

An Alphabet of Queries (8)

How did the Enfield get its name? This beast is said to appear first in the crest of the O'Kelly family of Hy Many in Galway, one of several Kelly families in Ireland—*On a ducal coronet Or an enfield Vert* (MacLysaght, 1985), and is variously described by the standard heraldic authors (Fox-Davies 1909, Scott-Giles 1953, Brooke-Little 1973, Dennys 1975). They all agree on the fox's head, front legs with feet like an eagle's (though an eagle's legs are in fact its rear limbs), and a bushy tail (fox or wolf), while differing as to its other parts, with wolf, lion, dog and greyhound all being mentioned (*but how can they tell?*). Actually, the beast in the crest, apart from its green colour, looks just like a fox and its feet are hidden by the leaves of the coronet. If it is a fox, why is it called an Enfield? Enfield is the name of several places, the best known being a village in Middlesex recorded in Domesday Book, the name probably meaning "open clearing where lambs were kept." It grew to fame from the small arms factory and got into the Dictionary by virtue of the Enfield rifle. As an Urban District its Council was granted arms in 1946 and



Arms of London Borough of Enfield (from Briggs 1971)

some learned herald put an Enfield on its shield. This must have been just a play on words, as there was no obvious link between Enfield and the Kelly family. Still growing, it became a London Borough in 1965, incorporating Edmonton and Southgate, and was given splendid new arms with an Enfield still on its shield and with another as a supporter. But where did this taloned fox get its name? Could it have been a mis-hearing of Alphyn, a somewhat similar beast (*see No 10*)? Or has the Gazetteer Game been played before?

Dragonlore

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A Griffin drawn by Maurice Sendak

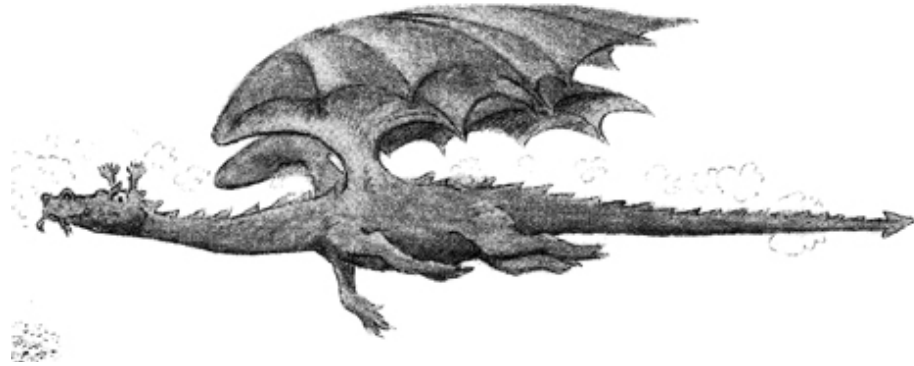
Prospected in 2001 by Ralph Brocklebank

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The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

Christmas is traditionally a time to review Children's Books, so here are a few, both old and new. A modern classic in this field is **Where the Wild Things Are**, Story and Pictures by Maurice Sendak (New York 1963, London 1967) in which the boy Max has some amazing adventures and meets lots of weird and wonderful monsters. Sendak's drawing of a Griffin in his distinctive style (*on the cover*) was a gift to the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature in the Toronto Public Library, and was kindly sent in by John Wilkes, a dracology supporter from that great city.

An older classic is **The Book of Beasts** by Edith Nesbit, originally published in 1900 as part of *The Book of Dragons*, and now re-issued and newly illustrated by Inga Moore (Walker Books, London 2001). It tells the story of Lionel, a small boy who is made King, and finds a magic *Book of Beasts* in the Palace library. Pictures of a Butterfly and a Blue Bird of Paradise miraculously fly out of its pages, but when a fearsome Red Dragon does the same it terrorises the Kingdom, and Lionel has to find a way to vanquish it. Luckily the answer is found in the same book, and though a Manticora is not much use, being rather cowardly, with the help of a handsome winged white horse (called a Hippogriff here but more like a Pegasus as we know it), Lionel manages to shut the Dragon up in the book again, so all is well. These two books are for children around five years old.



