

A different vintage British Chess set

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I recently purchased this interesting chess set and wanted to share with you. I hope to gather more information from chess collectors who may recognize the set or can provide more insight.



The pieces are made of sections that screw together around a semi-central post. The primary material seems to be brass, very ornate design. The tops are made of pewter and additionally identify each piece. The middle body is made of colorful Bakelite, one side red the other butterscotch/amber. The set is very old as evident by some patina and the fading of the Bakelite in the exposed areas that were not covered by the brass. Overall, “Faberge” charm with medieval touch .

As interesting is the board. It is mounted inside a solid brass frame, standing on four pedestals/legs. The symbols on the squares are of British-Scottish origin, **Thistles and Crosses**. There are four phrases, one on each side of the board and, additionally, a name next to one of them. In my research I was able to find the following. See details following the photo below:



1. “Nemo me impune lacessit” (Latin) = No one provokes me with impunity

Nemo me impune lacessit was the Latin motto of the Royal Stuart dynasty of Scotland from at least the reign of James VI when it appeared on the reverse side of merk coins minted in 1578 and 1580. It is the adopted motto of the Order of the Thistle and of three Scottish regiments of the British Army. The motto also appears, in conjunction with the collar of the Order of the Thistle, in later versions of the Royal coat of arms of the Kingdom of Scotland and subsequently in the version of the Royal coat of arms of the United Kingdom used in Scotland. It means No one "cuts" (attacks/assails) me with impunity. It is also alternatively translated into English as No one can harm me unpunished.

2. “Quis separabit?” (Latin) = Who separate?

(My Interpretation) Likely refer to Ireland and other territories which remained a separate realm and were not members of the Kingdom of Great Britain.

The Kingdom of Great Britain, officially called simply Great Britain, was a sovereign state in western Europe from 1 May 1707 to 31 December 1800. The state came into being following the Treaty of Union in 1706, ratified by the Acts of Union 1707, which united the kingdoms of England (which included Wales) and Scotland to form a single kingdom encompassing the whole island of Great Britain and its outlying islands, with the exception of the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. It also did not include Ireland, which remained a separate realm.

3. “Honi soit qui mal y pense“ (French) = Shame on him who thinks evil of it

Honi soit qui mal y pense is a French maxim used as the motto of the British chivalric Order of the Garter. It is translated as "May he be shamed who thinks badly of it" or "Shame be to him who thinks evil of it" or "Evil (or shame) be to him that evil thinks." In contemporary French usage, it is usually used to insinuate the presence of hidden agendas or conflicts of interest.

4. “Tria juncta in uno” (Latin) = The three united in one

The Most ancient and Honourable Order of the Bath is a British order of chivalry. It was founded by George I, on 18 May 1725. The name comes from an old ceremony, first mentioned in 1128. In the ceremony, men participated in a vigil of fasting, prayer, and taking a bath. They did this on the day before they were made a knight. The ceremony was abolished in 1815.

The Order is made up of the Sovereign (the British Sovereign), the Great Master (Charles, Prince of Wales), and three classes of members (Highest to lowest): Knight or Dame Grand Cross (GCB), Knight or Dame Commander (KCB or DCB) and Companion (CB)

5. “Lawrian Facit“ = Author Name/Signature(?)



In conclusion, seems to be a vintage British set but I'm in search for provenance, maker, age and other interesting information. Please write to me at chess@ogdir.com. Please visit my collection at www.eosef.com/gsc (no log-in required) where you can also find more photos of this (item #370) and many other sets.

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