

YORKSHIRE,

PAST AND PRESENT:



A HISTORY AND A DESCRIPTION OF

THE THREE RIDINGS OF THE GREAT COUNTY OF YORK,

FROM THE EARLIEST AGES TO THE YEAR 1870;

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF ITS

MANUFACTURES, COMMERCE, AND CIVIL AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERING.

BY THOMAS BAINES,

AUTHOR OF "LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE, PAST AND PRESENT," ETC.

INCLUDING

AN ACCOUNT OF THE WOOLLEN TRADE OF YORKSHIRE,

By EDWARD BAINES, M.P.,

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VOL. I.

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ADDRESS BY MR. THOMAS BAINES.

IN undertaking to write a History and Description of my native County of York, it is my object to bring together, within the limits of one work, as much as I am able to include of the information respecting that County which is now scattered through many works, or which is to be collected from the memories of persons born within the County or who have spent the greater part of their lives in the midst of its interests and occupations. From the extent of country which has to be described, at least in its principal features, and from the numerous branches into which a history going back for so many centuries, and constantly increasing in importance, down to the present time, naturally divides itself, I should not have ventured to undertake this task had it not been rendered possible of execution by the accumulation, especially during the last forty years, of immense masses of information on separate departments of the subject, the most valuable portions of which it is my desire to unite in one work.

Local history, and especially the history of widely extended, populous, and rapidly improving English counties, has always possessed a great interest in this country, chiefly from the fact that society has been developed by local influences and local efforts to a greater extent in England than in any other country of Europe. From the earliest times of the English race this part of the kingdom has had a strongly-marked local organization. The division of the County or Shire into three Ridings, as they are now called, goes back to a time so early as to render it impossible to speak with certainty as to the year, or even the reign, in which it originated. Several of the existing boroughs of Yorkshire have been represented in Parliament from the time when the earliest parliaments were assembled by the kings of England; and some of them were probably represented in the old Anglian Witans, or parliaments, which were held at York for ages before the Norman Conquest. In the great changes which have taken place in later times the County of York has generally taken an active part; and in more modern times, as society was assuming its present form, the influence of this great county and its ever increasing population have constantly increased. At the present time it is represented by nearly fifty members in the Parliament of the United Kingdom, and it exercises at least as large a share as any other English county in the general government of the country. Many of the principal branches of its industry can be clearly traced from the time when the industry of England first began to awaken, after ages of tumult and strife. And the most important of these can be connected with local causes, and still possess much of a local character. It will be my object in this work to trace the several branches of the local History in this great county, and to show what portion they form of the general development of the kingdom.

At the commencement of the present century the population of the County of York was considerably less than one million persons, not amounting to more, according to official returns, than 859,133 souls; when my father, the late Edward Baines, M.P., published his "History of the County of York," &c., in the year 1823, it was estimated that the whole county contained about 1,100,000 persons; in the year 1851 it was found that the population had increased to 1,797,995 persons; ten years later the population of Yorkshire had risen to upwards of two millions, or, according to the official returns, to 2,015,841; and the latest returns of the Registrar General, recently published, show that the population of the whole county in the year 1868 was estimated at 2,202,160 persons. The actual population is probably larger; for whilst the area of the County of York, as ascertained by the recent Ordnance Survey, is 3,923,697 acres, the quantity of territory included in what is called the Registration County of York is not more than 3,654,636 acres. There are few, if any, other English counties which at the present time can show so large a population and so rapid an increase of numbers. Every year, therefore, the local History of the County concerns a larger portion of the people. When my father wrote his account of the County of York, more than forty years ago, he stated very truly that "the County of York held a distinguished rank among the great divisions of this kingdom; and that faithfully to delineate the leading features of its History would be considered an object of laudable ambition." That also is my opinion and my ambition; and the more so because in the interval between the year 1823 and the present time many great discoveries have been made, bearing upon the History and Description of this County, which were at that time altogether unknown, and which gives to it a greatly increased interest.

At the time when my father's work was published, the science of Geology, with its wonderful bearings on the past history of the world and its present influence on the development of society, could scarcely be said to exist, although my father had the advantage afforded by the assistance of William Smith, the father and founder of modern Geology, in drawing up an original article of the Geology of the West Riding. Since that time Geology has

become a science, and the formation of this extensive portion of the kingdom has been laid open by many distinguished writers, of whom two of her own sons, Professor Sedgewick and Professor John Phillips, justly stand in the highest rank amongst the creators of that science. It is my intention in this work to show how immense has been the influence which the causes and the phenomena, so admirably described by these and other writers, have had on the industrial development, and the increase of employment and of profitable occupation, in the County of York, and how inseparably they are connected with its skilful agriculture, its immense mineral wealth, its flourishing manufactures, and its widely extended commerce.

It is also my wish to show, in the present work, how the recent discoveries in the history of languages of ancient nations, and in the arts and modes of life in ancient times, throw light on the early history of the inhabitants of this extensive district; and how, in return, the discoveries and the extensive antiquarian researches made in this county for many years, and continued to the present time, connect themselves with the discoveries in the history of nations made in other parts of the kingdom, and in other parts of Northern Europe.

