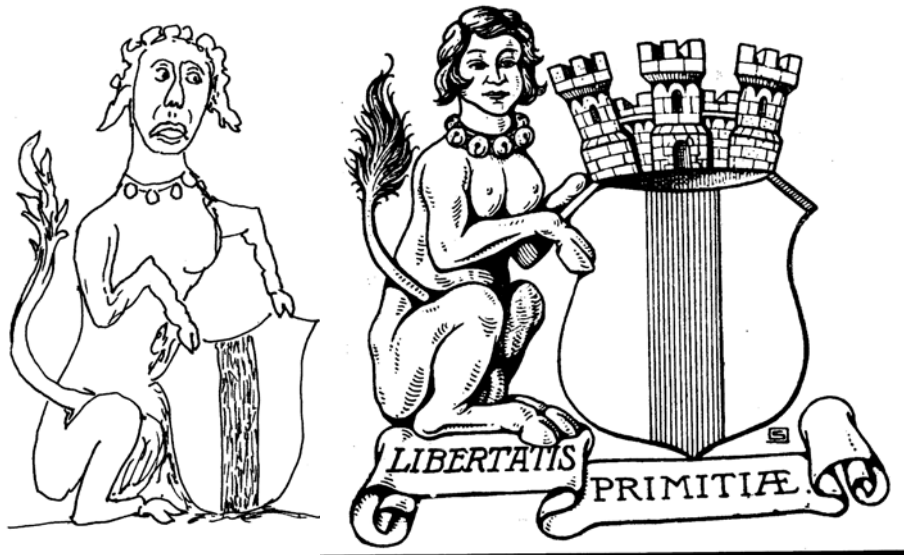


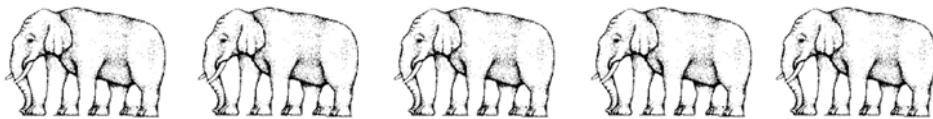
Jan Keuzenkamp sent a reprint of a paper he had written for a Swiss heraldic journal about some Dutch civic arms, with line drawings of, among other things, some Griffins and the unusual Capirusa.

Marc Van de Cruys sent an e-mail about the Capirusa, which he says may be a corruption of Caperisca, a small goat-like creature, according to Kits Nieuwenkamp, who describes it as “a female beast with a human face, a collar of jester’s bells, pointed flappy ears as those of a hound, goatlike paws and a dog’s plummy tail.”

He says that it has now taken on a life of its own, mainly as a supporter for the arms of Brielle, and he also sent two other renderings of it, one of which looks a bit like this:- and the other like this:-



And finally, **Alex von Volborth** has sent a card with his latest discovery, the portmanteau creature “Elephantom.” This may have descended from the eight-legged elephant we saw in Number 45, but has taken flight in a new direction. More later.

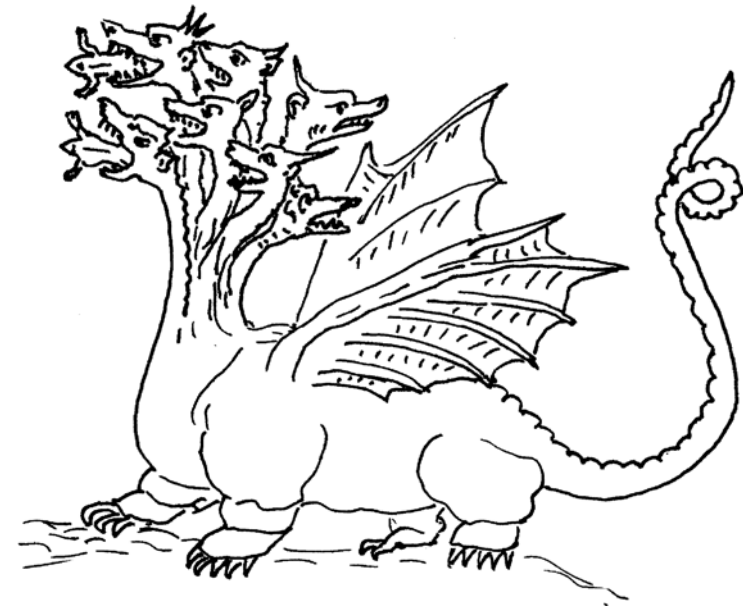


Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

Number 67

St John’s Day 2005



The Beast with Seven Heads and Ten Horns from the Revelation of St John, from a fourteenth-century French tapestry from Angers.



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

The feast of St John the Baptist on 24th June, Midsummer's Day, is widely known, not least through Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg* and, of course, the work of the Hospitallers, but the celebration of his namesake on 27th December, almost at Midwinter, is so overshadowed by Christmas that it is largely forgotten. The Fourth Gospel, three of the Epistles and the Book of the Revelation of St John the Divine are all thought to have been written by the same person, but scholars do not seem to agree whether it was that same John, one of the early disciples mentioned in the first three Gospels as the brother of James but not mentioned in the fourth (except for a reference to "the sons of Zebedee" near the end that some think was added later by another hand), or perhaps by another person altogether.

