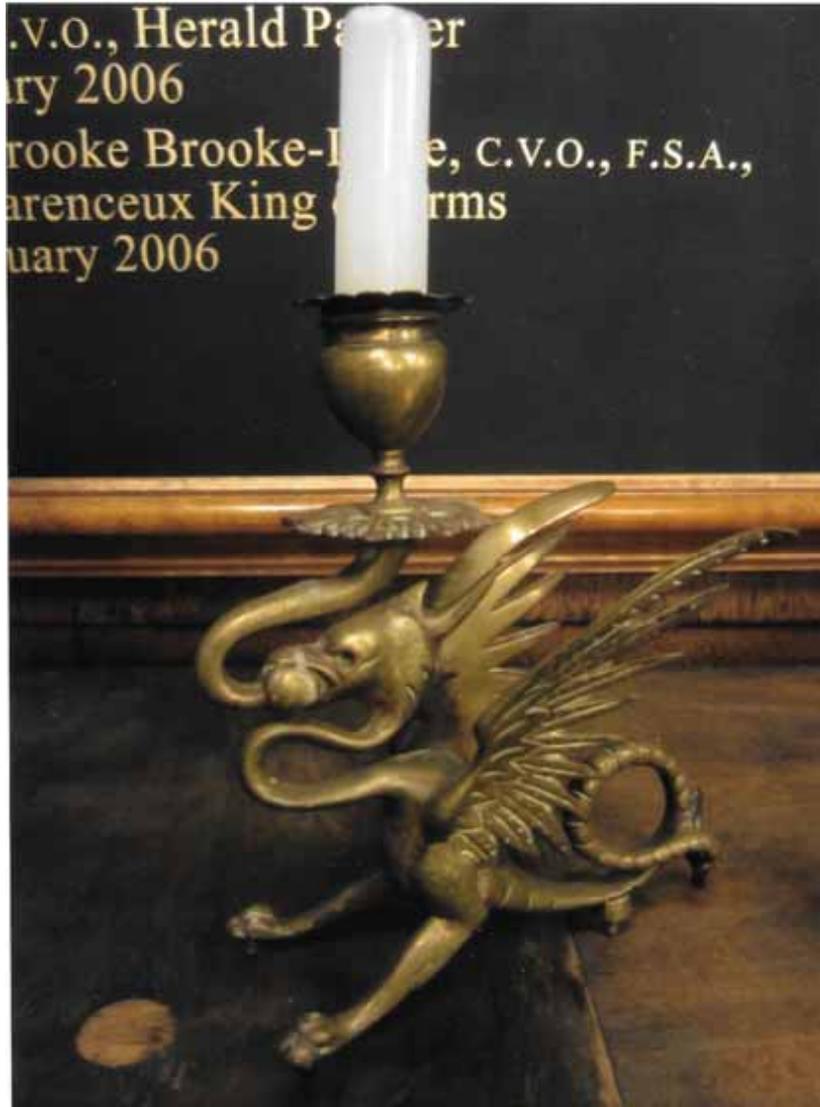


## A WRY WYVERN



This brass candlestick is in St Benet's Church, opposite the College of Arms, the Heralds' official place of worship. The photograph is by the kindness of **David Vaudrey**, who was visiting the church on the occasion of the White Lion Society's Annual Meeting.

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# Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

No.179

St Joseph's Day 2016



Griffin from a 15<sup>th</sup> century French Illuminated Manuscript



## The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts



Saint Joseph is a somewhat enigmatic figure in the Gospels, where he is described as the husband of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Actually both St Matthew and St Luke make it clear that he was the Father of Jesus, who was born into the House of David, but since the rise of the doctrine of the permanent virginity of Mary and the miraculous birth of Jesus, the Church has decreed that St Joseph was only the foster-father. I am not a theologian, but Matthew and Luke each give the step-by-step descent of Joseph from David but by quite different routes, one from David's son Solomon and the other from Nathan. Therefore, according to the Bible, there were two Josephs and presumably two Jesus children, an anomaly that has been debated at length in recent years.

Matthew has little to say about Joseph, just that an angel of the Lord appeared to him three times, first to tell him to accept the child that his espoused Mary is bearing and to call his name Jesus, then to warn him after the wise men from the east had visited them that he should flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt as there were those who sought to slay the child, and lastly to tell him that Herod was dead and that it was time he went back home. It is stated that the wise men had visited them in a house, not in a stable. Luke mentions Joseph rather more often, but only to tell of his presence at various events. One can infer that he was not well off, but most of what is said about him – his profession as a carpenter, for instance – is largely legendary. Both Joseph and Mary were among the commonest names with the Jews, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that there were two families who thought that their circumstances fitted the prophecies, which would have been well known at that time. Why the early Church Fathers should have accepted both stories as Gospel Truth and believed that they both referred to the same Christ Child, is yet another mystery. They are agreed that Saint Joseph's feast day falls on 19<sup>th</sup> March.

