Finch & Co



A VERY RARE EARLY BRITISH SAILORS' WALRUS IVORY TEETOTUM BALL NUMBERED 1 - 32

CIRCA circa 1660 - 1665

A VERY RARE EARLY BRITISH SAILORS' WALRUS IVORY TEETOTUM BALL NUMBERED 1 - 32 ON FACETED SIDES WITH A CROWNED PORTRAIT HEAD OF KING CHARLES II

WITH CARVED 'ARABIC' NUMBERS SAVE FOR THE ROMAN NUMERAL VI

SUPERB RICH DARK GOLDEN COLOUR AND PATINA

17TH CENTURY / CIRCA 1660 - 1665

SIZE: 4.5CM DIA. - 1¾ INS DIA.

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LITERATURE

THE PORTRAIT OF KING CHARLES II, CROWNED, APPEARS TO BE A UNIQUE DEPICTION ON A TEETOTAL BALL, WHICH ALLOWS US TO DATE WITH CERTAINTY TO AROUND JUST AFTER THE RESTORATION OF THE MONARCH, AROUND 1660 - 1665.

'TOTUM' IS LATIN FOR 'THE WHOLE' AND THEREFORE IS USED IN REFERENCE TO THE 'WHOLE STAKE' IN GAMBLING. TEETOTUM BALLS ACT SOMEWHAT LIKE SPINNING DICE, BUT HAVE FACETED NUMBERED SIDES SO WHEN THROWN THERE IS AN EQUAL CHANCE OF ANY NUMBER TURNING UP, WHICH IS NOT THE CASE WITH DICE.

LOTTERIES FIRST BEGAN TO BE AN ACCEPTABLE FORM OF GAMBLING IN THE REIGN OF ELIZABETH I. IN 1568 - 69 THE GOVERNMENT NEEDED TO QUICKLY RAISE A SUBSTANTIAL SUM OF MONEY FOR URGENT REPAIRS TO THE HARBOURS AND COASTAL FORTIFICATIONS OF ENGLAND IN ORDER TO REPEL THE THREATENED SEABORNE INVASION FROM THE SPANISH. SUCCESSIVE ACTS OF PARLIAMENT THEN ESTABLISHED LOTTERIES AS A LEGITIMATE MEANS OF INCREASING REVENUE, AND OVER TIME THEY BECAME A LUCRATIVE SOURCE OF GOVERNMENT INCOME.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE UK COLLECTION