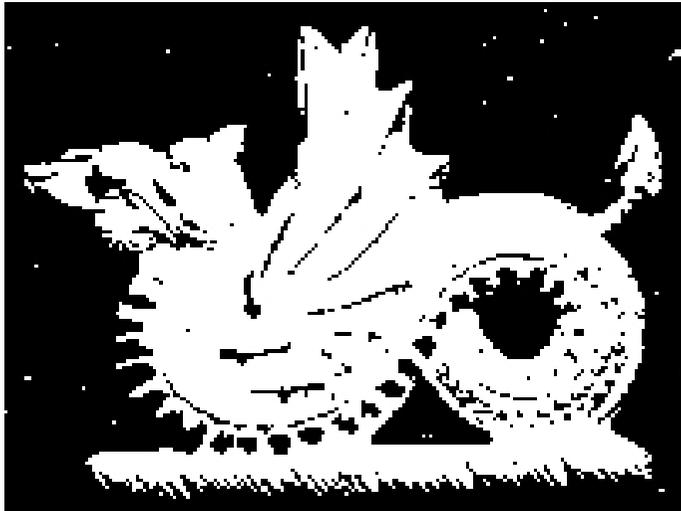


Tony Jones has sent a picture of a forked tree that he came across in a wood that had been carved into the likeness of two dragons apparently in the act of mating. If we can overcome the technical difficulties, this picture will be shown here in a later issue.

Joan Jordan has sent a picture of some Amazonian Manatees with a text that suggests, implausibly, that these ungainly creatures might have given rise to the legend of the mermaid. Had some sailors, already believing in the existence of mermaids, caught a glimpse of these great sea-mammals, it is just possible that they would think that they had actually seen the legendary beauties – that is, until they got a closer view of them. Similar postulations have been made about the Atlantic Grey Seal, the Indian Dugong and other sea mammals, many of which may cuddle their young in their flippers, but it seems much more likely that the origin of mermaids lies with ancient Greek myths of nymphs and undines, elemental beings that peopled the natural world about them.



The Midland Railway gilt cap badge for senior staff - the legless Wyvern

PENULTIMATE POTTER

Yesterday saw the publication of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, the sixth book in J.K.Rowling's series of enchanting stories of wizardry. The first chapter has a passing reference to permission having been given to import three foreign dragons and a sphinx for a Triwizarding Trial, an episode in an earlier book in the series, but it remains to be seen whether any exciting new fabulous beasts turn up in this story (some people cannot read the whole book on the first day it comes out!). These books have been a phenomenal success, but it seems that we may have to wait a while before we get the last of the series.

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Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

Number 62

St Kenelm's Day 2005



Wyvern Emblem of the 43rd (Wessex) Division



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

Saint Kenelm was a young Mercian prince who was murdered as a youth in 819 AD, in the Clent Hills. His body was then taken to Winchcombe Abbey in Gloucestershire for burial, where his shrine now is. Nearby is his well, watered from a spring that is said to have sprung miraculously when his body was rested there. There are half a dozen churches dedicated to him, including the one at Minster Lovell in Oxfordshire. His martyrdom is commemorated on 17th July.

The Clent Hills form two ridges of equal height, each peaking at 1000 feet above sea level, breaking up into fingers with coombes between to the west, but sloping down gently to the east. St. Kenelm's Church nestles close to the central pass between the ridges, where the road from Clent snakes over and down towards Birmingham, but the ancient village of Kenelmstowe that once huddled around it has long disappeared, although it remains the Parish Church of the nearby village of Romsley. These hills are made of Old Red Sandstone, part of a great barrier that separates the newer coal and ironstone layers to the north and east that formed the basis of the Black Country and industrialisation of the West Midlands, from the older clays that provide the agricultural ground of rural Worcestershire. It is supposed that the very name of Clent is derived from an old Norse word for "rock."

Of the many legends that have attached to the young Kenelm, one of dubious origin has him dispatching a dragon, but whether he was attacking an adder or conquering his conscience is not made clear. No remains of dragons have ever been found in this area, though they abound in Herefordshire beyond the Malvern Hills.

THE ODD STREAK

from the Daily Mail, 16 June 2005



A Shropshire Sea-Dragon

On the outside corner of the half-timbered gatehouse at Stokesay Castle is this three-foot high wooden carving of an unusual monster. It seems to be the same species as the one illustrated in No 49, page 6, from Halse in Somerset.



