london selection

The key to buoyant bone

Original details and quality are vital at auctions for models made by prisoners of war



Tom Derbyshire reports

THE workmanship produced by French prisoners of war who built beautiful ship models out of bone and other salvaged materials seems quite astounding at times.

But once you go deeper into that world it is not quite as simple as it seems and a whole range of factors come into play when they come up at auction, as the latest sale of maritime and scientific models, instruments and art at Charles Miller (20% buyer's premium) in West Kensington demonstrates.

Three of the ten top-priced lots on May 1 were bone ship models, originally made by those prisoners – captured during the Napoleonic wars – for the English gentry, who purchased display pieces from markets in the prison arounds or commissioned new models of particular vessels.

Seven were offered in total, with the highest price achieved for a bone and baleen version of the 4th-rate, 50-gun ship HMS Jupiter 191/2 x 2ft 4in (49 5 x 71cm), with a provenance to the Parker Gallery, 1960s, which made a mid-estimate £18,000 from a European collector. The Jupiter was built and launched by John Randall at Rotherhithe in 1778.

A model of the 74-gun HMS Bellerophon sold for a bottom-estimate £12.000 but another 74-gun model hit the top estimate of £6000. Both went to UK collectors.

In Charles Miller's April 2012 sale a selection of POW bone ship models fared better, mostly going over estimate, but he said he was satisfied with the 2013



Above and left: French prisoner-of-war bone model of HMS Jupiter – £18,000 at Charles Miller.

Right: full-length female figurehead c.1840 – £17,000.

Below: 21/4 in bore bronze cannon for the Dutch East India Company, signed and dated for 1764, 4ft (1.22m) overall. Signed for P.SEEST AO 1764. Peter Seest was head of the Amsterdam oun foundry in the latter half of the 18th century. Sold for a topestimate £8000 at Charles Miller to a UK collector.



result: "They are still within estimate, when it should have been a beige colour which is fine, and to be perfectly honest We know more now about how the these were perfectly good, attractive prisoners worked examples but they weren't actually that

"The carving was nice but not exceptional. It made the right money for what it was, and I'm satisfied with that and although I would have liked more you do get more elegant models.

"People are looking for things that are as original as possible, with the best detail as possible, and also of course the most attractive presentation. Again, this model of Jupiter had no original presentation – with the case it had originally it would have had something, or a good period case or decent mount would have set it off, but it didn't even have an original baseboard."

Despite the beautiful craftsmanship of these models, the standards certainly do vary. "You must understand that those prisoners were like anyone doing work nowadays – you got some who were bloody awful, some intermediate and some that are simply breathtaking. This was a perfectly good, bog-standard model." said Mr Miller

The original rigging and a fabulous, original case? That could have been another story.

And those prices achieved seem on a par with other recent sales. In February this year a model of HMS Leopard made £7500 at Christie's South Kensington and a 74-gun ship-of-the-line model c.1800 is guided at \$15,000-25,000 at Bonhams New York on June 5. (Also see the model in the Bonhams picture caption **above** riaht.)

The joint top lot at Charles Miller's sale was a 15-star American naval jack from the War of 1812, although it was at the bottom estimate of £18,000. It was used by Captain Thomas Brown in the battle to control Lake Ontario, in the little-known but fascinating Great Lakes campaigns involving mini-fleets of small ships.

'Little-known' is the problem, though the war is not only overshadowed. inevitably, by the Napoleonic war raging at the same time, but few Americans even seem to know about the conflict

"I had three or four American interns helping through this sale and not one of them had heard of the war, which I thought speaks volumes," said Mr Miller. "It is very rare to find items from that conflict. I would like for it to have performed stronger but I don't think people really understood it; although we

ship sales



Above left: a 7in radius bridge-framed Vernier sextant by Jesse Ramsden, London, no.1226, c.1794. Sold for £700 to a US collector, and **above right**, a 5¾ in radius Vernier sextant by Heath & Wing, London, c.1765, sold for £6000 to the European trade. Both at the Charles Miller sale on May 1.



Above: over at Bonhams in Knightsbridge on April 24, in the marine works of art sale, this 19th century POW bone model of a 50-gun ship, 2ft 6in (76cm) long, mounted on crutches on a parquetry baseboard, in glazed display case, made a mid-estimate £24,000 from a US buyer.

took out a certain amount of advertising and exposure in America and targeted the press out there they really didn't pick up on it."

That seems a real shame on the face of it, considering how important the war was to bonding the nation and the rarity of a 15-star flag, the second version. It did go to a US collector, however. On April 17 Freeman's of Philadelphia sold a first, 18th century version of the 13-star flag, for \$175,000 (£121,310), although that was a full stars and stripes rather than a naval jack.

One of the best sale performers for Mr Miller was a full-length female figurehead c.1840 which more than doubled top estimate to take £17.000 from a UK collector

"That figurehead proves exactly what I've said about quality," he said. "It is of no great size, it is only 21/2ft high, nothing to it, but she was such a pretty figurehead – a really good looker." Despite being small, and the identity of the ship it came from being unknown, it ended up very much in demand.

