh that bears the following inscription:

'An eloquent preacher of the gospel. Founder of the Edinburgh Original Ragged Industrial Schools, and by tongue and pen, the apostle of the movement elsewhere. One of the earliest temperance reformers. A friend of the poor and of the oppressed. Born at Brechin, Forfarshire. Minister successively of Arbirlot and of Greyfriars and St John's parish churches and of free St John's Church in this city'.



James Edgar: "Rev. Thomas Guthrie, 1803-1873". Image reproduced courtesy of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

