

Gorringe's

RESPONSE TO CUSTOMER SURVEY

Thank you to the many clients who took the time to fill out our customer survey form. Apologies to those who had it crash halfway through – this was entirely in the hands of the major UK online survey company who hosted it and out of our control. We received over 1,800 responses and the comments section made for interesting reading. There were too many comments to reply to individually but what follows summarises the main points and hopefully those that passed comment will know that their voice has been heard.

1. **Parking.** This was the number one complaint. Unfortunately this is something that in the short term is beyond our control. The pay and display carpark nearby fills up on weekdays as it serves half the town and the County Court. Just beyond it there is an entrance (beside the red brick houses) to a further large car park that often gets overlooked. In addition there is a short term car park beside the police station and another hidden behind Waitrose. We pay our staff the cost of their daily parking to ensure that our car park remains free for customers. The long term outlook is poor with North Street due for redevelopment. We are on the lookout for alternative premises which would almost certainly entail a move out of town. The same can be said for space inside and the lack of a café. We just don't have the room at present and aim to dedicate what we have to goods and viewing space.

2. **Website.** We agree it could be better. Many of you find it hard to negotiate, to register and place bids and view results. This is partly because we want to retain independence from the main online sites who would love to control all of our (and your) data. Here are a few tips for the most popular customer requirements.

Catalogue Search go to our website, avoid catalogue search (which covers everything we have ever sold) and instead click on the 'Upcoming Sales' button. Choose the sale you want – usually it is just the Weekly Sale available. Click on 'View Lots' and up they come. Use the 'Search in this Sale' box to enter key words. Do note that if you use plurals you might not get anything (so rugs will only find a result if we have a pair of rugs – whereas we may well have 20 lots of a Rug). Basic Categories are a search option to the left.

Bidding. This can be done through commission bids or separately for live bidding. Commission bids are handled by our auction software system. Live Bidding is handled by a separate online system – that is why there are two different registration areas.

Commission bids immediately start competing against other bids left online but not against bids left elsewhere. Just leave your top bid do not enter a lower amount as well.

Live bidding. If you have registered before you are likely to be automatically approved. If you are a new bidder or there have been problems in the past then you will have to await approval. This is done at the end of every view day and regularly reviewed on sale days.

Sale Results. Go to the home page and click on 'Auctions' then 'Past Sales'. The latest sale will be top of the column on the right. Click on 'View Sale', every lot will be listed with the hammer price or as unsold. You can enter individual numbers to save scrolling. These results are updated to the website every 20 minutes or so.

- 3. Photographs.** This applies to both sales. You would like to see more and better images. The Quarterly Fine sales do provide additional photographs. One photo and a short description is shown alongside the lot description. Click on 'Lot Detail' and you'll get a fuller description with sizes and often many more photographs. Kelly aims to show the obvious additional views that might be needed such as picture frame, backs of paintings, watch movements etc. We do not load these up to the main listing as it would massively slow down the ability to scroll through and bring phone usage to a standstill. This is also why the quality of the images is reduced. If you need higher definition image just ask and we'll email you a link or send them out by email. If you require additional photographs just ask (email is best) and we'll get them to you. Kelly will take approximately 1800 photographs in advance of a main sale, by the time the sale is over she will have added an additional 1000 as requests.

The weekly sale is not ready for photography until 2pm Wednesday. By 4pm Thursday Summer will have photographed every lot and have it online by 6pm. That's often 750 lots photographed and processed in a day. She does her best to take good usable photographs showing as much of the lot as possible. She does not have time to look for cracks/faults etc and ensure that they are shown – neither does she have time to position items so as to conceal damage, not that we'd ask her to! From Friday morning until the beginning of the sale she sends out another huge batch of photos, all upon request. So send us an email and she'll get you any extra images required.
- 4. Cataloguing.** This applied to weekly sales. The cataloguing varies, hopefully from quite good down to quite useless. Obviously we aim for the former but time does not always allow for this. The sale is a weekly one – our cataloguers have a very short time period in which to list everything. Not all of our cataloguers can be an expert on all categories. The specialists do try to ensure that anything 'good' is correctly described. We do add measurements for pictures (size of the work not the mount or framing) and furniture (always the width with the height where not obvious). We will start adding more measurements for more items.
- 5. Condition Reports.** These are provided upon request. We cannot do a detailed report for every lot in advance of the sale. For one thing it would be a huge waste of time as the vast majority of lots are not asked for. As soon as the sale goes online we start receiving requests for condition and/or further information. These are dealt with on a first come first served basis. They are emailed out to the requestee and once a lot has been done the report is listed on the website (to be viewed under 'Lot Detail'). Where there is significant damage we may well say 'cracked' or 'a.f' however we then get asked for more detail about the crack etc so a full report is always needed in the end. Writing as someone who has mistakenly bought 'cheap' lots in the past only to find them damaged and bought 'cheap' wine only to find that it was alcohol-free I can only suggest that you never assume that something is in perfect or even good condition. Try to view in person or ask us for a condition report. It's one of the reasons that you pay us buyer's premium (more on that later). Whilst considering condition reports it is always worthwhile talking to one of the valuers if you are interested in a particular item. Usually they will know where it came from, whether it has notable features (both good and bad) and whether the estimate is accurate, all things that are well worth knowing if you plan to bid.

