Signed to dial ‘Cary, London’, with engraved brass dial divided for furlongs, miles, poles, and yards, six-spoke wheel with steel rim tread, square mahogany forked body, hoop handle, on modern brass and wood stand.

A CARY WAYWISER

[Waywiser].

Author
CARY, [John]

Publication date
[c1780].

Publisher
[?188, the Strand]

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Signed to dial ‘Cary, London’, with engraved brass dial divided for furlongs, miles, poles, and yards, six-spoke wheel with steel rim tread, square mahogany forked body, hoop handle, on modern brass and wood stand.

Dimensions
(height) 1300mm (51.25 inches)

Notes
The origins of mechanically measuring and recording distance can be traced speculatively to

336-323 BC when Alexander the Great employed bematists for his campaign into Asia. As Donald W. Engels theorises in his publication, 'Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army', "The accuracy of the measurements implies that the bematists used a sophisticated mechanical device for measuring distances, undoubtedly an odometer such as described by Heron of Alexandria."

The re-introduction of this process in the seventeenth century, with the development of the waywiser, accounted for an influx of cartographic accuracy, and paved the way for the large-scale surveys of the 18th and 19th centuries. Each revolution of the wheel measured a set distance, while a counter kept track of the number of revolutions, thus allowing the surveyor to walk from one place to another and gain an accurate measurement of the distance in between.

John Cary (1754-1835) served his apprenticeship as an engraver in London, before setting up his own business in the Strand in 1783. He soon gained a reputation for his maps and globes. His atlas, 'The New and Correct English Atlas', published in 1787, became a standard reference work in England. In 1794 Cary was commissioned by the Postmaster General to survey England's roads. This resulted in Cary's 'New Itinerary' (1798); a map of all the major roads in England and Wales. He also produced Ordnance Survey maps prior to 1805. In his later life he collaborated on geological maps with the geologist William Smith. His business was eventually taken over by G. F. Cruchley.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £9000

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