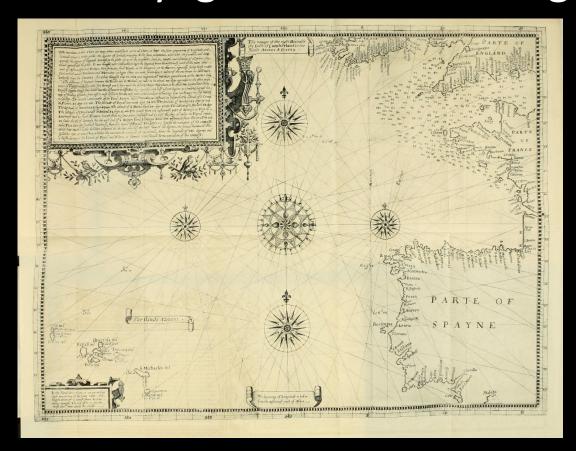
Privateer and Mathematician The Voyages of Edward Wright



Stephen Johnston
History of Science Museum, University of Oxford

Certaine

ERRORS IN NAVIGATION,

Arising either of the ordinarie erroneous making or vsing of the sea Chart, Compasse, Crosse staffe, and Tables of declination of the Sunne, and fixed Starres detected and corrected.

By E. W.



Printed at London by Valentine Sims. 1599.

ERRORS IN

NAVIGATION,

I Error of two, or three whole points of the Compas, and more fomtimes, by reason of making the sea-chart after the accustomed manes, with right lined rumbes, and equall degrees of latitude.

2 Error of one whole point, and more many times, by neglecting the variation of the Compasse.

3 Error of a degree and more fometimes, in the vie of the croffe staffe, especially by not regarding the eccentricitie of the eie.

4. Error of 11. or 12. minures in the declination of the Sunne, as it is let foorth in the regiments most commonly vsed among Mariners: and consequently error of halfe a degree in the place of the Sunne.

5 Frror of halfe a degree, yea an whole degree and more many times in the declinations of the principall fixed starres, set forth to be observed by mariners at sea.

Detected and corrected by often and diligent observation.

Whereto is adjoyned, the right H. the Earle of Cumberland his voyage to the Azores in the yeere 1589, wherin were taken 19. Spanish and Leaguers ships, together with the towne and platforme of Fayal. By Edward Wright.

Printed at London for Ed. Agm. 1599

Alternative title pages for Certaine Errors (1599), with different publishers

Edward Wright (1561-1615)

Norfolk family background ('mediocris fortunae')

Cambridge – entered Gonville and Caius College as sizar 1576; successively BA (1580-1), MA (1584) and fellow (1587-1596)

Diversions from academic life: to sea with the Earl of Cumberland, 1589 Astronomical observation programme 1594-7 in London

Married 1595 and resigned Cambridge fellowship 1596

Diverse and precarious London career: author on navigation, astronomy, sundials, logarithms, magnetism as well as active technical consultant

High-placed patrons such as Henry, Prince of Wales and latterly employment by the East India Company – but apparently dies in relative poverty

