

Pete Taylor has been given a magnificent book of Russian civic arms, all in colour, and all in Russian with only the briefest of chapter headings translated into English, from which he has selected this single shield for its dracological interest. It is the arms of the city of Kazan with its strange crowned monster, black with red wings (which unfortunately come out black here), and golden crown and feet. Is it a wyvern? According to Jiri Louda's book on *European Civic Coats of Arms* (1966) it was originally blazoned as a Basilisk, used on the town seal in the 16th century and approved for the town arms in 1781, but over the years it has lost its distinctive cock's beak.



Roland Symons has sent another of his neat drawings of RAF badges, this time for No 19 Maintenance Unit which was formed at St Athan in 1939 and was granted its badge in 1949. Being in Wales, it had to have a Dragon, whilst the key symbolizes the safe storage of equipment. The motto, "Arf Doeth Yw Pwyll," translates as "The Weapon of the Wise is Care."



Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

Number 71 St Gwinear's Day 2006



An Anglo-Saxon 'Button Beast' from Norfolk



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

We are sorry to report the death of Dennis Endean Ivall SHA, whose Cornish dragon we showed in No 57, as a crest on the arms attributed to King Arthur. He was very proud of his own grant of arms and this is one of many different versions of it that he drew for himself (note the beasties at top and bottom).

Son of an Irish king, Gwinear was converted by St Patrick and led a band of missionaries to Wales, Brittany and Cornwall in the sixth century. In Cornwall, Gwinear and several of his followers were killed by a local ruler, Teudar. The martyrs are commemorated in a number of Cornish place names, and St Gwinear is remembered especially on 23 March each year.



Dennis Endean Ivall

The picture on the cover was sent in by Tony Sims and shows what was probably an eighth-century button found within the Roman walls of Burgh Castle, Great Yarmouth. This is thought to have been the site of St Furzey's monastery dating from the seventh century, when this style of button might have been introduced. It is usual to call such strange beasts 'dragons,' but it might just as well have been intended to be a dog or a lion, or even a griffin.



the family home with her own daughters who also loved the unicorn. Now they, too, are married with their own families who in turn had also grown up and left home.

As the shadows lengthened, she bade me good evening, pointing out with a smile that both of them were looking somewhat threadbare with age."

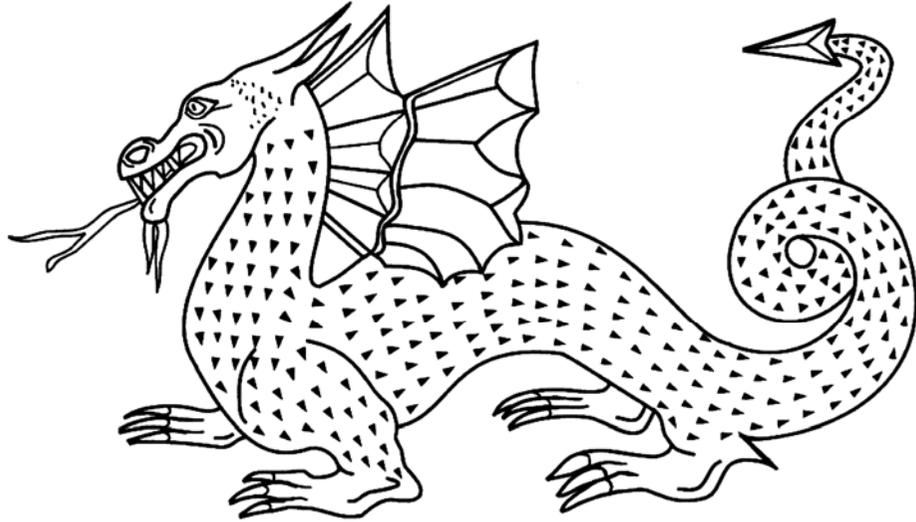
"It all took place somewhere in Pembrokeshire, though I cannot remember exactly where, though I recall clearly our chat in the warmth and tranquillity of the bee-busy, flower-scented garden – just one of those delightful, life-enriching recollections."

