

Robin Clayton

The Seaxe



Newsletter of the Middlesex Heraldry Society

Joint Editors - Don & Marjorie Kirby, 2 Jamnagar Close, Staines, Middlesex TW18 2JT (0784 456049)

No.1

(Founded 1976)

October 1994

EDITORIAL

Well, here it is at last - the first issue of the new look Newsletters. We are all growing older and membership of the Society does not increase to any significant degree which means that material for *The Seaxe* has all but dried up whilst the newer, younger members are not yet ready to carry the burden. Your Committee has therefore decided that we should have a Newsletter - quarterly, every two months or even monthly (as they used to say in the shipping world) "if sufficient inducement"! It is intended that *The Seaxe* Newsletter will include reports of visits, etc. much nearer to the time of the actual event, notes on future events, comments and correspondence and, a hitherto untapped source of much heraldic knowledge - a synopsis of every monthly lecture - providing, of course, that the lecturer is in full agreement to our making a tape of the actual talk. In fact some lecturers have loaned us their own tapes of the talk and even, in one instance, a copy of the speaker's own notes.

But, to quote a trite remark. "Rome wasn't built in a day" and we must ask you to bear with us in terms of frequency and of chronology in clearing the backlog. And - PLEASE - if you have anything to say, drop us a line or give us a note at one of our meetings. Don't worry about typing - we have had a lot of experience of deciphering handwriting - and we can always ask, can't we? Help us to get *The Seaxe* on the road again to become a living link between present and past members and with other societies. If you don't like the idea of the Newsletter or the format do let us know - and if you do like them let us know that too! Don't let us lose the reputation which a member of another society once described as "that power-house known as the Middlesex Heraldry Society".

HERALDIC EXPERIENCES - from Margaret Young

In October 1991 we visited All Saints Old Church in Chelsea as, having been bombed during the second World War, the exterior looks quite new but the interior is obviously very old with many fine tombs dating back over four or five centuries. We also found much heraldry. After lunch we walked through the back streets of Chelsea to St. Columba's Church. It was a delightful walk through streets lined with beautiful houses of the Georgian and Regency periods. Strangely it all seemed very remote from the hustle and bustle of everyday London only just around the corner. St Columba's is a Scottish church and extremely modern compared with All Saints and had the arms of many of the Scottish Burghs around the walls.

On 25th April 1992 we travelled to Northampton to join a whole day tour of the local area organised by Keith Lovell. We began by visiting the Records Office at Northampton where a formidable array of heraldry had been laid out for us and among the many books displayed was one recording the families of Northamptonshire from the time of William the Conqueror. There were many Rolls of Arms and other interesting material which kept the party completely engrossed until we had to move on to Higham Ferrers for lunch. After lunch we visited the church, hospital and college, the latter now only a ruin but still of much interest. The church is very fine with plenty of heraldry, some by Sir Ninian Comper. Higham Ferrers was the home of Archbishop Chichele who founded the college and a brass to his memory is near one of the altars - the church has a double nave and therefore two altars. Between the two is the tomb of Henry, Duke of Lancaster. To round off this excellent day we were entertained to a right royal tea at Keith's home at Woollaston and our thanks go to him for catering for our cultural and gastronomic needs so generously.

DID YOU NOTICE?

Did any of our members notice that the Cherbourg/Rennes leg of the recent *Tour de France* cycle race passed through Villedieu-en-Poëlle. This was the 'home town' of the great Percy family and the name translates as *City of God and frying pans*.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 15th September 1994

At the Annual General Meeting held at the Ruislip Manor Library the undermentioned officers and committee members were appointed:-

Chairman - **Nan Taylor** Vice-chairman - **Ron Brown**

Hon. Secretary - **Peggy Foster** Hon. Treasurer - **Stuart Whitefoot**

Committee - **Roger Matthews** (Sales Table) - **Margaret Young** (Visits Secretary)
- **Don Kirby** (Joint Ed. *Seaxe* Newsletter)

Co-opted - **Kay Holmes & Marjorie Kirby** (Joint Ed. *Seaxe* Newsletter)

ROYAL ORDERS OF DENMARK - from a talk by **Marion Miles** on 20th May 1993

The talk was given by **Marion Miles**, Secretary of The Heraldry Society, and is the result of intensive research into the two most important orders of Denmark, Europe's oldest kingdom, and which included first hand knowledge acquired by actually visiting Denmark itself. Marion began by telling us that the first part of the talk was devoted to the history and insignia of the orders and the second part to the heraldry of some of the holders.



