

apparently obvious but incorrect inference that if a griffin without wings is male, then one with wings must be female, would never have taken hold. In heraldic art, griffins have always been depicted with their leonine parts fully membered as males.

Hugh Murray, author of **Heraldry and the Buildings of York** (1985), tells the story of his embarrassment when showing a party of visitors round the King's Manor, and, standing with his back to a splendid carving of the Wentworth arms over a doorway in the inner courtyard, he said that one of the supporters was a female griffin. When the visitors started giggling, he looked round and observed that the life-sized three-dimensional griffin was indeed fully equipped as a male. He never fell into that trap again.

Another possible outcome of this incorrect inference has just come my way. Darren George, in his essay on "The Mad Menagerie" in *Heraldry in Canada*



described a carving of a creature in Kiev that he named a "harpygriff" (as reported in No 25). He has now sent a photograph of this remarkable monster, with its splendid eagle's wings and head (with ears) and leonine rear parts, but in place of its front legs it has two prominent female breasts. I can imagine that the stonemason was told to carve a griffin, and as an afterthought, to make sure that it was the kind of griffin that had wings, was told, "And make sure it is a female one!" The stonemason, not recognising the

implication, certainly did his best, and the Harpygriff was born.

Let us all resolve that in future we will always give the Keythong its true name, and lay the erroneous "Male Griffin" to a final rest.

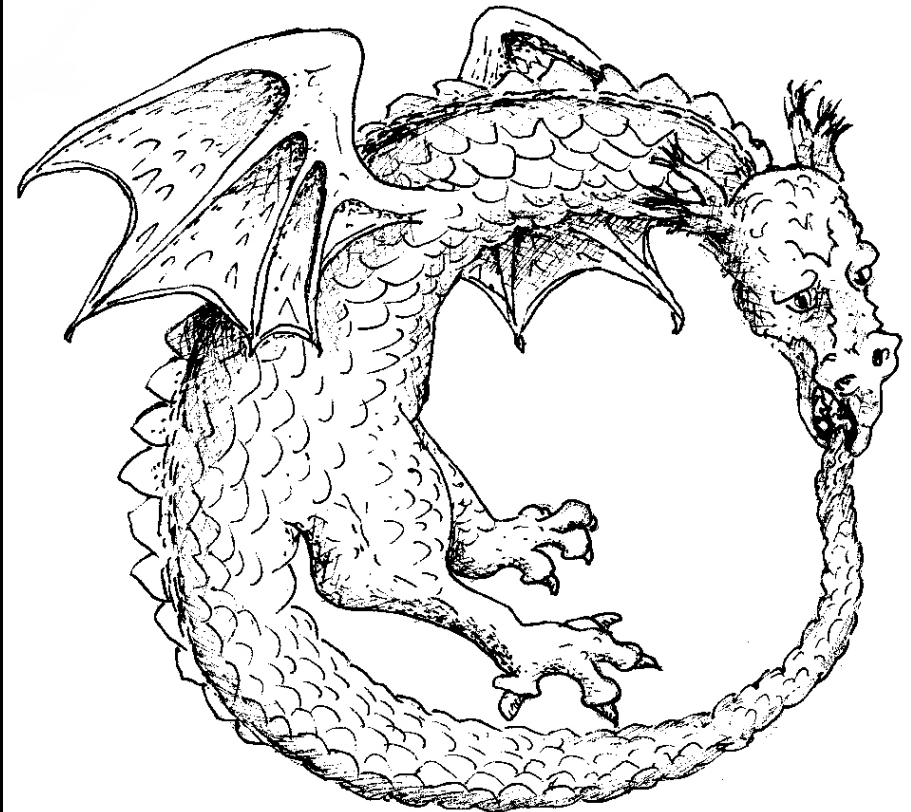
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Dragonlore

