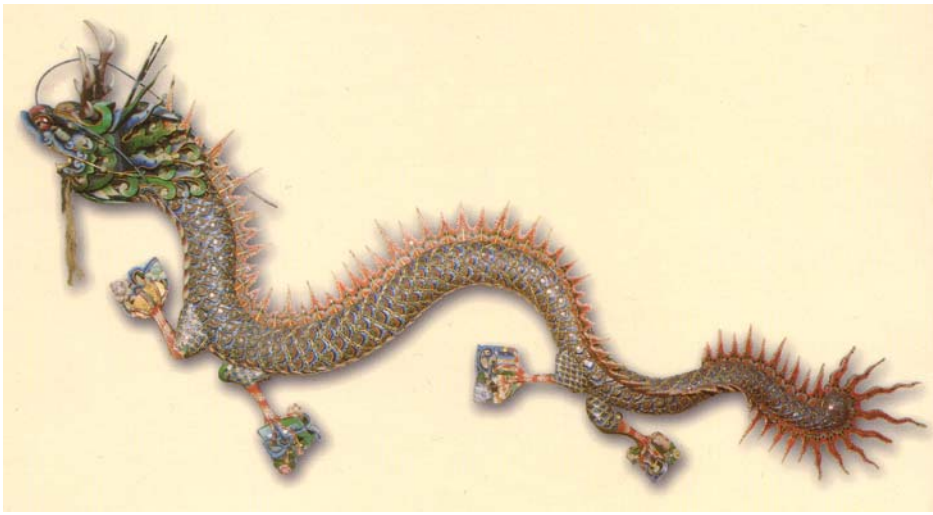


Baz Manning sent pictures of some brilliantly coloured Chinese dragons from a Buddhist Temple he surprisingly came across in the Burgundy countryside in France.



Cathy Constant continues to send interesting items, the latest being a charming Chinese Dragon from the Bristol Museum, carved from wood and painted and decorated with sequins and horsehair. It was probably designed for a temple in the late 19th century.



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St Oswin's Day 2008



Dragon Tile by William De Morgan (1839-1917)



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

Saint Oswin, who died in 651 AD, was a cousin of St Oswald of Northumbria and ruled the kingdom after Oswald's death. Another relation, Oswy, successfully plotted his death, which took place at Gilling in Yorkshire, and Oswin was venerated as a martyr. His feast day falls on 20th August.

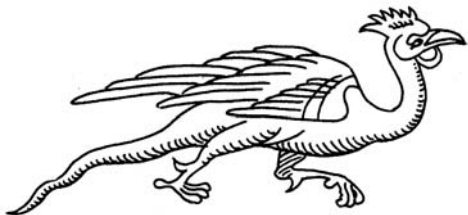
The picture of the hand-made tile on the cover, from the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, was sent in by Leslie Hodgson with the comment, "Look! No wings." It is a superb example of what might be called the art of the Gothic Revival.

FEEDBACK (1)

Roy Humphrey writes:

"I was interested in the article on the Basilisk and the Cockatrice. I must say that I agree with Sir Thomas Browne in *Pseudodoxia* that they are quite distinct creatures. It seems to me quite unreasonable that the 'King of Serpents' should not be crowned (and having a cocks-comb) and be equipped with feet (see Genesis, 'On thy belly shalt thou go.') Certainly, in the Castle Rushen wall hangings, they are both illustrated, and appear quite differently. The identification with the King Cobra would seem to explain the 'wings' on the Basilisk. An interesting side point in the handout at the Cranach exhibition at the Royal Academy last autumn was that in 1508 Cranach was granted by Frederick the Wise his personal arms of 'a crowned serpent with wings, holding a ruby ring in its mouth.' This sounds to me like a traditional Basilisk and it would be interesting to know what the Elector's 'Heraldic Letter' which made the grant actually said. In a way, a Basilisk is a suitable emblem for a portrait painter (or even more for a sculptor) as he 'freezes' the subject in a particular pose for posterity, as the Basilisk does."

