

## **The Hunts Post**

# **Antiques Roadshow's Cromwell jug likely to be a fake, says expert**

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THE authenticity of a jug thought to be made from the hide of Oliver Cromwell's favourite horse which featured on the Antiques Roadshow on Sunday has been thrown into doubt.

The jug, inscribed with the words Oliver Cromwell Lord Protector of England Scotland and Wales 1653, was hailed by expert James Foster as the most exciting find to happen on the BBC show for years. He valued the 2ft tall tankard, allegedly made from his horse Blackjack and owned by Dorset man Richard Hoare, at £30,000.

But John Goldsmith, curator of the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon, thinks the jug could be a fake, and the value a gross over-estimate.

He said a similar jug which was up for sale at Dukes auctioneers in Dorchester in April 2005, was examined by a silver expert and thought to have been made in the 19th century.

Since then, Mr Goldsmith has been contacted by other people with identical-looking jugs, including one found at Kiplin Hall in Yorkshire. None have proved authentic.

"I am very wary of objects which claim to be linked with Cromwell. There are very few of them with good provenance.

"There was huge interest in Cromwell in the 19th century and there are examples of other things being made in the 19th century with Cromwell links.

"There is collection of bibles dated 1658 and signed Oliver Cromwell, and they are not authentic. We have got on display in the museum a firing glass dated 1646 but that was made in the late 19th century.

"A few years ago, a pair of leather boots were auctioned off in Yorkshire and they were said to belong to Cromwell. But they were not the right style and came from a house where somebody who was a soldier in Cromwell's time lived. That is not exactly definitive.

“There are a lot of fakes and forgeries, and misrepresentations around. Certainly there are leather jugs of that period. I am doubting whether ones were made with a silver mounting and silver rim, and a coat of arms with the words Oliver Cromwell 1653.”

However genuine revelations about Cromwell, based on fresh readings of existing documents and new evidence, are set to be unveiled at a study day at Huntingdon later this month.

The day on October 22 has been organised by the Cromwell Museum, in partnership with the Cromwell Association, will bring together four historians each with an interest in Cromwell.

Cromwell, who was born and brought up in Huntingdon, came from a modest family and had no political office, but within 20 years he had become the most powerful figure in the country.

Historian Simon Heeley will present evidence that Cromwell tried to get his uncle declared clinically insane so he could get his hands on his estate.

Patrick Little, chairman of the Cromwell Association, will also show how Cromwell was a master of spin, at a time, centuries before it became a byword among the politicians and pundits of today.

Mr Goldsmith said: “Every generation interprets and re-interprets Cromwell, but one of the leading academics on Cromwell has suggested he might be due for a re-appraisal.

“Most historians have been broadly very positive about Cromwell, but that is because they have taken him on his word.”