

Daniel, now better known for his adventure with lions, claimed that the dragon that the King of Babylon worshipped was merely a brass statue:-

‘And the King said unto Daniel, “Wilt thou say that this is of brass? Lo, he liveth, and eateth and drinketh; thou canst not say that he is no living god; therefore, worship you him.” Then said Daniel, “I will worship the Lord my God. For he is a living God. But give me these, O King, and I shall slay this dragon, without a sword or staff.” The King then said, “I give thee these.” Then Daniel took pitch, and fat, and hair and did seethe them together, and made lumps thereof; this he put in the dragon’s mouth, so the dragon did eat and burst asunder; and Daniel said, “Lo! These are the gods ye worship.” ‘

John Somerville, who was a real person, was knighted, allegedly for his bravery in killing a dragon, given the post of Royal Falconer, and created first Baron of Linton. The Somervilles still bear a dragon, in the form of a wyvern, as their crest, and in Linton church there is a carving that shows a man with a falcon on his arm fighting a dragon. This is probably another example of a ‘charter myth,’ where a family claimed they got their titles and lands due to the bravery of a dragon-killing ancestor.

The story was well known in Somerset, and at Dinder near Wells there was the Dragon and Wheel Inn, now a private house but with the inn sign still in situ. It is to be found there because one of the heiresses of the manorial family married George Somerville (died 1776), a descendent of the dragon slayer of Linton. The story obviously appealed to the locals, particularly the inn keeper, who decided to feature it as his sign, which shows an ordinary wheel, not a waterwheel! There is no doubt the locals were aware of the story, even though it occurred so far away, or the sign and name would have made no sense to them.

Brian adds that the dragon in the crest “emitting fire at both ends,” is evidently accurate in view of how the creature met its end, though this may not account for the other similarly effulgent beasts in the other crests. For a picture of the Dinder inn sign, see Brian’s book on *Somerset Dragons*, page 138. (See right)



Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

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A Phoenix drawn by Michael Francis McCarthy



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

We welcome new members Gordon Macpherson and Elizabeth Roads

St Thomas, whose feast day was traditionally celebrated on 21st December, was one of the twelve Apostles, whose name means “twin” because he was perhaps born on the same day as Jesus. He is one of the few disciples whose words are recorded in the Gospels, and from the nature of his questions he is known as Doubting Thomas. Legend has it that he later went as a missionary to India, and also that he met his end as a martyr by being run through from behind with a lance. His effigies often show him holding a lance as a symbol of his martyrdom. Christianity is now the third most numerous religion in India, after Hinduism and Islam, outnumbering Sikhs and Buddhists, but this may be due more to the efforts of missionaries in later centuries than to the efforts of St Thomas, although he is still revered there as the founder of their church.

Although the Indian rhinoceros is said to be the original inspiration of the Unicorn, it is surprising that in Indian mythology there are plenty of monkeys, tigers, elephants and cobras, even some crocodiles, but precious few rhinoceroses, if any, and no Unicorns. It must be reckoned that the Unicorn, as we know it, is a purely European invention.

The Phoenix on the cover is taken from Michael McCarthy’s book DRAGONKIND, which we introduced in No 50 as a pre-view, encouraging him to publish it. This he has now done, and it will be available from next March. All dracologists are urged to acquire a copy, and they would also make excellent presents for ones sons and daughters, nephews and nieces. The caption to the Phoenix in the book says, “the fabulous Phoenix, reborn from the flame to lead anew those who had fallen....but being from beyond the flame, she retreated into the wilderness to be at one with it, to serve neither us nor them.” So she was no help to the dragons in their quest.

