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SELLER'S RARE COASTAL PILOT OF THE BRITISH ISLES AND DUTCH COAST

The Coasting Pilot: Describing the Sea-coasts, Channels, Soundings, Sands, Shoals, Rocks, & dangers: The Bayes, Roads, Harbours, Rivers, Ports, Bouyes, Beacons, and Sea-marks, upon the Coasts of England, Holland, Flanders & France... Collected and Published by John Seller. Hydrographer in Ordinary to the King.

Author

SELLER, John

Publication date

1672

Publisher

And are to be sold at his shop at the Hermitage Stairs in Wapping: and by William Fischer at the Postern-gate on Tower-hill, John Thornton at the Plat in the Minories John Colson in Marsh Yard in Wapping: and by James Atkinson at Cherry garden staires in Redriff,

Publication place

London,

Physical description

Folio (270 by 440mm), title, half-title, 54pp. text, advertisement, modern half-calf over green marbled paper boards, together with 18 engraved charts on 11 map sheets, a few charts with tears skilfully repaired, and a few with minor loss, housed within green marbled paper portfolio.

Dimensions

Notes

John Seller (1630-1697) was one of the most important individuals in the early history of the atlas trade in England, yet his grand ambition – to rival the great atlas publishing houses of Blaeu, Janssonius, and Goos – would lead to bankruptcy and eventual failure.

Before entering the atlas market, Seller traded in nautical instruments from his shop ‘at the Sign of the Mariner’s Compass’ in Wapping – at the time the heart of the maritime trade. In 1669 he published ‘Paxis Nautica: Practical Navigation’, which established his credentials within the maritime community. His place was further strengthened when, in 1671, he was appointed hydrographer to Charles II.

That same year, Seller published his first sea atlas, the ‘English Pilot: The First Book’, covering the northern navigation. In the following few years, Seller would go on to publish the second, third, and fourth books of the ‘English Pilot’, covering the Southern, Oriental, and North American navigations; a ‘Coasting Pilot’ detailing the coasts of Britain the Low Countries; and a sea atlas, the ‘Atlas Maritimus’. Although much of their contents were taken from Dutch works by the likes of Goos, Blaeu, and Janssonius, one has to admire Seller’s sheer industry. This industry, however, was not allied with enough business acumen, and by 1677 a consortium of map publisher’s – most notably William Fisher and John Thornton – had taken over his business. It would seem that the terms of the rescue were quite harsh, as when the consortium broke up in 1679, Fisher kept the publication rights to the ‘Atlas Maritimus’ and the ‘English Pilot the Southern Navigation’, and Thornton received some of Seller’s plates.

The Coasting Pilot was first advertised in the Term Catalogues for Hilary Term 1672 (licensed on 7 February), at six shillings bound, the announcement also referring to the Second Book of the English Pilot; there are also later advertisements in the London Gazette. The Term Catalogues’ advertisement seems to have been an opportunistic announcement referring, as it does, to the Pilot as being “Published for the better security of his Majesties Royal Navy in this present Expedition”.

Although, in terms of the charts, the Coasting Pilot is not an original publication, the suite of English charts (British Isles, North Sea, southern North Sea, Thames Estuary and Rivers Tyne and Humber), combined with the text, and textual illustration are a significant improvement on existing charting of England’s east coast, and paved the way for Greenville Collins’s Great Britain’s Coasting Pilot, some twenty years later. Indeed, were it not for Seller’s continuing financial problems, it seems certain that Seller would have produced just such a volume.

All editions of Seller’s Coast Pilot are rare and – due to Seller’s constant financial problems – composite in nature, with Seller using whatever plates he had to hand at the time of publication. An example housed in the British Library contains 21 charts on 13 map sheets; where as a later edition dated circa 1685 contains 16 charts on 10 mapsheets. Please see below for a full collation:

1. SELLER, John. A Draught of the Sands, Channels, Buoyes, Beacons, and Sea Marks upon the Coast of England from the Southforeland to Orfordness... Made and Sold by John Seller, Hydrographer to the King’s most Excellent Majesty in Wapping. London. Inset chart of the Thames. With additional sheet extending to the north coast of Norfolk.
2. SELLER, John. A Chart of the Sea coasts of England, Flanders & Holland... By John Seller Hydrographer in Ordinary to the King and are to be sold at his shoppes in Exchange Alley Cornhill and at the Hermitage in Wapping.
3. SELLER, John. A Chart of Flanders Between Calis and Walcheren with all ye sands and shoals upon that coast by John Seller Hydrog: Regis.
4. SELLER, John. A Chart of the South Sea. Texel and Fly-streame with all ye Sands Depths and Soundings by John Seller.

5. SELLER, John. A Chart of Eemes as the Easter and Wester Eemes Scholbalgh & the Lauwers by John Seller.
6. SELLER, John. A Chart of the Fly and Amelande gat by John Seller.
7. SELLER, John. A Chart of the Eemes Elve Amelande gat, Lauwers Scholbalth the Weser Eyder and Hever and how the same doth bare from Holy land by John Seller.
8. SELLER, John. A Chart of the Coast of Iutland with the Adjacent Islands Shoals and depthes, from the Hever to the Schaw by John Seller.
9. SELLER, John. A Chart of the Maes and Wielingen, Showing the Channell of Brewers haven, Zierick and Viergat by John Seller Regis Hydro.
10. SELLER, John. The Coast of Holland Between the Maes and the Texel by John Seller Regis Hydrog.
11. SELLER, John. A Chart of the North Coast of England, from Yarmouth to Cocket Island, Describing all the Roads Havens and Harbors Depthes and Soundings, the Coarses and distances of one Place from Another, Newly Corrected and Published by John Seller.
12. SELLER, John. A Description of the East Coast of Scotland, Shewing all the Bayes Roads havens Harbors depths and Soundings, Courses & distances of places one the said Coasts, Newly Corrected and Published by John Seller.
13. SELLER, John. The River of Humber Described by John Seller Hydrographer to the Kings most excellent Majestie.
14. SELLER, John. The River of Tyne Described by John Seller Hydrographer to the Kings most Excellent Majestie Cum privilegio.
15. SELLER, John. A Chart of ye Narrow Seas Newly Corrected by John Seller Hydrographer to the Kings most Excellent Majestie.
16. SELLER, John. A Chart of the Brittish Channel by John Seller, Hydrographer to the Kings Most Excellent Majestie.
17. SELLER, John. A Chart of the West part of England from Portland to Silly, discribing all the Roads Havens and Harbors, with all the Sands depths and Soundings, along the Coast, newly Corrected by John Seller.
18. SELLER, John. A Draught of the Landsend of England and Islands of Silly By John Seller Hydrographus Regis.

Bibliography

c.f. Shirley, Atlases, M.SELL-2a for a 1672 edition with 21 charts on 13 mapsheets.

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 1956