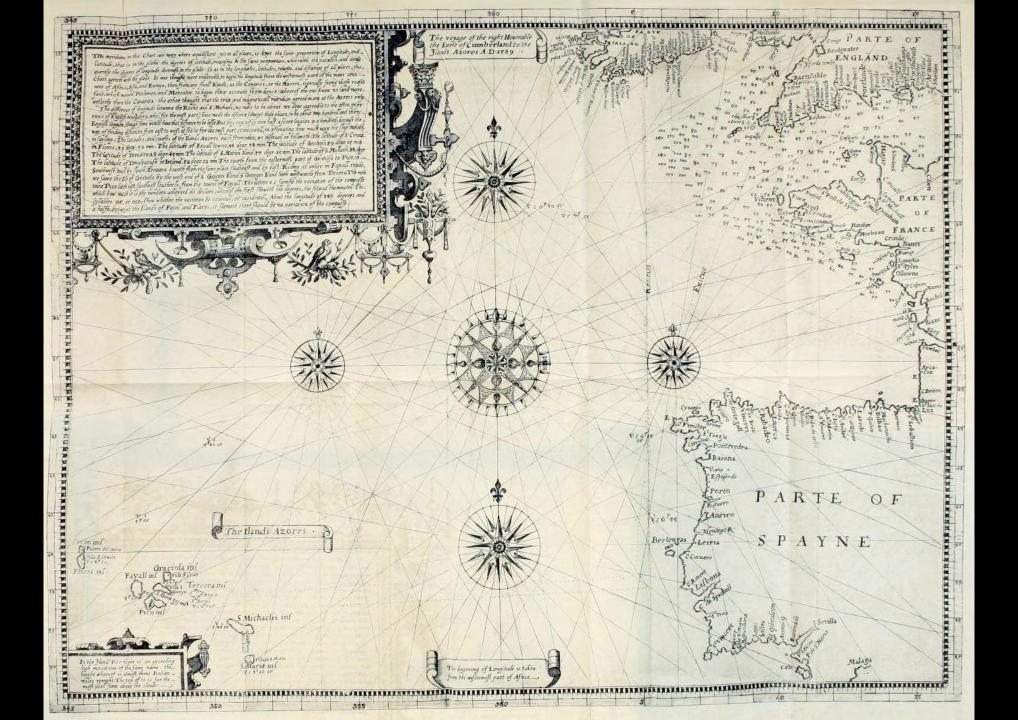


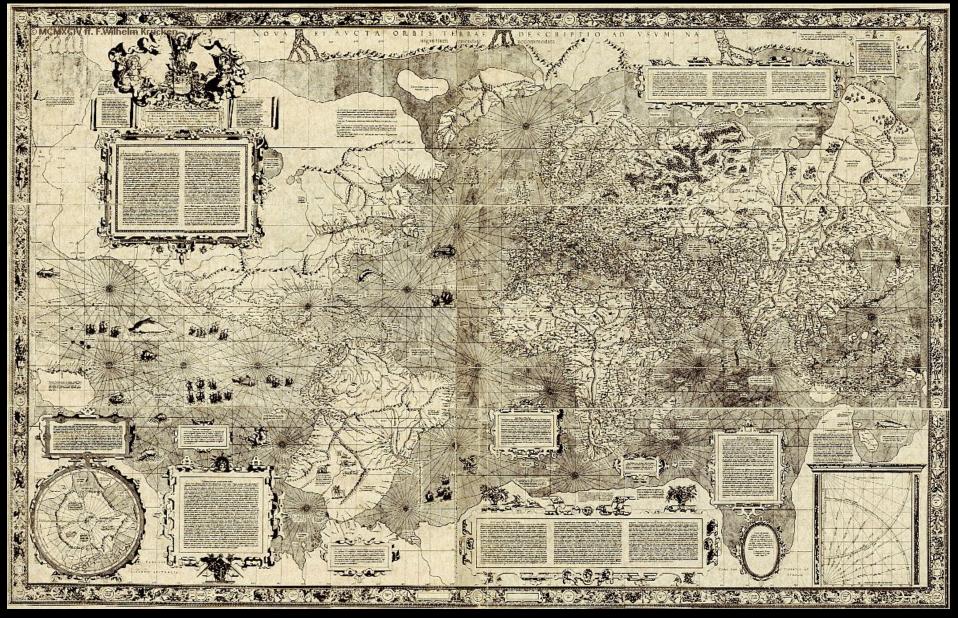
Sir George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland (1558 – 1605)

Cumberland headed a series of privateering fleets which set out most summers in the 1580s and 1590s

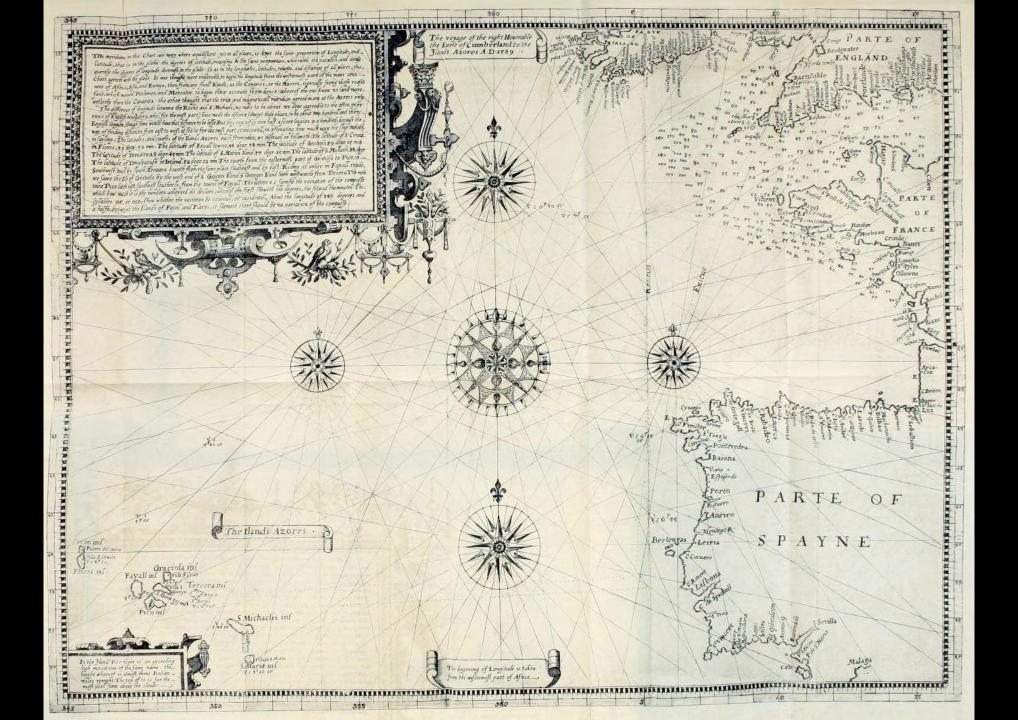
Portrait miniature by Nicholas Hilliard, c. 1590, showing him wearing tilting armour as Elizabeth I's Champion

