



A Baby Dragon, Or A Bad Joke?

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A pickled "dragon" that looks as if it might once have flown around Hogwarts has been found in a garage in Oxfordshire.

Yesterday the baby dragon, in a sealed 30in jar, was in the office of Alistair Mitchell, who runs a marketing company in Oxford. He was asked to investigate by his friend, David Hart, from Sutton Courtenay, who discovered it.

A metal tin found with the dragon contained paperwork in old-fashioned German of the 1890s. Mr Mitchell speculates that German scientists may have attempted to use the dragon to hoax their English counterparts in the 1890s, when rivalry between the countries was intense.

"At the time, scientists were the equivalent of today's pop stars. It would have been a great propaganda coup for the Germans if it had come off.

"I've shown the photos to someone from Oxford University and he thought it was amazing. Obviously he could not say if it was real and wanted to do a biopsy."

The documents suggest that the Natural History Museum turned the dragon away, possibly because they suspected it was a trick, and sent it to be destroyed. But it appears a porter intercepted the jar and took it home. The papers suggest the porter may have been Frederick Hart - David Hart's grandfather.

Mr Mitchell said: "The dragon is flawless, from the tiny teeth to the umbilical cord. It could be made from indiarubber, because Germany was the world's leading manufacturer of it at the time, or it could be made of wax. It has to be fake. No one has ever proved scientifically that dragons exist. But everyone who sees it immediately asks, 'Is it real?'"

Yesterday the Natural History Museum said that it was interested in following up the find.

Note - A one minute X-ray will answer the question instantly. If there is NO X-ray taken, we have a coverup. In all likelihood, an X-ray analysis has already been done... -ed

The scientific journal Nature once carried a tongue-in-cheek article on the ecology of dragons written by Lord May, who became the science adviser to the Prime Minister and is now the president of the Royal Society.

From the reported sightings, Lord May concluded that dragons are "both omnivorous and voracious", with great variations in diet: one made do with two sheep every day while another, kept by Pope St

Sylvester, consumed 6,000 people daily. Their lifespan seems to range between 1,000 and 10,000 years.

Some scientists believe that dragons, though the product of imagination, were inspired by the extraordinary creatures that once roamed the Earth. As J K Rowling's alter ego Hermione Granger once suggested, legends have a basis in fact.

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