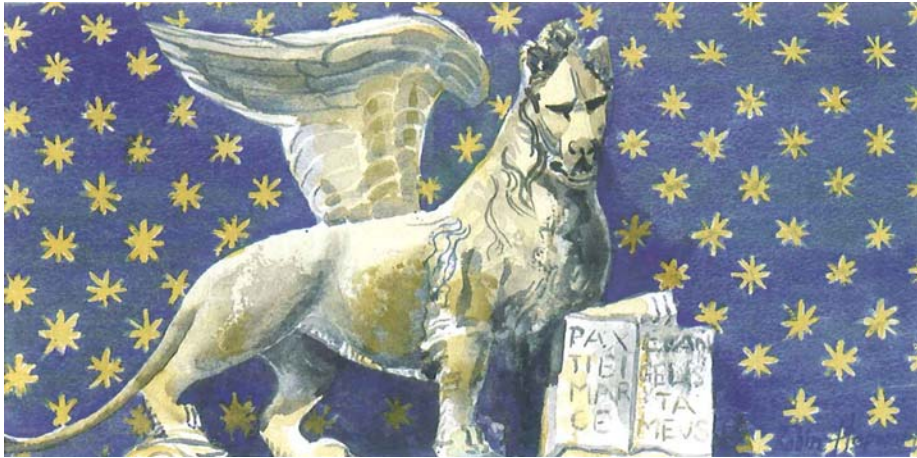
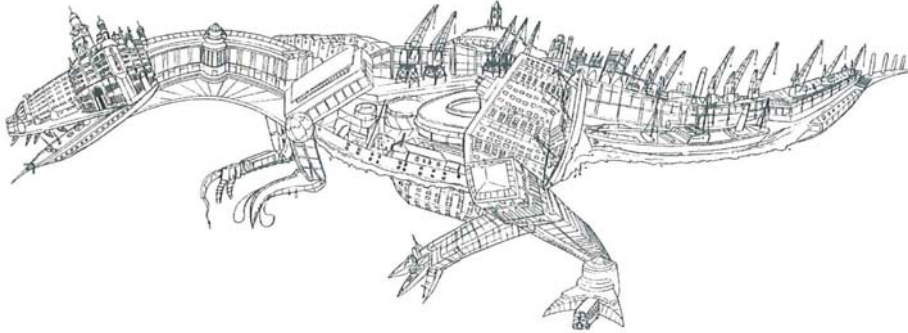


Mary Brooke-Little sent a delightful Christmas card with a watercolour by Robin Hepworth of the Winged Lion of St Mark in Venice (*below*).



Cathy Constant sent a bundle of good things including this picture of a Dragon (or dinosaur) made up entirely of buildings and things in the centre of Bristol,



and also this Hausa embroidery of a Dragon (or crocodile) from Nigeria.



FEEDBACK - **Bernard Juby** has e-mailed that in his copy of the Penguin edition of "Lady Chatterley's Lover" it says:- "Cover device by Stephen Russ, adapted from D.H.Lawrence's own drawing" – the Phoenix was his chosen emblem.

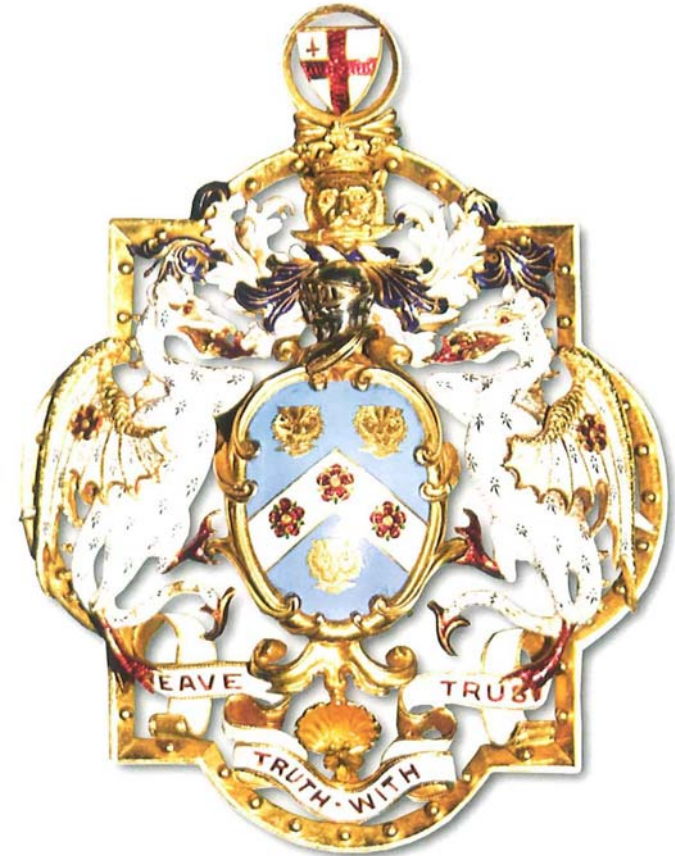
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St Silvester's Day 2011



