



Map of Middlesex and Hertfordshire from Drayton's fantastical 'Poly-Olbion'

DRAYTON, Michael.
 [Middle Sex; Hartford Shyre.]

London, 1612. 255 x 335mm.

£400

A very decorative map of Middlesex and Hertfordshire, ignoring political boundaries and instead focusing on natural features, with hills and rivers populated by allegorical figures. Only major towns are marked, including Hartford, St Albans, Brent, Enfield, Highgate, Hampstead and the River Colne. 'Watling Street, The first great way of England' is also marked. Michael Drayton (1563-1631), a prominent poet, is believed to have started work on his 'Poly-Olbion' in 1598. This epic topographical poem, divided into thirty songs written in alexandrine couplets, ran to nearly 15,000 lines of verse. Each song described one, two or three counties, describing their topography, traditions and histories. The First Part was published in 1612, with eighteen maps probably engraved by William Hole (who signed the frontispiece). Drayton had been a favourite of Queen Elizabeth's court, but was not so popular with James I. Perhaps to rectify this the 'Poly-Olbion' was dedicated to Henry, Prince of Wales, but Henry died in 1612, the year of publication. The work did not sell well, and it was not until 1622 that Drayton could find a publisher for the second part, which contained ten more maps. Drayton intended to compose a further part to cover Scotland, but no part of this work is known to have survived. Despite these setbacks Drayton was still prominent enough to be buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey when he



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died in 1631. It was only posthumously that the Poly-Olbion became a literary classic.

Stock ID :14043