

Culinary & Dining Antiques

Part 5: Furniture: With Price Guide

Auction Prices and the Market

Just as a fall in the housing or stock markets sends a shiver through the nation, so emerge the doom-mongers when antique furniture is experiencing a period of adjustment and re-appraisal. Yet this is hardly surprising following 30 years of quite astonishing growth when investing in antique furniture has outperformed houses and stocks. Let us see clearly from the very beginning what this adjustment really means. Regardless of those categories which have suffered, such as chaise longues, bureaux and much of the ordinary late Georgian and Victorian mahogany, that even here there is room for optimism. Almost any antique or second-hand furniture is still a better buy than brand new! Generally it is better made, is of higher quality materials and is certain to hold or maintain its value in the next, say 5-10 years. Today such furniture offers terrific value for money in terms of both function and investment. When you buy, primarily you must ensure, that your purchases have a clear use in the home and are in good condition. And in 'good condition' does not mean that all original surfaces have been destroyed and the piece over-restored. Carry out these simple rules and in a few years time if you have to or wish to sell you will soon find a buyer!

Having reviewed the worst scenario, let us now summarise the positives of recent years. The market for the higher quality, rarer items, of good colour and patination, is not only buoyant but is going through the roof! Early walnut, regardless of condition, is fetching a fortune and after a short lapse early country and oak has recovered and according to most reports is rising. Many auctioneers and dealers are judging that the market has 'bottomed out'. Decorative pieces are selling well and the unusual and the unique, or the quirky are in high demand. Arts and Crafts to Art Deco and the 1960s and 1970s are rising markets. In the meantime don't pass up a French farmhouse table at the right price but be more fussy about davenport, balloon-back chairs and chaise longues. 1970s Scandinavian rosewood is wildly collected and the twentieth century is on a high. Even 1930s utility oak is finding new homes as families realise the astonishing value of real wood compared to the futility of buying reproduction imitations or flat packs. Meanwhile, if you can find a good Victorian mahogany linen press (Georgian ones are more), or wardrobe for £400-£600 or a twin-pedestal sideboard for £300-£400, or even a good mahogany chest of drawers for £200-£300, don't hesitate! These prices might never be seen again. Also keep a look out for good dining room furniture such as large extending tables and long sets of chairs which continue in demand.

In summary it is simply not true that antique or old furniture has had its day and will never sell unless it is blue chip with an extensive provenance. Without doubt, minimalism, exchange rates and 9/11 have caused a re-appraisal following 30 years of astonishing growth. Undoubtedly, the glossies and the television have wooed potential buyers with their sleek laminate chipboard surfaces, silver appliances and halogen lighting. But the 'Ikea generation' is also a fashion and hardly likely to be as resilient as our history, our tradition and our heritage. However, many people have been prepared to borrow thousands of pounds against the enhanced values of their properties to purchase new furniture, some of which they have to fit together on the sitting room floor! As one auctioneer put it, "their dotcom wonderstock, which in a few years time they won't be able to give away".

Surely now one should consider that the depreciation in some sectors be viewed as a long-overdue correction. Therefore, now is precisely the time to buy from the huge resource of recycled furniture made from the very finest materials which represent our great heritage and which can bring huge pleasure and investment potential whilst having no adverse effect on the environment.

Summary of the Series

The series commenced in our March/April 2006 Edition. Any readers who have missed previous features can telephone us on 01843 862069 where we may be able to arrange back issues.

1. Collecting Silver Spoons.
2. Flatware and Cutlery Services
3. Table silver in general.
4. Culinary and Dining Ceramics.
5. Kitchen & Dining Room Furniture.
6. Table Glass. (next edition)

Dining Room Suites

The following three pages cover examples of whole dining room suites and then of individual tables, sets of chairs, dressers and bases and finally sideboards and buffets. Firstly let us look at the 23 examples of dining room suites, selected from our on-line database. Immediately it should be apparent that there are no examples preceding the twentieth century. However it is entirely possible to build up an eighteenth century selection in the same style, and it is quite easy to find nineteenth century suites, particularly matching or near-matching tables and chairs. Overwhelmingly twelve of our examples are walnut and eight are of oak. Most likely all of the walnut examples are veneered whereas most of the oak will be solid. However be aware that there are many oak services where everything is solid wood except the table tops which could be veneered. This selection belies the fact that there is also much early twentieth century mahogany in the market place.

