

Etched plan, trimmed to neatline.

THE FIRST SURVEY AFTER THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

A Map or Groundplott of the Citty of London with the suburbes thereof so farr as the Lord Mayors Iurisdiction doeth extend by which is exactly demonstrated the present condition of it since the last sad accident of fire, the blankespace signifiing the burnt part, & where. the houses be those places yet standing

Author
HOLLAR, W[enceslaus]

Publication date
1666.

Publisher

Publication place
[London],

Physical description
Etched plan, trimmed to neatline.

Dimensions
231 by 332mm. (9 by 13 inches).

Notes
The Great Fire of London broke out in a bakery on Pudding Lane, on Sunday 2nd September 1666 and raged for three days destroying most of the City of London. By the end, the fire had consumed some 13,000 buildings from Temple in the west to The Tower in the east, and Cripple Gate in the

north, with thousands of people being left homeless. Just five days after the flames had been tamed, the King commission Wenceslaus Hollar and Francis Sandford “to take an exact plan and survey of our city of London with the suburbs adjoining as the same now stands after the sad calamity of the late fire with a particular depiction of the ruins thereof”.

Hollar was an obvious choice as he had been preparing, since 1660, a large bird’s-eye view of the city, some “10 foot in breadth, and 5 foot upward”. Although his grand view was backed by the King, the project struggled for funding, and the Great Fire would make many of his endeavours redundant. Nonetheless, the two men worked quickly to survey the wreckage and by mid-November Hollar had engraved the first map showing the extent of the damage: ‘A Map of the Groundplott of the Citty of London with the Suburbes thereof…’.

The area devastated by the fire is shown devoid of house, only the street layout and the ground plans of the churches and principal public buildings are marked. A key in the lower left-hand corner lists 101 churches, 82 of which had been consumed by the fire, together with a list of 24 public buildings and gates (A-Z), and 14 whares, staires, and docks (a-o). This map together with John Leake’s survey of the city of 1667, which Hollar would also engrave, would form the basis for the reconstruction of the city.

Hollar work was extensively used by the likes of John Evevlyn and Robert Hooke, for the reconstruction of the city, and copied by many European mapsellers. The plan is even mentioned in glowing terms by Samuel Pepys in his diary, 22 November 1666:

“My Lord Boruncker did show me Hollar’s new print of the City, with a pretty representation of that part which is burnt, very fine indeed; and tells me that he was yesterday sworn the King’s servant, and that the King hath commanded him to go on with his great map of the City, which he was upon before the City burned, like Gombout of Paris, which I am Glad of.”

And by John Evelyn:

“I have since lighted upon Mr. Hollar’s late Plan, which looking upon as the most accurate hitherto, has caus’d me something to alter what I had so crudely don [sic]”.

Bibliography
NHG Hollar 1915 III; Pennington 1003; BM Q,6.57.

Provenance

Price: £10000

Inventory reference: 18350

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