

THE STORY OF THE LUDHAM DRAGON.

There are several versions of this tale, which tells of a fearsome dragon who left his lair in Ludham and took up residence underground at St Benet's Abbey. It may be based upon a real incident which was reported locally in the 18th century, when a large reptile was apparently caught in Ludham and killed.

This version comes from a collection of local history documents compiled by William Henry Cooke, a resident of nearby Stalham. He handed them to Russell Colman, a member of the mustard manufacturing family, in 1911. The papers now rest with the Norfolk Record Office and we are grateful to them for allowing their reproduction here.



The Ludham Dragon, as illustrated and related by William Henry Cooke.

Many years ago the good people of Ludham were shocked by the appearance of a hideous monster.

It was said to have resembled a dragon or monstrous lizard. It was covered with scales and had wings. Its frightful mouth was rendered formidable by tremendous teeth. It was supposed to measure from 12 to 15 feet in length.

As it was only visible after sunset, none dared to leave their houses when it was dark. It formed a large burrow which was known to extend from the yard at the back of the Carpenters Arms just past the old school house. Every morning the exit was filled up with bricks and stones, and then as often, reopened at night by the monster.

One bright sunny afternoon, to the horror of the inhabitants, it was seen to leave the burrow. As soon as it had got some distance away, a courageous parishioner dropped a single large round stone into the mouth of the burrow, completely filling it up.

After basking in the sun for some time the monster returned. Not being able to remove the stone it turned away bellowing and lashing its sides furiously with its tail. It then made its way across the fields in the direction of the Bishop's Palace. Turning to the left it made its way along the dreary causeway leading to the ruined Abbey Gateway. Round and round it ran, throwing up stones and dirt in its fury. Raising its hideous form up against the ruined walls, at last it entered the gloomy archway where it is supposed to have made its way to the vaults beneath and was no more seen.

After a time the burrow was carefully filled up. To the satisfaction of the parishioners, there has been no return of the Ludham Dragon.