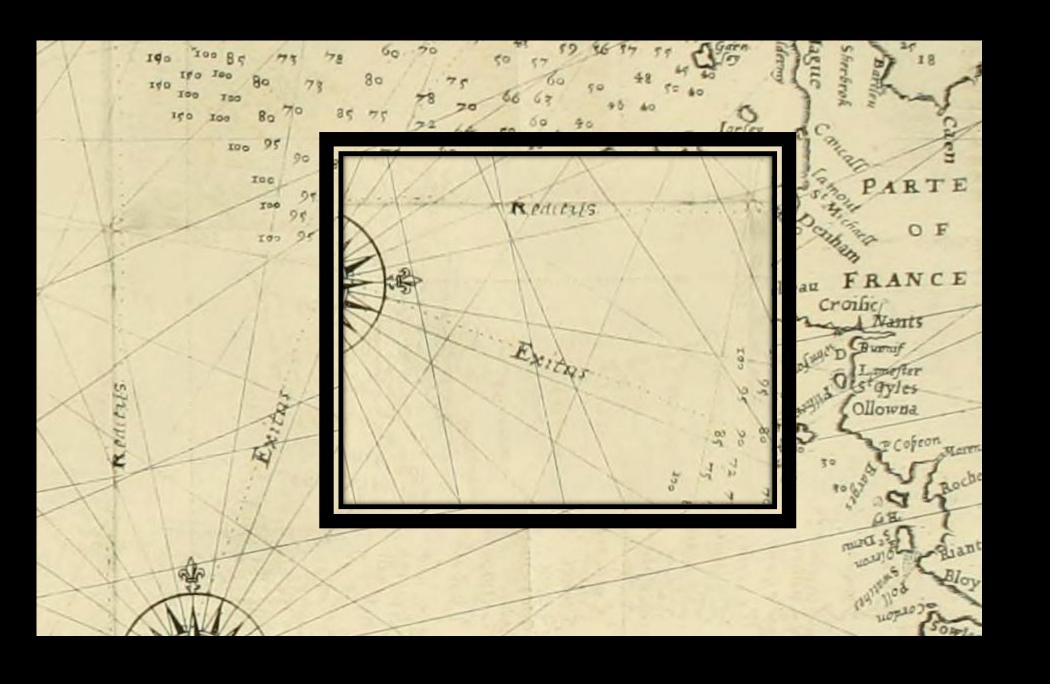
(National Maritime Museum)

