Finch & Co



AN ITALIAN CARVED IVORY ROSARY BEAD

AN ITALIAN CARVED IVORY ROSARY BEAD
DEPICTING THE HEAD OF CHRIST AND A SKULL 'MEMENTO MORI'
17TH CENTURY
SIZE : 3 CM HIGH, 3 CM WIDE, 2.5 CM DEEP – 1¼ HIGH, 1¼ INS WIDE, 1 INS DEEP

LITERATURE

THE WORD BEAD IS DERIVED FROM THE ANGLO SAXON 'BIDDEN' MEANING TO PRAY AND 'BEDE', PRAYER. DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD JEWELLERY WAS DISCOURAGED BY THE CHURCH, BUT ROSARIES WERE ACCEPTABLE AS CONVENIENT PORTABLE DEVICES FOR COUNTING PRAYERS. THEIR PURPOSE WAS TO ASSIST THE WORSHIPPER IN ACCURATELY REPEATING FROM MEMORY THE CORRECT NUMBER OF PRAYERS AND INCANTATIONS REQUIRED BY HIS FAITH. THE 11TH CENTURY BEQUEST OF LADY GODIVA TO THE MONASTERY OF COVENTRY INCLUDES 'A CIRCLET OF GEMS WHICH SHE THREADED ON A STRING IN ORDER THAT BY FINGERING THEM ONE BY ONE AS SHE SUCCESSIVELY RECITED HER PRAYERS, SHE MIGHT NOT FALL SHORT OF THE EXACT NUMBER'.
THIS LARGE CENTRAL CARVED IVORY BEAD WOULD MARK THE END OF A CYCLE OF PRAYER AND THE BEGINNING OF THE NEXT ALWAYS PROMPTING THE WORSHIPPER TO 'REMEMBER ME'.