

FOREWORD.

This book is largely based on a series of articles which appeared under the author's name in the "Huddersfield Weekly Examiner" during the year 1930.

The purpose of the original articles was solely to create interest in local history and local lore; there was no thought at the outset of ultimately evolving a book.

Judging from the kindly reception of the articles by the general public and the voluminous correspondence that ensued, the first object was fully accomplished. Letters were received, not only from the immediate neighbourhood and from all parts of England, but also from as far afield as America, Canada, Australia and South Africa. "Exiles" in far off lands gave a ready welcome to these simple efforts to tell the story of their "homeland."

Before long there were numerous requests that the results thus attained should take a more permanent form in a book dealing with the History of Huddersfield.

Although I welcomed the idea I also saw quite clearly the difficulties in carrying out the idea. A newspaper article is not always a safe foundation on which to build a permanent record. Many of the articles had been artificially restricted owing to exigencies of space, &c.; much "touching-up" would be required and many would have to be completely re-written, while the whole series would have to be rounded off. After much hesitation I decided to make the effort, knowing full well that many of the deficiencies of the finished product would be due to these distinct phases in its evolution.

At the same time I feel that the book will supply a real want. Without in any way belittling the efforts of other local historians, I feel there is room for a general history of Huddersfield written from a different angle from the others and giving in a popular yet scholarly way the main threads of the development of our town and neighbourhood.

Much, of course, had to be sacrificed—I am no archæologist, and the stone-age dwellers I willingly leave to specialists. My aim has been to give the ordinary reader a general picture of what our district was like at various epochs; of the many things of historical worth in our midst; of how modern Huddersfield has its roots deep in the past.

Local patriotism is very strong in our district, but all too often it takes a wrong orientation; there is not enough respect for the historic past, and this is doubly necessary in the age of democracy, for democracy is somewhat new with us and has not yet developed a liking for such things as tradition and sentiment. It too frequently falls a prey to the vandals who talk about "progress" without knowing the true meaning of the word. What destruction has been carried out in the "sacred" name of progress!

To the vandals there is nothing venerable in the survivals of past ages; "these old ruins" cumber the earth; let us demolish them completely and build "public conveniences" on the spot. Only a careful study of local history can rectify this point of view by creating a sound public opinion alive to the real aspects of the case. I am, therefore, asking my reader to step out of this present age of speed and scurry, of industrialism and exploitation, into the days of long ago, into the restful quiet of the cloisters, and there pause and muse awhile—dream dreams, too, if you wish. We will, as it were, take a voyage down the ages and arrive at length back in the 20th century, possibly enlightened, with greater civic pride and a full consciousness that we are citizens of no mean city.

Then, may be, the journey over, this ancient monument, that old landmark, that time hallowed custom, will, after all, seem worthy of preservation, both for its intrinsic value and for the story it can unfold—another site may even be found for the very necessary, but very mundane "conveniences."

Now for an expression of thanks to all those who have in any way helped to make this work a labour of love—to the Proprietors of the "Huddersfield Examiner" for their kind permission to use the articles already referred to; to my old friend, Mr. W. H. Sikes, for valuable help in so many ways and for allowing me to reproduce so many of his splendid photographs of local views; to Mr. Philip Ahier, without whose assistance many of the errors of the original articles would have remained undetected, and who has put at my disposal the results of his independent researches into local history. I owe to Mr. Ahier the many genealogical tables to be found in the book, and express my deep sense of gratitude to him for reading the final MSS. before it went to the press.

My indebtedness to Mr. Hobkirk and Mr. D. F. E. Sykes is apparent from the many quotations from their books. To others, too numerous to mention by name, I offer my sincere thanks.

As regards the blocks that illustrate the book, my indebtedness is due to Mr. W. H. Sikes for supplying most of the photographs, and to the Proprietors of the "Huddersfield Examiner" for the loan of some 30 blocks that illustrated my articles in their weekly paper.

The reader will at once notice the difference in the illustrations, some being half-tone blocks, made specially for the book, others being newspaper blocks unavoidably used to save expense.

A word of praise, too, for the Publishers, who have expended much thought and care on the production of this book.

Finally, I trust my many readers will not be disappointed with the book they asked for. It does not claim any originality, save possibly that of arrangement and method; it is not intended to be an exhaustive treatise, but rather a general survey, and as such I shall be amply repaid for the time and labour expended if it takes its place as a well documented, carefully compiled contribution to the History of Huddersfield & District.

TAYLOR DYSON.

SCHOOL HOUSE,
ALMONDBURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL,
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