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All Fools' Day 2003



Ouroboros Dragon drawn by Valerie Wright

The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

It has become a tradition in Britain that on All Fools' Day many newspapers print an entirely spurious yet plausible item, to see how many of their readers they can deceive. The BBC has also played this game, and its report on the Italian spaghetti harvest is fondly remembered. Perhaps the whole of dracology could be seen in this light, and certainly many of the more bizarre monsters reported in recent years have turned out to be delightful hoaxes (Bigfoot, Jackalopes and stuffed mermaids come to mind), whilst some of the curious Tudor inventions (*see opposite*) seem to have had a mischievous origin and were surely not intended to be taken for real creatures. One hardly likes to impute a playful purpose to the devout compilers of bestiaries, yet some of their wild animals and the tales told about them beggar belief. Were they really so gullible, or did they too have a sense of humour? Another category contains those literary creations which are designed to amuse or impress, or even scare or alarm, but not to deceive. To the Jabberwock, the Quangle-Wangle, Triffid and Snark in our *A to Z* should be added the **Push-me-pull-you** from Hugh Lofting's *Dr Dolittle* books, as I have been reminded by Hamish Wilson, who is a vet and knows his animals. (Hamish was puzzled by this beast's internal anatomy. It takes in food at both ends, but what happens then?)

Whereas hoaxes are "exposed," true origins are "uncovered," and this is what we are seeking to do for the hardy core of fabulous beasts in our studies - dragons, griffins, unicorns and the like. The others are decorative sidelines, added in for a bit of fun but not to be taken too seriously. April fools, perhaps.

The Ouroboros Dragon on the cover (also spelled Uroboros, see the A to Z in No 11) takes its name from the Greek word meaning "tail-biter" and was a favourite subject with the wood carvers who decorated our churches, being seen as a symbol for Eternity. It does not appear to have been accepted into English heraldry, but is known on the continent, as seen in the Czech dragon in No 27, page 7. Our cover picture is taken from Brian Wright's book on Somerset Dragons and was drawn by his wife Valerie. This book is full of gems. Whereas I had failed to turn up any Cornish dragons for St Piran (see No 27), Wright has found one for St Petroc which was famous enough to have strayed beyond his home town of Padstow into neighbouring counties. He suspects that the Padstow "hobby horse" and a similar one in Minehead, both still celebrated today, actually originated in festive dragons similar to Norwich's Snap (see No 30).

An Alphabet of Queries (15)

Whence cometh the name Keythong for the Male Griffin? In *The Coat of Arms, No 98* (1976), the late Sir Colin Cole, who was himself quite an authority on heraldic monsters, wrote a substantial 8-page review of *The Heraldic Imagination* by his colleague and fellow herald Rodney Dennys, in which he submitted the view that the appellation "male griffin" for a distinct monster was a mistake. In a manuscript in the College of Arms collection describing Edward IV's French Expedition of 1475, there is a thumb-nail sketch (*see above*) of the badge of John Butler, Earl of Ormond, showing a leonine creature with a griffin's head and three bursts of rays issuing from its body, clearly captioned "**peyr keythongs**." Oddly enough, Dennys reproduces this sketch in his book, though he seems to have overlooked its significance. The rays should be interpreted as a sunburst, rather than the metallic spikes which later artists

