

ROUGE DRAGON

The little red dragons which dwell in the caves
Deep under the mountains of Wales,
They comfort themselves in the long, long night
By telling the old, old tales;
And they tell the tale of a wonderful king
With a dragon gules on his helm,
Who put down rapine and war and want;
And his peace lay over the realm.
And the dragons claim, from his dragon-crest
All the dragons of Wales are descended;
And they say, some day the king will return,
And their long, long night will be ended.
For the king will rule throughout all the land
On Loegria's ancient throne;
And the serpent's reign will be over and past,
And the dragons come into their own, at last!
The dragons will come by their own.



From "Motley Heraldry" by C.W. Scott-Giles (London, n.d.) and kindly sent in by Mary Pierson. Scott-Giles was Fitzalan Extraordinary, and kindly signed my copy of his book, which I had forgotten all about until Mary reminded me. He was a superb heraldic artist, and illustrated all his own books and verses. (*See the cover of No 1.*)

The Return of the "Dragon" Brand

"With our thinning hair we notice how fashions change over the years. Shortly after the occupation, a quantity of enamelled cast-iron table-ware was discovered, and the favourite colours were mirror-finish, light blue and olive green. Nowadays fiery orange, chocolate and shiny black seem to be preferred, but why "Dragon" brand? Fire-proof, perhaps?"

(*Note – this entire section came in a dream. Make of it what you will.*)

Dragonlore

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Winged Sea-horse in Whitehall, London



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

Sixty is a very special number, as was realised by the wise men of the ancient Middle East, which is why we have sixty seconds in a minute and sixty minutes in an hour and also in a degree, and why there are sixty degrees in the angle of an equilateral triangle, six of which fit together round a pivot to complete a full circuit. It takes sixty years to reach a Diamond Jubilee or a Diamond Wedding, which, though rare, are celebrated more often by the living than is a Centenary. Our sixtieth issue also completes four years of production in our rejuvenated form, for which thanks are due to Guy (for providing the computer), Mark (for converting text and pictures into the layout of the master copy), Roger (for printing off as many copies as are needed) and now Paul too (for providing the website). Thanks are due also to all those who have sent in articles, pictures, cuttings, comments, even artefacts (not often reproducible), and useful contributions such as postage stamps. In fact, these welcome offerings have been so numerous that a few fall-back items in store have been repeatedly deferred to make way for more topical items. Above all, thanks are due to those who have sent their appreciative remarks, which give one the confidence to continue.

Saint Erkenwald, a monk who lived in the seventh century, founded the abbeys at Barking (where his sister Ethelberga became the first abbess) and Chertsey. He became Bishop of London, one of the first, and was the spiritual leader of the East Saxons for eighteen years, being credited with many miracles. He was regarded as the Patron Saint of the mediaeval city, and is buried in St Paul's Cathedral. His good works among the poor of the city were legendary. His feast day falls on 13th May.

The picture on the cover is taken from MICHAEL'S LONDON - A Book for Children in any City, by Elizabeth Montizambert (London, 1936). Our copy is inscribed *For Mrs Brocklebank with grateful thanks...and is signed by the author with the date November 1936.* That was my great-grandmother, who is mentioned in the Foreword as having "so kindly and patiently supplied information." She used to spend her winters in her villa in Florence, and lived until 1937. The book describes all sorts of things to see and to do, and involves a good deal of healthy exercise, walking around. Although they picked up this sea-horse in Whitehall, they seem to have missed the dragons on the Embankment and elsewhere round the City. (Right above)



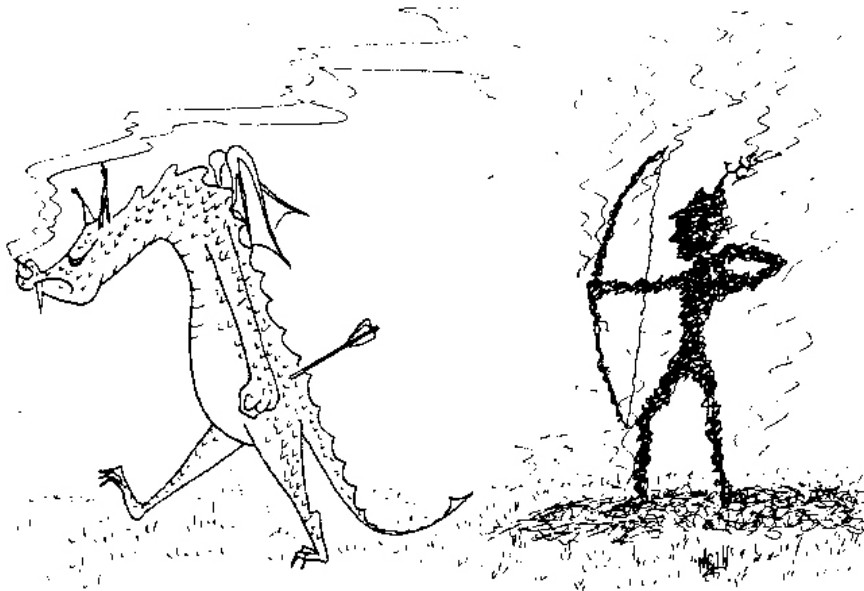
Griffins in the R.A.F.

