Antique Fishing, Eel Spear, Iron

Sold

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REF: 26420

Height: 36 cm (14.2")

Width: 12.5 cm (4.9")

Depth: 3.5 cm (1.4")

Description

Vintage Eel Spear.
A good 19th Century wrought iron eel spear with four prongs with serrated edges. The spear is offset, most probably for use on a river bank, and has a collar to attach the blade to a handle. The metal has a polished finish giving it an attractive look, it has also been mounted onto a walnut base.

The eels are caught with a spear whilst they are lying in the mud, with the spears being used from a boat, bank or from mud-flats once the tide has receded. The spear is thrust downwards into the mud where an eel is thought to be. Unlike salmon spears (leisters) that have barbed points to pierce and secure the fish, eel spears are made of flat metal tines usually with rounded ends set close together. They are designed in such a way as to hold the eel in between the tines without damaging it. There are two distinct types, the broad relatively short spears designed for 'hard bottoms' and those designed for use in deep dykes and heavy clay and known to fishermen as 'spears for no bottom'. In the latter group penetration is vital; the spears are longer and narrower and each prong is less flattened than in the first type. Their shape is specifically designed to penetrate thick mud, where eels might lie, and usually they are not fitted with one or two bands of metal riveted at right angles to the prongs, as in spears designed for hard bottoms. In 'hard bottom' spears, each prong may be flat and in a single spear nine prongs are not unusual for wide coverage is of greater importance than penetration. For really deep waters, an eel spear may be attached to a heavy ash handle as long as 20 feet or more, but for canals, ditches and dykes, short-handled and light spears are used.

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