

experienced, some which continually changed their form and could only be expressed visually by an amalgam of different creatures, hence the winged lions and bulls, griffins and anti-griffins and other strange monsters perceived clairvoyantly in the spiritual world or the etheric dreamland. Wings were a symbol of spiritual power.

To return to the Brockdorffs, it is not known whether the Berlin family used their traditional arms, but the fish was an ancient symbol for Jesus Christ, mainly because the Greek word *Ichthys* was an acronym for His Name and Title, *Iesous Christos Theou Uios Soter* ("Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour"), but also because the new Age of Christianity coincided with the new Age when the sun in the vernal equinox moved from Aries into Pisces, so it is possible that Steiner would not have seen the Brockdorff winged fish as just "a batty old trout" but as an emblem of the Highest Spiritual Being, the Risen Christ.



Brockdorff arms from Volborth 1996

An admirable first introduction to Steiner's life and work is the book *Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy for Beginners* by Lia Tummer, illustrated by Lato (Writers and Readers, London 2001) though it is a pity that the name of Dornach, the centre of Steiner's later work near Basel in Switzerland, is repeatedly spelled "Dormach".

St David, the Patron Saint of Wales, is celebrated on 1st March

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Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

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St David's Day 2002



Drawing by Donald Roger Barnes

from *Monsters of Heraldry* (2001)

The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

The splendid drawing of the Red Dragon of Wales on the cover is from a new booklet on *Monsters of Heraldry* by Donald Roger Barnes (Auckland, NZ, 2001) who also drew twenty-five out of the forty-six illustrations, including this one. The booklet was kindly sent in by Roland Symons who is himself a noted illustrator (*see No 11*). Barnes treats twenty monsters, all the well-known ones plus a few oddities such as the Caretynne and Lamia, with nearly half the pictures taken from old sources to supplement his own interpretations. It is an excellent introduction to the subject and his drawings are bold and clear. It ends with a bibliography of 33 titles, about half of them already noted in these pages. He must be accounted an accomplished dracologist but surprisingly has nothing about native Maori monsters such as the Taniwha (*see the A to Z in No 10*), perhaps because he does not reckon that Ships' Badges are yet part of heraldry. Nevertheless it is good to see interest in Fabulous Beasts spreading to New Zealand.

Canada, too, has not been idle, and what promises to be an interesting series on *The Mad Menagerie*, by Darren George, has started in *Heraldry in Canada* (Autumn 2001) with details of the Hippogriff and also an odd creature carved on a building in Kiev and provisionally named "harpygriff". Unfortunately the photograph of this oddity failed to appear, but we shall look forward to seeing it in a later issue. The Editor of *Heraldry in Canada*, Rean Meyer, also edits *The Blazon*, the journal of the B. C./Yukon Branch of the HSC, and he was so taken with *Dragonlore* that he has reproduced the piece on Army Badges from No 2, in the *Blazon* for Winter/Spring 2002 (Vol 5, No 1). Being a former military man, his choice is understandable.

Also from Canada, Kevin Greaves has sent in the legend behind the Monster Mosquito (No 18), and also related how his grand-daughter Michelle, aged nine, had immediately spotted the mistake about Norbert in No 19 (corrected in No 24). Such feedback is very welcome, and from nearer home we are delighted to feature in this issue an original contribution by Margaret Young who has already been briefly quoted with reference to the Cockatrice (No 20). Several other dracology supporters have sent in pictures and other items, even poems, and these will be featured when possible. A College is, after all, a gathering of colleagues, and all dracologists should take part in our studies as much as they feel able.

ERRATUM in No 21, p 3, 9th line of text, for "Perseus" read Theseus. This was inexcusable, as the same error was pointed out in the review of Room's *Classical Dictionary* in No 7.

lecturing on Nietzsche, asked him to talk to his group, and Steiner found this circle keen to hear the results of his spiritual researches. He gave several series of lectures, two of which became the books *Mysticism and Modern Thought* (1901) and *Christianity as Mystical Fact* (1902), and the group became the German branch of the Theosophical Society. But when the leaders of this Society began to talk of Jesus Christ as just one of many great teachers, who was due to reincarnate again (an actual child was nominated for this role), Steiner objected that his spiritual investigations had led him to recognise in the Risen Christ a Supreme Divine Being who had uniquely incarnated as a human in order to overcome death and redeem mankind, that His Heaven permeated the entire universe and that He was spiritually accessible to every single person. The Theosophical Society would have none of this, and expelled the entire German branch. The Brockdorffs again took the lead in the formation of an entirely new Anthroposophical Society, so that Steiner could continue to reveal the results of his researches to those who wanted to hear them.

