

Engraved trade card, loss to centre of image.

U IS FOR UNDERTAKER

At ye lower Corner of Fleet lane at ye Signe of ye Naked Boy & Coffin you may be Accomodated w.th all things for a Funeral as well ye meanest as those of greater Ability upon Reasonable Terms more particularly Coffins shrouds Palls Cloaks Sconces Stans Hangings for Rooms Heradldry Hearse & Coaches Gloves w.th all other things. Not here mentioned by W.m Chandler and W.m Grinly Coffin makers

Author
CHANDLER, W[illia]m; and W[illia]m GRINLY

Publication date
[c1700-1745].

Publisher
At ye lower Corner of Fleet lane at ye Signe of ye Naked Boy & Coffin,

Publication place
[London],

Physical description
Engraved trade card, loss to centre of image.

Dimensions
140 by 90mm. (5.5 by 3.5 inches).

Notes
During the eighteenth century, when many trades were restricted to guild members, or regulated by

codes of conducts, the role of undertaker was open to all. The three main branches of the trade were coffin-making, undertaking and funeral furnishing. These certainly overlapped and many performed all three roles, including William Grinly, who was active at his premises on Fleet Street during the first half of the eighteenth century. He appears to have established his funeral parlour independently, and then to have been joined by William Chandler. Chandler later took over the business with his son Edward, operating as ‘Chandler & Son’, before Edward took over the business, perhaps after his father’s death.

The present trade card lists the many services and wares offered by Chandler and Grinly, from the coffins they made themselves to the gloves, hearses, coaches and shrouds they presumably rented out for funerals. Presented on the upper-half of the card is a rather grim image showing a corpse, above which hang a baby and a coffin, illustrating the beginning and end of the life cycle. The coffin also bears the allegorical personification of time, bearing an hour glass in one hand and a scythe in the other.

In ‘Grave Concerns: Death and Burial in England, 1700 to 1850’ (1998), Margaret Cox offers 1700 as a date for the present trade card, while Catharine Arnold in ‘Necropollis: London and Its Dead’ () gives 1710. Julian Litten in ‘The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral Since 1450’ (1991) suggests 1730, and a number of other sources give 1745. Although these divergent dates are little help in providing a precise time of publication for the present trade card, they do at least indicate that Grinly and Chandler were active in business together during the first half of the eighteenth century.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 17926

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