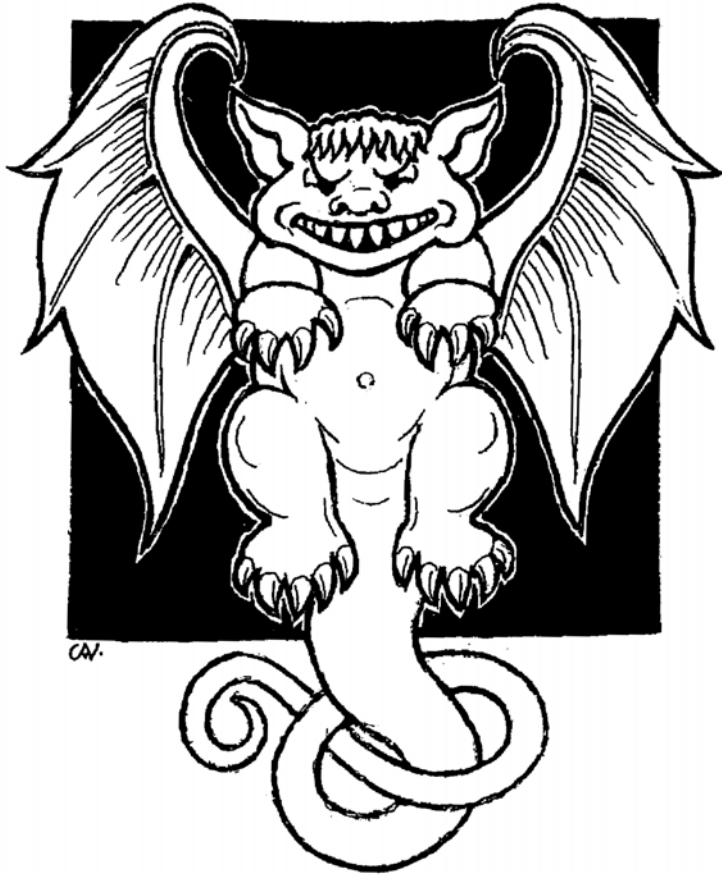


NEWS FROM EUROPE

Carl-Alexander von Volborth has sent in this drawing with accompanying note of his latest discovery:

THE SHREDDERDRAGON



The Shredderdragon has been recently discovered in the building of the European Union in Brussels. The little fellow (size as in our illustration) living it up, nesting on bookshelves and in files, has invited his relatives in Strassbourg to a Shredding Festival to be held in August. Hundreds of them are expected to swarm in on a hot summer night when the officials are on vacation. C-AvV

Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

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St Michael slaying Satan in the form of a Dragon



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

We welcome five new members, all from Canada:- Allan Bird, Darrel Kennedy, Benjamin Lee, Janice Patton and William Ward.

Not long ago, I was rung up by a man planning to make a brief documentary film about dragons, who was put on to me by Dugald Steer, and he wanted to know whether I “believed” in dragons. I said that I did not believe in them, in the sense that I did not think that they had, or had ever had, a material existence, but that I found them very interesting, as evidence of the human imagination, in folk-lore, literature and art. Then I said that Dracology was a science, not a religion. Scientists do not “believe” in atoms, or evolution, or black holes, but they find them interesting ideas to help them understand the phenomena of nature, and this is quite different from the position in religion, where belief in God, or Redemption, or the Forgiveness of Sins, is an article of faith. A belief in dragons may well have formed part of some religions in the past, and may even do so to some extent today (see below), but a dracologist is not required to share any such belief, though he may find them interesting. Although my caller said that he would be in touch again, in fact I heard no more from him. Perhaps he was looking for a “believer” who would enliven his programme, and could possibly be made to look ridiculous, in the style of so many modern interviews (because it is thought to make “good television”). As I have often said, Dracology can be fun (as can heraldry) but there is also some serious and interesting research to be done.

The picture on the cover is taken from “How to Read a Church” by Richard Taylor (London, 2003) which does not give its origin, but provides this gloss:

DRAGON: Dragons, reptilian winged monsters, exist in the mythology of almost all cultures. In the Bible, the dragon symbolizes Satan, as it was the shape taken by him in the Book of Revelation, which describes a war in heaven, between the angels of God, led by the Archangel Michael, and Satan and his rebel angels. The dragon (‘an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads’) and the rebel angels are hurled to earth, whereupon they go to make war with Jesus’ followers (Revelation 12 & 13). Where a dragon is portrayed being defeated by an angel – often run through with a spear and trampled underfoot – it is a depiction of Satan’s defeat by Michael.

A dragon is also depicted in pictures of Saint George. These can be distinguished from depictions of St Michael because St Michael is winged, whereas St George is a knight on horseback, usually with his badge of a red cross on a white background on

MORE FROM THE POSTBAG

David Hawkings has sent a picture of a Dragon he saw on a bag of cement, which is a much better design than the silhouette used by the Willie Line (*see No 59*) as the wing can be clearly seen to come from the shoulder. He also sent a little dragon ear-ring, just 2 cm high, which he came across whilst walking through Bishops Lydeard. If Brian Wright has lost such a piece, he now knows where to ask. It is like a miniature version of the charm shewn in No 48, page 5.

