Pair of George III sterling silver tea caddies

Michael Plummer

£8,000



REF: 9798

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Height: 155 mm (6.1")

Width: 140 mm (5.51")

Depth: 95 mm (3.74")

Weight: 963 g

Description

This stunning pair of George III silver tea caddies was made by Michael Plummer of London in 1792. They are of shaped oval form with domed hinged lids and elegantly unadorned sides other than family armorials.

The arms are Worsley of Overton Hall, Derbyshire quartering Carill. The motto reads as 'QUOD ADEST GRATUM JUVAT' which translates as 'What is present. It pleases, it helps'.

The Worsleys were an established family who can trace their roots to William the Conqueror.

Tea drinking in England became fashionable and hugely popular among the wealthy from the late 17th century. For most of the 18th century, import duties and the East India Company's monopoly on importing tea kept the price of tea artificially high making it a very expensive commodity. This in turn established the need for airtight, lockable tea canisters and chests, not only to preserve the tea's distinctive flavours, but to protect the precious contents.

Commensurate with the high value of the contents, tea caddies became treasured and valuable accessories in their own right often made in fine porcelain or silver, and invariably fitted with a key.

By the end of the 18th century tea canisters and chests were referred to as tea caddies. The word caddy is thought to derive from the Malay word "kati" which was a measure of tea weighing about one imperial pound.