

Double-page engraved map.

SPEED’S MAP OF BRITAIN IN THE TIME OF THE HEPTARCHY

Britain As It Was Devided in the tyme of the Englishe Saxons especially during their Heptarchy.

Author
SPEED, John

Publication date
[1614-1616].

Publisher
& are to be sold by John Sudbury & Georg Humble in Popes head alley,

Publication place
London,

Physical description
Double-page engraved map.

Dimensions
380 by 505mm. (15 by 20 inches).

Notes
A map of Britain, from the first large-scale atlas of the British Isles, Speed’s ‘Theatre’, as it was in the time of the Heptarchy. This is the period, which spanned the late-sixth to the ninth century, in which England was divided into seven kingdoms: Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex, East Anglia, Kent, Essex, and Sussex. Down the left-hand side of the map are illustrated, chronologically, the founding

kings of each kingdom, among them Hengist, king of Kent, and Uffa, king of East Anglia. Down the right-hand side of the map are illustrated, also chronologically, the kings of each kingdom who first converted to Christianity, among them Erpenwald, king of East Anglia (shown, here, at the point of his murder, motivated by his Christian faith), and Ethelwolfe, king of Sussex (shown, here, being baptized).

John Speed (1552-1629) was the outstanding cartographer of his age. By trade a merchant tailor, but by proclivity a historian, it was the patronage of Sir Fulke Greville, poet and statesman, that allowed him to pursue this interest in earnest. His 'Theatre of Great Britain', from which the present work is drawn, was first published in 1611 or 1612 and is "the earliest English attempt at atlas-production on a grand scale" (Skelton). Drawing heavily on the work of Saxton and Norden, little of Speed's cartography is original (he acknowledges, "I have put my sickle into other mens corne"), instead it is his blend of cartography and history, incorporating town-plans, vignettes, and genealogy, that makes Speed an innovator.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price: £3600

Inventory reference: 24159

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