

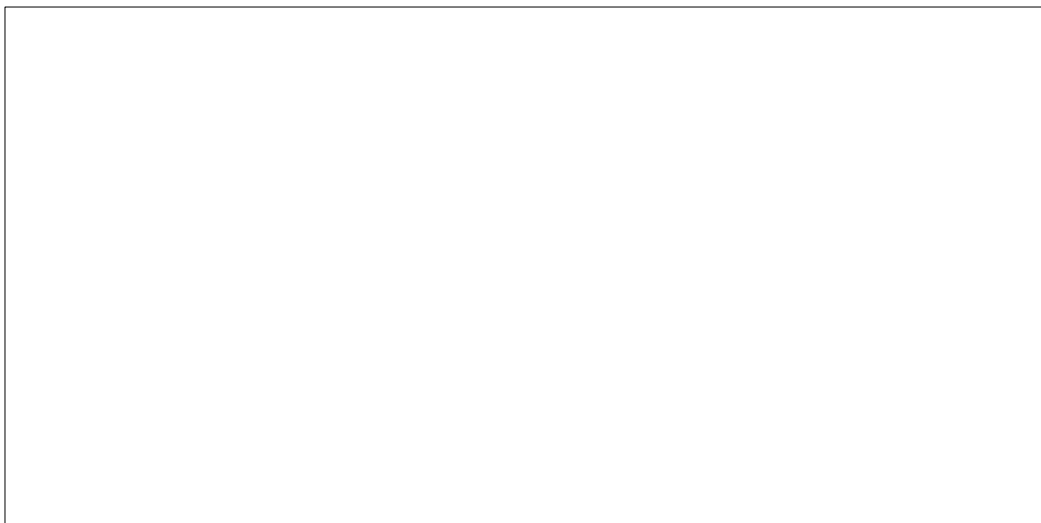
# DRAGONS AND SEA MONSTERS OR DINOSAURS AND WHALE SHARKS?

In St Gwyddelan's Parish Church, Dolwyddelan in North Wales, there is an interesting carving on a very ancient beam. The beam came from a church lower down the Lledr valley (nearer Dolwyddelan Castle) which was demolished about 1500 when the present church was built. The carving shows the 'Dolwyddelan Dragon'. The local legend is that this monster came up the river from the sea. The monster caused floods and so it was transported to a lake in the mountains.<sup>2</sup> The carving looks like this:



Not long after the Second World War, Thor Heyerdahl and his friends encountered a whale shark in the Pacific on their voyage on the raft *Kon-Tiki*. They called it a Sea Monster and described it as having a broad flat face like a frog with two small eyes at the sides. Its jaw was huge and had long fringes hanging down the sides. Its body was huge too and ended in a long thin tail. The body was brownish and covered with small white spots. Zebra-striped pilot fish swam in a fan formation ahead of it and its body was covered with parasites such as remora fish so that it seemed like a floating reef that was home to many other creatures.

Re read this description carefully then draw the sea monster here.



- <sup>1</sup> We happened to visit this church while reading Thor Heyerdahl's book *The Kon-Tiki Expedition*. The two things seemed to go well together as a writing exercise about how legendary creatures originate.
- <sup>2</sup> Information and illustration from *The Story of the Church of St. Gwyddelan at Dolwyddelan* available from the church. The picture is reproduced here by kind permission of the church wardens.