

HOW TO SPEND IT

# For gentlemen who prefer links with tradition

*As an expression of both status and personality, men are returning to cufflinks, says Paul Keers*

CUFFLINKS are among the few items of jewellery that gentlemen can wear, and men who have rediscovered proper shirts are now exploring the astonishing range of cufflinks which can accompany them. Bold or discreet, serious or whimsical, wealthy or restrained, cufflinks say more about character than a shirt button ever can.

The decision by a Swiss/American collector to sell his collection of more than 200 antique and contemporary pairs provides an opportunity to see - and, perhaps, to invest in - the finest cufflinks from Stuart times to the present day.

The collection, which covers designs from precious stones and metals to painted crystals, is on display at the Sandra Cronan gallery (18 Burlington Arcade, London W1), and includes the work of fine jewellers such as Cartier, Tiffany and Schlumberger. Prices range from around £300 for

as investments, and men are buying them as one of the few ways in which they can express their wealth and individuality.

Nearly all of the great names of women's jewellery now offer ranges of men's cufflinks too. Chaumet (178 New Bond Street) has just commissioned David Hicks to design a new women's collection (on display from December 2), and he has added cufflinks - because, he says, "they are the only jewellery a man can wear. I believe cufflinks should be simple, understated and unpretentious." In coral, turquoise, amethyst and other semi-precious stones edged in gold, Hicks's cufflinks cost £350 a pair.

Boucheron, another of the grand names of jewellery, has scored among wrist watchers with the distinctive design of their *Les Pluriels* links. The idea is that you buy the base, the linking bars, in either yellow or white gold (from

intricate," admits Ralph Destino, of Cartier Inc in New York, "but some are so hard to get on that you need a valet, a wife, or three hands."

Paul Longmire, the St James's jeweller (12 Bury St, London SW1) has an international reputation for trading in antique links, and always has several dozen for sale; the vast majority are two-ended. He also engraves family monograms and crests, and even paints favourite gundogs, on to links.

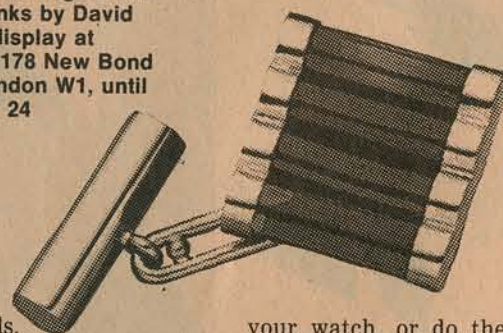
Nearby, Harry Fane (12 Duke St, London SW1) also keeps tradition alive by reproducing, using the original designs, materials and workshops, the cufflinks of the great Edwardian jeweller Falco de verdura. These include his famous "Night and Day" cufflinks, designed for Cole Porter - one a globe in daylight, the other the starry night sky.

Modern jewellery designers are also creating cufflinks in

addition to their women's ranges. Vicky Ambery-Smith, a contemporary jeweller whose work is sold in the Craft Council shops and the Oxford Gallery (High St, Oxford) has seen the demand for her cufflinks remain steady, while sales of women's jewellery has declined. She specialises in reproducing European architecture as cufflinks, usually in silver and red gold; one series copied the frontages of Tuscan villas, another the facades of Georgian houses. She also undertakes private commissions, like the links she made reproducing the showcase home of post-modern theorist Charles Jencks, as a present from his wife.

The Electrum Gallery (South Molton St, London W1), which also stocks Ambery-Smith's work, and Jess James (Newburgh St, London W1) are good places to find a varied range of contemporary links. The fashion designer Christian Lacroix is reportedly planning a typically opulent range of cufflinks for the New Year, based on his personal Arlesian iconography of crosses and

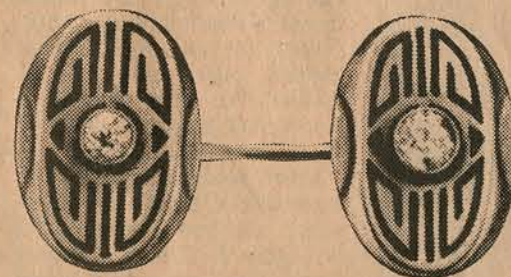
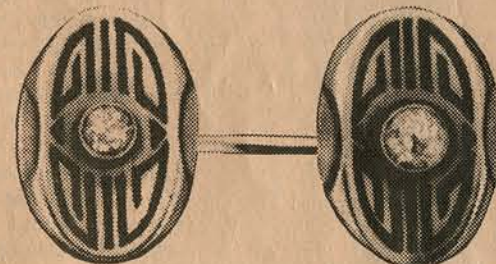
Pair of 18 carat gold and jade cufflinks by David Hicks on display at Chaumet, 178 New Bond Street, London W1, until December 24



Above right: Diamond and peridot cufflinks set in silver and gold.

