



## A Unique Set of 13 Desks Commissioned by the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons London

Ref: NPV000719

*Price on Application*

MAKER	Heal's
DESIGNER	Philip Tilden
PERIOD	Arts & Crafts Movement , 1920-1929
YEAR	1920
STYLE	Arts and Crafts
ORIGIN	United Kingdom
MATERIALS	Oak
DIMENSIONS	H: 30.31 in (77 cm)   W: 85.04 in (216 cm)   D: 29.72 in (75.5 cm)
CONDITION	Good

### About this piece

#### A unique set of 13 desks commissioned by the Council of The Royal College of Surgeons

at the Nuffield School of Surgical Sciences in Lincolns Inn Field, London. The London Royal College of Surgeons of England Council commissioned these desks for their meetings in The Nuffield School of Surgical Sciences buildings in London, 35-43 Lincolns Inn Fields. **Philip Tilden**, for **Heal & Sons**, designed a desk in 1922 with side flaps that had a secret central drawer, and a narrow

refectory table with the same legs and floor stretcher for Chartwell House, the country residence of Sir Winston Churchill.

We do not know the exact date this set was commissioned, and although the desks are clearly from Tilden's 1922 design, the building suffered badly from bombing during WWII (...). Reconstruction plus the addition of the Nuffield College of Surgical Sciences to the left of the main building was not completed until 1957. This might suggest the desks were commissioned in 1957, although after close inspection they were more likely to have been made in the late 1920/30s.

Particularly, they have solid oak drawers with handmade dovetails, solid oak legs, feet, and stretchers. Our research is ongoing regarding the actual dates they were commissioned. The Royal College of Surgeons England is the governing body of the Royal College of Surgeons and has 24 members, elected by the College's Fellows and Members.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England was created in 1745 when they split from the Barber Surgeons and created a separate organisation. They became The Royal College of Surgeons of London in 1800 and moved to Lincoln Fields in London, to finally become The Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1843.

We have also attached images of a painting that is hanging in the main entrance hallway of The Nuffield School of Surgical Sciences, depicting the Royal College of Surgeons in the Grand Council Room, assembled around the thirteen desks. As well as images of an early engraving showing the previous location Old Bailey known as Surgeons' Hall that also hung in the building, and an image of the main entrance taken from outside.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England is an independent organisation and charity working to maintain and promote best practices in the profession. The complete set comprises the main central desk, ten straight desks, and two curved desks, making a total of 13 desks.

The faculty of surgeons were seated at the twelve desks placed on each side of the central desk, in a U-shape so that each member could be seen and heard during meetings.

### **This listing is priced for the entire set of 13 PRESIDENT'S MAIN DESK**

The main central desk was used by the President and his three Vice Presidents during meetings, with a panelled front and inverted sides. It has two large drawers with dovetail joints. There is a mark and some damage to the center of the back shown in the images where the original brass plaque was fixed. It was removed and kept by the Royal College of Surgeons.

We can restore it to a plain panel, or a replica plaque to the original design could be made, or a different design to one's choice. Condition of all of the desks is very solid, strong, and sturdy, with some minor knocks and small losses, all easily restored or left to show the honesty of their use and age. The desk tops require a good clean, and then a complete wax all over included in the price.

### **TEN STRAIGHT AND TWO CURVED DESKS**

The ten desks and two curved desks follow the same design **Philip Tilden** used for an oak desk with side flaps that had a secret central drawer, and a narrow oak refectory table he designed for Chartwell House, the country residence of Sir Winston Churchill. The Royal College of Surgeons desks have conforming legs and floor stretchers.

With Tilden's permission, **Ambrose Heal** produced the desk and refectory table for commercial sale. The President's desk has two drawers. The twelve straight desks each have three drawers. The curved desks have four drawers, all of which have handmade dovetail joints, apart from the President's desk. The twelve have double ring-turned column legs to each end, with shaped sledge-style feet united by a floor stretcher with moulded edges to the sides.

### **Dimensions**

- Corner Desks: Height: 77 cm (30.3 inches), Outside width (corner to corner): 262 cm (103.1 inches), Inside width (corner to corner): 150 cm (59.1 inches), Depth (center of arc to diameter of inside): 106 cm (41.7 inches), Side depth: 75.5 cm (29.7 inches)
- Straight Desk: Height: 77 cm (30.3 inches), Width: 216 cm (85 inches), Depth: 75.5 cm (29.7 inches)

- Centre Desk: Height: 78 cm (30.7 inches), Width: 295 cm (116.1 inches), Depth: 90 cm (35.4 inches)