

The Doctor's Box

This box measures 42 cms across the front, 6.1 cms from back to front, and is 9.1 cms high. It appears to be made of oak and has 6 brass fittings binding the lid and a further 6 brass fittings binding the body of the box. The fittings are held in place with screws. The handle is also of brass and is fitted in the centre of the lid. There were originally two brass latches to hold the lid closed, one of which is missing. The lock is brass faced and the key is present.

The box was found on the battlefield by John Vincent Rohu, Coastguard, then serving as a Warrant Officer in the British Royal Navy aboard the H.M.S. Prince Regent in the course of the Crimean War. That ship was lying offshore from the Russian fortress of Balaclava. The ship had been shelling the fortress but began to put sailors ashore in longboats to assist the Army in any way possible. John Vincent began to keep a diary on January 11th. 1855 and continued with it until his discharge when the war was over. The diary is extant and from it a transcript has been made and is now in the archive.

The box appears to have belonged to a military doctor and is quite possibly of regular military issue. It contained one long metal forceps of unusual design. The forceps is now missing.

The date of birth of John Vincent together with those of his four siblings are handwritten on a piece of white paper, now fragile, which has been pasted to the underside of the lid. The dates are headed with the single word Bonaventure, the name of John Vincent's father. It is likely that the handwriting is that of John Vincent.

There is another piece of paper, blue, also pasted inside the lid and has in handwriting an inscription the meaning of which is unknown. This second piece of paper appears to be of a much later date. The box came to Mrs. Violet Warner, nee Forde via her Rohu mother, Lilian and has now been given to me to be part of the family archive.

This account has been placed in an envelope and be pasted to the interior of the box.