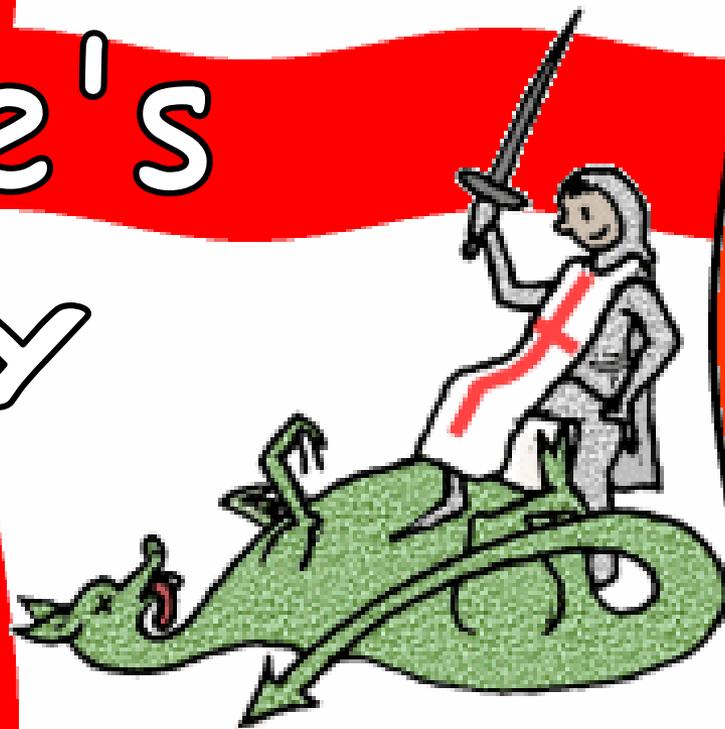


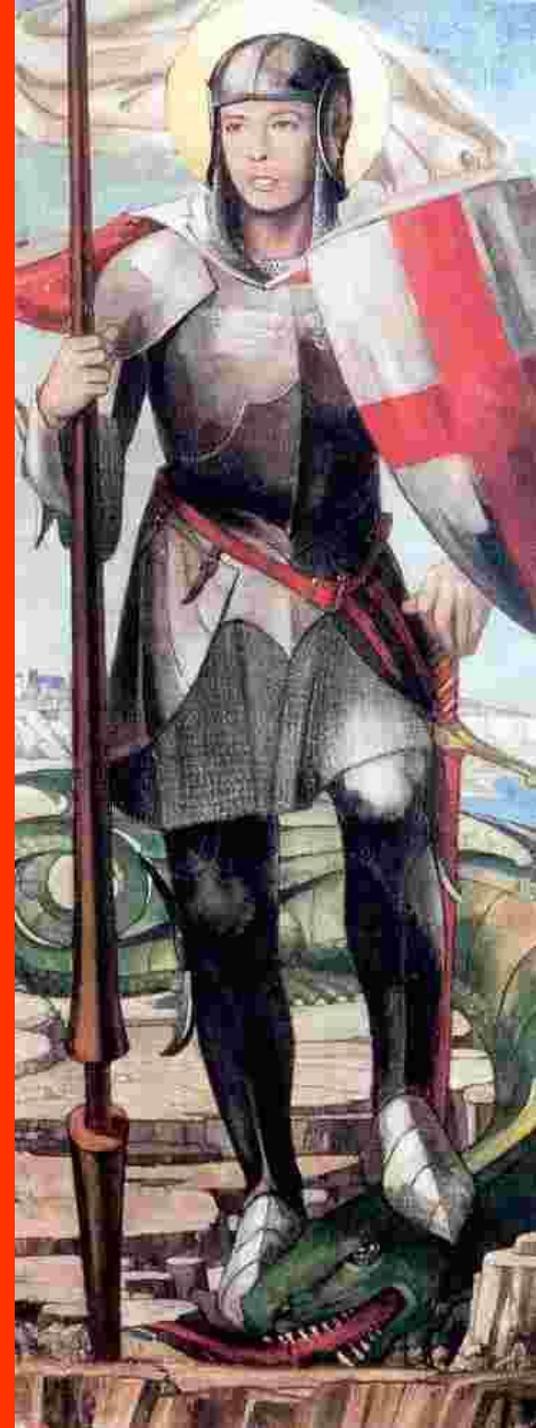
St George's Day





Every nation has its own patron saint who people call upon to help save the country from its enemies.