Wyverns supporting the Arms of the Worshipful Company of Weavers



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts



Silvester I was the pope who reigned from 314 to 335 and rejoiced at his good fortune in becoming Bishop of Rome after the Emperor Constantine granted toleration to the Christian church. He did many good works and was one of the first to be made a saint not having been martyred. His feast day on 31 December is widely celebrated on the continent as a festival more fitting than Hogmanay.

The picture on the cover is the jewelled badge of office worn by the Master of the Worshipful Company of Weavers, a Livery Company of the City of London, and one of a hundred illustrated in a majestic new book, reviewed on a later page.

SNAPDRAGON (abridged from *The Black Country Bugle*)

Fiery Victorian Parlour Game

OUR Victorian forebears really enjoyed parlour songs and games. And, when the extended family was gathered together, at Christmas, they loved to let their hair down. But, there was one Christmas parlour game, in particular, that sometimes left the players needing medical attention!

The fairly innocent sounding game of “Snapdragon” has a long history, and was a popular yuletide pastime from the 16th to the 19th century. It was played during winter, particularly on Christmas Eve. Typically, brandy was heated up and placed in a wide, shallow bowl. Then, raisins were thrown into the bowl and the brandy set alight.

The house lights would be extinguished or dimmed, to increase the eerie effect of the flickering blue flames. Then, the game would begin. The players had to pluck the raisins from the burning brandy, and eat them, risking nasty burns to fingers, faces and mouths.

Samuel Johnson’s ‘Dictionary of the English Language’ (1755) describes it as “a play where they catch raisins out of burning brandy and, extinguishing them by



CORRESPONDENCE

Adrian Overhaag visited New Zealand and saw this odd one-legged monster decorating a lamp-post in Arrowville (*right*). Adrian writes:

During my holiday in New Zealand, I expected to meet a lot of Maori fabulous beasts. But although most of the Maori statues had for me a rather monstrously appearance, it seemed that it were statues of Maori forefathers. So there was nothing fabulous to see. A little bit disappointed, I continued my search hoping to find something unusual. And when I visited Arrowville in the south of the Southern Island, there it was!

Dirk FitzHugh sent a Christmas card showing the gilded George and Dragon statue in the Dean’s Cloister, Windsor Castle, covered in snow (*below, left*). Luckily I had another picture of it taken on a warmer sunny day (*below, right*).



Gonfanon (Vol 22, No 3, Fall 2011) has some unusual hybrid supporters - Sir Arthur Currie's winged rams, the curious horse-dove supporters on the arms of Jean-Daniel Lafond (*below*) and Robert Watt's winged sea-cougars – besides a few winged paschal lambs, a pair of mermaids and a winged demi-lion crest. There is considerable controversy over the invention of unusual hybrids such as these horse-doves. One view is that they are irresponsible seeing that we know that they could never have existed, whereas traditional hybrids such as the centaur or griffin were believed to have been real creatures. But we do like to have a bit of fun.



The Heraldry Gazette No 122 (December 2011) has a few little Dragons from Somerset and elsewhere, a Griffin's head crest, another with a Sea-Lion, the usual Unicorns and an intriguing carving of a Phoenix rising from flames. A selection of photographs from the August Heraldry Conference in Birmingham includes at least six of our members.

closing the mouth, eat them.” An 18th century article in the ‘Tatler’ magazine notes “the wantonness of the thing was to see each other look like a demon, as we burnt ourselves, and snatched out the fruit.”

Before Victorian times, the game was really an adults’ drinking game, the Snap-dragons being “small combustible bodies fired at one end and floated in a glass of liquor, which an experienced toper swallowed unharmed, while yet blazing.” At this time, there was also a more dangerous variant of the game, where a lit candle was placed in a cup of ale or cider. The aim was to “quaff the liquor without singeing one’s face.”

Raisins were the usual treats to play for, but sometimes currants, candied fruit, figs, grapes, plums or almonds were used. The shallow bowl was placed in the middle of the festive table. And, in another variant of the game, a lighted Christmas pudding was put in the centre of the bowl, surrounded by the flaming raisins.