"It is very interesting because I've wondered whether size of a figurehead would be an issue, but of course

Right: 15-star US naval jack from the War of 1812 - £18,000 at Charles Mille



exceptional."

that is key to value.

For collectors in this market it is all

about quality and original details – and

"The Jupiter was the most original,

and it was a very nice model, but it had

been re-rigged in the 1960s," added Mr

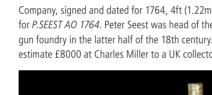
Miller, who is part of the 25 Blythe Road

auction 'collective'. "It was fine but the

back then isn't like what they do now.

Back then they put on an all-black rig

way the restoration and rigging was done



collectors these days need something they can put inside. If it's eight or nine feet they need to pull a wall down and will have a hernia putting it up. "I have no idea what ship it is from –

this came out of a private collection of a retired dealer and he'd had it for donkey's years. To be honest, you rarely know the ship. The merchant ships and so on are usually carved for the owners for their wives and you rarely know who they are, unless you're lucky enough to have it carved in the head somewhere. I've only ever had one figurehead where it was actually carved in the base, as HMS Wasp. "Sometimes you have a fantastic provenance and it doesn't matter as collectors have to go on the fact that they are attractive - and the subject matter." Overall, it seemed a very solid sale but not spectacular: "We achieved our budget, there were the highlights mentioned and they ran away and were great, but I'd have like to see some more activity in the paintings," Mr Miller added

See Art Market on page 30-32 for a closer look at the art section of this sale, including a POW drawing of prison and hospital hulks which certainly impressed.

Another football record for Graham Budd

ALMOST exactly a year after Graham **Budd's (17.5% buyer's premium)** sale from the north of England to reach the set a record for any football programme cup final and although they lost on this at auction he has done it again

On May 13-14, in his auction held at Sotheby's New Bond Street, the earliest-known surviving FA Cup final programme – Old Etonians v Blackburn Rovers, played at Kennington Oval on March 25, 1882 – shot past the £20,000-25,000 estimate to hit £30.000.

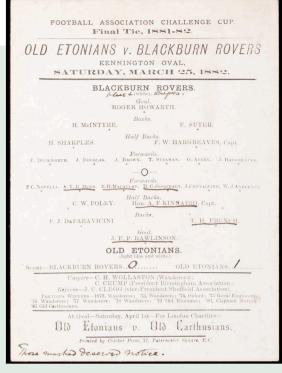
It was bought, appropriately enough, by the Old Etonians Football Club to go on display at Eton College's Museum of Eton Life, which is open to the public.

The previous record, which Graham Budd set on May 16 last year, was £20,000 paid for an official one penny match card from the 1909 FA Cup final between Manchester United and Bristol City. The price was just higher than the £19,000 seen for a copy of the 1889 FA Cup final programme (Preston v Wolves) which sold at Graham Budd in May 2006.

"The record had been edging up, to £18,000 to 19 to 20, and now up to £30,000," said Mr Budd. "There were a lot of underbidders for this one, about ten bidders altogether, with four on the phones, and quite a lot coming through the-saleroom.com, but in the end it was bought in the room.

This simple match card has team line-ups, a list of officials and previous winners 1872-81, and the original owner has underlined six of the Old Etonian players and annotated the card 'Those marked deserved notice'. The reverse has an advert for a weekly sports magazine

Its desirability is clear: nobody has seen an earlier FA Cup final programme or anything approaching as early as this, Mr Budd pointed out. FA Cup memorabilia is always popular and this programme also has huge historical significance. "It marks the end of the early history of football, which was dominated by what you would call the gentleman amateur team really," he



added. "Blackburn were the first team occasion thereafter it was dominated by such teams with professional players and the nature of football completely changed –1882 was the last time a team of gentlemen players won it."

The vendor, a collector, had a stroke of luck when he bought a job lot at a country sale, with papers, journals and other memorabilai relating to a lawyer called Sir Thomas Berry Cusack-Smith, KCMG, 5th Baronet (1859-1929), who was educated at Eton. The vendor spotted the programme, realised what it was and found a diary entry for March 25, 1882, in which Cusack writes about going to the match, after which he met "S. Goodhart & J.B. Bradshaw" - the Old Etonians line-up included Harry Goodhart, probably a relation.

In most auctions the sale of another very rare FA Cup final programme for £15.000 (estimate £5000-10.000) would be remarkable, but in this case it was inevitably somewhat overshadowed by being in the same sale as the world record example.

It was for a cup final replay played at Burnden Park, Bolton, on April 27, 1901, when Tottenham Hotspur beat Sheffield United 3-1. The single sheet includes a handwritten note 'Hotpsur won 3-1. H.T. 0-1, all 4 goals at Bolton end' and the goalscorers' names have been annotated in the order the goals were scored

Another football highlight was Eric Cantona's match-worn Manchester United No.7 jersey in which he scored the winning goal in the 1996 FA Cup final against Liverpool. It made £15.000. The vendor? None other than Neil 'Razor' Ruddock, who was on the bench for Liverpool that day.

His teammate John Barnes had swapped shirts with Cantona but then threw the jersey to the ground in the dressing room out of frustration. Ruddock picked it up and asked if he could keep it as a memento