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THE ANCIENT BOROUGH OF

BRIDGWATER HE COUNTY OF SOMERSE

IN THE COUNTY OF SOMERSET BY THE

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Author of Our Eternal Life Here; God Speaking in Nature;

The Influence of Jeremy Bentham upon Modern Thought and Legislation;

Sources of Eighteenth Century Deism, etc. WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS BRIDGWATER: PAGE AND SON

1907

PREFACE

THIS book is an attempt to set forth some of the incidents of the past history of a town whose antiquity is great, and whose story has been singularly varied. From the early part of the thirteenth century up to the close of the seventeenth the place throbbed with energy; they were five centuries whose characteristic, here, was action. It is with this period, in the main, that the following pages are concerned. From the dawn of the eighteenth century, and onwards, a quieter mood crept over Bridgwater. To chronicle this later period would require a separate volume, and entirely different treatment. It is therefore excluded from the scope of the book. Perhaps another hand may some day take up the task.

The difficulty has lain chiefly in selecting from the abundance of documentary and other evidence which has been available. A vast number of notes, carefully prepared, have had to be omitted by reason of the need of keeping the book within the due limit of size. A possible objection might be taken to the title, for although the town is always spoken of as the Ancient Borough, it was created a county by Henry VIII when he raised Henry Daubeney to the earldom of Bridgwater. This creation, so far as I know, has never been annulled, and presumably it exists still. But the town authorities, who at that time were in possession of ample privileges, allowed the higher title and privilege to lapse by non-use. Queen Elizabeth's Charter refers to Our Town or Burrough of Bridgwater in our County of Somersett hence my adoption of the usual designation.

It is mainly to the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood that the book is addressed, rather than to the antiquary or the historian. It has afforded me the keenest pleasure to observe the interest which Bridgwater people take in the history of their town, and I am grateful to them for the kindly welcome which they have given to this book.

A word should be said as to the exceeding value and interest of the original documents which are now in the possession of the municipal rulers of this place. These parchments are replete with information, and I earnestly hope that they may some day be published. In many an English borough the choicest historical documents are similarly stored away. All these, it is hoped, may some day be given to the public, and their hidden knowledge revealed to the student and to those who have every right to possess it.

Chapters i, ii, iv, xiii, and xiv are contributed by my friend the Rev. W. H. P. Greswell. They will be found to be of deep interest, since they are the work of a very competent hand. I have many thanks to express to many friends for help given to me in various ways. First, to Mr. Greswell, not only for his literary contribution, but also for advice given and for help rendered in every direction. I am indebted to the Mayor and Corporation of Bridgwater for permission to see the municipal and other documents of which they have the custody, and notably to the Town Clerk for his extreme courtesy in giving me access to them. To Mr. Broadmead of Enmore Castle I am grateful for constant reference to his excellent Somerset library, and to some valuable Bridgwater documents which he possesses. Mr. G. W. Jarman has been most kind in helping me to explore the battlefield of Sedgemoor; Mr. Godfrey Page and Mr. Cottam, F.R.A.S., have with great kindness provided me with some excellent drawings and a map; Mr. Kitch has been most diligent in photographing, and in other helpful ways. I am indebted to Mr. Charles Major for a photograph of Idstock ruined chapel, and also for much information about the old town. To Mr. Maurice Page I wish also to offer my hearty thanks for his great care and diligence in all the work which he has so kindly and well done in matters connected with the preparation of the book.

ARTHUR H. POWELL.

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Edited by Tony & Jane Woolrich, 23/04/2020

Editorial note

The footnotes have been moved to the end of each chapter

Rev W. H. P. Greswell.

Chapters I, II, IV, XIII, and XIV of this volume were written by his friend Rev W. H. P. Greswell. (1848-1923) who was an authority on the ancient history of the Somerset. After leaving University he moved to South Africa and lectured at Cape Town University, and became an authority on Colonialism. He returned to Somerset in the 1880s on his appointment to the living of Dodington, near Holford. While there he published a series of books on Colonial geography and history. They have all been digitised and may be consulted readily online. They show a formidable intellectual and writing ability.

Greswell was born in 1848, a son of Rev William Parr Greswell and Mary Ann Greswell. He was the vicar of Kilve. He married Blanche Carew in 1895, and he died in January 1923.

Obituary from the *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, 31 January 1923

ARCHÆOLOGIST

The funeral took place Bicknoller near Taunton, on Tuesday, of the Rev William Henry Parr Greswell, of Martlet House, Minehead, who died last Friday in Minehead and West Somerset Hospital while awaiting an operation. The son the Rev. W. H. Greswell, rector of Kilve, Mr. Greswell was scholar who won great distinction at home and the Colonies. Educated at the Somersetshire College Bath, and Brasenose College, Oxford, he numbered among his attainments those M.A., classical scholar, and exhibitioner. He was also an F.R.G.S. was lecturer of classics and English literature under the Higher Education Act of the Legislature in South Africa, [at Cape University TW] and drew upon his experience of this and Colonies in the writing of several books on Colonial history, geography, and administration. In 1888 he was appointed to the living of Dodington, in the Quantock country, and subsequent publications from his pen included a painstaking work The Land of Quantock. He was secretary the Committee which was formed, under the chairmanship of the Earl of Lyton, to acquire Coleridge's cottage, at Nether Stowey, for the nation and was of the trustees of that property. He was the author also of book Forests and Deer Parks Somerset, and The Dumnonia and the Valley of the Parret. The latter book was only published

few days before his death, and the author sought to establish the theory, on watch there has been much controversy among archæologists that the battle of Cynuit. Where King Alfred broke the power the Danes and slew their leader, Ubba, was fought at Combwich near the mouth of the Parret, and not near Bideford, as some contend. Mr. Greswell was an esteemed member the Somerset Archæological Society since 1892 and a member of the Council of the Society, which was represented at the funeral by Mr, M. H. St George Gray. Mr. Greswell was one of the founders the Somerset Cricket Club and a player considerable repute.

Publications

Our South African empire, (London, 1885)

England and her colonies. The five best essays on imperial federation, submitted to the London chamber of commerce for their prize competition, and recommended for publication by the judges: J. Anthony Froude, Professor J. R. Seeley, M.A., and Sir Rawson W. Rawson. (London,1887)

History of the Dominion of Canada, (Oxford, Clarendon press, 1890),

Geography of the Dominion of Canada and Newfoundland, (Oxford, Clarendon press, 1891

Geography of Africa south of the Zambesi, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1892)

Outlines of British colonisation. (London, Percival and Co., 1893)

The British colonies and their industries. (London, G. Philip, 1898)

The growth and administration of the British colonies, 1837-1897, (London, Blackie, 1898)

The United States and their industries. (London, Liverpool, G. Philip & son, 1899)

The land of Quantock; a descriptive and historical account, (Taunton 1903)

Forests & deer parks of the county of Somerset. (Taunton 1905)

Report on the excavations at Wick Barrow, Stogursey, Somersetshire; (Taunton, 1908), With Harold St. George Gray, C. W. Whistler, and Albany F. Major

Chapters on the early history of Glastonbury abbey, (Taunton 1909)

The story of the Battle of Edington, (Taunton 1910)

Dumnonia and the valley of the Parret, (Taunton 1922)