By the mid 19th century, Snap-dragon was firmly established as a Christmas family parlour game. In 1836, Charles Dickens mentions it in ‘Pickwick Papers.’ And, in 1871, Lewis Carroll describes “A snap-dragon fly. Its body is made of plum pudding, its wings of holly leaves, and its head is a raisin burning in brandy.” It was still being played in the 20th century, as Agatha Christie’s book, ‘Hallowe’en Party,’ describes a children’s party (during which a child is murdered and Hercule Poirot brought in to solve the case) at which Snap-dragon is played.

Even the scientist Michael Faraday mentions it in his 1860 essay, ‘The Chemical History of a Candle.’ Faraday suggests the raisins in Snap-dragon act like miniature wicks, but the brandy “is not burning at a high enough temperature to consume the raisins.” Faraday may have been right about the temperature of the flaming brandy, but, by the early 20th century, and goodness knows how many children and adults with burned hands and mouths, Snap-dragon began to die out.

It has been suggested the game is a very ancient one, with links to classical Greek stories about Hercules killing a flaming dragon. Another theory suggests the game harks back to druidic fire worship. Apples and fire were certainly part of pagan winter rituals, and it may be significant that Snap-dragon was often played at Hallowe’en as well as Christmas.

(Thanks to Dave Perks for bringing this, but note that, with respect to the last paragraph, dragons were never associated with fire in ancient Greek times, this being a rather late mediaeval innovation.)

BOOK REVIEWS

MASTER’S BADGES of the City of London Livery Companies by Richard Goddard (Phillimore, Andover 2011) is a magnificent record of one hundred masterful examples of the goldsmiths’ and jewellers’ crafts illustrated in life-sized colour photographs. The author (one of our members) must be congratulated on the completeness of his coverage of these superb ornaments, preceded by chapters starting from “How it all Began” through to “The Influence of Heraldry.” He does not describe the heraldry of the Companies’ arms, since these are fully covered in Bromley & Childs 1960 book, but he does give the blazons of all the more recent

grants with little coloured pictures. There is an abundance of heraldic monsters; a quick count revealed 18 dragons, 10 Griffins, 6 Unicorns, 5 Sea-Dragons, 4 each of Dolphins, Panthers and Mermaids, 3 each of Wyverns (*see the Weavers' badge on the cover*), Pegasus, Phoenix and Winged Bulls (*see the Butchers' badge below*), an Opinicus pair and one each Male Griffin, Sea Horse, Sea Lion, Winged Lion, Salamander, Carentyne and Cockatrice. Some of these badges do not have the full arms with supporters, so there may be others waiting in the wings, as it were. This impressive volume was a present from my son **Guy** who is himself a Past Master of the Worshipful Company of Scientific Instrument Makers, whose brilliant badge that he wore for a year has some clever heraldry but no beasts.



DRAGON ART Inspiration, Impact & Technique in Fantasy Art by Graeme Aymer (London 2009) starts with a brief but well-balanced survey of dragons in lore and legend, and goes on to describe the origin of fantasy art, with examples of the work of fifty or so artists, ranging from the truly fearsome to the merely frivolous. One marvels at their great technical skills as well as their fertile imaginations. This picture (*right*) is one of the simpler ones in the book, which was also a present, this time from **Roger Seabury**.



INHERITANCE by Christopher Paolini (London 2011) is the fourth and final volume in the Eragon "trilogy" whose earlier appearances we have reviewed in previous issues (*No 51 for Eragon and No 80 for its film version, No 67 for Eldest and No 108 for Brisingr*). This picture (*right*) of Eragon's tame Dragon Saphira by John Jude Palencar has not previously been seen here in colour, and is taken from the book jacket. Their adventures carry on much as before, with much blood and magic, and countless fearsome adversaries, but of course Eragon and Saphira come through in the end.. Yet another present, this one was from **Annie Robertson**.



JOURNAL SCAN

Tak Tent No 53 (Autumn 2011) has the Midland Railway's legless Wyvern crest on the armorial banner of John Murray as High Sheriff of Breconshire (*right*) as well as a few royal Unicorn supporters. Murray had this banner made with arms of his own invention with emblems on the shield from the arms of Derby and Brecon, both places where he had held office, and the crest taken from the emblem of the Midland Railway, his employers at that time. He added to the shield a blue fess with three blue mullets in token of his family clan connection, but entirely without authority.

