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Probably the rarest item in my collection was a pair of **Queen Anne's Woolweights**, having been cast during her reign 1702 to 1714. Each of these, weighing 7 lb, but joined together by a leather strap, was hung over the saddle of an official called *trantor*, who was riding through the country weighing the wool crop. From this weight the tax was calculated. They are very rare, as at the death of each sovereign they were melted down and a new king's crest was cast. *Author's Collection.*

Collecting can be great fun, as it means constant contact with people. One learns tremendously from the subject or objects one collects. It need not be in excess of one's available surplus money, but it demands a great deal of effort and application to increase the collection above other, comparable ones. Finally, a difficulty will arise towards the end of the collector's life, namely how to preserve the precious items, avoiding a public auction and renewed dispersal of the collectables, if the family does not share the collector's taste and does not want to inherit it. [See also Title 331 about collecting]

When I became aware that I had a small surplus of money, I became a collector, and that was on my return from Australia to England in 1954. I had just finished my survey of scientific research in many disciplines by scientific cinematography, and collecting scientific instruments seemed an obvious subject for me. I lived in London, by car only a few minutes away from Portobello Road, the Mecca of all collectors, and I soon became a regular visitor there on Saturday mornings. It was a real revelation to me that the history of science, about which I had only read in the literature was, through its instruments, readily available for purchase in Portobello Road.

There was one small shop, belonging to Evelyn Butler, which specialised in scientific instruments. She was not a scientist herself but, during the years of her successful trading, had acquired a great fund of knowledge about old telescopes, microscopes, sextants, ancient weights and other scientific collectables. I noticed soon that I was not the only regular customer in her shop and thus an exclusive group of friends established itself quite naturally, who proudly told each other of their latest finds or asked for advice from whoever was more knowledgeable than the happy new owner of a rare item.

My own collection grew slowly and one of my price items was a Georgian table telescope with a reflecting mirror of 3 inches for which I paid £ 15, a reasonable price at the time. I also had two microscopes of the Culpepper type, early Italian telescopes made of cardboard with lenses at both ends, and an ebony sextant with an inlaid silver scale of degrees.

The Astrolabe is of all antique scientific instruments the oldest, the most desirable, the rarest and the most expensive. The first, Arabic ones, date from about 1000 AD. It is commonly described as an astronomical and astrological circular 'slide rule' which allows the positions of stars to be determined in the past and in the future by a simple movement of a circular pointer, the rete, over another circular plate. As each Astrolabe always had to be calculated individually and hand-crafted, this explains its rarity, value and its aesthetic beauty.