

PASH ANTIQUES

A. PASH & SONS OF MAYFAIR

A silver mounted and rock crystal goblet

James Aldridge

REF: 10958

Height: 16.5 cm (6.5") Width: 15 cm (5.9") Depth: 13.5 cm (5.3")

£ POA



An early 19th century English silver mounted carved rock crystal goblet with faceted amethysts. The etched panels depicting birds, flowers, insects and trees to bowl of vessel.

London, maker's mark of "JA" for James Aldridge , date letter of 1836, and duty mark of King William IV (1834-1837).

A William IV silver-gilt mounted rock crystal tazza, James Aldridge, London, 1836

James Aldridge is known today because of his connection with the English connoisseur and collector, William Beckford (1760-1844). He was one of the small group of independent

craftsmen, remarkable for their obscurity being in the main the smallworkers and jewellers whose skills were well adapted to execute, often in mixed materials, the small and precisely-detailed pieces for Beckford's Fonthill Abbey.¹

Most of the objects or mounts known to have been made by Aldridge for Beckford, including a silver-gilt bowl, a silver-gilt-mounted hardstone cup and cover and a silver-gilt mounted Chinese porcelain coffee pot date from between 1813 and the late 1820s. Their beauty and outstanding workmanship appealed to Beckford's fastidious attention to detail.

James Aldridge, who entered his first mark on 22 February 1798 from 20 Strand, eventually settled about 1807 at his new address, 11 Northumberland Street, Strand.² He is recorded there in the 1841 Census at the age of 65 as a goldsmith who was born in the same county (i.e. Middlesex).³ This proves to be at odds with information published in both Grimwade and Culme, who state that Aldridge was the son of James Aldridge of Plaistow, Essex, wheeler, and that he was apprenticed on 8 April 1778 to Charles Aldridge, Citizen and Goldsmith of Aldersgate Street. The usual age for a boy to begin his apprenticeship was 13 or 14, which means that this James Aldridge was born in the mid 1760s, not about 1775/76 as the James Aldridge of Northumberland Street in the 1841 Census would have been.

It transpires that Charles Aldridge's apprentice, James, son of James and Rebecca Aldridge, was baptised at All Saints, West Ham, Essex on 19 October 1763. The parentage of Beckford's James Aldridge of Northumberland Street has not yet been confirmed but the most likely candidate is James, son of Thomas and Elizabeth Aldridge, who was born on 7 September 1775 and baptised soon afterwards at St. Anne, Soho on 1 October. Thomas Aldridge (d. 1786), a dealer in horses and equestrian equipment, was the proprietor of Aldridge's Repository in St. Martin's Lane, a well-known mart for nearly all kinds of horses, except racers.⁴

Where Beckford's James Aldridge received his training remains a mystery. His son, Edward (1803/1811-1883) was also described as a goldsmith at 11 Northumberland Street for the 1841 Census. By that time father and son had been together trading as Aldridge & Son, jewellers, a partnership which was dissolved on 30 September 1843.⁵ Edward subsequently moved to 46 Gerrard Street, Soho, where he traded briefly as a jeweller but by 1851 he had retired.

Notes

1. Michael Snodin and Malcolm Baker, 'William Beckford's Silver II,' *The Burlington Magazine*, London, December 1980, pp. 820-834

2. A.G. Grimwade, *London Goldsmiths, 1697-1837*, p. 421.