John Allen sent a picture of an antique match-box decorated with an amphiptere between two ramping lions, that was coming up for auction. He was unable to find any heraldic significance in this device, but could the legless winged serpent be a metaphor for Lucifer matches?



what has already been given above. As to its name, it is worth noting that the Greeks had a word for some sort of animal, possibly a wolf or a jackal, of just three letters – *theta, omega, sigma* - usually transcribed as *thous*, which may be relevant.)

AN HISTORICAL DRAGON



This is a drawing by Brian Jeffs of a dragon that was carved in low relief on a 8 x 10” plaque by Darren George’s great-grandfather Ralph Henry William George, who moved from Kidderminster to Canada in 1908. The plaque now hangs on the wall above Darren’s computer, and may well have served as an inspiration for his interest in fabulous beasts.

FROM THE POSTBAG

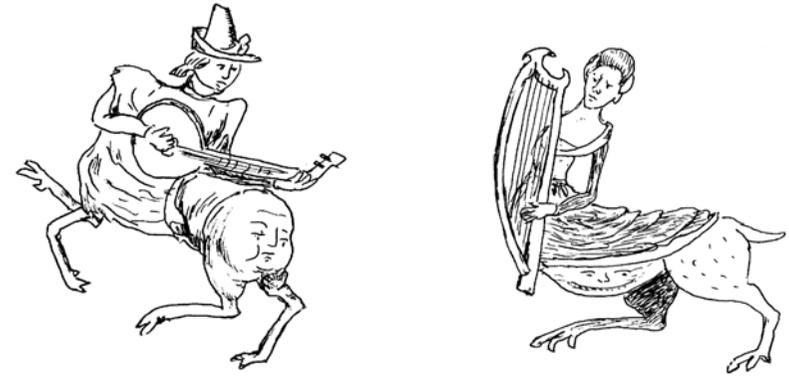
Lesley Holt has sent another of her enigmatic photographs, this time of an unusual wicker-work Unicorn that she found unexpectedly, with her note of the event:-

“I came across this unicorn amongst the shrubbery of a large garden that lay beside the footpath where I was walking.

With pleasure at finding such a delightfully heraldic monster I was smiling happily and talking to myself (as is my wont when I think I’m alone), when I was joined by a very old lady, the owner of the house and garden.

Aware of where my attention was focussed, she told me that the Unicorn was a gift from her parents when she’d reached her tenth birthday. In the quiet of the summer evening she continued, that even though she grew up, married, left home and had her own family, she loved and visited her unicorn, eventually returning to live in

Some Mediaeval Monsters



Two grotesque musicians (satyrs?) from the marginal decorations to an illustration of the Battle of Sluys (Edward III destroying the French fleet off the Dutch coast, 1340) in a 15th-century manuscript edition of Froissart’s *Chronicle*.

Was Nessie really a Nelly ?

This was the headline to an intriguing piece by Victoria Moore that appeared in *The Daily Mail* on Tuesday 7 March. She was reporting on the work of Dr Neil Clark, the curator of palaeontology at Glasgow University’s Hunterian Museum, which was published this month in the *Open Geological Society Journal*.



In spite of the early legend of St Columba in the sixth century, Dr Clark has shown that most reports of sightings of a Loch Ness monster are no earlier than the 1930s, when the A82 trunk road was completed along the west of the Loch. Indeed,

in May 1933 the *Inverness Courier* reported that a couple had spotted ‘an enormous animal rolling and plunging on the surface’ and this had caused a sensation, with a flood of sightings following. This was the year in which the film of *King Kong* showed a sequence depicting a vast plesiosaur that rose out of the water and attacked a boatload of people, and this may have influenced speculation as to the nature of the Loch Ness monster. Yet Dr Clark believes that the couple really did see an enormous animal rolling and plunging on the surface, and that it was in fact an elephant or two.

