

fictional Wyvern County, and what had appeared in fiction could not be transferred to real life, so what about Malvern County? Do not the Malvern Hills unite Herefordshire and Worcestershire? Indeed they do not, replied the locals, those hills have separated the two counties since time immemorial and they still do, and in any case both Hereford and Worcester are ancient cathedral cities, whereas Malvern is a jumped-up modern spa town that never existed until the railway came there. The deadline for the decision on the new name came and went without agreement, so the mandarins decreed that the new body should be known as the County of Hereford and Worcester. Sensibly, the Post Office decided that this could not be the name of a place, even though they were instructed to use all the new county names in postal addresses in other parts, so all our local towns were either in Herefordshire or in Worces, as they used to be, but for some reason the Press, anxious to conform to Government guidelines, always spoke about "Hereford and Worcester" as a place, and often still do, even though the joint County Council was dissolved some years ago into its former constituent parts. But during the twenty-odd years of its existence, the combined County Council sported a strange monster on its crest - not the traditional Wyvern that it

might have had if the locals had had their way, but the curious golden Bicorporate Lion, holding a black pear, signifying two Shires with a single County council at its head. This creature was not a new invention, as a few examples were known from mediaeval English heraldry, perhaps the best known being the arms of John of Northampton, Mayor of London in 1381-83, as drawn here by C W Scott-Giles. Although the combined County Council has gone, with its arms and crest, the strange bicorporate lion is still to be seen around, on the crest of the now-independent Hereford and Worcester Fire Service Authority.



*Leap Year Day is also known as St David's Eve. Not a lot of people know that.*

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# Dragonlore

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A Wyvern engraved on wood in 1982 by Miss Leslie Benenson

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

The picture on the cover is from a bookplate designed for the late Stephanie Kelvin, a print of which is presented to each new member of The Bookplate Society by her husband Brian Schofield. This Society not only publishes a newsletter and a Journal, but produces a new book on the subject of bookplates every year. Last year's book was **Some Bookplates of Heralds and Related Ex-Libris** by Brian North Lee (London, 2003), and as one would expect, the great majority of the 146 bookplates illustrated are armorial in content. It is therefore no surprise to find a quota of fabulous beasts, with Griffins the most popular, appearing on four plates, Dragons next, on two, with single showings of Pelicans, a Sagittary, an Heraldic Antelope (*see below*), Unicorns, Martlets, Sea Horses and, best of all, a Male Griffin. This



last is on Peter Spurrier's bookplate (so the creature is holding a Spur), and with luck we shall be hearing more about it in the future. The Unicorns are on the arms of John Brooke-Little (*see No 17*) from a drawing by Robert Parsons, while the Sagittary is the crest of the late Sir Colin Cole, Garter, another authority on heraldic monsters.

While on the subject of bookplates, mention should be made of three volumes intended as a kind of Who's Who of Heraldists, not only heralds but heraldic writers and artists as well, by Z G Alexy, **Ex Libris Armales** (Böhlau, 1983, 1984, 1985), which contain between them some two hundred and twenty actual bookplates, many in colour and not a few designed by Alexy himself. Among the great variety of heraldic

designs, thirty contain fabulous beasts, with Griffins again being the favourite monster with ten showings. Dragons again come next, with five (two of these being attacked by St George), and then Two-headed Eagles with four examples, to which might be added an odd Three-headed Eagle. There are three Pelicans, and single appearances of a Greek Sphinx, a Sea-Lion, a Mermaid, a Dolphin, an Unicorn, a Pegasus and an Heraldic Panther.

