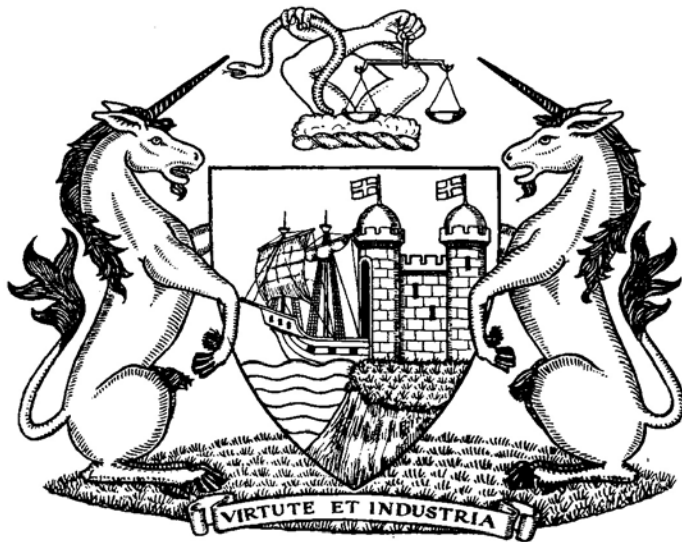


elephant; this perhaps is echoed in the similar victory, in Sindbad's second voyage, of the Karkadan, or rhinoceros, which can 'carry off a great elephant on its horn.' ... Another of the Unicorn's enemies was the lion, and a stanza in the tangled allegory *The Faerie Queene* records the manner of their duel... At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the union of the Kingdom of England with the Kingdom of Scotland brought together on the heraldic arms of Great Britain the English Leopard, or Lion, and the Scottish Unicorn.

In the Middle Ages, bestiaries taught that the Unicorn could be captured by a maiden; in the Greek *Physiologus* we read: 'How it is captured. A virgin is placed before it and it springs into the virgin's lap and she warms it with love and carries it off to the palace of kings.' One of Pisanello's medals and many famous tapestries illustrate this victory whose allegorical applications are obvious. Leonardo da Vinci attributes the Unicorn's capture to its lust, which makes it forget its fierceness, lie in a girl's lap, and so be taken by hunters. The Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ, mercury and evil have all been represented by the Unicorn. In his *Psychologie und Alchemie* (1944), Jung gives a history and an analysis of these symbols.

A small white horse with the forelegs of an antelope, a goat's beard, and a long twisted horn projecting straight out of its forehead is the picture usually given of this imaginary animal.



Golden unicorns with black manes, horns &c, supporting the arms of the City of Bristol (from C.W.Scott-Giles, *Civic Heraldry*, 1933)

Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

Number 40

St Vincent's Day 2004



A Centaur fighting an Amphysian Dragon

The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

Our search for a new name for the Male Griffin which is not a Keythong has led us to delve into the realms of onamatology, the study of names. Prominent in this field are Leslie Dunkling, one of whose many works is **The Guinness Book of Names** (London, 1974), a compendious overview of the whole subject, and Adrian Room, a prolific author and compiler, a few of whose books have been quoted in these pages. These two once ran The Names Society with its Journal **Viz**, both now dormant (but we hope not defunct). From them we learned that one of the categories into which names may be classified is the transferred name, and names may be transferred serially to produce a chain. One of these chains, with five links, starts with HMS St Vincent, a dreadnaught **battleship** of 1908 that fought at Jutland and was broken up in 1921 (without ever getting an authorised badge). The battleship was named after the **Admiral**, John Jervis (1735-1823) who took the title Earl St Vincent to commemorate his victory in 1797 over the combined French and Spanish fleets. The **battle** of St Vincent took its name from the nearby Cape in Portugal, the extreme south-west point of continental Europe, featured in Robert Browning's poem *Home thoughts, from the sea* ("Nobly, nobly Cape St Vincent to the North West died away..."). The **Cape** is named in honour of the Spanish **Saint**, Deacon and Martyr of Saragossa, who was martyred in 304 and whose feast day is held on 22nd January each year.

