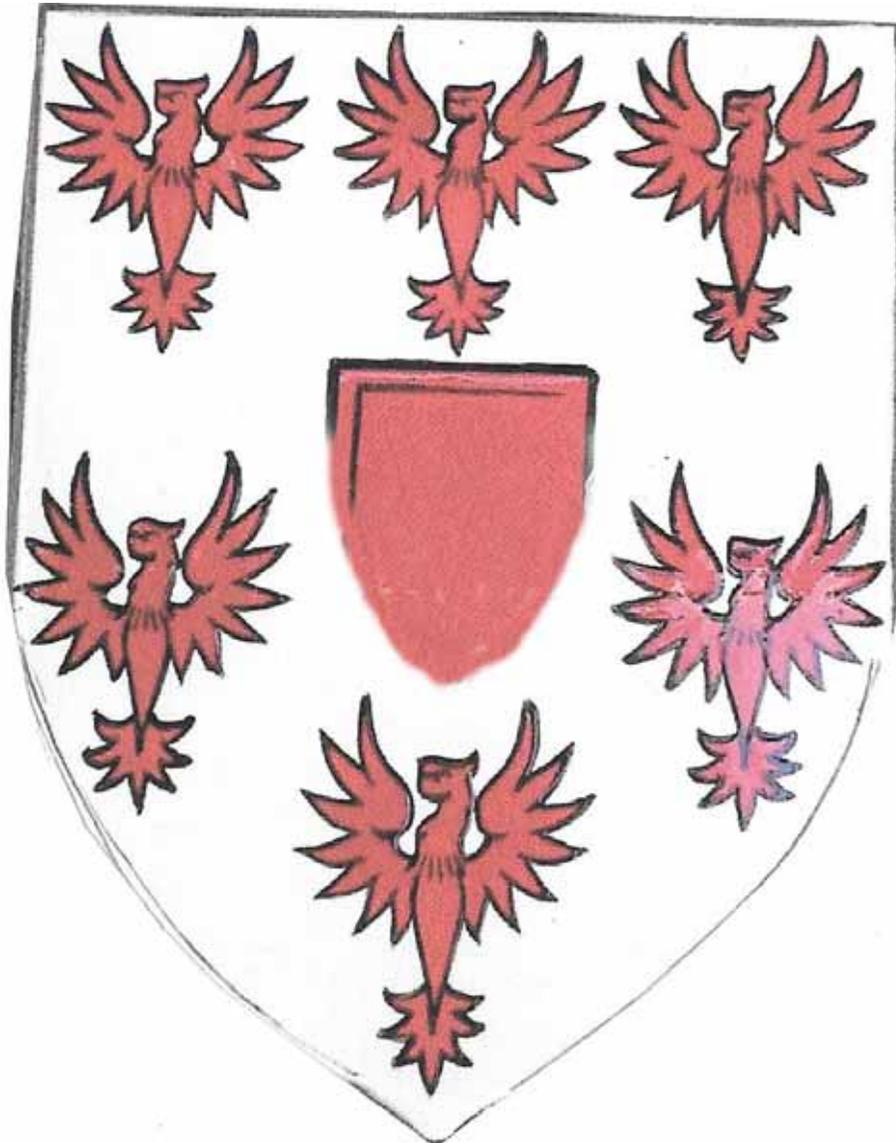


ALERIONS



Arms of the Holden family with Alerions (beakless and legless Eagles)

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# Dragonlore

The Journal of The College of Dracology

No.185

St Matthew's Day 2016



An Heraldic Harpy



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



We dealt with St Matthew at some length in No 103, 21 September 2008, and there is little to add except to remark that his Christmas story is so much at variance from that of St Luke, even with a different descent from David to Joseph, that some modern scholars think he was recounting the events of quite a different family. As the prophecies were well known to all, it is not unlikely that two families should have claimed to fulfil the requirements. Many early artists did paint pictures with two Jesus children, but modern artists who show shepherds following a star or wise men visiting a stable are hopelessly confused.

