



Christopher Clarke Antiques

Dealers in Campaign Furniture  
& Travel Items

Jemmy the Rock Man

£275



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REF: 84078

Height: 27.29 cm (10.7")

Width: 21.58 cm (8.5")

Depth: 4.44 cm (1.7")

## Description

A gilt bronze relief of James Guidney, also known as Jemmy the Rock Man. Guidney was one of a number of colloquial figures, often street pedlars, who found local fame in the 19th century. Another such figure is the Cheltenham Muffin Man. It was common for naïve portraits to be painted of them but this gilt bronze relief figure takes it a step further and perhaps demonstrates his popularity in Birmingham, where it was manufactured.

Guidney was born in either 1779 or 1782 in Norwich. He had 5 years of part time education and worked as an errand boy before joining the 48th (Northamptonshire) Regiment as a drummer boy in 1797. He served in Gibraltar and Malta, where he lost his right eye to Ophthalmia. He transferred from the 48th to the First Royal Veteran Battalion around about 1809. On his retirement from the army he sold boiled sweets in Birmingham and in 1824 gave up his army pension for 20 years as he married a woman of means. His pension was reinstated in 1844, his wife having died. He tried to reclaim the 20 years of pension he previously declined when he need financial help to care for his disabled second wife. Despite the Mayor of Birmingham and Town Clerk petitioning on his behalf he was unsuccessful. A short book on Guidney's life, which was likely an autobiography although anonymous, entitled 'Some particulars of the life and adventures of James Guidney, a well known character in Birmingham. Written from his own account of himself' had at least four editions. There are a number of known portraits of Guidney in museums and the tin from which he sold his medicated toffee, or rock as it was locally known, with the cry of "Good for cough or cold" is held by the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

This relief of Jemmy the Rock Man shows him in his trademark army tailcoat and military hat with the gilt burnished in places to highlight the figure. A number of different figures of famous people and horses etc. of the day were produced in Birmingham. Although those of Wellington and racehorses would have a wider audience reach it is interesting that eccentric characters, who would only really have been known locally, were also produced.

Jemmy is mounted on black velvet in a mahogany frame with a gilt slip. Circa 1840.