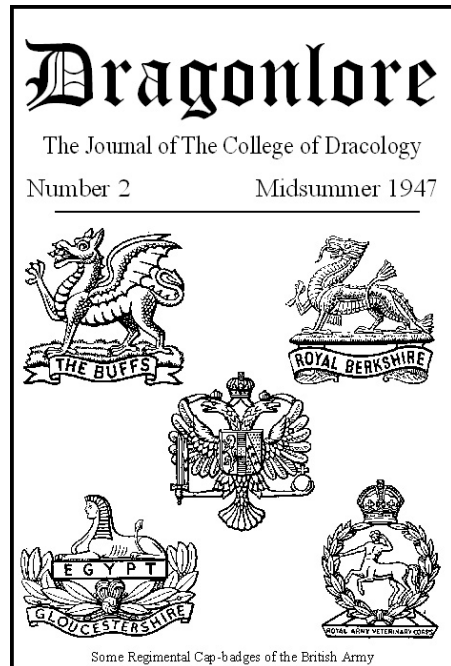
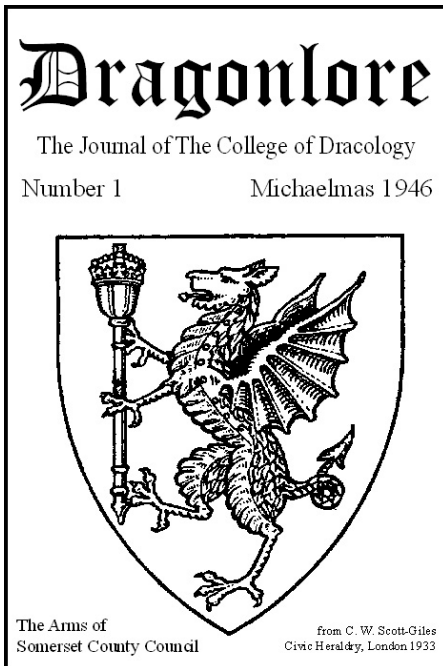


# THE WORLD OF DRAGONLORE

BY RALPH BROCKLEBANK

Dragonlore is the name of a Newsletter or Journal issued at irregular intervals by The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts, a rather grand, if not pretentious, title (but with a nice ring to it) for a group of enthusiasts who feel that such a study is a worthwhile endeavour and not time wasted on a lot of nonsense. It all started towards the end of the last World War, in a West Country school (not unlike our Heraldry Society) when a group of boys and girls began debating whether Dragons, Unicorns, Centaurs and so on were based on real experiences or were just figments of undisciplined imagination. One of them suggested that the subject deserved serious study (but not too solemn, as there was some fun to be had), and so the College of Dracology was formed with members undertaking to look into different aspects of the theme. At the end of the school year we all dispersed, and I thought that some kind of Newsletter could report our findings and keep us in touch. The first few issues were all prepared and taken to a handy printer (who did our parish magazine as well as the local weekly newspaper),



*Figure 1—The first two covers*

and he undertook to have blocks made for the illustrations and to set up the text in type, as there were no photocopiers or desk-top printing machines in those days. (*Figure 1*) Then family misfortune intervened, we had to move from Wiltshire to Sussex, and when at last I got back to the printer, he claimed that everything had been lost "in the fire," and the College became somewhat dormant (unlike the Heraldry Society, which at this time re-formed and has since flourished).

During the years of university, job-hunting and family-raising, I still kept an interest in dragons and their ilk, keeping notes and taking stock of new books on the subject. My tutor at college, a classic and a humanist, when asked about the word "dracology," said that it was a bastard, half Latin and half Greek, and the pure form should be "draconology," but he added that we accept "bicycle" and "television" as English words, bastards both, and since "dracology" looks much better as an English word, his advice was that we should stick with it. Later he told me that I would learn nothing useful about dragons from zoologists (with whom I was studying) because they were all materialists, but should look in the history of art and literature. This view was reinforced by my zoology demonstrator, the formidable Anna Bidder, who told me that if I wanted to do dragons, I should study art, but if I wanted to do zoology, I should keep dragons for Sundays. She said that there were so many wonderfully strange but little-known real animals needing to be investigated, that it was a shame to spend time on mythological beasts. Her own special study was of cephalopods, and when she became Principal of a new college that she had been instrumental in founding, she chose a Pearly Nautilus for the crest on its coat of arms. Her advice probably struck home, as dracology took rather a back seat in my life. A fellow zoology student, who was quite keen on fabulous beasts, said that he would not let it be known for fear that it would adversely affect his career. He became a beetle curator in the Royal Edinburgh Museum, but sent me newspaper cuttings about unicorns and the like from time to time. I never became a professional zoologist, but after a bit of teaching, got a position researching into colour perception and this in turn led me back into education and a wonderful fulfilling life in which mythology and art history again had a place.

