

Royston, Heart of the 13th Sign of the British Zodiac



Extract from 'The British Zodiac' study paper, describing the landscape zodiac of Britain first laid out by the Ancient Britons and used by subsequent societies, including the 16th/17th century Rosicrucians.

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The 13th Sign of the Zodiac

The traditional 13th sign of the zodiac is marked by Ophiuchus. This constellation, meaning 'Serpent Bearer' or 'Dragon Master', is both a Hercules and a St George figure, for St George, the Red Cross knight, is the master of the dragon. As the 13th sign it signifies the 13th seat at the Round Table, wherein can sit only the heir to the throne. The heir is the Grail knight, the one who has achieved the Holy Grail and thereby becomes a guardian of the Grail. The actual Sun-king, who is given the name of Arthur, is the principal guardian of the Holy Grail; hence

he is known as the Grail king. When the king 'dies' and moves on to greater things, his heir succeeds him.

Ophiuchus is actually located in the zodiacal sign of Scorpio, and the reason for it being the 13th sign is that it signifies the start of a new cycle of time and initiation at a higher evolutionary level than before. The midwinter sun has completed one complete circuit of the ecliptic and is now started on the next circuit. Ophiuchus is paired with its complementary 13th sign (i.e. there are two 13th signs of the Zodiac), Auriga, in the zodiacal sign of Taurus. Auriga, the Charioteer, is the 13th sign in respect of the midsummer sun. In terms of the British Zodiac, mythology and traditions, it is probably Ophiuchus that is the more important one.

The heart of Ophiuchus is marked by Royston. Seen this way, the Royston Cave, with its Knights Templar cave paintings, is of great significance. It lies at the intersection of Icknield Way and Ermine Street. In addition the serpentine Michael and Mary energy lines that compose the 'dragon' aspect of the St Michael ley line, as dowsed by Hamish Miller,¹ cross in the cave. Above the cave, on the surface, is the Roysse Stone, also known as Crux Roesia or Roisia's Cross – a stone cross erected by Lady Roisia at the crossing of the roads, which gave its name to the town that grew around it, first as Roisia's Town, then Roiston or Royston. Previously there was a Roman altar to the goddess Diana at the crossing.

Significantly, Royston is the original home in England of the Hot Cross Buns custom. The Saxons made cross-buns in honour of the goddess Eostre, whose festival was celebrated at the Spring Equinox. Eostre is the dawn goddess of fertility, the light-bringer, goddess of spring. She symbolizes springtime, new growth and the re-birth of life and nature after the harsh weather of the winter months. At the soul level she signifies initiatic rebirth or resurrection. Her name, Eostre, is the origin of the name 'Easter', and the Easter egg signifies her egg from which new life is born – a symbolism paralleling that of Eros who is born from an egg laid by Nox (Night).

The Hot Cross Buns custom is associated with the sacrificial death that leads to resurrection or rebirth, wherein the person who gets the burnt cross-bun is the divinely chosen sacrifice. The custom is very old. The Ancient Egyptians offered cakes to Isis that were imprinted with a pair of horns, symbolic of the Osirian ox, at the sacrifice of which they were offered on the altar. The Greeks offered cakes to Artemis, which were called 'bous' (ox) in allusion to the ox-symbol marked on it. The Babylonians offered cakes to Ishtar. The Romans offered cakes to Diana, whose festival was observed soon after the Vernal Equinox, and (like the Greeks) ate cross-bread at public sacrifices. Christianity adopted the pagan equinoctial festival of Easter, together with the cross-bun and Easter egg symbols, and married it to the lunar Passover festival held on the first full moon after the spring equinox, which celebrates the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus.

That Royston was the main focus in Britain of the cross-bun custom is entirely suitable for it marking the heart of Ophiuchus, who signifies the resurrected soul – the one who has mastered and raised (or transmuted) the dragon that is his own lower self. The heart of such

¹ See *Sun and Serpent* by Hamish Miller and Paul Broadhurst

an initiate is symbolised by the rose, and the Red Cross knight (St George) is also the Rose Cross knight, for the rose as well as the red (or golden) cross is his symbol.

The egg in which the initiate is incubated, dying in order to be reborn or renewed in a more glorious state of being (or dissolving psychologically, like a caterpillar in its pupa in order to become the butterfly), is provided literally by the Royston Cave – a bell or bottle-shaped cave carved out of chalk. All the indications are that this was a grain store used as a cave of initiation, especially by the Knights Templar who painted a whole schema on the cave walls depicting both the lesser and the greater mysteries of initiation in a historically symbolic form. These paintings were created by a band of Templars in England in 1314, after the Templar Order was suppressed by Pope Clement V in 1312 and their last Grand Master executed in 1314. This small band of Templars used the cave for 33 years, from 1314 to 1347, sealing the entrance to the cave with a mill stone and bricks in 1347.

The full number of degrees of initiation leading to resurrection is 33, which occurs in what is referred to as the Royal Arch Degree, wherein Truth (or the initiate) is raised out of the subterranean crypt or cave. Jesus, for instance, was 33 when he died on the cross and was resurrected. Solomon's Temple stood for 33 years before being destroyed and later rebuilt in greater glory. The Royal Arch Degree is based on a story of the underground crypt beneath the ruined Solomon's Temple being discovered by those who had returned from Babylon to rebuild the temple. This underground crypt had been the grain store of Araunah the Jebusite, sited adjacent to (or beneath) the threshing floor that was purchased by King David and on which David built an altar where he offered a sacrifice to mark the founding and dedication of the temple that his son, Solomon, was to build.

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