Finch & Co



A VERY RARE ENGLISH BEADWORK CHARLES I 'SWETE BAGE'

A VERY RARE ENGLISH BEADWORK CHARLES I ‘SWETE BAGE’ EMBROIDERED ‘THE GIFT OF A FRIEND 1631’

LEATHER

17TH CENTURY

SIZE : 13 CM HIGH, 15 CM WIDE – 5 INS HIGH, 6 INS WIDE

LITERATURE

'SWETE BAGES' WERE FILLED WITH SWEET SMELLING HERBS AND PUT IN WITH LINEN AND CLOTHES STORED IN CHESTS AND IN THE DAYS BEFORE REGULAR BATHING BODY ODOURS COULD BE MASKED WITH THESE 'SWEET BAGS'. SOMETIMES THEY WERE CARRIED SUSPENDED FROM THE WAIST AND CONTAINED SEWING EQUIPMENT OR TRINKETS, AND PRESENTS OR MONEY COULD ALSO BE GIVEN 'GIFT WRAPPED' IN THESE PURSES.

IN THE STUART PERIOD ENGLISH NEEDLEWORK WAS A SIGN OF INDIVIDUAL WEALTH AND PROSPERITY AND WAS USED TO ADORN COSTUME ACCESSORIES AS WELL AS DOMESTIC ITEMS SUCH AS CASKETS AND MIRRORS. IN ITALY GLASS BEADS HAD BEEN THREADED AND USED IN RELIEF SINCE THE 14TH CENTURY AND AS THE TECHNIQUE OF MAKING GLASS BEADS SPREAD TO FRANCE SO THE TECHNIQUE OF USING THEM IN EMBROIDERY SPREAD TO CONVENTS AND PRIVATE HOUSES THROUGHOUT NORTHERN EUROPE. UNLIKE SILKS, GLASS BEADS DO NOT FADE ALTHOUGH THE CHOICE OF COLOUR WAS RESTRICTED WITH BLUE, YELLOW AND GREEN BEING THE MOST WIDELY USED. PROFESSIONAL EMBROIDERERS WERE OFTEN EMPLOYED TO PRODUCE EXQUISITE BODICES, GLOVES, BAGS AND STOMACHERS, BUT DESIGNS FOUND ON SAMPLERS OF THE SAME DATE SUGGEST THAT MANY ACCESSORIES WERE ALSO WORKED BY AMATEURS.