

Close Stool, Early 18th Century, English William & Mary, Vernacular
Norfolk, Oak

£3,600



REF: 11316

Height: 42 cm (16.5")

Diameter: 42 cm (16.5")

Description

This is a particularly fine example of this rare model of close-stool from the Norfolk region. This is the only fourth example I have seen in the twenty-five years I have been dealing and in the best original condition. For example, I have not come across a carved interior lid before or all the original brassware, or the wooden seat. This is a characterful piece of furniture and a practical height to use as an occasional or lamp table beside modern settees.

The plank top in two sections with a moulded edge. Retains the original shaped brass hinge opening to reveal the lid carved with circular carved decoration. The original wooden seat which supported the pot is, unusually, in situ. The cylindrical body retains the original brass handles, shaped escutcheon and base moulding. Standing on replaced bun feet. Excellent original colour and patina. English, first quarter of the 18th century. Measures: Diameter 42cm, height 42cm

Related to: A matched pair of Norfolk oak drum, close-stools I sold in 1998, one to Handel's House Museum. A circular close stool, probably similar to this piece, is recorded in the inventory of Handel's House, 25 Brook Street, London.

Drum-shaped close-stools are unique to the Norfolk region and this, in conjunction with their utilitarian nature, accounts for their extreme rarity today. Given these factors, this piece has survived in remarkable condition.

From the end of the 15th century movable close stools were used in palaces and great houses superseding the garde-robes or structural privies contrived within the walls which were the only convenience of this kind afforded by the primitive hygiene of medieval times. These close stools were among the varieties of furniture which at this time were provided by coffer-makers to the crown. They were probably of box form and the Royal Wardrobe accounts of the period show that they were covered with velvet or 'fustian of Naples', studded with gilt nails and elaborately trimmed.

The box type remained in use, though no longer covered with fabric, into the early years of the 18th century, and a close stool from Dunham Massey dating from circa 1710 is veneered with figured burr walnut, crossbanded and bordered with ebony. In the late-Stuart period another variety, joined and mounted on a turned stand, appears to have been employed although surviving examples are rare.

Provenance: Private Collection.