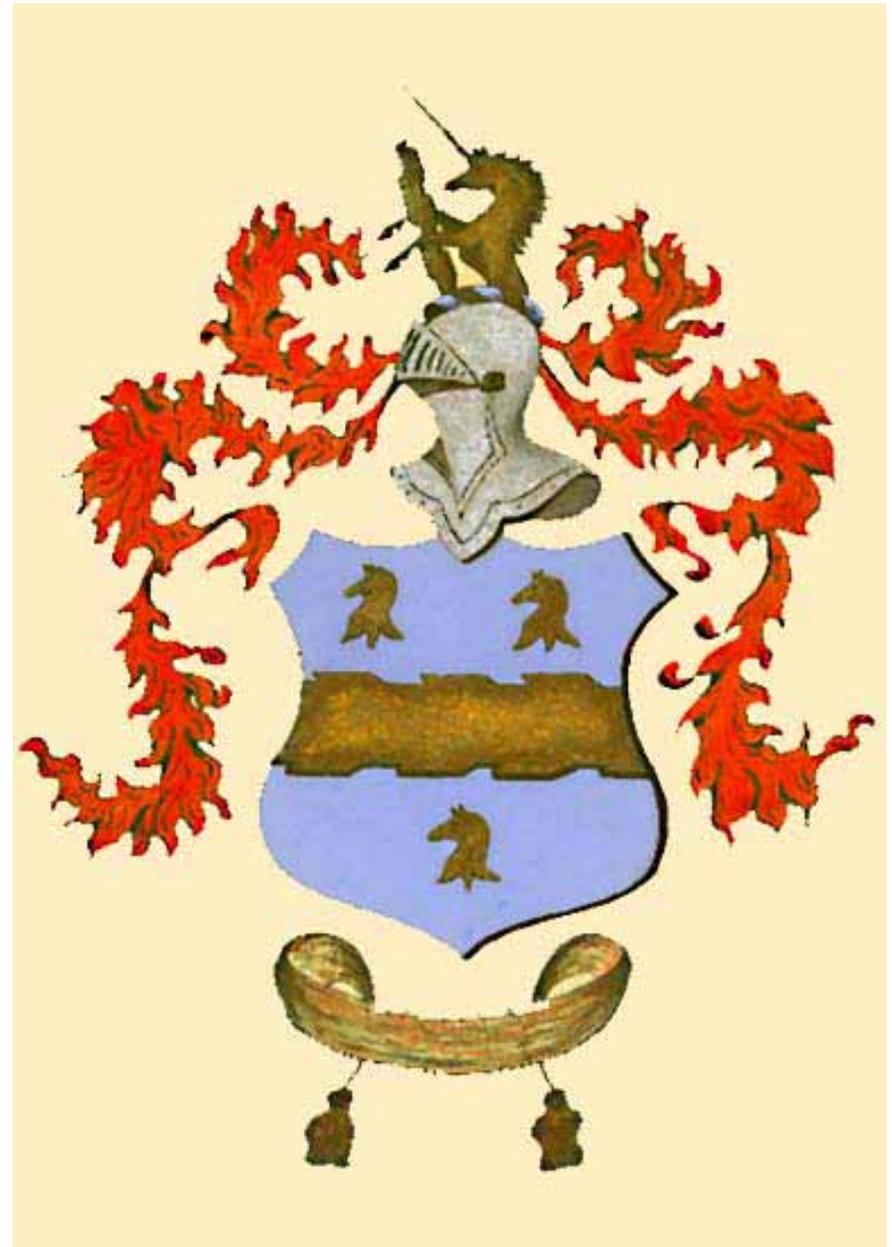
The picture on the cover is one of a pair sent by **Jan Keuzenkamp** from the French book by Jean-Pol Gomérieux, *Les motifs de l'heraldique; variations et compositions* (Editions Vial, 2013). It is captioned *D'argent, à la harpie de sable, chevelée de gueules*.

The other one (right) is captioned *D'argent, au basilic de gueules*. The drawing both of the Basilisk and of the Harpy, is beautifully bold and clear and sets a good example for all heraldic art. Jan also sent pictures of the arms of two Lithuanian villages: Barstyciai bears a fish with two heads, granted 28 June 2011, and Grendave has a sea-wolf, granted 16 January 2012 (both bottom). So good heraldry flourishes in Eastern Europe. Many thanks to Jan for these examples.



## JOURNAL SCAN

The **Somerset Dragon No.34 August 2016** has, apart from its delightful masthead, a demi-Unicorn crest with some Unicorn heads on a shield for the Leir family.



## BOOK REVIEW

**ST GEORGE Let's Hear it for England!** By Alison Maloney (London, 2010) starts off with a delightful re-telling of the legend of St George and the Dragon, but goes on to give a comprehensive survey of the mythology and history of the saint, from a Middle East martyr through the mediaeval warrior to the modern patron of so many countries, not just England. There are excellent summaries of the appearance of St George in politics, in literature and in art, an appreciation of his recent resurgence in England and an encouragement to celebrate him even more. There are both an Epilogue and an Afterword, useful time charts and a good bibliography, and it is illustrated throughout with little woodcuts, a selection shown below.



## A PAIR OF DRAGONS IN LOVE



**Mark Brocklebank-Smith** sent this picture of these statues by Darin Lazarov from Varne in Bulgaria. This is not a scene we see very often, if at all, but is a cheerful change from our usual depictions and has been delightfully executed.

## A MARBLE MANTLEPIECE



**Bernard Jubly** came across this marble mantelpiece at the Chateau de Tressé, Pouancé in France and loved the fabulous beasts carved in its surroundings. No doubt they originally had some significance, now lost, but we can at least admire their artistry. *(More on the next page)*

### How big were Dragons?

**Marc Van de Cruys** sent the chart on the page opposite which claims to show the relative sizes of various types of Dragon. Actually, these are all Fantasy Dragons from recent years, much too large historically, as genuine mediaeval Dragons were typically shown about the size of large dogs, as shown in the picture on the cover of No 30. Also, pictures of St George generally show the Dragon he is defeating trampled underfoot. They were considered dangerous, not because of their size, but because they were thought to be highly venomous. Even a tiny krait snake can give a lethal bite, and Dragons were taken to be serpents of a sort, even said to be the largest of the serpents. The biggest of all, probably based on a python, was shown wrapped round an elephant. Remember that in the mediaeval bestiaries all serpents were shown with little legs and wings on a swollen bit of their bodies, and those snakes without were classified as worms. We have come a long way since then, but I think we ought to respect the artists of old and not let the modern fantasists get away with their vastly exaggerated imaginations. All right in their place, of course, but they should not be allowed to dominate dragonlore.

### MORE OF THE MARBLE MANTLEPIECE

