LANGFORDS
Antique & Contemporary Silver

Set of six Victorian silver napkin rings

Walker & Hall

Sold

Langfords
London Silver Vaults • Vaults 8 & 10 • 53-64 Chancery Lane • London • WC2A 1QS
+44 20 7242 6646 • silver@langfords.com • www.langfords.com

REF: 2688

Diameter: 45 mm (1.77")

Weight: 212 g

Description

Fine set of six Victorian sterling silver napkin rings, individually engraved and numbered 1 to 6 and presented in their original satin-lined fitted box. Each antique silver ring is beautifully decorated with hand-engraved detail and bears a family crest of an antelope's head with the Latin motto "nolo dissimulare" which my schoolboy Latin translates as "unwilling to overlook".

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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