

squadrons with consecutive numbers and chosen for almost the same reason. 56 (Punjab) was granted its badge in August '36. They had used the badge since 1928 symbolizing the squadron's re-birth after everything it had been through. The phoenix is gold. 57 Squadron was granted its badge in December '36. At one stage during WW1 the whole squadron's flying personnel became casualties and the squadron was re-born with new personnel drafted in. The phoenix is blue."

Roland also asks whether anybody could come up with a good name for the flying camel which was the badge of No 45 Bomber Squadron shown on the cover of No 11.



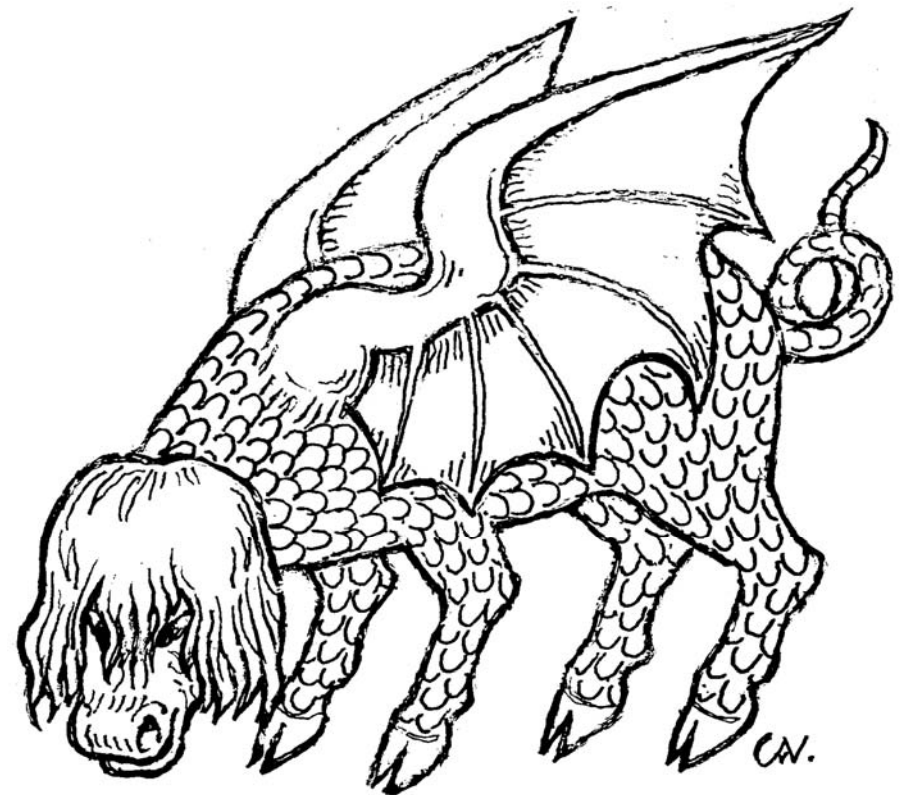
Marc Van de Cruys sent, by e-mail, a political cartoon from a Belgian newspaper which exactly copied his idea of the young Dragonslayer lacking a rear-view mirror, as shown in No 72, but not nearly so well drawn and certainly not worth reproducing here. We hope the newspaper gave Marc the credit he deserves for his notion.

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# Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

Number 87 St Mary Magdalen's Day



The Catoblepas drawn by Carl-Alexander von Volborth



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

We welcome new members Steven Ashley, Clive Cheesman, Michael Gunn, Phil Hewitt, Peggy Jackson, Jon Pitman and Megan Tait.

Mary Magdalen certainly played an important part in the life of Jesus, and is mentioned in all four Gospels. However, the exact role she filled has been the subject of controversy over the centuries, and presents something of a dilemma. The problem is not unlike that faced in dracology, and I would recommend that all speculation and dogma alike be set aside, such evidence as there is be considered carefully, and then a decision be made based on the most likely case. Still widely revered and with Colleges devoted to her in both Oxford and Cambridge, the Magdalene's feast day falls on 22 July.

