

T H E
H I S T O R Y
A N D
A N T I Q U I T I E S
O F
The Parish of HALIFAX,
in YORKSHIRE.

Illustrated with COPPER-PLATES.

B Y
The Reverend JOHN WATSON, M. A.
Rector of STOCKPORT, in CHESHIRE, and F. S. A.

I have confidered the Days of Old, and the Years that are past.
PSALM lxxvii. 5.



DIDSBURY MANCHESTER
ENGLAND

TO THE
INHABITANTS
OF THE PARISH OF HALIFAX.

GENTLEMEN,

YOU have, in the following Pages, the most material Observations relating to your Neighborhood, which I made during several Years Residence amongst you; and it will give me Pleasure to find that they contribute either to your Advantage or Amusement. I have, throughout the whole, used the utmost Impartiality, having no Kind of Attachment to bias my Judgment, or make me speak different from what I thought; nor have I had any mercenary View in the Undertaking. The chief Motive which urged me to so arduous a Task, was the Fondness I have long entertained for Enquiries of this Nature; and having the Honor to be a Member of the Society of Antiquaries in London, I thought it in some Measure my Duty, to draw up the best Account I could of the Place where I resided; and more especially so, as two such very imperfect Publications on this Subject have already made their Appearance.

It has always been the Wish of the above learned Body, to have their Members so stationed, that the different Parts of the Kingdom may, by Degrees, be described, either on the more extensive Plan of a Publication of this Sort, or by lesser Communications, affording Materials for their Archæologia. Thus Discoveries may be made to flow together as to one common Center, and such a Fund be at last acquired, as may give to Britain what the immortal Camden in vain attempted, a compleat Account of its Antiquities.

I believe I may say with the greatest Truth, that there never was so pleasing a Prospect of attaining this desirable End, as at present, when so many Gentlemen of known Abilities are employed in carrying it on. That Part of it which is here presented to the Public, is an Account of a District but little known, till of late it became so much distinguished by its Trade; but as it is rising so rapidly from its Obscurity, the following Description of it can neither be deemed needless, nor unseasonable.

All which the Author will say of his own Performance, is, that he has spared neither labor, nor expence, in searching every Repository, where any thing relating to his Subject was likely to be found, and that

— sicut

Parvula (nam exemplo est) magni formica laboris
Ore trahit quodcunque potest, atque addit acervo.

Pleased that his Mite may contribute to the making up the great Whole; and that he may be admitted to step within the Circle of Antiquity, though he presumes not to approach near the Center.

Publications of this Sort, it must be owned, are not entertaining to all; one Reason for which may be, that they are local; but so far as they are historical the Objection is removed. Who is content to read only the History of his own Parish, or County? It is some Pleasure to reflect that this Kind of Writing has, of late, increased in Reputation; perhaps the Public are better satisfied of its Utility, since Antiquarian Books have sometimes been allowed to be read in the highest Courts of Justice, on this well known Maxim. that the best Evidence which can be had should be admitted. Happy, if any Thing here discovered will contribute to the clearing up those Difficulties which have so frequently embarrassed your Neighborhood, and given Rise to disagreeable Litigations! Happy, if for the future what has been piously bequeathed to the Poor, may, by this well-meant Endeavor, be prevented from being either lost, or misapplied! It would give me great Satisfaction to think, that I had pleaded successfully the Cause of the Distressed; or that I had been the lucky Instrument of spreading Amity and Good-will amongst you.

Such as have favored me with any Communications on the Subject of this Performance, will accept of my grateful Acknowledgments for the same; and I now bid you my last public Farewell, wishing that your Parish may continue to flourish, and increase in every thing which is truly desirable.

I am, GENTLEMEN,

Your humble Servant,

The AUTHOR.



T H E
H I S T O R Y
 A N D
A N T I Q U I T I E S
 O F
H A L I F A X.

