



The first printed map of Dorset

SAXTON, Christopher.

Dorcestriae Comitatus Vicinarumque Regionum nova veraq. Descriptio Anno Dni 1575.

London, 1579. Original colour. 380 x 550mm, sheet with grapes watermark.

£5,500

The first published state of Saxton's map of Dorset, one of the first maps engraved for Christopher Saxton's county atlas of 1579, with a large strapwork title cartouche featuring Elizabeth I's royal arms. Bottom left is a scale cartouche with Saxton's name and the arms of Thomas Seckford, Elizabeth's Master of Requests, who financed Saxton's survey. It was Lord Burghley, Elizabeth I's Secretary of State, who determined that England and Wales should be mapped properly. Burghley's interest in defence, during the decade before the Spanish Armada, can be seen by the number of coastal castles marked, including Portland and Sandsfoot. With only a few exceptions, Saxton's surveys were the basis of county mapping until the middle of the 18th century, copied for Camden's 'Britannia' and the atlases of Speed, Blome and Morden. The printing plates also had a long lifespan: after being eclipsed by John Speed's atlas of 1611, the plates were re-engraved and re-issued in 1642 by William Web; most of the other plates were still being printed as late as 1770.



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