



Half-size clay model of the Dragon to be carved in stone for Temple Bar

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Dragon's Golden Reverberations



The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

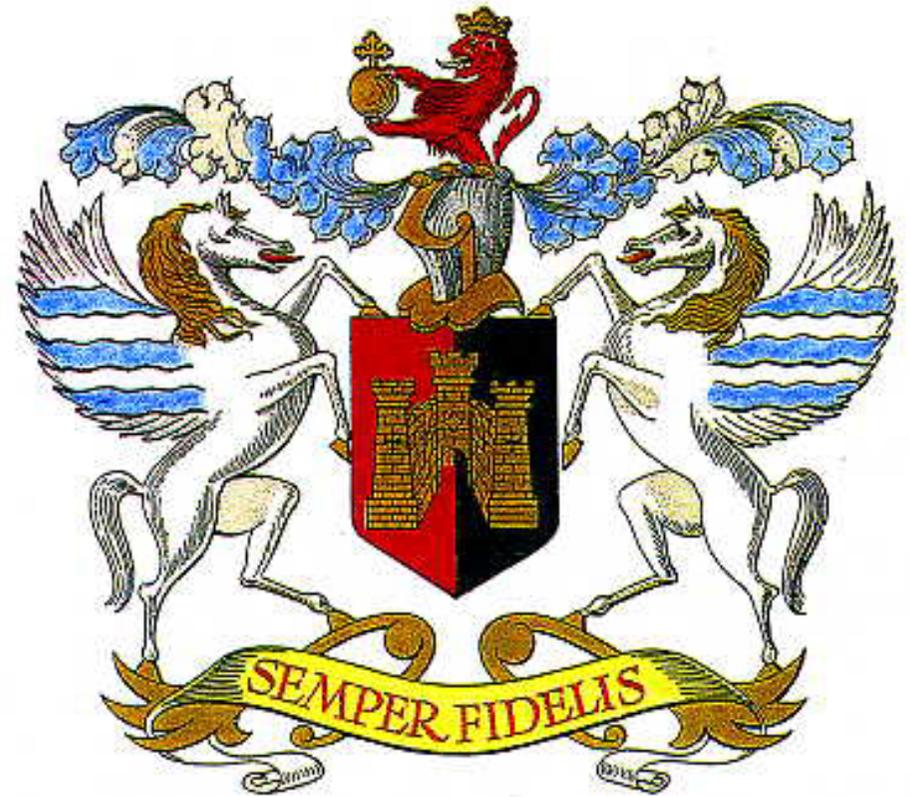


About Augustine of Canterbury, under the heading “May 27,” James Bentley writes in his book *A Calendar of Saints* (London, 1986) as follows; “In the year 596 Pope Gregory the Great sent the prior of St Andrew’s monastery in Rome, along with forty monks, to preach to the English. By the time they reached southern France the company had heard so many stories about the fierce English that they wanted to turn back. Gregory refused to hear of it. ‘It is better never to undertake any high enterprise than to abandon it once it has started,’ he wrote, adding, ‘The greater the labour, the greater will be the glory of your eternal reward.’ “Gregory persuaded some French priests to aid the mission and Augustine with his party landed in England in 597. He found a welcome from King Ethelbert, a pagan whose wife Bertha was the daughter of the King of Paris and already a Christian. Soon Ethelbert was baptised. Augustine was consecrated archbishop of the English, and he established his see at Canterbury. The saint was able to found two more bishoprics – at London and Rochester, and many came to learn from him; but much of the land still lay outside his jurisdiction at the time of his death seven years after he first reached England; some bishops in Wales and the south-west held fast to their Celtic practices.” Bentley does not make it clear that these ‘Celtic practices’ were in fact Christian, the Celtic Church, based in Wales and Ireland, having already converted pretty well the whole of Britain by the time Augustine arrived. His job was really to convert the English to Rome. It is due to him that Canterbury is our premier see.