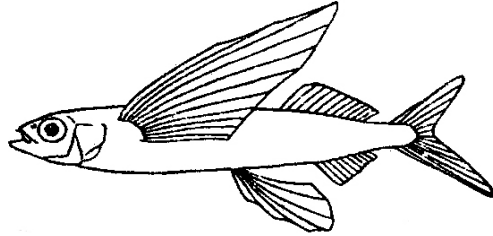
Some of Steiner's descriptions that concern our own studies might be of interest. He explains how the elemental beings described by Paracelsus can be seen in the development of plants. The **Gnomes** working in the solid matter of the earth (not in hollow caves) pull down the roots to give the plants nourishment. Then the **Undines** weaving in the watery realm cause the leaves to spread out, followed by the **Sylphs** in the light and air turning the leaves into blossoms, and finally the fire spirits (anciently called **Salamanders**, but more like fireflies or Pyralis than the lizard-like form known in heraldry) which brought the warmth that ripens the fruit and leads to the development of seeds, ready to produce the next generation. Steiner tells how he experienced these not as abstract life-processes but as active beings.

Another example, from Steiner's investigation into ancient civilisations, comes from his explanation that in the remote past clairvoyant vision was quite widespread, but that it had to be replaced by logical thinking based on accurate sense perception if mankind was to develop towards freedom. In ancient Greek times, amongst the pioneers of scientific thinking, there were still those with atavistic clairvoyance who described a range of nature spirits, some mischievous, even malevolent, who had failed in their attempts to become human. These included **Satyrs**, **Centaur**s, **Harpies**, **Mermaids**, **Sirens** and **Sphinxes**. Still earlier, in the Middle East, all sorts of demonic spirits (*such as Tiamat from Assyria, shown here*) had been



An Alphabet of Queries (9)

Is not the Flying Fish a genuine creature? Indeed it is, and today we know over 40 species, all with extended pectoral fins and some with wing like pelvic fins as well, with which, having gathered speed in the water, they leap into the air and can glide up to a hundred yards. The commonest variety, widespread in tropical seas and in the Mediterranean, is *Exocoetus volitans*, from which the Exocet anti-ship missile takes its name. (Drawing from Norman, 1931)



But in the past, travellers were prone to tell tall tales, and their accounts, maybe exaggerated, were seldom believed. Asked to draw a flying fish on a coat of arms, an heraldic artist, never having seen one, would think “fish with wings” and put bat’s or bird’s wings on a trout as in the armorial bearings of Brockdorff from Holstein (see drawing below from Birk, 1984), von Verson



and von Damme from Germany and some Swiss towns such as Mauensee in Canton Luzern and Itingen in Baselland. If he had thought of butterfly’s wings, or, better still, dragonfly’s, he would have been closer to the real thing in appearance, but no doubt he considered such delicate membranes too feeble to support a fish and only suitable for such dainty



