

An A to Z of Dragonlore—Supplement

Some additional entries that were previously overlooked or perhaps not considered eligible for inclusion:

ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN, a popular name for the Yeti.

ANZU, a sort of Sumerian anti-griffin with lion's head and front legs but eagle's wings and back legs.

BAKU, a Japanese monster with elephant's trunk, ox's tail and tiger's feet.

BHERUNDA, a mythical bird of Mysore like an eagle with two heads said to confer might, majesty and victory.

BIGFOOT, a popular name for the Sasquatch; interest in this legendary North American creature was revived when some amateur film footage purported to show a specimen fleeing into the woods, but evaporated again when enlargement of the film revealed the furs held together with safety pins.

BIXIE, a Chinese equivalent of the Chimaera.

BLUEBIRD, not the American name for a swallow but Maeterlinck's mystical creation that inspired Sir Malcolm Campbell.

BO, a Chinese composite monster like a horse that makes a noise like a drum.

BUCENTAUR, a man-headed bull or anti-minotaur from ancient Persia.

BULLICORN, a hybrid of bull and unicorn, a personalised heraldic joke combining beasts from the arms of Sir Colin Cole and John Brooke-Little, two English Heralds of the 20th Century.

BUNYIP, a huge water-monster like a bull-headed seal (though descriptions vary) that occurs in tales told by Australian aboriginal people.

CALADRIUS, a mediaeval bird that had the power of divination as to whether sick people would live or die.

CRIOSPHINX, a ram-headed lion from ancient Egypt.

DELPHYNE, a female dragon, half woman and half serpent, from Greek mythology.

ERECHTHEUS or ERICHTHONIUS, another monster, half man half serpent, from ancient Athens.

FIREBIRD, a fantastic creation from Russian folklore that inspired Stravinsky's ballet.

GARGOUILLE or "gargler", a huge French water-spouting aquatic dragon of serpentine form that lived in caves on the banks of the Seine and devastated the neighbourhood until overcome by a brave Archbishop of Rouen, now commemorated by the gargoyle waterspouts seen on many a church and cathedral.

To be continued...

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Dragon and Griffin supporters in the Arms of the Midland Bank
(from Briggs 1971)

The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

Among the indispensable works of reference is **CIVIC & CORPORATE HERALDRY: A Dictionary of Impersonal Arms of England, Wales & N. Ireland** compiled and edited by Geoffrey Briggs FRSA FSA (Scots), (Heraldry Today, London 1971). Although now sadly out of date, it gives the blazon and date of grant of over 1,700 corporate arms with line drawings of more than 940 of them (*from which our cover picture is taken*) produced by a panel of artists, namely Gerald Cobb, Dan Escott, Wendy Gould, Sandra House, Violetta Keeble and Theodora Winney, though they are not individually identified. Among the arms illustrated, 209 feature fabulous beasts in whole or in part (heads not counted) including 35 different varieties of which Dragons are favourite with 53 showings, three of them Sea-Dragons and one a Chinese Dragon; Griffins are next with 30, plus one Male Griffin, while Martlets, Seahorses, Unicorns, Dolphins and Wyverns all score well (in the 'teens). The rarities include an Enfield and a Pantheon, a winged Doe and a winged Lynx.

The Arms of the Midland Bank shown on the cover were granted in 1952, and are a composite of elements from the arms of the Cities of London and Birmingham. At the same time the Bank was granted a badge of a Griffin within a circle of bezants (gold discs) which would have made an elegant brooch, but was replaced by a bolder and more diagrammatic logo, easily identified from a distance but keeping its essentially heraldic character. A later version was too feeble to bear mention. Since this Bank is now totally absorbed into the HSBC and will lose its separate identity, these arms will become obsolete and its griffin badge will disappear to be replaced by the HSBC logo, a sort of red-and-white hexagonal envelope.

The Griffin: Guardian of Gold was the 1994 Calendar from the Midland Bank with twelve large colour plates giving examples of the Griffin in art through the ages. This was really the Griffin's swansong. One just cannot imagine a calendar based on great envelopes in world art. There has been a trend away from pictorial emblems towards abstract geometrical figures. One of the first of the banks to go was the National Westminster; when it was formed from a merger it might have chosen a National Lion leaning on a Westminster Portcullis, which would have neatly complemented the Griffin, Eagle and Black Horse of the other major banks, but went instead for a triangular conundrum. Now the Griffin is going and the Eagle is half dissolved into a crystal sphere, leaving only the Black Horse prancing across our television screens. Will it grow wings and fly away?

Fabulous Beasts in the City of London

The Arms of the City of London are supported by two silver **Dragons**, each with a red Cross of St George on the undersides of its wings, and a similar dragon's wing as crest. Some think that the crest started as a plain fan shape painted with the arms, later elaborated into the outline of a dragons wing, and that the supporters were inspired by this. Whatever their origin, silver dragons are now seen all over the City and have been borrowed often enough to show some connection with London by various corporations (such as the Midland Bank and several of the old Railway Companies).

A second beast associated with London is the **Griffin** seen on the Temple Bar and adopted from there as a badge by London Transport and on various corporate arms such as those of the Stock Exchange and Gray's Inn. Another of the Inns of Court, the Inner Temple, displays a **Pegasus** on its shield and this is said to be derived from an ancient device of the Templars showing two poor knights riding on one horse. Presumably the knights' cloaks, blowing in the wind, were mistaken for wings. Poor artistry followed by hasty mis-identification can probably account for quite a few heraldic curiosities.

By far the best display of fabulous beasts in the City is seen in the arms of the Guilds or Livery Companies. There are about one hundred of these and twenty or so have fabulous supporters, crests or charges on their shields. One of these latter is the Serpent or **Wyvern** between the feet of Apollo on the arms of the Apothecaries, and one cannot but suspect that this image may have originated in the figure of St Michael and the Dragon which was secularized to avoid charges of religious bigotry, although an alternative explanation holds that it represents alchemical symbolism. Among the supporters one notes the **Dolphins** of the Watermen and Lightermen, the **Griffins** of the Clothworkers and of the Grocers, the **Merman** and **Mermaid** on either side of the Fishmonger's arms, the **Opinicus** as supporters of the Plaisterers and as crest of the Barbers, the **Panthers** of the Dyers and of the Painter-Stainers who have a **Phoenix** as crest, as do the Blacksmiths, the **Pelicans** of the Poulterers, the **Sea-Horses** of the Master Mariners and of the Pewterers, the **Unicorns** of the Apothecaries, of the Goldsmiths, and of the Wax Chandlers, the **Winged Bulls** of the Butchers who have one also as a crest, and finally the **Wyverns** of the Weavers. These are all illustrated in **The Armorial Bearings of the GUILDS of LONDON** by John Bromley and Heather Child (Warne, London 1960) since when several new Companies have been founded and among these recent additions the Fuellers have a **Caretyne** supporter, the Engineers have a **Pegasus** and a **Wyvern** as its supporters while the Chartered Accountants have on their shield three towers from each of which arises a **Griffin**.