The classical winged but footless serpent was termed an Amphitere. Early Basilisks did not have wings or feet, but were distinguished by their crowns. Evidently there has been considerable confusion over the ages, and nomenclature even varied from one country to another. Roy's comments add clarification to a problem first outlined in our pages in Nos 19 and 20, in which our conclusion was that to tell a Basilisk from a Cockatrice, you had to get near enough to read the label.



The Basilisk from Basel from a Swiss printer's woodcut of 1511

CORRESPONDENCE

Many of you have sent congratulations on our hundredth issue, and we now hope to be able to continue with some colour while funds last.

Gillian Palmer (a website reader) has sent a picture of a carved Celtic cross from the Isle of Man with entwined dragons on either side.

Lesley Holt visited the Eden Project in Cornwall, and sent some pictures of a huge monster she saw there made up entirely of waste electrical equipment, rather like a cross between an ogre and a dinosaur.

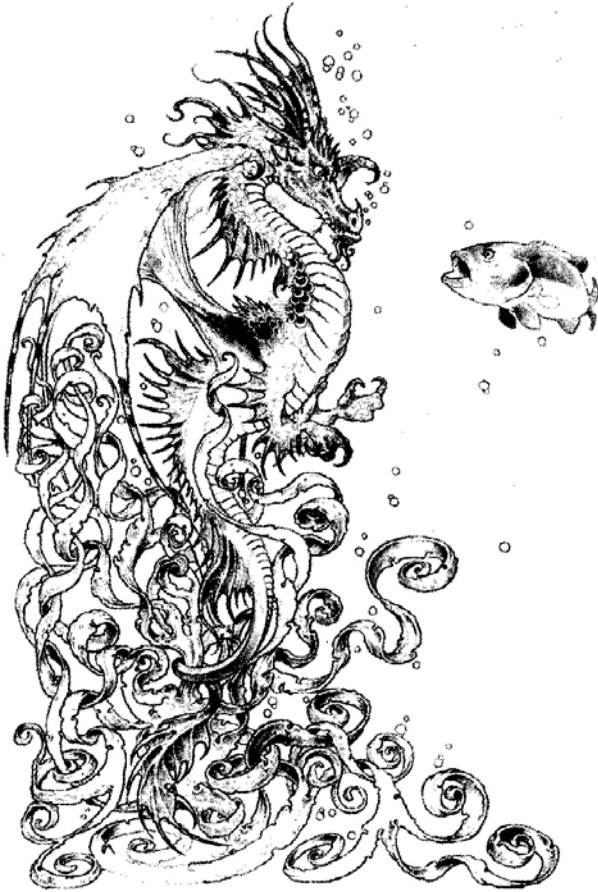
In an Appendix, Dr Drake gives some hints on Finding Fabulous Beasts, with notes on a few that he had merely glimpsed such as the Jaculus (*Serpens volucer*) and the secretive Sargasso

(right). Another Appendix gives Useful Spells and Charms, while the last one covers Historic Monsterologists, including Pliny the Elder, Isidore of Seville, Olaus Magnus, Gideon Mantell and Charles Darwin. Finally, the author concludes with a message worth quoting in full:-

“If I have communicated anything in this book, I hope above all that it has been something of the wonder not only of these fabulous beasts but of all the beasts, birds and fishes that inhabit the Earth. The world is full of amazing beasts and monsters far beyond our ken. They flash through the air and slither through the seas, crawl upon the earth and lurk in the woods. But I don’t expect you to believe me. Open your eyes and see for yourself. All anyone ever has to do is go out and *look!*”

