

An A to Z of Dragonlore *continued*

BARNACLE GOOSE, a curious mediaeval misunderstanding, since mature geese arrived from nowhere, and tiny stalked shellfish clinging to rocks and ships' bottoms, shaped like little birds, just dropped of and disappeared, so putting two and two together, the little barnacles must grow up into geese.

BASILISK, the regal serpent of classical antiquity supposedly hatched by a serpent from a cock's egg was said to kill with its mere glance and scorch the land around it wherever it crawled. It is generally shown with a serpent's body, sometimes with a second head at the end of its tail, cock's wings optional but always with a crown-like comb on top of its head.

BEHEMOTH, this biblical monster was probably a hippopotamus.

BONACON, a monstrous bull-like creature that defended itself by ejecting a high-powered stream of noxious effluvia from its posterior, as described by the ancients (a farting bison?), it was briefly adopted by Tudor heralds.

BOOJUM, a fateful form of Snark.

BOREYNE, another Tudor composite with horns, clawed feet, finned spine, tufted tail and spiky tongue.

BOROGOVE, a mimsy creature noted by Lewis Carroll in *Jabberwocky*.

CALOPUS, a horned cat-wolf from a one-off Tudor grant.

CALYGREYHOUND, another Tudor one-off used by the Oxford de Veres, it had a catlike face on a doglike body with an eagle's front legs and antlers like branches of oak—no wonder they fell for its charms!

CAMELOPARD, varieties of giraffe, with the face of a camel and the spots of a leopard, it was thought to be a blend of these two (how else could you describe such a creature if you had never seen one before?).

CAPRICORN, this sign of the Zodiac is usually depicted with a goat's forepart and the tail of a fish.

CARETYNE, a unique Tudor invention granted to Sir Francis Bryan, compounded of a bull-like body with tusks and flaming breath; it is hard to guess what it was meant to symbolise apart from the fact that nobody else had anything quite like it.

CATOBLEPAS, a quadruped whose head was so heavy it always hung down to face the ground, which was just as well as his gaze was deadly. Mentioned by Pliny (perhaps the gnu), when shown in heraldry (only once, in Tudor times) he is given dragon-like wings.

To be continued...

Prepared in 1947 by Ralph Brocklebank at Martlet House, Forest Row
Issued July 2001 from Orland, Clent, Stourbridge, Worcs DY9 9QS

Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

Number 2

Midsummer 1947



Some Regimental Cap-badges of the British Army

The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

All our members except one are pursuing higher education. Two are studying medicine, one is at art school (her dragon drawing was in her submission portfolio) and the rest are following various academic disciplines. The exception is John Davy, who is doing his National Service with the Intelligence Corps in occupied Vienna whence he writes as follows:-

“Here a commonly seen unnatural monster is the **double-headed eagle** of Imperial Austria. Some say the two heads signify the dual monarchy of Austria and Hungary, but others argue that the image is much older, being derived from a totem of ancient Byzantium which was adopted by the Roman Caesars. There is a picture in a church here called the Nine Worthies, in which Julius Caesar is depicted in fifteenth century armour carrying a golden jousting shield charged with a black double-headed eagle. This must be a back-projection from the arms used by the Holy Roman Empire. In fact the Emperors of Austria could claim continuous use of this symbol from those days, and it may have been copied by the Russians, Serbs and Bulgarians (though they would probably have claimed direct descent from the Byzantine Emperors). When the King of Prussia became Emperor of Germany he changed his single-headed eagle to double-headed, so it is most likely that this unnatural bird was not seen as a genuine fabulous beast, in spite of the efforts of political cartoonists, but rather as an heraldic symbol of Imperial status, whether by Caesar, Kaiser or Czar. It is noteworthy that the Austrian Republic changed their eagle to single-headed, as did the Weimar Republic in Germany.

“Another strange beast seen here is the **Styrian panther**, a scraggy green monster with horns, claws on its front feet and flames coming from its mouth. It is seen on the arms of the Austrian province of Styria (Steiermark in German). Scholarly opinion holds that it originated from a crudely drawn steer, a play on the name of the province which would explain the horns. The claws could be over-exaggerated cloven hooves and the flames a red tongue. I have not found any legends about this creature, which seems to exist only in Styrian heraldry.

“I have spotted just a couple of **dragons**, each lying at the feet of a figure of St George, but there is not much time here for research. Although there is a lot to see in this historic city, largely untouched by war damage, I spend much of my time driving round in a jeep crewed by four soldiers, one from each of the Occupying Powers....”

From John Davy in Vienna

Fabulous Beasts in British Army Badges

Regimental cap-badges have become a favourite subject for collectors, and they may be found at most military outfitters of which there are several in Warminster. Surprisingly, a **Welsh dragon** is the badge of the Royal East Kent Regiment (The Buffs), and this is explained because when the Tudors took the throne of England their dragon became a Royal Badge, and it is from Royal sponsorship that the Buffs originated in 1665. It is also seen in the badges of a couple of Welsh regiments. Although Monmouthshire is administratively reckoned as part of England, their Regiment is proud of its Welsh background and has a badge very like that of the Buffs, as does the Montgomeryshire Yeomanry (although their dragon has all four feet on the ground). The **Chinese dragon** was awarded for service in China, and is seen at its best in the Royal Berkshire Regiment badge, but also appears, though very small, in the badge of the Border Regiment. Another sort of dragon is shown in the badge of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers being attacked by St George on a horse. The **double-headed eagle** forming the badge of 1st King's Dragoon Guards is in fact the arms of the Emperor Francis Joseph II of Austria who was Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment from 1896 to 1914.

The **Sphinx** commemorates service in Egypt and is most famously seen in the badge of the Gloucestershire Regiment, though equally prominently in that of the Royal Lincolnshires as well as in the badges of the South Wales Borderers, the Lancashire Fusiliers, the East Lancashires, the Dorsetshires, the South Lancashires, the Essex Regiment and (scarcely visible) the Black Watch. Chiron the **Centaur** appears appropriately on the badge of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps. Chiron was skilled in the healing arts and also taught Achilles the wiles of warfare, so was a good choice to represent a Corps whose main task was to care for the thousands of horses employed by the Army.

Another popular field for collectors comprises the cloth Formation Signs, or “shoulder patches” as they are commonly called. Often embroidered, but occasionally just printed, they were widely used in the First World War and a few of them are of interest. The Cavalry Corps had St George and the Dragon, the 38th Welsh Division had a Red Dragon, the 50th Northumberland division a Unicorns head, while the 17th Indian Division formed in Mesopotamia had a strange six-limbed man-lion taken from an Assyrian temple wall-relief. In the Second World War Formation Badges were re-introduced and several were based on fabulous beasts. GHQ Home Forces had a winged lion, South East Asia Command used a phoenix, the 10th Army in Iraq and Persia had an Assyrian man-headed winged bull, while 12th Army in Burma had Chintre as did the 3rd Indian Division or Chindits. The Airborne Forces had Bellerophon riding Pegasus in light blue on maroon and the 43rd Wessex Division had a golden Wyvern on dark blue.

See **Heraldry in War: Formation Badges 1939-1945** by Howard Cole (1946).