The first edition of Napier's ground-breaking work on logarithms

John Napier, *Mirifici logarithmorum canonis descriptio.* Edinburgh: Andrew Hart, 1614. 8 inches x 5 1/2 inches (202 mm x 140 mm), 146 pages.

John Napier (1550–1617), eighth Laird of Merchiston known as "Marvellous Merchiston," was a Scottish mathematician and theologian noted for the invention of logarithms and Napier's bones, a calculating device for multiplication and division. He was an educated man who sought solutions to practical problems, making improvements to agricultural methods, inventing military devices, and facilitating mathematical calculations. Napier was respected by many of the leading mathematicians and scientists of his time, and his publications were eagerly anticipated. He was an fervent Protestant and authored *Plaine Discovery of the Whole Revelation of Saint John* (1594), the first book of biblical interpretation to emerge from Scotland.

Mirifici logarithmorum canonis descriptio (A Description of the Admirable Table of Logarithms) contained both the the first appearance of the term logarithm and the first table of logarithms. *Mirifici logarithmorum canonis constructio,* published posthumously in 1619 by Napier's son Robert and edited by Henry Briggs, explained the method used in Napier's calculation of his logarithms. His original logarithms are not the variety now in use; Napier and Briggs modified the earliest logarithms to create decimal logarithms, the first tables of which were calculated by Briggs.

This copy of the first edition Napier's first treatise on logarithms is from the Warnock Library and is bound in contemporary tan calf with double blind rules on all four edges; 2 ties on both the front and back covers are attached to the boards; the spine has raised bands and has been rebacked.

Octavo code: naploh