

Double-page engraved map, fine original hand-colour in outline, some offsetting, contemporary annotation on verso in brown ink.

THE FIRST PRINTED MAP OF WORCESTERSHIRE

[Worcestershire] Wigorniensis Comitatus
Sabrinae Fluminis Amoenitate ni Signis descriptio An Dm 1577

Author
SAXTON, Christopher

Publication date
1579

Publisher
Christopher Saxton,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Double-page engraved map, fine original hand-colour in outline, some offsetting, contemporary annotation on verso in brown ink.

Dimensions
420 by 550mm. (16.5 by 21.75 inches).

Notes
In 1576, the Privy Council of Queen Elizabeth I gave Christopher Saxton royal authority to survey the counties of England and Wales, in order to produce a series of maps later to be collected into the

first national atlas ever produced. This map of Worcestershire, or ‘Wigornia’, is the fourth of the 34 county maps included in the work, and the first comprehensive representation of the county. The rivers, towns and cities illustrated on the map are labelled with their sixteenth century English names, while the surrounding counties are noted in Latin. Of particular importance for Lord Burghley, who commissioned the maps along with courtier Thomas Seckford, were the estates of the gentry. As Secretary of State, this information was essential for administrative and defensive matters, and on his personal proof copy, Burghley’s handwritten annotations list the influential residents of Worcestershire, along with their lands and properties. Similarly, the border areas between counties receive particular attention on Saxton’s maps, as evidenced here by the areas surrounding Malvern, the Forest of Wire, and the Vale of Euesholiue (modern Evesham), which include details of towns and cities outside the county boundary.

Characteristically, the map features the county name, written in Latin, within an elaborate red and blue cartouche in the top right corner. The royal coat-of-arms appears on the opposite side, and beneath it, the Seckford heraldic crest with its later Latin motto. After the Atlas of England and Wales was completed, Queen Elizabeth I granted Saxton his own coat-of-arms, but it is Seckford’s that features on all 35 maps, as the patron of the work. A scale is also included in the bottom left corner of the map, although unlike other examples, it lists only Saxton’s name as cartographer, and fails to include that of the engraver. Additionally, like all the maps in Saxton’s ‘Atlas of England and Wales’, this map bears his watermark, a bunch of grapes, to identify the work as original.

Bibliography
Map of Worcestershire’ (The British Library Online Gallery, 2009).

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 15344

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