While we are on the Phoenix, let us turn again to Stephen Friar’s *New Dictionary of Heraldry* and see what Margaret Young has to say, accompanied as always by Andrew Jamieson’s stylish illustration:

tales of dragonslayers from Hercules, Theseus, Perseus, Jason, and Beowulf to Al Khidr, his Islamic counterpart. Although there are no pictures (apart from on the bookjacket), it is otherwise very comprehensive and tells you everything you could possibly want to know about our patron saint. Roland also sent, as usual, a Royal Air Force badge, this time showing the Basilisk on a monolith, of the 3rd Fighter Squadron.



Brian Wright wonders whether the device shown in the crest of Lord Somerville in No 77, page 6, is really a waterwheel, and in support sent this interesting story:-



John Somerville and the Linton Worm

John Somerville of Linton, in Roxburgh, Scotland, encountered the Linton dragon, also known as the Worm of Wormistone, in 1174, and to defeat it took a long spear to which he fixed a divot of peat dipped into a mixture of boiling pitch, resin and brimstone. To stop the peat and its scalding hot contents sliding down the shaft of the spear he had the foresight to fix a small wheel, perhaps from a small cart or wheelbarrow, just below the spear head.

He then rode out to find the dragon, and when he did so he went towards it, upon which the dragon opened its mouth to blast him with its poisonous breath, but John held the peat in front of him, and the nauseous fumes given off by it were blown in to the face of the dragon, causing it to almost suffocate as it drew in its breath. John rode closer to the writhing creature and thrust the burning peat down the dragon’s throat and held it there until it died.

There is an interesting aspect to this particular legend, as an almost identical method was used by Hector Gunn, another Scottish dragon slayer, from Sutherland. They both may have got the idea from a passage in the Bible which was accepted as an authentic part of the Old Testament until the Reformation, when it was removed from the Authorised Version. In this

Next the arms of Madrid, of which she remarked that it was most unusual to see a dragon guardant, looking straight at you. It reminded me somewhat of the Tudor dragon spotted in St George's Chapel, Windsor, and depicted in No 72, page 5.



Darrel Kennedy sent a picture of a fierce-looking beast that he thinks is an Opinicus, in spite of its draconian wings. He also says that, in his capacity as Assiniboine Herald, he is devising a new heraldic monster for a client, which will be revealed in due course.



Elizabeth Roads has sent several drawings taken from the Records of grants held at the Lyon Court (where she is their Keeper), including this banner of the arms of the Thistle Knight, Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, with its supposedly Chinese Dragon, and this crest of a Chinthe, from the arms of Colonel Dick Vivers.



Roland Symons has kindly sent a useful little book on **St George** by Giles Morgan (Harpندن, 2006) which summarizes the legend of the saint as martyr, warrior, dragonslayer, patron and icon, with excursions into other

PHOENIX The splendour of the phoenix is said to be greater than the eagle, although in modern heraldry the legendary phoenix is very much the same as the eagle of nature. In earlier times it appeared to be more like a peacock, with a crest of feathers on its head and a long sweeping tail, and in this form it is found in the London Blacksmiths' Company's Charter of 1571. It is always shown as rising from flames. Like the eagle it was a bird of the sun and was believed to be reddish purple in colour. In classic times it was the emblem of people in Paradise who enjoyed eternal youth.



The phoenix was thought to live until it was five hundred years old, when it became young again. Only one was alive at any one time. It lived in Egypt but when its time came for renewal it flew to Arabia and hid itself in a nest it made of the rarest sweet-smelling spices, which rose in flames when fanned by the bird's wings in the heat of the sun. The bird was burnt to ashes, but after three days a small worm appeared which gradually grew and became the new phoenix, fresh in life and vigour. This became an obvious symbol of resurrection and immortality in Christianity. The phoenix was used as a badge by King Henry VII of England and later by his grand-daughter Queen Elizabeth I. It was also a badge of Mary Queen of Scots. A phoenix in flames was painted as a symbol for Jeanne d'Arc in the Gallery of the Palais Royale in Paris with the motto 'Her death itself will make her live.'