The Red Dragon drawn by Inga Moore

Travellers' Tales

The next three books have a common theme, in that they purport to be old manuscripts newly come to light, and would suit twelve-year-olds. The first, **The Discovery of Dragons** written and illustrated by Graeme Base in the guise of Rowland W. Greasebeam BSc (Harry Abrams, New York 1996), has three chapters:- one recounts in letters to his colleague the adventures of a 9th

Wiltshire, as big as a bustard but twice as pretty, its harsh croaking call disturbed the nights throughout the long summer months; when roasted its flesh was said to taste like a ham-and-pork sausage, a delicacy now lost.

Muskoka, a much prized aquatic creature found in the central Ontario lakes in Canada, with three limbs, a ragged outline and having a rare fragrance; it was once quite common but is now almost beyond reach.

Nankivell, a giant amphibious monster like a huge centipede that once frequented the coves of Cornwall and the South West but is now rarely seen, though it is suspected that some survivors may have adapted to the dry life and hide out in inland arts centres.

Ormerod, a large burrowing worm that used to cause considerable collateral damage to mines and well-shafts until the use of explosives for tunnelling frightened it away; some now think it to be extinct, but odd traces remain.

Pendragon, once thought to be a small draconian species, but now reckoned to have been a rare cross between a bat and a cat found only in Cumberland.

Quantock, a massive beast that once roamed the wilder parts of Somerset, like a huge shaggy ram with antlers instead of horns, it gave its name to the range of hills but is otherwise largely forgotten.

Runcorn, a strange herbivorous quadruped with three horns on its head, two spiral ones that grow wider from year to year and a central straight one that is shed annually like a stag's antlers. After the shedding, it tries to pass as a ram in any handy herd of sheep, but as soon as the new middle horn appears, the real sheep turn against it and it is driven again into the wilds where it has difficulty in finding a mate, which may account for its decline towards final extinction.

Scargill, a fish-headed dragon with red wings, pointy fingers and the tail of a lobster, it makes fearsome threatening noises but has the heart of a lemon.

Tintagel, a delicate variety of wyvern covered in shiny metallic scales with enormous spindly wings and very long claws.

Ullock, an amorphous marine monster not unlike a cross between an octopus and a jellyfish, found near the coast of North West Britain.

Vobster, a gigantic marine creature that used to inflict untold damage to fishermen's nets with its numerous sharp teeth, it was once common in the Bristol Channel but is now a rarity if not actually extinct.

Wivenhoe, an East Country name for the Sea-Wyvern.

Xingcheng, an amphibious marine dragon with yellow scales, from China.

Yursk, the phantom ox of the Russian steppes with enormous horns and a shaggy white coat, it appears suddenly from snow storms and is reputed to gallop faster than an express train.

Zemmerly Fidd, mentioned by Edward Lear, these were a collection of small glittering creatures with lots of short legs that dwelt in the Somerset flats.

description of the fantastic creature that the name brings forth in your imagination. An alphabet of possibilities is here appended.

A Gallimaufrey from the Gazetteer

Alsager (m) a large aquatic lizard with a head like an otter and vestigial limbs, it lives in mud banks but can swim rapidly in pursuit of its prey, mostly minnows and other small fry. The female is called an **Alwin**.

Bewley, an iridescent stinging insect like a cross between a hornet and a dragon-fly. Its larval stage is known as a keevil.

Camel, this unlikely beast is said to have a face like a giraffe, a long neck like a serpent, two huge humps on its back like an yppotryll, feet with toes like an ostrich to stop it sinking in the sands of the desert where it lives, and shaggy fur like a yak, and is reputed to be domesticated and ridden like a wobbly horse—quite incredible!

