



HISTORY OF SKIPTON

(W. R. YORKS.)

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND INDEX.

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PREFACE.

BEFORE I began the preparation of this book, it had always been to me matter for surprise that the history of Skipton had continued so long unwritten. The annals of our ancient town being so remarkable, and the material so abundant, it seemed unaccountable that a History of Skipton was not in existence even before Dr. Whitaker gave to the world his inimitable *History of the Antiquities of Craven*. As a *comprehensive history* of the district, that learned and laborious work will long hold an undisputed position. But necessarily it fails to do adequate justice to individual places, and least of all does it meet the want of Craven's capital. It was the knowledge, therefore, that a separate and full History of Skipton was felt to be a real need which led to the undertaking of the present work.

Moreover, since the time when Dr. Whitaker wrote, eighty years have run their course, and in that period the material available for topographical works has greatly increased. It would, indeed, have been an act of presumption, to say the least, to have projected this work if I had been unable to record anything further regarding our town than has been before the reading world for eighty years. But in undertaking the present History, it was a very gratifying circumstance that I came across a large amount of what may be termed *new* information about Skipton, as well as about the many stirring events, military and otherwise, of which it has been the scene in bygone years, and about those worthy men and women who, issuing from this secluded district, have in various ways gained for themselves enduring fame and honour. My aim has throughout been to avoid, as much as might be, repetition of matter already well known, and to introduce facts and incidents with

which only very few can be acquainted. It should here be stated that the second edition of Whitaker's *Craven* (1812) has been made the standard in case of reference.

It would serve no good purpose to particularise here the many sources of information to which I have been led in the preparation of this History; and this is the less necessary as my authority is usually given in the case of matters of more than ordinary importance. I must, however, acknowledge great indebtedness for the permission I have had to go through the accumulation of MSS. belonging to Baron Hothfield, in Skipton Castle, and to consult the valuable Library at Eshton Hall, the residence of Sir Mathew Wilson, Bart., M.P. The invaluable aid obtained from the Castle Evidences will be best seen from the frequent reference made to them throughout this work. Nor must I omit to acknowledge the kindness and courtesy of other known and unknown friends. I would express my obligation, for suggestions and information, to Mr. R. H. Sidgwick, J.P., of Skipton; Mr. T. Brayshaw, of Settle, and others who are named hereafter; while for the loan of engravings I have to thank Mr. J. Dodgson, of Leeds, the publisher of the third edition of Whitaker (pages 51, 79, 170, and 171); Mr. J. A. Busfield, J.P., of Upwood, Bingley (page 211); Mr. W. Smith, F.S.A.S., of Morley (page 223), and Mr. W. Andrews, F.H.S., of Hull (pages 292 and 296.) Thanks are also due to a numerous body of subscribers, a list of whom is regretfully yet unavoidably excluded.

To conclude. This book has not been written with the idea of satisfying any literary ambition. The project was conceived, and it has been carried into effect, with the single desire that my native town might have its history recorded in a form worthy of its importance and its fame; and this is my only claim—that strict impartiality and honesty have guided the pen as it has run over every line and every page. Of the research and labour involved in this undertaking, I will only say that they have all along been a source of pure pleasure.

W. H. D.

Skipton, 1882.