

An Unusual But Perhaps Common - Use for a Very Large Pewter Plate

(Whilst the use now seems unusual there were in and around Covent Garden London a large number of *bagnios* – houses of ill repute also featuring Turkish bath type of facilities). Hence there were likely a large number of these plates in use. The scene below is from *A Rake's Progress* by Sir William Hogarth a coloured engraving of about 1735. The woman undressing on the right is a *posture-moll* who is about to perform naked on a Pewter plate brought into the room - another source of information follows the picture below.... This is shown by Dan Cruickshank a UK Architectural Historian of repute, in his recent book *A Secret History of Georgian London* (this very large Pewter plate or charger has the likely owner's name and address boldly engraved to the rim – *John Bonvine at the Rose Tavern Drury Lane* – an especially good illustration of the section including *posture-moll* and plate can be seen without explanation at **page 9** in **PEWTER at Colonial Williamsburg** by **John D Davis**.)



In the 18th century this game was played at the Rose Tavern near Drury Lane theatre. **“One of the posture-molls would strip naked and dance on an enormous pewter plate, then lie on her back, draw her knees up under her chin and clasp her hands under her thighs. The descriptions of this performance invite you to imagine what happened next as the drunken customers crowded round. At some stage the posture-moll would snuff out a lighted candle in an obscene mockery of sex. Plate 3 of Hogarth’s The Rake’s Progress shows the act about to begin. In the background a porter named Leathercoat is bringing in the platter and the candle. Leathercoat, a man of prodigious strength, would for the price of a drink, lie down in the street and allow a carriage to ride over his chest.” Other information suggests this started about 1690 and went on at least into the 1720s.**

Comment from another collector - (relating to the early 1970s) – same story slightly different and in part an incorrect interpretation

Interesting - this is the story relayed to us by Bert Isher some 30-odd years ago in his sitting room in Cheltenham.

It seemed a stretch then (imagine 2 or 3 men carrying a 110 lb. woman on this platter; talk about wobbly), and still does.

I really have no clear recollection of Bert Isher’s exact tale, but the essence of the story was unforgettable.

My memories of Cheltenham are mostly of the deserted workshops around a courtyard, many with dusty flagons and tankards sitting on benches, undisturbed, as if they had been abandoned there 30 years earlier. Old tools and ephemera, everything covered with dust.

The Isher bequest to the Cheltenham Museum is indeed a treasure; the story behind it has yet to be revealed

If anyone knows (who will tell us) what is meant by the last sentence this website would be intrigued to know...