



A 17th century county map of Wiltshire, with a rogue village

SPEED, John.  
 Wiltshire.

London: Roger Rea, 1665, Coloured. 385 x 510mm.

£1,100

Based on Christopher Saxton's map of Wiltshire and engraved by Jodocus Hondius, this is one of the most decorative maps of the county, with an inset town plan of Salisbury, a bird's-eye view of Stonehenge, armorials, and a vignette battle scene. On the reverse is an English text history of the county. This map's place in cartographic history is assured by the village of 'Quaere' west of Salisbury. When the map was being drawn up from Saxton's original, it was noticed that there was an unnamed village (actually Burcombe): the transcriber drew a line and the word 'Quaere' (Latin for query) as a note to find the right information. However it was forgotten, and Hondius dutifully engraved the note onto the copper plate, where it remained, to be copied by other mapmakers for nearly one and a half centuries. This example comes from the Roger Rea issue, which was beset with disaster: according to an advert for the 1676 Bassett & Chiswell edition, "the greatest part of an Impression, then newly Printed, [was] destroyed by the late dreadful Fire, 1666". Surviving examples of any Rea map are thus rare.



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