

An important and unrecorded set of eleven antique sterling silver dinner plates from the Mildmay service, London 1737 by Paul de Lamerie (Hertogenbosch 1688 - London 1751)

Of circular form with gadrooned border, the rim's engraved with a coat of arms of Mildmay quartering Fitzwalter with Schomberg on an escutcheon of pretence, for Benjamin Mildmay, 19th Baron Fitzwalter (1672-1756) created Earl Fitzwalter in 1730, and with the Mildmay crest with an Earl's coronet above and a cap of maintenance below. Inscribed to the reverse with numbers 49 through to 59 and with scratch weights. Fully marked to the reverse. (11)

Diameter – 30 cm / 12 inches

Total weight – 6864 grams / 220.68 ozt

Provenance – formerly the collection of Jennifer Ann Schmiedel (1942-2001)

These plates were put before the Antique Plate Committee in September 2017, where they underwent spectrographic analysis and were found to be in accordance with the Hallmarking Act (1973)

The Mildmay service was once an extensive service which to its benefit was particularly well recorded in contemporary inventories and accounts which survive to this day. As a vanished service, the reassembly relies on the rich paper trail from the aforementioned records and examples resurfacing at auction over the previous decades. In recent writings however, there has been much debate as to whether the service was once gadrooned or if it had a moulded edge. The surviving dishes/plate from the service are known to date from three years; 1725, 1737 and 1744, the vast majority from the first two dates. The principal concern with the moulded edge is that all of the numerous surviving examples with this edge have between a 13% and 15% discrepancy in their present weight as compared to their scratch weights as inscribed on the reverse of each plate in the service. The few known examples with gadrooned edges have also led some to believe that it is the gadrooned edge which was added later¹. Principally the set of twelve dinner plates marked for London 1725 with a moulded edge in the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown² are the main point of comparison where it can be deduced from the cataloguing that there is an overall variance in scratch weight versus the present weight of 13.51%. With the present lot of eleven there is an overall difference of only 2.1 % in comparison to the scratch weight with their present weight³. With further comparison to a known gadrooned example, a Second Course Dish London 1725, sold Christies London 6th June 2017 (and is probably that which was also sold Christies New York 15th October 1985) the difference between its weights is 3.1%. There is also another second course dish⁴ London 1737 but with a moulded rim, sold Bonhams London 9th Feb 2011 Lot 321, whose difference in weight is listed as 13.8%. A further set of twelve dinner plates marked for London 1737 were sold at Sotheby's Park-Bernet, New York 26th October 1976 Lot 406A (and again at the same house on 12th October 1978 lot 343A), they are described as *'possibly altered at a slightly later date'*. Carver Wees notes that *"these suspicions were largely based on the plates having lost nearly 15 percent of their original scratch weight. Subsequent testing of the metal, however, indicates no discrepancy."*⁵

We will go on to suggest that the eleven plates in this lot can demonstrate that the original service as ordered in 1725 and enlarged in 1737 were all originally gadrooned and that all examples with a moulded edge of these dates have been reformed at a later date thus accounting for their percentage loss in weight and that no metal was added only subtracted in the reforming.

¹ B.Carver Wees, *English, Scottish and Irish Silver at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, New York, 1997, P. 153* 'The Second Course dish sold at Christie's New York on 15 October 1985 is similarly catalogued, "border altered."

² *Ibid*, p.152-153, no 78.

³ See Appendix 1

⁴ Miscatalogued by Bonhams as a dinner plate, the diameter, scratch weight and No 3 confirm this to be a Second Course Plate as found in 'An Account of the Right Hon'ble the Earl of Fitzwalter's Plate taken this 22 day of June 1739', Essex Record Office D/DM/F12. This is likely the third plate listed under the category number No 3 with a matching scratch weight of 36=7.

