

Casket, German, Baroque, painted, Vivien Leigh, Laurence Olivier,  
Notley Priory

£6,300



REF: 11267

Height: 19 cm (7.5")

Width: 26 cm (10.2")

Depth: 15 cm (5.9")

## Description

This charming and unusual casket injects a romantic atmosphere into any interior. It has survived in impeccable condition with acceptable wear to the painted surface which signifies its age and use. It is a conversation piece, a piece of acting history, bought by Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier for their home. They were the King and Queen of stage and screen and their romance is an iconic love story. She was the raven-haired, green-eyed, feline temptress who won the most coveted female role in cinema history as the wilful Southern minx, Scarlett O'Hara, in the most celebrated film ever made, *Gone With The Wind*. He was the impossibly handsome, dark, and brooding Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, acclaimed as the greatest actor of the 20th century and the youngest to be knighted. It is not known when they purchased this casket, whether together or as a gift for the other, but its romantic charm would have harmonised with the romantic interiors they created at Notley Abbey.

The triangular lid painted on both sides with a large centralised poppy surrounded by stylised berries and floral sprays with red and white peonies. The front and back painted with a stylised tulip with two large red peonies either side and berries. The sides painted with stylised red and white peonies and berries. The casket retains its original iron strapwork decoration on the lid, front, back and sides. The original lock and later key. The interior retains a fragment of the original lining paper, white with gold squares and circles. The paintwork has some wear on the front and sides of the lid where it has been handled over time and developed a patina.

Notley Abbey: "Of all the houses I've lived in over the years, Notley is my favourite. It was absolutely enchanting, and it enchanted me. At Notley I had an affair with the past. For me it had mesmeric power; I could easily drown in its atmosphere. I could not leave it alone, I was a child lost in its history. Perhaps I loved it too much, if that is possible." Laurence Olivier

'Oh the hundreds of times my beloved Larry and I have wandered here in wonder and grateful amazement at the beauty all around us.' Vivien Leigh

Notley Abbey, named after the local nut trees, was an Augustinian abbey founded in the 12th century near Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire which became one of the largest and richest Augustinian monasteries in the Oxford region. The abbey was visited by Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VIII who dissolved it in 1538. By 1937 only the abbot's house and portions of the western and southern claustral buildings were relatively intact and the Abbey was excavated.

In 1944 Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh purchased Notley Abbey and the L-shaped, two-storied Abbots Residence became their marital home until 1960. They transformed Notley into a romantic haven hosting some of the greatest parties attended by the celebrities of the day such as Douglas Fairbanks Jr, John Gielgud and Peter Finch. The Oliviers also left an imprint on the garden with their planting schemes and Olivier planted a romantic nut tree walk at Notley, which survives today, as a gift for his beautiful wife.

'An attitude circulated that these weekend parties were in some way exclusive gatherings...