

David Vaudrey found this pair of celtic dragons entwined round the monograms of E.O.E.Somerville and Martin Ross, authors of "Some Experiences of an Irish R.M." in an early edition of the book (1916). In a later expanded edition, written just after the end of the First World War, there is quoted one of my favourite Irish sayings:- "This 'flu is a terrible thing, y'know. There are people dying of it that never died before."



And finally...

Further to the question of representing Wales in the Union Flag, the Canadian journal *Gonfanon* (Vol 19.1, Spring/Printemps 2008) shows a few suggested flags showing how Wales might be included, "some more serious than others," one of which clears the first quarter of its diagonal stripes to make way for a complete Welsh dragon or *Ddraig Goch*, but the implication therein that Wales takes precedence over the other nations of Britain as represented by their Saints' crosses, would surely not be at all acceptable to these latter. One of the other suggestions was to replace the white fimbriation of St George's cross with yellow, possibly derived from the daffodil, thought by some to be a typical Welsh emblem. This brought to mind a childhood memory of a picnic party to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V, which we held on the top of Cley Hill near Warminster. The *pièce de résistance* was the unveiling of a superb Jubilee cake made by my aunt, and decorated with hundreds and thousands, tiny coloured globules in red, white and blue – and yellow! Being a child of "insatiable curiosity," I asked what the yellow stood for, and quick as a flash my aunt said, "The Prince of Wales, of course!"

Issued 17 March 2008 by Ralph Brocklebank, Orland, Church Avenue, Clent, Stourbridge DY9 9QS
Website:- www.dragonlore.co.uk E-mail:- ralph@dragonlore.co.uk

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St Patrick's Day 2008



The Griffin crest of David Sellar, drawn by Mark Dennis



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

The Patron Saint of Ireland is too well known to need a description, and the universal celebration of St Patrick's Day on 17 March is equally famous.

The drawing on the cover, drawn especially for us by Mark Dennis, shows the crest of the arms newly granted by Robin Blair, the retiring Lord Lyon King of Arms of the Scots, to his newly appointed successor, David Sellar. The Griffin is holding a hammer, representing a blacksmith ancestor of the grantee, the beast itself being a traditional crest in the Sellar family. The hammer also appears on the shield, along with the chevron and open cups found on earlier Sellar arms. Mark has made a magnificent painting of the whole achievement in glorious colour (which is why we cannot show it here, though you can see it on the appropriate web-site), and, although he had applied for the position of Lord Lyon himself, he agrees that David Sellar was a good choice. Since Sellar had previously held the post of Bute Pursuivant at the Lyon Court, his promotion will leave a vacancy, and it is possible that Mark will after all find himself as an Officer in that establishment. He is, of course, already himself armigerous (*see No 46*) with an Opinicus for a crest, and with his artistic talent and deep knowledge of law and of heraldry, he would have much to contribute in that sphere. But we must not speculate – just enjoy what we have already been given.

On a point of design, I am always suspicious of crests which have an animal standing on one foot. They look fine on paper, but imagine them for real in three dimensions balanced on the top of a helmet. Are they not precariously unstable? That is why I always prefer the demi-beast in this position.

ANOTHER NEW BOOK OF FABULOUS BEASTS

Hard on the heels of *Fabelwezens* comes **Beasts of Myth and Mystery** by Michael St John Parker and Andrew Jamieson (Wessex Books, 2007), which describes three groups of seven each: **Classical** (Hydra, Sphinx, Harpy, Minotaur, Pegasus, Chimaera, Centaur); **Nordic** (Elves, Dwarves and Gnomes, Giants, Trolls and Ogres, Grendel, Mermaid, Sea Serpent, Green Man); and **Heraldic** (Dragon, Unicorn, Wyvern, Griffin, Yale, Cockatrice, Phoenix). Notwithstanding that few of the middle group would qualify as “beasts” as we understand the term, this is an outstanding contribution to our field of study, with some very imaginative illustrations by Andrew Jamieson (who is well known to our readers) together with a few from traditional

MORE FROM THE POSTBAG

Cathie Constant has sent a wealth of material, some of which we have seen before, but this engraving of a dragon by Lucas Cranach, with its boar's head, beetle's wings and serpent's tail, is a wonderful creation, typical of its period.

Roland Symons never fails to send one of his drawings every time he writes. This one is the badge of 107 Bomber Squadron, RAF, which was formed at Lake Down, Salisbury, in May 1918 and so took one of the supporters

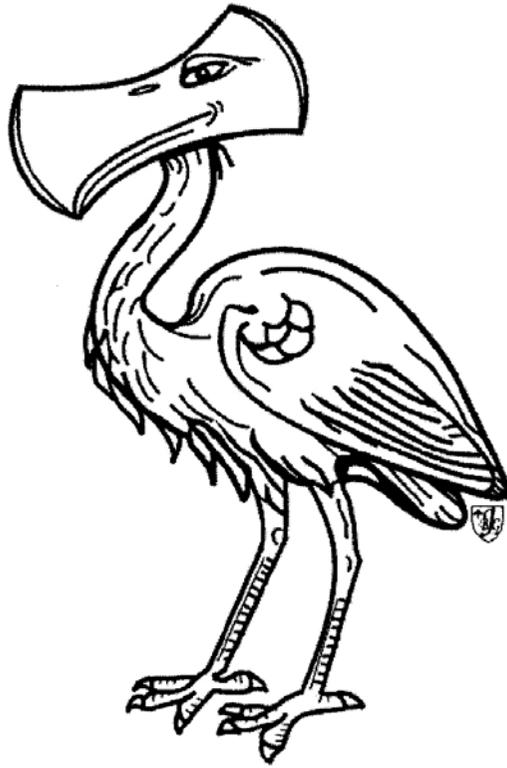


of the arms of the City of Salisbury (*see No 45*) when it was granted its badge in April 1938. Roland says that the collar of fleur-de-lys round the eagle's neck denotes the squadron's service in France during the First World War, when it was attached to the French Army, but in fact they were already a feature of the arms of the City, although in the form of a coronet fleury. One can agree with Roland that it is a very likeable design. He does not mention the colours, but I think I can remember seeing it as a blue eagle with golden fleur-de-lys round its neck, on a white field (as are all RAF squadron badges).

