

## A Bookish Griffin

The *Bookplate Journal* for September 2006 has an article on constructing modern armorial bookplates by the Dutch heraldic artist Daniel de Bruin. Among a couple of dozen illustrations is this one done in 1996 for Theo Kruger with its stylish Griffin crest.



## FROM THE POSTBAG

**Brian Wright** sent a couple of dragon-themed rear-window stickers to be used by intimidating motorists, rather reduced in scale here, but still legible.



# KEEP OFF MY TAIL!



## POSTSCRIPT

That old Unicorn joke keeps coming round. The latest version has the ark, crowded with animals, sailing away, then further away, and then right on the horizon, and finally two Unicorns looking at the empty sea with the punch-line, LATE IS AS GOOD AS NEVER. This is to advertise the Royal Mail special delivery service.

Issued 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2006 by Ralph Brocklebank, Orland, Church Avenue, Clent, Stourbridge DY9 9QS  
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# Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

Number 79 St Rumwolds's Day



Kevin Arkinstall's Winged Panther Emblem



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

Roy Humphrey sent this account of an unusual and little-known saint:-

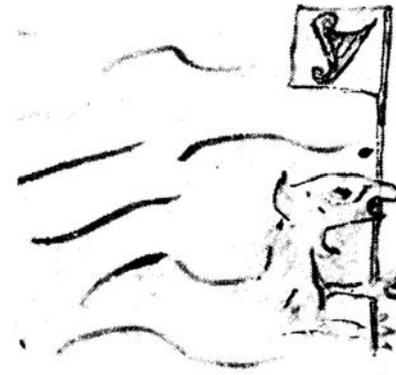
The legend of Saint Rumwold is remarkable even by medieval standards. He was apparently the child of a daughter of Penda and a pagan king of Northumbria. On the way to visit Penda at Sutton, now King's Sutton, Northants, she was delivered of a son, who immediately called out '*Christianus sum!*' three times. He then indicated that he wished to be baptised, chose his Godparents from two priests in the party, and directed the king's servants to 'fetc he a great hollowe stone that he would haue to be vsed for the Fonte.' They could not move it at all. 'When the Childe perceaued that, he commaunded the two Priests (his appointed Godfathers) to goe and bring it, which they did forthwith moste easily.' He was then baptised and preached a long sermon on the Holy Trinity and the need for virtuous living, freely citing Scripture and the Athanasian Creed, 'hauing in the meane while discoursed cunningly sundrie misteries of Popish religion.' He then predicted his death three days hence, and, after arranging for the bestowal of his body, expired.

His cult was observed in at least six pre-Conquest monasteries, and churches were dedicated to him in Kent, Essex, Northants, Lincolnshire, Dorset and Yorkshire, notably at Romaldswick, which is named after him.

Unlike most saints, it is difficult to say "Go thou and do likewise."

Roy cites *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (D Farmer 1987), *The Oxford Companion to the Year* (B Blackburn 1999), *The Kingdom of Northumbria AD 350-1100* (N J Higham 1993) and *A Perambulation of Kent: Containing the Description, Hystorie and Customes of that Shyre* (William Lambard 1576), and we are grateful to him for this contribution, though suspecting that there may have been some confusion over dates to compress such an eventful life into so short a time. Saint Rumwold is now celebrated on 3<sup>rd</sup> November.

Roy has also sent details with pictures of the Wall Hangings in Castle Rushen, Castletown, Isle of Man. One of these shows eighteen creatures from the bestiaries, all set against a lush *mille-fleurs* field, including a Basilisk, Bonacon, Caladrius, Camelopard, Cockatrice, Dragon, Griffin, Lion, Manticore, Oliphant, Panther (heraldic), Pelican in her Piety, Phoenix, Siren, Tyger, Unicorn (with Virgin), Urchin (with apples on its spikes) and Yale. These all show considerable artistic originality, and were the work some sixteen years ago of Anthony Barton, whom Roy traced through the internet, finding that he is now engaged on making models for wargaming. Since one of the other wall hangings depicts a detailed scene of the Battle of Bosworth, this is perhaps not too surprising. It would seem that if any of



Depictions of what may be onchus (heraldic beasts proper to Ireland). *Left* Detail from seventeenth-century map of island of Lewis and Harris. *Above* Detail from Speed's map, 1610.