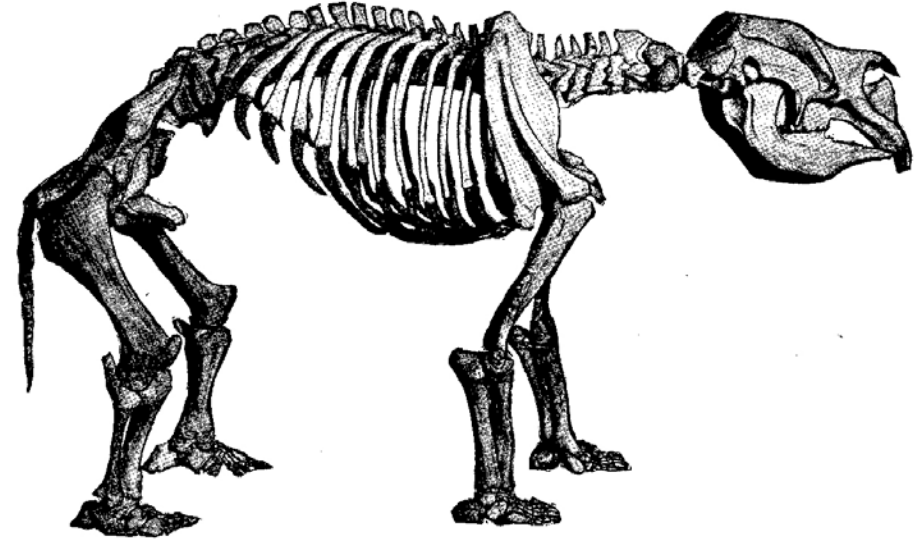
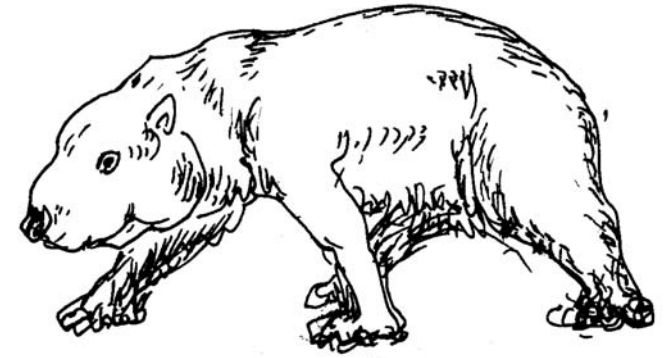
Ernest Drake”

This wonderful work is well researched and charmingly illustrated and conveys a real understanding of the nature of the creatures described, although Dugald Steer has admitted that some of the findings may be rather dubious. Little of the information given will be new to serious dracologists (our term) but some of the beasts described have not come our way before, namely, the Nue, the Baku, the Jaculus and the Sargasso, and may deserve fuller treatment in a later issue. **Monsterology** should find a place on the bookshelves of all those with an interest in the byways of the human imagination coupled with a love of art.



FEEDBACK (2)

Roy Humphrey has also pointed out, with respect to the Bunyip (No 101), that Richard d’Apice was wrong to describe *Diprotodon* as a dinosaur, as it was in fact a giant Australian marsupial mammal of the Pleistocene period, like a giant wombat (see right), the size of a rhinoceros and the largest known marsupial, with a huge skull. Although now extinct, it certainly survived until after the arrival of aboriginal people, and samples of its bones have been found with what look like tool-marks, suggesting that they were hunted and processed by man. It could thus quite probably have provided a material explanation for the legend of the Bunyip, and it has been remarked that even dreams may have arisen from a physical stimulus. If these creatures frequented rivers and marshland, then the description of it as a huge bull-headed seal would not be inappropriate.



*A restoration of the skeleton of **Diprotodon australis** by Professor E.C.Stirlin in the Adelaide Museum (from Parker and Haswell, 1947, Fig. 487, p 537.).*

Here is a legend about the Bunyip, as recounted by Dr Karl Shuker in *Dragons: A Natural History* (London, 1995), reviewed in *Dragonlore No 12*:-



Back in the far distant days of Dream Time, the son of the leader of a bold warrior tribe set out one day to seek a gift with which to win the favour of a maiden. Nothing commonplace would suffice; hours passed and still he had not found anything that satisfied him, until he came to a large pool in which an amazing little animal was merrily cavorting. Using his net, the youth soon captured the strange beast, which was unlike anything he had ever seen before.