Dunster, a pale brown monster of somewhat bovine appearance as to its face, but with the hide of rhinoceros, the feet of a bear and fearsome teeth, it is said to have preyed largely on quantocks in the days when they frequented Exmoor and the Somerset hills.

Etherow, a dainty marine mollusc that glows with many varied colours but can give virulent stings with its slender spines, found mainly in the warmer sheltered waters of the Irish Sea.

Fenrother, a hairy serpentine monster with vicious fangs and spiky fins, it used to frequent the East Coast until deprived of its livelihood by commercial over-fishing and is now found only in a closely-guarded secret location in Northumberland just 4 miles north of Morpeth.

Gweek, a rare estuarine bird like a stunted crane with a long twisted red bill and black and white feathers, its name is derived from its strangulated mating call uttered only in late April or early May.

Harbottle, a huge implacable horned beetle that flies around at night and feeds on dead sheep.

Itchenor, a parasitic marine worm that attacks scuba divers, mistaking them for its natural prey, the black-backed porpoise, causing them to break out into a scabrous purple rash.

Jesmond, a tiny semi-aquatic rodent with long delicate ears, webbed feet and a spiny tail that lives in the bogs of Western Ireland and feeds off discarded mop-heads, carpet slippers, unfinished Aran Island sweaters and the like.

Keevil, a pestilential small grub that infests porridge if kept in barrels, and uses its long sharp snout to bore its way out through the wood when it is ready to metamorphose into a bewley.

Lacock, a plump black-and-white game bird from the wild moors of



One of Sendak's Wild Things

century Viking who discovers four species of European Dragon (Great Snow, Emerald, Welsh Red and St George's) which are not unlike the somewhat later dragons drawn by mediaeval heraldic artists, though the winged four-legged varieties were not known in Europe until hundreds of years later than the Vikings. Next are the letters of a 13th century Chinese maiden to her father, a silk merchant, reporting on four kinds of Asiatic Dragon (Mongolian Screamer, Japanese Butterfly Lizard, Eastern Temple Worm and Soong Chen Yi's Dragon) which are all shown with wings although it is fairly certain that Oriental dragons did not grow these until much later in their developmental history. Last come the accounts of a 19th century explorer and amphibologist, written home to his beloved from the forests of Africa and Tasmania, describing four Tropical Dragons

(Livingstone's Demon, Crested Dipper, Common Green Draak and Spotted Marsh Draak) which are wildly improbable but great fun. The whole collection shows an admirable imagination and great artistic skill. The twelve main pictures (all in colour) first appeared in a calendar for 1990 and are quite enchanting.

The second is called **The Unprecedented Discovery of the DRAGON ISLANDS, April-June 1819, HMS Argonaut, Lord Nathaniel Parker R S**, with text by Kate Scarborough and artwork by John Kelly (Hamlyn, London 1997) and takes the form of an illustrated hand-written logbook supposedly penned in 1819 but unknown until now, describing an archipelago in the Pacific with detailed drawings and anatomical sections of various strange species including a sort of dragon, sea-serpent, griffin, unicorn, giant ostrich, kraken and other oddities. The flavour of 19th century nature studies is beautifully caught and the elegant departures from mythological stereotypes are truly ingenious.



Young draglings trying to fly, as noted by Nathaniel Parker

The last of these three books is a really sumptuous volume, **YEAR OF THE DRAGON, An Ancient Journal of Oriental Wisdom**, written by Nigel Suckling and illustrated by Wayne Anderson (Pavilion Books, London 2000),

