

**Helen Murray** sent a postcard from Zennor in Cornwall showing a mermaid carved on a pew-end. Although somewhat similar to the one shown in No 69 (*right*), it is not quite the same, so either there is more than one mermaid in Zennor, or else the drawing was a free rendering rather than an exact likeness.



**Bruce Patterson** sent a story from the press about a driver who was accused of being drunk in charge of his vehicle when it caused an accident, who pleaded that at the time his truck was being driven by a unicorn. It was not recorded whether he got off.

**Carl-Alexander von Volborth** has sent two more of his crazy creations. One shows a Manticore dressed in Twenties-style flapper clothes – blazer and boater – dated 1996, while the other is an unlikely combination of a tortoise's body with the neck and head of a giraffe, looking a little bashful, as well it might. Perhaps their proper destination is with Darren George's Critter Contest, where we may expect them to turn up.

REMINDER - College of Dracology ties are still available, (*see No 58*) and in spite of increases in postal rates remain at £8 for inland despatch or £10 to the furthest parts of the world. They are deep blue with the dragon emblem picked out in gold.

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# Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

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St George at King's Lynn, drawn by Susan Richards



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

*With great sadness we record the death of Brian North Lee, the bookplate historian, who had made several contributions to our studies. His last book, Scottish Bookplates, is reviewed herein.*

St George's Guildhall, King's Lynn, was built about 1430 to accommodate the meetings of the Guild as well as the goods of its merchants in the undercroft and warehouses by the waterside. After King Edward dissolved the religious guilds in 1547, the entire estate of St George's Guild became the property of the Corporation, and the Hall, being too large to attract a buyer, found many successive tenants, being in turn a school, sailmaking workshop, merchant exchange, court house and theatre. In the nineteenth century it was a wool warehouse and in the twentieth a workshop for a firm of scenic artists, but in 1945, dilapidated and about to be demolished, it was saved by Alexander Penrose, a well known local figure. It was restored as an Arts Centre, which was opened by Queen Elizabeth in 1951, the same year it was given to the National Trust, and the Festival of Music and the Arts which started then has become an annual summer event. King' Lynn is an English town of tremendous historic significance, and the outstanding example of its heritage is this St George's Guildhall in King Street, which, due to the destruction of similar edifices in London and York by enemy bombing, is now the largest Hall of a medieval Merchant Guild in England.

*(These notes were taken from an article by Dr Paul Richards in the National Trust newsletter, but he does not say where the accompanying illustration by Susan Richards, on our cover, comes from.)*

## REVIEWS

**UNKIND TO UNICORNS** Selected Comic Verse of A.E.Housman (Bromsgrove, 1999) is a little booklet, kindly lent by Roger Seabury, with illustrations by David Harris, one of which is reproduced here. The actual verse which gives the book its title is called, "Inhuman Henry or Cruelty to Fabulous Animals," and though it is too long to include all of it here, the first stanza summarizes the story:-

Oh would you know why Henry sleeps,  
And why his mourning mother weeps,  
And why his weeping mother mourns?  
He was unkind to unicorns.



Arms (from Dennys, 1975). On the left, the Opinicus crest of the Worshipful Company of Barber Surgeons, and on the right, the Phoenix badge of Verney of Pendeley.



## FROM THE POSTBAG

**David Freeman** takes up the story of HMS GRIFFIN, recounted partly in Nos 48 and 54, to say that the Canadian crew of the destroyer, after it was transferred to the RCN, wished to keep the name, partly because it had earned so many battle honours, and indeed it was actually re-commissioned as HMCS GRIFFIN and produced an unofficial Canadianized badge (as was usual in those days – *see left below*), but at Headquarters they decreed that the ship should be re-named OTTAWA in keeping with other Canadian destroyers that were all named after rivers, and to avoid confusion with the shore station HMCS GRIFFON (although in those days shore stations often had to give up their names if they were wanted for real ships!). In response, the ships' crew kept the Griffin as a totem, to be displayed on the funnel, or on the bridge-ends or wherever it fitted, as seen in this canvas flag (*centre*), and this practice has been followed by the crews of subsequent ships named OTTAWA, even the latest, which is not even named after the Ottawa River, but in honour of the City of the same name. David also sent a drawing of the emblem used by this latest Canadian warship (*right*).



main pair, and do whatever they do, whether it is walking on land or paddling about in the water. Most four-legged birds die early, but Stumpy was flourishing at the time it went public. If Nature can do this with a duck, who is to say that the same mutation could not happen with a Dragon? It still seems most likely that four-legged Dragons arrived as an influence from Griffins, but at least we can no longer argue that Nature cannot produce six-limbed vertebrates, such as the salamander seen in No 67, or indeed three-headed dogs or seven-headed hydra.

