

It is with mingled feelings that I conclude the laborious but pleasing task which has occupied the greater part of my leisure time during the past seven years.

I am conscious of the many short-comings of this History, but trust they may be overlooked as being unavoidable owing to the completion of the work having to be accomplished at a distance from the town. I imagine that an apology is scarcely necessary: the volume is placed before the Bridgwater public that they may be in the same position as in other towns in possessing a permanent summary of "*brief extracts and chronicles of the times*"

It but remains for me to express my great indebtedness to the many gentlemen who have assisted me in this important undertaking. My thanks are primarily due to Mr. E. J. Stanley, M.P., who not only allowed me access to his library but encouraged me in placing the History before the public in a permanent form. To the Rev. Father Kennard, of Cannington, and the Rev. Father Scoles, of Bridgwater, I am indebted for assistance, particularly with regard to Latin translations. To Mr. John MacGowan my warmest thanks are due for valuable help with regard to Freemasonry, and the material for the Chapter on Friendly Societies, one of the most important Orders of which he is a prominent member. To Mr. Dunsford, of the *Bridgwater Mercury*, I am indebted for much kindly help, and the use of three of the illustrations which are found within these pages; and a similar acknowledgment must be made to Messrs. Whitby & Sons, of the *Bridgwater Independent*; the Rev. C. Bazell also kindly allowed me the use of the illustration of St. John's Church, and the Rev. E. J. Dukes that of the Congregational Chapel. Many other local gentlemen lent me interesting manuscripts and books, notably Mr. W. John Ford; and to one and all I express myself as being deeply grateful.

To the public of Bridgwater I leave with confidence the result of these combined efforts towards the issue of a History of the old and loyal town.

Beckenham Villa, St. Ives, Hunts

June 1st, 1889.

Digitised and edited by Tony & Jane Woolrich, 15/01/20

CONTENTS.

<i>Chapter.</i>	<i>Page.</i>
I. — Early Times	1
II. — Under the Romans	4
III. — The Danes .	8
IV. — The Norman Conquest	15
V. — The Manor of Bridgwater	18
VI. — Castle of Bridgwater	26
VII. — General History (1138-1300)	31
VIII. — General History (1500-1620)	36
IX. — Siege of Bridgwater	43
X. — Local Coinage	57
XI. — Drainage Works	60
XII. — Admiral Robert Blake	63
XIII. — General History (1650-1700)	73
XIV. — The Battle of Sedgmoor	78
XV. — The Bloody Assize	95
XVI. — General History (1700-1800)	99
XVII. — Bridgwater in the Eighteenth Century	106
XVIII. — General History (1800-1840)	111
XIX. — Railway Matters	119
XX. — General History (1840-1860)	123
XXI. — General History (1860-1889)	129
XXII. — The Water Supply	139
XXIII. — The Population	144
XXIV. — The Volunteer Movement .	146
XXIV. — The Political History	149
XXVI. — The Borough Muniments	160
XXVII. — Bridgwater Journalism.	171
XXVIII. — Freemasonry	175
XXIX. — Friendly Societies	178
XXX. — The River Parret	198
XXXI. — The Churches of Bridgwater	201
XXXII. — Nonconformist Places of Worship	216
XXXIII. — The Charities	229
XXXIV. — Public Buildings and Institutions	233
XXXV. — Proposed Ship Canal	240
XXXVI. — Miscellaneous Notes	244
XXXVII. — A Concluding Retrospect	259
Appendix: — List of MPs, Mayors etc	263
List of Subscribers	279

ILLUSTRATIONS.

St. Mary's Church	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Fac-Simile of Corporation Seal	<i>Title Page</i>
Admiral Robert Blake	<i>To face 72</i>
King Alfred's Jewel	77
The Old Iron Bridge	105
The New Bridge	<i>To face 132</i>
Portrait of Mr. E. J. Stanley	136
The Old Borough Arms	170
St. John's Church	<i>To face 212</i>
Congregational Chapel	<i>To face 224</i>
The Infirmary	<i>To face 234</i>
Quantock Lodge	<i>To face 246</i>
Portrait of the Mayor	<i>To face 273</i>