

## An A to Z of Dragonlore (*seventh instalment*)

MANDRAKE, a legendary poisonous serpent disguised as a plant which shrieked so venomously when pulled from the ground that the noise itself would drive you mad; the name is now given to a medicinal herb used by the Greeks with a root that looks a bit like the trunk and legs of a man or woman.

MANTICORA, (variously spelt) possibly of Indian origin, it had a lion's body but a man's head with red eyes, lots of teeth and a spikey tale.

MARTLET, a common charge in heraldry, based on the swallow or martin which were real birds but fabled to remain perpetually on the wing and therefore depicted without any feet.

MEDUSA, one of the Gorgons of Greek legend, whose gaze would turn the onlooker to stone, but who was cleverly beheaded by Perseus who then used her head to freeze and kill the seamonster Cetus that was threatening Andromeda.

MELUSINE, a French mermaid or water sprite living in a fountain at Lusignan.

MERMAID, generic name for female elemental beings of the sea, shown with the upper parts of a young woman and the lower body and tail of a fish and usually holding a hand-mirror or looking-glass in one hand and a comb in the other.

MEROW, an Irish mermaid.

MINOTAUR, a monstrous bull-headed ogre kept by King Minos of Crete in a labyrinth at Knossos, and slain by Theseus of Athens, with a little help from Ariadne, the daughter of Minos.

MUSIMON, another Tudor compound with a ram's head on a goat's body but with two pairs of horns, one from each species.

NAGA, the seven-headed snake from Indian mythology, generally shown with the hoods of cobras, it had deep spiritual significance and power over water, and was widely used to decorate temple entrances.

NAIAD, a Greek water-spirit or river-nymph, often shown as a mermaid.

NEBEK, a strange black doglike animal with white mane and tufts of hair all over, it was the badge of William Fitzwilliam, Earl of Southampton and Lord High Admiral, and became his heraldic supporter when he was made Knight of the Garter in 1526, but is otherwise unknown.

NEREID, a sea nymph, daughter of the sea god Nereus in Greek mythology and thus shown as a sort of mermaid.

OCEANID, another Greek sea nymph, offspring of Oceanos, a Titan.

OGRE, a man-eating giant, while undoubtedly fabulous and of beastly habits and appearance, it is probably not a proper subject for dracologists.

*To be continued...*

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# Dragonlore

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The Styrian Panther (from Huber's *Treasury*, 1981)

See John Davy's report from Vienna, No 2, p 2

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

Sadly we must report the death of one of our founder members. John Davy, who was born 8th August 1927 (just three weeks after me) died of a brain tumour on 28th October 1984, aged 57. While Science Correspondent of *The Observer*, he had been appointed OBE in 1965 for services to science. In 1970 he moved to become Vice-Principal of Emerson College in Forest Row Sussex, an anthroposophical adult training centre with an international student body, though he still contributed occasionally to the Press. A book of his selected essays, "Hope, Evolution and Change," was published by Hawthorn Press, Stroud, in 1985; it reflects his deep interest in all aspects of original scientific thinking combined with his profound belief in the spiritual source of all human endeavours. Although I found only two mentions of dragons in these essays (one on the appearance of the Devil before his expulsion from the Garden of Eden when he was condemned to crawl on his belly, and the other a reference to Steiner's description of Lemurian beings), I feel that his commitment to discovering the truth in every field of interest, and his recognition that imagination as well as analysis can lead to knowledge, would have made him an outstanding dracologist if the course of his life had not led him down other paths. His early death is a great loss both to the field of scientific writing and also to the anthroposophical movement.

RB

The flood of dragonlore books has continued to appear; these are a few:-

**Mythical Beasts** by Hugh Lloyd-Jones with sculpture by Marcelle Quinton (Duckworth, London 1980) illustrates ten supernatural creatures described by the ancient Greeks and tells their stories: Amphisbaena, Centaur, Gorgon, Gryphon, Minotaur, Pegasus, Satyr and Pan, Siren, Sphinx and Triton. The sculptures, photographed against a dark ground, are unusually expressive.

**Fabulous Beasts** by Alison Lurie, illustrated in colour by Monika Beisner (Cape, London 1981) aimed at children, the pictures are quite enchanting, rather in the style of mediaeval illuminations; they are Unicorn, Basilisk, Simurgh, Salamander, Roc, Griffin, Gulon, Phoenix, Catoblepas, Dragon, Pegasus and a few others.

**Treasury of Fantastic and Mythological Creatures: 1,087 Renderings from Historic Sources** by Richard Huber (Dover, New York 1981); 151 plates of clear line images and a bibliography with 66 entries make this an invaluable visual reference book (see cover).

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**The Book of GRYPHONS** by Joe Nigg (Cambridge Mass. 1982) A superbly illustrated account of the Gryphon from its earliest origins down to its modern use in trademarks and logotypes, the chapter headings give a taste of the treatment: Master of Two Worlds; Sacred to the Sun; Saints, Demons and Knights; Fabulous and Regal; In a Modern Time. Of 130 pictures, 20 are in colour and the bibliography has 63 entries making this the standard work on the subject.

**Room's Classical Dictionary: The Origins of the Names of Characters in Classical Mythology**, by Adrian Room (Routledge, London 1983); a useful reference, I have only discovered one mistake in it: he says "The Minotaur was slain by Perseus, of course," whereas we had always thought it was Theseus.

**Saint George: The Saint with Three Faces** by David Scott Fox (Kensal Press, Windsor 1983) with quite a lot about dragons as you would expect.

**Dragons, Magical Beasts** (Centaur, Griffin, Phoenix, Unicorn and others) and **Night Creatures** (Vampire, Werewolf and the like), three books by Time-Life in the series "The Enchanted World" (Amsterdam, 1984, 1985, & 1985 resp.) each with a bibliography of 70 or so items, these are popularized compilations of myths and fantasies, eclectically illustrated.

**Mythical Creatures** by Bert Kitchen (Lutterworth Press, Cambridge 1986). Superb colour drawings interpreting a dozen monsters of Greek mythology: Griffin, Hydra, Chimera, Python, Pegasus, Centaur (with the arrow on the wrong side of the bow, on his thumb instead of his knuckle), Satyr, Minotaur, Amphitrite (a mermaid), Echidna, Typhon, Geryon, Cerberus and Medusa—some of these images are really quite frightening.

*To give a foretaste of the subject of the next issue:*

**Royal Navy Ships' Badges** by Peter C. Smith (Balfour, Huntingdon 1974) has some life like colour photographs including BENBOW'S Harpy, MARLBOROUGH'S Wyvern, SEALION'S heraldic Sea-Lion, TELEMACHUS'S Dolphin, AMPHION'S Dragon's head, GRENVILLE'S Griffin and the Martlet of SUSSEX. This selection of badges comes from the collection at the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. Other collections may be seen in the Imperial War Museum, in naval museums in Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth, and in Edinburgh Castle.