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An important Gothic elm trestle table, circa 1520, from Rothamsted Manor and the collection of Sir Charles Bennet Lawes-Wittewronge

Sold

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REF: 10231

Description

An exceptionally rare, Gothic, elm trestle table, circa 1520. The top is made from two 9ft long boards, which are 2" thick, displaying the fine grain of the Elmwood to full advantage. Apart from old repairs to the mortice joints, a couple of small patches to worm damage, and minor nibbles, the table has survived in remarkable authentic condition due to the fact that it has, most likely, stood in The Old Hall at Rothamsted Manor for most of its life.

Illustrated in The Age of Oak, by Percy Macquoid, 1904, Figure 77, as the property of Sir Charles Lawes-Wittewronge. "Figure 77 is about 1520, of elm, and very few of these elm tables exist, owing to the perishable nature of the wood. The frame and stretcher run through the trestle supports, and are kept in position by movable oak pegs. When space was important, these pegs were withdrawn, and the various parts stacked against the wall." The only other English tables documented in Macquoid, the seminal textbook on early furniture, from this period are the 2 long trestle tables in Penshurst Place which will never ever come onto the open market.

Sir Charles Bennet Lawes-Wittewronge, was the second baronet (1843-1911), a sculptor and athlete, of Rothamsted Manor, Hertfordshire, which is of 13th century origin. He was the first president of the Incorporated Society of British Sculptors. His collection of medieval furniture was highly regarded, and there is a life-sized statue of him which is now in the Prado, and some of the tapestries are now in the Burrell collection.

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In 1906 "Country Life" published a three issue profile of Rothamsted (February 24th, March 3rd & 10th). There are 3 images of the table in the Old Hall, on pages 307, 308 & 309 of the 3rd March issue.

"The main table in the Hall is one of a type of which few examples remain, a table of Elmwood of the early part of the 16th century whose form keeps the tradition of the Gothic period. It is supported upon two uprights with scrolled outlines, through which are trust the ends of the frame and of the long stretcher, which are then fastened with stout pegs……These are doubtless of the 16th century"

After Sir Charles's death, the contents of the Manor were dispersed in various sales in 1936 and the table was sold in "The Important Collection of English Furniture of the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries formed by Sir Charles Lawes-Wittewronge, Bart. Deceased" dated Thursday May 14 1936 (Christie, Manson and Woods).

"Lot 91 is "A Henry VIII Elm Table, with plain rectangular top and frieze, on scroll trestle supports united by a plain stretcher secured by pegs - 9ft long.

Illustrated in "The History of English Furniture" by Percy Macquoid, Vol. I fig 77". It was apparently sold for 35 guineas.

Length 9 ft., Width 30 inches, Top 2" thick.

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