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Collecting Signs with Greg Howard

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I began collecting in 1972 because I loved the pictorials that dressed up my shop walls – then, you could buy a very good sign for \$50-\$100. If only I'd known what was to come!

Signs have only really shot up in value over the last three to four years. In 1988 I was offered over a hundred signs for Fifty English pounds, and I knocked them back!

To me, investing in signs is far safer than investing in fly-by-night companies on the share market – here today, gone tomorrow. The market value of signs is underpinned by the Baby Boomer generation all coming up for retirement, and all looking for things to do, things to collect – a throw-back to their younger years. In the last twelve to eighteen months, the growth of prices for signs, tins, petrol pumps, boxes, showcards and posters is no doubt a phenomenon. Better than real estate, better than the stockmarket.

Even though this is happening, I still believe you can buy better signs today than you could have done 35 years ago, but you will have to meet market prices, the days of cheap signs are long past.

English enamel signs often reflected the social history of the day, and the reason for early pictorials was because the majority of the population were uneducated and could not read, therefore consumers would identify their goods by pictorials on signs, tins, boxes, etc.

Remember, always go for the best quality available. Market value on a good sign will increase for greater in one year than market value on a fair quality sign.

Condition is the main factor in price. There can be hundreds or thousands of dollars difference, depending on condition. For example, a good sign in rough condition could be worth \$1500, but in perfect condition it could be \$10000.



'Coopers Stands Alone'
Enamel Sign
in average condition
Price \$2500-\$3000



'Coopers Stands Alone'
Enamel Sign
in this condition
Price \$4500-\$5000



'Coopers Stands Alone'
Enamel Sign
almost perfect cond.
Price \$9500-\$10500