⁵ B.Carver Wees, *English, Scottish and Irish Silver at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, New York, 1997, P. 153*

Benjamin Mildmay (27 December 1672 – 29 February 1756), held many titles and positions of state. On the 18th June 1724, he married Fredercia Darcy (d.1751), daughter of the Duke of Schomberg. They would have taken up residence in Schomberg House, Pall Mall their London home as well as the Mildmay family home of Moulsham Hall, Essex. The first service was ordered in 1725 shortly after their wedding, which is likely to relate to an undated entry in the accounts of Mildmay as prepared by Paul de Lamerie which are as follows;

*To 12 Dishes & 3 Dozen of plates 1260 oz. : 15 dw. At 6 s. 2 d. p. oz. £388 14s. 6d
Fashion 18d. p oz. £94 10s. 0 d.
Engraving 3s. p. pc. £74 s. 0d.*⁶

This indicates the original size of the service but does not provide weights or a physical description. Mildmay served as the Commissioner of Excise between 1720 and 1728, upon the death of his brother in 1728 he was created Baron Fitzwalter. It was also in 1728 the remodelling of Moulsham Hall commenced, from a Tudor structure to a grander house in the Palladian fashion, this was to occur over a number of years. Thereafter on the 14th of May 1730 Benjamin Mildmay was made Earl Fitzwalter and Viscount Harwich, this almost certainly links to another account from de Lamerie that is likely but indistinctly dated 1st April 1731

*'To engraving the Coronett [sic] on 3 dozen of Nurlled plates 6d. p. pc. £17 s. 0d.'*⁷

This reference to 'nurlled plates' is the earliest reference to these plates being gadrooned, as nurling or nulling is another term for gadrooning⁸. As this is before the expansion of the service in 1737 this would suggest that this concerns the original service which as previously stated consisted of twelve dishes and three dozen plates. The expansion of the service in 1737 can most certainly be linked to Mildmay's appointment as Treasurer of the Household and as such he had an entitlement of 1000 oz of plate for his own use from the Jewel House. It can be found in the delivery book of the Jewel House that on the 16th of March 1737 Lord Fitzwalter took delivery of:

*'Delivd one doz. Gadrooned plates --- 249:10'*⁹

It is worth noting that a subsequent record in this delivery book for December 29th 1738 lists two soup tureens, one of which is illustrated and discussed by Christopher Hartrop as part of the Hartman collection (p.110-115), which also has a gadrooned edge. While this tureen bears the mark of Henry Hebert, Christopher Hartrop notes "*Herbert was probably a retailer, rather than manufacturer, of silver. There is no record of his apprenticeship or freedom of the Goldsmiths' Company...*"¹⁰ and thus the concept of him being supplied by de Lamerie is a sensible one. Hebert was one of the witnesses of the inventory taken on the 22nd June 1739 of Lord Fitzwalter's plate. This inventory lists other known pieces from the Mildmay service such as the four "*Sallet Dishes*" of 1738 also obtained from Hebert as a part of the 1000 oz allowance from the Jewel House¹¹. On this important document, there is listed the various form of dinnerware such as the second course dishes as divided by size in a numbering system; Three x No1, Four x No 2, Eight x No 3 and five times x No 4, underneath these there is an entry as follows;

⁶ The Accounts of the Right Hon'ble the Earl Fitzwalter prepared by Paul de Lamerie, (Essex Record Office D/DM-F13)

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ H. Newman, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Silverware*, Thames and Hudson, London 1987. P.44

⁹ C. Hartrop, *The Huguenot Legacy – English Silver 1680 – 1760, from the Alan and Simone Collection*, Thomas Heneage, London 1996, Page 112

¹⁰ *Ibid*, Page 115

¹¹ Sold Sotheby's New York 26th October 2005, Lot 47

This would imply that the service was increased in size by 60% in 1737 from the 1725 original. Of the dinner plates marked for 1725 there are sixteen with a known number sequence between 1 and 34¹³, this accounts for the first three dozen plates as originally ordered. Thereafter the only known dinner plates from 1737 with numbers published were sold at Sotheby's New York, 26th October 1976 and are the sequence between 49-60. These numbers conflict with the numbers on the plates in the present lot of 49-59. Given that no single plate from the fourth dozen, which we do know to have existed as of 1739 due to the inventory, has come to light in the centuries since and there is no other record of dinner plates as of 1739 we suggest than an error in numbering was performed on both sets of 1737 plates This perhaps can be accounted for due to one being ordered through Lord Fitzwalter's 1000 oz allowance from the Jewel House and the other, an as Christopher Hartop states, that this allowance 'which he augmented with purchases of his own.'¹⁴. The weight as stated in the Delivery Book of the Jewel House for the dozen gadrooned plates of 249 oz 10 dwt, the total weight stated by Sotheby's of the 1737 set is 214 oz 10 dwt, a difference of 14.06%, which as this is consistent with the difference found on moulded plates of several dates it would suggest that these were the plates delivered by the Jewel House (and the rims later reformed) and that the lot present was part of the augmented order by Mildmay and have retained their original gadrooned rim. It may also be that there was another dinner service that was kept at a different residence of the Mildmay's which was similarly numbered but always had a gadrooned edge.

