



## How charming

One of the most personal items of jewellery a person can own is a charm bracelet. I love finding antique ones and imagining the stories and symbolism of all those individual charms. They can symbolise so many different things, from love and spiritual devotion to being good luck charms and talismans. They might just be a travel document in jewellery form. Charms are really special when they have been handed down in families because they tell the next generation about their original owners.

Another great thing about charms and charm bracelets is that they never go out of fashion. Most jewellery shops can oblige when asked for charms but the ones found in antique shops offer the most interesting range to choose from. It might just be a compass, a Masonic ball, a heart locket or seal. Look out for older pieces as they are more individual and hence better. From Egyptian times until the present day, charms tell us about the personality of the wearer. They give an insight into that particular person's life. For example, Marlene Dietrich hated flying and every time

she travelled by plane she took with her a chain of travel charms.

The jewellery house of Cartier is famous for its charms since the 1930s. Most people would recognise the ladybird charm. Ladybirds are said to represent good luck, wealth and health. Another famous Cartier charm is that of the turtle. The turtle is supposed to offer protection for the wearer. Some time ago Kellies Antiques sold an original Cartier diamond set Arc de Triumph which was regarded as the ultimate travel charm. Many of our clients have travel charm bracelets and we get to see these wonderful pieces when they return from exotic destinations.

No matter where in the world you are, if you visit a jewellery shop with antique or contemporary jewellery, the likelihood of finding charms to purchase is very probable. They are affordable, tell a story and are often quirky and great talking pieces. We have at present a late Victorian coral penis and figa charm. It is delicate and unobtrusive but it is hard to imagine that the Victorians, noted for being so prim and proper, would have a charm

of this nature. It would have definitely been worn for fertility reasons. Coral was used for fertility and the figa (a clenched fist with the thumb between the pointer and middle finger) symbolises fertility. Superstitious beliefs hold that coral protects infants from evil spirits. The first ever piece of jewellery that Queen Elizabeth II wore was a coral necklace.

Charms are not just for women. During World War I, Australian jewellery retailers sold Kewpie charms. The advertisements read that 'No Soldier should go forth without this charm'. Occasionally at Kellies Antiques we have such

charms for sale. They are usually in 9ct gold and sometimes are found in sterling silver.

Touchwoods, which are supposed to bring general good luck and inner peace, are also sought after as good luck talismans. But I was once told that fighter pilots were not supposed to carry any good luck charm or talisman in case they were accidentally lost as this might subconsciously play on latent superstitions, a very undesirable consequence when heading into battle ■

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