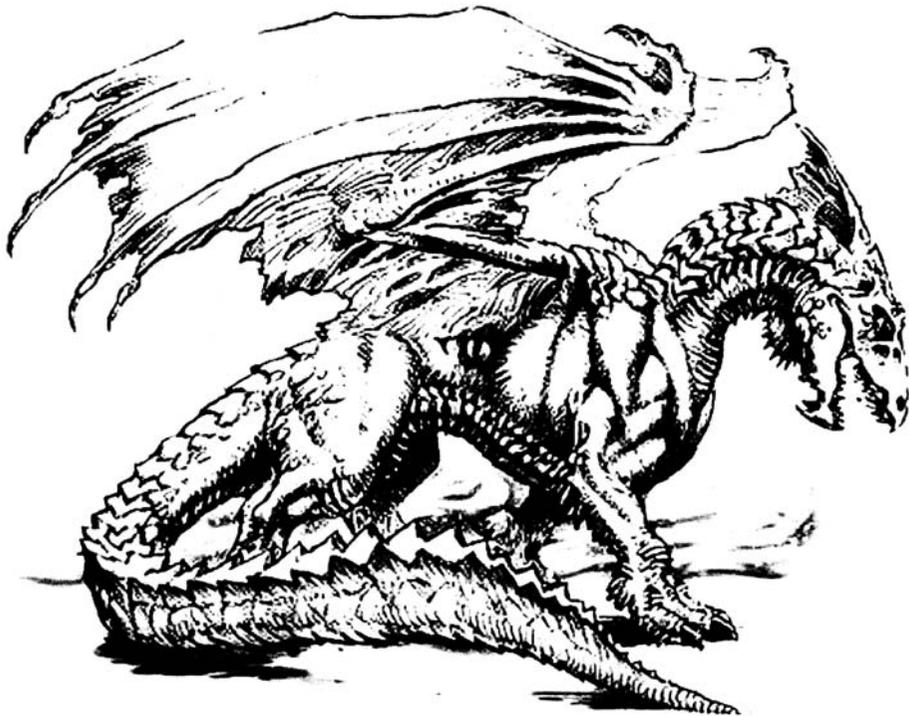


**Roland Symons** has come up with yet another striking RAF badge, this time for 183 Squadron. It shows *A demi-dragon gules gorged with a chaplet of maple leaves Or holding a rocket also Or*. The squadron was formed in November 1942 and was equipped with rocket-firing Typhoons, beginning operations from RAF Colerne (hence the dragon) and working with the Canadian Army after D Day (hence the golden maple leaves). The badge was granted in September 1945 (*right*).



**Marc Van der Cruys** came across a splendid dragon on the internet and was so impressed with the artwork that he sent a copy (*below*). The anatomy of the dragon is noteworthy, in that the wing is a fully-developed pentadactyl pectoral limb, though it is difficult to see how the front leg could articulate with the same shoulder joint. Perhaps one should not expect too much knowledge from our more imaginative artists, though it is clear why those of us with zoological training prefer wyverns.



# Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

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St Ursula's Day 2008



Coats of arms of some Finnish families:  
 Lehtinen, Karlsson, Salminen, & Heikkinen.



## The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

St Ursula is a rather shadowy figure. In Cologne there is a church dedicated to her with an inscribed stone that implies that she came there in the fourth century. By the eighth century her legend had grown, and by the eleventh was quite elaborate. It said that she was the devout Christian daughter of a British king who had taken vows of chastity, and when wooed by the demanding son of a neighbouring king, took her ten handmaidens with her and fled to the continent. They sailed across to Holland and then up the Rhine to Cologne, and later continued upstream to Basel and then on foot over the Alps and so to Rome, where she met the Pope. After a while she decided to return to Cologne, but when she got there they found that the city was occupied by Huns. The king of the Huns took a fancy to her and wanted to marry her, but she insisted on her chastity, so he took his bow and arrow and shot her and then had all her companions massacred, who by this time numbered eleven thousand, all virgins. It is now thought that this huge number was a misreading of the symbol M for Martyr as M for a thousand, but the story caught the imagination of the Middle Ages, and when an ancient Roman burial ground was unearthed near Cologne revealing thousands of bones, it was widely believed that the story had been proved. This is similar to the belief following the discovery of some fossil dinosaur bones, that the existence of material dragons had been proved. Whether logical or not, Saint Ursula and her Companions are celebrated on 21<sup>st</sup> October each year, especially in Cologne.

