

Edinburgh, Glasgow (post 1818)
and Hallmarked Silver

Note:
Although this piece is struck with the date letter G for 1786 - 1788 it is possible to tie the manufacture down to the latter part of 1786. The date letter changed from F (used 1785 - 86) in the latter part of 1786 and this with the combination of the incuse duty mark (only used between 1784 - 1786) this piece must therefore date from this period.

George Dempster MP, third laird of Dunnichen was one of Scotland's most popular men of his time. He was a very important and influential politician, businessman and land owner whose memory has now almost been lost to the public record. This was due to his determination only to be remembered for his work and personality rather than correspondence left behind, which he decided to dispose of in his life time. He was an important landowner within Scotland and held estates at Dunnichen, Skibo and Letham Grange.

Dempster was a figure within the eighteenth century enlightenment circles of Scotland and was certainly well accustomed to mixing with the better-known figures such as Sir Adam Ferguson, James Boswell, David Hume, William Robertson and Alexander Carlyle.

His career followed many paths; it was at first assumed that he would follow the family 'business' into law and he practiced for a short time. After moving from law to politics he seems to have found a more comfortable role and flourished within this environment. He was elected Member of Parliament in 1762 representing the Fife & Forfar Burghs. His re-election in 1768 was one that caused him great issue and the resulting legal battle cost him more than £10,000 to win.

As was all too common at this time the 'sponsors' of the candidate and the voting public at large were often given great favour to vote for a certain candidate and luckily for Dempster when 'bought' his electorate appear to have stayed 'bought', he would go on to represent the Fife & Forfar burghs for 28 years. This however did not go smoothly for Dempster and he was one of the first MP's to be caught by the new Act of Parliament against buying voters, after this he was branded with the ironic nickname 'Honest George'.

Throughout his life Dempster's was a businessman of notable merit and was involved in numerous successful and important businesses within Scotland and abroad. Perhaps the most successful venture being the Dundee Bank in 1763. The bank was heavily involved in the development and improvement of the city and surrounding area of Dundee, through the building of new roads and other commercial enterprises. He was also heavily involved in the milling industry in Scotland and was the owner or part owner in numerous mills.

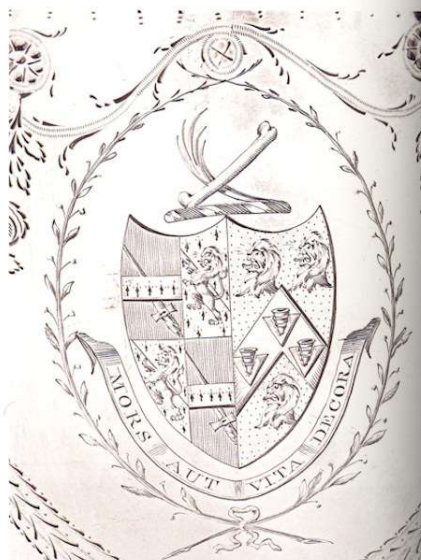
His interest in business was two fold, which ran hand in hand with his 'enlightenment' attitudes. Although business always came first he was not like many land owners of the time and his social conscious and care for his tenants was far greater than normally found in Scotland at the time. He therefore resigned the feudal rights on both his Letham and Skibo estates and gave the tenants the incentives and long term security on the lands to manage and improve them, not only making better living conditions but more profitable ones for tenant and owner alike.

This system was so far advanced for its time the effects are still felt today. In fact the purchaser of the Skibo estate from Dempster's great nephew in the mid 19th century it proved a costly one. The new owner, Evan Charles, through court action tried to revoke the system and return to the old fashioned feudal rights, this proved to be his downfall and he was finally declared bankrupt after following the action through the courts as far as his finances allowed.

Even after retiring from Parliament in 1790, Dempster still played a keen and active role within Scotland and was a great supporter and promoter of business within Scotland and business interests abroad for Scots companies.

Reference:

'The Gentleman User - the life and times of George Dempster 1732 - 1818' J Evans



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An oak cased George III presentation silver tea urn

by William Davie, Edinburgh 1786-1788 (date letter G), the body of vase form with beaded rim and chased, engraved foliate and swag borders, with two foliate cartouches, one engraved with family arms to an opposing cartouche above the straight spout engraved 'From The General Convention of the Royal Boroughs of Scotland by their unanimous vote on the 12th day of July 1786 by The Right Honbl Sir JAMES HUNTER BLAIR BART. Lord Provost of Edin. Prese(nts) to GEORGE DEMPSTER OF DUNNICHEN In the twenty sixth year in representing Parliament. The Royal Boroughs of Perth Dundee St Andrews, Cupar and Forfar' the twin handles with ribboned detail and acanthus leaf terminals, raised on a trumpet flared stem with beaded rim onto a square base resting on four ball feet, the domed cover with pineapple and leaf finial, all contained within original panelled oak case

57cm high, 109oz

£3,000-4,000