Within the last thirty years the early history of the Germanic and Scandinavian tribes of whom we are the descendants, has received a wonderful increase of light from the researches of eminent scholars. The origin of English poetry in the Abbey of Whitby, and of English history under the patronage of the Northumbrian kings of York, have both been clearly shown. We are also able to trace amongst the valuable publications of the Record Commission, and those published by direction of the Master of the Rolls, as well as those of the Surtees Society, the history of these districts from the earliest times to recent periods.

There is also a branch of local history which deserves to be more fully developed than has yet been done; viz., that of the public works executed in various ages in this extensive county, and their influence on public wealth and individual prosperity and comfort. Even within our own lives the whole of the modes of locomotion, and the means of transport both of persons and products by land and by sea, have been completely revolutionized. The result has been to apply the great powers of nature to the assistance of the feeble strength of men, and by ingeniously devised inventions to give to man a command which he never before possessed over matter in almost all its forms, and for every purpose to which it can be applied.

It is also my wish, in this work, to trace the History of the Progress of Society in this part of England more fully than has yet been done, and to show what has been the condition of the various classes of this portion of the English people from the earliest times to the present day. In early times the evidences of the condition of the people are very obscure, and have to be sought for amongst many insignificant details. As we come down to modern times we obtain additional light as to the condition of all classes; and in modern times an almost overwhelming mass of materials have been collected, bearing on this subject, which require to be analyzed and arranged, to render their general results useful.

One of the most striking characteristics of Yorkshire is the beauty and endless variety of its natural scenery. Another is the great variety of scenes and objects of historical interest which are included within its wide limits. These shall be described separately.

The number of Cities and Towns within the County of York is great, and rapidly increasing. On both the occasions in the present generation in which the representative system of the County has been changed, so as to adapt it to the existing population and to the existing wants of society, it has been found necessary to give an increased representation to the landed interest and the agricultural population of the County, and also to the varied interests of the large towns. Forty years ago the County of York had two members to represent it in Parliament, and it has now ten. It had at that time thirty city and borough members; it has now thirty-eight, notwithstanding the disfranchisement of Aldborough, Boroughbridge, and Hedon, and the reduction of from two to one member of the representation of Malton, Thirsk, Richmond, Ripon, and Knaresborough. Thus, notwithstanding the loss of ten seats in small boroughs, there is an aggregate increase of eight members in the whole number returned—a result which shows a great increase both of the agricultural and trading districts of the county.

In preparing this work I have received offers of assistance from several quarters. My brother, Mr. Edward Baines, M.P., has kindly favoured me with an account of the Woollen Manufacture, especially in the Leeds district; and I have other promises of co-operation and support which will add very greatly to the value of the work.



YORKSHIRE:

PAST AND PRESENT.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTY OF YORK.

YORKSHIRE, the largest of English counties, and in wealth, resources, and population amongst the most important, is situated near the middle of the island of Great Britain, at the narrowest part of England, on the shores of the German Ocean, and within easy distance of the Irish Sea and, through that sea, of the Atlantic. This great county extends over an area of nearly four million acres, or 6130 square miles, and contains a population of about two millions and a quarter of inhabitants. The general form of the county is that of an irregular quadrangle, extending about one hundred and forty miles in its greatest breadth, from the lofty mountains at the north-western angle of the county, to Spurn Point, at the mouth of the Humber on the south-east; and about ninety miles from the mouth of the river Tees on the north-east, to the point of junction of the counties of York, Derby, and Chester on the south-west. The average length of the county from north to south is about eighty miles, and its average breadth from east to west about ninety. The natural boundaries of Yorkshire are strongly marked by rivers, ranges of hills, and the sea. On the north it is separated from the county of Durham by the river Tees, which flows along the northern boundary of the county, with a rapid course, almost from the point where it rises in the western chain of mountains, to that at which it falls into the German Sea. On the south, Yorkshire is separated from the adjoining counties of Derby, Nottingham, and Lincoln by the broad estuary of the Humber, the

river Don, and by the range of hills from which that river flows. On the west it is divided from the counties of Lancaster, Chester, and Westmoreland by the lofty range of hills and mountains running from north to south, and known as the Backbone of England, or the Penine Chain; and on the east its bold and rugged shores are washed by the waves of the German Ocean. The territory included within these limits was ascertained by the recent Ordnance Survey to contain 3,923,697 statute acres, or rather more than 6130 square miles. This is more than twice the size of any other English county; Lincolnshire, the next in magnitude, covering an area of not more than 1,775,457 acres, and Devonshire an area of 1,657,188 acres. The natural resources of the county of York are great and varied, being alike derived from a fertile soil; from rich minerals, of which coal and iron are the most abundant and valuable; from numerous rivers and smaller streams, supplying water-power in great abundance; from safe harbours, available for trade and commerce; and from valuable fisheries on the sea-coasts, and in some of the principal rivers. The county is divided into three Ridings, the West, the East, and the North, the extent of which, as well as that of the whole county, is as follows:—

AREA OF THE COUNTY OF YORK.