MORE FROM CANADA

The latest issue of *The Prairie Tressure* (No 10) continues with a few more crazy critters, including the **axe-beaked heron**, here illustrated (*right*) by Brian Jeffs, of which it is said that it inhabits the woods and forests of north-central Alberta and is omnivorous, feeding mainly on bark, tree sap, and insects, although they will occasionally kill and devour beavers (more out of competition than for nutrition). Since the example shown has a double-bitted axe-head, it may be identified as a male of the species, as the females have only the beak shaped like an axe.

After mentioning the pizzly bear, the grizzlocetus and the hedgeduck, the article ends by



offering sympathies to Conrad Black, Baron Black of Crossharbour, on his recent legal woes and sentencing to six years in prison, and mentions the possibility of temporarily changing his handsome supporters from friggins rampant to friggins incarcerant, with wings clipped and leg chained (*left*). The **Friggin**, of course, was the very first submission to the critter contest, and is an upside-down Griffin, as was recognized by George Lucki (*see No 47*), and subsequently identified in Lord Black's armorial supporters with their lion upper halves and eagle lower parts.

sources. An example of the former is his rendering of the Greek Sphinx (*right*), one of the few not in colour, whilst one of the latter is this picture of the Unicorn (*below*) which shows it in the act of purifying the water in a pond and thus driving out those loathsome creatures that were polluting it. Strangely, the text makes no mention of this behaviour, and in various other places there are indications that the author has not been properly educated by the College of Dracology; for instance, he seems to think that the Wyvern is "the creation of a herald's fevered imagination" rather than the true ancient form of dragon for which Tudor heralds devised a new name after the royal Welsh Dragon with four legs had assumed the ascendancy in dragonkind. Also, he says that a Griffin guards the doorways of Barclays Bank, whereas it was the former Midland Bank that had a Griffin as its emblem, Barclays making do with an Eagle. Perhaps one should also mention that you should add 2 to



each of the page references given at the beginning (on page 4) as the proof-reader seems to have miscounted. On the other hand, there is much to commend in this little book, apart from the stunning pictures. It shows a proper understanding of the nature of myth, and the place that all these fabulous monsters hold in our culture, and we are grateful to Roland Symons and John Uncles for bringing it to our attention.

MORE ON UNICORNS

While on this subject, here is an example sent by Tony Denning from “The Spotted Dog” by Reginald Turner, a book about inn signs illustrated with wood engravings by John Farleigh, originally made for the Brewers Society, such as this Unicorn (*below*). The accompanying text, although containing much that is familiar, is sufficiently and delightfully original to be worth repeating in full:-

“North of Shropshire, in Cheshire where I would not be, the “Unicorn” at Wilmslow has good modern sign by George Wragge, and Altrincham’s Market Square, all that is left of the old town, has a “Unicorn” where I spent enough time to get to know the inhabitants of Lancashire and Cheshire as well as of the United States. All three kinds seemed to me to have a good deal in common, and I have even heard American soldiers praise Warrington.

“I think the unicorn’s legend is the nicest of all – it is as a mediaeval story that we think of it although in fact it goes back to 400 B.C., when it was mentioned by Ctesias. There are, too, Assyrian and Egyptian associations as well as Old Testament Biblical, and the legend was known to Herodotus, Aristotle, Pliny, and Caesar.

“The beast himself has the head and body of a horse, the legs of a stag, a lion’s tail, and a single twisted horn growing from his forehead. He was the exemplar of virtue, purity, and strength, and since his symbolism sometimes belonged, like the Pelican’s, to Christ, his sign might be thought religious. But, generally speaking, he is royal and heraldic, taking his place with the lion or standing in noble solitude.

“Now it was said that the unicorn’s purity was acknowledged by lesser beasts, who entrusted to him the task of testing with his horn the water in the forest pools. Till this was done, none would risk the serpent’s poison that might lie there. He was too noble ever to submit to capture by hunters, men far removed from him in the degree of sinlessness ; so they, in their baseness, lured him into subjection by a cruel subterfuge : a beautiful young virgin was induced to await him in his glade, and he,



coming upon a being as pure as himself, would lie down and sleep with his head in her lap. His trustfulness thus encompassed his death at the hands of the hunters.

“I like the story for the charm of the unicorn’s character, but I cannot commend the virgin – a traitress to her own purity and more to be condemned than the lewd fellows who employed her.”

This story of the unicorn’s capture was probably concocted to explain how unicorns’ horns came into the possession of those who purveyed them, as it is likely that they had no idea that they were really narwhals’ tusks captured by adventurous northern fishermen in distant Atlantic waters, rather than by forest hunters in central Europe. The image of the Virgin and the Unicorn also had deep religious significance, and in the many mediaeval depictions of this legend, the actual capture and slaying of the mystical beast is hardly ever portrayed, but left to the imagination – too awful for the artist to draw.

SOME ORIENTAL SEALIONS

Here, through the kindness of Leslie Hodgson, are the arms of the East India Company, taken from “London’s Armory” of 1677, that may well have inspired the Singapore fountain shown in No 95.



MERCHANTS OF EAST INDIA