



Christopher Clarke Antiques

Dealers in Campaign Furniture  
& Travel Items

## Joseph Hume's Dispatch Box

Furnell & Bagnal

Sold



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REF: 81232

Height: 17.5 cm (6.9")

Width: 36.5 cm (14.4")

Depth: 25 cm (9.8")

## Description

This dark red leather Dispatch Box belonged to Joseph Hume (1777-1855), a very active parliamentarian and a thorn in the side of many governments. It was made by Furnell & Bagnal, Trunk Makers to the Hon'ble. East India Company of 67 St. Pauls Church Yard, London. Hume joined the E.I.C.'s naval service as an Assistant Surgeon in 1797 and it is probable that he obtained this box around this date, given the maker's advertised connection to the Company.

Furnell & Bagnal were certainly active around this date and Kent's Directory of 1803 lists them as Trunk makers at 48 Cornhill. By the 1820s they are no longer listed.

Hume progressed to Full Assistant Surgeon on the Houghton by 1799 and on arrival in India transferred to the land service. He had a skill with languages and soon became a useful political administrator. With the outbreak of the Mahratta War in 1801, he joined the 18th Sepoy Regiment as a Surgeon but was soon appointed interpreter. He devised a way to safely dry damp gunpowder and progressed through several high posts in the army which allowed him to enrich himself. He retired from the E.I.C. in 1807 a wealthy man and returned to Britain. At first he travelled the country extensively, with a social interest, but in 1812 he purchased the seat of Weymouth. He went on to hold several seats including Aberdeen, Middlesex, Kilkenny and his home seat of Montrose. He took his duties as a member of parliament very seriously and was particularly concerned with exposing extravagance and abuse. He served on more committees of the House of Commons than any other contemporary member and died whilst still a MP. This box is made of leather on a softwood carcass and is lined in a green sugar paper. The lock is stamped GR, showing it to be Georgian and retains its key. The top has a brass handle and is marked Joseph Hume. Accompanying the box is a leather framed photograph of Hume which is initialled JH to the frame's cover. It was taken later in Hume's life and shows him holding papers presumably to indicate his position. The box is circa 1800 in date.