The Order of the Elephant is the most valuable of all the Danish orders of chivalry, ranking third in importance, with Queen Margrethe II as the Sovereign of the Order. The origins are uncertain but can be traced back to a company or brotherhood in being at the time of King Christian I, the first king of the Oldenburgh line. At his coronation in Stockholm, in 1457 he distributed chains to high born men and women of his three kingdoms. Unfortunately no names of recipients are known. In 1464 there was a religious brotherhood at Roskilde Cathedral called the Confraternity of the Virgin Mary which probably led, in 1477, to the collars with confronting towered elephants on which were representations of the Virgin and Child dependent from the collar under a sickle moon and hanging from that a medallion depicting one of the *Nails of Christ*. Collars were presented to, among others, Louis XI of France, Henry VII of England and James IV of Scotland. Christian I always wore the order and it is shown on the collar of his son, Hans (d.1513), on his tomb in the church of St. Louis in Odense. In 1508 Christian II conferred arms on the Dean of Roskilde and his successors showing *a tower bearing a gold elephant and seven gold lilies all on a blue field* - the colour of the *Queen of Heaven*. This order of the Virgin became obsolete in 1536 after the Reformation when the status of the Virgin changed considerably.

But why elephants? The answer is purely symbolic - in mediaeval times the elephant was used as a symbol of the fight against evil and also a symbol of chastity as the elephant was thought to mate secretly. Sometimes it is shown fighting a dragon (the devil) whilst the towered elephant is said to represent the Virgin supporting the Church. In 1559 Frederic II came to the throne and brought the order to life again as an order of knighthood stripped of its Maryan influences. The badge of the new order was a *towered elephant*. On a thin gold chain decorated with small rosettes hangs a flat elephant of gold with, on one side, a portrait bust of the king with the initials MHZGA (*In God alone my trust*) and, on the other side, his crown cypher and the initials TIWB. Christian IV, who reigned from 1588 to 1648, introduced changes to the style of the order - in 1616 there was a special order for Danes who had distinguished themselves in the war with Sweden known as the **Order of the Mailed Arm** - it is closely associated with with the **Order of the Elephant** and the badge is *an arm in armour holding a drawn sword*. There is a portrait in existence of Christian IV wearing the badge suspended below the elephant on a double chain with a winged heart. It was later placed on the side of the elephant with the Hebrew inscription *Jehovah*. In 1648 Frederic III was shown with the elephant suspended from a blue shoulder stud - hence the term **blue knights**. It was decreed that the knights should wear a star in the centre of which were two laurel wreaths surrounding a royal crown with the initials DVP - representing the Latin for *God will provide*. In 1693 Christian V produced new statutes and fifty pages of new rules. It now became a first class order similar to the **Garter** and membership was limited to fifty knights not including the Sovereign or royal princes. The order has been awarded to foreign dignitaries, lords of evangelical religion, privy councillors, ministers of the highest rank, military commanders-in chief and Knights Grand Cross of the Order of the Dannebrog. The badge is a *white enamelled gold elephant with a diamond on its side, another on its forehead and a blue saddlecloth on its back carrying a gold brick tower, later red enamelled, and, in front of this, a blackamoor* to be worn on a blue silk sash over the left shoulder or from a chain of conjoined alternately gold towers and gold elephants with blue-enamelled saddlecloths bearing D for *Dassiak* (the Latin for Denmark). Except when held by royal princes all other orders must be given up when becoming a **Knight of the Order of the Elephant**. (contd.)

ROYAL ORDERS OF DENMARK - (Continued.)



