

**THE HISTORY OF
WINCANTON, SOMERSET,
FROM EARLIEST
TIMES TO THE YEAR 1903**

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The History of Wincanton, Somerset, from Earliest Times to the Year 1903 by George Sweetman

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GEORGE SWEETMAN

**THE HISTORY OF
WINCANTON, SOMERSET,
FROM EARLIEST
TIMES TO THE YEAR 1903**

E. S. Cardell. 1903.

THE
HISTORY OF 
 WINCANTON,
SOMERSET,

From the earliest times to the year 1903.

BY
GEORGE SWEETMAN.

AUTHOR OF

- "THE FRENCH IN WINCANTON,"
- "STAVORDALE PRIORY AND PEN PITS,"
- "WINCANTON FIRES FROM 1707,"
- "WINCANTON MEMORIALS,"
- "HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,"
- "WINCANTON SIXTY YEARS AGO,"
- "GLOSSARY OF WINCANTON DIALECT,"
- "GUIDE TO STOURHEAD,"
- "A SOLDIER'S LETTERS,"
- "A WEST COUNTRY POTTER," &c., &c.

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" " GEORGE SWEETMAN, WINCANTON.

JUNE, 1903.

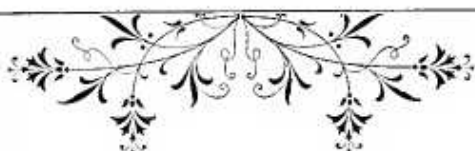


**SHEPHERD'S
PRINTING WORKS,
WINCANTON.**

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PREFACE.



*I*N the following pages will be found a very large number of facts concerning those who have lived in Wincanton, or been in some way connected with it, during many centuries. Most of the principal characters have lived humdrum lives, apart from the great world of thought and action. Wincanton has been, and is, no doubt, a place typical of thousands of other places in the kingdom of King Edward the Seventh; but the writer remembers that of the history of such places the greater history of the United Kingdom is made up. No doubt that there are here inelegancies of expression, and, what is worse, inaccuracies as to the facts. As it is, however, being the writer's best effort, it must abide the verdict of public opinion, in common with much greater attempts. It has one negative virtue at least, "Naught is set down in malice."

545228
ENGLISH LOCAL



VIEW OF WINCANTON IN 1797.
(From an Engraving by Robert Newman.)

History of Wincanton.

INTRODUCTION.

“**H**AVE I read Sweetman’s local histories? No! he has never written any! He has simply used scissors and paste!” Such was the expressed estimate of my work some years ago, and I will not deny that it was fair, if blunt. Scissors and paste have their uses; by their aid accuracy is secured. They are even useful in works of romance, as I know to my surprise, inasmuch as an eminent writer of fiction recently cribbed freely from one of my former pamphlets for use in one of his novels, and never had the courtesy to acknowledge his indebtedness. Yes, they are useful. For thirty years I have been using scissors and paste, but in the main I have *copied* what I thought worth preserving. To those who have many years before them I commend this practice. It is as pleasant as it is useful. To transcribe an old, badly written, time-worn document, overcoming one difficulty after another, is as pleasant and exhilarating as climbing a mountain of snow, and not half so dangerous.

The genesis of this book is as follows:—In the year 1871, the Somerset Archæological Society held its annual meetings in Wincanton. One of the speakers at one of the meetings said, “Wincanton has no history.” Since then, the speaker has shown in a piece of good work that a much less populous

INTRODUCTION.

place than Wincanton has a history, and one worth writing and publishing. At the time, I said to myself, "Is that true?" I had read Collinson and Phelps and a few fragments besides, and those were all. I had heard of a mysterious Charter belonging to the town; what it was, I could not find any to tell me, but I determined to find out, if possible. I believed, though I had never seen the couplet, that—

"Attempt the end, and never stand to doubt,
Nothing's so hard, but search will find it out."

I got many rebuffs, but that kind-hearted young gentleman, the late Mr. Herbert Messiter, placed the documents belonging to the Town Charities at my disposal, which enabled me to bring out "Fires in Wincanton." The church-wardens, Messrs. Fowler and Langhorne, lent me the old parish books. The present and past rectors have given me many extracts from the Registers. I desire also to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Revs. E. H. Bates, F. W. Weaver, W. E. Daniel, Canon Mayo, Messrs. T. H. Baker, E. Green, W. Macmillan, J. H. Moule, C. Tite, Harold Gray, and many others, to whom I have often applied and never in vain.

To all these resources, I may add without boasting that I have always had an insatiable desire to know all that could be known of the past history of my native parish and of the people, rich and poor alike, who have spent their days here. With their habits, pursuits, sorrows and joys, I have sought to become acquainted. Though my eyes saw them not, nor my ears heard them, I have loved them. The very stones in the walls are dear to me. These pursuits and enquiries have helped to fill my life, and it is my desire by writing of them to fill the lives of others. Life never need be dull in the most out of the way place in the kingdom. It is as true of happiness as of religion—"He who seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."