

# Silkstone.

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THE  
HISTORY AND TOPOGRAPHY  
OF THE  
PARISH OF SILKSTONE  
IN THE  
COUNTY OF YORK.

BY THE  
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All Saints Church, Silkstone.

TO

**The Miners**

OF THE PARISH OF SILKSTONE  
THIS HISTORY  
IS RESPECTFULLY  
DEDICATED.

## PREFACE.



THE Author has dedicated this book to the Miners of the Parish of Silkstone with respect. He has worked in their midst for nearly twenty years as a country parson, and has learnt to love and respect them. In travelling in different parts of England where no coal mines exist, he has felt the character of the miner is often misunderstood. Speaking for those amongst whom he has worked, he has found many true and loyal friends. Their work is difficult, dangerous, and trying, but the grimy black of the miner is only skin deep and many of them are intelligent, hard-working, excellent men.

It is a joy to the author to note the change in conditions existing in the mines to-day with those described in this book, in the chapter dealing with the coal mines (*see pp. 107-109*); and he asks his reader when at times he grows pessimistic with the state of affairs in England, to read those pages and see how much we really have gone forward during the past hundred years (*see pp. 118-122*). Looking back over the old Parish Registers, he finds the majority of the inhabitants of this Parish were then illiterate, and in his many conversations with the old residents finds a rough mode of life both as regards morals and behaviour to have been common. To-day there is an earnest and praiseworthy effort being quietly made by many of the miners of South Yorkshire to educate themselves and take an interest in things likely to improve their condition of life. Increasing numbers are availing themselves of the Technical Schools after the day's work and qualifying for deputies and under-managers, whilst many of them are denying themselves to enable their children to go to the local Grammar Schools and get a good education. All these things point to a better England. With regard to religion, as a class they are not opposed to it, but open-minded, as is Labour generally. Their church is often the Working Men's Club, where they read and discuss current

topics and take a glass of beer, but in the author's humble opinion the parson, if he be a man, can always find a ready welcome in these clubs and there get to know the men and respect them. Some of the happiest hours of the author have been spent in these clubs, and he has never felt his remarks or presence resented, only the reverse.

It is therefore with the hope to increase the thoughtful man's love of past history, and encourage him to fresh efforts, that the author has written this History. He is himself a great lover of books, and in reading the story of this ancient Parish, referred to by many writers, he thought it might be a good thing to gather such information together in book form.

The History contains the story of the present Parish of Silkstone and a short account of the Townships of West Bretton, Cawthorne, Barnsley (now a borough), Dodworth, Stainborough, Thurgoland, and Hoyland Swaine, all of which nominally belong, in the author's opinion, to the Parish of Silkstone.

The basis of information regarding these townships has been Hunter's "Deanery of Doncaster," and he has made liberal use of it for two reasons: (i.) he has found the information therein given generally accurate, (ii.) the book is now scarce and expensive and out of reach of the average reader. He offers his thanks to the son of the late Mr. G. H. Teasdale, of Silkstone, for permission to use any of his father's papers relating to Silkstone coal, etc. The rest of the information is taken from various sources, old deeds and records. To Mr. Percival Johnson, of Nabbs; the neighbouring clergy; Mr. E. Hoyle; Mr. Plumpton, of the *Barnsley Chronicle*; Dr. F. Horne, of Barnsley, and many other local gentlemen his thanks are due, and especially to the old miners about Silkstone with whom the author has had many interesting talks about old days.

*Silkstone,*

*Feb. 15th, 1922.*



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## CHAPTER I.

### *SILKSTONE.*



THE name Silkstone is well known to many people, as it gives its name to a famous bed of coal, the outcrop of which is in the village itself. Contrary to expectation, instead of being a large mining centre, disfigured with pit-heads and large industrial works, it is a pretty English village with very little signs of the coal industry: and any visitor arriving at the station cannot fail to be charmed with the view of the village below, nestling in the valley, with its noble church at the far end. The surrounding country is well wooded, and the pleasant sites of Stainborough Castle and Cannon Hall are all near at hand, and one can easily picture in one's mind what a beautiful country this part of Yorkshire must have been before the advent of industrial progress and the building of the large factories and works at Penistone, Barnsley, and Sheffield. Even to-day the country is very beautiful, being on the fringe of the famous Yorkshire moors, and if the number of octogenarians who sleep in the old churchyard is any criterion, Silkstone is a very healthy place.

Silkstone is spelt in various ways. In "Domesday" the spelling is Silchestone, and in old deeds the spelling is Sylkestone, Silkestone, Sylkeston, Silchstone, Silkestun. The derivation of the word is doubtful. Most probably it denoted a well-wooded district, a corruption of the Saxon "syl," *cf.* sylvan, "wooded." Even to-day the district is well wooded, and in those early days probably it would be a wild wooded place, hence name, Silkstone.

Hunter, in his history of the Deanery of Doncaster, raises the very interesting question in dealing with the Parish of Silkstone as to whether the mother-church in Saxon times was situate at Cawthorne or Silkstone. If we turn to the Domesday Book we find the following entries regarding Silkstone and Cawthorne under Staincross Wapentac.<sup>1</sup> I use translations as given by the Rev. Wm. Bawdwen in his translation of the Record called Domesday for the County of York, etc.

Manor. "In Calthorne, Gospatric had one carucate<sup>2</sup> to be taxed. Land to half a plough."

<sup>1</sup> The old Deira, the Latinized British "Deur," of the kingdom of Northumbria had in the time of Domesday become the County of Yorkshire, with its three greater divisions of Trithings, since corrupted into Ridings, and with all its lesser divisions of Wapentakes, so called from the custom of touching arms when the Hundreder or High Constable of the District entered upon his office. The Stone Cross of the accustomed meeting-place—the Moot—of this division was in or near Staincross and gave origin to its name.

<sup>2</sup> A carucate was as much land as one team could plough in one year (generally from sixty to one hundred and twenty acres). A bovate of land was an allotment to a person furnishing an ox to a plough-team, about one-eighth of a carucate.