Our first example and **7, 10, 14** and **17** are in the Queen Anne style and the price range is from about £5000 to only £900. I have included a Mouseman example at **2**. Robert Thompson was discussed extensively in our last edition including a good illustrated price guide. Readers should note that Art Deco suites of fine quality may be bought from about £4000 to £1350 in this selection. The example at **11** would have sold for much more if there had been a longer set of chairs.

The 1930s example at **16** by Austin and Cumberbirch of Rochdale is interesting. Regional and city firms up and down the country produced good quality furniture in this period and usually attached their nameplates on the insides of cupboards or drawers etc. These can be of bone or even stamped into the wood. They always indicate a sign of quality compared to the mass-produced, machine made utility furniture of the period. Buying a whole suite of dining room furniture can be extremely economical, and providing you spend plenty of time and take advice on your selection then you should ensure a good investment. Finally my pick of this selection is at **12**. This is an exciting and highly original suite of undoubted quality. The question marks are: How long is the dining table, and, if it will seat eight, could we find four similar chairs and upholster them in the same leather?

Dining Room Suites



1
Burr walnut dining room suite, c1920: oval extending dining table with additional leaf, 8 dining chairs incl. 2 armchairs, serpentine sideboard and side cabinet. *Rosebery's, London. Sep 02. HP: £4400. ABP: £5175.*



2
Oak dining room suite by Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson, 2nd qtr 20thC: sideboard and a set of four chairs. *Sotheby's, Billingshurst. Mar 00. HP: £3600. ABP: £4234.*



3
Art Deco walnut dining suite: extending dining table, 85.5 x 40in, sideboard, 6 chairs with cream leather overstuffed seats, serving table with a plated flatware service for 12 settings. *Old English pattern. Andrew Hartley, Ilkley. Feb 04. HP: £3000. ABP: £3528.*



4
Art deco walnut dining suite: canted oblong table, 97 x 40in, 8 chairs to match incl. 2 elbow chairs and a stepped pedestal sideboard, 66in wide. *Andrew Hartley, Ilkley. Oct 00. HP: £2900. ABP: £3411.*



5
Set of 8 Arts & Crafts style oak dining chairs, backs with Art Nouveau style oval tendrils above 3 vertical splats, stuff-over seats, incl. two carvers and an extending oak dining table ensuite, width 306 x 122cm. *Wintertons Ltd, Lichfield. Nov 99. HP: £2500. ABP: £2940.*



6
Art Deco burr walnut/birdseye maple dining suite: dining table, 2 extra leaves, 6ft long max, 2ft 6in wide, five chairs, sideboard and a cupboard. *Gorrings, Bexhill. Nov 03. HP: £2200. ABP: £2587.*



7
Queen Anne style walnut dining room suite, c1920: sideboard, with a D-end twin pedestal dining table, extra leaf, 8 chairs incl. 2 carvers. *Rosebery's, London. Sep 04. HP: £1650. ABP: £1940.*



8
1920s Art Nouveau inspired, light oak dining suite, with carved, stylised fruit and whiplash motifs: wind-out dining table, 29in high, 100in long, 2 extra leaves, set of six stud upholstered chairs incl. 2 carvers. *Amersham Auction Rooms, Bucks. May 02. HP: £1600. ABP: £1882.*



9
Art Deco maple dining suite with satinwood inlay: table with convex pillar supports, 72 x 36in, six chairs to match and a breakfront sideboard, frieze drawer, 47.75in wide. *Andrew Hartley, Ilkley. Oct 99. HP: £1500. ABP: £1764.*



10
Walnut & crossbanded dining suite: extending dining table, 36 x 59in, extra leaf to 77in, eight (6 + 2) dining chairs, serving table 39.5in, breakfront sideboard, 60in wide. Originally from Harrods. *Ewbank Auctioneers, Send, Surrey. Dec 05. HP: £1500. ABP: £1764.*



11
Art Deco burr walnut dining suite, table 6 x 3ft, 4 chairs and a sideboard. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Apr 01. HP: £1150. ABP: £1352.*