It would certainly be a good thing to revive the idea of the *Onchu* as the National Animal of Ireland, and to overcome the obstacle of the lack of proper information as to its appearance, I have suggested that a competition be held, open to all aspiring heraldic artists in Ireland (and elsewhere) to produce a convincing portrait of the beast, to be judged by a competent panel of experts (let us propose the Chief Herald of Ireland and Professor Williams for a start, if they would be willing). At present, so the Chief Herald informs me, Ireland lacks an official National Animal, so perhaps one could be introduced to celebrate some forthcoming centenary or such, and what better choice than the historic *Onchu*?

## Newly Devised Beasties

At the 27<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences held at St Andrews in August, there was an Heraldic Artists' Workshop organized by Romilly Squire, who invited artists from eight different countries to attend, each with a mini-studio, to work in full view of the visiting delegates. Each artist was asked to devise and present an heraldic Monsterpiece, in line with the general theme of the Congress, *Myth and Propaganda*. Those involved were Ronny Andersen from Denmark, Neil Bromley from Britain, Cathy Bursey-Sabourin from Canada, Marco Foppoli from Italy, Laurent Granier from France, Don McKee from the USA, Michael Medvedev from Russia and Gavin Schlemmer from South Africa, and their contrived beasties were quite remarkable. Marco's 'Unidraglyon' went one better than John George's 'Union' adding red dragon's wings to the unicorn/lion hybrid, Neil's 'Gartire' was a very Scottish emblem with white unicorn, eagle and thistles making a saltire against a blue concoction of feathers and bristles, but my favourite was Gavin's gladiatorially armoured warthog/lion hybrid overcoming a sea-eagle/serpent monster, all very South African. Cathy's 'Thief of time' based on a hyena/raccoon/lynx blend was promising but was not finished in the time available. We hope to be able to get pictures of some of them for a future issue.

## More from Ireland

In No 34, discussing Nicholas Williams' paper on the Enfield, Onchu and Alphyn, we wrote the following:-

“One of the more intriguing points raided by Williams in this paper is the possibility that in the seventeenth century the Onchu was perceived as the National Animal of Ireland, as the Unicorn was for Scotland and the Dragon for Wales (all fabulous beasts!). It was so often depicted on the banners used by warriors that the word *onchu* was used for the banner itself, but unfortunately there do not seem to be any pictures of what it looked like. It may have been a picture painted on a flag, or it might have been a wind-sock type of banner as seen in Harold's so-called Dragon-standard as shown in the Bayeux Tapestry.”

Now a massive and important book has come to my notice, **A History of Irish Flags from the earliest times** by G A Hayes-McCoy (Dublin 1979), which deals with this question in its opening section on “Banners and Standards up to the Norman Invasion.” Here is the opening paragraph:-

“It is, for our purpose, unfortunate that early Irish writers were so deficient in the power of description and so addicted to the use of poetic language; these failings were common to medieval writers as a whole, but the Irish display them most conspicuously. Their few references to flags, objects which have always inspired poetry, have suffered sadly in consequence.”

Various samples of flowery language are given, and it is asked, How can we envisage a banner merely said to have been ‘variegated’ and ‘gold-spangled’? Then it comes to the point of our interest with this sentence:-

“The earlier Irish texts use from time to time the word *onchu*, which has been translated as meaning a standard, ensign or flag, and also as meaning a beast, variously identified as an otter – here the dog-headed fish of the St Gall manuscript comes to mind – a lynx, leopard or wolf. [Here a footnote intervenes:- See the author's *Ulster and other Irish maps c. 1600* (1964), plate xxiii and p.34, for the suggestion that a beast like an otter which is shown holding a banner charged with a device of a harp on Speed's map of Great Britain and Ireland, 1610, and also on an early seventeenth-century manuscript map of the island of Lewis and Harris, Outer Hebrides, may, in fact, be an *onchu*, and that the *onchu* was looked upon at that time as the heraldic beast proper to Ireland, as the lion is to England and the unicorn to Scotland.]”

