

An Alphabet of Queries (2)

So when is the **Antelope** a monster and when is it not? It must be assumed that the natural beast is meant, unless it is said to be “heraldic,” so that the Avro *Antelope* built for the RAF in 1928, but not selected for service, and the fourteen steam locomotives that have carried this name on our railways would not have been monsters. On the other hand the twelve warships called ANTELOPE in the Royal Navy since the original Tudor galleon of 1546, named after a Royal Beast, undoubtedly carry an heraldic spirit, so when Major Charles ffoulkes designed the official badge for the 1929 destroyer, he correctly used the head of the Royal heraldic antelope which certainly looks rather monstrous (*as seen on the left*). The frigate of 1972 that was lost in the Falklands in 1982 used this same badge.



Natural antelopes are also found in heraldry, most often as supporters, especially when there is an African link, for example the Springbok and Oryx (Gemsbok) in the arms of the Republic of South Africa and again in the pair of Springbok in the arms of Lord Watson (*as seen here, drawn by Baz Manning*). Of course, the correct species of antelope has to be named, since there are so many natural varieties: Natal has Gnus (Black Wildebeeste) for instance, and Impala, Kudu, and Eland can also be found.

Next: Basilisk and Cockatrice—are they the same or not?



Dragonlore

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Monster Mosquito (*Pruriticus irritans*), a Tsimshian Totem drawn by Tsimshian artist Walter Harris (from Greaves, 1999)

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The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

It is pleasing to note an interest in dracology growing in distant overseas lands. The Heraldry Society of Canada publishes a quarterly journal, *Heraldry in Canada*, and in its issue for September 1999 (Vol XXXIII, No. 3, pp 24-28) a light-hearted but level-headed article, “**Here Dwell Monsters**” by Kevin Greaves raises some interesting questions. He points out that in the days of the mediaeval bestiaries, with their religious character, Griffins and Unicorns were thought to be just as real as lions or wolves, and he provides some sound ecological arguments as to why they are no longer to be found. He adopts a taxonomic approach to the organisation of the Class of Old World *Monstra*, and proposes dividing them into eight Orders, as follows:-

DRACONIA—the Reptilians: Dragon (*Draco ignifera*), Wyvern, Basilisk....

AILURIA—the Felines: Gryphon (*Panthera aquilatus*), Opinicus, Alphyn....

PARAUNGULATA—the Cloven Hoofed Monsters: Antelope (*Cervus tigriformis*), Unicorn, Yale....

THALASSAZOA—the Marine Hybrids: Sea Horse (*Equus aquaticus*), Sea-Lion..

PTEROZOA—Winged Hybrids: Winged Lion (*Leo flappus*), Pegasus....

ANTHROPOMORPHIA—Human-Animal Hybrids: Centaur (*Homo equinates*), Sphinx....

PYROPHILIA—Fire-Proof Monsters: Phoenix, Salamander....

MONTYPYTHONIDAE—Utterly Silly Monsters: Enfield, Tragopan....

(Here just a few examples of each order is given, but Greaves lists a total of forty, and those given Latin names he illustrates using Eve’s drawings from Fox-Davies.)

This is a good start, but it is still rather like the early classifications of Natural History that put Whales with Fishes and Bats with Birds. One needs to get beyond the outward appearances and study the underlying anatomy and evolutionary history of these creatures to deepen our understanding of them. Greaves next turns to the developing field of New World teratotaxonomy, and noting with approval the arrival of the Raven/Polar-bear hybrid in the arms of the Canadian Heraldic Authority, he has a few disparaging remarks about some proposed hybrid combinations that were quite incredible, and goes on to recommend native forms such as the Monster Mosquito (*seen on our cover*) and suggests that with imagination some genuinely original native forms of monster could be evolved. This is indeed a heartening development, and Greaves should be welcomed as a true dracologist.