12
Arts & Crafts style oak dining suite in manner of Sir Robert Lorimer, part green painted, gilt embellished: sideboard, cellarette drawer, 56in wide, a draw leaf dining table and 4 chairs in later leather, early 20thC. *Andrew Hartley, Ilkley. Aug 04. HP: £950. ABP: £1117.*



13
Oak dining suite by Heals, London: oblong folding table, joined by a square section stretcher, 54in long, 36in wide, and four chairs, shaped panel seat, moulded square legs joined by stretchers. (5) *Andrew Hartley, Ilkley. Oct 05. HP: £950. ABP: £1117.*



14
1930s walnut veneered dining room suite: six dining chairs, dining table and sideboard. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Apr 05. HP: £880. ABP: £1035.*



15
Nine piece walnut dining room suite: sideboard, buffet table, pull out table and six (4+2) chairs. *Great Western Auctions, Glasgow. Feb 06. HP: £820. ABP: £964.*



16
Austin and Cumberbirch (of Rochdale) oak suite: sideboard, dining table, sidetable and eight leather upholstered dining chairs. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Jul 01. HP: £800. ABP: £941.*



17
1960s-70s dining suite, table, 120 x 178cm, six burgundy coloured chairs made by Fritz Hansen in the style of Arne Jacobsen. *Lambert & Foster, Tenterden. Sep 04. HP: £800. ABP: £941.*

Prices quoted are actual hammer prices (HP) and the Approximate Buyer's Price. (ABP) Includes an average premium of 15% + VAT.



18
Walnut dining suite: oval wind out dining table on shell and scroll carved cabriole legs and ball and claw feet, 118in long (fully extended) with 8 dining chairs to match (7+1), early 20thC. (9) *Dee, Atkinson & Harrison, Drifffield. Feb 06. HP: £780. ABP: £917.*



19
French walnut dining room suite: extending dining table, inset two extra leaves, on six tapering reeded legs, 244cm, a sideboard with two frieze drawers above a pair of panel doors, carved in relief swags, 150cm, and a set of seven dining chairs. (5+2) *Charterhouse Auctioneers, Sherborne. Jun 05. HP: £550. ABP: £646.*



20
1930s Art Deco walnut veneered dining room suite: stepped sideboard with three doors above cupboards, rectangular twin pedestal dining table and a set of six chairs incl. two carvers. *Locke & England, Leamington Spa. Mar 05. HP: £450. ABP: £529.*



21
Pale oak pineapple dining suite: sideboard, moulded rounded top, above two short drawers and cupboard doors, foliate carving overall, moulded bracket feet and four dining chairs and a dining table. (6) *Rosebery's, London. Feb 06. HP: £200. ABP: £235.*



22
1930s Art Deco oak suite of 2 carvers & 4 side chairs with leather drop in seats, back panel decorated with painted flowers to each side of the main splat, draw leaf table & matching sideboard of 2 frieze drawers & 2 cupboard doors. *Hamptons, The Strand, London. Kent Auction Galleries, Folkestone. Feb 06. HP: £40. ABP: £47.*



23
Six piece Gordon Russell dining room suite c1960: drop leaf table, 4 chairs and sideboard with 3 central drawers flanked by cupboard, 153cm. *Boldon Auction Galleries, Tyne & Wear. Sep 05. HP: £20. ABP: £23.*

Tables



1
George IV mahogany 'D' end dining table with two loose leaves one concealed drawer to each end section, 124cm wide x 269.5cm long fully extended.
Dreweatt Neate, Newbury. Apr 00. HP: £6,500. BP: £7646.



3
Victorian mahogany extending dining table with three separate leaves, 122in x 54in.
Andrew Hartley, Ilkley, W Yorks. Dec 03. HP: £2,800. BP: £3294.



5
George III mahogany drop leaf dining table, raised on tapering legs, terminating in claw and ball feet, 118cm.
Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Nov 05. HP: £480. BP: £565.



2
Victorian mahogany windout dining table with 3 leaves on turned legs, 2 leaves later, extending to 10ft x 4ft wide.
Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Jul 01. HP: £4,000. BP: £4705.



4
George III oak drop flap dining table, 172cm when open.
Cheffins, Cambridge. Oct 00. HP: £1,600. BP: £1882.



6
George III mahogany drop leaf dining table, supported on straight cabriole legs terminating in pad feet, 114cm.
Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Nov 05. HP: £290. BP: £341.