	Acres.	Roods.	Perches
East Riding,	791,672	3	15
West Riding (including Ainsty),	1,768,380	1	2
North Riding,	1,361,664	2	26
City and County of the City of York,	1,970	3	3
York Castle, &c.,	8	1	38
Total,	3,923,697	0	0*

The Mountain Ranges, Dales, Plains, and Rivers of Yorkshire.—The natural features of the county of York are very strongly marked. Its most prominent features, and those which are most closely connected with the nature and the development of its resources, are two ranges of mountains or hills running from north to south, the one on the western boundary of the county, the other, of inferior elevation, near the shores of the German Sea, both sending numerous ranges of hills into the interior, from the western and the eastern sides of the county. These secondary ranges are separated from each other by deep and winding valleys or dales, which all

* Index to the Ordnance Survey of Yorkshire—1847—1853.

terminate in one great plain, in the middle of the county, known as the Vale of York; extending from north to south, from the banks of the Tees to those of the Don, a distance of nearly one hundred miles. In this plain nearly the whole of the rivers which descend from the hills and water the valleys, both on the eastern and western side of the county, flow into the bed of the river Ouse, and discharge themselves down its stream into the river or estuary of the Humber, which is the great receptacle of the waters of Yorkshire. A few streams, generally of smaller size, descend from the more eastern of these ranges of hills, and reach the German Ocean after a short and rapid course; whilst two or three flow from the western range into the Irish Sea.

The Western Range of Mountains, or the Penine Chain.—The more lofty of the two ranges of mountains, which we have spoken of as bounding or intersecting the county from its northern to its southern extremity, is generally known either as the Backbone of England, or the Penine chain. This range of mountains and hills, whose ridges and most elevated peaks generally form the western boundary of the county of York, separating it from the counties of Westmoreland and Lancaster, commences, at its northern extremity, amongst the higher ranges of Northumberland and Durham, and joins the mountains of the Lake district, which are the highest in England, reaching an elevation in several cases of more than 3000 feet.* These hills run southward from Westmoreland and Cumberland through the counties of York, Lancaster, and Derby, to the banks of the river Trent, which river winds around their western, southern, and eastern slopes in its course to the Humber. Where the Penine chain enters the county of York, at its north-western extremity, it has lost something of its original elevation, though it still rises to the height of more than 2500 feet at Mickle Fell (2581), the highest mountain in Yorkshire.† From that point it retains nearly the same elevation until it reaches the springs of the river Ribble, near which the bold summits of Pennegent (2270 feet), Ingleborough (2361 feet), and Whernside (2384 feet), three of the noblest mountains between Tweed and Trent, rise to an almost equal elevation. The Penine chain still retains a great elevation until it reaches the south-western limits of the county of York, frequently rising to the height of 1600 to 1800 feet. After

* Geological Map of England and Wales, by Andrew C. Ramsay, F.R.S. and G.S., local director of the Geological Survey of Great Britain.

† Ordnance Survey of Yorkshire, 1847-53.

leaving the southern boundary of this county, these ranges spread southward through Derbyshire, and along the borders of Cheshire and Staffordshire, retaining their elevation at the Peak of Derbyshire, at Axe Edge (1809), and Mow Cop (1101), and then gradually sinking into the great central plain of England.* The causes which raised this extensive range of mountains—with its heath-covered moors, its mountain-limestone pastures, its fertile clay soils, its numerous streams, and its rich beds of minerals—from the depths of the ocean, thousands of years ago, in a great measure decided the method in which society, industry, and population should develop themselves in the western districts of Yorkshire in modern times.

The Eastern Range of Mountains and Hills.—Highly important also in their influence on the development of modern society were the causes which, at some remote period, raised from the ocean the lofty rocks, the rich mineral beds, and the fertile soils, which extend from the coasts of the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire into the interior of those two Ridings. These mountains and hills are of the Lias, the Oolite, and the Chalk formations, and belong to strata which are not found in any part of Great Britain lying north of the county of York. They appear to emerge from the German Ocean, on the coasts of the North and of the East Ridings, whence they spread westerly, and then run in a southerly direction to the southern borders of Yorkshire. After passing under the Humber the strata rise again, increase in width, and spread over the midland, eastern, and southern counties of England, until they again reach the British Channel, and disappear beneath its waters.

Amongst the greatest elevations above the level of the sea attained by the rocks and beds of the Lias, the Oolite, and the Chalk formations, are those which they reach on the fine cliffs, the wild moors, and the extensive wolds of the North and East Ridings. At some of the highest points of the Cleveland district the mountains formed by the Oolitic rocks rise to a height of about 1500 feet; as at the Tumuli, Urra Moor, 1489—a greater elevation than they attain in any other part of England, and twice or three times the average height of hills of that description. The chalk formation also rises to much more than the average height which it usually attains in England, on the wolds of the East Riding. The

* Memoirs of the Geological Survey of Great Britain, &c., 81 N.W., and 81 S.W., by Edward Hull, Esq., B.A., F.G.S., and A. H. Green, Esq., M.A., F.G.S.: p. 16.