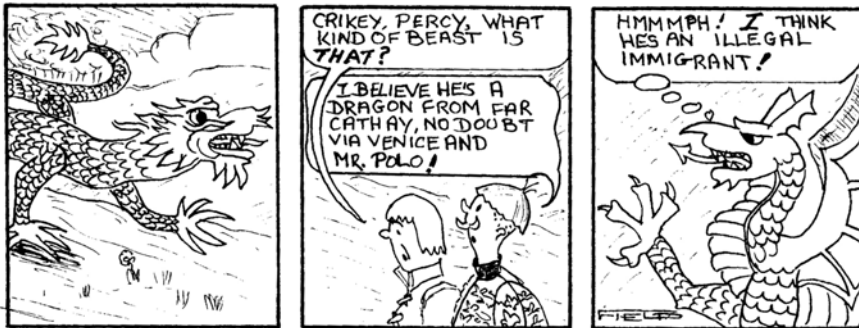


.BOOK REVIEW

A refreshing new-comer to our bookshelves is *A Humorous Guide to HERALDRY*, written and illustrated by Jack Carlson (Boston, Mass., 2005). Produced by the author while he was still at school, with a little help from Roland Symons and others, it is a straightforward introduction to the subject, light-hearted but free from errors. Here is a sample of his artwork.



PERCY VANT - HERALD WITH A DIFFERENCE by Peter Field



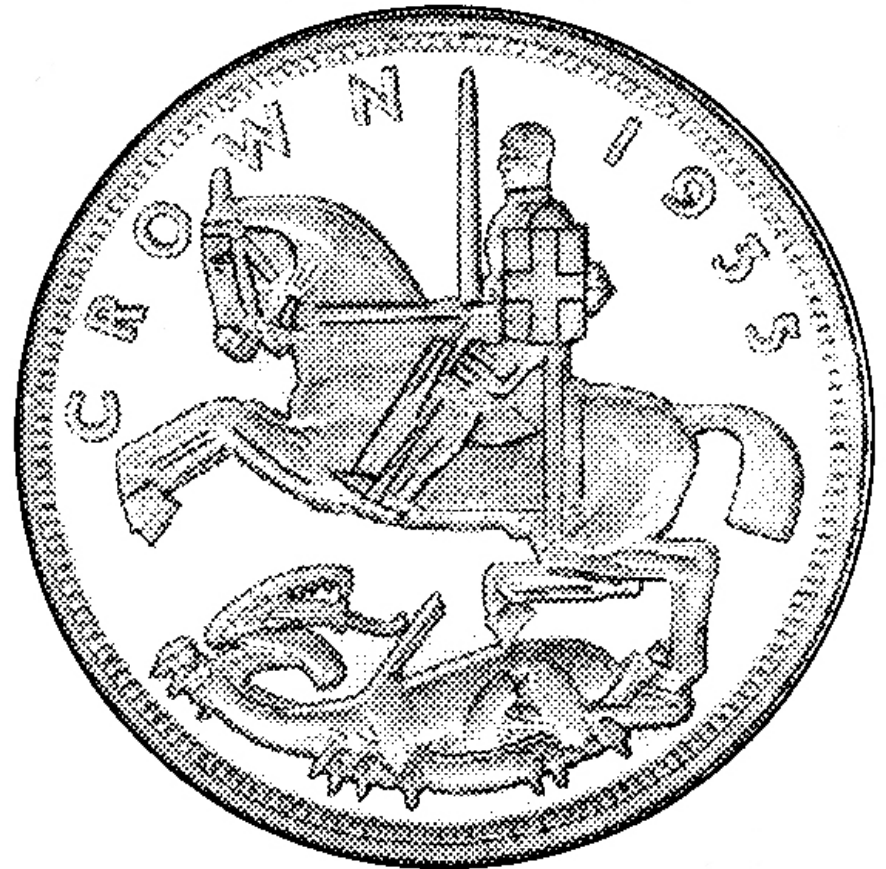
(from *The Heraldry Gazette*, March 2005)

# Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

Number 59

St George's Day 2005



St George and the Dragon by Percy Metcalfe,  
from the 1935 Crown coin (5 shillings)



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

We welcome new members Ron Gadd and Peter Page.

