9½" George II sterling silver salver

W H (attrib To William Hunter I)

£2,150



REF: 8760

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Height: 30 mm (1.18")

Diameter: 245 mm (9.65")

Weight: 526 g

Description

An excellent example of an early-18th-century silver salver in very fine and original condition resting on hoof supports. The salver's rim is decorated in a typical style of the era, featuring an applied fanned flute and scroll border.

The plain central surface is engraved with the coat of arms for the Wyrley family of Hampstead Hall, Wednesbury, Staffordshire and Birch Hall, near Rusholme in Lancashire. It may well have been in the possession of one of two brothers, Humphrey Birch (later Wyrley), (1706-1747) or his younger brother, John Wyrley Birch (later Wyrley) (1707-1775). More likely the latter.

Finding 17th-century and early-18th-century sterling silver salvers is rare, and examples in fine condition like this one are highly sought after. It is a lovely decorative piece in its own right but is perfect for serving drinks, petit fours, biscuits or canapés. Also known as a waiter, a salver looks particularly lovely holding a decanter and couple of glasses and protecting the surface of a polished wooden table.

The word salver derives from the Latin salvare meaning to save. Originally, food or drink intended for royalty would be initially tasted by a servant for signs of poison before it reached the royal top table. Being served on the salver indicated that this process had taken place and the food and drink was now fit for a king.

Salvers later became commonplace in aristocratic and wealthy homes and Samuel Pepys is recorded as an owner of a salver, signifying his high social standing.