Table fork

Place of origin: London (made)
Date: 1894-1895 (hallmarked)
Artist/Maker: Johnson, Walker and Tolhurst (manufacturer)
Materials and Techniques: Silver, die stamping
Museum number: M.36-2000
Gallery location: British Galleries, Room 125b, case 2

Public access description
Object Type
Large table forks evolved in the early 18th century as cutlery became specialised. A desire to eat more elegantly prompted the need for table equipment that could be used only at particular points in the meal or with certain foods. Table forks formed part of a matching cutlery set.

The Victorian Dining Table
From the 1860s Victorian society embraced the new method of serving dinner known as à la Russe, which fundamentally changed the look of the dining table. Previously foods had been set out in silver and ceramic dishes and diners helped themselves, but with dinner à la Russe each course was served individually to guests by servants. The silver entrée dishes and ceramic tureens gave way to lavish floral displays in glass vases and ceramic fruit stands. The cover or place setting assumed a greater importance and occupied a larger area of the dining table. Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management advised in 1888: 'We now come to the knives and forks ... it is usual to lay two large of each, flanked to the right by a fish knife and a soup spoon, and on the left by the fish fork; other knives and forks are supplied with the plates for the different courses.'

Design & Designing
From the 1840s mass-produced cutlery, machine-made in Sheffield, expanded the choice of quality and pattern for consumers. This fork was made in the popular King's pattern, but the Sheffield manufacturers James Dixon & Sons offered 28 different designs for cutlery sets in their catalogue of 1892.

Descriptive line
Table fork, silver, Kings pattern, made by Johnson, Walter Walker and Brownfield Tolhurst, London; 1894.

Physical description
Fork, silver, Kings pattern

Dimensions
Length: 216 mm, Width: 28 mm, Height: 25 mm

Museum number
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Object history note
Made for Walter Walker & Brownfield Tolhurst, London

Historical context note
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URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O48545/table-fork-johnson-walker-and/