



A

CONCISE HISTORY  
OF THE PARISH AND VICARAGE  
OF  
HALIFAX,

IN THE COUNTY OF YORK.

BY JOHN CRABTREE, GENT.

HALIFAX:

PUBLISHED BY HARTLEY AND WALKER.

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO., LONDON.

---

MDCCCXXXVI.

THE REVEREND CHARLES MUSGRAVE, B. D.

VICAR OF THE PARISH OF HALIFAX,

AND

PREBENDARY OF THE PREBENDAL STALL OF GIVENDALE,

IN THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF SAINT PETER'S, YORK,

THIS VOLUME IS (BY HIS PERMISSION)

DEDICATED,

AS A HUMBLE TRIBUTE OF SINCERE RESPECT

TO HIS PASTORAL OFFICE,

THE ARDUOUS AND IMPORTANT DUTIES OF WHICH

HE HAS

(UNDER DIVINE PROVIDENCE)

FOR NINE YEARS SO ABLY FULFILLED ;

AND ALSO AS A SMALL TOKEN OF ESTEEM AND REGARD,

BY HIS FAITHFUL PARISHIONER

AND DEVOTED SERVANT,

JOHN CRABTREE.

Halifax,  
March 1, 1836.



## P R E F A C E .

WHEN it is considered that many important changes and improvements have taken place in this extensive parish since Mr. WATSON'S valuable "History and Antiquities" issued from the press ; that its circulation is at the present very circumscribed : that new discoveries have been brought to light ; and, above all, that much local information of an interesting nature may be found in the elegant and elaborate works of Dr. Whitaker, Hunter, and other eminent topographical writers, (works too costly to find a place in the library of the general reader,) the Compiler of the following pages is induced to hope that a Concise history of the Parish and Vicarage of Halifax, founded on the labors of her able and zealous antiquary, and embodying additional information gleaned from the rich and fertile fields of literature before referred to, will not be unacceptable to those for whose peculiar use the present volume was intended, namely, the parishioners of Halifax.

It has been his endeavour to make such selections as appeared to him best calculated to illustrate the general history of the parish, not omitting matters of minor detail ; and to arrange the whole in a manner adapted to edify, to instruct, and to amuse. It is highly probable that defective information, or too great a regard for brevity, have caused him to pass over many things which would have materially illustrated the various subjects of the history, and particularly matters of legal detail. An adherence to facts has been his primary object.

There is no royal road to the knowledge of the law. No man can render an obscure and intricate disquisition of title either perspicuous or entertaining. While it has been the Compiler's endeavour to afford general satisfaction, there are two classes of readers whom he fears he shall have some difficulty in pleasing: To the first class, (whom without intending any offence) he must term the superficial reader, he fears his selections will frequently appear injudicious or ill-chosen; this class in general have a rooted aversion for any thing that savours of antiquity; to them the very word is bodied out in the form of a spectral old man, poring over some rust eaten weapon, or handling with affection some crazy vessel, which they could scarcely bring themselves to touch; or if they can fancy him unrolling ancient records, and attempting to decipher old characters, they regard him as a vision of the past, a being who has buried himself alive, and over whose living remains it is seemly and decent to draw the veil of forgetfulness. The other class run into an opposite extreme, and whose displeasure he fears he shall incur by the omission of pedigrees, armorial bearings, and family genealogies; he is free to confess that his own inclinations and pursuits would have led him to conciliate this class by entering fully upon enquiries of this sort, had his limits permitted him so to do: but he looks for some extenuation of his error (if such it be) in the confidence that the omission will be both ably and fully supplied in a forthcoming work on a larger scale.\*

It is stated by Dr. Whitaker, that "the antiquary who looks through this extensive district for those appearances which most delight him, will be disappointed. In a tract of more than 124 square miles there exists not the remnant of a castle; there never was a monastic foundation. He must therefore content himself with a few earth-works which in-

\* Proposed "History and Antiquities of the Parish of Halifax, by E. N. Alexander, F. S. A. &c. &c."

dicare that some inconsiderable fortresses once existed within it; and with respect to ecclesiastical antiquity, he must take up with the appropriation of its rectory to a remote house, and with a few scattered donations of acres and ox-gangs to such neighboring convents whose popularity extended beyond their own immediate bounds." Be it so. Does it thence follow that all is barren? The labors of Watson attest the contrary. Do they not present us a field for enquiry—a storehouse of relics from whence we may glean some memorial of generations who breathed two thousand years ago; that if the dust of the valley could spring to life, the sounds which our mountains and moorlands reverberated, in years of which scarcely a tradition remains, would again awaken the slumbering echo, and the wild solitude would be once more peopled with human beings.