supposedly the Journal written in the early 19th century by an English traveller in China. After describing the importance of the Dragon in Chinese culture, and giving a brief outline of Chinese astrology and their zodiac in which the dragon takes its place alongside eleven common animals, it explains the origin of Dragons from the original Four Most Fortunate Beasts (Dragon, Phoenix, Unicorn, Turtle) to the next generation of nine archetypal Dragons (Pulao, Quiniu, Bixi, Baxia, Haoxian, Qiwen, Suanmi, Yazhi and Jaiotu) who between them populated the world. There is, amongst other legends, a touching story of the discovery of crocodiles and the tests that were applied to find out whether they were true dragons or just ordinary mortal animals. Here is a typical quotation:- “Some Chinese dragons are said to have wings but most do not and they are able to fly because of their spiritual nature.” Unlike the other two books, this one is not full of fantastical inventions, but faithfully records the essence of traditional Chinese dragonlore and although aimed at younger readers, provides an excellent introduction to the subject. It is beautifully illustrated, but unfortunately all too delicately to reproduce here.

Fabulous Beasts from the Harry Potter books

A very popular author in recent years is J. K. Rowling, whose four Harry Potter books (published by Bloomsbury, London in 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 with three more due) have been described as suitable for children of all ages from eight to eighty, and bound to become classics. Harry is a young wizard attending Hogwarts School of Wizardry who undergoes fantastic adventures. The first of the books, **Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone**, has now been made into a very successful film, slightly abbreviated but otherwise faithful to the book. It shows “Fluffy”, an enormous three headed hound like Cerberus of old, Norbert a Norwegian Ridgeback Dragon (*and not as was stated in No 19*), a dead Unicorn, a Centaur and a vast Troll. The way that the hatching and first tentative steps of the dragon is animated in the film is most impressive. Called Norbert by Hagrid the gamekeeper (who loves it, even if



Norbert in the film, drawn from memory

nobody else finds it loveable), it is portrayed as a cross between a bat and a small dinosaur, technically a form of wyvern rather than a dragon as we understand the term, since it has only two pairs of limbs, the front ones being developed into wings but with two long fingers on each side which are used for walking. The second book, **Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets**, brings in countless dwarves, goblins, pixies and elves, also Mandrakes, Aragog (a giant spider), Fawkes the Phoenix and a fearsome Basilisk. Number three, **Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban**, also has Beaky the Hippogriff as well as boggarts, banshees, salamanders and werewolves, while the most recent, **Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire**, features leprechauns, giant winged horses, blast-ended skrewts, four species of Dragon (the Chinese Fireball, the Swedish Short-snout, the Welsh Green and the Hungarian Horntail which is illustrated on the cover as a typical if somewhat elongated European Dragon) as well as the Grindylow, Nifflers, Merpeople and a Sphinx. We shall see how all these will be shown on film and whether any new monsters appear in those books yet to come.

Rowling has also written a little booklet to help support the Comic Relief charity, called **Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them**, by **Newt Scamander** (London 2001), ostensibly Harry Potter’s own copy of his text book with his marginal comments added, which describes nearly one hundred creatures, some of her own invention such as the Clabbert, Dugbog, Occamy, Puffskein and various breeds of winged horse, besides some twenty-five old classical favourites. She lists ten species of Dragon each with half a page of description, including the Antipodean Opal-eye, Hebridean Black, Peruvian Vipertooth, Romanian Longhorn and Ukranian Ironbelly besides those already mentioned.

An entirely independent work entitled **The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter A Treasury of Myths, Legends and Fascinating Facts** by David Colbert (Puffin Books, London 2001) is a tribute to Rowling’s imagination and erudition, and provides a mass of background material to support all sorts of references in her stories, including plenty about Fabulous Beasts from Basilisk and Centaur through Manticore and Sphinx to Unicorn.

A Gazetteer Game

Rowling’s **Porlock** has already been mentioned in our A to Z (*see No 15*) and we can now add the **Graphorn**, said to be a large humped and horned quadruped from mountainous European regions (and if the Graphorn is not an Alpine peak, it surely ought to be). Together they suggest a new Christmas Party Game:- Take a Gazetteer or an Atlas and choose a name by careful selection or random pin-pricking (house rules apply). Then write a