Right: White gold enamelled cufflinks with diamonds

Both can be seen at the Cufflinks Through the Ages exhibition



bull's heads.

But however modern the design, there are traditional rules to be observed in the wearing of links. Beware of those plain barrel shirtcuffs which are described as "convertible", and which have a second buttonhole along with their button. Cuffs cannot be "converted" from informal to formal; to wear cufflinks with soft barrel cuffs is a sartorial gaffe comparable to wearing a tie with a polo shirt. Cufflinks can only properly be worn with formal turned-back, or 'French', cuffs.

Always try on cufflinks before you buy, to establish two important points. First, can you pull the cuff back over

your watch, or do the links 'pinch' too tightly? And secondly, are the fittings on the backs of the links correctly aligned? (Cuff buttonholes are always vertical, but some jewellers seem to forget this; a link will turn unless its fitting is in line with the buttonhole.)

Finally, remember that however tempting elaborate and bold links may be, discretion is the order of the day. It was said in one of Robert Maxwell's obituaries that "he took endless trouble to dress as an upper-class Englishman. Dark Savile Row suits and spotless white shirts were often ruined, however, by overly large and flashy cufflinks."

modern enamelled links and £900 for modest antique pieces, to a pulse-raising £8,350 for a pair of panther heads pavé set with diamonds. The average price is around £1,500 a pair - and an American architect has reserved half a dozen, while a pair of scarab beetle links have been resold to David Rockefeller.

"We've always sold cufflinks," says Sandra Cronan, "but over the last three years we've noticed a lot more men are coming in looking for unique, expressive cufflinks. They tend," she thinks, "to be men who are interested in dress, rather than jewellery."

The recession is also forcing the jewellery trade to look for ways to sell smaller items, and to move outside their traditional, female clientele. Fortunately, more men are choosing to wear their art on their sleeve.

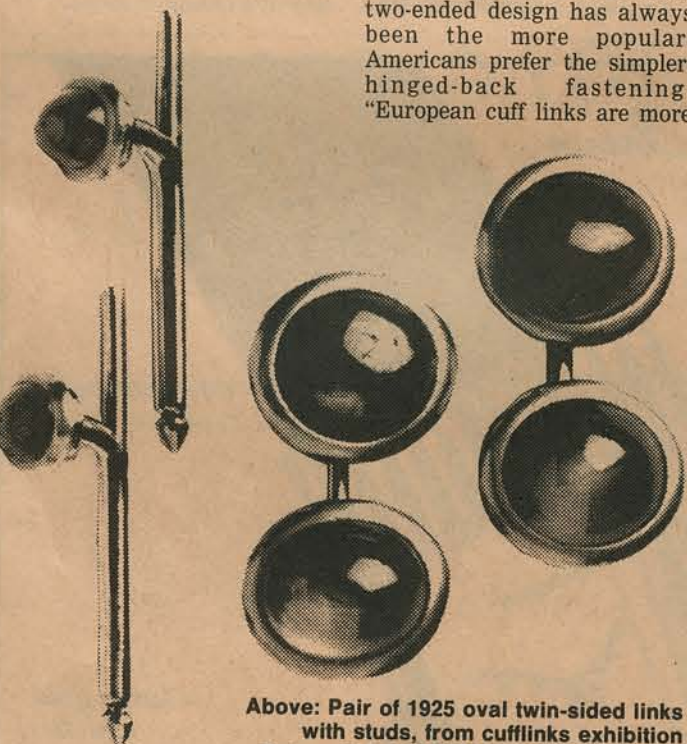
Now, contemporary designers, antique dealers and the grandest names of jewellery are all offering cufflinks. Women are buying them as gifts, dealers are buying them

£450), and then collect interchangeable batons, in anything from rock crystal or onyx to malachite, lapis, coral and other materials (from £150 to over £525 a pair).

Collections can be built to match different outfits, to commemorate annual occasions or to cover business and evening dress. As Boucheron says: "Easier than sewing on a button, and much more fun." Much more expensive, too.

Interesting cufflinks do not have to be that pricey. Silk knots, in combinations of colours, are available at all of the Jermyn Street shirtmakers for as little as £5.95 a pair. Moss Bros (Covent Garden and selected branches) has an intriguing selection of links from £32.95; those based on the porcelain caps from Hot and Cold taps are particularly witty. And Hackett (Sloane Street, SW1) does several styles, from miniature silver stirrups and shotgun cartridges to the classic gold or enamelled chain-linked ovals from £45 a pair.

In Europe, the traditional, two-ended design has always been the more popular. Americans prefer the simpler, hinged-back fastening. "European cuff links are more



Above: Pair of 1925 oval twin-sided links with studs, from cufflinks exhibition  
Below: Hot and Cold and Ten-past-Ten, both at £32.95 a pair. Spotted bow ties £35, branches of Moss Bros