by Roland Symons



asked to draw the Butler badge, and being told its name, the witless artist would think around for a bit, and then come up with the intertwined cords or thongs. It seems possible, but is mere speculation. More evidence is needed, and for a start it would be good to know the earliest use of the Ormond knot by the Butlers, as well as their first use of the wingless Griffin. Did the latter exist as a family totem before it was incorporated into their heraldry? The creature balanced on top of a castle on the back of an elephant, as carved at Clonmel (*see No 50, page 6*) is certainly ancient, but was it connected with the Butlers? There is much still to discover, but in the mean time those who rather like the name 'Keythong' for the wingless Griffin do not need to lose heart – they might just be on to a good thing.

An Archer's Nightmare



Roger found this cartoon by Mike McGill in *Toxophilisms* (Chesterfield, 1994).

The dangers of annoying fire-breathing creatures should never be underestimated. Archers are generally much more careful in selecting their targets, and Roger has had experience of upsetting neighbours when arrows get blown off course, having taken part in many field shoots (though being a champion archer himself, it was not his arrows that went astray). However, he cannot recall ever having encountered a wild dragon during his archery competitions.

BOOK REVIEW

Peter Ackroyd's book on Albion has already been noted in these pages (*see No 35*), and he has now produced another blockbuster: **LONDON, The Biography** (London, 2000), which contains some quotations worth repeating.

In 1221, "vpon seynt Lukys Day, ther blewe a grete Wynde out off the North Est, that ouerthrewe many an house and also Turrettes and Chirches, and fferde ffoule with the Woddes and mennys orcherdes. An also fyrye Dragons Wykked Spyrtes weren many seyn, merveyllously ffleyng in the eyre," according to the *Chronicles of London*. (St Luke's Day is 18th October.)



He records that in the Tradescant collection, later to become a museum in Lambeth, there were "salamanders, dragons two inches long and two feathers from a phoenix."

On a river pageant in 1533, there was a flat vessel, rather like a floating stage, upon which 'a dragon pranced about furiously, twisting his tail and belching out wild fire,' all part of the ceremonial entrance of Anne Boleyn to London.

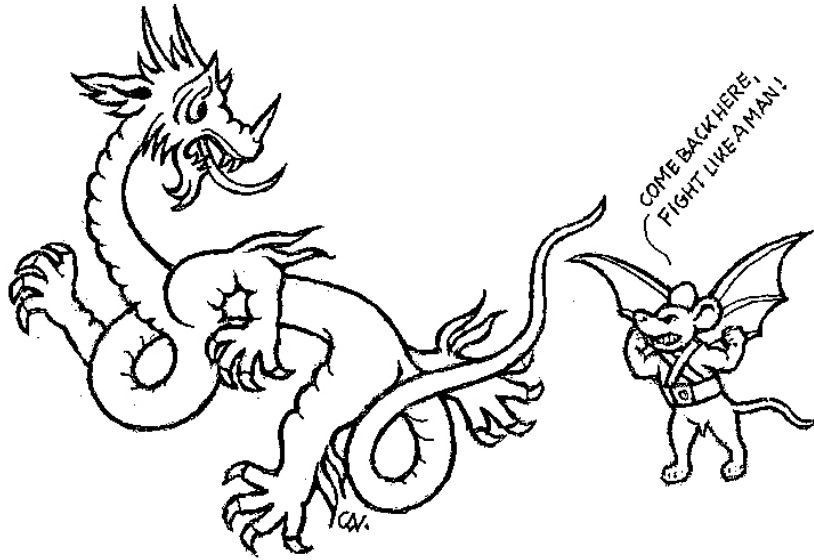
In another pageant, in the nineteenth century, the Minotaur made an appearance, the mythical beast's devouring of Athenian maidens being compared by social reformers to the nightly sacrifice of virgins in London to prostitution – the 'appetite of the minotaur of London is insatiable,' they said.

