

Cecil Humphery-Smith has written about the Beley arms shown in No 65, page 4 and again here, which he claims to have designed. In 1856? Further investigation needed! He also sent in some copies of splendid early drawings of dragons by Carl-Alexander von Volborth, and an Otto Hupp rendering of the rather forbidding German Spirit of Saint Michael trampling on a miserable little dragon underfoot.



Dragonlore

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St Bride's Day 2006



Chinthe, the Burmese temple guardian used as a totem by the Chindits.



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

We sadly record the death of John Dent of Norwich, one of the founders of the Norfolk Heraldry Society, who wrote lovingly about heraldic monsters in their Journal, the Norfolk Standard, and was very proud of his Wyvern crest (see No 28).



The picture on the cover shows the shoulder badge of the special raiding force known as The Chindits, that operated in the Burmese theatre during the second World War. They were formed by Orde Wingate in 1942, and were officially the 77th Indian Brigade, but were so successful that they were expanded to become the 3rd Indian Division, made up of six brigades. The badge shows the Burmese dragon called “Chinthe” which stood at the entrance of every Burmese temple or pagoda, and one of these is also seen on the badge. (Information from *Allied Special Forces Insignia 1939-1948*, by Peter Taylor, Barnsley, 2000.)

In our A to Z (in No 3) we said that Chinthe was probably not a dragon or fabulous beast, but a lion stylised in the Burmese fashion, though it has since undoubtedly acquired fabulous status. Mediaeval heraldic lions are also stylised in their own fashion, and so for that matter are Chinese ceremonial lions, neither of which are taken to be fabulous beasts, just “strangely drawn lions,” though I think we must allow the Chinthe to retain its mythological standing.

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St Bride is the English attempt to spell the pronunciation of the name of the Irish saint Brigid, also spelt Brigid, Bridget, Bridie, or Biddy, who was an historical character who lived from 453 to 525 AD, founding the monasteries at Kildare, and is not to be confused with the Swedish Saint Birgitta, Brigitte or Bridget who was much later, 1303-1373. The name Brigid was that of an early Celtic fire-goddess, meaning “the high one,” and is also given to a legendary figure, St Bride of the Isles, said to be from Iona, who is alleged to have travelled miraculously to the Holy Land to suckle the Infant Jesus, and was given Mary’s blue mantle, studded with stars, as a reward. St Bride’s Day falls on the first day of February, and I remember that when I first went to Sunfield they had a play with music for all the children to take part in to celebrate this festival, with the song:-

“Saint Bride of the Isles who wanders far,
with a Dove, a Thrush and a Golden Star...”

This was written in 1931 by Michael Wilson, soon after Sunfield was founded, but seems to have fallen out of use, probably because Sunfield now copes with an

that the dragon shown on the cover of the book (*seen here*) is certainly not a Chinese specimen.



Roger Barnes has sent some more issues of *The New Zealand Armorer* with his drawings of the Male Griffin, the Salamander and other delights. Those who already have his highly-recommended *Monsters of Heraldry* will recognize these old friends. We saw his Male Griffin in No 31, so here is his Salamander, as in the crest of the Earl of Douglas (*On a chapeau Gules, turned up Ermine, a salamander Vert, armed Gules, langued Azure, in flames of fire Proper*):-



Dragons inspired Gareth's first book

This is the headline for an article that appeared in the *Stourbridge News* on 19 January 2006, and tells the story of a local man, Gareth Woodberry, who wrote a book called "Gakeva Gluntok's New School" for his two daughters, and which has now achieved a remarkably wide success. Gakeva is evidently some kind of dragon, or Zeelonian, as he says they prefer to be called, and the book is intended to be the first in a series called The Bragooda Chronicles. It is published online, and is not therefore available from the usual sources. My friendly local bookseller says that there is currently a complete glut of dragon-based children's books, and he cannot possibly stock them all, and this one he cannot even order for me. Perhaps it's just as well! I had just received notice of "Dragonfire," a first novel by Anne Forbes (Edinburgh, 2006), said to be a "fast-paced comic adventure, full of magic, mayhem, mystery...and a dragon" but now that my grandchildren have grown out of that sort of thing, it will have to wait for my great-grandchildren to grow up.

FROM THE POSTBAG

Drusilla Armitage and **Una Lewers** have each sent in a clipping about a new book, "Temeraire" by Naomi Novik. Here is what the blurb says:-

"The ingenuity of Novik's first novel is astonishing: when Captain Laurence captures a French ship during the Napoleonic Wars, he discovers that it is carrying a prized gift to Napoleon from the Chinese Emperor – a dragon's egg. The egg hatches on board Laurence's ship and he finds himself permanently responsible for the dragonet who is given the name Temeraire. Without straining the historical context, the novel imagines squadrons of trained French and British dragons fighting in the air above Europe as a fantastic air force. Genuine military excitement is cleverly combined with a moving tenderness between Laurence and the young dragon. Laurence and Temeraire have a long career ahead of them in Novik's future novels."

