

AN ACCOUNT
OF
HORNSEA,
IN
HOLDERNESS,
IN THE
EAST-RIDING OF YORKSHIRE.

HULL:
WILLIAM STEPHENSON, 51, LOWGATE.
LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO.

1848.

It is possible that facts, hitherto unpublished, illustrative of the history of Hornsea, might be found in the MSS. relating to St. Mary's Abbey, York, that are yet extant, and in other quarters; but on the present occasion there is no pretension to any such research. With the exception of such matters as rest on local information, little more is aimed at in the present publication than to collect the few facts relative to Hornsea dispersed in books, some of them bulky and costly, contained in the excellent Subscription Library at Hull, with the occasional addition of slight illustrative notes obtained from the same source. When, however, it is considered that Mr. Poulson, while compiling his History of Holderness, frequently referred to in the following pages, had before him the ample stores of the library at Burton Constable, among which were the collections for a History of Holderness, which the Rev. William Dade, rector of Barmston from 1766 to 1790, was, for several years, actively engaged in making—assisted, as regards Hornsea, by the communications of his "indefatigable correspondent," Mr. Whytehead, then curate of that place—it may be presumed that most of the information concerning Hornsea that can be obtained has been made public.

Another year's observation has strengthened the writer's conviction of the correctness of the statements that he has made with reference to the geology of Hornsea, and the rate of incroachment by the sea there; and his confidence has been increased by a very kind expression of approval of the edition published last year, received from John Phillips, Esq., F.R.S., whose Illustrations of the Geology of Yorkshire, and other scientific works, are well known.

The principal addition now made is the reference, as briefly as possible, to some of the most prominent features in the history of Yorkshire before Hornsea or Holderness are heard of, during part of which time they were probably comprised within the British and Anglo-Saxon state of Deifyr or *Deira*, and consequently from either of them *may* have been taken the captives, whose beauty attracting the notice of Gregory in the slave-market at Rome, caused his often-related play upon the words, *Angli, angeli, de ira, &c.*, and is said to have led to the mission of Augustine and the consequent re-introduction of Christianity into Britain. A few particulars concerning the fabric of the church and the agriculture of the parish, and a directory, are also among the present additions. But while dwelling on such subjects as present themselves in connexion with the history and description of a rural parish, it is found that interest may be felt in very trivial matters in the absence of things of more consequence, and details be indulged in, the generally uninteresting nature whereof is overlooked until they are seen in the clearness of print and remedy is not easy.

Some verses, &c., by the late Mr. Paul Gray, a native of Hornsea, are added in an appendix.

The lithographic drawings and etching by Mr. Bevan will speak for themselves. The best distant views of Hornsea are obtained from the higher parts of Southorpe and Hornsea-Burton, and include the mere and the sea and the houses on the cliff, but on the whole the view from Brockholme (on the Seaton-road, about a mile from Hornsea,) seemed most eligible for the present purpose.

E. W. BEDELL.

H O R N S E A .

“ The history of a district is very much the history of the property of that district.”—“ Whatever there may be in a village to excite curiosity or invite attention, is usually connected with a line of its lords.”

If the observations above quoted are generally true, which perhaps is questionable, Hornsea is one of the exceptions. Among other things that make it such are, its geological position, which is very remarkable, and calculated to excite the curiosity of those to whom geological inquiries are in general dry and repulsive ; and its situation on “ the wasting cliffs of Holderness,” which since the making of the Domesday survey have probably receded not much less than a mile throughout the greatest part of their extent, and continue to yield, year by year, to the slow but unceasing inroads of the sea, obviously affording interesting matter for inquiry as well as for reflection.

In the line of its lords there is much to invite attention. The first of these, of whom anything is known, was the good and popular Earl Morcar who, in frequent conjunction with his brother Earl Edwin, bore so prominent a part in the closing scenes of the Anglo-Saxon dominion in Northumbria ; and from about the time of the foundation of the Abbey of St. Mary without the walls of York in the year 1089, to the dissolution of monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII., Hornsea, with its Church and Mere, was one of its possessions, and appears from the Valor Ecclesiasticus of Henry VIII. to have been one of the most valuable of them.