### From the Lion to the Griffin

The Lion Rampant, symbol of Lucas Bowmen, one of the West Midland's oldest archery clubs is to be transformed into a Griffin Passant. This metamorphosis coincides with a change of name to Solihull Archers, and was determined by the members who felt that as any links with Lucas Industries had long ceased to exist, it was time for a change. Whereas the lion was the company's trade mark, the griffin (without arrows) is one of three family charges comprising the Solihull civic badge. The name change to Solihull Archers was considered to be more appropriate for a club that meets and shoots within the



borough and anyway it's about time somewhere the size of Solihull had its own archery club. The lion however, is not a beast to be ignored, and we shall always be proud of our history, our Lucas origins and of the characters who helped to forge them. Roger Orme, Solihull Archers

*This whole piece was sent in by Roger Seabury, who found it in the March 1995 issue of the journal 'The Bow.'*

### Some Heraldic Grants

The March issue of *The Heraldry Gazette* has a fine full-page colour picture of the arms of Sir Robert Balchin HonFHS DL, featuring a crest showing the Bagwyn, an uncommon monster of Tudor origin (see Nos 1 & 31). On other pages appear the Chadwick martlets, the Chetham griffin and the Longworth dragons' heads, all on arms of Bolton families, and new arms for the Rt Revd Dr John Fenwick with his ancestral martlets on the shield and a crest with a Phoenix head wearing a Byzantine Mitre embellished with double-headed eagles – another excellent full-page colour painting.

### FEEDBACK

Further to the various depictions of the Opinicus and the Phoenix as shown in recent issues, here are two drawings by Alison Urwick taken from records at the College of

Twelve stanzas make up the whole, in Housman's clever style, somewhat similar to Belloc's *Cautionary Tales* and Harry Graham's *Ruthless Rhymes*.

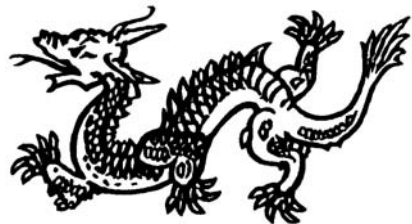
**SCOTTISH BOOKPLATES** by Brian North Lee & Ilay Campbell (London, 2006) is in fact a concise history of bookplates illustrated entirely with Scottish examples, from the very earliest label of about 1530, through Early Armorial, Jacobean and Chippendale styles down to quite modern plates, including one for our member Elizabeth Roads. A total of 256 plates, all printed in facsimile, makes a superb survey of the illustrator's art. Most of the plates are heraldic, so it is no surprise that a number of fabulous beasts feature, including Dolphins, Griffins, Martlets, Mermaids, Pelicans in their Piety (surprisingly the most numerous, with five examples), Unicorns, Winged Lions (said erroneously to be griffins) and Wyverns, one of which is amphisbaenid, and another perched on a wheel in the Somervell crest (see No 77) – but not a single Dragon! We show two early plates and two modern ones. Each plate in the book is accompanied by notes on the artist and biographical details of the owner, and the whole work is a masterpiece of elegant production.



**GENESIS OF THE GRAIL KINGS** by Laurence Gardner (London, 1999) was kindly lent by Michael Gunn, whose brother David was given it by the author. The main theme of the book is to compare the stories from the Old Testament with the records that have come to light during the last century from ancient Sumeria, with the underlying premiss that the so-called Grail Kings form an unbroken sequence that dates from the earliest times when the leaders of men were regarded as gods. One such ancient Sumerian god was Marduk, shown here from a Babylonian relief with a tame dragon at his feet, that may be a variety of sirrush or mushushu (see No 38). Gardner believes that the dragon was a powerful symbol of natural spiritual power, and that the leading figures in ancient times were known as dragon kings, later worshipped as gods. Certainly Sumeria was a very advanced civilization, far ahead of all its contemporaries, but whether Abraham, who came from that part of the world, was a descendant of Marduk and thus a transmitter of the dragon heritage down through Moses to Jesus, is perhaps a conjecture too remote to evaluate properly. The book is certainly thought-provoking, and some early passages are worth quoting:-



“From the very earliest of recorded times, dragons have featured at the forefront of cultural lore, where they have been portrayed in various conflicting guises. The ancient Greeks believed that dragons were benevolent creatures with the ability to convey the wisdom and secrets of life, while, in contrast, the early Hebrews saw dragons as the meddlesome purveyors of sin. The mighty dragon was the emblem of the Chinese Empire, being a national symbol of good fortune, and outside the Hebrew tradition dragons were generally seen as the guardians of universal knowledge and the benign protectors of humankind.



