

Strange Beasts - The Griffin

We've put the special heraldic words in italics.

On the tomb of Sir William Paston in North Walsham church is his *achievement*, a design including his coat of arms and various other devices to which he was entitled.



The full achievement of Sir William Paston (1528-1610)

The *achievement* has a shield, the *mantling*, a *helm* and *crest*. On top of the *helm* (helmet) is a *griffin*.

The *griffin crest* can also be seen as the "badge" of the Paston family. It is a mythical creature with the head, chest and front legs of an eagle and the body, tail and back legs of a lion. The *lion* was traditionally considered the king of the beasts, and the *eagle* the king of the birds.

A griffin often looks like this on a shield. This is a *griffin rampant*, standing up and looking fierce. He was thought to be a powerful and majestic creature.



The idea of griffins comes from very ancient times. They are found in pictures from ancient Egypt, 5,000 years ago, in stories from the Middle East and the Ancient Greeks imagined creatures that were a mix of birds and animals.

In England at the time of the medieval Pastons, the griffin was a Christian symbol, intelligent and strong.

You'll find griffins in story books today. In the 'Puddle Lane' books, they've become griffles, perhaps to look a little less fierce!

