

THE BOAR-BADGE OF RICHARD III HELMUT NICKEL

The generally accepted interpretation of the White Boar is that it represents a pun with "*Eboracum*," the Latin name for York. This interpretation is made even more plausible by the fifteenth century spelling "*bore*" for boar.

The wild boar, furthermore, was the strongest and most dangerous game animal in the medieval English forest, but in spite of its strength he was not a predator preying upon others, and was dangerous only when attacked, therefore he was considered a "*right royal souveraigne beaste*."

Another suggestion for an interpretation of the Boar-badge might be that the Roman legion XX Valeria Victrix had a charging boar as its badge, as witnessed by countless memorial tablets, roof tile ends, and other architectural elements found on archaeological sites, wherever units of this legion were stationed. In the second part of the first century AD its headquarters were at Gloucester, and possibly excavated examples of the Legio XX boar-badge came to Richard's attention.

However, there seems to be a far more direct rebus hidden in the badge of the Boar. Richard's motto "*Loyaulte me lie*"—"Loyalty bindeth me"—and the name of office of his personal herald "*Blanc Sanglier*" suggests that he was thinking in French terms, when choosing his cognizances, see front cover picture. Therefore, if badge and motto were taken as a unit, the words "*Sanglier—Loyaulté me lie*" would be pronounced the same as "*Sang lié—Loyaulté me lie*." From all what we know about Richard and his devotion to his brother Edward, a device spelling out "*Bound by blood, loyalty bindeth me*" would be exactly what one would expect him to choose.

On the other hand, if the first syllable to "*sanglier*"—"boar"—would be spelt "*sans*"—"without"—the word could be read as "*sans lier*"—"without fettering", a meaning that would call to mind the famous Falcon and Fetterlock badge of the Dukes of York (Fig. 1). The fetterlock in most representations was carefully shown as being opened, and the falcon was a generally accepted symbol of love and affection without force or compulsion, because he voluntarily returns to his master's fist.

Finally, the now obsolete word "*lier*" and its equally obsolete synonym "*liois*" meant "*white and hard*," such as in marble, and perhaps the whiteness of the boar could have been suggested not only by the White Rose of York and the White Lion of March, used by Richard's brother Edward, (Fig. 2) but even by a part of the word "*sanglier*" itself.

Badges were usually designed to carry a cryptic message that was known and decipherable only to the owner and an "in-group" of close friends; the great multitude outside was to know the badge, but not its "secret." In regard to the meanings and interpretations the principle was often "the more, the merrier," thus the more meanings could be read into a given badge, the more sophisticated it must have been considered by the "in-group." Therefore, of all the interpretations mentioned above—"bore"—"*Eboracum*" "*royal souveraigne beaste*," "*sang lie*" and "*sans lier*"—probably all of them would be right or would have pleased Richard, in case he had not thought of them himself.

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—Editor.)