The Order of the Dannebrog is the second in importance but of earlier origin. The order was founded by Valdemar II in 1219, re-activated by Christian V in 1671 and takes its name from the Danish (Danne) flag or cloth (brogh) of *Gules a cross Argent* which legend says fell from the sky betokening victory of the Catholic Danes, under Valdemar II, over the pagan Baltic States. It is, however, more likely to be the gift of the Pope. The 1693 statutes decree that the order must be awarded only to Princes of the Blood and fifty knights of noble descent. In 1808 Frederic VI opened the order so that it could be awarded for civil and/or military merit. Since 1951 ladies have been admitted to the order. It is rather like our **Order of the British Empire** and has seven classes - the highest, **Grand Commander**, is reserved for Danish royals and foreign sovereigns who are related. The badge is a *white enamelled Latin cross with red edges* - on the obverse surface is an inscription *to God and King* with the crowned cypher of Christian V in the centre - on the reverse surface are a crowned cypher of Valdemar II and the dates 1219, 1671 and 1808 on the arms of the cross

[Above the cross is the crowned cypher of the installing monarch and royal crowns placed between the arms of the cross. The ribbon sash is white silk edged with crimson. Knights Grand Cross also wear a collar of white enamelled Latin crosses separated alternately by cyphers of Valdemar II and crowned cyphers of Christian V and also wear an eight pointed star with flat rays upon which the obverse of the cross but with the cypher of Valdemar is arranged so that the lower arm of the cross is debruised at the lower point of the star]

There is no official authority in Denmark like our **College of Arms** but there are Heralds as can be seen in a painting of the coronation of Christian IV. Uncontrolled assumption of arms has always been recognised in Denmark and some are recorded in a Scandinavian Roll of Arms published, as a private initiative by Swedish armourists. There are records of lodges and societies whose members assume arms and records of royal orders and knighthood whose holders must submit the designs so that plaques may be painted and displayed. The **Order of the Elephant** and the **Order of the Dannebrog** have their own chapel in the Castle of Fredricksburg, about 25 miles from Copenhagen. Plaques of members of the **Order of the Elephant** can be found on the organ and round side walls. Round windows there are plaques of members of the **Order of the Dannebrog**. The display includes arms from all over Europe and beyond - Marion showed slides of many of these and of particular interest to us were those of our own royal family who, of course, have strong blood ties with the Danish royal family.



HATCHMENTS - Survey Completed - from a talk by **John Titterton** in July 1993

This talk given by **John Titterton**, the driving force behind the Oxford Heraldry Group, was the story of the setting up, the organisation and the completion of a survey of hatchments in the U.K. with an occasional find in the Commonwealth and elsewhere. The survey was started by **Peter Summers** who, in a letter to *The Guardian* in 1952, asked its readers to send him any information they had on hatchments. Over a period of thirty years this request resulted in 10,000 letters received and about 5,000 hatchments recorded by a group of volunteers. It also resulted in the founding of many friendships and a great deal of travel.

Hatchments were discovered in strange places - in rubbish skips (one found and lovingly restored by our own **Peach** and **Joss Froggatt**), in builders' yards being used as mortar boards and consequently beyond redemption, and no fewer than four in Beverley Minster discovered by a visiting campanologist with an interest in heraldry, on his way up the tower to ring his bells. Having tracked a hatchment down to a castle in Scotland, Peter Summers was obliged to ford a river on foot in order to carry out the recording! Hatchments have been used at funerals and outside the houses of the deceased since the 16th century but they are rarely used today although one was displayed outside the house of Palmer(?), the Squire of Nazeing in Essex in 1950 and another was reported to have been seen in Berkeley Square at about the same time.

After the death of an armiger the achievements hung outside the house until they were carried to the church in the funeral procession - the achievements remained in the church but the hatchment itself was returned to be displayed outside the house. Perhaps the best known achievements are those of the Black Prince in Canterbury Cathedral. Some hatchments are square but the vast majority are diamond shaped probably because of the greater ease of carrying and hanging. They were often painted by specialists like Thomas Sharpe, who had a workshop outside St. Benet's Church, opposite the College of Arms and was responsible for over two thousand whereas the hatchments of the Harpur-Carew family were painted by Holmes & Sons, coach-builders of Derby. (Contd.)