Carl-Alexander von Volborth added these notes to his drawing (on the cover):-

“The catoblepas is a four-legged bull-like legendary creature from Ethiopia with a very large and heavy head. Because of the weight of its head it can only look down (*catoblepas* is Greek for ‘that which looks downward’). It has a long mane that hangs over its eyes, which are red and bloodshot. Its back has scales that protect the beast. Its stare or breath could either turn people into stone, or kill them. Sometimes it could be winged. It was first described by Pliny the Elder and later by Claudius Aelianus.”

Other sources add that it was once granted as a crest by a Tudor herald (at which time the dragon-like wings were added to the animal described in the bestiaries), and that the generic name *Catoblepas* is now given to the species of heavy antelope also known as the Gnu or Wildebeest, indicating that early zoological systematists had received a decent classical education. It is supposed that the animal Pliny described was in fact a Gnu, and that in legend it somehow got mixed up with the Gorgon.

Drawings of the catoblepas all seem very much alike, and here are a few for comparison. First, Peter Spurrier's 1997 version of the Tudor grant (*left*), next Joyce



that when the Disneyland rival emerges, any effigy of a dragon is more traditional than the one we illustrated in No 62. According to the book **Art of the Dragon** (1989), reviewed in No 9, one of the earliest jade dragons, from the Neolithic period, was unearthed at Sanxingtala, Inner Mongolia, and looks like this (*right*).



## Philosopher's stones

This heading in the *Telegraph Magazine* for 23 June 2007 covered an article by Jessie Sheeler, illustrated with photographs by Mark Edward Smith, describing the extraordinary meaningful sculptures uncovered in a garden in the Italian town of Bomarzo. Created in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Vicino Orsini to reflect his ideas of divine order, logical hierarchy and harmony, it was abandoned when it seemed that his views might be deemed heretical and became completely overgrown. Now being restored as best as may be, one of the huge statues depicts a dragon attacked by lions while another shows an elephant and castle with a wounded warrior.

## FROM THE POSTBAG

**Darren George** produced a tiny Ukrainian 10 kopeck coin with a mounted warrior spearing a dragon on the obverse, very much in the same style as the Russian rider on their coat of arms – almost too small to see, let alone draw or photograph, but we shall try our best.



**Peter Giles** sent a few interesting cuttings he had culled from various sources, including one showing the curious ornamental dragon in the garden at Biddulph Grange, that we showed in No 26, and another dealing with the question of the significance of the double-headed eagle on the national flag of Albania. This emblem was derived from the seal of George Kastrioti (1405-68), commonly known as Skanderbeg or the Dragon of Albania, and he is supposed to have adopted it as the symbol of the Byzantine Empire, of which Albania was a part, and because Albanians call themselves *shkypetars*, which means “sons of the eagle.”

**Roland Symons** has sent two more of his drawings of RAF Squadron badges, this time each featuring a Phoenix. He writes:- “Odd that they should be the badges of

But Puyang faces stiff competition. At Chifeng, 300km north-east of Beijing, a large C-shaped jade dragon pendant was unearthed in 1971. Dated to 3000BC, it, too, is claimed to be “The First Dragon of China.”

As if there were not enough coils in the tail of China’s first dragon, one more city has also laid claim. Fuxin lies in the north-east and here in 1994 archaeologists, excavating a Stone Age farming community, found a 20m stone dragon, dated to about 6,000BC.

The city has constructed the Fuxin Institute of Dragon Culture and is looking to cash in on its “First Dragon of China.”

Cao, at the city’s bureau of culture, said: “Puyang has done a much better job of promoting itself and raising money [but] the issue is far from settled.”

Leslie also sent a clipping of the editorial from page 23 of the same newspaper:-

### **Make way for the dragon**

FOUR Chinese cities are competing for the title of “birthplace of the dragon,” the ancient national emblem of China itself. The winner is likely to build a Chinese equivalent of Disneyland, which will become a tourist draw. But as any faithful reader of *Dragonology*, by the late Dr Ernest Drake – first published in a limited edition in 1895 – will know, the Chinese dragon (*Draco Orientalis Magnus*) is only one of 18 known species of these beautiful creatures, now so rare as a result of human expansion and global warming.

