



Sunken Riches: Jewels from the 'Earl of Abergavenny' Shipwreck Spark New Fascination

The infamous Earl of Abergavenny cargo ship sunk in 1805 off the coast of Weymouth with William Wordsworth's brother John Wordsworth as the captain of the vessel. Known as one of the UK's most horrific maritime disasters, the wreck involved the loss of 250 lives. Reaching the headlines 219 years later, the wreckage has now been granted protected status as of 14th August 2024.

The ship's cargo, estimated at around £70,000 at the time, is said to be worth £7.5 million today. The Earl of Abergavenny was transporting over 60 chests of silver bullion as well as countless artefacts that were excavated in 1980 and now housed in the Portland Museum, Dorset. One such find was a single gold cufflink, bearing the initials J.W., and so widely assumed to be the possession of Captain John Wordsworth.



Titanic Relics – Waltham Pocket Watch Sets Auction Record

Captain John Wordsworth's cufflink is not the only shipwrecked jewel to hit the headlines this year. In April, a gold pocket watch worn and recovered from Titanic passenger John Jacob Astor broke auction records with a hammer price of £900,000 at Henry Aldridge & Son. This auction result marks the highest price achieved for any single artefact recovered from the Titanic.



Above: The 14ct gold Waltham pocket watch originally owned by John Jacob Astor. Sold in April 2024 for £1.1 million inclusive of fees. For reference, unassociated 14ct Waltham pocket watches are available to buy from £1,300-£6,500 on Chrono24.

The General Abbatucci Artefacts

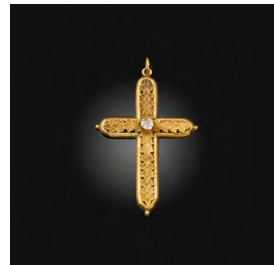
The staggering uplift in value for these remarkable survivors of unthinkable disasters is ever increasing. Historic Shipwreck sales include Christie's 2009 sale of 'The General Abbatucci

Cargo' which saw a sale total of over £280,000. The General Abbatucci sank on 7 May 1869, sailing from Marseilles, France, to Civitavecchia in Italy. Believed to be carrying cargo destined for The Vatican, the wreck was found nearly 127 years later and much of the cargo sold through Christie's South Kensington in a 270 lot sale featuring bullion, chains, watch cases and jewellery, mainly presented in group lots.

In the last couple of years, pieces from this remarkable 2009 sale have resurfaced, accompanied by their provenance and certificate of authenticity. To the right is a fine Victorian watch chain, available to purchase from Bentley & Skinner for £7,750.

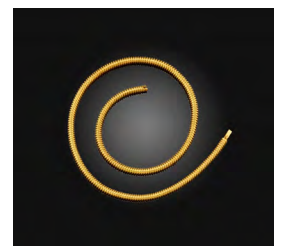


Two further lots to re-appear at auction in the last couple of years featured at Woolley & Wallis sales. These lots were catalogued together with their original lot numbers from the 2009 Christie's sale, and can demonstrate a rise in value, even from an auction standpoint.



A mid-19th century gold cruciform pendant, set with a cushion-shaped diamond, the cross decorated with layered and textured gold ivy leaves, 2.9cm wide. Sold for £551. Previously part of a group lot 28 in The Abbatucci Cargo Sale 7th October 1997, selling for £748 (both figures inclusive of fees).

A mid-19th century gold necklace, of tubular construction, entwined in coiled wire, in yellow gold, 41cm long. Sold for £2,624. Previously lot 180 in The Abbatucci Cargo Sale 7th October 1997, selling for £863 (both figures inclusive of fees).



With the clear uplift in value and an enduring, timeless fascination with these surviving relics both in the auction and retail worlds, it will be highly interesting to see the long-term trajectory for these pieces. With such tales remaining at the forefront of the news this year, values and desirability of these rare historic pieces are set to rise even further, particularly for those items with clear provenance and traceability to historic sales such as the Abbatucci Cargo Sale.

For an up-to-date auction valuation of your own treasures, do get in contact with our nationwide team of specialists.