

free, a fate which is reflected in the Harry Potter adventure.

Kevin Greaves, as we know, maintains that Ariosto was wrong, since the Griffin, being itself a hybrid and thus sterile, cannot breed. But there is an ethical dilemma here. If Ariosto, who invented the Hippogriff, is wrong about its origin, can we believe that it exists at all? Since it is making more and more frequent appearances, notably in Canadian heraldry, this is obviously a question that must be addressed by expert ethico-etymologists, not to mention competent crypto-geneticists. Further comments and contributions will be welcomed.

NOTICE

"The World of Dragonlore," a well-illustrated account of our origins, attainments and aspirations, has appeared in *The Coat of Arms* for June 2004.

NORFOLK BEER FESTIVAL DRAGON



The Norfolk Standard for May 2004 has this emblem for the local Beer Festival, which is held, as might be expected, in the Dragon Hall in Norwich.

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Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

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St Swithun's Day 2004



Vouivre carved in lime-wood by Antony Denning SHA



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

We welcome new members Stuart Emerson and Richard Goddard.

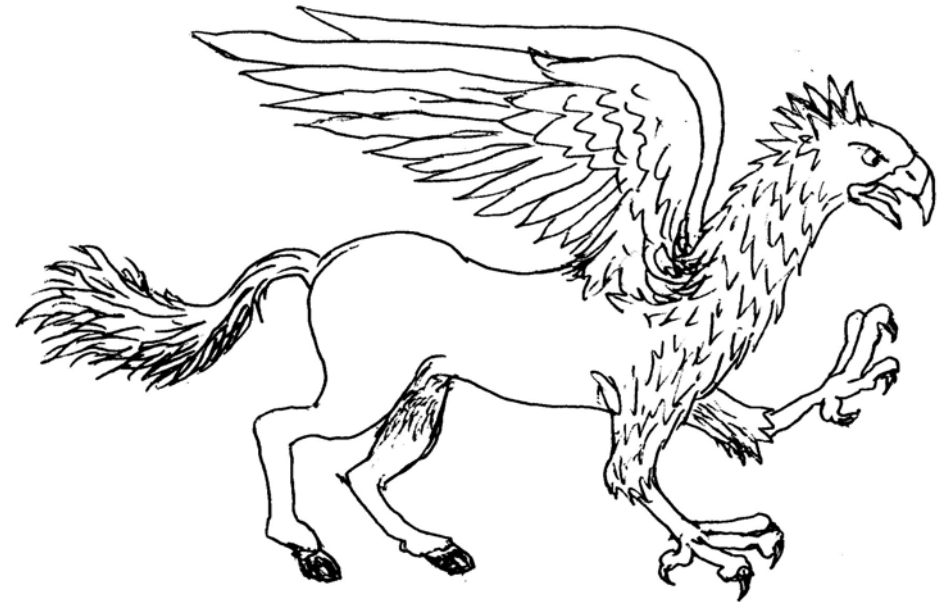
St Swithun was born in 800, was chaplain and counsellor to two Kings of Wessex, Egbert and Ethelwulf, became Bishop of Winchester in 852, being renowned for his philanthropy and the founding of numerous churches, and died in 862, being buried humbly in the churchyard according to his wishes. On 15 July 971 his body was disinterred and re-buried ceremoniously within the cathedral, and this is the day that he is commemorated. As it rained all day on that occasion, a piece of meteorological folk-lore has attached to this date, besides which he has become the saint asked to intercede to alleviate droughts. In China, rainfall and droughts were brought about by dragons, but we seem to prefer superstition.

The Society of Heraldic Arts was founded in 1987 to encourage high standards of craftsmanship in the various fields of activity, such as drawing and painting, carving and modelling, engraving and stained glass, in which heraldry finds expression. Some dozen Craft Members of the SHA are dracologists, as well as rather more Associate Members, that is, those who support the Society without themselves being artists (other than as amateurs). The carving by Antony Denning, shown on the cover, is about eight inches high and was inspired by a picture in an early issue of the Society's Newsletter (No 9, Summer 1992) of Vouivre, the French Wyvern (*see right*), accompanying a review by Baz Manning of the book *Hargreaves New Illustrated Bestiary* by Joyce Hargreaves (Glastonbury, 1990). This book has a wealth of pictures, or images as they are now called, and will come in handy in the future.