“To the Celtic races of Europe, the dragon was the ultimate symbol of sovereignty (hence, the Dark Age ‘Pendragons’: Head Dragons or Kings of Kings), but in AD 494 Pope Gelasius I challenged the Celtic Church by canonizing a certain Bishop George of Alexandria, who was said to have slain a dragon.... He emerged, however, as the famous martyr St George, with surrounding legends that are ever more exaggerated.”

“The dragons of Christian mythology were adopted from those of the Hebrew tradition and are often portrayed with wings and breathing fire, but historically dragons were the epitome of the royal crocodile or sea-serpent....”

“By way of a manipulated tradition in Western Christendom, the dragon has been portrayed rather differently from its original representation in the Eastern cultures. It has also been diverted into the realms of legend and mythology, whereas it was with the fat of the historical *Messeh* (the sacred dragon, or crocodile) that the Egyptian pharaohs were anointed upon coronation. It is an apparent fact that what one culture defines as history, another will define as mythology; this is especially the case in

religious affairs where opposing cultures are in spiritual conflict. Christians, for example, consider the deities of other beliefs to be mythical, but maintain that their own deity is not. The same might, of course, be said in reverse – so where in all of this lies the truth of that which is called ‘history’?”

These excerpts from the opening chapter give a fair picture of Gardner’s attitude. As dracologists, we should maintain academic balance, but it is worth noting that although it might be widely accepted that dragons were related to sea-serpents, or perhaps, better, sea-monsters such as the Ketos, it is unusual to find them equated with crocodiles. In fact, it is reported that when the Chinese first met crocodiles, they did tests to ascertain that they were indeed flesh-and-blood animals that could be killed with impunity, rather than spiritual dragons that deserved respect. But perhaps the Egyptians thought differently. Crocodiles certainly deserve respect, though for rather different reasons.

All in all, this is a fascinating book that brings a little new light into dracology, but although it attempts to re-write the Bible story, it should not be taken for Gospel. Our warm thanks to Michael Gunn for bringing it to our attention.

**PIRATEOLOGY** (Dorking, 2006) is another of Dugald Steer’s amazing compilations, alleged to be “The Sea Journal of Captain William Lubber, Pirate Hunter General,” describing his chase after a notorious female pirate, and including in passing a great deal of fascinating information about pirates both real and legendary. Unfortunately for us, there is no mention at all of sea-serpents reported from far-off waters, but there is a small note included, supposedly a clipping from a recent newspaper reporting the discovery of a sea-chest which contained Lubber’s journal, on the back of which appears another item, as follows:

**“Lizard of the Lizard?** By Oliver Crook

Of all the preposterous and nonsensical follies to be put forward by that deluded example of highly enthusiastic Victorian gullibility, Dr Ernest Drake, it was perhaps his assertion that there was a genuine, *bona fide* sea monster living off the Lizard in Cornwall, England, that is the most ludicrous... ..but who nowadays believes in dragons? They may make an ideal topic for a children’s book, but such bogus science is wishful thinking and not a serious attempt to describe the things that we experience in the world around us. After sea-serpents and dragons, what will they try to get us to believe next? That the Ancient Egyptians were capable of using powerful curses? That medieval wizards could fly?”

In spite of our disappointment, we must congratulate Dugald on another excellent production, ingenious and imaginative, with its subtle reminders of his earlier works.

## **TWO LEGS OR FOUR ?**

We reported in No 78 the story of a four-legged duck that was the product of a troubled mind, but accounts appeared in the press on 4<sup>th</sup> April of a genuine living four-legged duck called ‘Stumpy’ that had been lovingly reared by the owners of a duck farm where it made its unexpected debut, the result of a rare but not unknown mutation. The second pair of legs seem to be a less well-developed version of the