

THE
ANCIENT BOROUGH
OF
BRIDGWATER
IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET
BY THE
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VICAR AND RURAL DEAN OF BRIDGWATER
Author of Our Eternal Life Here; God Speaking in Nature;
The Influence of Jeremy Bentham upon Modern Thought and Legislation;
Sources of Eighteenth Century Deism, etc.
WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS
BRIDGWATER: PAGE AND SON
1907



PREFACE

THIS book is an attempt to set forth some of the incidents of the past history of a town whose antiquity is great, and whose story has been singularly varied. From the early part of the thirteenth century up to the close of the seventeenth the place throbbed with energy; they were five centuries whose characteristic, here, was action. It is with this period, in the main, that the following pages are concerned. From the dawn of the eighteenth century, and onwards, a quieter mood crept over Bridgwater. To chronicle this later period would require a separate volume, and entirely different treatment. It is therefore excluded from the scope of the book. Perhaps another hand may some day take up the task.

The difficulty has lain chiefly in selecting from the abundance of documentary and other evidence which has been available. A vast number of notes, carefully prepared, have had to be omitted by reason of the need of keeping the book within the due limit of size. A possible objection might be taken to the title, for although the town is always spoken of as the Ancient Borough, it was created a county by Henry VIII when he raised Henry Daubeney to the earldom of Bridgwater. This creation, so far as I know, has never been annulled, and presumably it exists still. But the town authorities, who at that time were in possession of ample privileges, allowed the higher title and privilege to lapse by non-use. Queen Elizabeth's Charter refers to *Our Town or Burrough of Bridgwater in our County of Somersett* hence my adoption of the usual designation.

It is mainly to the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood that the book is addressed, rather than to the antiquary or the historian. It has afforded me the keenest pleasure to observe the interest which Bridgwater people take in the history of their town, and I am grateful to them for the kindly welcome which they have given to this book.

A word should be said as to the exceeding value and interest of the original documents which are now in the possession of the municipal rulers of this place. These parchments are replete with information, and I earnestly hope that they may some day be published. In many an English borough the choicest historical documents are similarly stored away. All these, it is hoped, may some day be given to the public, and their hidden knowledge revealed to the student and to those who have every right to possess it.

Chapters i, ii, iv, xiii, and xiv are contributed by my friend the Rev. W. H. P. Greswell. They will be found to be of deep interest, since they are the work of a very competent hand. I have many thanks to express to many friends for help given to me in various ways. First, to Mr. Greswell, not only for his literary contribution, but also for advice given and for help rendered in every direction. I am indebted to the Mayor and Corporation of Bridgwater for permission to see the municipal and other documents of which they have the custody, and notably to the Town Clerk for his extreme courtesy in giving me access to them. To Mr. Broadmead of Enmore Castle I am grateful for constant reference to his excellent Somerset library, and to some valuable Bridgwater documents which he possesses. Mr. G. W. Jarman has been most kind in helping me to explore the battlefield of Sedgemoor; Mr. Godfrey Page and Mr. Cottam, F.R.A.S., have with great kindness provided me with some excellent drawings and a map; Mr. Kitch has been most diligent in photographing, and in other helpful ways. I am indebted to Mr. Charles Major for a photograph of Idstock ruined chapel, and also for much information about the old town. To Mr. Maurice Page I wish also to offer my hearty thanks for his great care and diligence in all the work which he has so kindly and well done in matters connected with the preparation of the book.

ARTHUR H. POWELL.

few days before his death, and the author sought to establish the theory, on which there has been much controversy among archaeologists that the battle of Cynuit, where King Alfred broke the power of the Danes and slew their leader, Ubba, was fought at Combe near the mouth of the Parret, and not near Bideford, as some contend. Mr. Greswell was an esteemed member of the Somerset Archaeological Society since 1892 and a member of the Council of the Society, which was represented at the funeral by Mr. M. H. St George Gray. Mr. Greswell was one of the founders of the Somerset Cricket Club and a player of considerable repute.

Publications

Our South African empire, (London, 1885)

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History of the Dominion of Canada, (Oxford, Clarendon press, 1890),

Geography of the Dominion of Canada and Newfoundland, (Oxford, Clarendon press, 1891)

Geography of Africa south of the Zambesi, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1892)

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