It has not been possible to look up this 1964 reference, though it may well be the source of Williams' remarks. However, this book does carry illustrations of the two beasts mentioned in the footnote, which are reproduced here (though there is some doubt as to whether the caption labelled them the wrong way round!):- (next page)

our readers find themselves in the Isle of Man, they should most certainly fit in a visit to Castle Rushen.

Kevin Arkinstall, whose emblem of a Winged Panther is on the cover, is one of our most original heraldic artists. His work first appeared in our pages on the cover of No 37, then again in No 43 with our very own dragon, (and forever thereafter as our masthead) with a variant in No 46. On the cover again on No 57 with a wyvern, his improved version of our tie symbol appeared in No 72. His current emblem might perhaps be named a Pantheagle, as it is rather more than just a Panther with wings.

While we are on Panthers, let us see what Margaret Young had to say in Friar's *Dictionary*, with the illustration by Andrew Jamieson:-

**Panther** The heraldic panther is always termed incensed, that is with flames issuing from its mouth and ears. It is depicted with spots of various colours on its body, although in appearance it is much like the natural animal. However, this fiery creature seems to derive from a much more peaceful one. In mediaeval bestiaries it is described as being both beautiful and kind, its body being streaked with a variety of colours. Only the dragon regards it as an enemy. It sleeps for three days after dining, and when it awakes ‘a lofty sweet singing comes from its mouth and with the song a most delightful stream of sweet-smelling breath, more grateful than all the blooms of herbs and blossoms of the trees’ (*Exeter Book*, translated by Stopford Brooke). All other animals follow the sound because of the sweetness of the scent, except the dragon, who runs away from it and hides in fear, as the smell overcomes it and makes it torpid. The sweet breath depicted streaming from the panther's mouth in early pictures was later changed to fire and smoke.



Another story, told by Pliny, says that the panther entices animals by its sweet breath, but its looks are so hideous that it hides its head until they are near enough for it to spring on them and kill them.

Their many-coloured spots make panthers appropriate supporters for the Painter-Stainers Company in London. A very different panther is a supporter of Henry VIII's third wife, Jane Seymour. This delightful creature, though blazoned incensed, appears to be much more like the animal in the bestiaries, with breath, not fire, issuing from its mouth and its body striped with various colours, instead of being spotted. MY

So here are the arms of the Company of Painter-Stainers, (opposite) as shown in "London's Armory" by Richard Wallis in 1677. Note that the panthers apparently have black spots, rather than multi-coloured, and that there is no sign of smoke or flames or even sweet-smelling breath – just ordinary panthers, in fact. At least there is a fabulous beast for a crest – the colourful phoenix. (More about the Phoenix next time.) The shield also has golden phoenix heads, on a blue field with a gold chevron, in the second and third quarters, in what was the original coat of arms of the Company. The blue quarters with the white escutcheons were added as an assertion of their right to do heraldic painting, a matter with which they were in dispute with the College of Arms for many years. Actually, the supporters are blazoned as 'panthers Argent spotted with various colours,' so perhaps they are really a bit fabulous, after all.

Jane Seymour's panther is illustrated in colour on page 75 in *The Art of Heraldry* by Peter Gwynn-Jones (London 1998), the other supporter, on the dexter side, being a splendid Unicorn garlanded about the neck with roses.

#### A White Dragon for England?

QUESTION and ANSWER from *The Daily Mail*, 14 August 2006.

#### What is the origin of the White Dragon flag that I have seen flying recently?

The White Dragon is the oldest recorded emblem of the English. Legend has it that the defeat of the Celts by the early English was foretold in prophecy.

According to the tale, in an underground lake slept two dragons – the Celts were represented by a red dragon and the English by a white dragon.

When they awoke, they fought and the red dragon was overcome by the white one, representing the victory of the Anglo-Saxons over their Celtic adversaries.

There is much debate as to how the legend ends and the outcome of the battle depends very much on whether it is an Englishman or a Welshman recounting the tale.

*Julien Crichton, Nottingham.*

(This last remark is certainly true, as those who recall the letters reprinted in No 75 will confirm. The Archdruid Emeritus was sure it was the Welsh who won the fight.

And this same Julien Crichton claimed that he had sold more white dragon flags than all the other national flags put together, though I have yet to see a single one. I would be glad of any reports of confirmed sightings.  
RB )