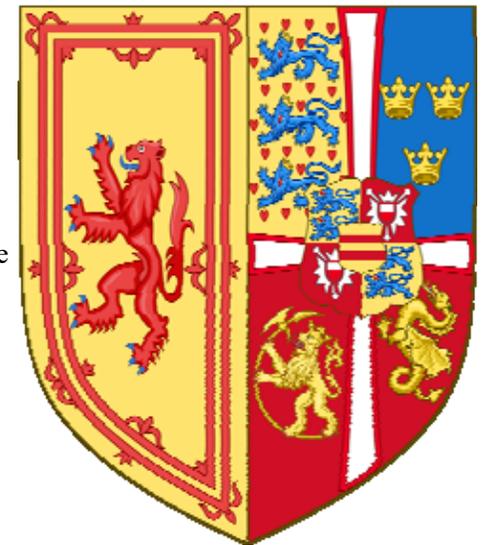
The picture on the cover is for the month of May in Ciruelo Cabral’s 2016 Dragon Calendar, a present from Annie Robertson. His artwork is very imaginative, if rather overpowering, and the Dragons he paints are all enormous fantasy types, not the rather cute little beasts seen in mediaeval illustrations

A CALLIGRAPHIC CURIOSITY

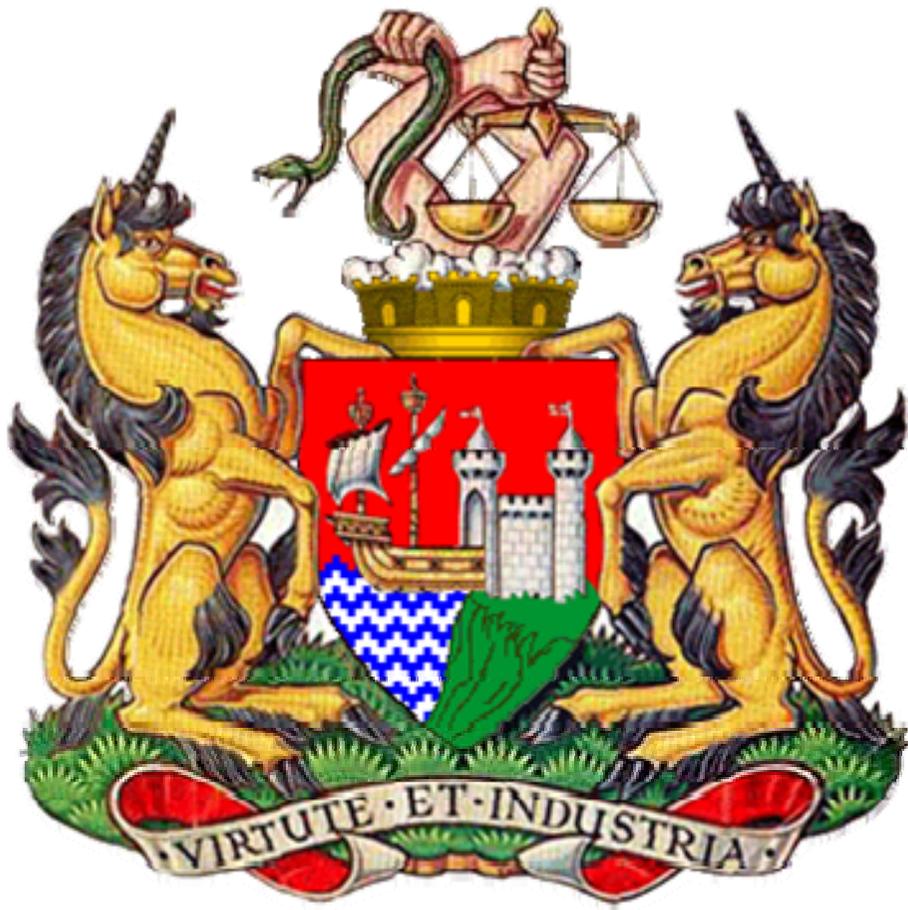
This stylish letter ‘H’ is from a manuscript writing book, copied from an alphabet engraved by the Master of the Banderolles, English, about 1550, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Is the Dragon being examined by a nurse, or is this a struggle in which the brave lady is preventing the Dragon from eating her? One longs to see the rest of the alphabet, and wishes that one’s own writing lessons had been such fun.



Tak Tent No 71, Spring 2016 (came in May) has no Unicorns, and little else for us, but the keen-eyed might discern a golden Dragon, much distorted, representing Slavonia in one of the quarterings of the arms of Margaret of Denmark, the Queen of James III of Scotland (*enlarged version seen here on the right*).