and to distinguish the ancient two-legged variety they resurrected the ancient word Wyvern or wiver, meaning a worm or serpent (the word is cognate with "viper"). This does at least remind us of the serpentine derivation of Dragons, but it is a pity if it implies that the Wyvern is not a true Dragon, which it is. It is also more consistent anatomically than the four-legged sort, comparing well with birds and bats, the other flying vertebrates. On the side, it might be noted that the heralds did the same thing with the Griffin, as the original classical Gryphon had all four legs belonging to the lion, and only the head and wings from the eagle. When the front legs became taloned like an eagle's (actually the eagle's back legs, as his front legs were his wings), this new form was accepted as a proper Griffin and the old type was re-named the Opinicus. It has been suggested that it was the prevalence of Griffins that led to the development of the four-legged Dragon - just another four-legged beast with wings added! Incidentally, the Centaur is another ancient creature with a total of six limbs - how did they get away with it? Of course, adding wings to a four-limbed creature was widespread in the ancient Middle East, but there has been no suggestion that the Dragon we know evolved from a lizard or crocodile with added wings. It seems more likely that the earliest Dragons were sea serpents with fins, and indeed early Wyverns had rayed fins rather than jointed wings, but then the creatures found on mediaeval seals had feathered wings like birds, so the puzzle remains. It is certain that Wyverns have a lot to be worried about.

One rather nice story about a Wyvern concerns the two Midland counties of Hereford and Worcester. When they were told that neither county was large enough on its own to be viable so they would have to merge, they were asked to suggest a new name for the combined county. Mindful of Hereford



*Wyvern from the Bayeux Tapestry*

on the River Wye and Worcester on the Severn, the name Wyvern was proposed. However, the mandarins in Whitehall said that this was unacceptable, because there had been a TV police drama series set in a

## Another New Dolphin

Roland Godolphin Symons, to give him his full name, has been granted arms of such eminent beauty and simplicity that it is difficult to believe that nothing like it has ever been used before. The blazon reads *Or, a pall engrailed moline azure*, with a crest of an heraldic dolphin urinant crowned rayonny Or. The motto is *WHY NOT I*. The pall (which I think I would have called a shakefork) and the motto both emphasise that his surname is spelled with a “Y” but it is the crest that is our main interest, being the heraldic monster (see Nos 21 & 22). The word “urinant” really just means standing on its head, as applied to fishes (and the Dolphin was the King of the Fishes) but this one is shaped like the letter S to repeat Roland’s last initial. To complete the set, it could be said that the tincture of the field and of the crest is the start of his first name, spelled backwards. The design must have been of his own devising, and I am sure he feels it was worth waiting for. Congratulations, Roland.



## An Alphabet of Queries (26)

Why is the Wyvern so wily and wild, waving its wings so wide? Perhaps he is disgruntled at having been replaced as the exemplar of the Dragon type in English heraldry by the four-legged variety. On the continent of Europe all Dragons are treated equally and are simply blazoned as such, it usually being up to the artist to decide on purely aesthetic grounds how many legs to put. English heralds, on the other hand, certainly since Tudor times, have insisted that anything called a Dragon must have four legs as well as a pair of wings,

## Fabulous Beasts in Norwegian Civic Arms

Norway is divided into nineteen districts or counties (*fylkeskommune*) each of which is further sub-divided into parishes or communes (called municipalities), and some twenty years ago a great effort was made to get the majority of these civic bodies to have simple modern arms, based on emblems previously in use wherever possible. The results appeared in a handsome volume called **Norske Kommune Våpen** by Hans Cappelen and Knut Johannessen (Oslo, 1987) which illustrates over 300 of these arms in colour, with notes on their blazon, origin, symbolism and use, together with chapters on the history of heraldry in Norway, the development of municipal arms and the rules of composition and laws governing their use. Although all in Norwegian, there is an illustrated glossary of terms, which is quite helpful (see sample, right), and a brief summary in English at the end.



