

DECONSTRUCTING ... A PAIR OF ANTIQUE SILVER EPERGNES

By: Matthew Elton

Have you ever been in The Padang Restaurant and noticed, hiding in plain sight on the top shelf of one of the display cabinets, a handsome pair of sterling silver epergnes? Pronounced *EE-pern*, these ornamental table centrepieces would have adorned the grandest dining tables from the 18th century onwards.

Consisting of a central flute or bowl, standing on a flared foot, they typically have six baskets or vases radiating from the central flute. They would have been filled with fruit, nuts or sweetmeats and their vases held flowers or candles. An exceptionally beautiful example is featured regularly in the TV series, *Downton Abbey*!

The earliest record of an epergne was in 1725. The word 'epergne' is probably a derivation from the French word 'épargne', which means 'saving'. Their use meant less work for the servants as less dishes had to be passed around. The epergne also made the most of the space on the table. By suspending the smaller bowls from the larger bowl, it was less cluttered. As it was impolite for a guest to lean across the table for an item, larger tables would have required multiple epergne which is why they were often made as pairs.

The examples in the SCC collection are very typical of Edwardian period (1901 to 1910) and were made by the well regarded silversmiths, Walker & Hall, in Sheffield, England in 1908.

The company was originally established in 1845 by George Walker and called Walker & Co. but was renamed Walker & Hall when Henry Hall joined the firm in 1853. They went on to become famous silversmiths and made a fortune from the electroplating boom of the late 19th and early 20th century. Sadly, the business closed down in 1971.

This pair of epergne were donated to the Club by C.M. Arthur, Esq. in 1908, the same year they were hallmarked. If they were to come up at auction today, we would estimate their value to be between S\$2,500 – S3,500.



Matthew Elton is the founder and dynamic personality behind HotLotz Auction House. As Singapore's only full-service auction house, HotLotz offers a simple solution for buyers and sellers alike. For more information download the HotLotz app or visit hotlotz.com

Watch This Space!

HotLotz is taking part in SCC's Bicentennial Celebrations happening 11 – 26 October 2019. The HotLotz team will be offering an 'Antiques Roadshow' style appraisal service to Members or guests who would like to learn more about their items, in return for a small donation to SportCares. Look out for more information coming soon!