

LANGFORDS

Antique & Contemporary Silver

Pair of antique Britannia silver-gilt wall sconces

Maker Not Traced

£7,850



REF: 6551

Height: 420 mm (16.54")

Width: 295 mm (11.61")

Description

Supported on polished wood mounts, this pair of highly decorative antique Britannia silver-gilt wall sconces are hand-chased in an 18th century style that would have been popular circa 1730. Britannia silver is softer than sterling silver so the silversmith has been able to craft the metal into highly detailed designs; luxuriant foliate scrolls, a pillared canopy, acanthus leaves and a classical urn overflowing with flowers.

The pair was made to hold candles but could be adapted and wired for electricity if desired.

Silver-gilt or gilded/gilt silver, sometimes known in American English by the French term vermeil, is silver which has been gilded with gold. Most large objects made that appear to be gold are actually silver-gilt. For example, most sporting trophies (including Olympic gold medals) and many crown jewels are silver-gilt objects.

The Britannia silver standard (95.84% fine silver) was introduced in 1697 by King William III to replace sterling silver (92.5% fine silver) as the obligatory standard for items of silverware. Britannia standard silver was introduced as part of his great recoinage scheme when attempts were made to limit the clipping and melting of sterling silver coinage to make other silver goods. Introducing a higher standard for silverware meant that sterling silver coins could not easily be used as a source of raw material without adding more silver. After much argument and lobbying among silversmiths and parliament, the sterling silver standard was restored in 1720, but the Britannia standard was not abolished and has remained in use as a voluntary alternative option to sterling standard for hallmarking in the UK and Ireland.

Britannia silver should be distinguished from Britannia metal, a pewter-like alloy containing no silver.