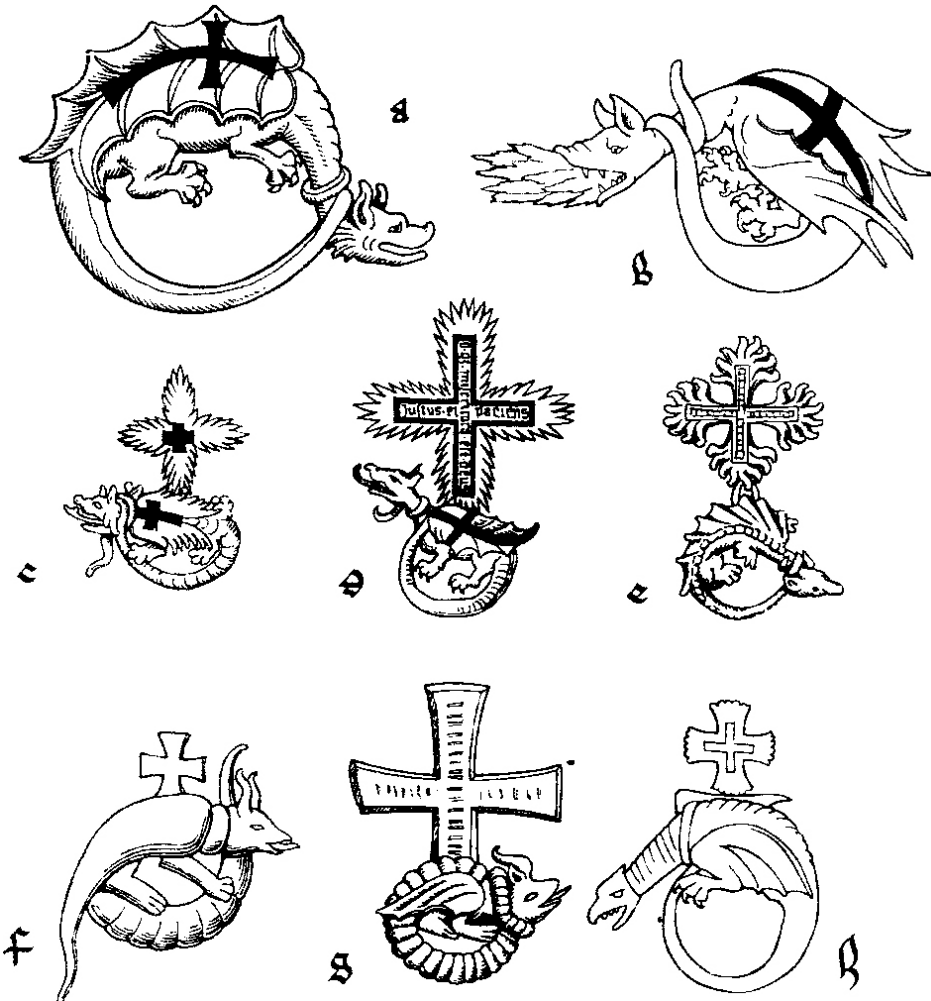


"Male Griffin" from Barnes: *Monsters in Heraldry*

have made of them, not understanding their significance (though admittedly, golden sunrays and metal spikes are hard to differentiate in stylized drawings), thus identifying the keythong as a truly cosmic creature, symbol of the Sun, as indeed was the griffin itself. If the rays were taken as spikes, perhaps the name was meant to be "mailed griffin," that is, armoured (they were not very good at spelling in those days). The keythong should therefore take its place alongside those other Tudor specialities which occur in single grants, and Cole wrote that "the so-called male griffin should be driven from the scene and from the ken of the Kings of Arms." Had this been done, the

FEEDBACK

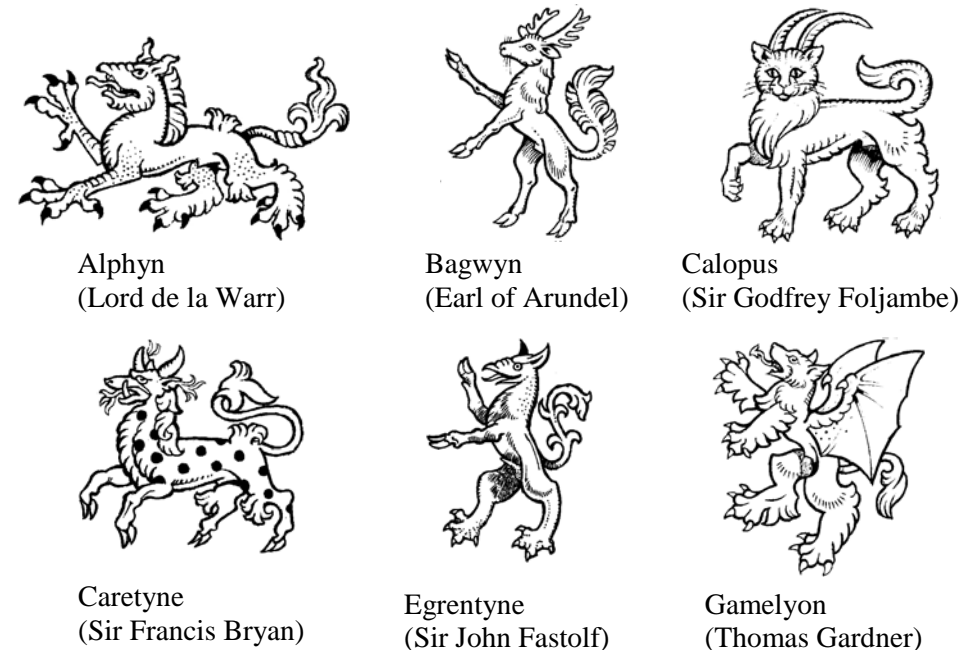
Following the query asked about the Order of the Dragon in No 29, p 6, CEJ Smith has sent excerpts from **The Knights of the Crown** by J. D'Arcy Bolton, where it is described as the Society of the Dragon and not strictly an Order of Knighthood. It did not long survive its founder, but during its short life used a variety of insignia, as shown here:-



Examples of the badge of the Dragon taken from a variety of embroideries, stained glass, tombs and metalwork, all fifteenth century.