1 Havbukk. 2 Bevingt fisk. 3 Basilisk. 4 Enhjo/rning. 5 Jomfru i fjaerham. 6 Valrav.

Since the book was published, a good many of the 178 then-unarmigerous municipalities have acquired official arms following the procedures then laid out. Most of the arms here displayed have only one charge, one colour and one metal, and the charge, whether an heraldic ordinary or some creature or common object, is always shown in simple outline without shading, leading to a very modern style. Among the charges are a host of animals, birds and fish - bear, reindeer, elk, muskox, wolf, fox, lynx, horse, lion, raven, swan, seagull, cormorant, blackcock, salmon, seal, whale, lobster and herring among others, but of particular interest to us are the golden Griffin on red of Troms county (left), and, amongst the municipalities, the silver Lindorm on red of Skiptvet, like a Wyvern, Stjørdal’s golden Lindorm, also on red and rather different, Borre’s silver Mermaid (*havfrue*, or fish-woman) and the golden demi-Griffin on blue of Bjarkøy (all shown



below). Perhaps among the newer designs there will be some more heraldic monsters, but it is clear that fabulous beasts form a notable part of the Norwegian tradition. (As an aside, I was amused to see that a place called Ørland had the very simple arms *Venstre skrådelt av sølv og svart = Per bend sinister argent and sable.*)



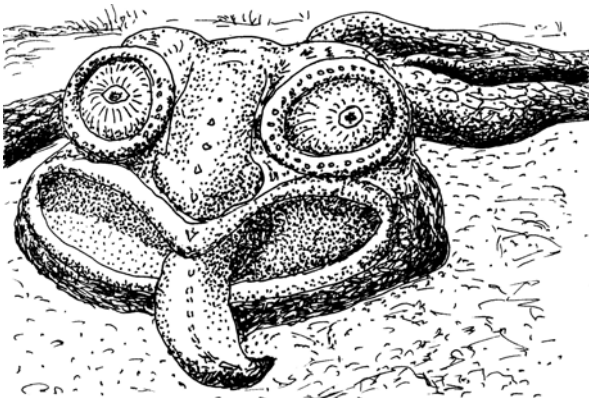
ADDITION to the A to Z

**Wakonda** is the name of a creature described by John Cherry in his 1995 book as a mighty thunderbird of the Great Lakes tribes of Native Americans, which creates thunder by flapping its wings, seen here in a woven design from native handcrafts (from Eva Wilson, *North American Indian Designs*, London 1994). Since the Great Lakes tribes lived largely in what is now Canada, and since the Canadian Heraldic Authority is now making more use of native legendary and mythical monsters, perhaps the Wakonda will be making a wider showing.



### More on the Taniwha

Roger Barnes writes that the Taniwha shown in No 39 as the badge of HMNZS Waikato is taken from a traditional Maori wooden carving, and it may be seen in a number of different versions. Taniwha is a generic name, and the one that caused the trouble with the road-works was called Karu Tahī (meaning “one-eyed taniwha”) while two others, called Waiwai and Te Iaroa, live further down the Waikato River. One of these is shown on the badge of HMNZS Monowai (*right*)



eyes and tongues in black mouths, all in a light blue field. A similar version is seen in this playground sculpture (*left*). *The New Zealand Armorer* is an excellent little quarterly heraldic journal which reports on these things from time to time, and I am grateful to Roger for sending me copies.

### A Midland Griffin

Adrian de Redman has sent this drawing by the late Frank Best showing a banner of the arms of Honorary Alderman Peter J P Barwell, MBE, Hon CSM, who was Lord Mayor of Birmingham in 1992-3 and the first to get his personal grant of arms while in office. The little flame inside an annulus that the Griffin is holding is a symbolic representation of an internal combustion engine, motors being one of Barwell’s main interests.



### The Sea-Wolf that never was

Rodney Denny, in his 1975 book *The Heraldic Imagination*, describes a Sea-Wolf argent, tail nowed, and charged on the body with three barrulets sable, as the crest of Sir Myles Busschy of Houghton (*see right above*), and he suggests that this oddity might have been influenced by German heraldry, in which such curious creatures are common. It has also been called a Sea-Dragon, but now Anthony Jones has shown that it is derived from an imperfect rendering of the crest and mantling on the seal of Sir John Bussy of Hougham (temp. Henry IV). This has a Dragon’s head crest with simple barred mantling repeating the pattern on the shield, as seen in Anthony’s drawing (*left*). Imagination can sometimes create new monsters where none were intended.



From *The Daily Mail*, Friday 27 February, 2004:-