The picture on the cover, drawn by Anne Marie Jauss (from Lum, 1952), is taken from a carved 13th century boss in the Muniment Room at Westminster Abbey. Note that the centaur is a man-lion compound, not a man-horse, and this may be significant in the context as this struggle depicts the fight between light and darkness, and the lion was seen as a creature of the sun. In many church settings, a centaur may indeed represent Christ himself. The dragon here is a typical mediaeval specimen with a serpentine body, bird's wings and two legs (*see also No 26*). The word "amphysian" means with a head at "both ends." In times long ago, the daily struggle between the sun and the dark powers of night must have been awe-inspiring, and by no means a forgone conclusion. Even the cycle of the seasons was seen as a long-drawn-out fight between the sun and the darkness of night. In the springtime, the sun gradually gains the upper hand until the summer with its longer days, but is then slowly beaten back until the turning point in winter, now celebrated as Christmas, when the days once more begin to lengthen. This eternal struggle between the forces of light and darkness, symbolised here, was then transferred to the fight between good and evil, right and wrong. Today we think we understand the mechanisms that produce the cycles of the day and the year, and remain confident that each cycle will recur, but the moral struggle remains, and perhaps that is why, apart from its artistic beauty and ingenious composition, this carving still appeals so strongly.

collectors, he was dismayed to think that this might be the same animal as the elegant Unicorn of tradition. An ancient Egyptian drawing showing a lion playing chess with an animal like an antelope with a single doubly-curved horn may be an early depiction of an Unicorn, as may the bull-like beast being attacked by a lion shown at the end of No 38, but it remains doubtful whether a single horn was intended or merely the closer of two lying side by side. The long straight spirally-grooved horn on the traditional western Unicorn (and none so long as that shown on the animals in the Cluny tapestries) was surely influenced by narwhal tusks, which were real enough, and much prized treasures.

The earliest written description of a Unicorn tells of an animal like a white horse with a single horn on its forehead, not on its nose, and living in India, not Africa. Nothing like a rhinoceros, although early bestiaries did confuse these two animals, also introducing the *Monoceros* into the story. If a rhinoceros did influence the idea of an Unicorn, it was certainly not the African variety but the Indian, which is in fact the only known animal with a single horn. (That at least was the opinion of John Cherry, who wrote about *Unicorns* in the book he edited on **Mythical Beasts** in 1995.) However, Major Davies was quite right about one thing, which was, after all, his main point, and that is that until modern times almost everybody believed Unicorns to be real, if elusive, animals. Whether this applied to all the hybrid and composite creatures in ancient statuary and mythology is another question altogether.

In the mean time, here is what Jorge Luis Borges has to say:-

The Unicorn

The first version of the Unicorn is nearly identical with the latest. Four hundred years B.C., the Greek historian and physician Ctesias told that among the kingdoms of India there were very swift wild asses with white coats, purple heads, blue eyes, and in the middle of their foreheads a pointed horn whose base was white, whose tip was red, and whose middle was black. Pliny, more precise, wrote (VIII, 31):

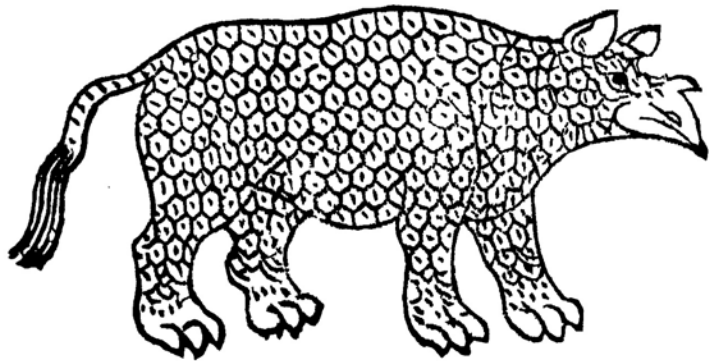
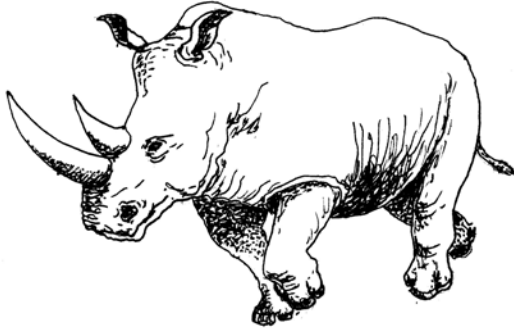
the fiercest animal is the unicorn, which in the rest of the body resembles a horse, but in the head a stag, in the feet an elephant, and in the tail a boar, and has a deep bellow, and a single black horn three feet long projecting from the middle of the forehead. They say that it is impossible to capture this animal alive.

Around 1892, the Orientalist Schrader conjectured that the Unicorn might have been suggested to the Greeks by certain Persian bas-reliefs depicting bulls in profile with a single horn.

In Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*, composed at the beginning of the seventh century, we read that one thrust of the Unicorn's horn may kill an

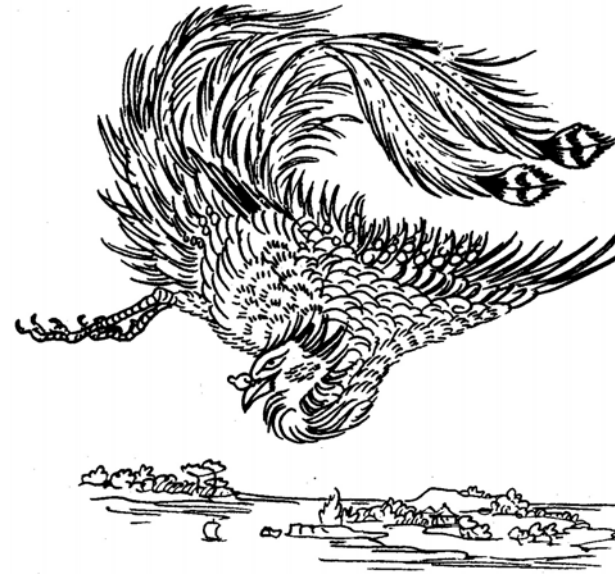
An Alphabet of Queries (24)

What was doubtful about Major Davies' theory of the origin of the Unicorn, as reported in No 35? He said that "the rhinoceros was more widely distributed in the ancient world and early travellers caught a hasty glance of the white rhino before beating a quick retreat, bringing back to Assyria and Persia rough descriptions of the Unicorn." This, of course, is pure speculation, and it is always good to bear in mind the difference between what is *possible* and what is *likely*. To begin with, the so-called White Rhinoceros has got two horns, on the nose, and not one on the forehead. Then again, it is not white in colour, but brownish grey, matching the mud of its environment. The word "white" in its name is a corruption of the Boer word "weid," pronounced "wait" and meaning "wide," referring to the animal's broad upper lip, in contrast to the pointed, almost beak-like, upper lip of the common rhino (often called "black" but actually a muddy grey). And then there is no record of travellers from the ancient Middle East, who wrote extensively about everything they did, ever having travelled into the African interior. The earliest descriptions of Unicorns all tell of a delicate creature like an ass, gazelle, deer or goat, living in India. When Marco Polo was shown a real rhinoceros, probably of the Indian variety, because the Chinese were indeed great travellers and



An early 15th century Chinese drawing of an Indian rhinoceros.

Fabulous Beasts in the Imperial Japanese Navy



A Japanese phoenix, called Ho-Ho or Ho-Sho

navy used ships' badges, as we understand them, but it is likely that the well-known images would have been used in one way or another. These two drawings are by Jauss, from Lum (1952).



An Oriental Dragon from the 12th century

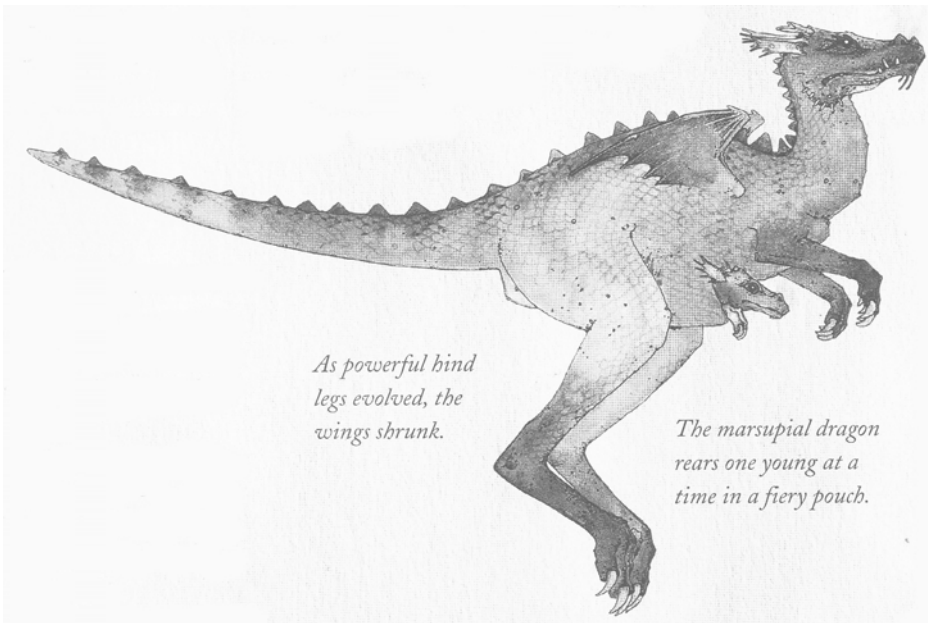
Derek Taylor writes, "The Japanese fleet carriers of the Second World War were named after beasts connected with flight : HOSHO ("Soaring Phoenix"), HIRYU and SORYU, which took part in the Pearl Harbour attack, translate as "Flying Dragon" and "Blue Dragon" respectively." The Phoenix and the Dragon were familiar creatures in Japanese folklore, so these were quite appropriate names for these warships. It is not known whether their

