

## An A to Z of Dragonlore (*fourth instalment*)

DOLPHIN, this King of the Fishes in its heraldic version is a hybrid of the cetacean mammal and the scaly dorado fish, with features of both.

DRAGON, the archetypal fabulous beast exists in a range of varieties but seems to have originated in East and West as a sea-serpent or water-monster, gradually acquiring a pair of legs, then wings, fiery breath, another pair of legs, scales and claws, until reaching its definitive form as seen in the Red Dragon of Wales. The Chinese dragon evolved rather differently and even though aerial forms exist, it never had wings. The influence of the crocodile, at least in depicted forms, if not in its origins, seems hard to deny.

EAGLE, this King of the Birds often appears in heraldry in double-headed form, having been used as an emblem by the Holy Roman Emperors and their Imperial successors, but, though there are three-headed dogs and giants and seven-headed serpents, two-headed birds seem to be absent from classical fable (but one might note the Indian Bherunda bird). The Eagle also contributes to the Griffin.

ECHIDNA, a monstrous serpent-woman of Greek mythology, the wife of Typhon and mother of Chimaera, Hydra and Cerberus and also of Orthus by whom she incestuously bore the Sphinx.

EGRENTYNE, a 16th century hybrid of dog's body, dragon's face, cloven-hooved forefeet and webbed hind feet, granted to Sir John Fastolf KG as a supporter.

ENFIELD, a composite with a wolf's rear part on which are grafted the head of a fox and the forelegs of an eagle.

FAFNIR, a dragon in Norse mythology, slain by Sigurd.

FAIRY FOLK, elemental nature-beings including Elves, Pixies, Imps, Sprites, Goblins, Brownies, Leprechauns and other Little People, undoubtedly fabulous but certainly not beasts, as their bodies, though diminutive, are of human form: if they have wings, these are of the gossamer butterfly type, not feathered.

FAUN, an ancient Roman woodland sprite identified with the Greek Satyr.

FENRIS WOLF, another fierce Norse monster, eventually destroyed by Thor.

FIREDRAKE, another name for the Wyvern, or indeed any flame-breathing dragon.

GAMELYON, occurs in a one-off grant of 1557, a beast with a lion's body, wolf's head and dragon's wings.

GANESHA, a monstrous Hindu deity with a plump human body, four arms and an elephant's head.

GARUDA, an ancient Indian divine bird often shown with the upper parts of an eagle, the middle body and arms of a human and the feet of a lion.

*To be continued...*

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# Dragonlore

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Chinese  
Dragons  
by  
Howard  
Kelly

## The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

It is now over eight years since the last issue was prepared. Our founder members are now dispersed, following their varied careers: Richard Fox in psychiatry, Eva Frommer in paediatrics, Jane Hampton and Colin Voake teaching, Angela Richards translating and editing the works of Sigmund Freud for Penguin Books, John Davy editing Science for “*The Observer*” (and on the side writing the text for a film on Fabulous Beasts for the BP educational series) and RB working on colour perception at the Goethean Science Foundation with some part-time work at Sunfield Childrens Home in Clent. Teddy Pelham-Clinton is a full-time beetle curator at the Natural History Museum in Edinburgh but sends me press cuttings about dragons and unicorns from time to time. Some of the staff at Sunfield have shown an interest in fabulous beasts, Ursula Grahl particularly in their role in folk-lore and fairy tales, Ursula Bartning in so far as they appear in images of St George and St Michael, and Edna Williams especially in their biblical connections; Helen Martin thinks that Rudolf Steiner spoke about mythological beings, and Leslie Ladell too thinks that anthroposophy would throw useful light on the subject, while Michael Wilson believes that true fabulous beasts are cosmically significant, but none of them feel able to contribute to Dracology. Perhaps the College should now be considered dormant. I shall continue to prepare an issue of *Dragonlore* from time to time, at least until we have come to the end of the A to Z.

R.B.

### REVIEW

**Fabulous Beasts** by Peter Lum (Thames & Hudson, London, nd, c 1952) 15/- with 84 line drawings by Anne Marie Jauss based on extensive research in the pictorial representations of such figures in the art of the East and the West.

If we were giving courses in Dracology, this would be the text-book of choice. The author has travelled and read widely in East and West, and gives an objective account of the creatures described in fables and myths, relating them to the state of consciousness of those who told the tales. He does not make fun of them for being superstitious, but fits their experiences into the culture of their times. There is a Bibliography of 38 titles and the index includes over one hundred named fabulous beasts.

### COVER ILLUSTRATION

Various types of dragon from examples of Chinese porcelain, jade, silk and bronze  
Drawn by Howard Kelly, from his book “Dragon Doodles” (1946)

## How to see Chinese Dragons in the Sky

Although originating as water-spirits, Chinese dragons soon became active in the sky, being responsible for clouds, rain and thunderstorms. They flew effortlessly through the air, though unlike their western counterparts, never developed wings. One description from a Chinese source runs as follows:-

“Their bodies are almost transparent, with a globular head and a sinuous body. They can change size at will and hover in the sky, gently writhing and pulsating. They are extremely shy, and if you try to look directly at one, it will dart away out of sight at high speed.”

Now choose a sunny day with a cloudless sky and lie on your back so that your head is quite still and gaze directly upwards with the sunlight shining obliquely across your eyes. Soon you may see faint shadowy globular forms sinuously pulsating and writhing, and slowly floating or drifting about. If they seem quite near, they will be small but if they appear to be very high they will seem enormous. As you cannot tell how far away they are, you cannot actually judge their size. And here is the clincher — if you try to look at one directly, it will zoom away out of sight.

Nowadays, of course, we explain these phenomena as the shadows cast on the retina by tiny fragments of cellular tissue drifting about within the fluid that fills the eyeball. If you try and look straight at one that is just off centre, the whole eyeball moves and the object darts away. Scientific thought has replaced superstition, as Howard Kelly would say. But the question remains, did the ancients see these “floaters”, project them into the sky and describe them as aerial dragons, or had they already heard about dragons and when they saw the “floaters” recognised them as confirming their existence, perhaps using their appearance to influence the way they were depicted? This dilemma faces us when we consider all sorts of fabulous creatures, from mermaids to unicorns, and can only be determined by a balance of probabilities, undoubtedly influenced by our own mind-set.

### REVIEW

**The Queen’s Beasts** described by H. Stanford London FSA Norfolk Herald Extraordinary, with a forward by the Hon. Sir George Bellew KCVO FSA Garter King of Arms, illustrated in colour by Edward Bawden and Cecil Keeling and by photographic reproductions of the heraldic figures sculptured by James Woodford OBE RA which stood at the entrance to Westminster Abbey on the occasion of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 2 June 1953. (London 1953)

Of the ten beasts illustrated and described, four are fabulous: the Griffin of Edward III drawn by Edward Bawden, and the Yale of Beaufort, the Red Dragon of Wales and the Unicorn of Scotland drawn by Cecil Keeling. There is also a new drawing of the Royal Arms by Bawden with his version of the Unicorn.