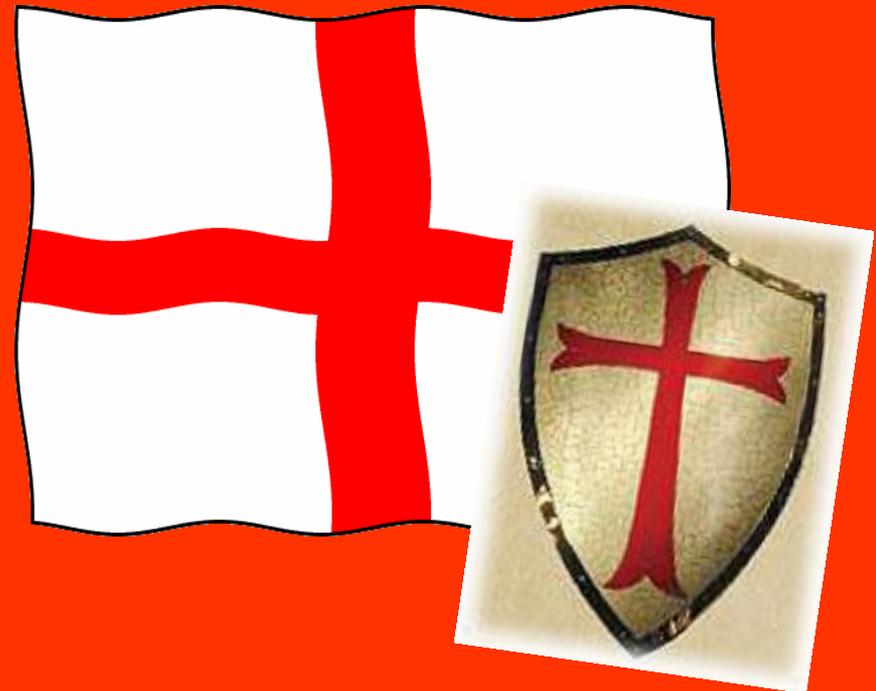
The patron saint of England is called St George.



The legend of Saint George - the patron Saint of England.

St George is painted as a knight carrying a shield with a red cross (or a banner with a red cross).

Sometimes he is shown sitting upon a horse or killing a dragon.



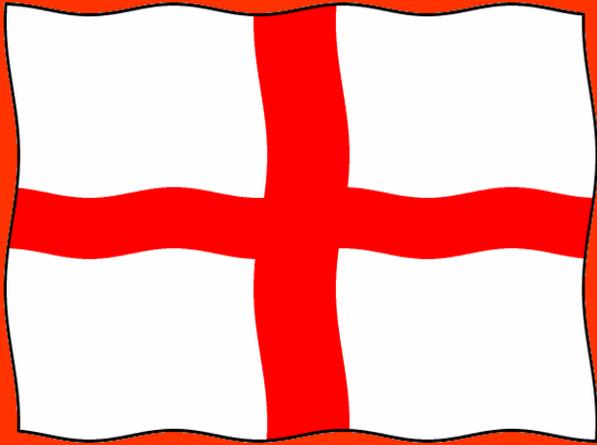


St George was a high ranking officer in the Roman army. He was killed around AD303.

Saint George was tortured to make him deny his faith in Christ. But he showed amazing courage and faith.

Stories of his strength and courage soon spread throughout Europe.





Every year on the 23rd April many people from around the world celebrate what is known as Saint George's Day.



There are many legends telling the story of Saint George ... and here is one of them.

One of the best-known stories about Saint George is his fight with a dragon.



It is a story of legends...

... of a town terrorised by a dragon, a town where a young princess was offered to the dragon. When St George heard about this he rode into the village, slayed the dragon and rescued the princess.

Once upon a time, long, long ago, there was a good king, and his little Princess, whom he loved dearly. The Princess was as sweet as a rose, she was kind and beautiful.



One day a dreadful thing happened to the king and his people. Through the gates of the city, came a huge, fierce and terrifying dragon!

It was horrible to look at, with eyes like two red coals and a mouth that breathed out fire. Its jaws were wide open, its claws were sharp, and it was as tall and huge as a forest tree.





The dragon raged and it tore up the crops in the fields, killed the cattle and then lay in wait by the river bank. No one in the whole kingdom was brave enough to kill it.



The king sent nobles to try to get the dragon to leave, but in vain.

The dragon sent a message to the king to say that each day the king should send one of the children from the village and fasten them to an old oak tree by the bank of the river so the dragon could eat her.

If the king would not do this, the farmers would not be allowed to go back to the fields, and there would be no food in the land.

Everyone in the kingdom was upset. Mothers held their children more closely and everyone began to feel hungry.



The Princess cried, "Let me be the first child to go. I will go to the dragon."

The king's adviser told the people, "We will bring a dove into the palace yard, and set her free. If she flies north, or south, or west, the Princess will not be given to the dragon, but If she flies toward the east and the sunrise the Princess shall go."

So they took a dove, set her free in the courtyard dove spread white wings and circled about in the air, and then flew straight to the east!

The poor Princess!

She was carried out to the river bank and fastened to the oak tree so that the dragon could find her.





The dove flew on and on, through fields and forests, until it came to a brave knight riding who was riding through the woods.

The knight and his good horse were tired from the many brave battles they had fought. He had stopped to rest under a tree when he spotted the dove as it flew straight to his shoulder and began cooing softly in his ear.

"I wonder what this means," said the knight to himself, as the dove flew off a little way and then returned, cooing.

He jumped upon his horse and followed the way the dove led.



Bravely the dove flew, until the knight was brought to the place where the Princess was fastened to the oak tree and there was the dragon close by ready to eat her.

The dragon's breath was so hot that it burned the knight, but he was brave and strong. He thrust the end of his spear as he rode straight toward the dragon's angry jaws.



George the Knight killed the dragon with his spear, and he unfastened the Princess.

He lifted her to his saddle and carried her home to her father, the King.

Oh, there was great rejoicing in the kingdom!

The people crowded the streets and threw flowers for the knight to ride over.

The king said the knight should be called St. George, and he gave him a wonderful gold cross to wear upon his breast.

It was so many, many years ago that St. George killed the dragon, but still the people in England remember him, and even now brave English soldiers wear a tiny cross like St. George's on their uniform.



All over England Saint George's Day is celebrated, and the flag flown, on his feast day, April 23rd.