As a further peculiarity with the 1737 plates is that each of the hallmarks on these eleven plates traverses the crease of the rim to main body, this has also been noted on the Second Course Dish sold at Bonhams 9th February 2011, who were of the opinion '*that de Lamerie sent the plates to the Assay Office in the flat, and it was decided later to be shaped into the desired bowl or dishes.*'¹⁵. Between number 49 and number 59, the hallmarks slowly transverse the seam between rim section and bowled section, the latter having more of the mark over the bowled section. As to when the original gadrooned service may have been altered to the moulded rim, and thus in the process having lost approximately 13-15% of their weight, is uncertain. In the Sotheby's catalogue of 26th October 1976, lot 404 relates to a further addition to the Mildmay service which are three meat dishes marked for London 1744 by de Lamerie. Each of these plates is of the same shaped rectangular form and has a moulded edge, as to whether this indicates a date that the service was altered within the 1740's and by de Lamerie himself remains to be established. One account book is missing from the Mildmay records¹⁶ which potentially could have held details of the service being reformed or why these plates have conflicting number with the other known 1737 dinner plates. Similarly, as to how these plates and two others known have gone unaltered is equally without explanation. It is however acknowledged that the Mildmay accounts make frequent reference to Lord Fitzwalter, along with his cohort of servants, making regular trips to Moulsham Hall from Schomberg House with his personal silverware, perhaps a small portion of the service was kept apart from the main service and thus escaped the later reforming. Lord Fitzwalter died in 1756 with no heirs and his titles became extinct, Moulsham Hall was later abandoned by members of the Mildmay family due to military occupation in the Napoleonic war, it was demolished in 1809. The date and means of distribution of the Mildmay service is not known. The whereabouts of the twelfth plate from this set, which would be No 60, is also unknown. These plates therefore represent a rare example of an early use of a gadrooned edge on dinnerware, and currently represent the largest known collection of the Mildmay service in its original form.

¹² C. Hartrop, *The Huguenot Legacy – English Silver 1680 – 1760, from the Alan and Simone Collection*, Thomas Heneage, London 1996, Page 114

¹³ No 14 and No 34 are recorded as sold at Sotheby's London 17th November 2010, these moulded edge examples also show a discrepancy of weight of 17.7 %

¹⁴ C. Hartrop, *The Huguenot Legacy – English Silver 1680 – 1760, from the Alan and Simone Collection*, Thomas Heneage, London 1996, Page 113

¹⁵ Bonhams London, 9th February 2011, Lot 321

¹⁶ B.Carver Wees, *English, Scottish and Irish Silver at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute*, New York, 1997, P. 153

Appendix 1

Scratch weights on present lot verses actual weight and percentage difference

Inscribed number	Scratch weight	Scratch weight in Grams	Present weight in grams	% difference
No 49	20 = 11	637.71 grams	625 grams	2%
No 50	20 = 9	636.06 grams	626 grams	1.6%
No 51	20 = 5	629.84 grams	618 grams	1.9%
No 52	20 = 14	643.83 grams	628 grams	2.5%
No 53	20 = 7	632.95 grams	622 grams	1.7 %
No 54	20 = 13	642.26 grams	630 grams	1.9 %
No 55	20 = 18	650.05 grams	645 grams	0.7 %
No 56	20 = 6	631.39 grams	622 grams	1.5 %
No 57	20 = 16	646.94 grams	621 grams	4 %
No 58	20 = 9	636.06 grams	623 grams	2.1 %
No 59	19 = 19	620.50 grams	604 grams	2.7 %