THE parish, or vicarage of *Halifax*, in the West Riding of *Yorkshire*, and wapentake of *Morley*, consists of twenty-six townships, or hamlets, viz. *Barkisland*, *Brighouse*, *Eland*, *Eringden*, *Fixby*, *Greetland*, *Halifax*, *Heptonstall*, *Hipperholme*, *Langfield*, *Linley*, *Midgley*, *Northouram*, *Norland*, *Ovenden*, *Raistrick*, *Ribsworth*, *Stainland*, *Stansfield*, *Shelf*, *Skircoat*, *Sowerby*, *Soyland*, *Southouram*, *Warley*, and *Wadsworth*. This parish has often been compared to Rutlandshire for size, but perhaps is the larger place, if Mr. Wright, in his Description of that County, has reckoned by statute miles, when, at p. 1. he says, "its dimensions are not above some twelve miles over in any place;" for the length of this parish, from the upper end of Bradley-wood to the top of Widdop, in the direction

rection of south-east and north-west, will be nearly twenty statute miles; from Bailey Brigg to Stiperden Bank Bottom, in the direction of east and west, about seventeen miles; from the bounds of the parish, a little beyond the sign of the Queen's-head, in the Bradford-road, to the top of Blackstone Edge, in the direction of north east and south west, about fourteen miles. The breadth of it, from the top of Ogden to Cawcliff-yate, near Fixby, or from north to south, about ten or eleven miles; from Fly-laith to Coldacres, in the same direction, nearly the same distance; from Stairs-foot to the upper end of Dean-head chapelry, still in the same direction, about eleven or twelve miles. It is bounded on the south east of Halifax town by the chapelry of Hartshead, by Birstall parish on the east, by Bradford on the north, Whalley on the north west, Rochdale on the west and south west, and by Huddersfield on the south. The townships which surround it are Hartshead cum Clifton on the south east, Wike on the east, Wibsey, Clayton, and Thornton on the north, Howarth on the north west, Todmorden and Hundersfield on the west, Saddleworth and Scamonden on the south west, New Linley and Golcar on the south, and Bradley on the south east.

It is not my design to write a natural history of this parish; I shall therefore content myself with giving the reader the following concise account of the country, under the general heads of fire, air, (or weather,) earth, and water.

And 1st. Several parts of this parish afford coals, which are particularly useful here for the carrying on of that extensive trade for which this neighborhood is grown famous. Without these (as the country yields but little wood) the manufactures would languish, if not be totally destroyed. What deficiency there is in this respect, is amply supplied from the neighboring parishes. In some townships there is plenty of turf earth, which, when prepared for fuel, by drying in the sun, is reckoned a wholesome firing. It has even been remarked, that where the use of this prevails, pestilential disorders have been more rare, and less fatal. (See Morton's Northamptonshire, p. 84. and Philosophical Transactions, No. 170.)

The air of this parish is very good. The winds which chiefly blow here come from the west and south west, and are often attended with rain; for sweeping in those directions over a large tract of the sea, and bringing with them much vapor, they meet with little to obstruct them in their course, till they come to the high chain of hills called Blackstone-edge, (the south west boundary of this parish,) which not being able to surmount, the greatest part in that case falls in Lancashire; at other times it is forced over, when the electrical fire with which the clouds are charged, being strongly attracted by these mountains, heavy showers of course succeed. In these high lands are more thunder and lightning than in low flat countries, which was remarked by the ancients as a general fact, though they knew not the philosophy of it. Thus Horace has told us, that “*feriunt summos fulmina montes.*”

The winds which blow from the east are not so apt to bring rain with them as the above; however, it sometimes happens, that what rains they do bring, continue to fall here for two or three days together, which may be owing to the currents of air being so much weakened in their long passage, that they cannot easily drive the vapor over such high lands as part Lancashire from Yorkshire. This causes a kind of stagnation, which lasts till either the mass of condensed vapor is discharged, or a current sets in from the west, strong enough to drive it back.

I think it has been observed, that a ridge of high ground generally runs through the middle of every large island, that the springs, as well as the descending rains, may have the liberty of discharging themselves into the sea. That this end is answered by Blackstone-edge, is plain, because the water which falls here, runs both into the eastern and western seas; and to confirm the general observation, Camden, p. 379. edit. Lond. 1587. says, “*Pars septentrionalis montibus non magnis leviter intumescit, qui --- per Angliam medium perpetuum dorsum perpetuis jugis elatum ad Scotiam usque, nomine saepe mutato, agunt.* Hic enim Moreland, inde Peake, deinde Black-

"ston-edge, postea Craven, deinceps Steanmore, et demum in
"cornua scissi Cheviot vocantur."

