

## An A to Z of Dragonlore—Supplement (*fourth & final part*)

SKYAMSEN, another name for the Thunderbird.

STORMBIRD, a generic name for composite winged Sumerian monsters.

TEELGET, a man-eating horned monster described by the Navajo of Arizona.

THUNDERBIRD, a fabulous totem figure from North America that was reputed to have an enormous wing span, and was thus equated with eagles or condors, but was more likely to have originated from a woodpecker hammering on a hollow tree and so making a thundering noise. In Britain the name was applied to the little wren, which was seen to be active after thunderstorms.

TONTON, a clever invention found in the Star Wars saga, this large biped with a head like a camel with ram's horns and a body like a kangaroo, that does not hop but runs like an ostrich, has been tamed and is ridden at high speed over the barren lands.

UNION, a hybrid of Unicorn and Lion devised by John George to provide supporters for the arms of the Wilkinson Sword Company.

WANTLEY DRAGON OF YORKSHIRE, another beast that terrorised the locality until craftily killed by a local hero in a story similar to the Laidley Worm of Lambton, from Lambton Castle in County Durham, not so far away. The plots of these stories are so like those of the Perseus and St George legends that one suspects a deep need for such reassuring tales in many parts of the world from whatever source.

WARSPITE, possibly the Elizabethan name for the humble English thunderbird of the woodpecker variety.

WEEWILMEKQ, a giant leech with deadly suckers, in fact the shaman Medskelemet in disguise, that defeated the Kitchi-at'husis in Lake Boyden in North America.

XENOMORPH, a technical name for any foreign form, that is, not indigenous to the place where it is found, and thus by definition covering all Fabulous Beasts and Fantastic Creatures.

Without doubt, further named monsters will come to light and they will be reported in these pages in due course. For instance, here is one worth mentioning: KEYTHONG, this apparently is the correct name for the monster commonly known in heraldry as the Male Griffin. What a lot of confusion could have been saved had it been used regularly!

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Prompted in 1998 by Ralph Brocklebank

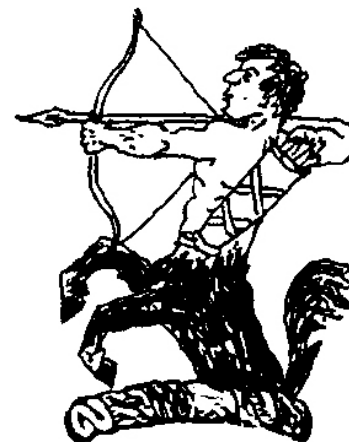
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# Dragonlore

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Three crests recently granted

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

Time takes its toll, and three more of our founder members have died, Jane Hampton, Angela Richards and Colin Voake. So too has Teddy Pelham-Clinton. Once, at a Trinity May Ball, he proposed to my sister with the added inducement that she might one day become a Duchess. Unfortunately he was a clumsy dancer and trod on her toes, so, making a hasty balance between the remote chance of a coronet and the present reality of bruises, she turned him down. Many years later, after he had retired from being a Deputy Keeper of beetles at the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh and had settled in Devon, his distant cousin died and he became the Duke of Newcastle. Sadly, he himself died very soon afterwards, still a bachelor, and his title died with him. The Pelham quartering in his arms included Pelicans vulning themselves. He was a good friend and a strong supporter of dracology in its early years.

Time also brings new developments, and recently three of my circle of family and friends have had grants of arms with fabulous beasts as crests (*see cover*).

*Robert Grainger has a green demi-griffin gathering grain, reflecting both his surname (meaning one who guards the golden grain) and his lifetime of work in the Inland Revenue, as the griffin was the traditional guardian of treasure; it is also grittily alliterative. The drawing is by Robert Parsons.*

*Roger Seabury, who is himself a champion archer, has a demi-sagittary, shown here as our submission sketch. We asked for him to be “proper” — in natural colours — but Garter insisted he should be an heraldic colour, red, green or blue. When we said, “What about black?” he replied, “Of course, Sable is a good heraldic colour, and if the hairy parts are black I will allow you proper pink for the fleshly parts.” But a centaur lives out of doors in sunny climes, so the artist who painted the finished work, Dennis Field, made sure that the fleshly parts were well tanned, which was proper in this case. The quiver on his back, white with blue bands, is a mark of difference.*

*Dave Elderton’s family comes from Shropshire where there is a village of that name, once known as Aethelheardstun, the home of a worthy Saxon who may have been an Elder as indicated by the ancient crown (instead of a wreath), from which arises the red West Country dragon holding a golden leaf of the common Elder, Sambucus nigra. Crown and leaf come together again on the shield and in the badge. The drawing is by David Hopkinson.*

These three promise to become keen dracologists.

## Fabulous Beasts in Churches

A splendid and worthy book has recently been published which not only illustrates the whole range of creatures found in church carvings, but in an enlightened text explains why they are there and what messages they carried. **GOD’S BEASTS: Identify and understand animals in church carvings** by M. W. Tisdall (Charlesfort Press, Plymouth 1998) tells “the stories that give point and purpose to over one hundred varieties of animal and other figures in our church carvings” — with copious photographs of examples from England and France. Nearly a quarter of these are from the realm of myth and fable, and include the Amphisbaena, Antelope, Basilisk and Cockatrice, Centaur, Dolphin, Dragon, Griffin, Harpy, Hydra, Lamia, Leviathan, Lindworm, Mantichore, Mermaid, Panther, Pelican, Phoenix, Salamander, Sphinx, Tiger, Unicorn, Wyvern and Yale. To those who are familiar with these beasts mainly from their depiction in a more formalised heraldic context, the liveliness, vigour and expressiveness of these carvings will come as a revelation, and all achieved with great economy of form. There might once have been equally entrancing wall-paintings to be seen, but none seem to have survived; paint is less durable than stone or wood and easily covered over by Puritans. What remains certainly deserves the effort of understanding their purpose, as a quote from Tisdall’s Introduction explains: “Animal carvings are important for the message that they carry. They never pretend to be true to nature pictures. *The carvings are there not to tell us about the physical nature of the animal but to tell us a moral or spiritual truth about ourselves.* It really does not matter even if the animal is one we now know does not exist. To them a griffin or a unicorn was just as real as an elephant or a tiger. There was no need to be concerned about the strict ‘scientific’ truth. We demean ourselves when we belittle them for their lack of knowledge. If we do not know the story then it is we who are to be pitied.” As a dracologist, I must agree with these sentiments. Tisdall shows wisdom as well as knowledge. His bibliography has 66 entries.

## REVIEW

**The Art of Heraldry: Origins, Symbols, Designs** by Peter Gwynn-Jones, now Garter King of Arms (London 1998) expands on his 1993 work and again has a chapter on **Heraldic Monsters**. Unlike other books with this title, this one tackles the history of heraldic composition and not just techniques of execution, and among the copious illustrations appear the Styrian panther, another recent grant of an Alphyn, and a new hybrid — a winged but legless sea-bull. Garter likes to encourage unusual beasts in new grants and is not averse to inventing new monsters, so we can expect some more of these.