

Director's Choice A Pair of Extraordinary Royal Marine Ice Pails



London, 1819
Maker's mark of Philip Rundell

Height: 54 cm
Total weight: 29,580 g 951 oz 2 dwt

Bearing the Royal coats-of-arms of Eugène 8th Prince de Ligne

The Director's Choice this week looks at an incredible piece that we are pleased to present for the first time later next month at [Treasure House](#).

On the market for the first time since they were made.



These amazing sculptural pails would undoubtedly have been inspired by the great Marine Service of rococo silver made for Frederick, Prince of Wales, in the 1740s. The extreme naturalism of their design parallels Nicholas Sprimont's crayfish and crab salts made in 1743. However, the massive scale and weight of the pails is quite unlike mid-eighteenth-century silver and reflects the increasingly opulent tastes of Regency period in England produced by Rundell, Bridge & Rundell.

What is extraordinary is that these magnificent sculptural masterpieces pre-date those commissioned by George IV in 1828 and another example commissioned by Thomas and Harriet Coult's the famous bankers in 1821. It shows how forward thinking this great commission must have been at the time.



A mixture of neo-classical and naturalistic motifs, they look ahead to the eclecticism of the middle years of the nineteenth century. Elements were probably designed by Flaxman, who made sketches of the overall composition. The figure on the cover, inspired by Giambologna, is by Edward Hodges Baily, who probably modelled the entire composition.

The pails are vase-shaped and are enriched with sea anemones as a background to the splendid cast and applied royal coats-of-arms of the 8th Prince de Ligne. Festoons and garlands of foliage and marine shells are applied to the pails, the lips of which are composed of acanthus leaves and the bases worked in imitation of sea-waves. The covers, which are surmounted by a figure representing the "Birth of Venus" on a foliated crown, are embellished with scrolls and shells, large masks and reeds. Three figures of tritons rest on the large and ornate triangular stands, which are worked in imitation of sea-waves and they rest on turtles, shells and seaweed feet.



The Part of The Grand Service inspired by The Marine Service:

The Grand Service is the magnificent silver-gilt dining service commissioned by George IV (1762–1830) when Prince of Wales. It is made up of over 4,000 pieces for dining and display in a vast range of styles. Among them are elaborate dessert stands, candelabra and ice pails, as well as simpler items like trays and egg cups.

The Service was made by the Royal Goldsmiths, Rundell, Bridge & Rundell, following an initial commission of £60,000 worth of plate. The first delivery was made to Carlton House in 1811, and at a dinner there that year, the Prince sat against a glittering backdrop of the new silver gilt. In addition to this impressive Service, guests were also surprised by a channel of water running down the centre of the table, with real fish swimming in the stream.

As both Prince Regent (1811–20) and King (1820–30), George IV added to the Service, commissioning further dining plate and pieces for display. The first instalment had included plain silver as well as silver gilt, but gradually George IV ordered every piece to be gilded. This may have been a response to comments that the silver plate seemed 'cold and poor' next to the gilded plate, as well as an attempt to rival the gilded collections of Napoleon I. Gilding the entire Service also helped to give the varied pieces a feeling of consistency.

Among other items, the Grand Service includes 140 dishes, 288 dinner plates, 118 salts, 12 ice pails, 58 dessert stands and centrepieces and 107 candelabra. The pieces have no single style of decoration but include a range of Greek, Roman, Egyptian and oriental designs. Some pieces include marine themes, inspired by the dining service of George IV's grandfather, Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707–51).

The Service is so large and so magnificent that it has never been replaced. It remains in use to this day and is placed on the table for State Banquets at Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace, as well as for other official and ceremonial events.



Four large silver-gilt scallop shell tureens, each surmounted by a triton blowing a conch shell horn. The rippled cover has a handle in the form of a calling eel with a lobster and naturalistic vegetables. The tureen is supported on three hippocamps and a triform base cast with waves, on three feet cast in the form of tortoises, shells and coral.

These impressive tureens were supplied by Rundells for George IV's Grand Service in 1826/7 and described as '4 richly chased gilt shell pattern Soup Tureens supported by Sea Horses with Triton handle'. They were designed to match the superb Marine Service of rococo silver made for Frederick, Prince of Wales, in the 1740s. The extreme naturalism of their design parallels Nicholas Sprimont's crayfish and crab salts made in 1743. However, the massive scale and weight of the tureens is quite unlike mid-eighteenth-century silver and reflects the increasingly opulent tastes of George IV.

Rundell's pioneered organic naturalism and the rococo revival style in silver in the early nineteenth century, largely by means of the plate that they supplied for George IV. They also drew inspiration from sixteenth and seventeenth century plate; the hippocamps or seahorses which support the tureens are derived from an early seventeenth century nautilus cup, considered by Flaxman to be by Cellini, sold to George IV by Rundell's in 1823.



A set of four silver-gilt bottle coolers each surmounted by a figure of Venus in a scallop shell and embossed with masks of Neptune with shells and seaweed. The pail is cast with swags of shells and three low relief panels of Neptune and is supported by three cast mermen or tritons with tridents and conch-shell horns, on a triform base of waves, the border with figures of putti rowing amid waves. The three feet are cast as pairs of turtles with shells and branches of coral.

Provenance:

Supplied to George IV by Rundell, Bridge & Rundell in 1828-9 for £2,814 16s 8d.



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