

An A to Z of Dragonlore—Supplement (*continued*)

GLAISTIG, basically a female Urisk, from the Scottish Highlands.

GUIVRE, a toxic horned serpent that infested mediaeval France, it was extremely bashful and would flee from the sight of a naked male figure, a weakness that, once discovered, led to its total expulsion by bold young men.

HEMICYNES, dog-headed humanoids from the Black Sea shores according to the Greeks.

HYBRIDS, new monsters are still appearing in stories and in heraldry, that combine features from two or more animals but often do not have a specific name of their own. Examples are a fish with bird's wings and a lion with peacock's tail from Switzerland, a salmon with antlers and a wolf-headed raven from Scandinavia, and the supporters of the arms of the Canadian Heraldic Authority with upper half of a red raven and lower half of a polar bear.

ICE-MAIDEN, perhaps a frozen mermaid.

JACKALOPE, a hare or jack-rabbit with antlers, first noted in Germany but later a popular diversion in North America and much favoured by pranksters.

KITCHI-AT'HUSIS, a forty foot long water serpent with antlers and venomous fangs that once lived in the waters of Boyden Lake in Maine, North America, but was beaten and eaten by a Weewilmekq; it was possibly a protean shaman.

KUKULKAN, a Mayan feathered serpent perhaps related to Quetzalcoatl.

LAMASSU, Assyrian man-headed winged lions and bulls used as gate guardians

LINDORM, in Scandinavian heraldry, a kind of Wyvern probably the same as a Lindworm though in folklore the legs and wings were often missing.

LINDWORM, an ancient Germanic or Anglo-Saxon serpent sometimes shown with legs or wings or both, said to dwell in churchyards and quite common in church carvings.

LOTAN, a dragon slain by Baal in Canaanite myth.

MAPPIN-GWANEE, a huge cave-dwelling monster from Brazil with a deadly gaze, a loud roaring voice and impervious to shotgun pellets it is supposed by some to be a survivor of the giant sloth.

MOCK TURTLE, a composite creature invented by Lewis Carroll as a companion to the Griffin and illustrated by John Tenniel as a turtle with calf's head and feet; these beasts are thought to be derived from nicknames given to academics known to the real Alice.

MOKELE-MBEBE, a huge monster said to dwell in the swamps of the Congo, with an elephantine body supported by four stout limbs each with a three-clawed foot, long tapering neck and tail and a small head but shy rather than fierce—thought by some to be another dinosaur survival.

.To be continued...

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The Unicorn

The Lady with the Unicorn after a French 15th century tapestry from Cluny, drawn by Anne Marie Jauss (from Lum 1952).

Inset: Unicorn drawn by Andrew Jamieson (from Friar 1987).

The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

In 1996 the Heraldry Society of Scotland under the Chairmanship of Dr Patrick Barden held its Annual Meeting in Perth, an ancient capital of Scotland, and celebrated the occasion with a symposium devoted to the **Emblems of Scotland**, arranged by Mr Leslie Hodgson. This has now (1997) been published as a booklet, and one of the five essays is on **The Unicorn** by Mark Dennis in an outstanding contribution to our understanding of this fabulous beast. (The other emblems are the Lion, the Double Tressure, the Saltire and the Thistle.) Dennis traces the history of the unicorn from ancient Greek writings through biblical references and mediaeval devotions to its use in heraldry, its introduction to Scotland and its eventual pairing with the Lion in the Royal Arms of the United Kingdom. The flavour of Dennis' treatment can best be conveyed by quoting an introductory paragraph:-

This is the beast that is and never was, has never been and never ceased to be. Any child will readily draw a unicorn for you, and no zoologist will admit of them. It is a creature of the heart not nature; it dwells in the yearning of our souls for the brave and the bright and the beautiful. It is not endangered. It shares with the dragon the distinction of flourishing non-existence over nearly all human cultures. He plays draughts with a lion on an Egyptian scroll, fights still the lion on the walls of Persepolis, as the karkadann of Islam he jousts with the elephant, as qi'lin announces with a jade tablet the birth of Confucius, and as our own unicorn argent embraces the Sovereign's shield in a thousand thousand places every day in Britain. He is everywhere a figure of purity and courage. His nature is gentle not aggressive, but he is indomitable in defence. He is noble.

Mark Dennis has given us a model treatment for a fabulous beast, and I would like to see something as good on the Dragon as an Emblem of Wales.

The Lion and the Unicorn

*The lion and the unicorn were fighting for the crown,
The lion beat the unicorn all round the town.*

In **The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes** (1951) the editors, Iona and Peter Opie, remark that an antagonism between these two beasts has been legendary in many countries through many ages, but note that the earliest record of this verse occurs soon after the Hanoverian succession when strife between England and Scotland briefly resumed. Although the Unicorn was certainly introduced as a supporter of their Royal Arms by the Scottish

Stuarts, I believe it is a mistake to identify the Lion just with England. Indeed, the Scottish Kings did not see the Unicorn as a symbol of Scotland as they already had the "ruddy lion ramping in a field of gold" for that purpose, but rather as a sign of spiritual favour for their kingship, an emblem of the chivalric ideal, as Dennis puts it. Before the Stuart succession to the throne of England, the Tudors used many supporters, not only the Lion but the Dragon, Greyhound, Yale, Antelope and others, mostly with different family connections, and the Scots also had Lion supporters on their Privy Seal as well as that on their shield.

I believe the Lion, King of Beasts, represents the Majesty of Kingly Power, and indeed it is to be found in the arms of almost all the Royal Houses of Northern Europe, as well as on the shield of the Counts of Flanders—perhaps the oldest genuine coat of arms known to us. The Unicorn then is not antagonistic to the Lion but complementary, possibly representing Divine Grace. This most famous of all pairs of supporters can then be seen as standing for all manner of complimentary opposites, from Sun and Moon, Strength and Elegance, Dominion and Sacrifice, down to such as Gladstone and Disraeli in the famous Tenniel cartoon.

Fabulous Beasts in Scottish Heraldry

Apart from the beloved Unicorn in the Royal Arms, fabulous beasts do not figure largely in Scottish heraldry. In **Scottish Burgh & County Heraldry** by R. M. Urquhart (London 1973) out of 220 arms illustrated only 16 include such creatures. The splendid green **Dragon** supporters of the City of Dundee arms are almost alone, the only other dragons are two being trodden on by St Michael; there are five **double-headed eagles**, a mere four **Griffins** in whole or in part, two shields with **Martlets**, one with a **Unicorn** and one with a dancing **Dolphin**. In family and personal arms the position is much the same with only a couple of Unicorns, a handful of Griffins, and a few Martlets.

Urquhart's 1979 book, **Scottish Civic Heraldry**, records the arms of the newly-formed Regional Councils, each of which was given one Unicorn supporter and one of local significance, whereby an ancient puzzle can be resolved, namely, just how big is a Unicorn? It would appear that it can be as large as a stag—a red deer—or an Angus Bull, or as small as a Goshawk or a ptarmigan, and in between can match a lion, a human figure (St Servanus for Fife, a Border Knight, or an Orkney Udaller), a Shetland pony or a Golden Eagle. In other words, the Unicorn can be any size it likes because it is a magic beast.

See also Margaret Young's entry under **Unicorn** in Friar's 1987 Dictionary.