## Fabulous Beasts from Finnish Family Heraldry

The arms on the cover are taken from a remarkable book, SUOMALAISIA VAAKUNOITA (2006), meaning “Finnish Coats of Arms” and published by the Heraldic Society of Finland and containing a complete record of the arms of all their members as listed in their register. The Society was founded in 1957 following the popular success of a book of Finnish Civic Arms, and the desire of many Finns to have their own arms registered. As there is no official heraldic authority in Finland, (municipalities are encouraged to record and legitimise their own arms) the Society undertook this task. Each submission is checked by experts at the Society both for originality and for conformity to the rules of good heraldic design, and the result is a stunning display of imaginative heraldry, much of it quite traditional but some pieces showing a freedom of inspired artistry which is quite breathtaking. A total of 1356 coats of arms are included, each with the name of the owner, the blazon (mostly in Finnish, but a few in Swedish), the name of the designer if known, and the arms themselves in colour. For this book, each of the arms was redrawn by a professional

## JOURNAL SCAN

**The New Zealand Armorer No 108** (“Spring” 2008) has a tribute to Pauline Baynes 1922-2008 with the same two drawings we showed in the last number, of the Cockatrice and the Questing Beast. It also has a fine drawing by Roger Barnes of a Double-headed Eagle illustrating his article on “The Arms of John Milton.” (*right*)



## CORRESPONDENCE

**Russ Fletcher** visited Lambeth Palace with the White Lion Society, and came away with a card showing “The dragon cast into the jaws of Hell” illustrating *Revelation 20, vv 9-10*, from the Lambeth Apocalypse. The woeful little dragon is standing in a dark abyss surrounded by a six-faced opening, having his nose tweaked by pincers wielded by a dog-faced demon with two-faced buttocks and accompanied by what may be the rear half of a deer, part of another animal, what seems to be a swarm of little creatures and half-a-dozen human faces. Nearby is a toad, and what looks like a butterfly with armorial wings. Plenty of symbolism in a powerful image!

**Cecil Humphery-Smith** sent some pictures taken from a rare book in his library, the *Insignia Sacrae Caesareae* by Philippus Lonicerus (1579), showing some strange creatures including a pair of demi-women with wings for arms, an armless bishop crest and some devilish little demons, as well as a couple of his favourite elephants.

**Jan Keuzenkamp** sent fifteen photographs of coats of arms with fabulous beasts in them from his extensive collection, mostly of municipalities but a few of families from Eastern Europe. Griffins, dragons and wyverns, the double-headed cock of Versailles, a human-headed cock from the Czech town of Ceska Trebova (forgive the missing accents!) and lastly the rare Ipotane of the Gellyei family (known locally as a Centaur) make a fine assortment. One we have seen earlier has a shield *party per pale Or and sable* surrounded by a green dragon biting its own tail which we said belonged to the Z Vartenberka family (*see No 27*) but is here given for the Czech town of Ceska Kamenice, with a different crest.

## BOOK REVIEW

A treasure from the past, *Beasts and Saints*, translations by Helen Waddell with woodcuts by Robert Gibbings (London, 1934), has forty-five legends from the Latin of the fourth to twelfth centuries, and inevitably one or two of them involve dragons. The Blessed Father Ammon and St Simeon Stylites each encountered such a fearsome monster, the former dealing with it forcibly and the latter peacefully, but one of the choicest pictures in the book is this illustration to the tale of St Brendan and the Sea Monsters.



artist and coloured in by computer, which gives an artistic unity to the whole, all the better to reveal the variety of the individual designs.

Amongst the charges, inevitably there is a quota of fabulous beasts, though not in abundance. Out of the total, 24 arms contain one or more monsters, Griffins being the favourite with seven examples, three of which are holding a pair of ink-pestles, the traditional sign for Teutonic printers, as seen in the arms of Lehtinen on the cover. Next come four Pegasuses (or perhaps just winged horses), three Wyverns (including the ingenious arms of Karlsson on the cover), two each of Dragons and Double-headed Eagles, with single showings of a winged bull, a winged fish, a winged lion, a double-headed winged hare (for Salminen, on the cover) and a strange fish/cockerel hybrid (for Heikkinen, also on the cover). These last two may be unique in European heraldry. The Heraldic Society of Finland deserves congratulations for their enterprise.

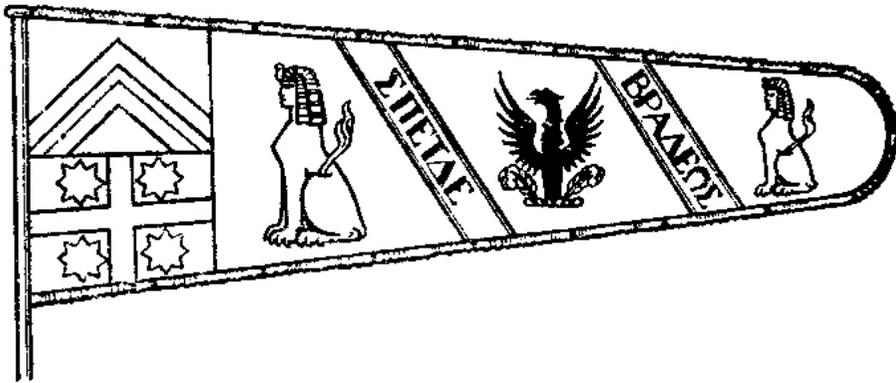
### Fabulous Beasts in British Family Heraldry