In shape it recalled a young calf or colt, but its head resembled a bulldog's, with a blunt muzzle and wide jaws brimming with tiny teeth. Its finned tail was long and flattened, its eyes glowed like torches, and its body was tessellated with a mosaic of iridescent scales. Delighted, the youth returned home with this wonderful animal.

However, the tribe's wise leader was horrified. He ordered his son to return it to the pool, for he knew only too well the animal's identity – it was a baby bunyip, and anybody rash enough to abduct one would soon face its mother's terrible wrath.

But already it was too late. A hideous roar like all the summer thunderstorms rolled together echoed across the land, and the fearful people saw that the rivers and lakes had risen, submerging the valleys and plains in an all-embracing flood. In a desperate exodus, the tribe raced up into the mountains, but still the leader's son would not relinquish the little water dragon.

Suddenly, a huge black shadow fell across the fleeing people. It was the mother bunyip, an immense vision of glittering scales, rapacious teeth and monstrous reptilian rage, gathering the waters of her aquatic domain around her like a robe of revenge with which to smother all who oppressed her offspring.

Finally realizing the full extent of his folly, the youth opened his arms to release the infant bunyip – but they were no longer arms. They had become a pair of feathered wings. He cried out in terror, but his cry was not that of a man. It was, instead, the forlorn honk of a strange new bird with a long slender neck, ruby beak

and plumage as black as the shadow of the mother bunyip. He looked at his companions and found that they too were transformed.

At last the mother bunyip turned away with her offspring, and the waters receded to their former level, leaving behind what had once been a tribe of humans but was now a flock of black swans, the first ever seen in the world.

Unfortunately, Shuker's picture illustrating this legend of the Bunyip proved difficult to reproduce well, but for a truly excellent drawing of the creature by Helen Ward, see the next piece. Perhaps this one could provide Richard's need for an heraldic monster, as it would make an excellent supporter in an Australian grant.

BOOK REVIEW

Monsterology is the latest title in the Dragonology series (see No 40 for a review of the first book of its kind), the full title of which is "Dr. Ernest Drake's MONSTEROLOGY. The Complete Book of Fabulous Beasts." Edited by Dugald A. Steer, B.A. (Brist), S.A.S.D. & S.M.S.M. (Dorking, 2008). It follows in the same style, with lots of delicate drawings and little envelopes to open containing samples of Unicorn' hair, the skin of a six-legged Salamander, and ashes from a Phoenix's nest, among other delights. Following Dr Drake's voyage of discovery in his yacht *Hydra* (shown as a three-masted sailing ship) undertaken in 1898, the book describes his efforts to "seek out those beasts that had so far escaped the scientific attentions of humankind" – but avoiding Dragons, which he had covered thoroughly in earlier works – efforts which were met with surprising success. He writes, "As these creatures had hitherto been dismissed as 'monsters', I was amazed to find a huge variety of them in almost every corner of the globe." He then goes on to describe his findings in some detail.



Male buniyips can be identified by their long tusks.

Starting with the Beasts of the Earth, including the Arabian Unicorn, the Chimera and its Japanese counterpart the Nue, the Baku, Yeti, Bigfoot, Behemoth and the Six-legged Salamander, he then does Beasts of Water – Kraken, Hippocamp, Sea Serpent, Leviathan, Bunyip (*left*), Lake Serpent, Hydrus, Loch Ness Monster and Kelpie – followed by Beasts of the Air – Griffin, Winged Horse, Hippogriff, Cockatrice, Roc and Phoenix. Then come Semi-Human Beasts, with the Harpy, Merfolk, Sphinx, Manticore, Cyclops, Faun, Centaur and Gorgon. Each of these is given an appropriate scientific binomial taxonomic species, with notes on its habits, distribution, evolutionary history and appearance, together with a number of engaging asides, such as the miniature Riddles Book that accompanies the Sphinx (for example:- "What can you catch but not throw?"). Another example is the picture of Bellerophon on the winged horse Pegasus, slaying a chimera, with the comment, "Using one fabulous beast to help kill another is hardly conducive to conservation."