

THE DEVONSHIRE SHELL COLLECTION



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AN EXTRAORDINARY ASSORTMENT OF SHELLS
LATE 18TH CENTURY / 19TH CENTURY

comprising a large and fine pearly nautilus, a further fine nautilus, a hippos shell, four large helmet shells, a turbo shell, a large volute shell, several large abalone shells, an assortment of strombus and murex shells including six 'pagodas' types (with spikey 'tails'), two tibia shells, a group of conus and mitra shells, eight brightly figured conical spotted shells, two harp shells, four dried seahorses, a dried cowfish, two small nautiluses, a dried starfish together with a large group of small shells including four cypraeacassis (Cameo) shells with several volutes, clams, limpets and a small collection of miniature cowrie shells within two boxes decorated with shells, circa 1920 and an old tin cigarette box with a label for *Finest Egyptian Cigarettes* containing various shells and a necklace made up of sixty-eight matched shells, a further necklace made up of a large number of clustered and polished white shells, a further run of ten shells and two delicate bracelets and many smaller fragments (qty)

largest 7cm. high, 19cm. long; 2¼in., 6½in.

LITERATURE

Chiswick Inventory, 1869, p. 10 in the Passage, 2 cases of shells

Chiswick Inventory, 1869, p. 77 in the Second Room, 4 shells

Chiswick Inventory, 1892, p. 7 in the Passage, 2 Mahogany cases containing sea shells and on p. 45 in the Tent Room, *Mahogany specimen case of sea shells, coral etc*

The collection of shells offered here belong to a collection assembled by and for the Duchess Georgiana in the late 18th century and extended by her son the 6th Duke and subsequent members of the Cavendish family in the 19th century.

The Duchess' ever growing collection was primarily kept at Chiswick. Here, in the new wings created by John White circa 1790, specially constructed shelves lined the walls in some of the reception rooms to display both minerals and shells. Whilst the Duchess clearly delighted in the physical beauty of some of her specimens, this ran in tandem with her scientific interests in the Natural World.

It would also appear from the inventories that at least part of the collection remained at Chatsworth during the 19th century. That said shells were also to be found at that time on display at Chatsworth including a *splendid specimen of fossil shells on a small Persian carpet*, *Chatsworth Inventory*, 1844, p. 104). As none of the inventories make reference to specific types of shell it is not possible to identify the original location of individual specimens.

© £ 3,000-5,000 € 3,350-5,600



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A REGENCY GILT-METAL MOUNTED POLISHED COCONUT CUP
AND COVER
EARLY 19TH CENTURY

with applied cast fruiting vine mounts and raised on a conforming naturalistically cast stem

16cm. high; 6¼in.

£ 400-600 € 450-700