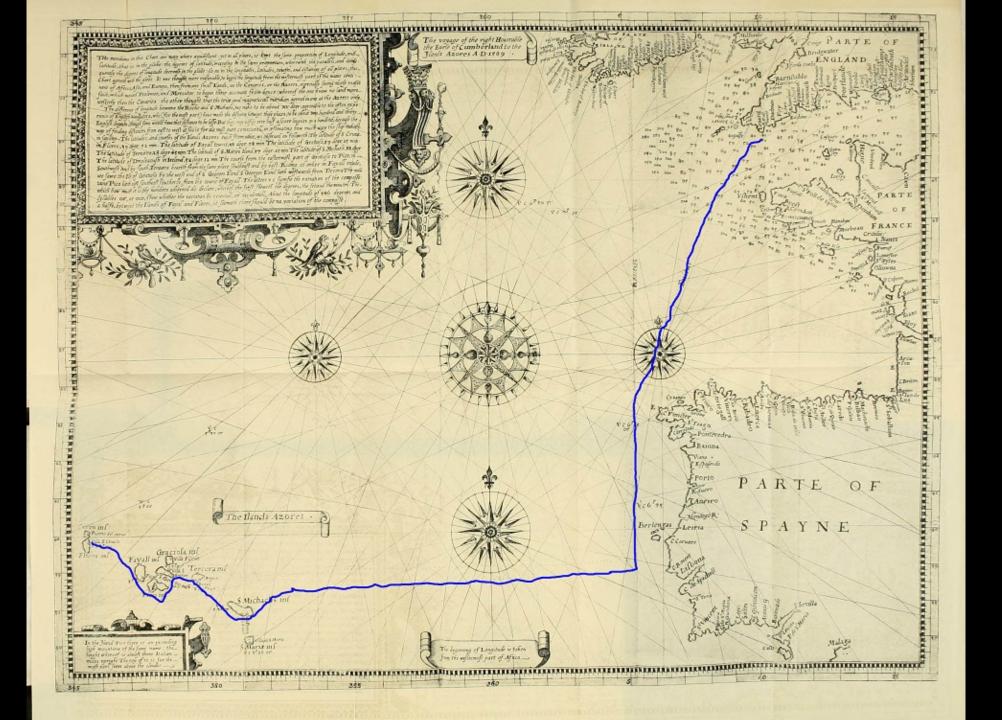


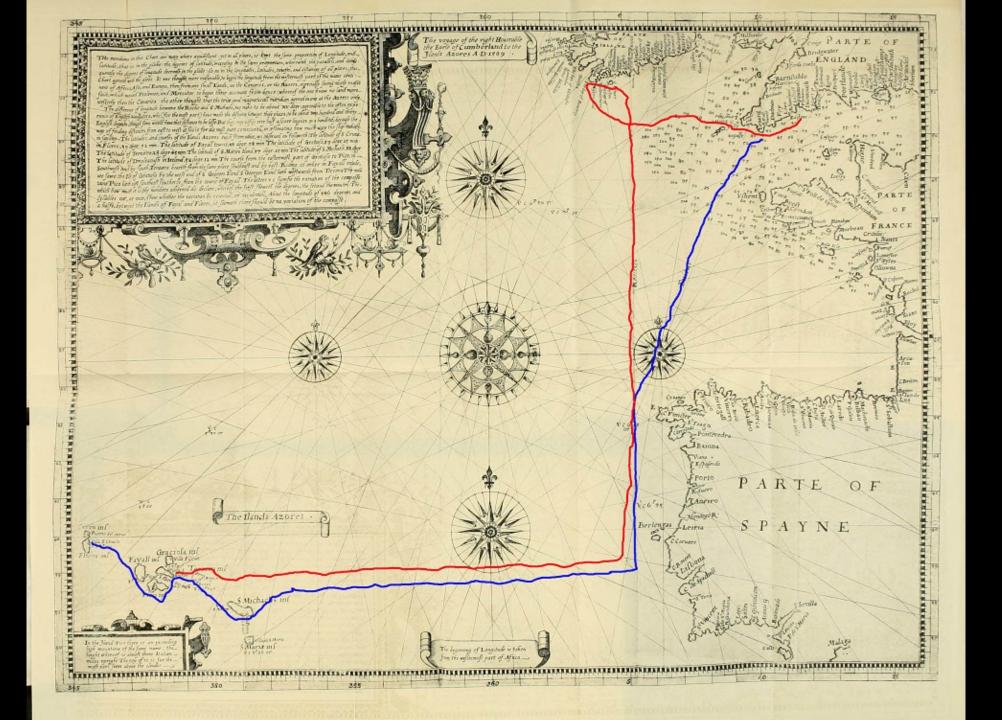


Gerard Mercator, Nova et Aucta Orbis Terrae Descriptio ad Usum Navigantium Emendate Accommodata (1569)









Life (and death) at sea

Coming home from the Azores voyage of 1589:

'Now in every corner of the ship were heard the lamentable cries of sick and wounded men sounding woefully in our ears, crying out and pitifully complaining for want of drink, being ready to die, yea many dying for lack thereof, so as by reason of this great extremity we lost many more men than we had done all the voyage before'

(Certaine Errors, 1599 edition)

Wright reflecting on mariners' experience, in which they were:

'banishing themselves (as it were) from their nearest friends and native country, to remain in a wooden prison, always within one span of present death, with the dangerous adventure of their dearest lives also at sea many times'

(*Certaine Errors*, 1610 edition, dedication)

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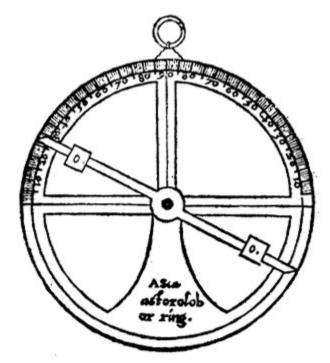
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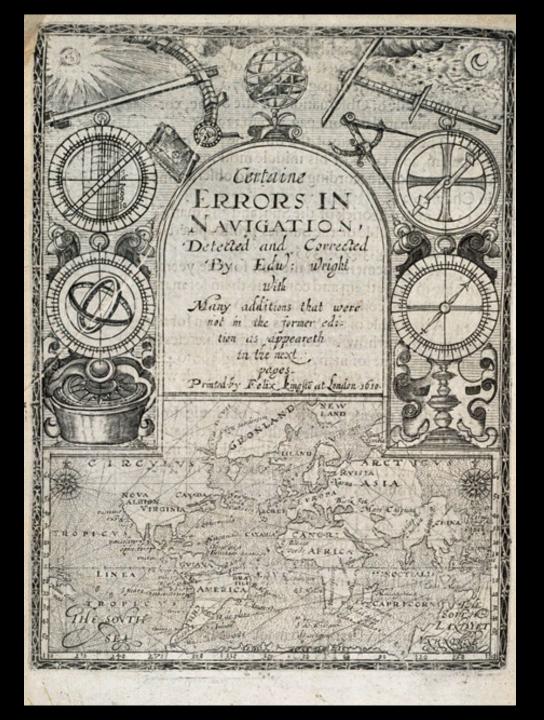
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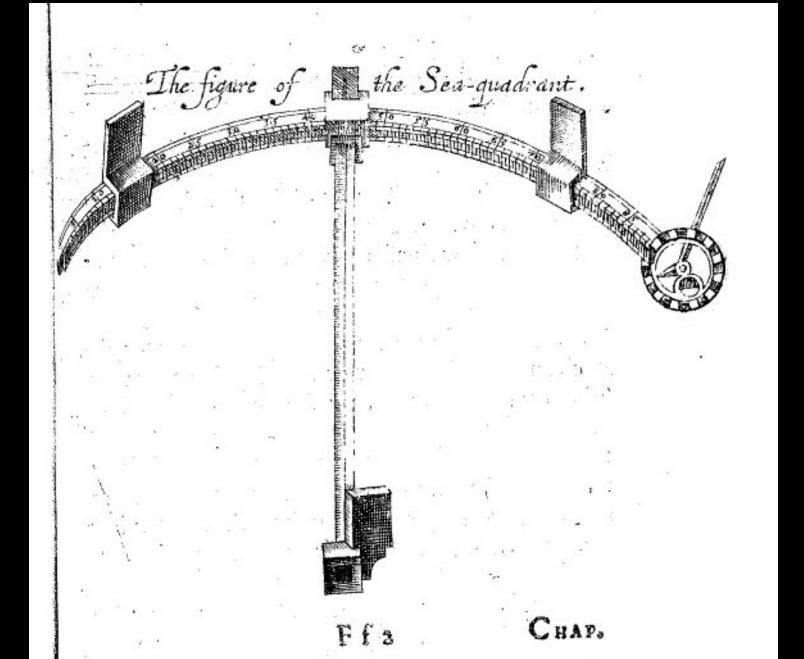
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Certaine Errors in Navigation, Detected and Corrected