If it be asked—Are there no memorials in existence to indicate that aught but the forest tree or the heath has tenanted the soil, since the retiring waters crept into the ocean? The learned Doctor has proved the contrary, as may be seen by his opinions, embodied in the following pages, to which the Compiler craves, with all humility to refer; opinions which encouraged him in this attempt, from a conviction that they contained interesting local information, too valuable to slumber on the shelves of the antiquary and topographer. The past state of a country cannot be known, until its antiquities have been thoroughly and accurately investigated. Disclaiming the arrogant assumption of one single qualification necessary to constitute a true antiquary, save a guileless enthusiasm, the Compiler has ventured occasionally to offer an hypothesis or conjecture when connected with the early history of the parish, in the hope that it might conduce to stimulate the reflection, and to guide the researches of others; and should he have succeeded in the attempt he shall hereafter reflect with honest pride that his labors have not proved fruitless. His own personal conviction has been strengthened by the opinions of individuals, for whose judgment he has the highest respect, (among the number he may be permitted to

mention the late Mr. Watkinson, who was well acquainted with the localities of this extensive parish,) that notwithstanding much has been done of a valuable character, and the ground comparatively cleared of many of its obstructions, and the journey of future historians rendered comparatively easy, an unexplored field of enquiry is yet open in which both pleasurable occupation and honor may be gained.

Already have the inmost recesses of her woods been penetrated for the advancement of science, and trodden by the foot of the naturalist. That there are few districts which afford opportunities so valuable for the cultivation of natural philosophy, the labors of a Bolton bear ample testimony.

If we descend into the bosom of her moorlands and her mountains. Are we not presented with an instructive field for geological examination in its varied and interesting characters? Ask the Geologist, he will not only tell us of the treasures that are hidden under the surface, and of their value in a scientific and commercial point of view; but he will pause and ponder over the mysterious things which have already been brought to light as tending to illustrate some of the most imposing theories of that sublime science.

But why mention these facts to stimulate the exertions of others when it is borne in mind that a great desideratum has been attained for Halifax in the union of literary feeling and sentiment. Already is the ivy clinging to the oak, and the admirer of nature, in the cultivation of his favorite pursuit will in the end have the satisfaction of finding that she "never betrayed the heart that loved her."

It was the intention of the Compiler to have added a Chronological Table of the principal events connected with the parish; but finding so many opportunities in the course of his progress for introducing matter originally set apart for this table, he was induced to embody it in the work rather than add it in the form originally intended, which would have considerably increased the bulk of the volume. He begs most explicitly to state that no information which he contemplated inserting in that table, has been omitted here.

To some of his professional friends the Compiler is under great obligations for much valuable information ; particularly to Mr. James Edward Norris and Mr. Edward Nelson Alexander his best thanks are due ; to the former gentleman for several important historical facts relating to the early history of the Advowson, and other ecclesiastical matters of much and valued interest : the latter for some additional information relating to matters of title, and for correcting some errors connected with that intricate subject. To Mr. F.A. Leyland, jun. he also tenders his acknowledgements for some information relating to the antiquities of the Parish.

He can neither forget nor be ungrateful for the very kind and flattering manner in which his proposals for publication were honored by his subscribers ; he shall ever reflect with pride on the confidence reposed in him, assuring them that it has been not only the highest object of his ambition, but that of his Publishers, to merit their approbation.

It is with extreme reluctance that the compiler adverts to a personal affliction which precludes him from enjoying the pleasures of colloquial society ; nor would he have intruded the subject in these his prefaratory remarks had not that affliction prevented him from obtaining much information that might have proved both interesting and instructive, and driven him to seek for that in the society of books, which others more favored obtain by the "hearing of the ear."

He is not impervious to criticism. To those who are inclined to censure he cries, "your mercy gentlemen." "Do not pursue with a weighty scourge the man who deserves only a slight whip."



## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
General description of the Parish and		The Township of Shelf .....	393
Vicarage of Halifax .....	1	—————Sowerby .....	401
The British Æra .....	24	—————Warley .....	418
The Roman Æra .....	31	—————Midgley.....	424
The Saxon Æra .....	41	The Parochial Chapelry of Elland ....	430
The Norman Æra .....	47	Township of Elland-cum-Greetland ..	431
The Manor, (as part of the Manor of		————— Greetland .....	456
Wakefield) .....	50	————— Barkisland.....	457
The Gibbet Law.....	61	————— Fixby .....	469
The Advowson .....	77	————— Norland .....	474
The Manor of Halifax .	91	————— Rastrick .....	476
The Parish Church .....	97	————— Rishworth.....	486
The Middle Ages .....	132	————— Soyland .....	490
The Modern Æra .....	145	————— Stainland .....	494
The Public Charities .....	157	The Parochial Chapelry of Heptonstall	501
Biography .....	257	Township of Heptonstall .....	ib.
The Woollen Trade and Manufactures	296	————— Erringden .....	509
Population .....	310	————— Langfield.....	518
Parochial Government.....	317	————— Stansfield .....	520
The Township of Halifax .....	323	————— Wadsworth .....	525
—————Northowram .....	361	Borough of Halifax .....	529
—————Southowram .....	367	Appendix.....	546
—————Ovenden .....	374	Index.....	553
—————Hipperholme-cum-			
Brighouse.....	381		