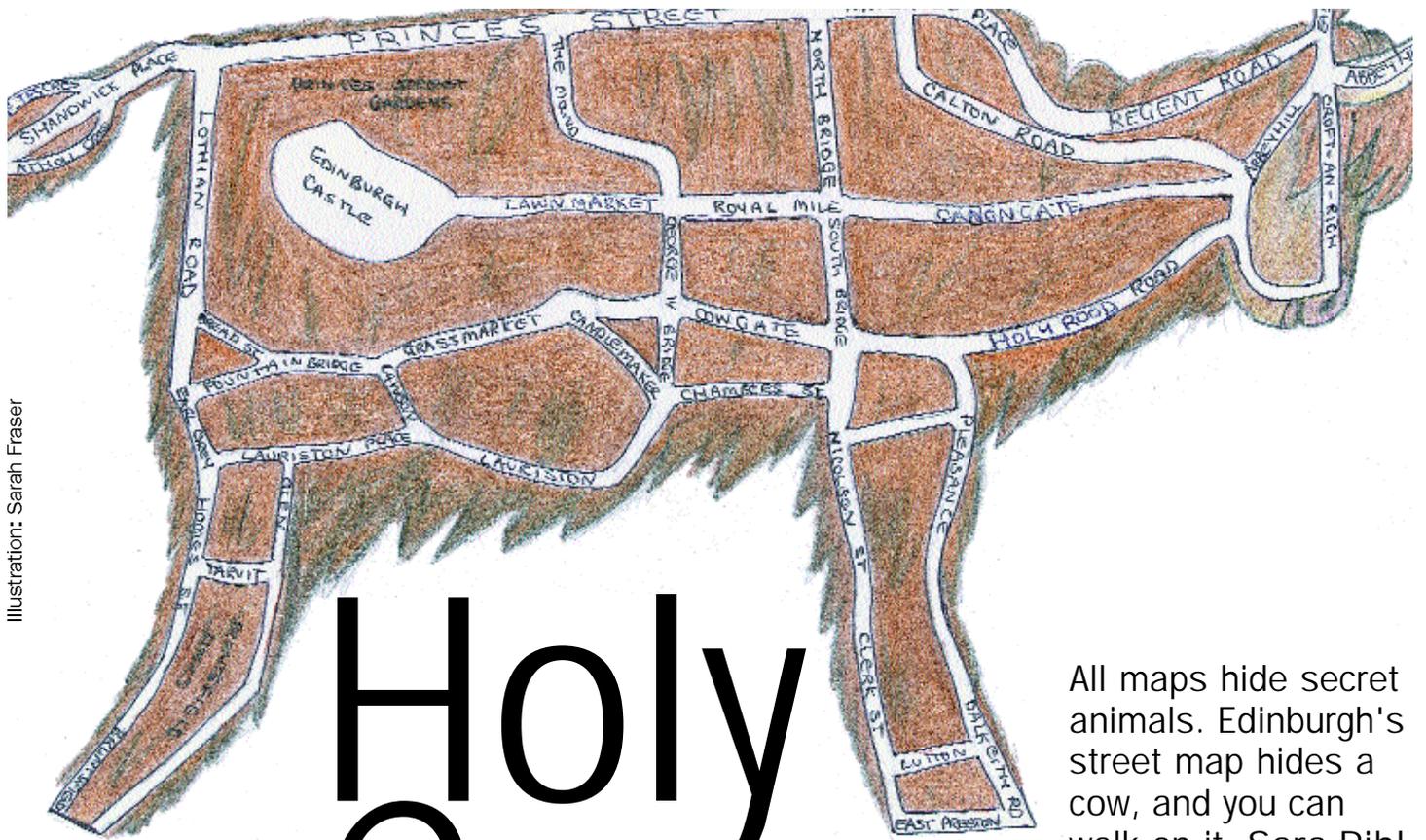


Illustration: Sarah Fraser



Holy Cow

All maps hide secret animals. Edinburgh's street map hides a cow, and you can walk on it. Sara Pihl did, and entered the strange world of carto zoology.

Since the dawn of time we have sought meaning and understanding. We have seen the world and tried to explain it. We saw the stars, and we saw they were the shapes of animals. We gave them names. But we could not explore them, only dream about them. We still do.

Thirty years ago, in a Boeing 727, an idea was conceived. Tor Aage Bringsvaerd, a Norwegian author and playwright, was looking at a Reykjavik street map when he found that a giant fish was staring back at him. It was there, in his lap, begging to be

explored. For the streets are closer than the stars.

