

## Significant Suffragette collection comes to auction

One of the largest private collections of material on the Suffragette movement will be sold next month.

Amassed by Lesley Mees from the 1980s onwards, it features printed material, jewellery, ceramics, rosettes and a range of notable novelties.

"I began collecting suffrage material while researching for a PhD on women's history," said Mees.

"It was at a time when contemporary literature, such as books, pamphlets and newspapers on the women's suffrage movement was relatively abundant and affordable.

"I became increasingly fascinated by the bravery of the courageous women who were prepared to risk their lives, their health and sometimes their position in society to stand up for their rights, many of whom were brutalised by the legal system."

Mees started visiting antique and book fairs, trawling auction catalogues and when the internet emerged, searching online auction sites.



**Left:** Suffragette money box, estimate £4000-5000 at Bonhams.

"I vividly remember the excitement of buying a hunger strike medal."

The 109-lot collection will be sold in a timed online sale at Bonhams Knightsbridge ending on October 3.

### Post box pop-up

As well as that medal – awarded to Maud Joachim in 1912, estimate £12,000-18,000 – a Suffragette money box is among the rarities on offer.

The significance of its pillar box form



**Above:** Suffragette chess set, estimate £3000-5000.

and the Suffragette inside who pops up with a squeak or a screech when a coin is inserted would not have been lost on contemporary audiences. In late 1911 Emily Wilding Davison was arrested for trying to set fire to a pillar box on Parliament Street.

Other Suffragettes followed her lead, either firing boxes, or pouring ink and other substances inside to ruin the post. In February 1913, the year this novelty box (estimate £4000-5000) was made,

five postmen were burned in Dundee when handling a phosphorus Suffragette letter bomb addressed to Prime Minister Herbert Asquith.

Another stand-out item is the *Topical Chessmen (Suffragettes v The Law)* chess set. Prison guards and society women take the place of the knights, burning buildings and prison cells are the rooks, and policemen and Suffragettes face each other as the pawns.

The set was made in London by disabled soldiers and sailors for The Incorporated Soldiers and Sailors Help Society. This organisation was founded in 1899 during the South African War by Lord Roberts, who set up commercial workshops that employed disabled ex-servicemen.

Estimated at £3000-5000, the set may have been a one-off production as no further sets have been traced.

The collection also features a range of anti-suffrage material including a poster, a doll and a jack-in-the-box.

Matt Ball

## Elveden Hall brings back the room bidders

by Laura Chesters

In what may have felt like a flashback to the past, when bidders actually attended day sales in person, the Elveden Hall auction held by Sworders was deemed a runaway success.

Unusually, the sale was held on the premises of the Suffolk family home. The 440 lots from Lord Iveagh, Edward Guinness, 4th Earl of Iveagh, on September 14 took a hammer total of £706,520 and hit £920,000 when including buyer's premium.

Although many of the lots would not usually have warranted the treatment of a single-owner sale, their provenance merited the special attention.

### Duleep Singh home

The collection was from the Guinness family's homes: Farmleigh in Dublin and Elveden. The latter was the former home of Duleep Singh (1838-93), the last Maharajah of the Sikh Empire. He purchased the Elveden Hall estate in 1863 and had it



**Above:** auctioneer and Sworders' head of art and estates Luke Macdonald on the rostrum at Elveden Hall with a packed room.

**Above right:** the 1928 Rolls-Royce phantom once owned by MP and car collector Alan Clark, £40,000.

**Below right:** two views of a late 19th century Ziegler Sultanabad pattern carpet, £34,000.



remodelled with an interior to resemble a Mughal palace.

The house and estate was later sold to Edward Cecil Guinness (1847-1927) and has been with the family ever since.

More than 1000 people visited across the five preview days and for the auction itself. The occasion also attracted

1192 absentee bids and in total there were 1367 registered bidders. The auction achieved a 95% sold rate.

Many of the online buyers hailed from Ireland and the US while most bidders were private individuals rather than trade.

The top lot of the day was a 1928 Rolls-Royce phantom,

once owned by MP and car collector Alan Clark, which hammered at £40,000, plus 25% buyer's premium (estimate £35,000-45,000).

It had been bought for Elveden in 2007 for use on "the estate as intended, as an extremely up-market 'gun bus', ferrying guests to their

pegs in grand style".

A late 19th century Ziegler Sultanabad pattern carpet with a label for Harvey Nichols from 1894 from the Farmleigh nursery dining room took £34,000 hammer against an estimate of £15,000-20,000, selling on the phone to a US private buyer.