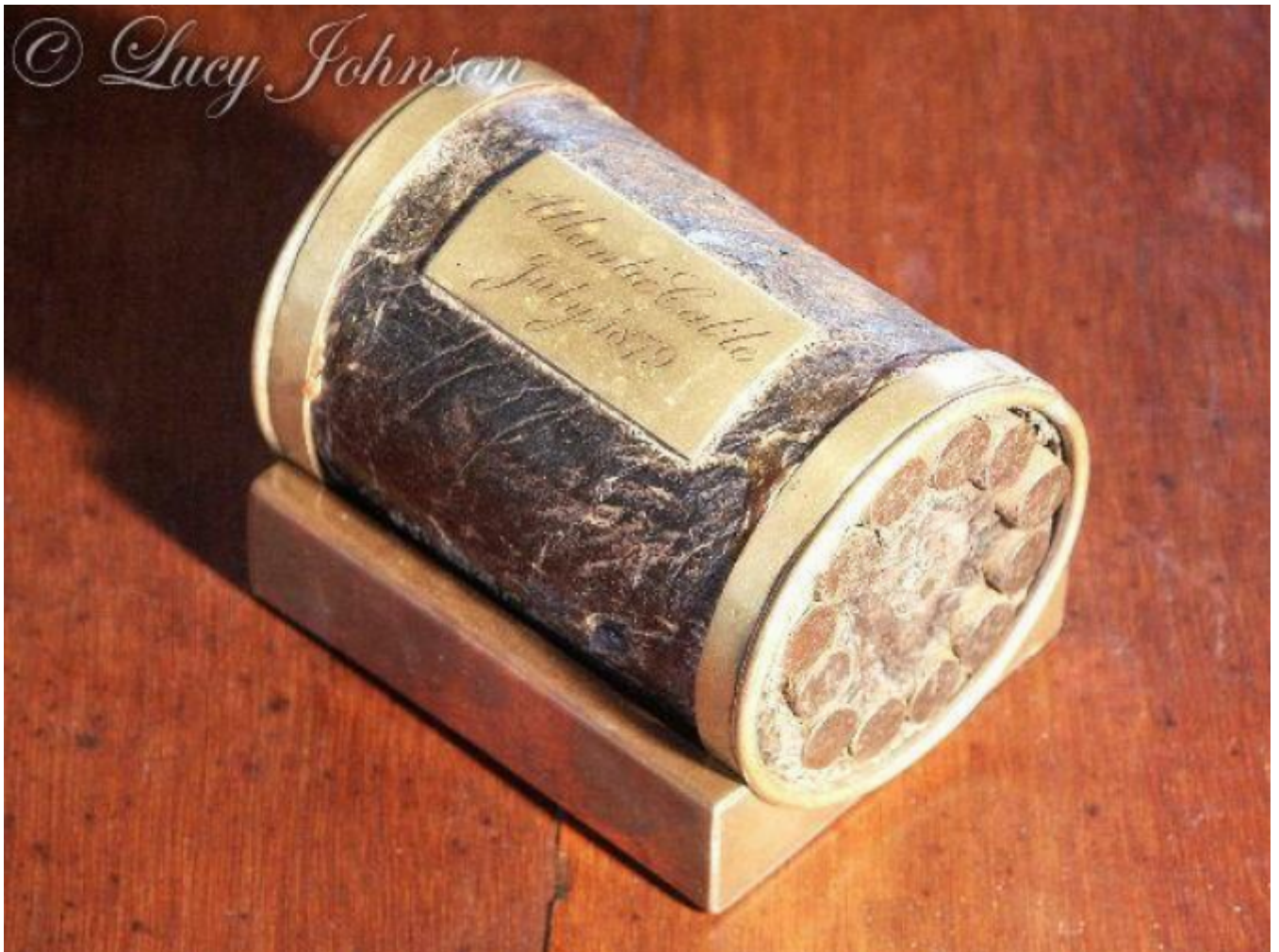


A mounted section of the marine, telegraph cable laid across the Atlantic bearing an engraved plaque dated July 1879

Sold



REF: 10115

Width: 10 cm (3.9")

Description

Single core section, with a brass plaque engraved 'Atlantic Cable, July 1879'. Mounted by James McMillan Snr.

Until the first transatlantic cable was laid, the fastest communication between Europe and North America took at least a week. The quest to establish a transatlantic telegraphic link took 12 years and five attempts at laying the cable, demanding the confidence and expertise of countless financiers, electrical engineers, scientists, and sailors. As with the overland cables, undersea cables were laid rapidly. Within 20 years there were 107,000 miles of undersea cables linking all parts of the world. The original two cables ceased to work in 1872 and 1877 but by this time four other cables were in operation. It is interesting to note that even though later cables could carry large numbers of signals at the same time, it was not until the 1960s that the first communication satellites offered a serious alternative to the cable.

The era of globalisation began with a 2,370 mile telegraph cable manufactured at Greenwich, which was laid across the Atlantic from Valentia in Ireland to Heart's Content in Newfoundland in 1866. It took four attempts to lay a cable which neither broke nor fell overboard.

On Friday, 13 July 1866, the Great Eastern, by far the largest ship afloat, left Valentia, Ireland, (corresponding IEEE Milestone) with 2730 nautical miles of cable in her hold. Fourteen days later 1852 miles of this cable lay at the bottom of the ocean, the ship was at anchor in Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, and the old and new worlds were in permanent telegraphic communication.