

The Renwick Cockatrice

Music: Nigel Harbron

The vill-age of Ren-wick sits 'neath Fi-ends Fell, It's a
la'al qui-et spot, so lo-cal folk tell, But a long time back in se-ven-teen thir-ty three There
was an e - vent that you'd not want to see. *Ch.* Was it a bat or a dra-gon, or
a pol - ter - geist: The Cock - a - trice al - so known as Cock-a-Christ.

The village of Renwick sits 'neath Fiend's Fell,
It's a la'al* quiet spot, so the locals do tell,
But a long time back in seventeen thirty-three
There was an event that you'd not want to see.

*Ch: Was it a bat or a dragon, or a poltergeist:
The Cockatrice also known as Cock-a-Christ?*

Now the old church had been there for many a year,
But the cost of its upkeep was too much to bear.
A decision was taken that a new church be built,
Though not without feelings of sadness and guilt.

The roof soon came off and the walls were knocked down,
And soon the old church was razed right down to the ground,
But foundations turned out to be not at all deep,
So trenches were marked out, both straight and both steep.

But as soon as the pace of work had increased,
A frightening spectre from below was released.
The workmen downed tools and all fled from the site,
As the cockatrice flew out, causing all a great fright.

A cockatrice kills in a number of ways:
By its talons, its breath, or simply its gaze.
Who could outwit this large serpent most vile?
Was there a magical power that could it beguile?

Now John Tallentire was the bravest of brave,
And he took the decision the village to save.
He chopped off a branch from a mountain ash tree
As he knew that the wood had a rare property.

To the churchyard he went with the bough in his hand,
On a flat piece of ground he then took up his stand.
The cockatrice swooped down and aimed for his head,
But one blow from the rowan branch killed it stone dead.

The village rejoiced at the death of the beast,
And later that day it enjoyed a great feast.
For what Tallentire did on that most fateful day,
He was given an estate with no taxes to pay.

(* la'll is Cumbrian for little)

Renwick really is a 'la'al quiet spot'. It has a church, a chapel, a small village reading room, a few farms, and a few more houses, and that's about it. The story of the cockatrice (often referred to as 'The Renwick Bat') is well known locally, and there has certainly been name-calling along the lines of 'You're from Renwick, so you must be batty!' Cumbrians know how hurtful the power of words can be, don't they?

As for the cockatrice itself, there remains dispute as to its exact form, but illustrations of it rarely suggest a nice, furry creature. Here's an example incorporated into a building (a welcome on the doorstep?), but feel free to draw your own....

