

More from Alexander Troblov



*This is, as everybody can see, blunt falsification of history.
Don't take it too seriously.
Historians can lie, or change their opinion, as time flies by.*

Note that these two dragons are wingless, one has four limbs and the other two, but with buds that may grow into limbs, perhaps even into wings. Stranger things have been reported.

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More on this cockatrice later.

Dragonlore

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St Walburga's Day 2005



Wyvern by Kevin Arkinstall SHA



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

We welcome new members David Cvet and Carl-Alexander von Volborth, and sadly report the death of Peter Spurrier (see Nos 15, 31 & 47).

Walburga was born in Devon, the daughter of a Wessex chieftain, who took to Christianity, became a nun, and went to Germany with her brothers as a missionary under the guidance of St Boniface. She became abbess of a nunnery at Heidenheim, and when her brother died, who had been abbot of an adjacent monastery, she took that under her wing as well, and did much to establish the Christian faith in Germany. Widely revered as a healer, when she died in 779 her body was taken to be buried at Eichstatt on the 1st May, which happened to be a pagan festival, and ever since then her name, in the form of Walpurgisnacht, has been linked to the one night of the year when witches, demons and very possibly dragons, have a free hand. But in fact her real Feast Day in the Calendar of Saints is celebrated on 25th February.

The Wyvern on the cover has been enlarged from a rubber-stamp image measuring 1.5 x 2 inches, that Kevin carved from a school eraser and uses with various coloured inks on his stationery. It compares well with any mediaeval woodcut.

News from Sweden



The colourful journal of the Swedish Heraldry Society, *Vapenbildn*, reports on new coats of arms, and one illustrated in the issue for October 2003 is this grant to Eva Ohlund. On the circular shield is an heraldic sea-horse, and perched on the most unusual helmet is the crest of a winged hound. Twenty eight other new arms are shown, all in colour, but the only other fabulous beast is an eight-legged horse with little sparks coming from its rear hooves, probably representing Odin's steed, Sleipnir. It is a white horse with golden mane, tail and hooves, on a blue shield surmounted by a version of the Swedish Royal crown and backed with a vertical sword, point uppermost, and is apparently the new emblem of their army's logistics force.



drawings were made depicting the creature, and at 50-year intervals the villagers would come together and re-enact the slaying.

More than 700 years on, this is a tradition still observed by residents of all the places connected with the legend and the latest dragon-slaying carnival took place in Dinder in 2001, where a giant model of the Worminster dragon was paraded through the village before being set alight.

But it appears the reinactments have not done the trick and the dragon has returned.

Our photographer Jason Bryant snapped this picture of a blue dragon hiding in the trees high up on Launcherly Hill, near Worminster and North Wootton.

Some say it is the same dragon that was created by the King William Carnival Club in the mid-1990s for its award-winning Quest for the Crystal float.

The model was sold on and featured in the Easter Parade in London.

Whether it is the return of the Worminster dragon or a carnival-related prank, it is the latest in Somerset's illustrious connection to dragons, which even has the dragon for its emblem on the county's coat of arms.



(This legend, and the Dinder re-enactment in 2001, are thoroughly covered in Brian Wright's 2002 book on Somerset Dragons, with a coloured photograph of the latter. This had a bright red dragon with a fierce face, quite different from the one reported from Launcherly Hill. Note that the newspaper photograph was too blurred to reproduce, so a line drawing has been substituted. It appears to have been made from pale blue polystyrene or something similar.)

The Battle of Bosworth



This symbolic representation of the crucial battle has Henry Tudor's Welsh Dragon triumphing over the Boar of King Richard III, with snakes or worms crawling out of his toppling crown, from an engraving by George Vertue.

Another Somerset Dragon

John Uncles has sent in a clipping from the *Wells Journal* of 27 January 2005, with the headline "There be dragons." The article, by Emma Frampton, reads as follows:-

Could an ancient dragon that ate children and terrorised whole communities have returned from the grave to haunt villagers near Wells?

During the 1200s, Dulcote, Dinder and North Wootton were troubled by a dragon living at Worminster Sleight, who breathed fire, scorching fields, trees and sheep.

The people called on the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Bishop Jocelyn, for help and he rode out alone to find the beast.

The details of his confrontation with the creature vary, depending on who tells the story. Some say he killed the dragon with a lance, others maintain he struck it down with his bare hands.