Second edition, 1610



Certaine

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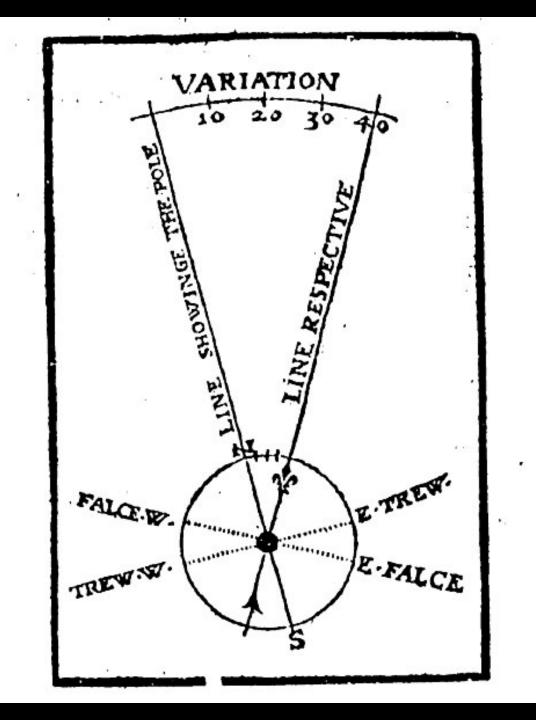
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Item 2: the variation of the compass



Robert Norman, *The Newe Attractive* (1581)

Explaining compass variation.



Gerard Mercator, north polar view of the world

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DE MAGNETE, MAGNETI-CISQVECORPORIBUS, ET DE MAGno magnete tellure; Physiologia noua, plurimis & argumentis, & experimentis demonstrata.



LONDINI

EXCVDEBAT PETRVS SHORT ANNO MDC.

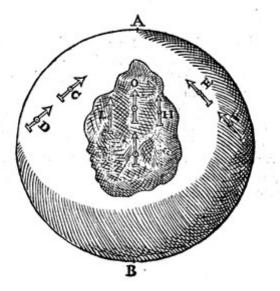
CAP. II.

Quòd variatio ab inæqualitate eminentium telluris partium efficiatur.



Emonstratur hoc ipsum manifeste per terrellam, hoc modo: sit lapis rotundus aliqua parte impersectior, & marcore labesactatus (talem habuimus parte quadam cariosa, ad similitudinem maris Atlantici, siue Oceani magni) pone fila ferrea longitudinis granorum duorum hordeaceorum super la-

lantici, fiue Oceani magni) pone fila ferrea longitudinis granorum duorum hordeaceorum super lapidem, vt in sequente figura. A B, Terrella partibus quibusdam impersectior, & virtute in circumferentia, inæqualis;



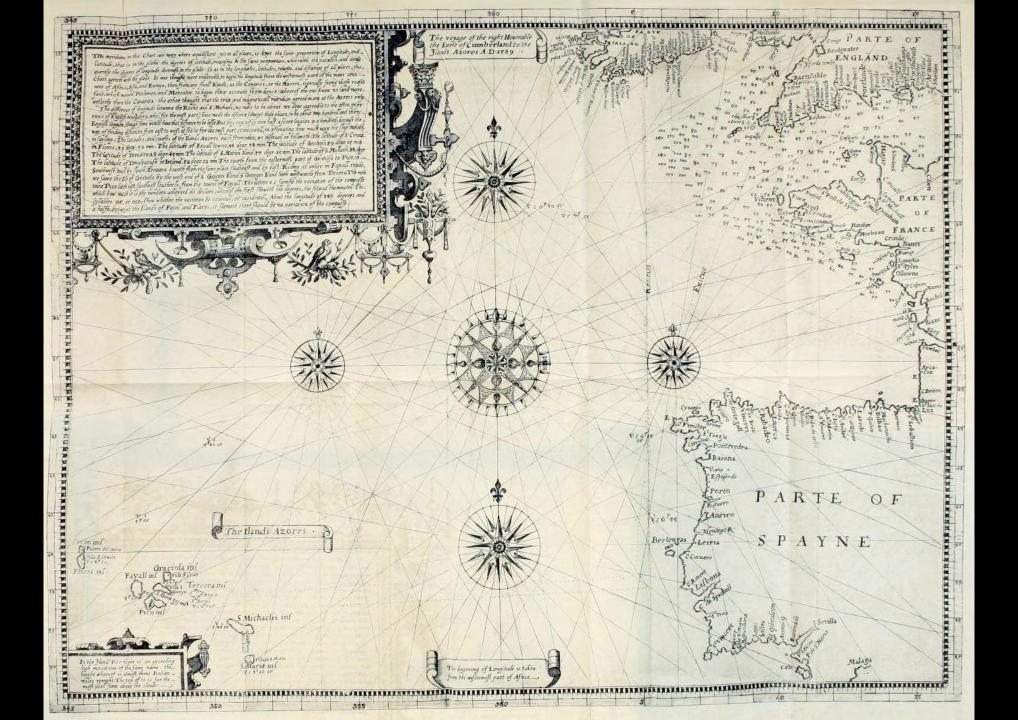
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William Gilbert, De magnete (1600)

