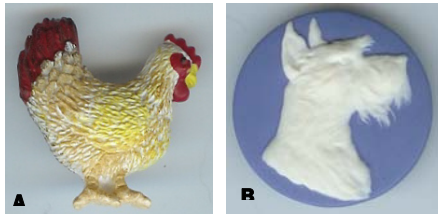


## Fabulous Creatures

By Tom Barrans

There are things we know like chickens and dogs.



There are things we believe in, like angels and devils. The things we are not sure about, like dragons and sea serpents, are fabulous creatures. They are the magical creatures, neither animal, nor human, extolled in fable and story.

Our National Button Society Classification used to list *Fabulous creatures* as a subclass under Mythology, along with *Gnomes, fairies, and Cherubs, cupids*, which are also pretty fabulous.

Angels, of course, are found under the *Religious class*.

The new classification (2005 issue) has now given these categories major class status, as it is quite easy to assemble a tray of them.

Many of the buttons appropriate in class 20- 7, *Fabulous creatures* may also be used in other classes.

For example, a Chinese dragon may be classed as a Fabulous creature or as Oriental.

Bastet, the winged

cat may be classed here, or in Egyptian. Mythological Gods sometimes morphed into animal form, but should not be used as fabulous animals.

The seahorse is a real animal, and is not fabulous unless depicted as a mythological creature. This classification is reserved for imaginary animals.

An article by Jane Ford Adams is illustrated with 124 photographs of fabulous animal buttons. See NBB Vol.44, No.4, October 1985. Much of the following is from that text. The following is not a complete list of fabulous creatures, but a few to illustrate the class. This list is not guaranteed against measles at National or your local state show, however Jane Ford Adams is a well-respected source.

Bubastis or Bastet – winged cat of Egypt

Centaur – Greek mythological creatures having human head and trunk on a horse's body.

The most famous of these is Chiron, so beloved that he became immortalized as Sagittarius the archer.

Dragons – a very large group, as they are numerous and varied among buttons.

Western dragons are frightful, and like to guard huge piles of treasure just to irritate any humans who would love to have it. They all have large heads and jaws, and may well breathe fire. Their body is elongated, often with scales, they may have two legs or four, and a pointed tail.

Western dragons have wings to fly, but the magical beneficent dragons of the East flew without any wings at all.

### 20-7 *Fabulous creatures.*

*Mythological (imaginary) animal/human-like creatures without separate class(es) of their own. Creatures may be unique (dragons) or incorporate features from more than one being (griffins, centaurs, mermaids, etc.). Some allowances are necessary for artistic interpretation.*  
 (from the Official NBS Classification System, February 2005 Edition)

*Buttons from the collections of Barbara & Tom Barrans, Joy Journeay, and Susannah Jordan*

- A. Polyester realistic chicken
- B. Jasperware by Stella Rysynski
- C. Brass, original tint, steel background, Shakespeare's Ariel
- D. St. Michael slays the dragon, wallpaper background
- E. Artid, Western dragon
- F. Bone dragon head
- G. Cinnabar demon cat face
- H. Brass sea horse, double border, twinkle background on inner border
- I. Winged cat on stone
- J. Brass centaur, paste OME
- K. Livery satyr
- L. Gin bari Eastern dragon
- M. Enamel dragon (unlisted) 18th century, carved ivory under glass
- NN. Large Arita dragon





O



P

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- O. Velvet background cockatrice
- P. Ivory Japanese dragon
- Q. Carved, engraved, and gilt pearl on wood, cut steel OME
- R. Papier mache firebird (phoenix)
- S. Aluminum wyvern
- T. Brass cockatrice
- U. Arita Foo Dog
- V. Anubis, brass, cobalt enamel
- W. Bethlehem pearl Phoenix
- X. Brass Harpy
- Y. Mermaid
- Z. Scrimshaw mermaid on bone OME on wood
- AA. Livery Pegasus
- BB. Phoenix, enamel on copper
- CC. Brass Satyr Pan



Q



R

Japanese dragons have three claws while their Chinese cousins have 4 or 5.

Some of the variations of Dragons include the Wyvern, which has two legs,

and the Cockatrice, which has two legs and the head of a rooster.

Dogs – some of the mythical dogs are Cerberus of Greek mythology who had 3 heads; the Chinese Foo Dog who brought good luck

and Anubis who was the Egyptian dog of the nether world.

Griffin or Griffen or Gryphon – has the head, claws and wings of an eagle with the body and tail of a lion. (Not to be confused with Sphinx.)

Harpy – had the wings and body of a vulture with the head, neck, and breast of a woman. A smelly nasty creature ugly in appearance with poor table manners.

Mermaid – and the Merman were half human and half fish and popular with drunken sailors.



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X



Y



Z

Pegasus – Winged horse.

Phoenix – mythical bird rising from the ashes. Hope springs eternal.

Satyr – Part man and part goat. Sometimes the proportion is half and half and others have only goat whiskers, horns and hooves. Pan, the flute player is a satyr.

Sea Goat – as in the sign of Capricorn.

Sea Horse – Neptune had three to pull his chariot.

Sea Serpents – as in the Loch Ness Monster.

Sphinx – a lion with a human head Egyptian style or with wings and female head in the Greek style. The famous Egyptian Sphinx done in stone is architecture.

Unicorn – Fabled horse with horn.

- DD. Sea horses
- EE. Egyptian sphinx
- FF. Wyvern, brass with multiple metallic paint/tints to imitate shakudo
- Brass winged Western dragon, 4-legged
- Stamped brass
- Orobous, cut steel OME
- Carved, pierced ivory



AA



BB



CC



DD



EE



FF



GG



HH