BOOK REVIEW

A magnificent Christmas present from Roger was the sumptuous book **Dr Ernest Drake's Dragonology - The Complete Book of Dragons**, edited by Dugald A. Steer BA (Brist) SASD, (Templar Company, Dorking, 2003) and manufactured in China. It put me in mind of two books reviewed in No 24, in that it purports to be the facsimile reproduction of a work produced in 1896 by the said Dr Drake, and "recently found in a bookshop near the Seven Dials in London. Unfortunately, the publisher has been unable to ascertain whether a real Dr Ernest Drake ever lived in St. Leonard's Forest or wrote a book called Dragonology and so, with regret, is unable to make any claim as to the truth of this and must present this volume merely as an interesting curiosity." There is also a distinct flavour of Dickinson's *Flight of Dragons*, (see No 37) which is not surprising as the main illustrator of both is the same Wayne Anderson.

The letters SASD stand for The Secret and Ancient Society of Dragonologists, and we may have a rival body here. Friendly enquiries have been set in motion. In the mean time, let us see if there is anything in the content that might advance our own studies.

The book treats dragons as a little-known genus containing eleven distinct species, and starts off with some advice to those who would wish to take up their study - simple, but not always very helpful, for example:- "Fatalities - unless these are avoided, the student will make little progress." There is a



*As powerful hind
legs evolved, the
wings shrank.*

*The marsupial dragon
rears one young at a
time in a fiery pouch.*

map of the world showing the distribution of ten of these species, with Amphitheres (winged but legless dragons) confined to the Americas and the Wyvern for some reason dwelling only in Africa and shown much larger than any of the others. One unusual European species is the Knucker, smaller than the rest and with only vestigial wings, and thought by some (but not Dr Drake) to be a junior form of the regular dragon. The oriental species include the Chinese *Lung* and the Lindworm (with no wings and only one pair of legs), but perhaps the most original contribution is *Draco marsupialis*, found only in Australia (*seen here*).

Chapters follow giving the anatomy of a typical dragon, with fold-back diagrams showing skin, muscles and bones in sequence, and then their life cycle, development, behaviour patterns and ecology. The "pearl" associated with the Chinese dragon is said to be its egg, which is why it is always so carefully guarded. Examples are given of dragons' writings in runic script, and those familiar with the runes shown in Kipling's *Just So Stories* will find that these ones are almost the same. Some of these scripts spell out riddles, for which it is said that dragons have such a great liking that it is advisable when approaching a dragon to have a great store of riddles by heart in order to entertain and calm it. If you have one for which it cannot guess the answer, you have it tamed for life. Finally the book gives tips to aspiring dragonologists, with advice on field work, note taking, useful equipment, spells and charms, and how to tame them as mounts for riding on (very risky but highly rewarding once achieved), with short biographies of notable dragonologists and dragonslayers from history, and ending with dire warnings against incompetence. We do not want to make dragons extinct, do we?

Throughout the book there are little inserts giving samples of dragon skin, dragon dust, runes and riddles, and it is all great fun and very imaginatively produced, though one doubts that it advances our knowledge of *dracology* by very much. But I would not have missed it for anything.

FEEDBACK

Paul Thorning writes: "I had an idea (probably not original) on the naming of the 'male griffin.' What about simply reserving '**gryphon**' for it? It is not much used nowadays as an alternative to griffin, is clearly related but also clearly different, and to me, at least, a real name narrowed down in usage is preferable to an invented name for an established beast. Obviously I can see objections, though - scope for confusion until the usage became established, in particular, and the fact that the 'male griffin' is quite likely not a griffin at all, originally. The nearest analogy I can think of is the common use of 'tyger' for the heraldic animal and 'tiger' for the Bengal version, which seems to work." Thanks for this.

