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CRAYKE: Geographical and Historical information from the year 1890.

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Wapentake of Bulmer - Electoral Division of Stillington - Petty Sessional Division of Bulmer West - Poor Law Union, County Court District, and Rural Deanery of Easingwold - Archdeaconry of Cleveland - Diocese of York.

This parish, sometimes called Craikshire, comprises an area of 2,779 acres, and was formerly a part of the county of Durham, from which it was detached in 1844 and annexed to the North Riding for all purposes, in pursuance of an Act of 7 and 8 Victoria. Its rateable value is £4,268, and its population in 1881 was 501. The landowners are Capt. William Waite (and lord of the manor), Crayke Castle; Henry Yates Whytehead, M.D.; the Rev. H. R. Whytehead, Marlborough Rectory, Wilts; Henry Newton (trustees of), Crayke; and R. P. Smith, Esq., Cheltenham.

Crayke is a place of very great antiquity, its authentic history dating from the time of the Saxon Heptarchy; and long before that, it is said, the Romans had a *castellum exploratorium*, or watch-tower, on the hill of Crayke, but this statement appears doubtful, even though it has the authority of Drake, the able historian of York. A Roman road undoubtedly passed near Crayke, and the hill was most advantageously situated for such an outpost - commanding, as it does, a view of the country for miles around - but not a single relic has been found to show that it was occupied by the legions of Rome. It comes, however, into notice soon after the departure of the imperial flag. Simeon of Durham, who died about the year 1130, in his History of the Church of Durham, tells us that Egfrid, king of Northumbria, in A.D. 685, gave *Creca*, and all the land within a circuit of three miles round it, to St. Cuthbert, bishop of Lindisfarne, that the saint might have a resting-place in his journeys to and from the city of York. For this purpose, it is said, the holy Cuthbert founded a monastery here, which continued to flourish until the invasion of the country by the Danes. The sainted bishop died two years after this donation, and it may be doubted whether he ever beheld the walls of the abbey which he had founded. Some time later, Etha, spent the declining years of his pious ascetic life with the monks of

Crayke. Alcuin, a monk, and one of the most learned men of his time, was contemporary with this holy man, and thus extols his virtues in a Latin "Poem on the Bishops and Saints of York"

"Then flourished Etha, venerable man,
A holy anchorite in wilderness;
A secret life he sought, and in chaste zeal
Fled from all earthly honours, that, with God
His King, he might find honours at heaven's court;
Devoutly led on earth an angel's life,
And seem'd as if with prophetic pow'r inspired."

Etha died here, according to Simeon of Durham, in the year 767.

Upwards of a century passes and nothing is recorded of Crayke; but in the second half of the ninth century evil times fell upon Northumbria. The Danes, under Halfdane their leader, made a descent on the coast, burnt and plundered the priory at Tynemouth, and then went northward towards Lindisfarne. The bishop and monks, apprised of their coming, hastily collected their treasures and, taking with them the body of St. Cuthbert and the relics of St. Aidan, went forth in search of some safer retreat. They wandered about with their precious burden from place to place, resting at each for a time, and where afterwards arose churches dedicated to his name. After seven years Alfred the Great, having routed the Danes and obtained temporary quietness, by appointing Guthrum the Dane his tributary king in Northumbria, the monks who had wandered about in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire, now ventured to return to Northumbria, and were received into the abbey of Crayke, where they sojourned four months. This was in 882, the seventh year of their wanderings. The bishop and monks did not, however, return to their ruined abbey of Lindisfarne, but established the bishopric at Chester-le-Street, where it remained for 113 years, before it was finally settled at Durham, to which church the manor of Crayke subsequently belonged.

After the departure of the bishop and monks with their precious treasure Crayke Abbey is never again mentioned in the pages of history. It was probably shortly afterwards wrecked by the Danish marauders. There is no record of this spoliation, but it is certain that within a century a large portion of the parish had fallen into the hands of a Dane, named, in the *Liber Vitæ* of the Church of Durham, Earl Thured, who, in the latter part of the tenth century, gave to St. Cuthbert's see two hides of land in Crayke, two at Smeaton, and one at Sutton. The church appears to have recovered her own before the Norman Conquest, as we infer from Domesday Book, wherein it is said, "In *Creic* there are six carucates rateable to the gelt. Bishop Alwin held this as one manor. There is a church and priest."

The manor at this time seems to have comprehended the whole parish, but subsequently portions of the land were alienated, in what manner does not appear, and when the estate was sold by the last episcopal owner, Van Mildert, it contained about 1,000 acres. The purchaser was R. J. Thompson, Esq., who subsequently sold it to William Waite, Esq., of Holdgate, near York, father of the present owner.