Since the monks were lords of Hornsea, it has undergone some decay by the inroads of the sea ; and the venerable Mere itself, the last survivor of the many lakes once existing in Holderness, considerably reduced at the western end, is by degrees becoming shallower, and in the course

of ages would, if spared by the sea, probably become another of the extinct lakes of that district. But though apparently destined to extinction, at some very distant day, as complete as that which has befallen those who were so long its lords, it has for some years been marked by improvement, not decay; and it perhaps still holds the rank of "Market town," the grant of a market there to the Abbot and convent of St. Mary being yet extant,^a and the market having fallen into disuse only within the last 50 or 60 years.

Hornsea is an agricultural village standing in a little valley

—“ on the bleak coast that hears
The German Ocean roar, deep booming,”

between a fresh-water lake called Hornsea Mere and the sea. It has of late years been increasingly resorted to for sea-bathing, and *demand* is slowly producing the effect of *supply* in the building of lodging-houses, &c. It is about 16 miles north-east of Hull, 13 from Beverley, 14 from Bridlington, and 40 nearly due east from York, between which last-named place and Hornsea a certain relation, offering a rather curious coincidence, may be noticed. At the time of the earliest information about Hornsea that can be found, its lord, the *Saxon* Earl Morcar, as Earl of Northumbria resided at York, of which place he was Governor:^b sometime afterwards, granted by the Conqueror to the *Norman* Earl Odo, Hornsea was given by him to the Monks of St. Mary's, whose Abbot was often called the Abbot of York, and who were its lords upwards of 400 years: and in 1845, the York and North Midland Railway Company, whose principal station is at York, obtained an act for the making of Branch Railways, one of which will, in connection with other branches and the York and Scarborough Railway, form an almost direct line between York and Hornsea; crossing, at York, in a piece of ground *once adjoining and belonging to St. Mary's*, called the Almry Garth,^c the site of the Abbot's fish-ponds, and passing within about 200 yards of one of the principal of the Abbey gateways, which, with the ancient lodge adjoining it, is yet standing.

^a Tanner's Notitia. Poul. 1, 314.

^b Drake, 348.

^c See plan of St. Mary's, in Drake's Eboracum.

The little valley in which Hornsea is situated affords several sheltered spots, and is overspread with considerable accumulations of *land-gravel* and sand, rather level near the mere, but towards the sea swelling into undulations of from 10 to 20 feet high. Above the gravel is a fruitful, but very light and porous surface soil, and *most* of the village has the great advantage of being built thereon. Aided by its gravelly sub-soil, it is a very neat, clean, and dry place, and might, with little additional cost and care, be second to no village in England in those qualities.

The population of the whole parish, comprising an area of 3,160 acres, was according to the last census, 1,005; the number of houses, 231.^a

There are three principal streets, one of them skirting the east end of the mere in a semicircular form, and called in different parts of it Westgate, Market-place,^b and Southgate. The Church, the remains of a cross, the Post-office, &c., are in or near Market-place, and distant from the mere about 100 yards, and from the sea about 1,000 yards. The streets called Newbegin and Eastgate branch from the neighbourhood of the Market-place towards the sea, uniting about 200 yards before reaching the cliff. There are houses on each side of Newbegin for the first two or three hundred yards, and a few houses in Eastgate, the remainder of the ground between the town and the sea being occupied by arable and pasture closes, over the last two of which there is a pleasant footpath from Newbegin (or Cliff-road) to the sea. This footpath, however, will soon be among the things that were "a long time ago," as it is proposed to close it in consequence of the making of a new carriage road to the beach with a footpath by the side of it, running parallel to the old footpath at a distance of 80 or 100 yards south of it, and now nearly completed. It is believed the new road will be generally considered an *improvement*, the previous access to the beach for carriages being circuitous and difficult; and the footpath will be a little shorter, and from its level less fatiguing to invalids. Probably many, however, will regret the loss of the pleasant prospect and fresh breezes of the little hill in the old path, which, with its seat, was a prominent feature in the walk to the sea-side. From

^a Returns of Population, p. 360.

^b Town's Book.