

Engraved map with hand colouring, blank to verso.

SPEED’S MAP OF OXFORDSHIRE

Oxfordshire described with ye citie and the armes of the colledges of ye famous university Anno 1605.

Author
SPEED, John

Publication date
[1627].

Publisher
Performed by John Speede and are to be sold in popes head alley against the Exchange by I.S. & G.H.,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Engraved map with hand colouring, blank to verso.

Dimensions
380 by 520mm (15 by 20.5 inches).

Notes
A map of Oxfordshire, with an inset map of the city of Oxford and a border made up of the coats of arms of the university colleges. At the bottom, the scale bar has been decorated with a globe and two scholars, one of whom is using a pair of compasses to measure out the scale bar.

John Speed (c1551-1629) is perhaps the most famous single figure in the early history of the English map trade. He was a member of the Merchant Taylors' Company, made free in September 1580, and later Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. By training he was probably a rolling-press printer, but by interest he was a historian, and Queen Elizabeth granted him a sinecure in the Customs House, to give him the opportunity to pursue these interests.

Speed always considered his 'History of Great Britaine' (1611) his major work, but his reputation was established by the companion atlas volume, 'Theatre of the Empire of great Britaine', published in 1612, the first printed atlas of the British Isles. The earliest map prepared was 'The County Palatine of Chester' [1604], but the death of the engraver William Rogers meant that Speed's publishers had to turn to Jodocus Hondius, an Amsterdam engraver, to prepare the maps.

The atlas was completed in 1612; the maps are notable for the decorative elements included, evidence of Speed's interest in antiquities and most have inset town-plans, the first series of printed town-plans of the British Isles, and were issued with descriptive English text printed on the verso. In the hands of different publishers, there were numerous editions to 1676 with text; this example, published by George Humble, was issued in 1627.

Bibliography
Chubb XXV.

Provenance

Price: £2000

Inventory reference: 16372

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