Average difference between plates – 2.1 %

Appendix 2

Timeline of Earl Fitzwalter and the Service

18 th June 1724	Benjamin Mildmay, marriage to the daughter of the Duke of Schomburg
1725	Original service is ordered from de Lamerie - see quote from undated entry in Fitzwalter accounts 'To 12 dishes & 3 Dozen of plates 1260 oz etc'
1728	Moulsham Hall, Essex, is rebuilt over a period of years (records known showing that silver was moved between here and Schomburg house in London)
14 th May 1730	Made Earl Fitzwalter and Viscount Harwich
1 st April 1731 (prob)	Entry in Fitzwalter accounts 'To Engraving the Coronett [sic] on 3 dozen knurled plates 6d. p. pc. £17s 0d.'
1737	Made Treasurer of the Household, with an entitlement of 1000oz of plate for his own use.
16 th March 1737	Order recorded delivery book of the Jewel House as 'Delivered one dozen gadrooned plates – 249oz 10 dwt'
June 22 nd 1739	Inventory taken of Lord Fitzwalter's silver – entry on page 1, '5 Doz ^{ne} of plates : all Number'd --1229 oz : 2 dwt --' (Indicating the service was increased in size by 60% in 1737)
September 26 th 1739	The administration costs of the Earls 1000 oz allowance of plate are paid
1744	Three meat dishes are known marked for London 1744 (with moulded edge)
1756	Earl Fitzwalter dies with no heirs
1809	Moulsham Hall, Essex demolished after abandoned by Mildmay relatives

Appendix 3

Known examples in auction record from the Mildmay Service

Dinner plates

Moulded edge dinner plate London 1725

- Two plates - Sotheby's London 17th November 2010, Lot 15
- One plate - Christsie's New York 29th April 1987, Lot 394
- Two plates (with a second course dish) - Sotheby's Parke – Bernet, New York, 26th October 1976 Lot 405

Moulded edge dinner plate London 1737

- Twelve plates - Sotheby's Parke – Bernet, New York, 26th October 1976 Lot 406A
And again;
Sotheby's Parke – Bernet, New York, 12th October 1978 Lot 343A

Second Course Dishes

No 2 size

- A 14.5 inch diameter example with gadrooned edge London 1737, surmised to be a No 2, (B.Carver Wees, English, Scottish and Irish Silver at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, New York, 1997, P. 153)

No 3 size

Gadrooned Edge, London 1725

- One dish - Christie's London, 6th June 2017, Lot 91
same as (prob) Christie's, New York 15th October, Lot 313

(several records in the 1739 inventory could possibly be this entry listed as "40 : 0")

Moulded edge, London 1725

- One dish (with two dinner plates) - Sotheby's Parke – Bernet, New York, 26th October 1976 Lot 405

Moulded edge, London 1737

- One Dish - Sotheby's Parke – Bernet, New York, 26th October 1976 Lot 406
- One Dish – Christies, London 7th July 1982, Lot 93
- One Dish (miscatalogued as a dinner plate) – Bonhams London, 9th February 2011, Lot 321
(this is likely the third plate listed under the category number No 3 with a matching scratch weight of 36=7)

No 4 size

- One Dish - Christie's, New York, 26th January 201, Lot 165
(formerly in the Domcha Collection, this plate is likely the third plate listed under the category number No 4 with a matching scratch weight of 29 = 4)

Meat Dishes

- Three Dishes, London 1744 - Sotheby's Parke – Bernet, New York, 26th October 1976 Lot 404

Four Salad "sallet" Dishes

- Sotheby's New York, 26th October 2005, Lot 47
and previously;
Sotheby's New York, 28th October 1992, Lot 327

A pair of Soup Tureens

- Two Tureens - Parke – Bernet, New York, 13th April 1963, Lot 71 and 72
- One Tureen - Sotheby's London 9th June 1994, Lot 301

Museum Collections

- A set of twelve dinner plates, London 1725 - Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts
- A soup tureen London 1738 – Campbell Collection, Winterthur Museum, Wilmington, Delaware