

Silver Plate

Weekly Times Column

By Warren Joel

byjoel

So what is silver plate and why is it so uncollectable?

The term silver plate refers to the collection of mostly obsolete entertaining items from the 1920's and 30's. These include objects like Grandmother's tea set, the ice bucket and tongs and all those strange serving implements that no one remembers what purpose they have.

During the 1920's through to the 1940's there was a proliferation of silver plate manufacturing and use in the wider community. Silver plate being a thin layer of silver layer of silver over a base metal was much cheaper to produce than sterling silver. At the time it must have been a high fashion item to have a silver plated implement and container for every conceivable entertaining occasion. From fruit knives and forks to asparagus tongs, from sardine dishes to bread forks the range was enormous.

Living in the 21st century most of these items have become totally obsolete and if not, their original usage forgotten. While doing estate valuation work I am often presented with shelf upon shelf of this type of "uncollectable". My question to the executor is "who wants it and what are you going to do with it?" And it is the answer to this question that has made silver plate so unpopular.

Not all is lost. There are some of us who still want to entertain, use the formal dining room or have high tea. But, we are very selective about the silver plate that we want to use. A very simple example of this is the Robur teapot, which makes a good traditional cup of tea. It is the practicality of the Robur teapot in its ability to make good tea that now makes it one of the few collectors' items bringing between \$100 and \$200.

My advice to most of my clients is to send the silver plate to the local opp shop, think what you might use and unfortunately, give away the rest.

Next week: On The Internet.

Free Valuation for Weekly Times readers.

Byjoel will do a free valuation of your collectables via email. If you send a photo and description of your item to valuations@byjoel.com.au I will access the item and respond.

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Warren is a third generation auctioneer and valuer specialising in Art, Antiques and Collectables, accredited by the Commonwealth in 2002 different areas of collectables.

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