Antique cut glass tantalus decanter with patented locking silver mounts

Betjemann Brothers

£1,185



REF: 9762

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Height: 245 mm (9.65")

Width: 92 mm (3.62")

Depth: 92 mm (3.62")

Description

Smart cut glass spirit decanter and stopper fitted with a lockable Betjemann tantalus silver collar, and complete with the original key. Made in the Victorian era, the decanter's panelled glass body has been crisply hand cut with an interwoven diamond pattern around the top half of the body. The bottom half is plain and shows off the starburst cut into the base, and the clarity of the contents. The ball-shaped glass stopper is multi-faceted.

The the lock on this tantalus is marked Betjemann's patent. Patent no. 25038-97. The Betjemann tantalus locking system was invented by George Betjemann, grandfather of the noted English poet and broadcaster, Sir John Betjeman, in 1881.

The concept of lockable decanters, where the contents could be viewed but not opened or poured unless the case was opened by a key, was named after the Greek mythological mortal, Tantalus. Legend has it that Tantalus stole ambrosia and nectar from the gods and was punished for his lack of self-control by being made to stand in a lake with low hanging fruit trees above him. Whenever he tried to grab the fruit the branches would lift beyond his reach and when he bent to drink the water the lake would recede from him. This punishment of temptation is where the word tantalise comes from and the tantalus is often believed to have been designed to prevent household staff from stealing or sampling the decanter's contents. Or maybe children!