FROM THE POSTBAG

Roland Symons and **Melvyn Jeremiah** have both sent pictures of a curiously contorted Welsh Dragon supporter to some Royal Tudor Arms in Carlisle Cathedral, spotted during a White Lion Society visit.

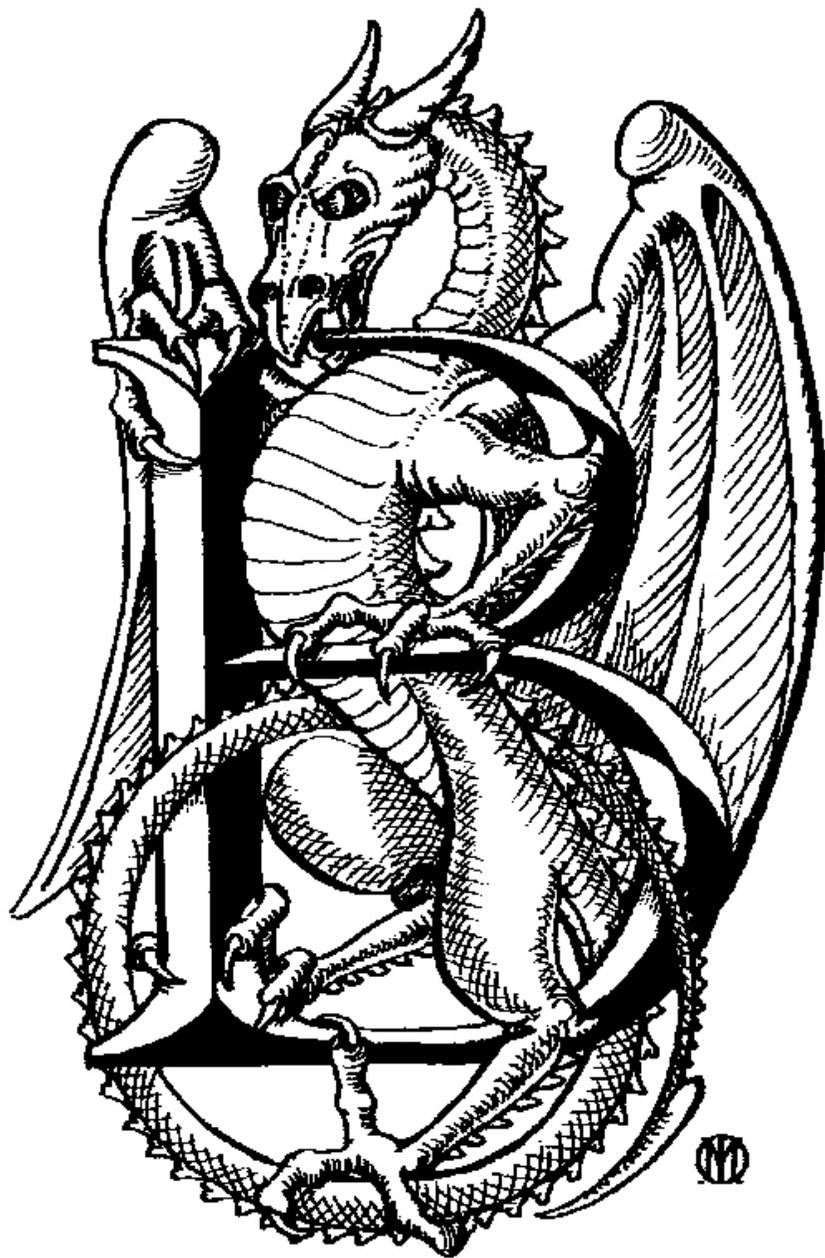
Philippa Sims has sent a simple do-it-yourself cut-and-fold paper dragon from the Dragon Hall in Norwich, which has a new programme to appeal to children. She also sent a template for embroidering a picture of St George and the Dragon, based on a design by Siebmacher dated 1601.

Mary Rose Rogers sent an elegant card with a sparkling dragon designed by Jane Crowther, and she mentioned seeing an amazing place where sea-dragons are born, as she was travelling on a bus between Split and Dubrovnik. An arm of the sea between two land masses was full of white sea horses and also huge jets of spume, many feet high. She was told that the place is highly dangerous and is treated with great respect.

