



Signed to dial 'Made by Geo. Adams at Tycho Brahe's Head in Fleetstreet, London', with engraved brass dial divided for miles, furlongs, and links of chains, six-spoke wheel with steel rim tread, square mahogany fork body, hoop handle, on modern brass and mahogany stand.

AN ADAMS WAYWISER

[Waywiser].

Author

ADAMS, Geo[rge]

Publication date

[circa 1740].

Publisher

Made by Geo. Adams at Tycho Brahe's Head in Fleetstreet,

Publication place

London,

Physical description

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Dimensions

Notes

The origins of mechanically measuring and recording distance can be traced speculatively to 336-323 BC when Alexander the Great employed bematists for his campaign into Asia. As Donald W.

Engels theorises in his publication, 'Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army', "The accuracy of the measurements implies that the bematists used a sophisticated mechanical device for measuring distances, undoubtedly an odometer such as described by Heron of Alexandria."

The re-introduction of this process in the seventeenth century, with the development of the waywiser, accounted for an influx of cartographic accuracy, and paved the way for the large-scale surveys of the 18th and 19th centuries. Each revolution of the wheel measured a set distance, while a counter kept track of the number of revolutions, thus allowing the surveyor to walk from one place to another and gain an accurate measurement of the distance in between.

George Adams (c.1704-1773) was one of the leading the scientific instrument makers of his day. Apprenticed in 1718 he is recorded as setting up his business in 1735 of Fleet Street at the sign of Tycho Brahe's Head. He began making scientific instruments for the East India Company from 1735, was Mathematical Instrument Maker to the Royal Ordnance from 1748-53 and later instrument maker to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and King George III.

George Adams is recorded as being at the address Tycho Brahe's Head between 1738-1757.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 2864