Marc Van de Cruys has sent in a splendid picture of St George slaying the Dragon, but perhaps we should keep it for next April the Twenty-third.

Roland Symons often sends in RAF badges with dragons, griffins or wyverns, but this one from the station at Hullavington is special. I can remember the base being built before the War, with its vast arched hangers covered in turf to hide the largest bombers, as we drove past to visit my grandmother at Tetbury. She said the place was called “Hullin’ton” by huntin’ folk (and they abound round there). Once, driving into a nearby town called Cirencester on the sign, she said it was “Sissister” and when I queried this, she said we would stop and ask a local, which she duly did. “What do you call this place?” she enquired of an elderly man by the roadside. “Well, ma’am,” he replied, “Round here we do mostly call ‘er Soyren.” On another occasion, returning from a visit to Northampton, we drove through the town of Daventry, which she told us huntin’ folk called “Daintry” and then a little further on we came to another town, and I said, rather cheekily (I was only ten), “I suppose you call this place Cointry?” “No,” she replied, “There’s no huntin’ in Coventry.” But to get back to the RAF badge, Roland says that the reason the golden Wessex Wyvern is holding a torch of learning is because the station is now used as a training base. The badge was granted in May 1972, when Hullavington was no longer a base for bombers.

Una Lewers has sent this little cartoon from *The Daily Telegraph* which reminds us of the tyranny of the mobile phone. There was recently an attempt to excite tourists by building a replica Loch Ness monster and then having it appearing out of the water before diving again, but apparently nobody was fooled. They made a TV programme out of it, but that too excited little interest. Perhaps the news on Blackberry is indeed more worthy of attention. Una also sent the 1945 edition of *The Pick of ‘Punch’* with a classic cartoon – but we have run out of space, so more next time.



looks down from the north arcade in Henham church, while the local legend is perpetuated by the sign of the *Essex Serpent* at 6, King Street, Covent Garden.

In response to Cecil's query, Keith Lovell has confirmed that there is still a traditional pub of the same name at this same address, though there is no picture of a serpent or dragon on its sign, outside or inside the pub.

WELSH WOODLAND DRAGONS

Tony Jones has very kindly made this drawing from his photograph of a tree-trunk carved into the likeness of a pair of dragons, which he came across while walking in a Welsh wood. Roger Seabury happened on something very similar, perhaps the very same one, in woods at Margam, but did not have his camera with him. He asked, "Are they mating?"

This is not the only carving in these woods, but probably the most imaginative. There is evidently much scope for turning old tree stumps into evocative art-forms, using chain-saws, axes and then chisels for the final finish. Woodland nymphs and dryads are an obvious choice, but some quite intricate abstract forms are also to be seen. I have such an old oak stump in my garden, some six feet high, and am looking for suitable inspiration.



his shield or breastplate.

Of course, St George is often shown without being on horseback, and indeed the picture of him in this book, opposite the text quoted, shows him standing over a purple dragon, from a stained-glass window in the church of St Mary, Happisburgh, Norfolk. But to return to St Michael, the picture on the cover is odd in that it shows the archangel, complete with identifying wings, halo and cross on the end of his spear, dressed in the garb of a Norman knight, with a mail hauberk and leggings and a conical helmet. The dragon, too, is unusual, being much larger than St Michael. It has the bird-like feet and wings typical of early mediaeval dragons. It would be good to know whence this drawing came.

It should be noted that Saint Michael pre-dates Christianity, having been adopted from the ancient Jewish scriptures (The Old Testament) in which he is one of the few archangels given a name. Michael, in Hebrew, is actually a question, meaning "Who is like God?" (*Quis ut Deus* in Latin). Some have linked him with the heavenly being known in the ancient Middle East as Marduk, who has in turn been identified with the planetary god Mars, which may help to explain Michael's warrior garb. It is not clear whether the Hebrew archangel ever fought with a dragon, but Marduk certainly struggled with the monster Tiamat and her offspring. There is a story of Bel and the Dragon as an apocryphal addition to the book of Daniel, and some scholars think that Bel, or Baal, is none other than Marduk, but in any case, Daniel beats them both. As a Christian saint, Michael is not always shown fighting a dragon. Often his adversary is depicted as a devil or demon, but in either case Satan is intended.

