

# THE QUEEN'S BEASTS

By Greg Balagian



Three of the heraldic beasts of Queen Elizabeth II are felines or part feline (1978): The Lion of England, Ascension Island 229a; The White Lion of Mortimer, Belize 397a; and The Griffin of Edward III, Barbados 474a.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (b. 1926) marked the 60th Jubilee of her ascension to the throne following the death of her father George VI on February 6, 1952.

Commissioned by the Ministry of Works of the United Kingdom for the Queen's Coronation on June 2, 1953, ten six-foot sculptures called The Queen's Beasts were created by the sculptor James Woodford (1893-1976).

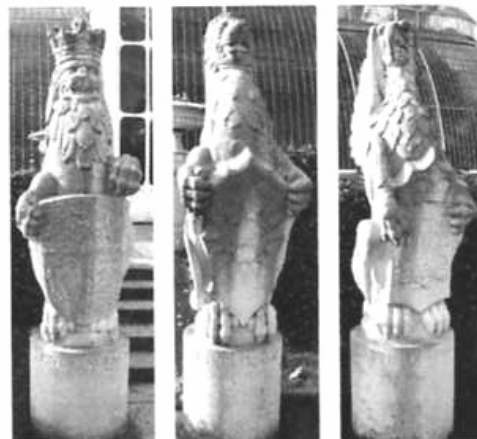
The ten heraldic animals depict the genealogical background of the Queen: The Lion of England, The Griffin of Edward III, The Falcon of the Plantagenets, The Black Bull of Clarence, The Yale of

Beaufort, The White Lion of Mortimer, The White Greyhound of Richmond, The Red Dragon of Wales, The Unicorn of Scotland, and The White Horse of Hanover.

Three of these beasts are either felines, or part-feline. The crowned Lion of England was first used as a heraldic badge by James I in 1603. The shield shows the Royal Arms from Queen Victoria in 1837. First and last quadrants contain the Lions of England; the Lion of Scotland is in the second quadrant, and the harp of Ireland is in the third.

The Lion of Mortimer, from Edward IV in 1461, is holding a shield with a white

Three of the ten sculptures titled The Queen's Beasts are in the form of cats or part cats: The Lion of England, The White Lion of Mortimer, and The Griffin of Edward III.



rose encircled by the sun. The griffin, thought to symbolize courage, strength, and keen vision dates from Edward III in 1327. The shield depicts the tower of Windsor Castle.

The sculptures were installed temporarily in front of the annex to Westminster Abbey for the Coronation. Because they were cast in plaster, they could not be left in the open air. They were moved to the Great Hall of the Hampton Court Palace, and in 1957 were relocated to St. George's Hall in Windsor Castle.

In April of 1958, the sculptures were put into storage and eventually offered to the Commonwealth governments.

Canada, as the senior nation, was offered them first, and in June of 1959, accepted. The sculptures are currently in the care of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, in Gatineau, Quebec.

Originally only the heraldic shields of each sculpture were colored, but for the celebrations of the Canadian Federation

in 1967 the sculptures were painted in their heraldic colors.

In 1958 the Chairman of the Distillers Company in Edinburgh, Sir Henry Ross, ordered replicas of these sculptures to be made from Portland stone which are now on display outside the Palm House at Kew Gardens in London.

An omnibus series of miniature sheets commemorating the 25th anniversary of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II were issued on June 2, 1978.

This format contains two se-tenant strips of three stamps separated by a horizontal gutter with an inscription and depiction of coronation procession.

The Lion of England is depicted on Ascension Island 229a; The White Lion of Mortimer, on Belize 397a; and The Griffin of Edward III, on Barbados 474a.

The Lion of England also appears on two other issues: 1977 Barbuda 321a and 1978 Cook Islands 486b. ❁

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