

## REVIEWS

Peter Drummond-Murray and Anthony Lombardo Delarue, *Banners of the Bold: A Roll of Banners & Standards of the Order of St John in England*. Stonyhurst, UK: St Omers Press, 2018; ISBN: 978-0951266458; 400 pp.; hardback; RRP: 30 pounds sterling.

I will start with a simple observation: this is an eccentric book. It is a book that glories in being unconventional and slightly strange.

Why this should be the case is revealed, in part, by its origins. The book is (in a sense, and for want of a better description) the intellectual last will and testament of Peter Drummond-Murray of Mastrick, the well-known and highly regarded Scottish heraldist. He was working on it at the time of his death in 2014 and it has now come to print thanks to the sustaining efforts of Anthony Lombardo Delarue. The text is mostly PDM, while the images have been rendered by ALD. But it is not the dual, or staggered, authorship that renders the work eccentric: it is the original scope and intent of it that is wonderfully odd. Its origins lay in a Tudor manuscript – *Prince Arthur's Book* – an heraldic work designed to teach Henry VII's ill-fated heir the principles of armoury. The logic of this starting point is clear, in relation to the Order of St John. The MS contained many glorious illuminated images of arms born by British knights of the Order. Furthermore, the MS was added to later, during the brief reign of Queen Mary I. It was she who revived the Order in England, following its eradication during the Dissolution. The banners-of-arms, therefore, represent a wonderful array of heraldry that is meaningful to the history of the Order in Britain.

The heraldry is beautiful and the shields and banners have been rendered authentically and vibrantly by the illustrator. Their inclusion constitutes the first section of the book.

So, nothing obviously eccentric yet. However, Section Two introduces something a little strange – historical arms rendered in the same style as the Tudor MS. Here we have the possibility of anachronism, yet thanks to the historical knowledge of PDM and the artistic skill of ALD, the arms are of equal beauty and interest. I admit I struggled to appreciate at first glance the connection between some individuals and the Order. For example, Sir Thomas More was a great Catholic layman, but not a member of the Order. His inclusion is justified by the authors on the grounds of his recusant descendants and their (eventual) membership of the British Association of the Order.

Section Three includes the arms of British members of the Order. Their armorial bearings have also been rendered in the Tudor style of the original MS. Rather than seeming anachronistic this gives the book a pleasing visual homogeneity. Obvious, license has been taken with regard to the right to supporters, with everyone included receiving a Tudor beast. Sometimes this is born by right, as it is for members of the Order who are also peers of the realm. For everyone else the supporter represents a visual conceit, often a play on their name.

Beyond the heraldry all looking alike in form and style, I think there is a deeper meaning contained in this book. The preface claims: "This volume makes no pretence ... to make any new contribution to the history of the Order". With respect, this claim is false. The book, in fact, offers a fascinating snap-shot of the Order in Britain, its membership, character and self-perception. The book is an historical statement in favour of continuity of the Catholic Order; from its stable base in the early reign of King Henry VIII (the original MS), through its brief revival under Queen Mary I (Docwra, Tresham, Shelley), into the era of the 'revived' Grand Priory of England of

the Order of Malta (Festing, Crichton-Stuart, Scott). In this story there is no room for Her Majesty's Royal Order of Chivalry: the Venerable Order of St John.

This is awkward for two reasons. First, because a number of people included in this volume are also members of the Venerable Order (most notably Charles Burnett, Ross Herald emeritus, who is included here only due to his role as a convenor of the Companions of the Order of Malta). Second, because it ignores the more awkward realities of the Order of Malta's return to Britain.

From the 1830s, the proto-Venerable Order called itself the resurrected 'Grand Priory of England' of the Order of Malta. By the 1870s these claims had been resoundingly eschewed by the original Order in Rome, in part due to the advocacy of Sir George Bowyer MP. He had been an influential member of the Venerable Order, but split from it in the hope of resurrecting a full-blown (and resolutely Catholic) 'Grand Priory of England'. However, this aspiration was never realised and an Association was the best that could be achieved. Even then it was mostly populated by continental Europeans. It would take many decades before Britain's old recusant families became a prominent feature of the Order in Britain.