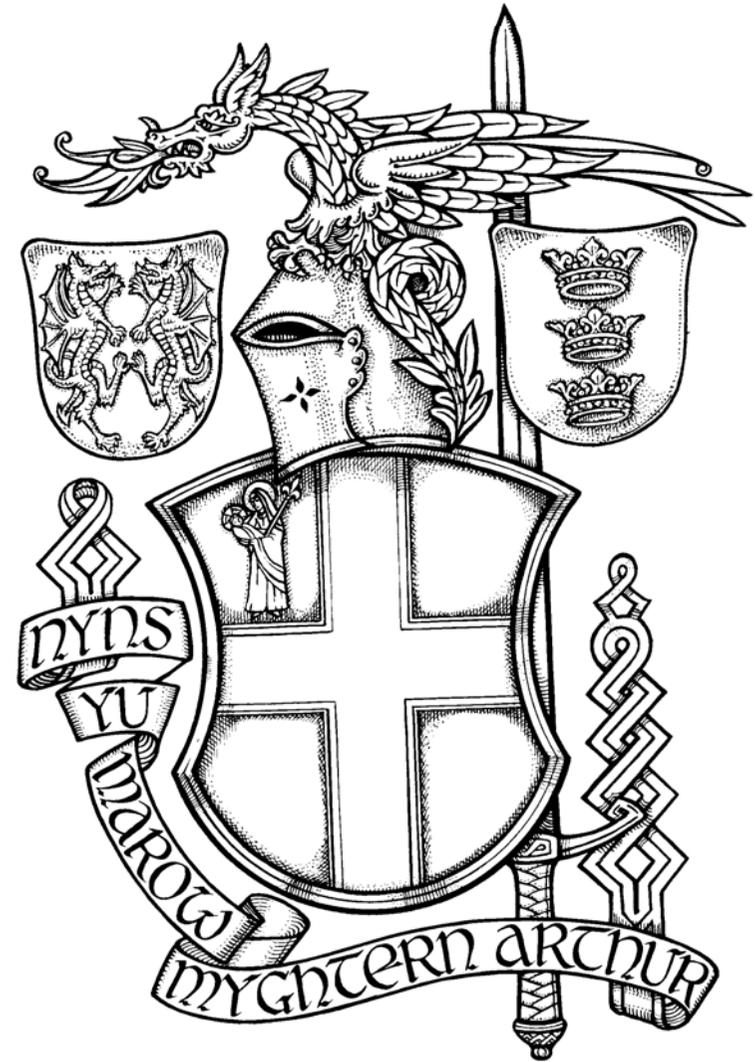
In either case, the dragon ended up dead – but the story does not end there.

It seems that before it breathed its last it bestowed a curse and if the villagers ever forgot about the monster it would be able to return to life; and its chance for reincarnation would come every 50 years.

So, to make sure it stayed dead, the people of Worminster Sleight and the surrounding area did everything they could to keep the dragon's memory alive.

Ballads were written praising the bravery of Bishop Jocelyn, paintings and

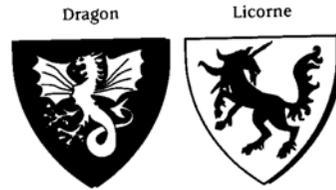
Dragons from Cornwall



Dennis Endean Ivall SHA wrote and illustrated a book, *Cornish Heraldry and Symbolism* (Redruth, 1988), which contains this full-page drawing of the arms attributed to King Arthur and his father Uther Pendragon (the small shield with two dragons combatant). Arthur himself was credited with various devices, the main one here being the green shield with a white cross and the figure of Our Lady in gold. Another one was the three gold crowns on a red field, a device which occurs in many European settings. The motto translates as "King Arthur is not dead." Note that Dennis has given the dragon on the crest a distinctive Cornish feel.

Fabulous Beasts from France

A sumptuous little handbook, *L'Heraldique* by Claude Wenzler, illustrated all in colour and with drawings by Claire Jambon (Rennes, 1997), has some fine unicorn supporters from the 16th century on the cover, several two-headed eagles (not all Imperial German), the Dauphin's dolphins, the strange footless and beakless goose known as a Merlette, and these two little figures amidst a page of heraldic charges. Note that the beast labelled "Dragon" is what we would call a Wyvern, though it is good to be reminded that the Wyvern is indeed a Dragon of sorts, if not the actual archetypal Dragon of antiquity. The insistence by English heralds that only the four-legged variety should be termed a Dragon, is merely a matter of their own convenience, and should not obscure an understanding of their proper historical origins. The two-legged version is the older, and is still recognized on the continent as a Dragon, not only in France, but in Germany and elsewhere.



A Canadian Sea-Wyvern



Eric Saumure, who is currently the Editor of *Heraldry in Canada*, the quarterly Journal of the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada, has sent in one of his bookplates, drawn by Gordon Macpherson SHA, which has an interesting creature as the crest, which we would probably classify as a Sea-Wyvern, although Sea-Dragon might do as well. How could one tell them apart?

An Embroidered Unicorn



This elegant creature is taken from a hand-sewn appliqué embroidery, 50 x 28 cms, by Diana M. Khan, published as a postcard by Wynstones Press of Stourbridge. Seeing it in the wholesale display rack, I asked if it were possible to buy it. "No," I was told, and then, after a pause, "I shall give it to you." So here it is.