Thus a new science called carto zoology emerged, inspired by maps, stars and animals. It was a completely new way of learning to know the world.

"The coincidences are our friends," Tor Aage Bringsvaerd says. "Most good ideas are coincidences. The idea of carto zoology was just that. I was never in doubt that it would appeal to people, but it took almost 30 years before it got somewhere."

Now the carto zoologists have found a highland cow in Edinburgh. It is not visible

on every map. Sometimes it is hiding.

Easter Road and Abbeyhill make up its horns. Its neck is Regent Road. Princes Street forms a proud, straight back. Lothian Road and Nicholson Street are its legs. When you walk the outline of the cow, you experience history like you have never experienced it before.

History in Edinburgh is like a wild but curious animal that has never seen humans before. If you are careful, you can pet it. The highland cow is that animal. It might look dangerous, but it has gentle, brown eyes that look straight at you.



Photos: Sara Pihl

Above: David Livingstone statue
Below right: Greyfriar's Bobby

“ In Oslo, a total of six animals have been discovered ”

Since the discovery of the Reykjavik fish in 1974 and the breakthrough of serious cartozoology in Norway in 2003, many animals have been found. Mr Bringsvaerd has found a dog in London, which has been included in his most recent book, a tale about travelling in the capital. In Oslo, a total of six animals have been discovered.

Cartozoology is more than just a crazy idea. It is a game. “We are like trees,” Mr Bringsvaerd says, “we have growth rings. Inside us are still those we once were; the five-year-old, the teenager, the 40-year-old, though they may be hidden. The people we once were are our roots, without them we will die. And, without games, without being able to play, we will also die.

“Games are not something that only belongs to childhood. It is an important part of being a human.”

A cartozoologist does not only find the animals, he walks the outline of them, armed with a notebook and a camera. He talks to the people he meets. He writes a report about his experiences and photographs all animal life he encounters. He is an adventurer.

Walking along the route of the highland cow, 26 animals were observed. Among them were Capricorns, lions, horses, eagles, dragons, a deer, a highland cow, a mammoth, a bat, a paper tiger, an alligator, an elephant and many black cats.

In Princes Street Gardens, there is a statue of a fellow adventurer, Dr Livingstone, who found the Victoria Falls and crossed Africa from west to east. He fought slavery. Most know what Henry Stanley said to him.

The cartozoologists, facing the statue, did the same: “Dr Livingstone, I presume?”

Next to Dr Livingstone, Sir Walter Scott has a dog by his side. Even though no dogs are admitted in the gardens without a leash, Sir Walter Scott's dog is free to run. Still, it has never left his side.

Although a cartozoologist has a brilliant knowledge of maps, it does not help him to navigate through the jungle of Tollcross. Here, survival skills are necessary. If you don't look out, you might find yourself the victim of a Jaguar.

In Bruntsfield Links, businessmen are playing golf in their lunch breaks, ravens are stealing their golf balls, children running about playing football while their grandparents try to make them stand still long enough for a photograph.

The Balmoral Bird and Pest Control was observed outside Napier University's student flats - however, none of the cartozoologists rushed to conclusions.

The most famous dog en route is Greyfriar's Bobby. He represents the moral of the highland cow. Give it a thought: Thirteen years by his master's grave, per-



haps hoping to hear his master's voice just one more time. "Let his loyalty and devotion be a lesson to us all."

Close to the Cowgate, where the cartozoologists did not find any cows, there is a reconstruction of the Flodden wall, made in 1513. It was built in a hurry to keep the English out after the Battle of Flodden. However, the English took their time in pursuing the Scots. They did not arrive in Edinburgh until 32 years after the battle. Then, the wall proved to be useless.

Along the outline of the highland cow, a very special species is seen more often in summer than in winter. It is recognised by a high rate of digital and 35mm cameras, video cameras and mountain boots – the tourist. One was observed meditating on the roof of Princes Mall, his video camera out of battery.

The cartozoology movement is growing. It has made the national newspapers in Norway. More people catch a new interest in their cities as a consequence.

"I am looking forward to the first international cartozoology congress," Mr Bringsvaerd admits. "Maybe in Edinburgh? I hope Scottish cartozoologists will take the initiative – we need an organising committee."

As yet, the published reports are only available on the cartozoology website, www.kartozoologi.no, and unfortunately only in Norwegian. But the website will be translated into English during the summer, when the cartozoologists welcome a more international membership. ❶



Right: Unicorn in the Meadows