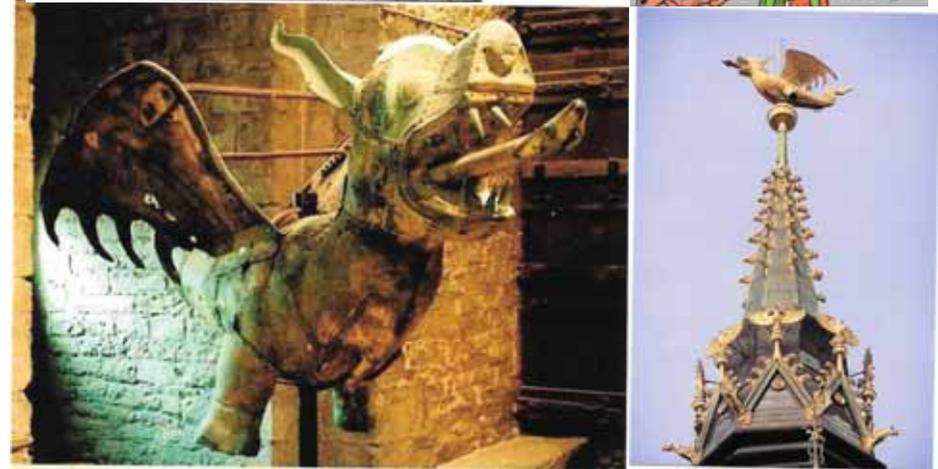


Aspects of Heraldry No 30, 2016 has the Unicorns supporting the arms of the City of Bristol (*below*), the Pegasus supporters with the arms of the City of Exeter (*next page*) and a Red Dragon as the sinister supporter for the University of Lancaster, in an article *Town and Gown* by David Krause. Sea Lions and Sea Dragons appear in the arms and banner of the Thames Traditional Rowing Association in an article on *Banners on Boats*.



A GENT GROTESQUE

Cathie Constant went to Belgium and in the town of Gent (Ghent in French, Gaunt in English) she found a Dragon, not unlike the one we reported from nearby Brugge (*see No 51, p 6*) but better illustrated. The first picture shows it in 1913 as a photograph and the next in a cartoon celebrating its centenary. Then there is a photograph taken when it was being restored, and lastly a view of it perched atop the Belfort spire.



A FABULOUS FUTURE

This curious device says it is a Dragon, with a recognizable picture to confirm it, but actually it is a spacecraft, with its inventor Elon Musk standing in front to give a sense of scale. This appeared in the Business section of *The Daily Telegraph* for Monday 16 May 2016.



A CURIOSITY FROM CORNWALL

Nicholas Williams writes as follows:

“There is an interesting incident with a dragon in the Cornish play *Beunans Meriasek* (The Life of St Meriasek). The whole text is online at archive.org under *Beunans Meriasek, the life of Saint Meriasek, bishop and confessor. A Cornish drama*. The play was written (if not composed) in AD 1504 in Camborne in Cornwall. The main character is Saint Meriadec (Merissek in Cornish) who was the house saint of the Counts of Rohan. Much of the activity in the play takes place in and around Pontivy in Vannes in Brittany, the territory of the Counts of Rohan. Other people also occur in the play, the emperor Constantine and the Blessed Virgin Mary, for example. The incident with St Silvester and the dragon starts on page 226, at line 3904;

Besy yv thyn bones war yma dragon vras heb mar in caff oma rebon ny.

‘It is necessary for us to be careful, there is a great dragon certainly in a cave beside us here.’ I mention this because the incident seems unique to me. St Silvester, unlike St George, doesn’t kill the dragon but exiles her (*dragon* is feminine in Cornish) to the wilderness. It seems as though Silvester was the first conservationist and didn’t want a rare animal to become extinct.”

We dealt with St Silvester briefly in No 132. He was a contemporary of Constantine, who made him Bishop of Rome, and was the first non-martyr to be made a saint. Elsewhere we have noted a couple of Near Eastern female saints who tamed their dragon foes rather than kill them, but St George too came from the Near East, and he fits well into the classic pattern seen in the stories of Perseus, Bellerophon and other heroes. Such legends spread across Europe, and we are grateful to Nicholas for bringing to our attention this one from Cornwall.



JOURNAL SCAN

The New Zealand Armorer No 138, Autumn 2016 (May) has no fewer than nine Unicorns, all on Royal Coats of Arms, but very varied in style.



The Heraldic Craftsman No 91, April 2016

(came in May) has a number of two-headed Eagles from the Austrian Imperial arms but also several versions of the Dragon being restored to Temple Bar, now preserved in Paternoster Square in London, of which this half-size clay model (*see back page*) is the best example.