After retirement, whilst looking through my papers for something or other, I came across my notes and drafts for the early issues of Dragonlore. My son-in-law had just invested in a new computer complete with scanner and printer, and he suggested that we could produce it anew, so with his enthusiasm and expertise and my notes and memories, we produced a few issues, and soon found a growing circle eager for more. (*Fig 2*) At first the

# Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

Number 13

Michaelmas 1996



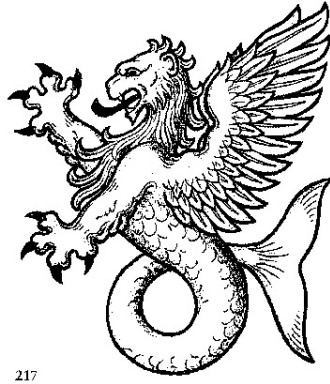
Dragon and Griffin supporters in the Arms of the Midland Bank  
(from Biggs 1971)

# Dragonlore

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Number 15

St George's Day 1998



217  
Geflügelter Seelöwe

A Winged Sea-Lion drawn by Carl-Alexander von Volborth (1996).

# Dragonlore

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Christmas 2002



A winged heraldic Antelope in Baz Manning's crest, granted 2000.  
A brush-drawing by Robert Parsons.

# Dragonlore

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Number 33

St Augustine's Day\* 2003



Dragon inscription from a stone found at Maeshowe in the Orkneys,  
possibly Viking in origin (from Hitching 1976)

\*This is the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century Augustine of Canterbury, not the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century Augustine of Hippo.

Figure 2—Some more covers

cover carried the hypothetical date on which the issue might have appeared, with the actual date of issue at the end, but after a while we caught up with my old notes and the earlier books to be reviewed, and now we are up to date, with contributions and feedback from a total of over eighty members. Membership requires only a belief that the study is a worthwhile activity and not a waste of time, and there are no registrations, subscriptions, constitutions or other restrictions, so we are free to print what we like, for private circulation only. In other words, Dragonlore is not published.

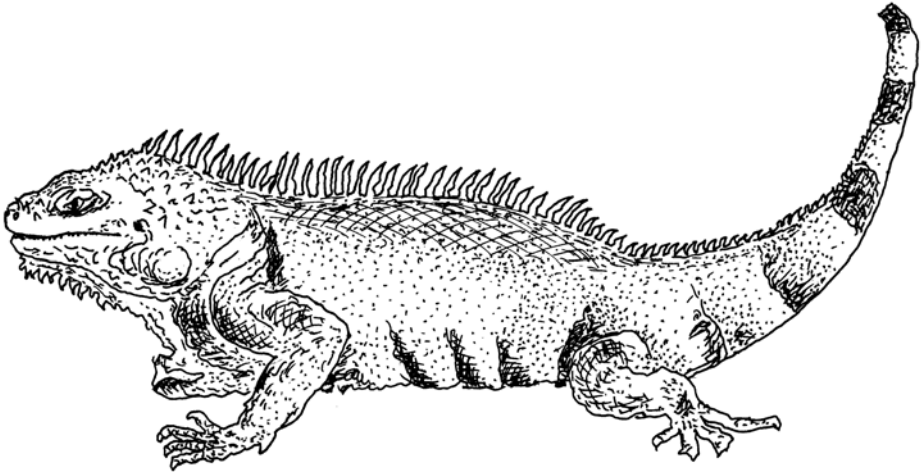
Having started as a four-page A5 leaflet with a large illustration on the cover, notes and reviews inside and an on-going A to Z on the back, we are now up to a regular eight pages, with plenty of pictures, very occasionally in colour for a special celebration. The A to Z ran for sixteen issues and comprised about 200 entries, and has been replaced by a more



*Fig 3 -A Manticor from a 12th century bestiary*



*Fig 4 - The Kelly's Enfield crest*



*Fig 5 -The iguana is not a dragon*

discursive series, an Alphabet of Queries. Well over a hundred books have been reviewed or noted, and a few have been recommended as basic texts for serious study, such as *Fabulous Beasts* by Peter Lum (1952) and *Mythical Beasts*, edited by John Cherry (1995). The very first book reviewed, *A Book of Fabulous Beasts* by A.M. Smyth (Oxford 1939), has hardly been bettered as a first introduction to the subject. Surveys of Fabulous Beasts in various areas, such as the City of London, Naval Ships' Badges, cathedral misericords, mediaeval bestiaries (*Fig 3*), the Bayeux Tapestry and children's literature, keep the interest wide-ranging, while more specialized articles have included such topics as "How to see Chinese Dragons in the Sky," the origin of the Enfield (*Fig 4*), the anatomy of dragons, and "The Biblical Origin of Dragons" by Ben Elliott. Heraldic monsters feature prominently, with a piece dedicated to the strange Tudor inventions, but they are joined by creatures from zoology (*Fig 5*), mythology (*Fig 6*), folklore (*Fig 7*) and imaginative literature (*Fig 8*) that have not yet found their way into heraldry, though we have put forward or passed on a few suggestions.



