

Rare Bonnie Prince Betty print is sold

A VERY rare 18th century print of Bonnie Prince Charlie dressed as an Irish maid fetched £1,100 at auction in Edinburgh.

The mezzotint print showed the Young Pretender in disguise as Jacobite heroine Flora MacDonald's maid Betty Burke after his defeat at the Battle of Culloden in 1746.

Flora famously helped Charles evade Hanoverian troops by taking him, in disguise as Betty, by boat from Benbecula "over the sea to Skye", from where he was able to return to the mainland and make his escape to France.

The print, by portraitist John M Williams, produced later in 1746, shows Bonnie Prince Charlie in Betty's dress and bonnet.

The rare portrait went under the hammer at Bonhams as one of the highlights of the David McFarlan Collection of antiques and other rare objects, where it was sold to an online bidder.

Gordon McFarlan, Director, Bonhams Scotland, said: "After his defeat at Culloden, Prince Charles went on the run with a £30,000 bounty on his head – the equivalent of around £1 million today. Despite this enormous sum, nobody turned him in.

"In one of the most famous episodes, Charles was aided by Flora MacDonald, who helped him sail to Skye disguised as her maid Betty Burke. This satirical print was produced shortly afterwards."

Charles Edward Stuart – Bonnie Prince Charlie – led the romantic but ill-fated Jacobite Uprising of 1745 to restore the Stuart monarchy to the throne. Following his defeat at

Culloden on 16 April 1746, he went into hiding.

The part that Flora MacDonald played in the escape was immortalised in the "Skye Boat Song", published in 1884.

Despite his renowned pretty looks and the ultimate success of his disguise as Betty Burke, it is said that Charles was unconvincing as a woman, and joked that if the soldiers searched him, they would find more than pistols about his body.



*Routed, o'er Hills the young Adventurer flies,
And in a Cottage sinks to this Disguise.
Fled his gay Hopes, defeated his fond Scheme,
His Throne is vanish'd like a golden Dream.
By manly Thoughts He'd charm His Woos to rest,
In vain! Culloden still distracts His Breast.*

J. Williams fecit

Bonnie Prince Charlie as Betty Burke



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