Here in the UK we are more familiar with the larger, fire-breathing *Draco Occidentalis Magnus*, now sadly confined to a few remote areas of eastern Europe – though Scottish Natural Heritage is consulting on whether the species should be reintroduced into the Highlands, provided sheep and local maidens can be protected effectively.

There are reports that some examples of *Draco Occidentalis* have been released illegally in Perthshire, along with beavers. SNH has been at pains to tell the public they should not panic, as this species only eats humans if there is no other food available, due to the bitter taste.

The Chinese move will be welcomed not only by Dragonologists, but by children everywhere.

Leslie then sent a Letter to the Editor from the issue of Wednesday 13 June 2007:

### **Here be dracologists**

Although an amateur in this particular field of study and a fan of Dr Ernest Drake, I nonetheless feel obligated to point out an error in your editorial (11 June). The correct term for the study of dragons is dracology, and those who practise it are called dracologists. After all, we do not refer to those who study birds as “birdologists,” do we?

MEGAN TAIT,

*Craighouse Avenue, Edinburgh*

Many thanks to Leslie for sending in these interesting items, and three cheers for Megan Tait for setting the Editor aright on matters of terminology. Let us hope

Hargreaves’ 1990 drawing (*centre*), and then Rosalind Dease’s illustration from Barber and Riches’ 1971 *Dictionary of Fabulous Beasts* (*right*). Note the variations in the hands and feet.

I seem to remember seeing a recent drawing accompanying a revival of this creature for an heraldic crest, but a search through all my heraldic journals has not yet revealed it, though in the course of searching I came across a few other items worthy of note, of which more later. Perhaps some reader can jog my memory.

Along with the picture on the cover, Alex sent a few other drawings, including the Antwerpian road-runner-dragon of Japanese descent, in action (*seen here*). Alex now lives in Antwerp so might have come across this in his wanderings.

As for the pieces that I found in my searchings, first there were drawings of an Unicorn and a Chinese Dragon done by Dan Escott for an American magazine article by Ray Massaro, from *The Heraldry Gazette*, March 1999 (*right*), and then this most delightful sketch of a Dragon attempting a yoga exercise, as well as this fabulous art student, very probably a Catoblebas, both by Kevin Arkininstall, from *The Heraldic Craftsman* No 32, Summer 1999 (*below, left and right*).



## MORE FROM NEW ZEALAND

The *NZ Armorist* No 102 (Autumn 2007) (that is, our Spring!), kindly sent by its Editor, Gregor Macaulay, prints this letter, with the heading **Proof that there be dragons?** and with the accompanying illustration:-

“I am Mr Regor Senrab and am amateur archaeologist. I find recently, and with much luck, a total skeleton of a dinosaur in my country of Tsejastan, once time part of Soviet Union. The skeleton has a pointy horn on tip of nose, and spikes along back bone, and two legs, and bones of two wings (and that suggest wings like those of creature which English call ‘cricket’ and Germans call ‘fledermaus’). Distance of top of head above ground is near 4 metres, tip of wing to tip of wing is 7 metres.

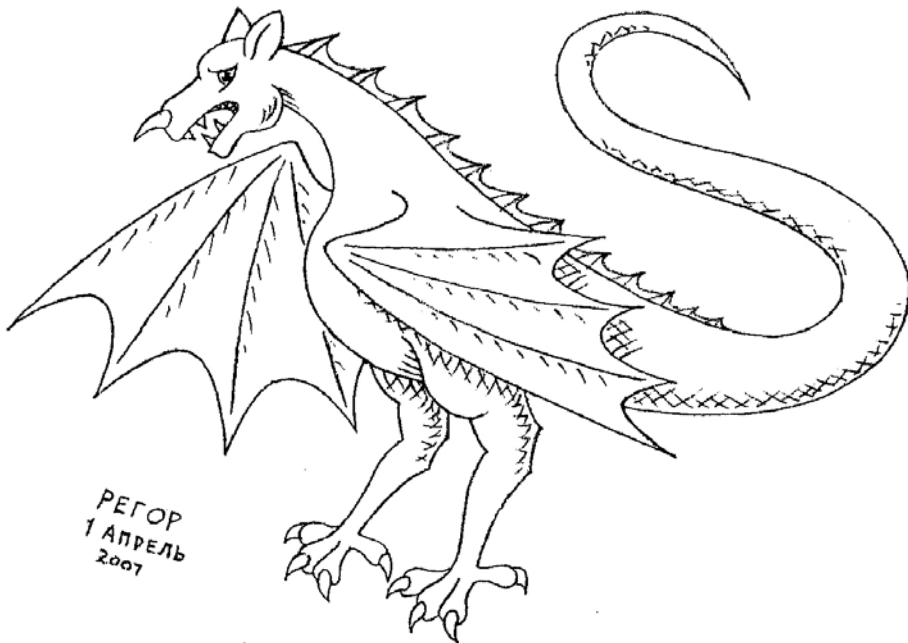
“My drawing by pencil has image of creature how it looks if living.