Kevin Greaves was having a holiday in Italy, and sent some pictures of a remarkable dragon carved in marble on the terrace of the Basilica of Santa Croce in Lecce, and nearby on the gable peak of another church was a carving of a very aquiline Pelican in her Piety. These pictures came by e-mail, but are not easy to reproduce here.

Alex Findlater e-mailed some pictures of dragons and other monsters from Somerset, and **Anthony Bruce** sent a picture of two dragons with their necks entwined from over the door of the Old Butcher's Shop in Axbridge. Later that day, Roger and I were able to visit Axbridge and see them for ourselves.

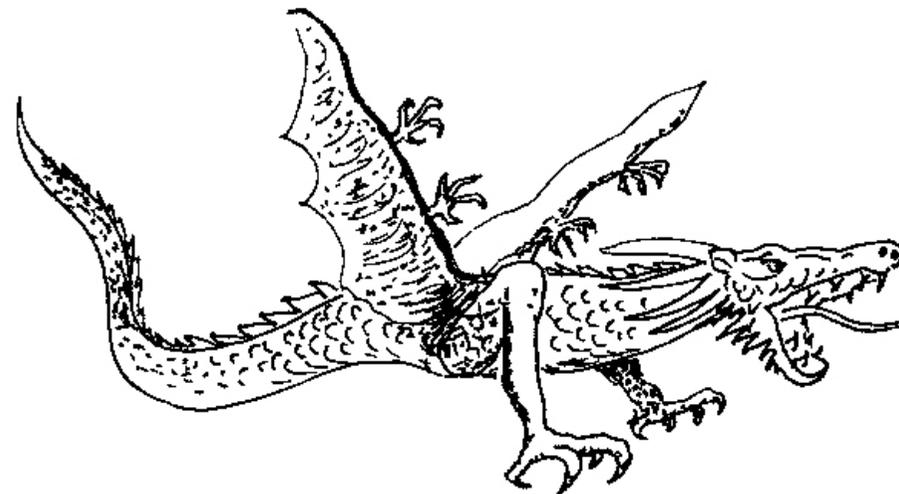




Mark Dennis has kindly sent this specially drawn contribution to *Dracology*. The fully coloured version is a real rainbow eyeful of marvellous majestic mystery.

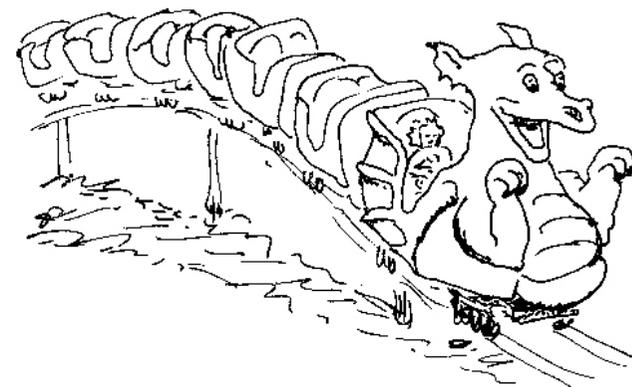
The picture on the cover, of a Wyvern with an almost-human face, is taken from Brian Wright's "Somerset Dragons" (2002, page 173). The actual formation badge used by the 43rd (Wessex) Division, originally part of the Territorial Army, was rather simpler, embroidered in gold on a blue ground, and was illustrated in No 43, page 3.

CONTRASTING FAIRGROUND DRAGONS



In China, it was always considered a sign of good fortune to have a dragon on the roof, but this one is unusually menacing. Some 50 feet long, it has settled on the roof of the Changying Century City, the country's first cinema-theme amusement park, according to the *Daily Telegraph* of 28 May, 2005. Unlike traditional Chinese dragons, it has a long snout, strange upside-down legs, no tail-fin, and very odd wings with a pair of little hands on each (does it somehow remind you of a four-engined bomber?). Why should such a fearsome creature decorate an amusement park? Could it be taken from a Chinese film? Or is it there to frighten away illegal gamblers?

Quite different is this articulated children's ride from Legoland, which, according to the *Mail on Sunday* for 12 June 2005, may be up for sale, with some serious bidders coming forward. Any dracologists interested?