MY

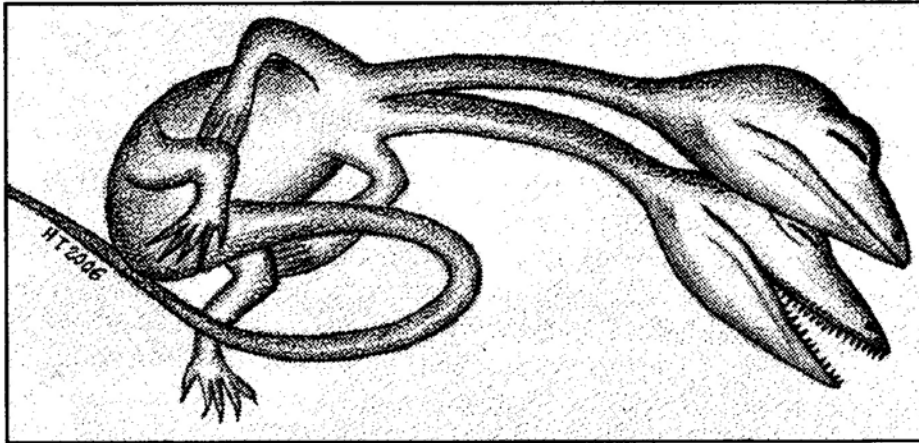
Here is the Phoenix crest (omitting the detached Sun) from the Blacksmiths' Charter of 1571, drawn by Heather Childs in her 1960 book (*see No 13*).



Unearthed, the dragon with double firepower

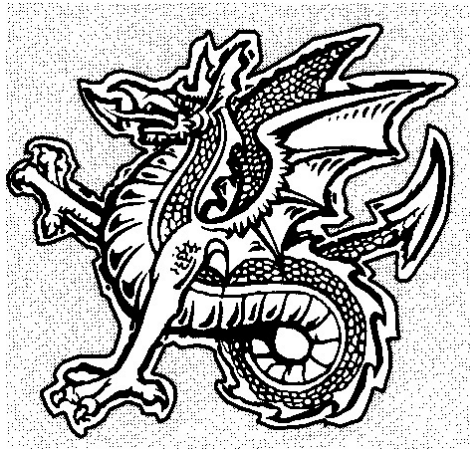
This was the headline over a report by Julie Wheldon, Science Correspondent, in the *Daily Mail* for 20 December, describing a three-inch long, 145 million-year-old fossil recently unearthed in north-east China, with two heads on long necks. Although two-headed monster reptiles are not unknown among today's animal population, Dr Eric Buffetaut from the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris said: 'This two-headed reptile seems to be unique in the fossil record.' The creature's official name is *Sinohydrosaurus lingyuanensis* and it belongs to the family of Choristodera reptiles, which evolved crocodile-like characteristics and grew up to three feet long. This

specimen was either a foetus, had been stillborn or died soon after birth. The reconstruction, seen here, closely follows the outline of the bony remains. In the world of mythology, of course, double- or multi-headed dragons are well known, and it is just possible that the discovery of such a fossil may have inspired such a belief.



Attribution confirmed

The splendid drawing of a Wyvern shown in No 35, page 6, which was taken from the cover of the book *Pendragon*, by Blake and Lloyd, where it was used without acknowledgment, has been identified as the work of John Ferguson, and would have appeared on the cover had I known then who had drawn it. Better luck next time!



ERAGON takes to the Big Screen

Reviewing the book *Eragon* in No 51 back in September 2004, we said that it was “firmly in the Tolkien tradition,” and the newspaper reviews of the recently-released film version say much the same thing, comparing it rather unfavourably with the much-admired *Lord of the Rings*. However derivative the story and the characters in it, they do seem to like the computer-generated dragon, seen here in a still from the film.

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FROM THE POSTBAG

Drusilla Armitage sent a couple of pictures of heraldic dragons she had found in Fox-Davies’ *Book of Public Arms*. First these delightfully entwined supporters from the arms of the City of Dundee:-