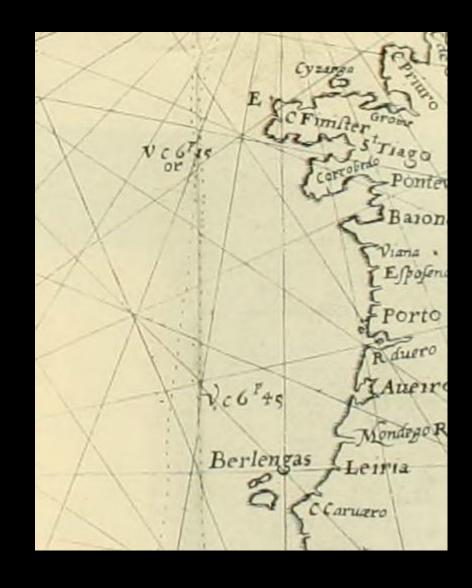
Accounting for magnetic variation

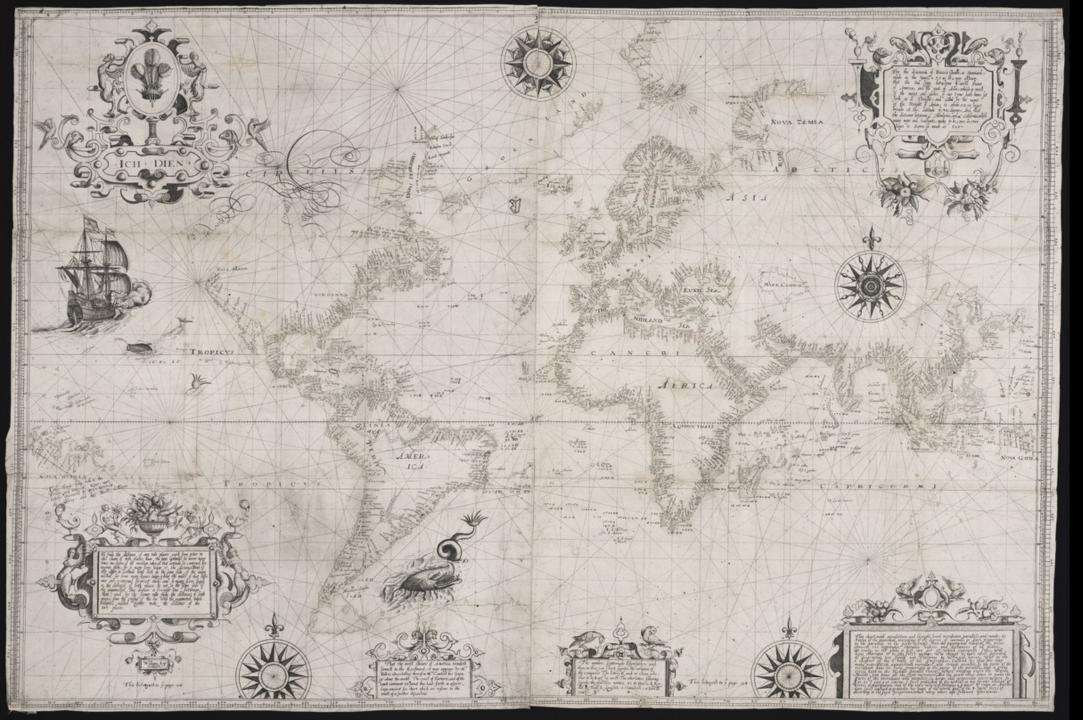
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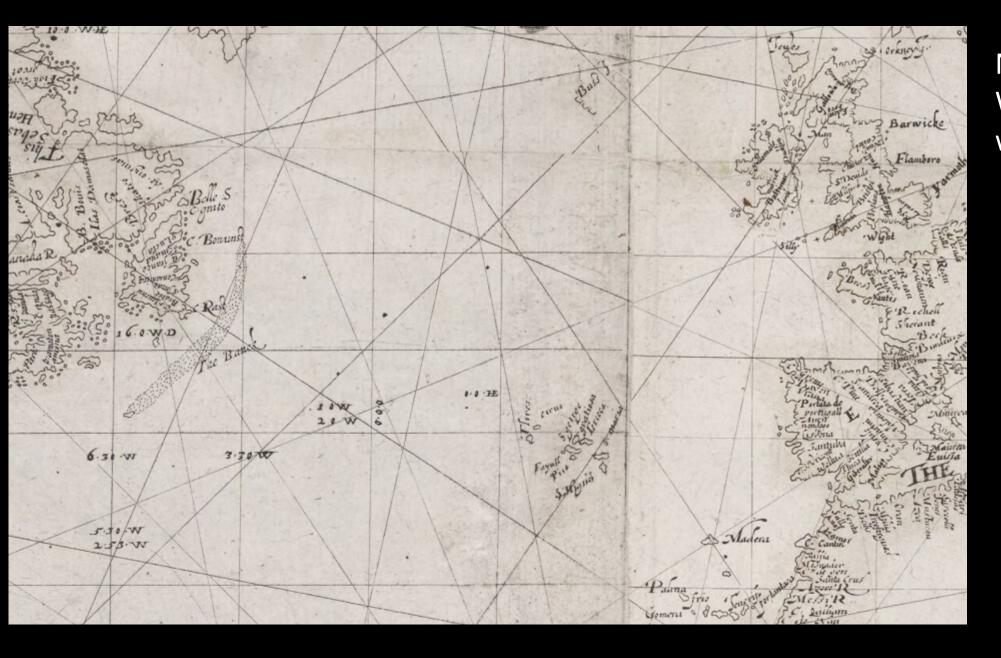


"The letters vc signifie the variation of the compasse: which how much it is, the numbers adioyned do declare, whereof the first sheweth the degrees, the second the minutes. The syllables *or* or *occ* shew whether the variation be orientall, or occidental."