The design on the cover is taken from a commemorative coin issued in the reign of King George V to mark his Silver Jubilee in 1935, and though legal tender, was not intended to be used in day-to-day transactions, but to be kept by collectors. The equivalent “Crown” coin of today is given a face value of £5, but the actual worth of the 1935 coin in today’s money would be nearer £20, such has been the rate of inflation. (For our younger readers, one might explain that five shillings was one quarter of £1.) The image was designed by Percy Metcalfe, and shows a very nonchalant knight who might be taking part in a *dressage* competition. He has discarded his lance, the broken tip of which is lodged in the dragon’s body near its heart – surely a mortal wound – and has drawn his sword ready for the final fatal blow (when he has done with posing). The dragon is unusual, not very large and with a long serpentine body, a strangely flattened head, four legs with huge claws, but no wings. The whole effect is very typical of its period, highly stylised in a sculptural mode, but it was not at all popular, and so it is hardly surprising that it has never been used again.

While discussing images of St George, Brian North Lee kindly rang in to say that the representation shown in the Windsor Castle bookplate by Stephen Gooden (*see page 7 in No 56*) was used by George Kruger Gray for modelling the reverse of the George Medal. The bookplate we illustrated, much reduced, had the monogram ER at the top, for King Edward VIII, but it was used again with the monogram altered to GviR for the next reign, and evidently King George VI liked the design enough for him to have chosen it for the George Medal (*see right*). It is certainly more vigorous than the 1935 Crown image.



YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS!

## An Oddity

Philip Hagreen (1890-1988), one of the founder members of the Society of Wood Engravers, is probably best known for his religious works and his bookplates, but Brian North Lee has sent in this example of one of his lighter moments (*right*). The original was about 30cm x 20 cm, but no other details were given.

Reynolds Stone of St Michael slaying a seven-headed serpent, taken from the bookplate of the Coventry Cathedral Library. This must be the incident described in the *Revelations of St John*, when the creature is called a seven-headed dragon.