Hornblower meets Eragon, it seems! To niggle, one could point out

entirely different type of child, older and much more challenging.

Having dealt comprehensively with Somerset Dragons, Brian Wright has turned his attention to the historical and legendary figures of St Bride, and we look forward to seeing his definitive book on the subject. In the mean time, he has sent us this little story of St Bride and the Dragon that he came across during his researches.

The Dragon Who Knew of Saint Brigid

There is a curious story concerning Saint Brendon, known as 'The Navigator' (c. 486 – 575 AD) who was a contemporary of Saint Brigid and, according to tradition, was a great friend to her and composed a hymn in her honour. It is found in early Irish writings and is a rare example of a dragon calling on a saint for help.

One day Brendon came to visit Brigid and told her of a strange encounter with some sea dragons during one of his voyages and asked her what might be the meaning of it. Brendon was standing on a lofty crag and saw below him two sea dragons trying to drown each other, when suddenly one of the monsters cried out to the other in a human voice, "I beseech you in the name of Saint Brigid to let me be." On hearing this, the other dragon at once withdrew to the depths of the sea. What puzzled Brendon was why the dragon had referred to Saint Brigid despite the fact that he himself was present. Brigid then said that each of them should make a statement of belief that might provide an answer to this puzzle.

Brendon said, "I declare I have never crossed seven waves without turning my mind to God on the seventh." Then it was Brigid's turn: "I confess that since I first fixed my mind on God, I have never taken it off, and never will till doomsday." Brigid then explained that because Brendon was constantly exposing himself to danger during his voyages, it was natural that he had to concentrate on his own safety, and it was not because he forgot God that he thought of him only at every seventh wave. So Brigid, kindly and modestly, had to explain that the dragon had called on her as it felt that she was the holier of the two!



English Dragons

A hefty new book, **The LORE of the LAND, A Guide to England's Legends**, by Jennifer Westwood and Jacqueline Simpson (London, 2005) gives hundreds of summaries of legendary tales, arranged county by county (using the traditional boundaries), with useful maps and plentiful illustrations (including this rather fetching 17th-century mermaid from Zennor in Cornwall, *right*), interspersed with dozens of thematic articles, one of which is devoted to Dragons. This is a brief but scholarly account of the classical origin of dragons and how they are dispersed in England. There are over twenty local legends involving dragons, including those from Mordiford and Wormingford which we have already encountered in these pages. All in all, this is a splendid new reference book which will surely become a classic.



More Critters from Canada

The fifth issue of *The Prairie Tressure* contains another Critter Contest, with such imaginative entries as the **bee-wolf**, **pfeasant**, **wapitree** and variations on the **jackalope**, that delight of taxidermists, the antlered hare or jack-rabbit, now spread to cover the **coyolope**, **pheasalope**, and **fishalope**. This last actually appears as a formidably antlered trout, in the arms of the Finnish town of Inari (*right*), while the Wapitree, in the form of the head of a wapiti or elk whose antlers turn into pine-tree branches complete with pine needles and pine cones, is seen in the arms of the town of Saldustiskis in Lithuania. This issue also contains a cartoon which includes a gloriously punning beast, the **Pigasus**. If pigs might fly, this one certainly does.



The sixth issue has an amusing article proposing heraldic representations for the chemical elements, with Fluorine given *Vert, a basilisk Or*, Aluminium, *Per pale Gules and Azure, a winged amphisbaena Argent*, and Chlorine, *Or a dragon passant Vert*, all with suitable reasons. There are also further entries in the Critter Contest with no fewer than twenty-seven hybrid creatures. The majority of these involve the incongruous pairing of parts, such as the **moggie**, a magpie with a cat's head, and the **churtle**, a chicken with a turtle's shell. Perhaps the most heraldically acceptable is the **Seaprong** (*seen here*), drawn by Brian Jeffs, though the nameless moth-like critter submitted and drawn by Thomas Falk (*below*) is also worth showing.



It may in fact be the original **Flutter-by**. Most of these critters depend for their impact on clever word-play rather than visual

attractiveness, and should not be taken seriously. They are unlikely to

feature in a future edition of the A to Z, for instance, though are good

fun for all that, and demonstrate Darren George's brilliant wit.

On a more scholarly level, Darren has written a further instalment of **The Mad Menagerie** for *Heraldry in Canada* (Volume 39, No.4, Winter 2005), dealing with various human/animal combinations such as the **lympago** (*left*), **sphinx**, **manticore**, **satyral**, **sagittary**, **centaur** and the newly-proposed **leontosatyr**. This last is a more generalised term for a hybrid creature such as this German 'Moor-lion' (*right*). The article is an excellent treatment of the subject, with historical backgrounds, reasoned arguments, and copious references, a model of dracological scholarship.

