



Engraving and etching with aquatint, fine original hand-colour.

LONDON'S MEAT MARKET

Cattle Market, Smithfield.

Author

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London,

Physical description

Engraving and etching with aquatint, fine original hand-colour.

Dimensions

Image: 470 by 690mm (18.5 by 27.25 inches). Sheet: 542 by 785mm (21.25 by 31 inches).

Notes

View over Smithfield Market, looking towards Giltspur Street; sheep in pens in square, cattle surrounding pens, men milling amongst livestock; a bull attacks a man who has fallen in foreground.

Smithfield was originally established as a market site in about AD 950 in a field immediately outside the gates in the London Wall. It was paved for the first time in 1614.

The Yeomen of the Guard, founded by Henry VII at the beginning of his reign in 1485 to act as his private bodyguard become known as Beefeaters because of the size of the meat rations they were given. Indeed, in 1813, the 30 yeomen of St James's Palace received 24 pounds of beef, 18 pounds of mutton, and 16 pounds of veal per day to share (!).

The demand for meat increased as London's economic power and human population exploded: the population doubled between 1801 and 1841, to reach 2.3 million by 1850, reaching 122-53 pounds per head. To supply this market about 140000 cattle and 1 million sheep were needed in 1810; by 1853, cattle numbers had risen to 277000 head and sheep to 1.6 million head.

All of these animals came into London to be sold and slaughtered, giving the metropolis the dubious honour of being the only city in Europe, and probably the world, with a livestock market – Smithfield – and thousands of slaughterhouses at its centre. This market coped with the greatest volume of domestic livestock destined for slaughter of any city in history.

Bibliography

Siltzer, Frank, The story of British sporting prints, London, 1929, p.220; Crace, John Gregory, A Catalogue of Maps, Plans and Views of London, Westminster and Southwark, collected and arranged by Frederick Crace, 1878 XXVI.72; Velton, Hannah, 'Beastly London: A History of Animals in the City', Reaktion Books, London, 2013 pp.14-16.

Provenance

Price:

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