LANGFORDS
Antique & Contemporary Silver

Set of six Victorian pierced sterling silver napkin rings

John Harris

Sold



REF: 10263

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Height: 30 mm (1.18")

Diameter: 44 mm (1.73")

Weight: 126 g

Description

Set of six antique sterling silver napkin rings of pierced construction, made during the latter part of the 19th century. These highly decorative rings are adorned with flowers and foliage, and have shields suitable for engraving names, initials or numbers. The are presented in their original fitted case.

It is said that silver napkin rings emerged at the start of the 19th century in France and rose in popularity among the European bourgeoisie from 1800. Few Georgian silver napkin rings remain so the vast majority of antique silver napkin rings found today were made after 1850.

Their primary purpose was one driven by hygiene. Napkins were not washed every day so a personalised napkin ring would assign a particular napkin to an individual. Curiously, etiquette ensured that guests were never presented with a napkin ring; it would imply they had been given a previously used napkin.

Typically made in pairs or sets of four, six or 12, silver napkin rings provided an extra opportunity to decorate the dining table and silver was the perfect material. (Incidentally, silver also has antiseptic properties.) Silver's malleability meant it could be fashioned into different forms and embellished in fine detail to produce some very fine examples reflecting the styles and fashions of the day; from the simple to the very elaborate displaying intricate chased designs and stylised engraving.

Not all napkin rings were circular. Square, elliptical and hexagonal examples are not uncommon, while figural silver napkin rings were very popular in America, depicting all sorts of forms including dogs, cats and horses.

Sometimes referred to as a christening bangle, napkin rings have traditionally been a popular christening gift, and for weddings too.

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