



Executed Chippenham burglar's skull up for auction

The skull of an executed Chippenham felon is up at auction next week, with a guide price of £2,000 to £3,000.

The skull dates from the early 19th century, when John Parker, 36, born in the parish of Langley, was hanged for a burglary [committed] in Bristol.

The skull is being sold with a photocopied newspaper cutting detailing the execution, but there is no visible newspaper title or date.

It says Mr. Parker, along with 30-year-old Thomas Rodway, was hanged on the top of the lodge at "Gloucester Gaol", for the burglary of a Mrs. Grey's house at Clifton.

It reads: "Although obdurate at first, they at last became more sensible of their awful situation and died with due penitence."

The piece has been privately owned by a natural history collector for 30 years.

It will be up for sale at Summer Place Auctions in Billingshurst in West Sussex on Tuesday, when it will form part of the Garden, Design and Natural History auction.

Auctioneer James Rylands said: "I think he has just run out of space and his wife isn't hugely keen on it.

"It is a fascinating piece of social history, that in those days, you did something like that and you'd be sent to the colonies or strung up."

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An auction estimate was tricky, he said, as it was the first of its kind the firm had seen, but one person had expressed serious interest in the skull.

“It is one of the more wacky items we have had,” he said.

“I suspect it will appeal a lot to a very few people, rather than a little to a lot of people..”

The 12 inch skull is inscribed with “John Parker hanged for robbing Henbury Church and De Boudrie’s school”.

It has been partially cut away to serve as an anatomical specimen and comes encased in an antique glass dome. An Egyptian mummified head is also for sale.

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Original Article By Julie Armstrong

OPC Note:

The news cutting mentioned in the article was published in the Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser, London and dated 17th September 1813