One suggestion of the true authorship follows from the unusual way in which St John refers to himself throughout the Gospel as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," without giving his name. The only other place in the Gospel where he refers to those "whom Jesus loved" is in the account of the family of Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus, who was raised from the dead – a story that is not mentioned in any of the other Gospels. From this it is deduced that John was the name taken, perhaps in honour of the Baptist, by the young Lazarus after he had been raised. Be that as it may, the Evangelist is supposed to have lived to a very great age, and having lived for some time on Patmos, where he did much of his writing, eventually died at Ephesus. This does at least suggest that he was much younger than the other disciples, and is always so depicted by artists such as Raphael and Leonardo.

The emblem of St John the Evangelist is the Eagle, sometimes shown holding an open book and often used as a form of lectern in churches. While not itself a fabulous beast, except perhaps in its double-headed variety, the Eagle has contributed to the form of the Griffin, which some think was a compound beast, either for symbolic or possibly for astrological purposes, while others believe it was an original creature of its own that was compared to an eagle about its head and to a lion in its nether parts, thus leading artists to depict it as the compound with which we are familiar. In either case the Eagle had its part to play.

Of greater interest to dracologists are the beasts described in the Book of the Revelation of St John the Divine, including the one shown on the cover. There are many varied representations of this monster with seven heads and ten horns, and in this one some of the heads are shown with frogs coming out of their mouths, which may have alchemical symbolism as a sign of Satan's untruths. Other representations show more conventional mediaeval dragons, though multi-headed like the Hydra (see *Margaret Young's description in No 27*).

Called an "Ornithopter" and constructed by David Kemp, it made a striking vision against the sky. The name ornithopter means "bird-wing" and was applied to early forms of powered aircraft that attempted to achieve flight by means of flapping their wings, though none of them was successful. This metallic creation seems to be fitted with a fan or propeller, either for forward motion or perhaps for cooling, but one doubts whether it could achieve flight, except in the imagination – which is actually what such a construction is all about.

Antony Denning has sent a lovely picture of Mont San Michel from *Les Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* of 1415, with St Michael fighting a dragon in the sky. This is one of the earliest examples of a dragon shown with bat-like wings instead of the feathered variety, though he still has only two legs (see *No 29, p 7*).

Derek Taylor sent some photographs of new official Royal Navy badges, one of which, for HMS Dragon, we were privileged to see earlier (*No 29*). Two others are for Portsmouth-based establishments which Guy found, when he was stationed there, to be using unofficial emblems. On his advice, they applied for official badges. That for the Maritime Warfare Centre contains a collection of appropriate objects not of much interest to dracologists, but the badge of the Fleet Diving Squadron (*right*) has an old diving helmet in gold on a black underwater mine flanked by two splendidly heraldic golden Dolphins.



Mervyn Jeremiah was much taken with the Macclesfield Psalter showing at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, in particular the marginalia, and sent a picture of a dragon facing down a bedraggled-looking lion that accompanies Psalm 30. He regretted that Dragonlore is not printed in colour, to do justice to the illustration.



Tony Sims visited the same exhibition, but kindly sent his tracing of the same dragon so that we can reproduce it here. For those who like to put in the colours, its wings are purple, its head green, its legs, backbone and tongue are red, while its body-feathers, claws, spurs and nose-spike are white.

NEW MONSTERS from Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

The latest Harry Potter film has some imaginative realizations of the monsters described by J.K. Rowling in her book, including an unusually spiky dragon (the Hungarian Horntail, *left*) and a weirdly mesmerific merperson (*right*).



FROM THE POSTBAG



Lesley Holt sent a picture of this strange dragon-like creature she had found lurking in Jersey, made up from an assemblage of assorted pieces of agricultural machinery.

To return to the Eagle, let us be reminded of Margaret Young's essay in Stephen Friar's *NewDictionary of Heraldry* (1987) with Andrew Jamieson's illustration:-

Eagle

The eagle has dominion over all the birds and its majestic soaring has given it an exalted place in many civilizations. Both the Greeks and the Romans associated it with their gods, and in the Christian religion it has become the emblem of St John. As the standard of the Roman legions it led the way into all parts of the Empire. When in the year 800 AD Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, the eagle was the obvious symbol to show on his shield, and later it was established as the heraldic device of the Holy Roman emperors, but became double-headed. The fierceness of the eagle, with its sharp beak and long outstretched talons, made it a popular heraldic emblem, and was much in use, particularly in Germany and Austria.



'When the eagle grows old and his wings become heavy and his eyes become darkened with a mist, then he goes in search of a fountain, and, over against it, he flies up to the height of heaven, even into the circle of the sun, and there he singes his wings and at the same time evaporates the fog of his eyes in a ray of the sun. Then at length taking a header down into the fountain, he dips himself three times in it, and instantly he is renewed with a great vigour of plumage and splendour of vision' (from the twelfth-century *The Book of Beasts*, trans. T.H. White, London 1954). Erasmus, the Dutch renaissance scholar, does not share this romantic view of the eagle: 'Of all the birds the eagle alone has seemed to wise men the type of royalty, a bird neither beautiful nor musical nor good for food, but murderous, greedy, hateful to all, the curse of all, and with its great powers of doing harm only surpassed by its desire to do it.'