It is possible to buy tables dating to the seventeenth century for about £4000 or less and later examples in the refectory style for under a £1000. French farmhouse style is suitable for cottage or kitchen dining. The development of tables in the eighteenth century involved more and more parts and more and more legs in attempts to seat greater numbers. The larger the table and seating capacity, the higher the price. Example 4 is about as big as a drop leaf gets and should seat at least eight, whereas at 6 this cottage size table will only seat four. In the late eighteenth century extra flaps or table sections between the two 'D' ends ensured more people could be seated but this meant some guests having to sit astride the multiplicity of legs. The solution came in the nineteenth century with the invention of the wind-outs shown at 2 and 3 and the twentieth century saw the refectory table back in fashion. Buying new is never an option with no investment potential. There are 400 years of history in the market place with tables to fit every situation from the small cottage to the mansion, in oak, mahogany and even elm, fruitwoods and maple. Number 6 is 250 years old, has character and will seat four or preferably two for an intimate dining occasion. Add a pair of Georgian brass candlesticks at about £50-70, about a £100 worth of solid Georgian silver and up to four rummers and your investment is complete, solid antique purchases that can be sold on or passed down the line for a future generation.

Chairs



1
Set of twenty Regency mahogany dining chairs.
Dreweatt Neate, Newbury. Apr 03. HP: £36000. BP: £42345.



3
Five early 19thC bar top single dining chairs attributed to Billinge, Lancashire, c1820.
Peter Wilson, Nantwich, Cheshire. Apr 00. HP: £2300. BP: £2705.



5
Set of six 19thC painted mahogany framed dining chairs, pierced backs, overstuffed seats.
Cheffins, Cambridge. Apr 04. HP: £1000. BP: £1176.



2
Set of ten William IV rosewood dining chairs with curved cresting rails and spars and drop-in seats, on turned and fluted tapered legs.
Gorringes, Lewes. Sep 00. HP: £5600. BP: £6587.



4
Set of eight Victorian rosewood dining chairs.
Cheffins, Cambridge. Dec 00. HP: £1500. BP: £1764.



6
Set of eight inlaid mahogany dining chairs, c.1900 each with an oval back and a serpentine seat, comprising: six singles and two carvers with swept arms.
Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Feb 05. HP: £550. BP: £647.

Sets are available back to the seventeenth century. The different eighteenth century styles from Queen Anne to Chippendale, Hepplewhite and Sheraton have all been reproduced ever since. Very large (we say 'long') sets are rare due to the Victorian and later practice of division of inheritance. Picture 1 gives the reader some idea of the importance of '20' and at 2 even a set of 10 is hardly cheap. There are also sets of windsors and their ubiquitous reproductions. Windsors are chairs where back and legs are supported in sockets in the seat. There is also the ladder back style shown in 3. These chairs depend on the two main back supports which are usually vertical. This can make for uncomfortable seating on dining occasions. Some degree of rake is more comfortable. I cannot but help admire the design of the painted chairs at 5. Imagine then in a conservatory setting. Balloon-backs are currently out of fashion but the rosewood chairs at 4 are an exception. For comfort and elegance the set of eight mahogany chairs at 6 are a snip. I have eighteenth century dining chairs in the Chippendale taste bought as pairs or singles. £250 nowadays should find a good pair. Build up your set over time and buy the very best you can afford. The 'Rule of thumb' for chair prices of medium quality is:

A pair	3 times single chair price.
Set of four	6-7 times single chair price.
Set of six	10-12 times single chair price
Set of eight	15 plus times single chair price
Sets of ten+	The sky's the limit!

Dressers & Bases



1
George III oak dresser, closed pine 3 shelf plate rack, 5 spice drawers, base with breakfront section with mahogany banded drawers, 185cm wide x 210cm high. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Feb 05. HP: £5800. BP: £6822.*



3
Georgian oak dresser, three drawers and 3 cupboards below, closed plate rack, panelled back. *Batemans, Stamford. Mar 06. HP: £2,900. BP: £3411.*



5
Oak open dresser and rack, 18thC style, brass loop handles, boarded base, 54.5in wide x 70.5in high. *Dee, Atkinson & Harrison, Drifffield. Sep 05. HP: £660. BP: £776.*



