

Aladin's Cave Re-discovered: London's Silver Vaults



Entrance to the silver valuts

London's Silver Vaults, a true part of traditional England, are a well kept secret. They are located in Holborn, Central London in the legal district, down a modest lane with just a small sign directing visitors to the world's largest collection of fine antique silver.

Ash tray



CHANCERY LANE SAFE DEPOSIT
SAFE HIND SAFE FIND
CHANCERY LANE G1162 **LONDON W.C.**

OVER 6000 SAFES
STRONG ROOMS
FOR PRIVATE USE.
IMMOVABLY FIXED.

GUARDED
NIGHT & DAY
BY MILITARY PATROL.
NIGHT WATCHMEN ARMED.

The vaults in days gone by

The illustration depicts a grand, vaulted interior space, likely a safe deposit vault. The architecture features high ceilings with intricate patterns and large, arched doorways. Several figures are shown walking through the space, providing a sense of scale and activity. The overall style is that of a historical engraving or woodcut.

The underground vaults are a fascinating maze of more than 40 shops owned by the same families for at least fifty years.

The treasures are well guarded. Behind huge safe doors and within vaulted walls, 1.2metres (3.9ft) thick and lined with steel, countless silver objects delight visitors. There is even a full size silver armchair. Among the smaller objects are trays, swizzle sticks, cuff links, spoons, card holders,

perfume bottles, picture frames, trinket boxes, enamel dressing table items, candlesticks and boxed cutlery items. Grandeur pieces include bowls, pots and urns.

Some of the shops specialise in antique & contemporary jewellery, vintage wristwatches, antique pocket watches and objects of vertu. Others focus on silver flatware (cutlery) and meat carving/dessert trolleys. Goblets

Silver unlimited



are also popular. English silver is dominant depicting the quintessential brilliance and superiority of English craftsmanship in silver, unsurpassed the world over. Some shops carry a large selection of Chinese export silver and Japanese silver and items

from all parts of the world, from every period and in every style are on display. Intricate 17th century antiques compliment contemporary designs. Like the products, prices vary considerably ranging from £25 to over £100,000 but shop proprietors



Exhibition of British silver

London Silver Vaults, Ltd.

FOR THE REFINED CONNOISSEUR & INVESTOR! THE DEALER'S DEALER



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emphasise that everyone is welcome and new buyers are provided with informed, efficient service with a smile.

All of the dealers belong to the London Silver Vaults Association whose Charter provides the customer with protection and security in the knowledge that the purchases that they make have been accurately described. Items are always sold with a guarantee to condition and authenticity.

The vaults date back to 1882 when the nearby Chancery Lane Safe deposit was opened and used by London's wealthy and elite in order to safeguard their household silver, jewellery and personal documents. Merchants in nearby areas such as 'Hatton Gardens', centre of the Diamond trade, would use the vaults each night to put away their valuable pieces and collect them again in the morning ready for their daily trading. As the vaults became

more reputable over time, trading transpired from the building itself with many of the original clients being replaced by silver dealers who required secure premises for their valuable stock.

The vaults have never been broken into and are seemingly indestructible. During the Second World War, the building above was destroyed by bombing and almost a decade later a new

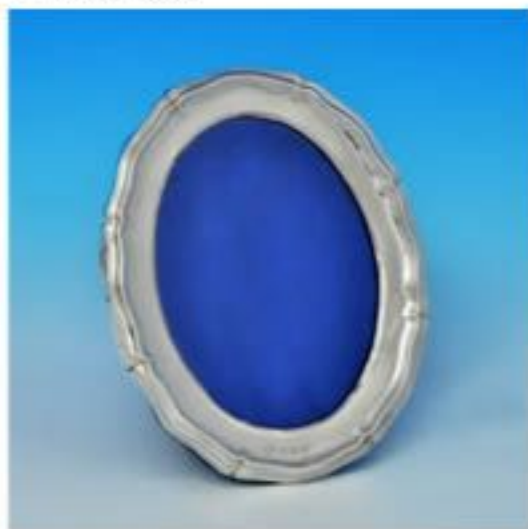
Goblet



Jewellery boxes



Photo frame



Silver-lined
bobon-dish



Cake stand



building emerged in 1953, known today as Chancery House. Each dealer has his own vault and there is a safe door to each room. One vault used to store a farthing – the vault costing more than 100 pounds.

Selling exhibitions are held at the vaults the most recent being Boxing Clever: A Silver Case for the Collector. Many of the boxes were the object of collecting

enthusiasms such as vinaigrettes, patch boxes or snuff boxes, a spice box in the shape of a fish, tea caddies with lock and key, a bodkin case, a toothpowder box, biscuit barrels, a paint box, gilt-lined table boxes and a silver boxed man's travel case.

A fascinating day out is guaranteed at the silver vaults as young and old, rich and poor from all over the world re-discover Aladin's cave.