Fabulous Beasts Sighted on British Railways

Stuart Emerson saw a couple of diesel locomotives at the Craigentiny railway depot near Edinburgh, named *Gryphon* and *Chimaera*. These are not listed in the 1989 edition of Ian Allen's *abc* of British Rail Locomotives, though it does include 86219 *Phoenix* and 47616 *Y Ddraig Goch. The Red Dragon**. Turning to the still older book, "British Locomotive Names of the Twentieth Century" by H.C.Casserley (London, 1963, revd edn 1967), we see that although the vast majority of named railway engines are called after people or places, there has been a steady trickle of fabulous beast names. The *Dragon* was a popular name with the early Great Western Railway, several following on in sequence, and they also had a *Pegasus*. Early LNWR engines included *Argus*, *Banshee*, *Centaur*, *Cerberus*, *Chimera*, *Cyclops*, *Dragon*, *Harpy*, *Hydra*, *Leviathan*, *Medusa*, *Pegasus*, *Sphinx*, *Typhon* and *Unicorn*, and many of these names were used again in later classes, and kept on when they were transferred to the LMS line, who also had a *Minotaur* and a *Phoenix* in their "Jubilee" class in the thirties, as well as another *Cyclops* and *Leviathan*. The only *Griffin* listed was a 0-6-0 saddle-tank built in 1913 for the Cannock Chase and Wolverhampton Railway. The Great Northern Railway of Ireland had a *Cerberus* and a *Cyclops*, built between 1885 and 1911, but in more modern times there are only D808 *Centaur*, D814 *Dragon* and D835 *Pegasus*, all Western Region Diesel-Hydraulic engines in the "Warships" class of 1958, and the sole 26056 *Triton* amongst the British Rail electric locomotives.

Turning from locomotive names to company insignia, we find quite a few fabulous beasts scattered round railway history. An excellent guide is "Railway Heraldry and other insignia" by George Dow (Newton Abbot, 1973) with a Supplement published by the author in 1985. Possibly the earliest Dragon to appear in this field was one taken from the seal of the Earl of Lancaster that squeezed into the bottom of the device of the Furness Railway in 1846 (*see right*). Unicorns are seen on most of the emblems of the Scottish railways, and Dragons on those of the Welsh, as well as on the device of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway. Sea-Horses were used by the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway, and a winged version of the same by the Belfast and Northern Counties Line, while the device of the Perth, Almond Valley and Methven Railway was based on a double-headed Eagle. London Transport used not the dragon but the Griffin (*see left*), embroidered on staff uniforms and embossed on their buttons, but the most distinctive of all was surely the legless Wyvern used extensively by the old Midland Railway, on uniforms, rolling stock, luggage racks, bridges and



buildings and even on chamber pots (*see right*). George Dow was so taken with this device that he called his house "Wyverns" and had a decorative sign embellished with cast examples of this fabulous beast.



*Later, Stuart spotted the number 31190 on *Gryphon*, which is listed, unnamed, in the 1989 book as having been built between 1959 and 1962.

BOOK REVIEW

Dugald Steer has been busy, producing two new pocket-sized (c 4" x 4") booklets in the series "Dr Ernest Drake's *Dragonology* Pocket Adventures." One is "The Dragon Star" and the other "The Iceland Wyrn" (both Dorking, 2005). Each contains a series of numbered paragraphs with one step in the adventure leading to a choice. For example, when sailing to Iceland the ship is attacked by a large sea-serpent, and the adventurer has to make his first decision. Does he, A. Try to speak to the serpent [go to 6] or B. Tell everyone to get into the rowing boats, and get into one himself [go to 21]? Each move will either lead to a further choice or to a disastrous end. Some paths lead back to give a second chance, but the correct sequence of choices leads in the end to a happy conclusion. It is assumed that the adventurer is a serious dragonologist, schooled in Dr Drake's methods, and would be unlikely to make rash decisions, but even then some of the false paths lead to quite drastic deaths. However, a successful completion of the course leads to the award of a Certificate of Appreciation signed by Dr Drake himself! These two little books are models of ingenuity and imagination, and are highly recommended – as Christmas stocking fillers, perhaps. Dugald Steer is to be congratulated, especially as he demonstrates a proper regard for decency when dealing with dragons. (See also Nos 40 and 55 for reviews of his earlier works.)

Melvyn's Dragon



This lively Dragon courant from the Jeremiah arms was drawn by Alexander Kurov.