*Fig 6 - Lamia from Greek myth*

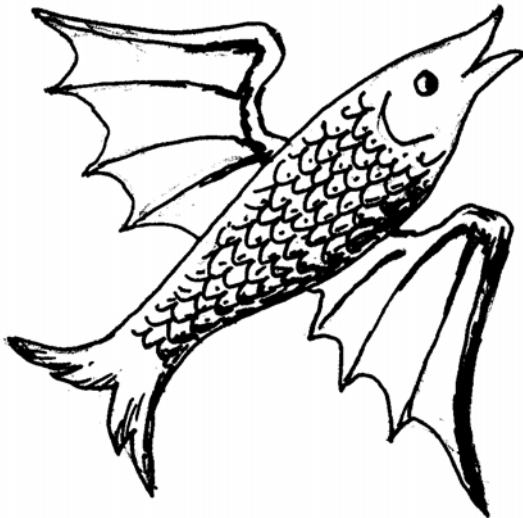


*Fig 7 - Snap the Dragon in the Castle Museum, Norwich*



*Fig 8 -A baby Norwegian Hatchback from the Harry Potter film*

Apart from reporting the work of others, several original contributions have appeared, such as the observation, not noted elsewhere, that Chinese dragons never had wings until Chinese artists had seen European pictures of dragons, and then they copied their wings in every detail, added as appendages to their typical dragon forms. Another example is the suggestion that the winged fish, notably seen in German heraldry (*Fig 9*), may have been a significant



*Fig 9 - Von Brockdorff's flying fish*

Christian symbol and not just a fanciful illustration of a traveller's tale. Then there was the remark that the Unicorn in the Royal Arms is not there to represent Scotland, as is widely supposed, but as a sign of Divine Grace to balance the Kingly Majesty represented by the Lion. And while on the Unicorn, some comment was directed to the problem of its true size, which might be as large as a red deer or as small as a ptarmigan, if the evidence of recent Scots civic heraldry is anything to go by.



*Fig 10 -The beast that was drawn next to the phrase " peyr keythongs " in the College of Arms manuscript*

One of the more unusual articles, *An Essay in Three-fold Cubic Symmetry* is reproduced in full overleaf (pages ??) and has engendered some interesting correspondence. Another source of lively responses has centred round the word *keythong*. Was it, as Sir Colin Cole asserted in 1976 (*The Coat of Arms*, No 98), the true name for the monster usually known as the *Male Griffin*, or did it refer, as Roger Barnes believes, to the two interlinked cords of the Ormond knot, the badge of James Butler? Barnes makes a strong case for his view, and if, as seems likely, he is right, then we ought to find a new and less confusing name for the strange rayed creature - perhaps a *mailed griffin*, a *rayed griffin*, or even an *Orogriff*. Suggestions are still coming in. (Fig 10)

Dragonlore seems to be assured of a future, as there is a growing interest and no shortage of material to fill further issues. We attempt to be both level-headed and light-hearted, and while full of admiration for true scholars in the field, whom we quote whenever we can, we may still hope to put forward original contributions to our subject from time to time.



## **An Essay in Three-fold Cubic Symmetry** with a Family of Fabulous Beasts

Most are familiar with a Cube standing four-square on its flat square base, with four square walls rising from its edges, one on each side, and topped with a flat square roof. This is indeed the basic structure of nearly all modern buildings and packaging. Fewer know the three-fold symmetry of a cube hanging from one corner, with three ridges radiating out and down to a periphery zig-zagging round an hexagonal equatorial plane, and then three more ridges converging to the bottom point.

To replace abstract geometrical forms with concrete examples, consider the development of a commonplace, totally unfabulous creature such as a prancing horse. This animal, one of the Twelve Noble Beasts, can be seen as a three-fold composition. First is the head, the location of all the main senses and the centre of consciousness. Next comes the middle region with heart and lungs, the core of the rhythmic system, and shoulders and forelegs, used for steering and balance. Last are the hinder parts containing the organs of digestion, metabolism and generation and supported by the powerful hind legs, the main source of locomotive thrust.

Now the head can be enhanced by a horn, a symbol of cosmic awareness, to turn the horse into a Unicorn. (Not all Unicorns are derived from a horse, but some certainly are, and these will serve to represent the others.) If the plain horse is placed at the apex of the cubic structure, the addition of a horn is shown by a vector leading down and back to the left.