Fabulous Beasts in Tudor Heraldry

Heraldic monsters used in Tudor times fall into three classes. First are those classical beasts that had already been adopted into heraldic usage, such as the Dragon, Griffin and Unicorn. Second are various curiosities which the Tudor heralds found in the bestiaries and introduced into their practice, such as the Bonacon, Parandrus and Theow. And third are those strange inventions of their own with no known provenance, which mostly occur only in single grants of arms, and which some think should be regarded as the private property of the families to whom they were granted. Their names also provide an etymological enigma. A selection from our *A to Z* would include the Allocamelus, Alphyn, Apres, Bagwyn, Boreyne, Calopus, Calygreyhound, Caretyne, Egrentyne, Gamelyon, Musimon, Nebek, Pantheon, Polyger, Trogodice and Ypotryll. Some of these are illustrated here, from *The Heraldic Art Source Book* (Spurrier 1997), whose clear line drawings are based on the rather fuzzy sketches found in the records of the College of Arms. A few of these original drawings are reproduced in **The Heraldic Imagination** by Rodney Dennys (London 1975). Dennys has given his opinion that new monsters should not be invented capriciously for heraldic use, but he appeared to allow that these Tudor oddities might yet be found appropriate applications.





Nebek
(William Fitzwilliam,
Earl of Southampton)



Polyger
(in a 16th c MS,
but never used)



Ypotryll
(John Tiptoft,
Earl of Worcester)

I believe that in Tudor times many learned men were becoming quite sceptical about the existence of the less likely forms of traditional monsters, particularly the strange hybrids such as the griffin and the centaur, as well as the outrageous forms apparently reported by travellers. This may have given them a sense of release from the ethical restraints imposed by orthodox belief, with the result that they felt free to invent new monsters without having to pretend that they really existed. Pure speculation, of course, without documentation of the heralds' processes of thought, but at least a likely development in the light of what is known about philosophical thinking of that period.

Finally, here is perhaps the most extraordinary of all these Tudor oddities, a favourite with the de Vere family, Earls of Oxford in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, the **Calygreyhound**, drawn here by Colin Cole from their contemporary seal (from Dennys 1975).



Dennys and others have suggested that all these Tudor singularities should be treated with great respect as the personal property of the individual families to whom they were originally granted, but some leeway has been allowed in cases where the name makes a nice pun with that of a new grantee.

Fabulous Beasts in Carlisle

Similar to the booklet reported from Gloucester in No 25, **Carlisle Cathedral Misericords** by Christa Grössinger (Carlisle 2002) illustrates a total of 46 woodcarvings, of which 30 include monsters of various kinds, sometimes as many as four in one panel, so that there are altogether 50 fabulous creatures featured, apart from numerous lions, dogs, foxes, geese, eagles and herons and a single hyena, not to mention angels, demons and ordinary people. The most numerous monster is the Wyvern, with ten appearances, followed by Dragons (7), Griffins (5), Pelicans and Winged Lions (4 each). There are



three Manticores, (*one with wings, shown above*), two each of Cockatrices, Harpies, Winged Dogs and a strange beaked "Elephant" (being attacked by a serpent-dragon—*see below right*) and a single showing each for a Bigorne, Amphisbaena, Double-headed Eagle, Human-headed Griffin, Bicorporate Lion with bird's talons, and a Mermaid. Two unusual monsters are hard to describe, with human heads, one with two dragon's bodies and the other with two lion's bodies, and there is also another strange demon with a bearded human face, eagle's wings and the paws of a lion. Again it is evident that the Bestiaries and other illustrated manuscripts were the main sources for these images, but one must allow that the woodcarvers had real imagination to back up their manual skills.

(Thanks to Leslie Hodgson for providing a copy of this publication.)