Vouivre, Wouivre or Wivre are all versions of the same word that we know as Wiver or Wyvern, and even as Weaver, the



More Harry Potter



Buckbeak the Hippogriff, "Beaky" to his friends, drawn from memory by HK.

The third of the Harry Potter books (see No 24) has now been made into a brilliant film with a very presentable Hippogriff. Although in the book there is a whole cluster of them, all in different horse colours - chestnut, bay, roan, grey and black - in the film there is just the one, a grey, which is introduced for a lesson in the Care of Magical Creatures, and after playing quite an important part in the plot, disappears at the end carrying the escaped Prisoner of Azkaban to his freedom. Oddly, although the picture on the cover of the book shows the Hippogriff with ears, the one in the film had none, though otherwise he was well done. Sadly, the Werewolf was not nearly so convincing, being too much like the Golem in the film of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and not much like a wolf.

As for the Hippogriff, Jorge Luis Borges reminds us that Ludovico Ariosto, writing in the sixteenth century, invented it as an ironic comment on Virgil's remark that griffins detest horses and breeding between them would be the epitome of impossibility. Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* tells how Roger rode on a Hippogriff to rescue Angelica, and describes it thus:-

"The steed is not imagined but real, for it was sired by a Griffin out of a mare: like its father's were its feathers and wings, its forelegs, head and beak; in all its other parts it resembled its mother and was called Hippogriff; they come, though rarely, from the Rhiphaean Mountains, far beyond the ice bound seas."

At the end of Ariosto's story, the Hippogriff is unsaddled and unbridled and set

More Somerset Dragons

The Somerset Heraldry Society has arranged visits to a number of churches and other sites, with interesting dragons on view as a side-line. Brian Wright's book on *Somerset Dragons* (Stroud 2002) which was reviewed in No 29, has been a useful guide. One of the most unusual was this sea-dragon (*right*), carved by a parishioner in 1900, on a bench-end in St James's church, Halse, with its legless body covered in small scales and its fin-like wings and fish-like tail. Another is this gilded monster from St Mary's church in Bishop's Lydeard (*below*), one of a pair supporting the figures on the rood-screen. There is a very similar pair in the church of St Pancras in West Bagborough.



Brian himself turned up at Halse and showed us an attractive little cast of what purported to be a dragon fossil (*see below right*), as well as a formidable skull, said to be that of an extinct dragon, that he had found in a Bristol market. About the size of a sheep's skull, but with more bird-like proportions, it had spikes on the tip of its snout and along each side of its nose closely resembling its teeth. No details of its supposed provenance were available. (Enquiries about the fossil cast should be directed to The Secretary, Museum of Anomalous Antiquities, 8 Murrayfield Road, Fifers Lane, Norwich NR6 6NQ. It appears that six different species of fossils are available.)



name of a twisting, winding river in Cheshire. The word Viper probably comes from the same source. It is likely that snakes were anciently regarded as powerful earth-beings with deep spiritual forces working through them, and were held in some awe. Inevitably, myths and legends grew around them, and it is possible that they were given wings to express their spiritual power rather than as naturalistic appendages. It is notable that, besides the chicken-like wings and legs that the bestiaries gave to all serpents, the French variety has delightful feminine characteristics as well. The thing like a third eye in her forehead is a ruby or garnet with which she sees her way through the underworld. There are many legends about her in different parts of France, in Switzerland and in Germany, and she has even been equated with the Melusine, usually shown with a female upper half and a fishy, rather than a serpentine, lower half, sometimes with two tails. This mediaeval French woodcut (*right*) shows two such creatures, one decently dressed out-of-doors and the other bathing naked and being watched by a Peeping Tom. Called Melusines by some, they are much more like the Vouivre in their bodily details. Although not known in English heraldry, she was familiar to the woodcarvers who decorated our churches, and her like on misericords are often labelled as Harpies, in spite of their serpentine bodies. (More on Harpies in a later issue.)