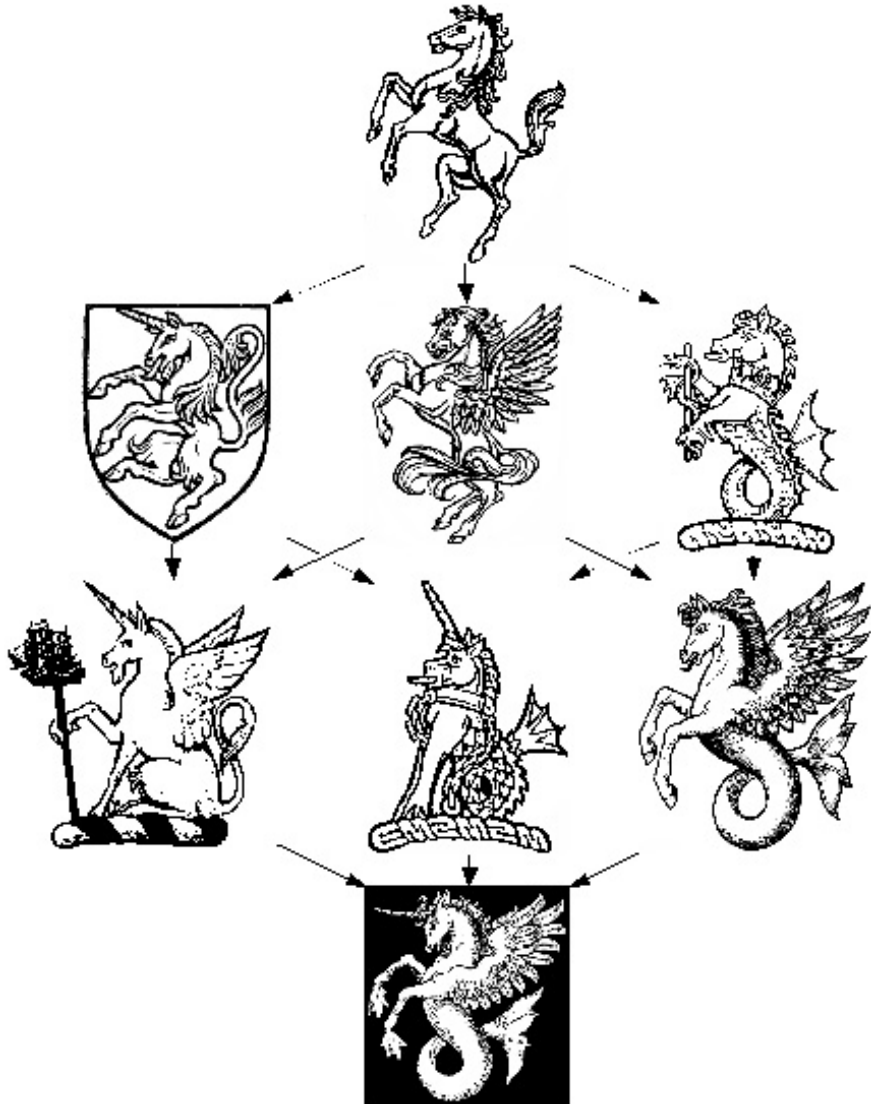
Next the middle region can be enhanced with wings, the symbol of spiritual breadth, shown by a vector leading straight down and forwards and yielding a Pegasus.

Last, the hind-quarters may be enhanced by turning them into a fish-tail, a symbol of universal etheric power, as the waters widely cover the earth, and shown by a vector leading down and back to the right, pointing to the Sea-Horse or Hippocampus.

There is now a tier of three Fabulous Beasts, to which the same three vectors may be applied in pairs to give three new Fabulous Beasts. The Unicorn can evolve into a Winged Unicorn or into a Sea-Unicorn, the Pegasus into a Winged Unicorn or into a Sea-Pegasus (Winged Sea-Horse)\*, and the Sea-Horse into a Sea-Unicorn or into a Sea-Pegasus (Winged Sea-Horse).

Finally, from this lower tier, the three vectors can lead together, by different routes, to the culminating Fabulous Beast, the Winged Sea-Unicorn. This completes the cubic structure (*see opposite*).

\* Some say that a Sea-Pegasus has hooves and a Winged Sea-Horse has webbed feet like an heraldic Sea-Horse.



*Prancing horse - Arms of Kent County Council*

*Unicorn - Arms of Ballwil, Canton Luzern*

*Pegasus - Arms of the Inner Temple, London*

*Sea-Horse - Crest of Dr. Kevin Greaves FRHSC*

*Winged Unicorn - Crest of Norman Duncan Esq CBE*

*Sea-Unicorn - Crest of E.N. Taylor Esq FHS*

*Sea-Pegasus or Winged Sea-Horse - Badge of 894 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm*

*Winged Sea-Unicorn - Supporter of the arms of the Royal Overseas League*

(from Dragonlore Number 27, Michaelmas 2002)