The Victoria history of Berkshire

Ditchfield P H
The Victoria History of the Counties of England
EDITED BY WILLIAM PAGE, F.S.A.

A HISTORY OF BERKSHIRE
VOLUME I
This History is issued to Subscribers only
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INSCRIBED
TO THE MEMORY OF
HER LATE MAJESTY
QUEEN VICTORIA
WHO GRACIOUSLY GAVE
THE TITLE TO AND
ACCEPTED THE
DEDICATION OF
THIS HISTORY
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GENERAL ADVERTISEMENT

The Victoria History of the Counties of England is a National Historic Survey which, under the direction of a large staff comprising the foremost students in science, history, and archaeology, is designed to record the history of every county of England in detail. This work was, by gracious permission, dedicated to Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, who gave it her own name. It is the endeavour of all who are associated with the undertaking to make it a worthy and permanent monument to her memory.

Rich as every county of England is in materials for local history, there has hitherto been no attempt made to bring all these materials together into a coherent form.

Although from the seventeenth century down to quite recent times numerous county histories have been issued, they are very unequal in merit; the best of them are very rare and costly; most of them are imperfect, and many are now out of date. Moreover they were the work of one or two isolated scholars, who, however scholarly, could not possibly deal adequately with all the varied subjects which go to the making of a county history.

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In the Victoria History each county is not the labour of one or two men, but of many, for the work is treated scientifically, and in order to embody in it all that modern scholarship can contribute, a system of co-operation between experts and local students is applied, whereby the history acquires a completeness and definite authority hitherto lacking in similar undertakings.

The names of the distinguished men who have joined the Advisory Council are a guarantee that the work represents the results of the latest discoveries in every department of research, for the trend of modern thought insists upon the intelligent study of the past and of the social, institutional and political developments of national life. As these histories are the first in which this object has been kept in view, and modern principles applied, it is hoped that they will form a work of reference no less indispensable to the student than welcome to the man of culture.

THE SCOPE OF THE WORK

The history of each county is complete in itself, and in each case its story is told from the earliest times, commencing with the natural features and the flora and fauna. Thereafter follow the antiquities, pre-Roman, Roman and post-Roman; ancient earthworks; a new translation and critical study of the Domesday Survey; articles on political, ecclesiastical, social and economic history; architecture, arts, industries, sport, etc.; and topography. The greater part of each history is devoted to a detailed description and history of each parish, containing an account of the land and its owners from the Conquest to the present day. These manorial histories are compiled from original documents in the national collections and from private papers. A special feature is the wealth of illustrations afforded, for not only are buildings of interest pictured, but the coats of arms of past and present landowners are given.

HISTORICAL RESEARCH

It has always been, and still is, a reproach that England, with a collection of public records greatly exceeding in extent and interest those of any other country in Europe, is yet far behind her neighbours in the study of the genesis and growth of her national and local institutions. Few Englishmen are probably aware that the national and local archives contain for a period of 800 years in an almost unbroken chain of evidence, not only the political, ecclesiastical, and constitutional history of the kingdom, but every detail of its financial and social progress and the history of the land and its successive owners from generation to generation. The neglect of our public and local records is no doubt largely due to the fact that their interest and value is known to but a small number of people, and this again is directly attributable to the absence in this country of any endowment for historical research. The government of this country has too often left to private enterprise work which our continental neighbours entrust to a government department. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that although an immense amount of work has been done by individual effort, the entire absence of organization among the workers and the lack of intelligent direction has hitherto robbed the results of much of their value.

In the Victoria History, for the first time, a serious attempt is made to utilize our national and local muniments to the best advantage by carefully organizing and supervising the researches required. Under the direction of the Records Committee a large staff of experts has been engaged at the Public Record Office in calendering those classes of records which are fruitful in material for local history, and by a system of interchange of communication among workers under the direct supervision of the general editor and sub-editors a mass of information is sorted and assigned to its correct place, which would otherwise be impossible.

THE RECORDS COMMITTEE

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FAMILY HISTORY

Family History is, both in the Histories and in the supplementary genealogical volumes of chart Pedigrees, dealt with by genealogical experts and in the modern spirit. Every effort is made to secure accuracy of statement, and to avoid the insertion of those legendary pedigrees which have in the past brought discredit on the subject. It has been pointed out by the late Bishop of Oxford, a great master of historical research, that 'the expansion and extension of genealogical study is a very remarkable feature of our own times,' that 'it is an increasing pursuit both in America and in England,' and that it can render the historian most useful service.

CARTOGRAPHY

In addition to a general map in several sections, each History contains Geological, Orographical, Botanical, Archaeological, and Domesday maps; also maps illustrating the articles on Ecclesiastical and Political Histories and the sections dealing with Topography. The Series contains many hundreds of maps in all.

ARCHITECTURE

A special feature in connexion with the Architecture is a series of ground plans, many of them coloured, showing the architectural history of castles, cathedrals, abbeys, and other monastic foundations.

In order to secure the greatest possible accuracy, the descriptions of the Architecture, ecclesiastical, military, and domestic are under the supervision of Mr. C. R. Peers, M.A., F.S.A., and a committee has been formed of the following students of architectural history who are referred to as may be required concerning this department of the work:

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE

Prof. Baldwin Brown, M.A.  Roland Paul, F.S.A.

GENEALOGICAL VOLUMES

The genealogical volumes contain the family history and detailed genealogies of such houses as had at the end of the nineteenth century seats and landed estates, having enjoyed the like in the male line since 1760, the first year of George III., together with an introductory section dealing with other principal families in each county.
The general plan of Contents and the names among others of those who are contributing articles and giving assistance are as follows:

**Natural History.**
- Geology. CLEMENT REID, F.R.S., HORACE B. WOODWARD, F.R.S., and others
- Palaeontology. R. L. LYDEKKER, F.R.S., etc.
- Fauna. Rev. T. R. R. STERRING, M.A., F.R.S., etc., and other Specialists
- Roman Remains. F. HAVERFIELD, M.A., LL.D., F.S.A.
- Domesday Book and other kindred Records. J. HORACE ROUND, M.A., LL.D., and other Specialists
- Ecclesiastical History. R. L. POOLE, M.A., and others
- History of Schools. A. F. LEACH, M.A., F.S.A.
- Maritime History of Coast Counties. Prof. J. K. LAUGHTON, M.A., M. OPPENHEIM, and others
- Topographical Accounts of Parishes and Manors. By Various Authorities
- Agriculture. SIR ERNEST CLARKE, M.A., Sec. to the Royal Agricultural Society, and others
- Forestry. J. HORACE ROUND, D.O.C., and others
- Industries, Arts and Manufactures. By Various Authorities
- Social and Economic History. By Various Authorities
- Ancient and Modern Sport. E. D. CUMING and others
- Hunting. By Various Authorities
- Fishing, etc. By Various Authorities
- Cricket. HOMER GORDON
- Football. C. W. ALCOCK