

HERALDIC DECORATION OF THE DRAWBRIDGE OF THE MEDIEVAL BRIDGE OF ROCHESTER

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IN the Bridge Wardens' Council Chamber there has hung for many years an oil painting of the old bridge, a reproduction of which appeared in *Archæologia Cantiana* (Vol. XXXV, facing page 138). Although its artistic merits are not of a high order, its topographical value is great, for the leading features of the structure are well portrayed. It is a matter of regret that the date of the picture is not known. The late Mr. A. A. Arnold (the writer of the article which the picture illustrates) suggested that its date is probably about 1734 and that the picture was painted for the well-known Rochester antiquary Dr. Thorpe, who had collected a mass of material about the bridge which occupies four of the many volumes of the Thorpe MSS. now in the library of the Society of Antiquaries. There seems a possibility that the picture was based upon an earlier one, or that Dr. Thorpe may have had certain features added to it, which had disappeared in the course of time and of later alterations. A feature of the drawbridge in the picture is a series of posts with some "form" surmounting them, the significance of which must have puzzled many who have viewed the picture. The solution of this matter, the present writer believes, is to be found in an account of work done for the drawbridge, preserved in Vol. CXCVIII, i., ii. of the Thorpe MSS.

For the following extracts from the accounts of the Wardens of Rochester Bridge the writer of this communication owes to Mr. H. S. London, F.S.A., his sincere thanks, and to the same gentleman his gratitude and appreciation of his kindness and learning in describing the heraldic significance of the beasts, adding thereby so much interest to the record of their addition to the Rochester Bridge drawbridge :

The first of Thorpe's drawbridge extracts¹ is from an account dated 3rd and 4th Henry V. Then come three extracts from accounts which he has not dated, and then this :—

The Drawbridge plancked the Beastes made and sett up the new Iron work and the Drawbridge with the Beastes painted.

Paid to Gyles Fysher for cuttinge of fowre Beastes viz. the Lyon, the Unicorne the Bucke and the Greyhonde at XII.s a peece. XLVIII.s.

¹ Thorpe MSS. *penes* Soc. Antiq. Vol. CXCVIII, parts i and ii, fo. 24.

Paid to Gyles Fysher for cutting of six beasts viz. the Bull Boare Dragon Leopard Talbott and Panther at XII.s. the beast. III Li.XII.s.

Paid by (John Haggett) to a Joyner for boaringe of forty holes in the heeles of the beastes of the Drawbridge and for cutting a Crowne of wood for the Lyon VIII.d.

Paid to Thomas Mason for forty great wayles to sett the beastes on the ten postes of the Drawbridge waying eleven pounds at III.d. the pounde. II.s.IX.d.

The Accompt &c.,
fol. 24 v.

To Phillip Pue painter for an imprest for the painting and gilding of the beastes over and about 5 li. paid him on the last years accompt II.li.

To Phillip Pue painter in part of a more somme for painting the Drawbridge and Beasts over and above 40.s. already paid him 7.li.

The Accompt &c.

Item geven to Willson for taking upp one of the Booles hornes in The Thames being beaten of a mad fellowe II.d.

The Accompt &c.

It is unfortunate that Thorpe omitted to note the dates of the accounts from which the above extracts were taken, but the choice of beasts leaves no doubt that they were ordered between Henry VIII's marriage to Jane Seymour on 30th May, 1536, and Jane's death on 14th October, 1537. As will appear from the following notes, nine out of the ten beasts were associated either with the royal house or with the Seymours. One only, the talbot, had no such connection, so far as I know.

LYON. The provision of a "crown of wood for the Lyon" shows that this is the royal supporter, and not the "leopard" of the arms. Henry VII used a dragon and a greyhound as supporters, and Henry VIII used the same two beasts in the early part of his reign, but he soon discarded the greyhound, setting a lion on the dexter side and moving the dragon to the sinister. The lion, guardant and with a royal crown, has been used by all his successors except Queen Mary.

UNICORN. I can find no vestige of this as a royal badge or supporter before the accession of James I, who replaced the Tudor dragon by one of his Scottish unicorns. But the unicorn was a Seymour badge and Willement gives the arms of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour supported by the royal lion and the Seymour unicorn. (*Regal Heraldry*, Pl. XVI.)

BUCKE. This is the well-known badge of Richard II, more often called a white hart. In Henry VIII's reign one of the royal ships was called the *Hart*, and the white hart is mentioned in divers manuscripts

as one of his badges. In 26 Hen. VIII. Antonio Toto made two standards "of the white hart" for the King, and one of the standards carried at Queen Mary's funeral displayed a white hart.

