An exceptionally rare, Elizabethan, 6-legged oak, drawleaf table extending to 15ft. 6 in., from Ripley Grange, Theydon Bois, Essex

Sold

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REF: 11004

Height: 83 cm (32.7")

Width: 247.5 cm (97.4")

Depth: 88 cm (34.6")

Description

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This particular table is as fine an example of an Elizabethan drawleaf as one is likely to see. There is no question that the top and base are original. Although they were most likely made in the 19th century, the leaves have been made from old timber with exceptional figuring and retain their original 17/18th century patina.

This table has many features which are typical of drawleaf tables that were made in the third quarter of the 16th century. The bulbous or vase-shaped legs were of Flemish and German origin, introduced intoEngland by immigrant craftsmen and through published designs such as those of Dietterlein and De Vries.In these early Elizabethan examples, the vase-shape is very pronounced, the bulbs generally being carvedwith acanthus and gadroons, and terminating at the junction with the frame in Ionic volutes as in thisexample.

Elizabethan drawleaf tables rarely come onto the open market. The Ripley Grange drawleaf has two exceptional features; it has 6 bulbous legs and extends to a massive 15ft., 6 in. There appears to be only one other comparison from this period with 6 bulbous legs which is in the Burrell Collection. Only the base survives and it has a modern top, replaced feet and has lost its leaves. The frame of the Burrell Collection drawleaf is the same size as the Ripley Grange drawleaf and, far as I am aware, this is the only other surviving, period example which could have extended to a similar size. The 4-legged drawleaf tables from this period all appear to have significantly smaller frames which indicates they could not have extended to this length.

The immovable character of these early examples caused them to descend through many generations inthe same family, and Evelyn observes in a familiar passage that both in hall and parlour long tables " wereas fixed as the freehold " '. Consequently drawleaf tables still survive today in situ some of the greatcollections, such as Hardwick Hall, while others have passed into the hands of museums such as theTreasurer's House, York

The Ripley Grange drawleaf retains its original top made from three, quarter-sawn, planks surrounded by a cleated oak frame. The leaves, are most likely 19th century replacements made from old timbers, each comprising two central planks surrounded by a cleated oak frame. The underside lopers and lifting mechanism date from this period. One of the lopers bears a paper label 'G-177 ELIZABETHAN DRAWER-TOP REFECTORY TABLE (SIX BULBOUS LEGS CARVED WITH LEAVES) JULY 1916' (see below). The frieze is crisply carved with flowerhead motifs with a gadrooned border below

The legs are the typical Elizabethan 'cup and cover' model. The lower section is finely carved with acanthus leaves, with a central band/ring separating this from the upper part which has fine gadrooning. The legs terminate with an ionic capital. The legs are mounted on blocks, unusually with carved detail on the top, joined by square stretchers with wear and losses. Excellent original, lustrous colour and patina. English, second half of the 16th century

Height 83 cm., 32¾ in. Depth 88 cm., 34½ in.
Fully Extended Length 472.5 cm., 15ft 6 in., Closed length 248 cm, 8ft 2 in.,

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