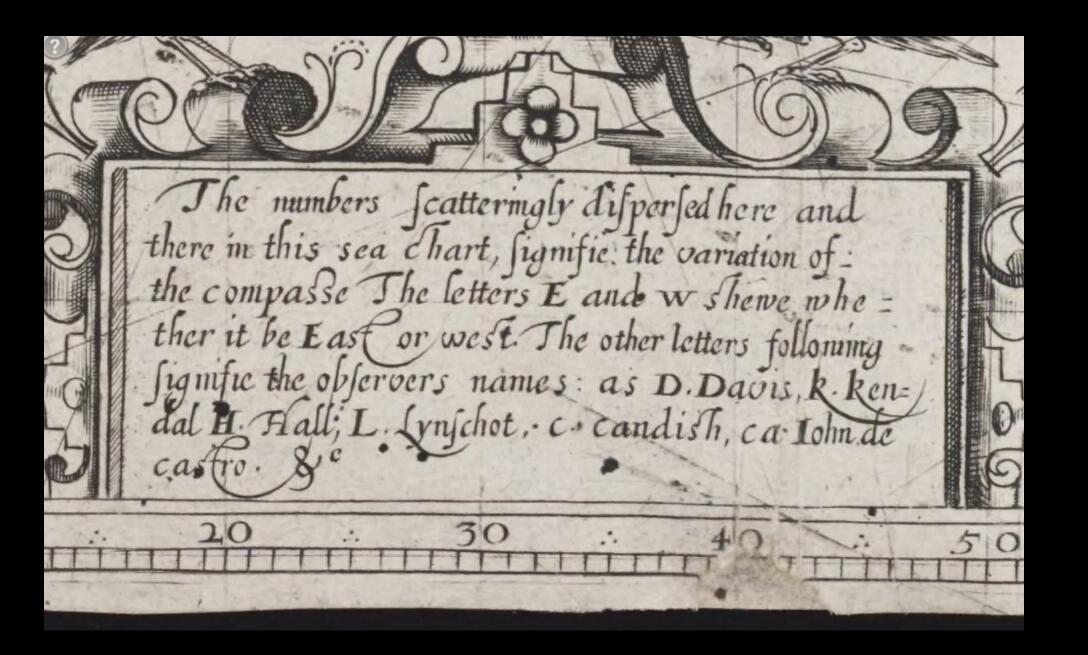


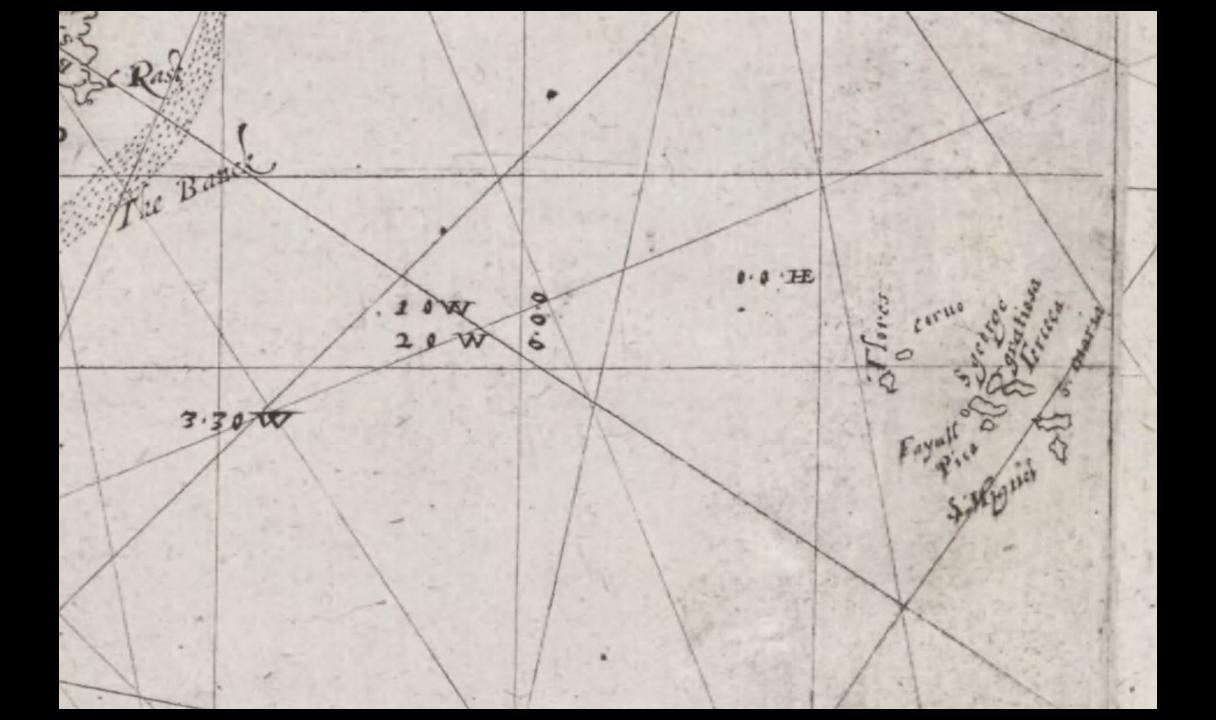


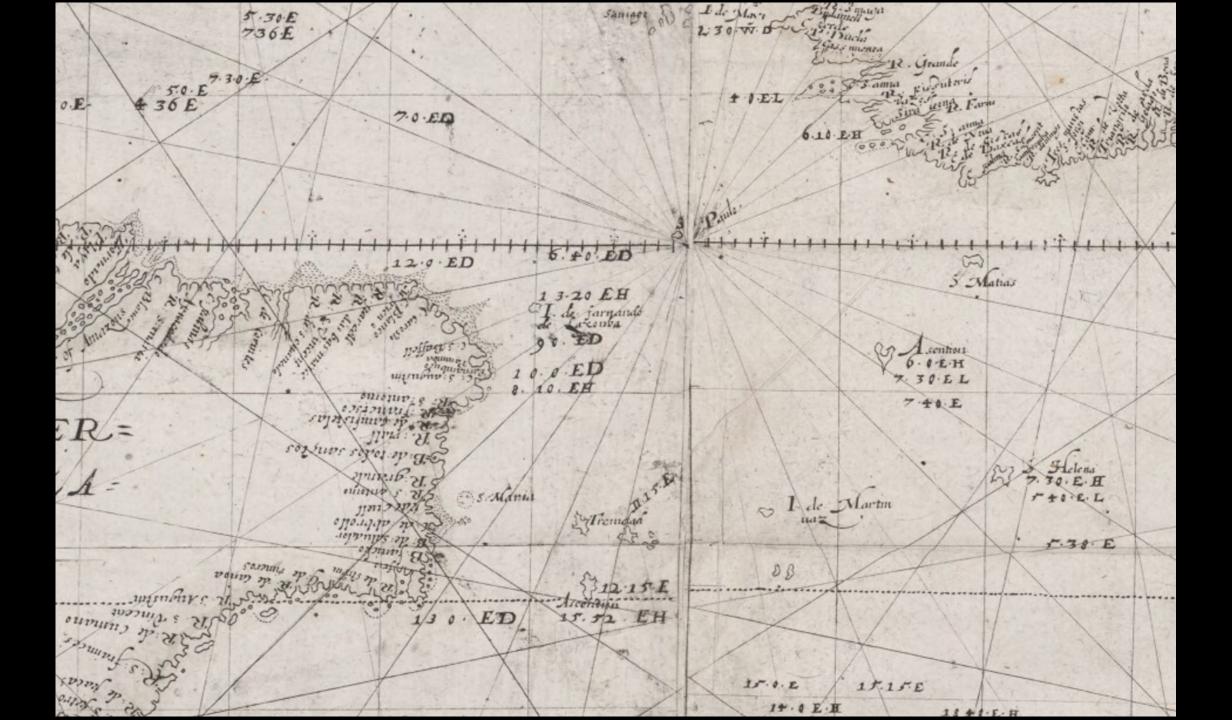
Edward
Wright,
Mercator
world map
from 1610
edition of
Certaine
Errors