A representative selection of British family coats of arms is to be found in *Burke's Landed Gentry – 18<sup>th</sup> Edition, Volume 1* (1965), which, in spite of its outdated title (few families can be said to be “landed” in the older sense these days), gives a fair choice of non-peerage family histories. Out of a total of 686 families listed, 468 are illustrated with their coat of arms, and of these 72 have one or more monsters in whole or in part – a much higher percentage than the Finnish sample given above. Griffins are again the favourite, with 37 showings (compared with 110 with lions or parts thereof), followed by 8 dragons, 5 wyverns, 5 unicorns, 4 double-headed eagles and 4 martlets, with single examples each of a mermaid, a demi-woman with wings for arms, a pelican vulning herself, a horned leopard's head, a panther's head, an heraldic tiger, a cockatrice, a demi-seahorse and a set of dolphins.



It is not common to see supporters for non-peerage arms, but these griffins (*above*) are too splendid to ignore. They are for the Argenti family of Italian origin,

which has an amazing history. One early member took part in the First Crusade and settled in Constantinople around 1100. A later member lived in Genoa and his arms were inscribed in the Libro d'Oro in 1532 and have since been registered with the College of Arms after the family settled in England. For those who like to colour them in, they may be blazoned: *Quarterly 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, argent two chevronels azure; 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, azure a cross argent between four mullets of eight points Or. Crest: a demi-eagle wings expanded sable issuant from a coronet of a Genoese patrician. Supporters: On either side a griffin Or.* Their badge, to be seen on their standard (below), is a Greek Sphinx seated, a most unusual creature in heraldry though not counted in the total given above as a standard is not a coat of arms!

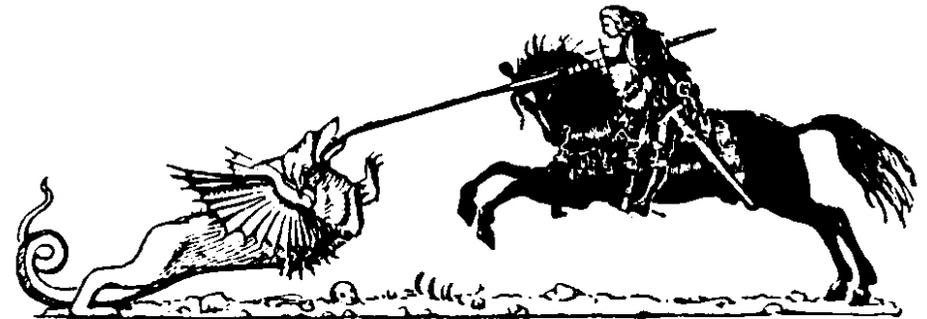


Another example worthy of note is for Smith of Woodhall Park, namely: *Or, a chevron cotised sable between three demi-griffins couped of the last, the two in chief respecting each other. Crest: An elephant's head erased Or, charged on the neck with three fleur-de-lys sable.* This has features in common with the arms of Cecil Humphery-Smith, one of our regular contributors, as may be seen in Nos 26 and 50, with griffins on the shield and an elephant's head crest. These arms were seen in a hatchment for Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother painted by Mark Dennis.



## THE DRAGON - SPAWN OF THE OLD SERPENT

This is the title of the third and most illuminating chapter in a booklet, "St George, Ruskin and the Dragon" published by the Sheffield Arts Department in 1992 in connection with the Ruskin Gallery and the Collection of the Guild of St George, and kindly donated by Leslie Hodgson. The first two chapters, "St George, Martyr and Hero" and "St George and the Dragon," cover familiar ground, but the third and last traces the origin of legends about the dragon from remote pagan times and describes how it evolved from a nature spirit, largely benevolent, into the demonic embodiment of evil which had to be overcome by the true Christian, personified by St George. Ruskin was concerned that as art moved into a time of lessening faith, the true impact of all images such as those of St George and the Dragon would lose their essential message. He was particularly interested in a picture by Carpaccio painted in 1502, shown here in outline (below), which he felt was one of the last to have been born out of faith and not merely painted as an exercise in aesthetics. The booklet contains a number of unusual illustrations, and a facsimile of the "Lyf of Saynt George Martyr" from the Golden Legend, as printed by the Kelmscott Press in 1892, as well as a wealth of interesting information.



As an afterthought, it occurred to me that the reason why dragons changed in the Middle Ages from feathery wings to those bat-like ones, was because in olden times wings were a symbol of spiritual beings, which were helpful to mankind, but since dragons had become associated with the evil serpent of Christian tradition they needed something less pleasant, and bats were thought of as nasty creatures of the twilight and the dark, so bats' wings they were given. But artists were never very consistent and the wings they drew on dragons varied enormously, often verging towards fishes' multi-spined fins, as in Carpaccio's dragon seen here. Artists had to rely on other artists' pictures or on their own imagination, and one should bear in mind that they were trying to impart a message, and as Ruskin indicated, we should try to appreciate just what that message was.