

The Absolutely Totally 100% True Story of King Richard and The Cockadrill

Retold by Liz Wesencraft and Domini Thorpe

A very long time ago – over 800 years to be precise - in the land of Israel, there was a great **Crusade**. King Richard the Lionheart, King of England, travelled to Israel to help his friend, the King of Israel. When the battle was won, the King of Israel gave Richard a very special gift in return for his aid. A big golden egg.

King Richard looked in wonder at the big golden egg, wondering what was inside it. The King of Israel said it was a Cockadrill, but Richard had never heard of one of those!

The journey back to England was long and difficult. This was in the days before aeroplanes, trains, and even cars. The only way back was to ride a horse, or walk the whole 3000 miles.

When Richard passed through Germany, he was taken prisoner by the King, who wanted to steal his gold. But Richard hid the Cockadrill egg so that the King couldn't find it.

The King imprisoned Richard in a castle. In his cell, Richard took out the egg, and saw that it was starting to wobble and crack. The golden shell split open, and out popped a baby Cockadrill! It was a lizard-like creature with short thighs and sharp claws, yet tiny enough to fit into the King's open hand.

The King kept Richard prisoner for two whole years. Richard was beginning to give up hope of ever getting out. But then one day, he heard a familiar tune outside the window. A song that he loved, written by a minstrel back in London. The minstrel was called Blondel.

When Richard heard the music, he sang the next part. The music paused, and then started playing again. Richard and the musician took turns until

Richard looked out of the window and saw that it was Blondel. He had been found!

Now the Cockadrill may only have been a hand-span long when Richard first got him, but by the time Richard got out of prison, he was 1.5m tall and had great sharp talons.

When King Richard got back to England, he knew he had to keep the Cockadrill safe, so he took the him to the safest place in all England: the Tower of London.

The Cockadrill kept growing and growing, but he enjoyed spending time with Richard, who would sing Blondel's song to him. The Cockadrill always relaxed when he heard that song, and eventually fell asleep. But then Richard was called away to deal with some problems in a far away part of the Kingdom, and the Cockadrill began to miss his friend.

He got more and more bored and unhappy, until eventually he lashed out with his great tail, and smashed his cage to pieces. Slithering and crawling towards the river, he escaped into the Thames and disappeared beneath the dark, cold waters.

The King offered a reward for his return, but no-one saw hide nor hair of the Cockadrill, and eventually everyone thought he was gone for good.

All was quiet along the Thames and life went on for the King and his people. All was well until the villages downstream from London started to find their sheep going missing.

Determined to find out what was causing this, the villagers kept a close watch on their sheep. One night, they finally saw what was happening to their animals – a great dragon came crawling out of the river, snatched a sheep and dragged it back into the water.

Terrified, the villagers tried to decide what to do. First, they tried to kill the dragon by shooting arrows at it. But the dragon's hide was so thick

that the arrows bounced right off it. No-one wanted to get close enough to try fighting the dragon with a spear or sword, so that was out of the question.

Then the villagers tried feeding the dragon their farm animals, hoping that it would be happy and not try to eat any of the people.

However, the sheep would not last forever, and the villagers were soon running out. If the dragon carried on like this, it might start hunting people! So they sent word to their Lord, Sir George Marney of Layer de la Haye.

Sir George was very brave and agreed to help. put on his shiniest armour, took his sharpest weapons, got on his horse and rode through the forest to the village. When he got there, he waited for the dragon to appear. But before the dragon could show its face, someone else arrived. Blondel the minstrel had heard what was happening in the village, and thought he knew just the thing to help.

The villagers watched with baited breath. Would Sir George and Blondel beat the dragon, or would they be eaten by the dragon?

Soon enough the dragon appeared, creeping and clawing its way out of the river onto the bank. Sir George, was ready to fight the dragon!

The villagers held their breath.

Just then, music started to play. Blondel was playing King Richard's favourite song. The Dragon...or rather the Cockadrill... perked up, looked at Blondel, and then closed his huge eyes and went to sleep!

The villagers cheered in delight. Sir George and Blondel had saved them all!

Sir George and Blondel took the Cockadrill back to London where he was reunited with King Richard. The King promised never to leave the Cockadrill alone for so long ever again, and the Cockadrill promised never to steal any more sheep!