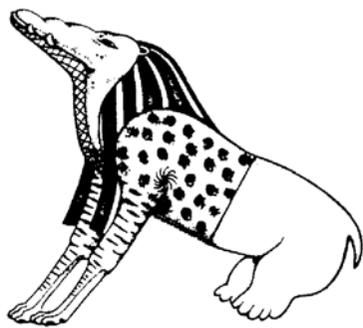
His research has shown that circus fairs visited Inverness at that time, and they may well have stopped by the shores of the Loch to allow the animals to rest. It is known that elephants enjoy a swim, and when they do, most of their bodies are submerged, with only the tops of their heads and backs breaking the surface and with their trunks raised in front of them so that they can breathe. The picture shows what would be seen, and it is remarkably like reports of sightings, and indeed alleged photographs, of the monster.

Dr Clark adds, “I think it is highly relevant that in 1933, the same year as the first modern sighting, the circus owner Bertram Mills offered a reward of £20,000 – about £1 million in today’s money – to anyone who could capture the monster for his circus. I’m sure he knew the monster was actually nothing more than an elephant so there was no danger of having to pay up.”

This unusual yet plausible solution to the Loch Ness problem deserves to be taken seriously, but is unlikely to put an end to what is now a considerable tourist industry for monster spotters.

ADDITION TO THE A TO Z - An Egyptian Hybrid

Although it is generally agreed that the animal- and bird-headed figures that represent the Egyptian gods should not be reckoned as fabulous beasts, there is one monster from their ancient mythology that should certainly be included. The **Ammut** was a creature with the body of a hippopotamus and the head of a crocodile, sometimes shown with the fore part of the body with the front legs as those of a lion or leopard.. When an Egyptian died, his spirit was weighed and if found to be weightless, was judged to be pure and without sin and was sent to its permanent home in the stars, but if it was heavy with sin, it was fed to the Ammut who devoured it and it then ceased to exist. This drawing of it is taken from Hargreaves’ *Bestiary* (1990).



The Theow

This strange beast, also called Thoye, Thos or Thea, was described by Pliny as a variety of wolf with an extra large body and very short legs, and appears in some of the mediaeval bestiaries as a native of Ethiopia, now having a multicoloured mane and a long tail, and able to leap so far that it was thought to fly like a bird. When it makes an appearance in Tudor heraldry, it has become a bit of a hybrid with cloven hooves. It first appears in Prince Arthur’s book, where it is holding the banner of Sir Thomas Cheney, KG. It is green with golden hooves, collar and chain, but its mane has gone, and apart from the hooves could well be taken for a wolf, though it is clearly labelled in the margin as a “Theow.” Sir Thomas was created Knight of the Garter in 1539 and died in 1558. His son Henry, Lord Cheney of Todington, used the same beast both as supporters and as crest, still green with golden hooves, collar and chain, but now spotted with red and gold roundels (perhaps to comply with the ‘multicoloured’ description) and named a “Thoye.” The drawing (*right*) was done by Sir Colin Cole after the painting in Prince Arthur’s book.



Here is what Margaret Young had to say about it in Friar’s *Dictionary* (with Andrew Jamieson’s interpretation of the beast – *left*):-



Theow or Thos It would seem that this imaginary animal is a muddled version of a natural one, perhaps a wolf, a fox or a jackal. It is spoken of by Pliny and recorded in medieval bestiaries, where it is called a ‘Thea’. It is described as being a kind of wolf, with a thick mane of many colours. It was thought to be able to fly as well as run on the ground. During winter its hair was thick, but in summer it was naked. Its nature was such that it would never attack a man, and it was said to live in Ethiopia, this being given as the place of origin for any animal whose native land was not known. The heraldic animal has acquired cloven feet, although in other ways it remained wolf-like
MY

My guess is that, due to the cramped working conditions of the early copyists, what was intended to be THE WOLF became THEWOLF and then THEWO and ultimately the THEOW, but this can be no more than conjecture. However, because of the change in the feet, possibly again due to careless copying, there is no doubt that this heraldic monster has to be accepted as a distinct species. (For a longer discussion of various misidentifications of this beast, the etymology of its name and details of the Cheney family heraldry, see the article by H. Stanford London in *The Coat of Arms* No 23 (July 1955), though it adds nothing about the Theow itself apart from