Margaret does not mention that the Roman eagle acquired its double head during its sojourn in Byzantium. I believe that the spreadeagled position of this bird as usually depicted in heraldry was an attempt by an artist not familiar with perspective to show an eagle in the act of pouncing on its prey from the point of view of the victim, its most frightening aspect, and certainly not from a specimen pinned out on the display board in the natural history museum.

THE ODD STREAK

from The Daily Mail, 15 December 2005



Yet another possible reason for the present absence of Unicorns.

BOOK REVIEWS

Dugald Steer has produced another stunner in **WIZARDOLOGY, *The Book of the Secrets of Merlin*** (Dorking, 2005) in the same format as his earlier *Dragonology* (see *No 40 and also Nos 55 and 62*) and *Egyptology* (*No 55 again*). It has some nice touches, such as the picture of the Wizard's Workshop, with one of these earlier books lying open on the desk and two others in the bookshelf behind. Then again, under A Wizard's Loyal Familiars, he lists Dogs, Cats, Toads, Ducks, Fishes and Owls, with notes on their uses, and for Ducks it says *With their limited intelligence, ducks are really not much use for anything besides quacking*. There is a whole Chapter on A Wizard's Menagerie of Magical Beasts, with splendid new drawings of



the Unicorn, Dragon, Salamander (oddly with six legs). Gryphon, Giant Asp, Elephant, Phoenix and Camelopard, each briefly described. The artists are not given individual credits, but are listed as Anne Yvonne Gilbert, John Howe, Tomislav Tomic and Helen Ward, and they certainly deserve our congratulations. This book tells you everything you could possibly want to know about Wizardry. It is as if Dugald had spent a lifetime researching the subject.

ELDEST by Christopher Paolini (London, 2005) is the second book in the trilogy following the career of the American boy-adventurer Eragon (see *No 51*) who has taken the role of a Dragon Rider. It is full of magic, mind-games and masochism, and ends up with a massive battle involving dwarves, elves, urgals (a kind of prolific minotaur) as well as humans – just like the first book in the series. It is written in an intriguing language, a mixture of current American idiom and quaint archaisms, with plenty of invented names and words. Here is a sample:- “He is Gilderien the Wise, Prince of House Miolandra, wielder of



the White Flame of Vandil, and guardian of Ellesmera since the days of Du Fyrn Skulblaka, our war with the dragons. None may enter the city unless he permits it.” Dove meaning dived is not unknown, but pled for pleaded was a surprise. Before the big battle, the hero/author spends a lot of time with the elves, learning new magical skills and suffering terrible injuries, which are then magically healed so that he can suffer some more, and so it goes. There are a few dragons, clever and wise and basically beneficent, but the principal villain, though often mentioned, never makes an appearance, so there is still much to look forward to in the third and last instalment. We are grateful to Annie Robertson for providing this volume.

FANTASY ENCYCLOPEDIA by Judy Allen (London, 2005) with illustrations by John Howe, Richard Hook, Patricia Ludlow and Nicki Palin is a sumptuous survey of all manner of magical and mythical beings and beasts. The entries are all very brief, but they cover a wide range and give many further references to books and films in which the creatures feature. The chapter on Fabulous beasts has this opening paragraph:-

Fabulous beasts were originally born from human imagination. They were created to explain human nature – love, cruelty, courage and fear – and also to account for natural events – storms, drought and floods. This blend of fiction and reality has given these beasts a freedom and power that sometimes allows them to cross the borders between fantasy and the real world.

The first section in this chapter is *Dragons in the East*, and includes this piece headed **DRAGON LORE:**

The Yellow Dragon only emerges from his river when a holy man rules the country. It is said that when Fu Hsi, the first of the Ten Emperors, was on the throne, the Yellow Dragon rose from the water with the earliest Chinese characters marked on his back. In this way he gave the secret of writing to the emperor and so to his people.

In Vietnam, carved dragons on roofs are a protection against fire. Dragon-fire and earthly fire are opposites. Earthly fire is put out by water. Dragon-fire burns in water but is put out by earthly fire.

It was believed that no rain could fall until a dragon rose into the sky, so in times of drought every effort was made to encourage him to wake up and fly. Better still was to disturb two dragons in the hope they would battle with each other until the storm clouds broke and watered the earth

Further sections deal with *Dragons in the West*, *The unicorn*, *Fantasy horses*, *Fire and feather*, *Giant birds*, and so on. Some of the entries are really too condensed to be much use, and a few, such as that on the Wyvern, are quite misleading, though on the whole the information given is well researched and nicely balanced. Other chapters deal with a wide range from fairies and elves to ghosts and wizards, and from a whole lot of different cultures. This book would make an excellent introduction to the field for an enquiring child.