The picture on the cover is taken from Manuscript MS 251 in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. It shares a page with an Eagle, a Swan and a Cockerel, so evidently the artist thought a Griffin was more bird than beast. A beautifully proportioned example of its kind, one wonders why the leonine rear-end is cowed. The Griffin is by far the most popular fabulous beast in British heraldry, outnumbering Dragons quite significantly. It is just a pity that they are so often mistaken for Dragons, presumably because the Dragon is the more popular with the public at large.



## JOURNAL SCAN

**TAK TENT No 70** Winter 2016 (came in March) has lots of pictures of members of the Heraldry Society of Scotland all decoratively attired but none of them fabulous, and then, in an article on Lady Heralds, the arms of Claire Boudreau, Chief Herald of Canada, with its Panthers incensed (*seen small in No 174 but rather larger here below*).



Finally, announcing the appointment of Liam Devlin as a new Unicorn Pursuivant of Arms, replacing John Malden, there is a picture of his badge of office, a handsome Unicorn (*right*).



## TWO ANCIENT ARTEFACTS

Christopher Howse writes: “In the soggy ground of King’s Lynn one day in 1992 someone picked up a clod and, rubbing the mud from it, found an almond-shaped coppery object, an inch and a half long (*right*). It shows St Margaret of Antioch beneath a Gothic canopy, with a book of the Gospels in one hand and in the other a staff with a cross, which keeps down a wicked dragon beneath her feet. In one legend about her, when the dragon ate her, the sign of the cross made it burst. St Margaret, one of the so-called holy helper saints, was invoked in the Middle Ages by women in the perilous time of childbirth. An image of her survives on the marvellous painted screen in the parish church at Ranworth, Norfolk. The coppery object turned out to be more than 700 years old, for it was the mould or matrix from which wax seals were made, authenticating documents written for the Prior of the Sack Friars in Lynn...” (*and see No 172*)



This mediaeval sculpture from a church in Italy (*above*), for which the explanatory text has been lost, shows a man holding two Griffins by the neck while they in turn are biting his upper arms. Its significance has been forgotten over the ages, but speculation suggests that it may refer to a legend of Alexander the Great, who is said to have tamed Griffins to carry him aloft when chained to a basket. On the other hand it may just be an example of mediaeval exuberance. In any case, it is an impressive piece of art.

## LOATHSOME LADON



This picture of the hundred-headed Dragon Ladon guarding the tree bearing the Golden Apples of the Hesperides was sent in by **Cathie Constant**, who found it in a book in the children’s section of her library, *THE TWELVE LABOURS OF HERCULES* by James Riodan and illustrated by Christina Balit. The Hesperides were three nymphs who were the only ones allowed to pick the golden apples, the tree having been a wedding gift from Zeus to Hera. Eurystheus was the bitterest enemy of Hercules and was determined to get rid of him by giving him impossible tasks, ten of which had been successfully achieved, fetching the Golden Apples of the Hesperides being the eleventh task. Hercules found that each time he cut off one of Ladon’s heads, two more grew in its place, but when he used a burning brand to seal the wound, no more growth occurred, so he was eventually able to overcome the monster and pick the apples. After one more task was completed, Eurystheus gave up and freed Hercules, who was then accidentally killed by his wife, taken up into the sky and made into a god. Some people think that the stories about Hercules may not be entirely legendary, but may be based on the exploits of a real man.

## WELSH WONDER



A hitherto unknown Jurassic-era dinosaur whose remains have been discovered on a beach in Penarth, South Wales, has been named *Dracoraptor hanigani* in the mistaken belief that it was some kind of Dragon or perhaps just in honour of the Welsh totem creature. It was first found by the brothers Nick and Rob Hanigan, hence its species name, and was about 28 inches tall and 6½ feet long – quite small for this type of dinosaur. In spite of what cartoonists will continue to depict, all the dinosaurs had long since disappeared before ever a human being walked the earth. Dragons were developed from serpents by the human imagination and never had anything to do with dinosaurs. However, we must congratulate the Welsh on now having their very own extinct raptor.

**ODD STREAK** from *The Daily Mail*, 7 March 2016 - "HORN ENVY"



## CANAL-BOAT CAPERS

Dave Perks decorates canal boats among his other skills and Dragon themes have become quite popular. Here are a few of his recent efforts, the three-headed Dragon for "Khaleesi" being from the Game of Thrones on the television and the rest being ingenious variants of Celtic knot-work.

