Antique Golf Club, Urquhart Adjustable Patent

D & W Auchterlonie

£1,900

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REF: 32192

Height: 91 cm (35.8")

Width: 9.5 cm (3.7")

Depth: 3.5 cm (1.4")

Description

Antique Patent Adjustable Iron Golf Club by Urquhart.
A fine example of an antique patent adjustable golf club by Robert Lish Urquhart, fitted with a hickory shaft and preserved in excellent condition. Dating from the pioneering period of late nineteenth-century golf club development, this ingenious club represents one of the most inventive attempts to provide a golfer with the versatility of several clubs in a single, highly practical design.
Robert Lish Urquhart was the first to patent an adjustable-loft iron, with British Patent No. 8,176, dated 30 April 1892. The Urquhart design was subsequently refined through further patents, reflecting the considerable experimentation that went into developing a reliable adjustable club.
The blade has a distinctive low profile, with a pronounced hump running across the back, giving the club a particularly characteristic appearance. The face is marked with traditional score lines, with a central circular panel containing a criss-cross pattern and the name "URQUHART". On the back of the toe is Urquhart's trademark, a "U" within a circle, together with the production number 1265. The same number appears on the rear of the hosel, alongside the Urquhart patent marking.
The club retains its hickory shaft, which has been fitted at a later date with a polished leather grip. The shaft is stamped "D & W. Auchterlonie, St Andrews," linking the club to the Auchterlonie golf-making tradition in St Andrews and adding further interest to its history.
What makes the Urquhart particularly remarkable is its adjustable blade. The mechanism allows the loft to be altered through a remarkably wide range, from a driving cleek through a lofting iron and ultimately to a putter. In effect, the intention was to provide the golfer with the playing characteristics of an entire selection of clubs in one. At a time when golf equipment was comparatively expensive and caddies were not always readily available, the economy and convenience of such a design would have been an obvious attraction.
The adjustment mechanism is ingenious but remarkably straightforward. By pressing the lever on the hosel while pulling the spring-loaded blade outward, the internal cogs are disengaged. The club face can then be rotated to the desired loft. Once the blade is released, the spring returns it into position, and the interlocking cogs secure the face firmly at the chosen loft. It is an elegant piece of mechanical engineering, particularly for a golf club of this period.
Contemporary advertising provides an insight into the reputation the Urquhart club had established by the late 1890s. An advertisement published in GOLF in April 1897 stated that the club heads had been thoroughly tested following two or three years of careful trials, and that testimonials regarding their efficiency had been received from many leading golfers of the day. Among those named were P. L. Anderson, the Amateur Golf Champion, Tom Morris, J. H. Taylor, W. Fernie, Andrew Kirkaldy, Charles Hunter and Jack Duncan, together with many other prominent amateur and professional players. Such contemporary endorsements demonstrate that the adjustable Urquhart was not merely an experimental curiosity, but a club that had att...

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