Amongst the excesses in the weather in these parts which I have met with on record, are these. In the Register-office at Wakefield, Rot. 1615. it is said, "Mem. Quod decimo sexto
"die hujus mensis Septembris, et nocte ejusdem diei, ac etiam
"decimo septimo die sequenti, tanta et tam magna fuit pluvia
"hisce occidentalibus partibus Eboracensis comitatus ad flumen
"Calderi, et alia flumina ita increverunt, ut per immensas aquas,
"et inundationem earund. aquarum, pontes lapidei de Ealand,
"et Kighley, ac quamplurimi alii lignei ponticuli ad numero
"viginti, ad magnum detrimentum transeuntium tam vi-
"cinorum quam extraneorum, et ad magnum patriæ sump-
"tum facti prostrati, et ejecti fuerunt." This is in some measure authenticated by a list of the disbursements made in rebuilding the bridge at Ealand, from whence it appears, that at Christmas, 1617, there had been expended on the work, 424l. 15s. 4d. and the estimate for finishing it was 60l. more.

In the register of Hartshead Chapel, adjoining to this parish, is the following entry: "Sept. 11, 1673, was the great flood
"that broke down so many bridges." But the most remarkable thing of this kind, which falls within the compass of my design, is what is called Ripponden flood, which happened May 18, 1722, between the hours of three and five in the afternoon, an account of which may be seen in the Abridgment of the Philosophical Transactions by Reid and Gray, Vol. VII. p. 45. drawn up by the late Mr. Thoresby, of Leeds, who attributes the cause of that surprising inundation to the dashing of two great watry clouds upon the hills. Whether he was rightly informed of the number of houses, mills, and bridges destroyed, as also of the lives lost on this melancholy occasion, is not easy now to determine; it is certain, however, that the chapel at Ripponden was so damaged by the flood, that the inhabitants were obliged, a few years after, to erect a new one. A coffin also was forced out of a grave there, and lodged in a tree a considerable distance from the chapel yard. Those who saw the inundation,

inundation, say that the water rose seven yards perpendicular, and that the river Calder was drove back more than a quarter of a mile above Sowerby-bridge. It seems that there had been dry weather for a fortnight before this accident, and that no thunder preceded the shower, so that the above conjecture, of the dashing together of two clouds, is not improbable; but no certain account can be given of it, for want of sufficient observations having been made when the fact happened. There was a great flood also the same day, at the village of Slaighthwaite, which may be accounted for, because the greatest weight of the rain fell southward of Rippenden, on the hills, towards Booth Dean; for this reason, likewise, the stream which runs by Soyland-mills, and which, coming from the west, falls into Rippenden Brook, was not much swelled.

The winds from the south west have sometimes blown so strong, that the pieces of cloth on the tenters, in several parts of Halifax parish, have been charged with a considerable number of saline particles brought from the sea, but this is rare.

On Sunday, June 5, 1628, the south east pinnacle, and corner of the steeple of Halifax church were struck off by lightning, the stones of which broke down much of the timber, slate, and battlement of the church, and south porch thereof.

In the Philosophical Transactions, abridged by Lowthorp, vol. ii. p. 179. is an account of one Jeremiah Skelton, who was killed by lightning, in a barn at Warley, in this parish, Dec. 22, 1698. This happened in one of the winter months, but is not quite singular; for Borlase, in his Natural History of Cornwall, has given an instance of this kind, which fell out on the 20th of December, 1752, in that county, and observes, that the ravages of lightning are not limited to a season.

The uncommon contagious disorders which have happened here, are chiefly these. First, The sweating sickness, called by foreigners, the English sweat, or Sudor Anglicanus, because it was reported to be peculiar to England, and its natives. It first appeared in 1481, and returned in the years 1485, 1506, 1517, 1528, and 1529, at which time alone (as we are told by

Valangin,