The *Castle*. - It is probable that the Saxon bishops of Durham had a hall or manor-house here before the Conquest. Soon after that event a strong castle was erected on the hill, probably by Bishop Pudsey, who was a great builder. It was here, whilst on his way to London, that he contracted his last sickness. Aged and infirm, with impaired digestive organs, he is said to have indulged too freely at the table, and a surfeit was the consequence. He died at Howden a few days afterwards, on the third of March 1195.

During the next century and a half nothing is recorded of the castle. Edward III was here on the 19th of October, 1345, and issued a charter to the Prior and Convent of Durham, dated from Crayke, granting them permission to elect a new bishop in place of the learned Richard de Bury, deceased.

No certain traces of this Norman Castle now remain. The present square castellated peel was evidently a Tudor addition to the structure, which, according to Leland, was "erected totally by Neville, bishop of Durdome," (Durham), who died in 1457. It is four stories high, and was probably built for protection against the marauding Scots.

According to local tradition, the bishops had here an inclosed park or chase, in which deer were preserved as late as the reign of James I. The forestership of Crayke was no mean office, and Bishop Sherwood, who held the see of Durham from 1483 to 1494, deemed it not unworthy of bestowal upon his own nephew. The bishop possessed exclusive privileges in this forest, and it is said that he had the royal warrant to seize any of the king's deer that might stray from the forest of Galtres into his park at Crayke, provided that he himself kept his own park fence in good repair, and of such a height as to afford no facility of trespass.

The village of Crayke and what remains of the ancient castle are situated on the hill before mentioned, the summit of which commands one of the most extensive and varied prospects in Yorkshire. To the south stretches the plain of York, and in the far distance, some twelve miles away, is seen the noble pile of York minster - "like the form of a ship at sea; " northward the view is confined by the Hambleton Hills; in the dim distance westward may be seen the form of Whernside and the nearer and lesser heights of Craven and Wensleydale, and to the east the Yorkshire Wolds present their whole extent to the view. Some of the cottages bear marks of antiquity. A court leet and baron is held yearly at the Durham Ox. Mr. Walker of Escrick is receiver.

The Church (St. Cuthbert) stands near the castle, a little below the crest of the hill, and is

supposed to have been erected about the time of Henry VII. The chancel was restored by the late rector, Archdeacon Churton, and a few years later he added an aisle on the north side in memory of his son, who died at the age of 20 years. The benches are black oak, and there is a carved chancel screen of the same material. The tower contains three bells. In the belfry are preserved the stone effigies of a knight and his lady which formerly stood in the nave. They bear no inscription, but are supposed to represent Sir John Gibson and his wife, the lady of Wyndham. The living is a rectory in the patronage of the Crown, and held by the Rev. M. E. Stanbrough, M.A., Caius Coll., Cambridge. It is valued in the King's Books at £10, but is now worth £600 a year. The tithes have been commuted for £688, and there are about 50 acres of glebe land.

The Wesleyans and Primitive Methodists have each chapels in the village, and the Catholics had also a chapel here which was disused after the erection of the church at Easingwold.

The National school was built in 1846 at the joint expense of the late rector, Archdeacon Churton, and Dr. Whytehead.

CHARITIES. - John Bowman, Esq., in 1799, left by will £150, three per cent. consols, out of the interest thereof one shilling per week was to be paid to the schoolmaster for attending the Sunday school, and the remainder for educating poor children, The Rev. J. Watson Bowman, by deed of gift in 1805, conveyed the new schoolroom, cottage, and land, for the benefit of such clerks as shall be appointed by the rector for the time being. The Rev. Mr. Oworm left six acres of land at Farlington for the poor. Mrs. Orfeur left £250, a portion of the interest to be distributed in 12 twopenny loaves to as many poor persons every Sunday after service, and the remainder to be given away every Christmas day. The Rev. A. Jepson, rector, gave by deed of gift in 1756, the sum of £17, the interest to be distributed in bread every other Sunday, and the Rev. John Turner left a similar sum for the same purpose. Rent-charges amounting to 65s. were left by Thomas Grayson, Ralph Belwood, and Samuel Coates, for the poor. The poor also receive the rent of a piece of ground at Crayke, purchased with £120, which had been left by several persons.

[Description(s) from Bulmer's *History and Directory of North Yorkshire* (1890)]

Directories

- Transcript of the entry for the Post Office, professions and trades in [Bulmer's Directory \(/big/eng/YKS/NRY/Crayke/Crayke90Dry\)](http://big/eng/YKS/NRY/Crayke/Crayke90Dry) of 1890.

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