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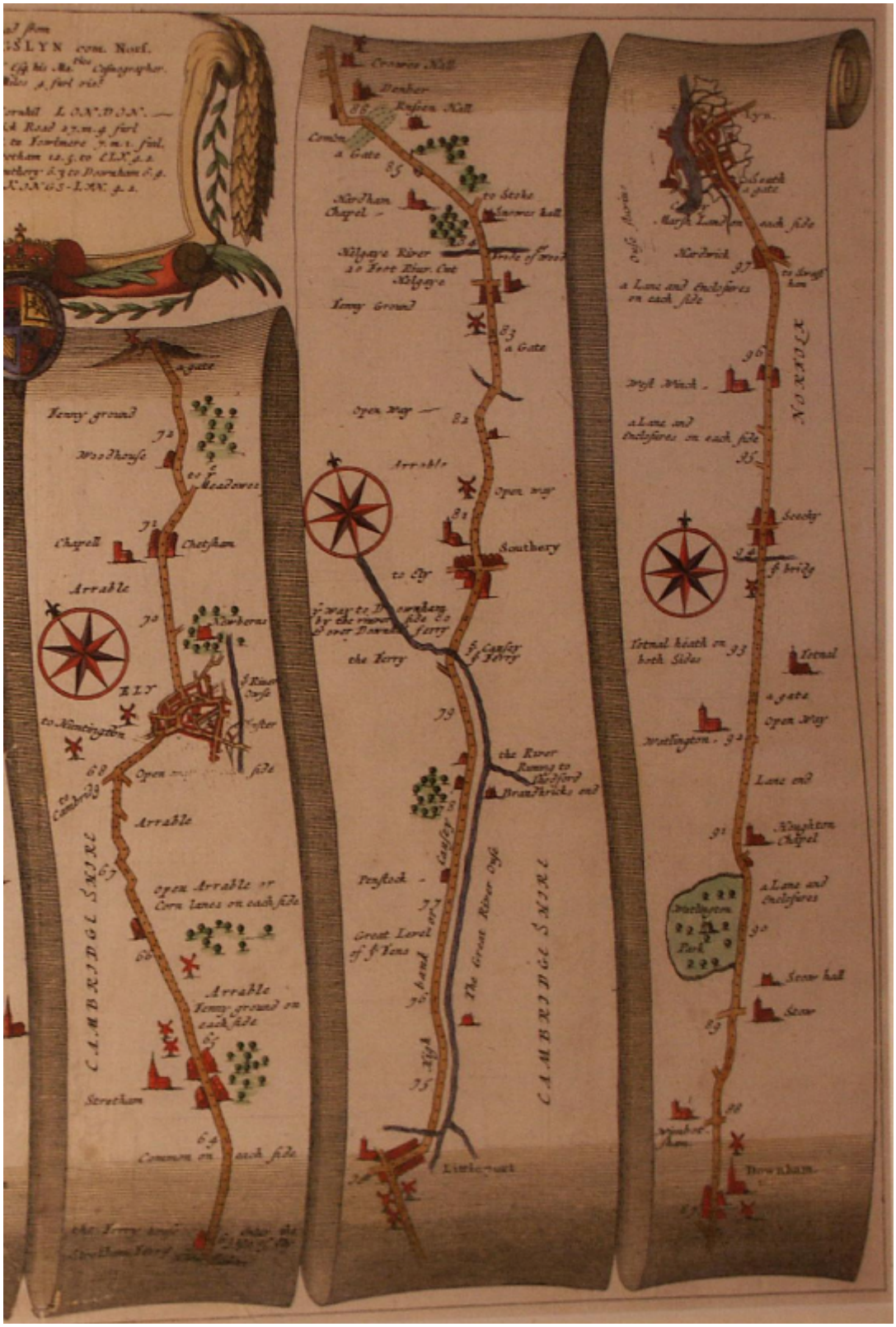
Road Map, from London to Kings Lynn, Royston to Downham, John Ogilby, Britannia

Sold

John Ogilby



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REF: 11231

Height: 52 cm (20.5")

Width: 62 cm (24.4")

Depth: 1 cm (0.4")

Description

John Ogilby (British 1600-1676) Cosmographer and Geographick Printer to Charles II

A road map from Britannia, 1675/6. The road from London to Kings Lynn, showing Royston to Downham

In a remarkable life John Ogilby pursued, several careers, each ending in misfortune, and yet he always emerged undeterred, to carry on. His modern reputation is based on his final career, started in his sixty-sixth year, as a publisher of maps and geographical accounts.

Ogilby was born outside Dundee, in 1600, the son of a Scottish gentleman. While he was still a child, the family moved to London. When the elder Ogilby was imprisoned for debt, the young John invested his savings in a lottery, won a minor prize, and settled his father's debts. Unfortunately, not enough money was left to secure John a good apprenticeship; instead, he was apprenticed to a dance master. Ogilby was soon dancing in masques at court but, one day, while executing a particularly ambitious leap, he landed badly. The accident left him with a permanent limp, and ended his dancing career. However, he had come to the attention of Thomas Wentworth, later Earl of Strafford, Charles I's most senior minister. Ever one to exploit his contacts, Ogilby became a dance instructor in Strafford's household.

When Strafford was sent to Ireland, Ogilby accompanied him as Deputy-Master of the Kings Revels, and then Master of Revels. In Dublin, he built the New Theatre, in St. Werburgh Street, which prospered at first, but the Irish Rebellion, in 1641, cost Ogilby his fortune, which he estimated at £2,000, and almost his life. After brief service as a soldier, he returned to England, survived shipwreck on the way, and arrived back penniless.

On his return, Ogilby turned his attention to the Latin classics, as a translator and publisher. His first faltering attempt, in 1649, was a translation of the works of Virgil, but after his marriage to a wealthy widow the same year, his publishing activities received a considerable boost. One means by which Ogilby financed these volumes was by subscription, securing advance payments from his patrons, in return for including their name and coats-of-arms on the plates of illustrations. Another approach was to secure a patron, preferably in the court circle. Ogilby's first patron was Strafford, who found out too late that all leading ministers are dispensable when Charles I assented to his execution in 1641. As he re-established himself, Ogilby sought a new patron, the King himself.

In 1661, Ogilby was approached to write poetry for Charles II's coronation procession; he later published 'The Relation of His Majesties Entertainment Passing Through the City of London', and a much enlarged edition the following year, which included a Fine set of plates depicting the procession. Royal favour was bestowed in 1674 when John Ogilby received the title of 'His Majesty's Cosmographer and Geographick Printer' with a salary of £13.6s.8d per annum.

In 1665, Ogilby left London to avoid the Plague then ravaging the capital. The following year, in the Great Fire of London, Ogilby claimed that he lost his entire stock of books valued at some £3,000, as well as his shop and house, leaving him worth just &p...

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