

SA1206714

19th Century Napoleonic War Prisoner of War Straw Work Box

Price

GBP 375

| USD \$506 | EUR 439

Item Reference: SA1206714**Date of manufacture: 19th Century**

Dimensions

Height = 8.5 cm (3.3")

Width = 7 cm (2.8")

Depth = 2 cm (0.8")

Description

This straw work box is a poignant example of Napoleonic War Prisoner of War folk art, dating from the early 19th century (c. 1793–1815). The box is designed to mimic the form of a small bound book. It is constructed from a wooden frame, then veneered in intricately applied, naturally dyed cereal straw. Upon opening, the box reveals a multi-functional interior. The lid houses an original mercury-glass mirror, framed by mitred straw borders. The interior floor features a delicate hand coloured decoupage figurative scene, depicting what appears to be a small winged figure or cherub and text which translates to: 'Your absence worries me. I am only happy where you are.' Considering its age and the fragile nature of the medium, the box presents in good antique condition. The colours remain remarkably vibrant, particularly the greens which often fade to brown over time. Handcrafted by French soldiers held in British prisons (such as Norman Cross or Dartmoor) or aboard "hulks" (prison ships), this diminutive box is a lovely survivor of their celebrated "straw work" craftsmanship. Deprived of standard materials, prisoners used their meagre rations and scavenged items to cre...

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