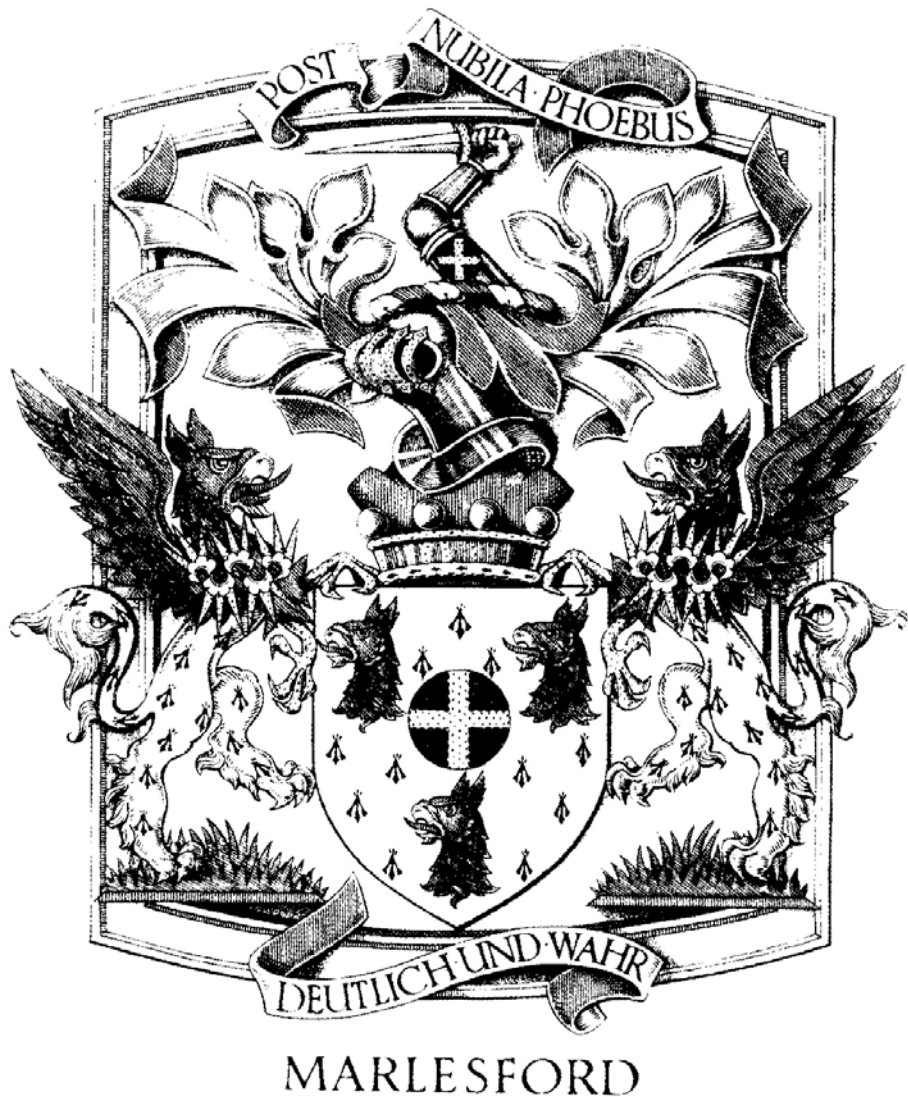


## A Welsh Dragon Goes to Sea

Dave Freeman, browsing through back numbers of *Sea Breezes*, came across this silhouette emblem of the Willie Line in the issue for July 1979. It looks as if its wings were coming from its hips, but probably they actually come from his shoulders and sweep backwards along his flanks before rising up further back, near his hips. Such an illusion, made possible by the solid silhouette, has been noted once before, but if artists study their anatomy they will not fall into this error – not that they can observe dragons in the flesh, but there are plenty of reliable sources of illustration to act as a guide.



Charles Willie had his office in Cardiff, and the line, founded in 1903, at first traded across the Bristol Channel to Watchet in Somerset, taking coal one way and bringing back pit props and timber the other. Later they traded to Portugal and then also to Portuguese-speaking South America. They were flourishing during the second world war, when they operated quite a number of ships for the Ministry of War Transport, so the Welsh Dragon must have been seen up and down the Atlantic. The firm is now trading as Charles M. Willie and Company – Shipping, still based in Cardiff, with a fleet of some twenty ships, and still using the dragon emblem.



A selection of eighteenth-century bookplates by William Stephens of Cambridge, in an article by John Blatchly, has examples of martlets, griffins, unicorns, a dragon and a mermaid.

In another new book by Brian North Lee, *Some Church of England Parochial Library and Cathedral Ex-Libris* (London, 2004), is this rather unusual depiction by

## Fabulous Beasts at Sherborne

A weekend conference on Heraldic Art was held at the beginning of April, which included five lectures by eminent heraldists and a tour of Sherborne Abbey. Of the 81 people attending the conference, exactly one third, 27, were dracologists, so it was not surprising that some of the lecturers made mention of Dracology at suitable moments, for instance, when Steve Slater or Keith Lovell had a dragon or such on a slide. Steve was talking on modern military insignia, and fierce monsters are quite popular in that field, this beast from Germany being but one example (*right*). Keith's subject was Victorian heraldry, and of course dragons and griffins were an essential ingredient of neo-gothic decorative arts.



In Sherborne Abbey there are plenty of fabulous beasts, notably among the carved wooden bosses that decorate the roof, several of which have delightful little mediaeval dragons in a variety of postures – though field glasses or a telescope is needed to appreciate them properly. Among the armorials on the walls of the nave are a couple of shields with the rebus of Abbot Thomas Langton, showing a cockatrice or “angsane” (*left*).

At one point Ben Elliott called me over to see the much-mutilated effigy of an abbot on his tomb, with what was said to be a lion at his feet. Ben pointed out that although the rear end of the little beast was undoubtedly leonine, what was left of its front legs seemed much more like eagle's talons than lion's paws. Its head had been broken off, but careful scrutiny revealed the outline of wings on the creature's flanks, so this animal was certainly a Griffin, which Ben said was most unusual as the footrest of an Abbot. Well spotted, Ben!

The Abbey is most proud of its two magnificent modern stained-glass windows by John Hayward, who was there to talk about them. The Great West window, full of symbolism, was dedicated in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen in 1998, to commemorate the founding of the Benedictine community in Sherborne in 998 AD, and the smaller but no less splendid window in the south aisle, called the Millenium Window, has amongst other armorials, an impressive pair of Griffins supporting the arms of Sherborne Town Council.