But what a change has taken place! This book is a testament to the antiquity and tight family bonds that exist between current members of the Order in Britain. Confidence and pride has flowed from the reality of two English Grand Masters in recent decades and the final realisation in 1993 of Bowyer's dream of a Grand Priory of England. This is all very awkward for the Venerable Order, which occupies the medieval Clerkenwell headquarters of the Order. The book also, tellingly, looks askance at the 1963 joint declaration made by the Order of Malta with the Venerable Order (and the other 'alliance' Protestant branches of the Order of St John) affirming their brotherhood in a shared tradition. So 'historical snap-shot' seems an appropriate term to describe this book and the people and attitudes it so stridently advertises at this time.

With this in mind, it might surprise the reader to realise there are several interesting Australian connections in the work. Let us start with the two Australians mentioned in the text.

Fr Anthony L'Estrange Robbie is a priest of the Archdiocese of Sydney currently living in Rome. He is described in the book as a magistrals chaplain, who joined the Order in 2006; is chaplain of the Australian Association and a chaplain in the Magistral Palace in Rome. Fr Robbie founded the Australian Association Youth Movement, and was chaplain of the Blessed Gerard Youth Pilgrimage. He is descended in his maternal line from the ancient East Anglian family of L'Estrange, of Hunstanton, in Norfolk. The golden lion supporter refers to his L'Estrange ancestry, as do the lions and their tincture in the arms.

Simon James Grenfell joined the Order in 2002, joined the Council of the British Association in 2007, and was in Obedience in 2008. In 2009 he became a member of the Governing Council of the Order (re-elected 2014). He is descended from the Grenfell family that migrated to the colonies of New South Wales and Queensland in mid-nineteenth century. The family is Cornish originally, while this knightly member of it is a banker by occupation who lives in London and Singapore. The griffin supporter is that of Cardinal Wolsey, perhaps in reference to the Armiger's position on the Governing Council of the Order?

A third, and very interesting, Antipodean connection is presented in the arms of Lord Craigmyle. His banner of Scottish arms is supported by a Kangaroo. The late Thomas Shaw, third Baron Craigmyle, was a prominent convert to Catholicism and a philanthropist. An Old Etonian, he had served in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve

during the Second World War and was chairman of Craigmyle & Co Ltd, and Claridge Mills Ltd, and director of Inchape & Co Ltd. Lord Craigmyle was also a Knight of Justice of the Venerable Order of Saint John and President of the British Association of the Order of Malta, of which he was a Bailiff Grand Cross. He was “one of Britain’s most philanthropic Roman Catholic laymen. A convert ... with a deep piety and astonishing personal generosity, to the great benefit of the numerous causes he supported” (quoted from his obituary in *The Times*, 8 May 1998).

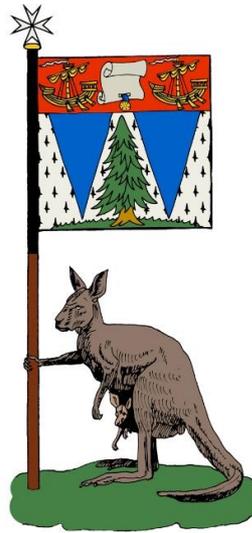


Figure 1: Armorial banner of Lord Craigmyle reproduced with permission of the author, Anthony Delarue.

Why a kangaroo? Lord Craigmyle’s father, the second Baron Craigmyle, was chairman of the P&O Steam Navigation Company, having married into the Inchcape family. This connection, and his job, led the couple to visit Australia several times; in 1934 and in company with their daughter, the Hon. Jean Shaw, in January 1938 (see e.g. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 1938). The arms of Baron Craigmyle bear a Kangaroo proper as the sinister supporter, which is recorded in his grant from the Lord Lyon King of Arms in Scotland, 27 December 1937. The P&O arms, which are quartered per saltire, include a kangaroo in one of these quarters (these were granted 16 June 1937).

To conclude, this book is a fascinating and very satisfying adventure into several disparate, but connected, worlds. It takes us into the heraldry and history of the Order of St John in the Tudor period; informs us of some interesting connexions among recusants families, both their ancestors and descendants, as a meaningful narrative; and provides a vibrant and accurate rendering of the arms of current members of the Order in Britain – among them many old families whose names are recognisable to any student of British history. Overall it is a visual treat, replete with finely rendered armorial shields and banners on heavy quality paper and solidly bound. The book is a worthy addition to any heraldic library for this reason alone. However, it offers much more. In my opinion it is an important piece of historical evidence for the Order of Malta in Britain today: its membership, their links to one-another, self-perception and a manifesto of their mission and history as they articulate it in 2018.

Matthew Glozier  
Sydney Grammar School