

It's gold party time



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Gather your friends and your old jewellery and join the bullion bandwagon

GOLD parties could become as popular as Tupperware parties once were, as people seek to make money from selling their unwanted jewellery.

Rather than face the stigma of selling items through a pawnbroker, gold parties are increasingly considered a more "acceptable" way for people to generate some extra income during the recession, particularly as gold prices have soared recently. Bullion broke through the \$1,000 per ounce barrier for the first time in seven months in September. At the beginning of this week, the price was \$991 per ounce, equivalent to around £620. However, remember that you won't get bullion rates when you sell, as the price companies pay will depend on the purity as well as the weight of the items you are selling.

The company Ounces to Pounds, which runs gold

parties, says that it currently pays about 75pc of bullion rates. That is potentially a lot better than some of the payments you could get through companies which invite people to sell their gold by post. Cash4Gold.com, for example, pays between 20pc and 85pc of bullion rates, depending on the quality and weight of the gold.

Mark Nicholson, director of UK operations at Ounces to Pounds, said: "As an example, someone selling two fairly fine 16in 18-carat ladies chains could expect to get in the region of £100."

Be aware that a valuation for the gold will not usually include any precious stones or the decorative or antique value of the jewellery, as the gold is wanted for melting and refining. Mr Nicholson said: "We have had cases where people have brought rare or very valuable items such as a Cartier watch or a Krugerrand to a party, and when that happens we would always refuse the items, as they would be able to get a better price elsewhere."

The party format is simple – you invite friends around to your home to sell their jewellery, and a gold expert from the site will bring machines that tell if the jewellery is gold and what its carat reading is. The value of the items is then calculated according to

weight, using that day's fixed London gold price, and the fineness of the gold. Ounces to Pounds says that it is attending around five or six gold parties every day, and this number is increasing.

Anyone who decides they want to sell their jewellery for

the price offered will be given a cheque there and then in return for their gold. Should any of your guests have a change of heart about selling after the event, they may be able to get their money back – provided they act swiftly.

Mr Nicholson said: "If someone came to us within a few days and wanted their jewellery back, we'd be happy to do that, as we don't melt the gold down immediately. If they came to us three months after the party, then that would be too late, although this hasn't happened so far."

In return for arranging and holding the party, the host is paid 10pc of total sales at that party. According to Ounces to Pounds, hostesses receive an average of £350 per party. Ounces to Pounds will also pay 3pc commission on any party hosted by a guest of your party or referred to them by you directly, plus £35 cash towards drink and food costs, provided there is a minimum total payout of £700.

For more information, telephone 0808 225 4653 or visit the website www.ounces2pounds.co.uk, where you can book a date for your party online. The company Your Gold Party also runs events, and can be contacted on 0800 112 3185 or via the website www.yourgoldparty.co.uk.

If hosting, or selling through a gold party isn't your forte, and you'd prefer to sell by post or on the high street, then make sure you do plenty of research first.

Trading Standards officers are advising people to look around for the best rates and to only deal with reputable, well-established firms. The warning comes after officers from Sutton Trading Standards took a 9ct gold bracelet to six shops and were offered between £17 and £32 for it – a difference of almost

90pc. If you have already sold items but think you weren't treated fairly, contact Consumer Direct on 08454 040506, or visit the Consumer Direct website on www.consumerdirect.gov.uk.

Make sure you have at least



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cheque there and then

a rough idea of how much any gold items you own are worth before you accept an offer. Look carefully for any hallmarks, as this can help you work out what sort of price to expect. For example, if your gold jewellery has the hallmark 375, this means the gold is 9ct. The number 375 relates to how many parts per thousand are pure gold, so, 9ct gold is therefore 375 parts per thousand, or 37.5pc pure.

The website www.hattongardenmetals.com/scrap-gold-prices.aspx has a useful online calculator to help you find out how much you could get for your gold. When I checked this week the site gave a quote of £180 for 25 grams of 9ct gold, rising to £359 for the same quantity of 18ct gold.

There is no shortage of websites you can sell your gold through, but it is always

wise to choose one which offers a guarantee that you can get your gold returned if you are not happy with the valuation. The site www.postalgold.com, for example, enables you to request a prepaid insured envelope via the site to send your gold in, and promises to send your payment within 24 hours of having your jewellery valued. If you are not happy you can return the payout within seven days and get your gold back.

Remember that if you are sending items by post and the company you are sending them to does not offer an insured postage paid envelope, then make sure you use special delivery. Jewellery items are not insured by recorded delivery or by first or second-class post, so the post office will not compensate you for any loss.

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JONATHAN LODGE



Strike it rich: bullion prices are on the rise, so now is a good time to cash in any unwanted gold

