

# *Finch & C<sup>o</sup>*



**AN ENGLISH TURNED LIGNUM VITAE WOOD MORTAR AND PESTLE**  
**AN ENGLISH TURNED LIGNUM VITAE WOOD MORTAR AND PESTLE**

MD 17TH CENTURY

MORTAR: 22.5CM HIGH X 23CM WIDE

PESTLE: 43CM

## **LITERATURE**

LIGNUM VITAE WAS FIRST BROUGHT TO EUROPE FROM THE WEST INDIES AND CENTRAL AMERICA IN ABOUT 1515. ITS INTRODUCTION AT THAT TIME WAS MEDICINAL AS IT WAS THOUGHT TO CURE VENEREAL DISEASE. LIGNUM SAWDUST WAS MIXED WITH WATER AND FED TO SUFFERERS AS A FORM OF PORRIDGE. IT IS AN EXTREMELY HARD AND DENSE HEAVY WOOD. IN 1609 A TON WAS ORDERED BUT ALL THAT THE PURCHASER RECEIVED WAS APPROXIMATELY 25 CUBIC FEET OF LIGNUM VITAE.

THE FIRST REFERENCE TO ITS USE IN TURNERY ACCORDING TO PINTO OCCURS IN 1605: '2 PAIRE OF BLACK LIGNUM VITAE BOWLLES'. IN 1660 SAMUEL PEPYS WROTE IN HIS DIARY ON NOVEMBER 21ST 'THIS MORNING MY COZEN THOMAS PEPYS THE TURNER SENT ME A CUP OF LIGNUM VITAE FOR A TOKEN'. THOMAS PEPYS WAS A FREEMAN OF THE COMPANY OF TURNERS.

IT WAS NATURAL FOR A TURNER TO THINK OF MAKING DRINKING VESSELS AND MORTARS AND PESTLES OF LIGNUM AS IT IS SO HARDWEARING, IMPERMEABLE TO LIQUIDS AND HAS THE ADDED SELLING POINT THAT THE CURATIVE QUALITIES OF THE WOOD SUPPOSEDLY PASSED INTO THE DRINK OR MIXTURE COMPOUNDED IN THE

VESSELS. THUS LIGNUM VITAE BECAUSE THE WOOD FOR DRINKING BOWLS, MORTARS  
AND PESTLES, LOVING CUPS ETC IN STUART ENGLAND.