A Particular Unicorn

The latest edition of the SHA Newsletter, now called *The Heraldic Craftsman* (No 48, June 2004), has an interesting article on the design of the Unicorn trademark of the Wellcome Foundation. First used in 1908, it is not clear why Henry Wellcome, the founder of the drug company, chose this beast as his trademark. Perhaps he had in mind the legendary curative powers of the Unicorn's horn, but he gave detailed instructions to the artists appointed to draw it. They should keep to the spirit of the Unicorn - "delicacy and refinement, and grace with virility and verve, and the possibility of fleetness and an expression of alertness, which were supposed to be characteristic of the beast." When the drawings came in, Wellcome made detailed criticisms such as this, "Sketch is spirited but not sufficiently refined, nor is it graceful or ethereal or imaginative. It is too hard and angular. The eye is too expressive of fear or fright, rather than keenness or alertness. The horn is too short and too upright. The neck is realistic, but not too refined, and not graceful. The bushing of the tail is too massive and top heavy. The rump is hard and not graceful. The forelegs are very good, and the hind ones not bad." Perfectionist that he was, he

certainly thought he knew exactly what a Unicorn should look like, and he did eventually get a drawing almost to his satisfaction. “This drawing is a great improvement over previous ones, though there are several defects. The horn is not quite as perfect as it was. The shaping of the upper part of the right hind leg is not quite satisfactory and the hooves require very slight modifications; the chest is a little exaggerated. Generally speaking it is very effective and has good spirit. I have cabled the word ‘yes’.” We have only been able to get a silhouette version (*right*) of the design, which unfortunately does not show the detail of the keen and alert eye, and in any case the trademark was redrawn in 1968. (Our thanks to Pete Taylor for sending in this story.)



Enquiries about the SHA should be directed to the Secretary, John Ferguson, at 46 Reigate Road, Reigate, Surrey RH2 0QN, England.

A Dracological Presentation



This dragon is from a painted wooden relief carving, 14½” long by 8” high, that was presented to us by Drusilla Armitage, having been made by her late brother Michael. The dragon itself is all gold, as is the frame, while the “emanation” from its tail is silver, all on a black background. Attempts to photograph it, or scan it directly, failed miserably, so we have resorted to pen and ink.

A Green Dragon in Herefordshire

On a visit to Sufton Court with the Clent History Society, a small green stuffed-toy dragon was observed along with other trophies of the Hereford family, and our attention was directed to an old watercolour of the parish church of Mordiford, done by an ancestor, which clearly showed a green dragon painted on the west wall under the gable (*see right*). We were told that when the church was enlarged, this wall-painting disappeared, but the legend lives on.



Apparently a dragon had taken up its abode in a local wood, coming out from time to time to indulge in its diet of sheep and young maidens, as dragons do. The local worthies, disturbed by these losses, offered a reward to anyone who would rid them of the troublesome beast. Several brave lads lost their lives in their attempts, but then a rascally youth, a bit of a villain who had himself a taste for young maidens (in a rather different sense) devised a cunning plan. Taking a stout dagger, and with his head hidden in a large pail, he crept upstream to where the dragon was drinking, and coming underneath it unnoticed, he struck upwards at the dragon’s soft belly, piercing it to the heart. Unfortunately he had overlooked the dragon’s inflammable nature, and the dying creature exploded in a burst a flame that quite consumed the young rogue. So the village was rid of both its predatory monsters in one big bang, and was saved the expense of the reward as well. To this day there is a track on the edge of the wood known as Serpent’s Lane. It is not known whether this dragon was related to the famous Green Dragon in Hereford, a few miles away.

The Mordiford Dragon by J.D.Devlin (1848, reprinted 1978) might be worth a look, if only one could find a copy.

THE ODD STREAK from *The Daily Mail*, 13 July 2004.



Why dragons may burst into flame when punctured.