A little earlier, a piece by William Cooke appeared in *Hogtown Heraldry*, the journal of the Toronto Branch of the HSC (Vol 11, No. 1, pp 12-15, Spring 1999) arguing for a proper respect to be shown to monsters, and disparaging arbitrary hybrids, rather echoing the views of Major Davies quoted in our last issue (see **The Ethics of Monsters**). Cooke also maintains that the rare one-off Tudor curiosities should be regarded as the private property of the families to whom they were granted, and not be re-used indiscriminately in modern grants (though he allowed extenuating circumstances in the case of Enfield). He too quotes Rodney Dennys with approval: “New chimaerical creatures should only be evolved if there is nothing in our stables which will fit, and they should be apt and have a reasonably plausible pedigree.”

Fabulous Beasts in Canadian Heraldry

The standard work in this field is **Beddoe’s Canadian Heraldry** by Alan Beddoe, edited by Col. Strome Galloway (Belleville, Ont, 1981), which illustrates a total of 355 coats of arms, personal and corporate. Of these, 25 have fabulous beasts in, on or around them, including 13 different varieties: Unicorns and Griffins are favourites, with 5 of each, Pelicans coming close with 4, Martlets occur on 2, with one each of Basilisk, Dolphin, Dragon, Hippogriff, Mermaid, Pegasus, Seahorse, Winged Ram and Wyvern. These few are greatly outnumbered by 35 beavers.

Another useful book is **Armorial Heritage in Canada of Continental European Families** by Hans Dietrich Birk (Toronto, 1984) which illustrates 512 coats of arms in colour mainly from Germany and Eastern Europe, and of these 27 have fabulous beasts. Again Griffins (7) and Unicorns (6) lead, with Dragons close (5), with one each of an Eagle with two heads, a Fish with batwings, another with bird wings, Harpy, Lindworm, Pelican, Phoenix, Sea-Griffin and Sea-Lion. This is all quite typical of European heraldry, of course. A better selection, generated within Canada, is seen in **Badges of the Canadian Navy** by J. G. Arbuckle (Halifax NS, 1987) which contains colour pictures of 191 badges of which 17 have fabulous beasts in, with Dolphins and Sea-horses, as you would expect, a couple of Unicorns and a Dragon, Martlet, Opinicus, Pegasus, Winged Lion, Winged Sagittary and Wyvern, but also a native Haida Thunderbird with two heads, a Kwakiutl Thunderbird, and best of all the Okanagan marine monster “Ogopogo” drawn as a red wingless dragon with a serpentine body arising from waves. HMCS OKANAGAN was a submarine named after the tribe that shared its name with the Lake where the monster was said to dwell, though the legend described it as a greenish grey rather than red.

The **Canadian Heraldic Authority**, founded in 1988, has evolved a new all-Canadian hybrid as supporters for its own coat of arms, with the upper half of a red raven attached to the lower half of a polar bear. Red and white are the Canadian national colours, while the bird and bear represent the contribution to the nation made by the First Peoples, formerly known as Red Indians and Eskimos. Bruce Patterson, Editor of *Hogtown Heraldry* and a keen dracologist, hopes that the Authority will pursue a policy of encouraging the use of creatures from native folk-lore, so that Thunderbirds, Wendigo and Ogopogo could appear in new grants. Attempts to create original hybrids to represent multiple ethnic populations, as in the arms proposed for the new Megacity of Toronto, were greeted with derision by press and populace alike, as noted by Greaves and Cooke, and in the end Toronto settled for genuine native fauna, beaver, brown bear and golden eagle. Cynics pointed out that it is a long time since any of those were seen in the city but at least they are more impressive than fox, raccoon, skunk or squirrel which are still to be seen scavenging in Toronto’s parks and gardens. Canadians are working their way towards a heraldry in their own style, and we may be sure that some mythical creatures from native folk lore will join the European immigrants, of which the Hippogryph seems to be becoming quite popular in certain circles as a symbol of rapid and purposeful transportation.