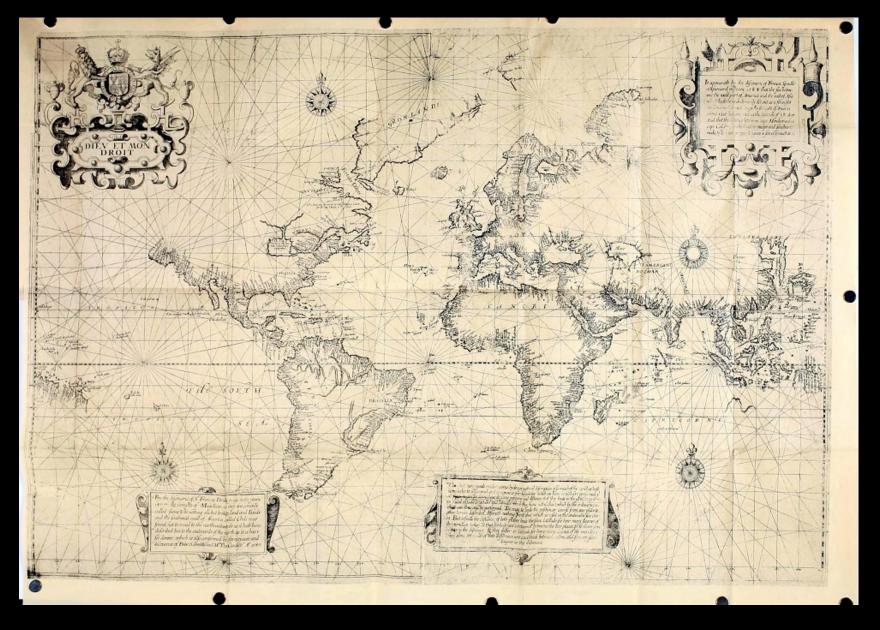


North Atlantic from Wright's 1610 world map









World map on Mercator projection, from Richard Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, 2nd edition (1598-1600)