6. Postage and Delivery. This ties-in with Condition Reports. Several clients have asked us if we could provide shipping and delivery estimates alongside the lot description in advance of the sale. This is not all that straight forward. We'd need to know where the item is to go to, consider the size, weight, delicacy and value. We do provide quotes upon request again on a first come first served basis. We pack in-house and arrange shipment for anything that is practically within our capability with no or low packing fees. We are well aware that the cost of postage can reduce the point of bidding so try to be flexible. That said we do have to ensure that anything we send is delivered reliably and intact. Items such as paintings with delicate frames, fancy porcelain figures or unusual destinations have to go through alternative carriers such as Mailboxes (who have better insurance than most parcel companies as well as specialist packing skills). Time is also an issue. We aim to get parcels sent out as soon as practically possible, this is usually within a week but can take longer after a major sale. We were also asked to provide an in-house van delivery service to London, the Home Counties and even Scotland, preferably on a daily basis and without charge. I'm sorry but we are not a delivery company. We can recommend proper insured carriers but oddly they will want to charge you for the cost of two men and running a van. Where possible we do arrange for local deliveries of furniture and we send to London by arrangement. Just ask and we'll try and help.

7. Presale notifications. Many of you asked for our sale dates to be published in advance. We sell every Monday unless there is a Bank Holiday. In addition we hold quarterly Fine sales. The dates are published and calendars are available upon request. If you register with us you will receive email notification as soon as any of our sales go online.

We were also asked to provide longer notice of what is going to be in the sale. Sadly given that this is a weekly sale it is not possible to provide any further notice – we do not know what is going to be in the sale as items are being booked-in right up until the Thursday morning. The weekly sale goes online at around 6pm on a Thursday evening, approximately three hours after we have lotted up.

Lot notification service. This is available through the Gorrings website

We were also asked to provide more low value (sub £50) lots as well as fewer low value lots and more over £200 lots. Others asked for us to offer trend sales such as Watches and Classic cars. We were also asked for more vintage and more jewellery. The fact is we offer for sale what we are asked to sell. People tend to keep what they like (usually what is in fashion) and sell what they don't like (currently most things Victorian). We could put on specialist sales if we sourced goods from the trade but that would lead to overpriced and unsold lots – others find that an acceptable business model, we do not. The general trend over time will be towards more valuable lots. The 2016 average lot price for Garden Street was £85. The 2017 average for weekly sales at North Street is £180. This comes from us being more selective in accepting goods, the effect of live online bidding and additional IT and photography support. Even if we had more space we would not have time to sell a greater number of lots (the internet bidders keep the selling rate down to around 100 lots per hour – and that's fast compared with many salerooms) so sadly the mixed box lots, group lots of prints and low end furniture are becoming a thing of the past as it is no longer economical to offer them for sale.

8. Presale estimates and valuations at the saleroom. Gorrings are open for business Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm. We almost always have a senior valuer on duty who can appraise whatever is brought in to us as well as general valuers who can look at most things. We are open in the lunch hour. Monday is best avoided as we have a sale on. Tuesday is the best day to come if you want to

enter goods for the Monday sale. Wednesday and Thursday are okay but you may well find that we are already oversubscribed. We will take goods in but they'll be held for a later sale. Friday is best for smalls but not a good day for furniture. We do not have a valuer available on Saturday mornings. If in doubt call us and we'll let you know when is the best time to come along or arrange to come and see you.

We welcome requests for valuation by email. Send us one or two photos and the size and we'll do our best to reply within a few days.

9. Buyers Premium. Many of you said that our charges were too high. The buyer's premium has always been contentious but without it auctioneers would be out of business. In the old days all we needed was a village hall, some trestle tables and a gavel. Times have changed, a well-managed auction needs to provide all of the things that you have commented on – free valuations, space to view, parking, a café, a fully illustrated fine sale catalogue, all sales to be fully illustrated and listed online, live bidding facilities, worldwide marketing, condition reports, remote payment facilities, a postage and packing service. Salerooms also need a good auction software package, high end security and CCTV, proper insurance cover and a well-run accounting system with a ring-fenced client account. Auction houses are one of the few businesses where an onlooker can see what the income might be. Running a weekly sale requires a lot of bodies in addition to all the other overheads. Yes we want to make a profit but we also want to look after our staff (without exception we pay the living wage or better) and to invest in the future. At 21% we remain lower than the London houses (25%) and about average in the South-East.

10. Other requests. We were asked to open Sundays. We do this for Fine sale views but for insurance purposes a full complement is required and the staff need at least one day a week to recover. Viewing times at the weekend are based on the level of demand so we close at 1pm. We were asked to list on thesaleroom.com by several clients – this seemed odd as we have always been listed there (with live bidding on thesaleroom.com since January 2017), the other options being Invaluable, the auctionroom.com and GorringsLive. We were asked to provide disabled access. The old building presents difficulties but the ground floor is fully accessible, we have a disabled use toilet and a stairlift. Complaints about Nazi items, ivory and other offending items have all been taken into consideration.

11. Staff. Overall we received a very positive response with particular attention drawn to the good nature and helpfulness of the porters. Apologies if some of us come across at times as stressed or pompous, (hopefully not both at once!). We are friendly but stressed at times and occasionally indulgent in a little pomposity.

12. Gorrings's. We received passionate requests to drop the apostrophe.

Overview. Thank you for your feedback. I hope that this response explains and clarifies to some extent what and why things happen as they do. In light of your feedback and where it's possible we will be making some changes in the coming months to improve customer experience and we will be passing on your key frustrations to all staff so they can be more aware and more helpful as a result.

We always welcome customer feedback, both good and bad so feel free to email or speak to us at any time.