

Engraved map on two sheets joined, slight staining but otherwise in good condition

THE RIVER THAMES

[Untitled map of the River Thames] THIS Navigable passage from Bristoll to London and else where set forth by Francis Matthew Esqr. sole Inventor there of unto whom (his Ma[jes]ties.) out of his most princely affection to workes of this nature and encouragement to Industry so advantagious and beneficiall to his Ma.tie Subjects imployed as his Ma[jes]tie: Servant, with his Assistance vnder his most Gratious hand and privy Signett (1662) that it may be happily effected to perpetual his Ma[jes]tie most Famous memory.

Author
MATTHEW, Francis [Mathew]

Publication date
1668

Publisher
Thomas Jenner for Francis Matthew

Publication place
London

Physical description
Engraved map on two sheets joined, slight staining but otherwise in good condition

Dimensions
185 by 940mm. (7.25 by 37 inches).

Notes
Francis Matthew (fl. ca. 1655-1670) was an interesting figure in early English canal history. In 1655 he approached Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector, with proposals to construct a canal linking the Thames and Severn Rivers. Cromwell was intrigued, and have Matthew approval to conduct a formal survey, which was completed and submitted to Parliament in 1656. Matthew highlighted the commercial benefit that would accrue from such an extensive inland river system and the revenue that the state could earn from building and operating the canal link. The bill was voted through the House of Commons but rejected by the House of Lords, perhaps more realistic in their understanding of the engineering difficulties (and expence) the project faced. Subsequent attempts, in 1662 and 1664, were also rejected.

In 1668, the date of this map, Matthew again placed a bill before Parliament, claiming to have the royal blessing. However, his bill was rejected at the first reading; made a final attempt in 1670, publishing a pamphlet promoting the scheme, but this marks the end of his grand scheme to link the

Thames and Severn Rivers, although he did propose a number of other canal schemes, for example one linking the Thames and Avon River, but these also came to naught.

The great rarity of the map makes analysis difficult, but it seems plausible that this map was first published in 1662, the date of the royal approval mentioned in the title, and then slightly amended and updated for publication in 1668, the second engraver working in a smaller hand, adding Baskerville's credit, Sir Roger L'Estrange's licence, the upper reaches of the Arun River (against the lower border) and accompanying note (against the upper) and additions to the panels of text engraved within Kent, as well as other small notations across the face of the map.

Surprisingly, there seems to be no specific reference to this map in Matthew's published writings, although he did write that the Avon and Thames could be connected "… by so much a shorter and safer cut; (as will appear more plainly by divers Maps, and other printed Papers, set forth at my own particular charge)…" in To the Kings most excellent Majesty, and the Honorable Houses of Parlament. A Mediterranean passage by water, from London to Bristol, &c.… for the great advancement of trade & traffique.… (London, 1670, p. 7).

Bibliography

No other exemplar located; unrecorded in ESTC; unrecorded in COPAC; unrecorded in Burden, Printed Maps of Berkshire, Part 4 Middle and Upper Thames Maps, recording no earlier map of the River Thames; no exemplar traced in the online catalogues of the BL, Bodleian Library, Cambridge University Library, National Library of Scotland or The National Archives; Matthew and Baskervile are unrecorded in Bendall, Dictionary of Land Surveyors; Matthew is recorded in Tooley's Dictionary of Mapmakers (revised edition) as "Mathew, Francis. River Thames, 1667 [sic] (engraved by Thomas Jenner).".

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 11334

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