Later, he writes, "The coinage of early tribes in the area of London, particularly that of the Iceni, carried the image of a griffin. The present City of London uses the same miserly and rapacious birds as its emblem. More than two thousand years after their appearance, the griffins still guard the boundaries of the City." (Is he perhaps confusing griffins with dragons?)

Lastly, coming more up to date, he describes how the novelist Anthony Powell, on fire duty in the City, watched the V1s travelling through the air to their unknown targets "with a curious shuddering jerky movement...a shower of sparks emitted from the tail," and saw them as dragons.

Ackroyd has since made a number of television programmes about various aspects of London, one dealing especially with the many great fires that have attacked the city, from Boadicea's burning of the Roman garrison right down to the Blitz, and remarked how often the towering flames had been compared to dragons' breath. Poor old dragon! Whoever first mistook his forked tongue for a flame has a lot to answer for. But Ackroyd's book on London, like his Albion, is a monument to diligent research combined with poetic imagination, yielding a deep understanding.

Alex Troblov strikes again



Alex has sent in another of his fantasy drawings, with a bold Batmouse frightening off a Chinese dragon. One of the characteristics of classical Chinese dragons is that, owing to their twisted bodies, it often appears that their legs do not come in pairs on opposite sides of their bodies, but are staggered, so that those on one side are further forward than those on the other. Alex seems to have exploited this feature here, though it may just be a quirk of perspective that makes it appear so. He added these notes:-

*In ancient Greece and Rome a dracon was a **giant serpent**. Such a dragon is depicted in the coat of arms of the Visconti family. Later artists and heraldists began to draw dragons with legs and the wings of bats. - In **China and Japan** the beasts are shown without wings. A dragon without wings is called **Lindwurm** in German heraldry. The Lindworm might have two or four legs.*

In English mediaeval church carvings, Lindworms are shown without any legs, usually rising up out of the ground and sometimes fighting Wyverns. These were generally symbolic scenes, designed to remind us of our weaknesses and the dangers of temptation. We have already remarked that Chinese artists started to add wings to their dragons after they had seen European pictures of mediaeval dragons with wings. They said it had taken a thousand years for serpents to evolve horns, and another thousand years for them to grow legs to turn into proper dragons. These dragons could fly without wings because they were spiritual. If it took them a further thousand years to grow wings, perhaps it was because they were losing their spirituality. This could be a warning to mankind.

More thoughts on the Keythong

Nicholas Williams, who is a linguist and a philologist as well as being a master dracologist (having discovered how Enfield evolved from *Onchu* – see No 34), has written as follows:

“While in Budapest I bought a very interesting book in Hungarian on Hungarian civil heraldry. Although complicated the language is not particularly difficult. I notice that as with the Germans the Hungarians’ heraldic vocabulary is largely native. A coat of arms they call *cimer* and heraldry is either *heraldika* or *cimertan*. *Cimer* looks as though it may have been borrowed from Middle French *cimier* ‘crest’ although it has probably been associated in the popular mind with *cim* ‘title, address.’

“Talking of the popular mind, I am quite sure that the English word *keythong* is by Volksetymologie. Why would a savage-looking animal be called the equivalent of a modern key-ring? I believe *keythong* is not English but has been assimilated to the similar-sounding English word, in the same way that to unlettered gardeners *Galinsoga* becomes ‘gallant soldier’ and *Mesembryanthemum* ‘Sally-my-handsome’.”



Another example is the way that HMS *Bellerophon* was known on the lower deck as the ‘Billy Ruffian,’ and also HMS *Charybdis* became the ‘Cherry Bee.’ But there is an ancient example of this assimilation in our own field of studies. The strange oriental beast whose name may have been connected to the Sanskrit word for ‘tiger,’ *pundarikas*, was known to the Greeks as the *pan-thera*, which they understood to mean ‘all-beast’ or perhaps ‘Pan’s animal’ and some of the curious legends about this creature may have derived from this folk etymology. In the bestiaries, the panther was described as multi-coloured, and emitting sweet odours, so the heralds depicted it with spots of all the hues of the rainbow, and with the odours shown as wavy lines coming from its mouth and ears, which were then taken for flames. Thus the supposedly gentle beast became a frightening monster, which of course it may have been in the first place!

To return to the Keythong, we have previously discussed how names can become transferred from one object to another quite different one, but this process can go in either direction. Could it be possible that the fearsome beast totem of the Butlers, a sort of wingless Griffin, having had its ancient name, possibly Irish, transformed into the more English-looking ‘*keythong*’ was itself the source of that other Butler badge, the Ormond knot? Being