Finch & Co



A RARE GOLDSMITHS 'TOUCHSTONE' CARVED WITH INITIALS 'HB' AND THE DATE 1642

A RARE GOLDSMITHS 'TOUCHSTONE' CARVED WITH INITIALS 'HB' AND THE DATE 1642
PROBABLY ENGLISH
17TH CENTURY
SIZE: 26 CM LONG, 6.5 CM WIDE, 2.5 CM DEEP – 10¼ INS LONG, 2½ INS WIDE, 1 INS DEEP
PROVENANCE: EX ENGLISH PRIVATE COLLECTION

LITERATURE

'GOLD IS TRIED BY TOUCHSTONE AND MEN BY GOLD'
FRANCIS BACON, POLYMATH AND POLITICIAN, 1561-1626
TOUCHSTONES ARE COMPOSED OF A DARK FLINTY SCHIST CALLED IN ANCIENT TIMES 'LAPIS LYDIUS' AND ARE CALLED TOUCHSTONES BECAUSE GOLD CAN BE TRIED AND VERIFIED BY THEM.
A SERIES OF NEEDLES ARE MADE BY THE GOLDSMITH OR ASSAYER. THE FIRST NEEDLE BEING OF PURE GOLD, THE SECOND OF 23 PARTS GOLD AND 1 PART COPPER, THE THIRD OF 22 PARTS GOLD AND 2 PARTS COPPER AND SO ON UNTIL BASE METAL IS REACHED. WHEN THE ASSAYER THEN SELECTS ONE OF THEM AND RUBS IT ON THE TOUCHSTONE IT LEAVES A REDDISH MARK IN PROPORTION TO THE QUANTITY OF COPPER ALLOY. THUS IN GOLD WORK TOO SMALL TO BE ASSAYED THE GOLDSMITH CAN ASCERTAIN ITS QUALITY BY 'TOUCH'. THE COLOUR LEFT BEHIND ON THE TOUCHSTONE IS COMPARED AND JUDGEMENT MADE ACCORDINGLY.