GREYHONDE. A white greyhound, generally with a red collar, was used as a supporter by Henry VII and Mary. Henry VIII sometimes used it and, in common with several of his successors, he engraved one on the reverse of the great seal, running beside his charger. Some writers have thought that this was a Neville badge, used by Henry VII for his wife, Elizabeth of York. It has, however, been found as a Beaufort badge and a passage in the Chronicle of Adam of Usk¹ shows that it was also given by Henry IV; perhaps both he and the Beauforts derived it from John of Gaunt.

BULL. This may be the black bull of Clarence, which occurs in sundry lists of Henry VIII's badges. But (a) Henry VII displayed at Bosworth a banner with a *dun* cow; (b) Henry VIII is said to have given as badge and used sometimes as supporter a *white* bull; and (c) a *blue* bull was a Seymour badge. The *Bull* occurs in a navy list of the reign of Edward VI.

BOARE. A boar is said to have been given by Edward III as badge for the honour of Windsor. It was one of the badges of the House of York and was Richard III's favourite device. I do not know it as a specially Tudor badge, and we cannot exclude the possibility that the blue boar of Vere was meant.² If the white boar was intended, it must have been included for Henry VIII's mother, Elizabeth of York.

DRAGON. The red dragon of Cadwallader was given as badge, in token of their Welsh descent, by Henry VII, Henry VIII, and Edward VI. Elizabeth preferred to colour it gold.

LEOPARD. Willement (*loc. cit.*) illustrates the arms of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn supported by a leopard and the male griffin of Ormond. The leopard has a crown about its neck with dangling chain. Apart from its leonine tail, it is a very natural looking beast; it was perhaps taken from the arms of Guyenne, one of the quarterings which Henry granted to Anne Boleyn. Ten such leopards were set up in the "New Garden" at Hampton Court, but when Anne was executed, the Kingston carver, Harry corant, was ordered to alter them to panthers by changing the heads and tails. It is most improbable that Anne's leopard would have been set on the drawbridge cheek by jowl with Jane's unicorn and panther, and we must, I think, take it that the Rochester leopard was one of the beasts from the royal arms, alias a lion passant guardant.

TALBOT. This is unknown to me as either a royal or a Seymour

¹ Ed. Maunde Thompson, 1904, p. 172-3.

² A canting badge, Latin *verres*, old French *verre*, a boar. As a Yorkist badge, it has been suggested that the "bore" was taken as an anagram for "Ebor"

badge. It is best known as badge of the Earl of Shrewsbury, and other Talbots, but a hound or talbot was also given by Devereux, Ferrars and Stapleton.

PANTHER. This is familiar as a badge of Beaufort, Somerset and Seymour. A manuscript in the College of Arms, I. 2, compiled about 1540, has the arms of "Regina Jane" supported by a unicorn and a fire-breathing panther.¹ It is there depicted with a head rather like a horse but with a camel's ears, and the whole creature is painted in blurred stripes of many colours somewhat like marbled paper. Later the panther was drawn in more natural guise, and instead of its multi-coloured stripes it was dappled with roundels of divers colours, whilst flames issued from its ears and nose as well as from its mouth.

It seems probable that these beasts were intended as a merely temporary decoration, for the late Sir Alfred Clapham told me that for a permanent job the Tudor craftsman would not have contemplated the fixing of the beasts by means of "nayles" through holes bored in their heels, but would have mortised them into holes cut in the posts.

We may compare this decoration of the drawbridge with that in the Privy Garden at Hampton Court Palace,² and with that on the stone bridge over the moat there.³ In regard to the Privy Garden, Ernest Law cites an account for the provision of 4 dragons, 6 lions, 5 greyhounds, 5 harts, and 5 unicorns.⁴ He says that the accounts, now in the Public Record Office, were made up fortnightly, but he does not date the extracts. It would, however, seem that work in the garden was begun in Anne Boleyn's day and continued into Jane Seymour's time, if not longer.

It would be interesting if some Rochester antiquary could find why the talbot was included in this menagerie, and whether the boar was there as a Yorkist or a Vere badge.

¹ Fo. 15. See reproduction in *Banners, Standards and Badges* (De Walden Library, 1904), p. 18.

² Sir W. H. St. J. Hope, F.S.A., *Heraldry for Craftsmen and Designers*, pp. 244, 245.

³ "On the Stone Bridge at Hampton Court," by Sir C. R. Peers, F.S.A., in *Archæologia*, Vol. LXII; "The King's Beasts at Hampton Court," by the Rev. E. E. Dorling, F.S.A., in *The Leopards of England*, p. 39.

⁴ *Hampton Court Palace*, 2nd edition, I. p. 370.