## Some Victorian Fabulous Beasts

Whilst in Sherborne, Drusilla Armitage produced an interesting book, *The Curiosities of Heraldry* by Mark Antony Lower (London, 1845), which aimed to present heraldry as an entertaining and useful practice. He tried to introduce a useful distinction between *heraldic*, to do with heralds, and *heraldric*, to do with heraldry, but it did not catch on. The book has a chapter on *Chimerical Figures*, headed by a vignette of the Ipolyte from Sir John Mandeville (*see No 20*) which is like a centaur but without the horse's front legs, but it did not say whether such a creature had ever appeared in heraldry. In this chapter the author writes, "Under the category of Heraldic Monsters the following deserve especial notice:- The Allerion, Chimera, Cockatrice, Dragon, Griffin, Harpy, Lyon-Dragon, Lyon-Poisson, Mermaid, Mantygre, Martlet, Opinicus, Pegasus, Sphinx, Sagittary, Satyr, Unicorn, Wyvern, Winged Lyon and Winged Bull." This is followed by a footnote, "In reading this list it will be seen that it contains several monsters not of the 'Gothick' but of the Classical era, as the chimera, harpy and sagittary; but it is a characteristic fact that the purely classical monsters were never great favourites in heraldry." Nevertheless, he goes on to give each of the twenty creatures named a paragraph describing the beast, and usually giving an instance of its appearance in heraldic use. About the dragon, he writes that in ancient times certain fortified earthworks were called 'dragons' and these would be used in dangerous times to protect vulnerable members of the family such as the young ladies. Thus arose the many legends of princesses being guarded by dragons, which needed to be overcome if their suitors were to be successful. He recounts how the heraldic dragon developed wings and fiery breath, and that people believed that such monsters truly existed, but he goes on, "In our days nothing of the kind is to be seen, excepting a harmless animal hunting its insects. The light of these days has driven the fiery dragon to take refuge among nations not yet visited by the light of civilization. The *Draco volans* is a small lizard, and the only reptile possessing the capacity of flight. For this purpose it is provided on each side with a membrane between the feet, which unfolds like a fan at the will of the animal, enabling it to spring from one tree to another while pursuing its food. It is a provision similar to that of the flying squirrel, enabling it to take a longer leap. The annexed cut represents a *dragon Volant*, as borne in the arms of Raynon of Kent." (*See right*)



Having described his twenty chosen monsters, Lower concludes thus, "What shall we say of the *Nependis*, or ape-hog, half ape, half swine; the *Minocane* or

*Homocane*, half child, half spaniel dog; the *Lamya*, a compound of a woman, a dragon, a lyon, a goat, a dog, and a horse; the Dragon-tyger, and Dragon-wolf; the Lyon-wyvern; the Winged Satyr-fish; the Cat-fish and Devil-fish; the Ass-bittern (the arms of Mr Asbitter !); the Ram-eagle; the Falcon-fish with a hound's ear; and the 'Wonderful Pig of the Ocean'?"



Note that the Ram-eagle is now identified as the Tragopan, a variety of oriental pheasant whose prominent head-feathers do somewhat resemble ram's horns, a feature no doubt exploited by fanciful artists to create this new hybrid monster.

With regard to *Draco volans*, in a recent television programme called *The Real Dragons*, perhaps in answer to the rather fanciful one reported in our last number, David Attenborough dealt with this and other lizards, with some fine photography, but it must be stated that calling a lizard *Draco* no more turns it into a Dragon than calling a sea-slug *Doris* turns it into a beautiful nymph. He was certainly dealing with real zoological specimens, but not with real dragons, which are creatures of the imagination. Perhaps one has to be a Jungian to appreciate that there are spiritual realities as well as physical ones.

## Some Bookish Monsters

The *Bookplate Journal* for March 2005 has an article by Brian North Lee on the work of Stanley Reece, which includes illustrations of several heraldic monsters, such as the winged bull crest of Geoffrey Ralph Evans, four examples of the Keatley's crest with a wyvern (the most unusual one shown here), and the griffin supporters of the arms of Lord Marlesford, with griffins' heads on his shield (*see next page*).