“Dragons as drawing in ancient beast-books and middle ages heraldry had only two legs. Later in time they had four in drawings. Two legs dragons now called wyvern.

“I have been much honoured by authorities who give names to dinosaurs. Mine dinosaur is to have name of Wyvernus Senrabii.

“Must not this be proof that dragons did have existence in old days?”

“Your servant with much respect,  
Mr Regor Senrab,  
Tsejnogard, Tsejastan. April 2007.”



As one who once knew a Mr H'plar Knabelkcorb, it is not too difficult to discern the true identity of the intrepid archaeologist, though we remain rather sceptical about the validity of the proof. Dragons in mythology, both Eastern and Western, certainly originated with serpents, though it remains a mystery why mediaeval artists started to show all serpents with little bird-like wings and legs. Later discoveries of fossils of dinosaurs, and their projected reconstructions, seem to have influenced the way that artists depict dragons, and we have noted how any new discovery, usually in China, of a previously unknown species of dinosaur is invariably heralded in the press as a real dragon, but it is important to keep a sense of historical perspective – not that we should try to prevent Mr Senrab having his bit of fun.

## Battle to step into the dragon's den

This was the headline on page 3 of *The Scotsman* on Monday 11 June 2007, kindly sent in by Leslie Hodgson. It did not refer to the popular television programme, but to the competition between four Chinese municipalities to be recognised as having the oldest example of a dragon in Chinese history, referring to man-made artefacts rather than mere legends. The article, by Steven Ribet and Stephen McGinty, runs as follows:-

CHINA is echoing to the clash of claws, clattering of teeth and the whip of scaled tails. Four regions – Puyang, Mount Shizu, Chifeng and Fuxin – are battling over which has the strongest claim to being the birthplace of the dragon, the nation's ancient symbol of success and sovereignty.

The competition has seen a giant concrete dragon defeated by red tape and a tiny dragon made from ancient clamshells.

In another battle, a small jade dragon pendant has been pitted against a 20-metre stone dragon. At stake is the title “birthplace of the dragon” and billions of pounds in tourist revenue to rival Mickey Mouse.

As Sun Minsheng, a consultant working to re-brand the city of Puyang as the world's “dragon capital,” said: “We should learn from the Americans. For us Chinese, the mouse is a most disgusting animal, yet the Americans have taken it and created a multi-billion-dollar industry.”

The dragon is revered as a symbol of strength, tenacity and power. According to legend, the Yellow Emperor, leader of the Huaxia clan and father of the Chinese people, was transformed into a dragon on his death in 2599BC.

His birthplace, Mount Shizu in the province of Henan, is the planned site of a £264 million, 21km-long dragon to be called “The First Dragon of China.” While the head, ten storeys tall, has been completed, the body, which is set to snake across a national park, has been bogged down in a planning dispute.

This has delighted Puyang, 150km to the north-east, which is luring tourists with its “First Dragon of China,” a mosaic of clamshells found in a Neolithic tomb, dated to 4,400BC.. When unearthed in 1987, the mosaic was considered by archaeologists to be the oldest example of the creature discovered. Last month, the city began construction of the “China Dragon Garden,” a £46 million project.