

Toowoomba



Collection of porcelains



The view from the entrance



Detail of mother-of-pearl insert decoration

You still have a choice!

Almost 100 years has passed since the last of the true brass and iron beds were made by the original bed artisans. Can you begin to imagine what it was like to have such a choice and to make your own special requests? How often do you read or scanned antique books and magazines, taking extra time to ponder over the beautiful bedroom furniture? Do you flip through copies of the original mail order catalogues and wish you were born 100 years ago? You are not alone.

So many people have told us that they ended up choosing modern reproductions

either because they do not have the time to search the antiques shops, bazaars and markets or when they do find them, there is only one – leaving them to make ‘a take it or leave it’ decision. As it was then, so it can be now. This is exactly why we began our specialist business. This interest started when a 13 year old boy found an old bed and his grandfather taught him how to polish brass. That was 30 years ago and neither he nor his grandfather could have dreamed it would lead onto him to having a collection of approximately 16 tonnes of original brass and iron beds, including spare parts.

History continues to be the most important part of our restorations. This includes dating beds and, where possible, providing provenance to the new owners – one of the little extras we aim for. Some beds having very interesting stories. Our most recent find also came with photos that show the bed end used as a poddy calf feeder. We are certain that the bed artisan would never have guessed that there would be this extra usage when he designed and made his beautiful brass bed.

Everyone loves a choice, especially lovers of antiques, but choice in a specialised field, such as brass beds, is a luxury. Our clients come to us because we offer the luxury of choice. As they walk through the door they are confronted with a large range of beds, from singles to doubles. There are the old 1860s iron cameo and three leaf clover styles through to the turn of the century and the end of the brass and nickel bed era following the Depression years.

Brass bed choices were further narrowed during the 1930s and 1940s when many old beds were thrown onto scrap ironmonger wagons and given up to support the war effort. During WWII its value as scrap metal increased, as it was used in the manufacture of artillery for the allied forces.

Despite the reduction in numbers, there somehow still are choices. Enthusiasts can find beds with and without porcelains. Not only are bed styles important, but also the adornments that go with them. Therefore, to be offered a choice with regard to colour and style takes purchasing a bed to the next level.

Mother-of-pearl was used as a decorative feature and is all but a lost art when it comes to restoring and recreating the delicate patterns. It was often used in place of porcelain and beds produced for the upper end of the market incorporated both mother-of-pearl and porcelain. The most common problem today is that the glue has deteriorated and the mother-of-pearl inserts have fallen out, unless the bed has been well looked after kept well away from moisture.

Choice is everything. Lately, our clients are looking to acquire the more elaborate double bow front (serpentine), single bow fronts, mother-of-pearl and all brass. They are requesting beds made from original bed parts to match a bed they already own. This is truly a challenge when dealing with such old and rusty raw material.

These are wonderful requests but this is where we hit a snag. Simply, we cannot offer an instant match and make replacement. These items are no longer being made and so there



Poddy Calf Bed

is no supplier we can call for the requisite pieces. Sourcing original parts is a lengthy business. At its easiest, it can take hours, but more likely weeks, even months before a couple of pieces to fit the final puzzle are found.

Finally, one of our old customers who now resides overseas found his bed had been damaged during shipping. He requested that all the brass pieces be sent back to us for repair, repolish and restoration. His luxury of choice was knowing that the workmanship and old fashioned values adhered to by the team at Timeless Antiques meant that the repair job would be done right ■

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Four poster iron bed



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