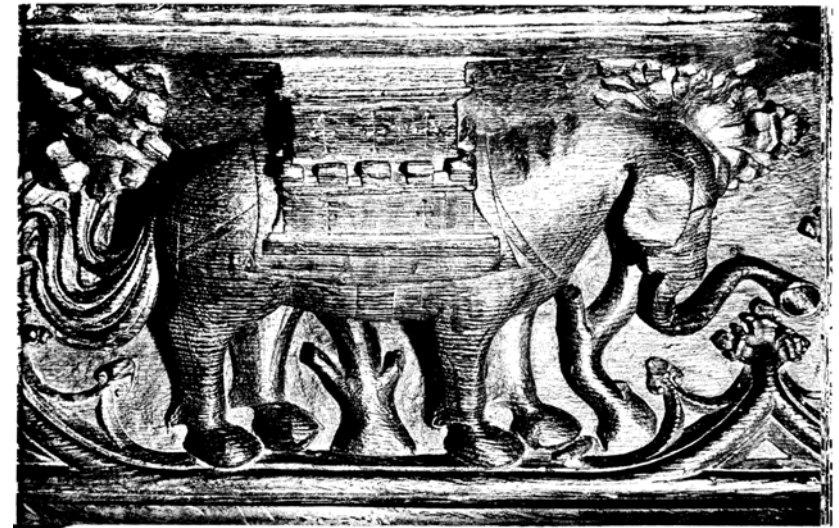
creatures as fairies, and so, out of a combination of ignorance and imagination, he created two new Fabulous Hybrid Monsters, the Bat-winged and Bird-winged Flying Fish. But there may be more to it than that.....

Birk took his bat-winged fish from the arms of a Brockdorff family that had moved to Canada from Denmark in 1879. It had become the custom of continental families for all male heirs, not just the eldest, to inherit their ancestor’s arms and titles, and in 1900 there were in Berlin a Count and Countess Brockdorff who had started a circle of friends interested in all manner of intellectual enquiry. The Count having heard Rudolf Steiner

Fabulous Beasts in Gloucester

Many mad mediaeval monks meticulously made marvellously modelled misericords.

The Misericords of Gloucester Cathedral by Jack Farley (Gloucester Cathedral Bookstall 1981) is a splendid photographic record of all 58 of the carvings under the tipped-up seats in the choir stalls of the cathedral. Of these, 46 date from the fourteenth century, the other 12 being replacements from when the choir was restored in 1873, but mostly copying mediaeval originals from Boston, Chester or Worcester. No fewer than 19 show fabulous beasts including eight dragons, seven griffins, various indeterminate monsters, a mermaid, a pelican feeding her young and a strange elephant with cart-horse’s feet and tail, talbot’s ears, a trumpet-shaped trunk, and a castle on his back.



This beast is similar to some pictures in the Bestiaries, and lends support to the view that this is not just a badly drawn elephant, but a genuine hybrid monster, more fabulous than fabled. Of the odd monsters, one is swallowing a man, perhaps Jonah, and one pair has human heads and feathered wings, perhaps a cross between harpy and sphinx, while the serpent between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden has a horned human head and bat wings. Several of the dragons are fighting each other or lions, one is being attacked by St George and one is being slain by St Michael. The most unusual scene, shown three times, is the Flight of Alexander, where the legendary King is seen seated on a throne and held aloft by a pair of griffins, in two cases being lured upward by chunks of meat on spears held by the King.

Some remarks on Dragons *by Margaret Young*

Dragons have always been benevolent in China, but elsewhere their characters have changed down the ages. In Egypt they were worshiped as Gods, but later were regarded as evil. This may be for the same reason as for cats, who were also sacred in Egypt but later became the Devil's spawn and connected with witchcraft. This is thought to have been an idea instilled by early Christianity in order to overcome their previous saintliness in men's view, so maybe the same applies to dragons.

There are two contradictory stories about dragons. A dragon called Gargouille lived in the River Seine and ravaged the city of Rouen, causing devastation and chaos. Alternatively, two dragons lived in the River Thames where it runs into London, and were guardians of the City, preventing any evil from entering therein. At the present time there are two magnificent dragons, standing on plinths, one on each side of the Embankment where the road crosses the boundary into the City of London. They are standing on their hind legs (salient) and each holds a shield of the arms of the City of London.

At one time there was an equally magnificent dragon on an enormously high column, which overtopped surrounding buildings and this was in the middle of the Strand, again at the point where the road crosses into the City. The dragon was therefore silhouetted against the sky and was a wonderful sight. Unfortunately it has now been removed into the country to make room for the amount of modern traffic.

In the next issue: Biblical Origins of Dragons by Ben Elliott



One of the Dragons marking the boundary of the City of London
from *London's City* by Alan Jenkins (Heinemann 1973)