HERALDIC MONSTERS from the 19th Century

Derek Taylor has kindly presented a copy of "An Introduction to Heraldry, containing the Origin and Use of Arms; Rules for Blazoning and Marshalling Coat Armours; the English and Scottish Regalia; a Dictionary of Heraldry with its terms in English, French and Latin; Orders of Knighthood, illustrated and explained; Degrees of the Nobility, Gentry, etc; Tables of Precedency; and a Dictionary of Mottoes; the Whole forming a Complete Manual of Rank and Nobility" by Hugh Clark (11th Edition, London, MDCCCXXIX). It runs to 324 pages with another 48 plates of engraved illustrations, containing "upwards of one thousand examples, including the arms of nearly five hundred different families." Among these examples are some thirty-odd heraldic monsters and other fabulous beasts:- The Allerion, Basilisk, Chimaera, Cockatrice, Dolphin, Dragon, Griffin, Harpy, Heraldic Antelope (with a common antelope for comparison), Hydra, Lion-Dragon, Lyon-Poisson, Male Griffin, Man Tiger, Martlet, Mermaid, Musimon, Opinicus, Panther, Pegasus, Pelican (again with a "natural pelican" as a comparison), Phoenix, Sagittarius, Salamander, Sea Dog, Sea Horse, Sea Lion, Spinx (*sic*), Tyger, Unicorn, and Wyvern. The whole book is only 7in x 4 in, and with 24 pictures on each plate, they are tiny and difficult to reproduce, though some of the descriptions are worthy of note; here is the text for OPINICUS: - this beast is of heraldic invention; its body and fore legs are said to be like those of a lion; the head



and neck like those of an eagle; to the body are affixed wings, like those of a griffin; and it hath a tail like that of a camel. *Note*, The opinicus is the crest to the arms of the barber surgeons. And for PANTHER:- This beast is very beautiful, by reason of the variety of coloured spots wherewith his body is overspread : he is a fierce and cruel beast. *Note*, When he is depicted with fire issuing from his mouth and ears, he then is termed *incensed*.



PHOENIX, a beautiful Arabian bird, famous among the ancients, who describe it in form like the eagle, but more beautiful in its plumage; when advanced in age, it makes itself a nest of spices, which being set on fire by the sun, or some other secret power, it burns itself, and out of its ashes riseth another. In heraldry, a phoenix in flames proper is the emblem of immortality. Burnet, in his Theory of the Earth, says, "I do not doubt but the story is a fable as to any such kind of bird, single in her species, living and dying, and reviving in that manner : but it is an apologue, or fable with an interpretation, and was intended as an emblem of the world, which, after a long age, will be consumed in the last fire; and from its ashes or remains will arise another world, or a new-formed heaven and earth. This, I think, is the true mystery of the phoenix, under which symbol the Eastern nations preserved the doctrine of the conflagration and renovation of the world."



SAGITTARIUS is an imaginary creature, being half man and half beast, and a poetical fiction; it represents one of the twelve celestial signs, and was borne by King Stephen of England, by reason he entered the kingdom when the sun was in that sign, and obtained a great victory by the help of his archers; and took for his arms the said sign, and left off bearing both the arms of his father, Stephen, Earl of Champaine, and his grandfather, William the Conqueror. *Guillim*.



SALAMANDER is represented like a small common lizard; its legs and tail are longer; the belly is white; one part of the skin is black, and the other yellow; both of them very bright, with a black line all along the back, where those spots are, out of which (as some writers will have it) a certain liquor or humour proceeds, which quenqueth the heat of fire when it is in the same. Salamanders are bred in the Alps, and some parts of Germany, in marshy wet places: that a salamander can live in, and not be burned by, the fire, is without foundation of truth, for the experiment has been tried. A salamander was the hieroglyphic of constancy.



(I could quote more, but that will be enough to give the flavour. I hope there were no animal rights activists around to watch the experiment with the salamander.)

THE ESSEX SERPENT, or HENHAM DRAGON

Cecil Humphery-Smith has kindly sent this excerpt from a local book:-

This is the story of the Henham dragon, which from its description in a British Museum tract (*The Flying Serpent, or Strange News out of Essex*, reproduced in facsimile by W. Masland of Saffron Walden, 1885) was a serpent eight or nine feet long, varying in girth from the size of a man's leg to that of a thigh; eyes like those of a sheep, two rows of very white sharp teeth, and two wings too small and weak to carry such an unwieldy body. This creature appeared in Henham, a 'Town standing upon a Hill, having many fair Farms and Granges,' in 1668, in the Lodge fields, and was usually seen sunning itself upon a bank by Birch Wood in May or early June.



The first man to see the dragon was riding along 'a Gentlemans way' – still in existence as a field-path skirting a field called Birch Wood, near the Lodge farm – who 'affrighted the Rider so much with his monstrous proportions and bold courage . . . that all in a maze he spurred his Horse, who almost as much afraid as his master, with winged speed hasted away.' After this it was seen by several people, and some tried to kill it, watching with clubs, guns, musquets and fowling-pieces for it to emerge from its lair in the wood. Although the description of the dragon was so terrible that no women or children and few men would go near the place, it seems to have been peaceable enough, to have done no damage and killed no farm animals, which gives grounds to one solution that it was a large Diver-bird, driven inland by strong winds, where its long unwieldy body, and short wings and tail-feathers, might easily gain absurd proportions. Essex was a county given to thoughts of dragons: one was supposed to have been seen at St. Osyth in Henry II's reign; a cockatrice to have depopulated the town of Saffron Walden until she was assailed by a valourous knight in a coat of crystal glass, and a fourteenth century dragon with a knotted tail