2
Mid 18thC oak dresser base, 5 raised spice drawers over 3 drawers, shaped apron with a further drawer, 74in. *Gorringes, Lewes. Oct 00. HP: £4000. BP: £4705.*



4
George III oak dresser, 4ft 6in wide, 5ft 11in high. *Gorringes, Bexhill. Mar 03. HP: £1700. BP: £2000.*



6
Oak dresser, 18thC & later, low panelled back over six drawers, baluster-turned supports linked by pot shelf, 156cm high, 201cm wide. *Gorringes, Bexhill. Dec 05. HP: £440. BP: £518.*

Sideboards & Buffets



1
Regency ebony strung mahogany sideboard with 2 drawers, flanked by a bow cupboard and cellaret drawer, 7ft 6in. *Gorringes, Lewes. Jan 02. HP: £7,500. BP: £8822.*



3
Pair of George III style mahogany half round sideboards, each fitted with two short drawers flanked by cupboards, square tapering legs, spade feet, 132cm wide. *Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Jul 05. HP: £1500. BP: £1764.*



5
Mid Victorian mahogany buffet, 43in high, 42in wide. *Amersham Auction Rooms, Bucks. Oct 02. HP: £300. BP: £353.*



2
Adzed oak sideboard by Robert 'Mouseman' Thompson, ledge back, two small and three long drawers flanked by panelled cupboards, wrought iron hinges and latches, 60in wide, 35in high, c1950. *Dee, Atkinson & Harrison, Drifffield. Nov 05. HP: £2,800. BP: £3294.*



4
Victorian mahogany buffet, comprising moulded edged shelf with ledge back and pierced brass gallery, base with three cupboard doors, flanked by fluted pilasters with bracket capitals, 64in wide, 50.5in high. *Andrew Hartley, Ilkley, W Yorks. Apr 06. HP: £580. BP: £682.*



6
19thC mahogany buffet, two tier with 3/4 gallery, base with two deep drawers, glass knob handles, turned feet, 51in wide x 47in high. *Dee, Atkinson & Harrison, Drifffield. Apr 06. HP: £240. BP: £282.*

Eighteenth century oak is being reproduced in all its forms and is selling from good quality high street outlets. Inevitably such pieces are expensive and indeed compare in price with originals in good condition. The term 'period' in much of today's magazines implies reproduction. They embrace a style and frequently an eclecticism 200-300 years away from reality. Real period pieces are readily available in all price ranges and offer the buyer the opportunity to enjoy and preserve our heritage as well as an investment opportunity. Prices couldn't be better and buying antique furniture now is like buying a home when the market is low. It must be doubtful whether these prices will ever be seen again - in the short or long term.

Dressers are essentially Georgian. They fit well into period homes and particularly into period kitchen and dining settings. Mahogany examples were made but these are usually later. Here we are talking about English oak. Note the pine back to the plate rack in **1** and the mahogany banding to the drawers, a sure sign of quality. At the lower end of the market at **6** there are later additions which affect the price. Fine art auctioneers will always give you a full condition report on anything you are considering buying as will dealers, particularly these who are member of associations. Providing you approach your buying with the same care as you would in buying a house or an insurance policy you cannot go far wrong.

Now you can furnish your dining room at prices often much cheaper than buying new. The range of sideboards, buffets and chiffoniers is enormous. I have a late seventeenth century oak sideboard in original condition which cost only £600. The last few years have seen nineteenth century brown furniture prices decline and the bargains to be found are beyond belief! It is a fact that you could not today go out and buy planks of mahogany or oak at the prices you can buy good quality furniture. It is a buyer's market.

Some further tips. When buying tables or chairs they must please from every angle and every view. Cased furniture on the other hand has a back which is usually to the wall. Ensure that it is in original condition. You don't want to find any plywood when you get it home! Ask about woodworm. Look for the tiny flight holes about 1mm in diameter or the wood dust in their vicinity. These are rarely a problem and are easily treated. Ask about the fittings such as hinges, locks, escutcheons and handles. If you are considering buying at auction get a condition report. If you are buying retail do the same and request a detailed invoice. Ask about any surface renovation. The patina on old furniture contains its value! Over restoration is common and does more damage to furniture than woodworm! Incidentally stripped pine is out of fashion, don't buy, it has been ruined in the dipping process. And don't dismiss twentieth century oak.