Inscription

Edwd. Nairne London (support strut)

Description Notes

Sextant, by Edward Nairne, English, 1773 (c).

Sextant. Plate brass frame. Wooden handle fixed in brass mount. Removable brass cross piece. Adjustable index mirror with three coloured filters. Horizon glass with level adjustment. Alternative telescopic and pinhole sights with lateral adjustment (screw missing). Shadow on eyepiece. Index scale divided clockwise [6˚] - 0 - [139˚], numbered by 10˚, subdivided to 5˚, to 1˚ and to 30´. Brass index arm with clamp and tangent screws and type-B vernier on brass divided clockwise [0] - 30´, numbered by 5´, subdivided to 1´. Reading glass on subsidiary arm attached to index arm.

Step wooden box

Key for this instrument may be on bunch of keys for St. John's instruments. See location note and notes fields for more information.

References

Events

Description

The sextant is a very effective tool which took quite

some work to construct. They were most commonly used at sea to find the angle between two objects which then could be used to find your latitude.

Invented in the early 1700s, they were originally made out of wood. But these had a tendency to warp and split and so weren't very reliable or sustainable. When they started being mass produced for the navy, they were made out of brass; despite being heavy it gave them a great amount of stability so they wouldn't wiggle as much in your hands while the boat rocked. This made them very accurate. In hot climates, the sextant would be painted white to reflect the heat so that the glass didn't warp and ruin the readings. Unlike most modern tools like GPS it doesn't require electricity to function. That why this excellent piece of kit is still used as part of the modern navy's training and is featured in their exams too.

Do we have a tendency to rely too much on technology with nothing to fall back on if that fails?

[Label written by work experience student Jack in 2019]
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Created by: **Morgan Bell** on 26/09/2022

Description

Today navigation instruments such as radar, radio and satellites update a ship's position continuously. During the 17th and 18th centuries manual calculations had to be made using instruments such as the backstaff, octant or sextant.