Basic Detail Report

00006892

Title

Telescope, sextant accessory

Date

1784-1840

Primary Maker

Spencer, Browning and Rust

Medium

Brass, glass

Dimensions

Overall: 26 x 177 x 26 mm, 0.1 kg

Name

Sextant part

History

The sextant was developed in 1757. It is an instrument of double reflection by means of two mirrors, and thus although its actual arc subtends an angle of 60 degrees (1/6th of a circle - hence the name sextant), it is capable of measuring angles up to 120 degrees. The sextant was an improvement on the earlier quadrant, an instrument capable for measuring angles up to 90 degrees (1/4th of a circle hence the name quadrant). The capacity of sextants to read angles greater than 90 degrees was an advantage when using the lunar distance method to determine longitude. This was also useful for taking horizontal angles.