



The Hickman Chalice - 1608 Fruitwood - Made in England

49.7

This type of item is not usually made of wood. It shows workmanship of a highly detailed, carved, dark decoration/pattern.

The workman is unknown but, would more than likely have been a Protestant. Items made from wood were usually humble items. This is a high status item. The vast majority of religious items in the Collection are from the Roman Catholic religion. This is the single most important piece with Protestant or Reformation associations. The Henry V111 / Anne of Cleves bed head being another, as it was made for a strictly Protestant marriage. This was made during the reign of James 1 / V1. There is one other similar piece in the Collection – taller. It was bought by Burrell in 1933 from Owan Evans Thomas, an author of a book about Treen. (Published in 1932). It is thought that Burrell saw pieces in the book and arranged for Thomas to provide him with a supply. In the Purchase Book it is described simply as 'The Hickman Chalice'. Burrell probably did not know the background to the chalice.

It is a Communion cup with possibly a spice container on the top, although it might just be a knob! Wood is porous. Most priests were against using wood for Communion cups as they could absorb the consecrated wine. This would be lost & be difficult to clean. With silver or other metal all of the wine was used by the priest. There is a poem engraved below the rim and around the base. "The lord of life his precious blood has shed..." It is quite a long ponderous poem !** Curator has script. Lots of - sinne = sin

Contributor: Wilma Robinson

This turned fruitwood standing cup with cover, known as the 'Hickman chalice' is decorated with scrolling, arabesque-like foliage patterns on the foot, cup, and cover. The domed cover is surmounted with a decorative acorn knob on top of a globular finial decorated with hatched marks and geometric designs.

This standing cup and cover can be referred to as an object of 'treen', which means 'made of wood'. By the early 1600s, in addition to luxury items such as this standing cup, many common household items were fashioned from wood. The thin, rounded form of this chalice, the flared, and baluster stem suggest that the cup was turned on a pole lathe. Fruitwoods were often used for drinking cups of this type as they are dense woods, which are less likely to break when turned. The decoration on the cup was incised onto the wood by delicately branding the surface with a hot metal tool.

The name 'Hickman' was attributed by the Hickman family, of Lincolnshire, England who commissioned and owned this cup. The Hickman family were followers of the Protestantism and this cup is inscribed with three Protestant religious texts. Under the lip-band and continued round the bottom of the cup, is the inscription: "The Lord of Lyfe his Precious Blood hath shed from Death and Hell his chosen to redeeme such as from Sinne are risen from the dead him and his word they greatly do esteeme for that from so great Death they are set free they shune all Sinne and serve him thankfully."

The foot is also inscribed with: "God's word sincerely often preached and read, true Christian Soules it doth in ofte truly feed. Thereby they learn a Blessed lyfe to leade: to them Christ giveth worthy Drink indeede: his owne Deare Blood."

There is a final inscription found on the underside of the foot, incised in concentric circles, which reads: "Doth cleanse them from all Sinne. Salvation Good they so are sure to winne: Because they do feel the Power of Christes Death working in them effectually the Death of all Sinne and the power of his resurrection raising them up to newness of lyfe to serve God with a faithfull sincere loving and obedient heart so rune that you may obtain; 1608".

It is possible that fruitwood standing cups and covers of this type made during the early 1600s were used for the taking of Communion as part of the Christian faith. However, since 1071, wooden cups had been banned for the taking of communion as it was thought they absorbed the sacred 'Host'.

Contributor: Collections navigator