



NORTH WALES TALES

The Little Dragon in the Walls of Caernarfon Castle

Caernarfon Castle, North Wales

Bryn loved the great stone walls of **Caernarfon Castle** more than anywhere in the whole of Gwynedd.

His grandmother told him the walls kept a secret. "They were begun in **1283**, for King **Edward I**," she said, "and folk built them tall and strong, like the famous Walls of Constantinople far away. A castle that grand is sure to hold a secret or two."

One misty morning, Bryn pressed his ear to a cool grey stone, and heard a tiny sneeze.

Atishoo!

A puff of warm smoke curled from a gap in the wall. Then two golden eyes blinked out, and a dragon no bigger than a cat wriggled free.

"Oh, do excuse me," said the dragon. "I'm Seren. I've lived inside these walls a very long time. Since the building of them, in fact."

Bryn's mouth fell open. "You've been here since **1283**?"

"Longer than I can count," said Seren, fanning her little wings. "I kept watch when **Madog ap Llywelyn** took the town in **1294**, and I cheered the year after, in **1295**, when it was won back. I dozed through the long siege of the **Glyndŵr Rising**, between **1400 and 1415**, when the castle held firm and was never taken."

"Why have I never seen you?" asked Bryn.

Seren's wings drooped. "Because I've lost my way home. My nest is deep inside the walls, but so many rooms were never finished, and the inside buildings have crumbled away. I can't find my own front door."

Bryn thought hard. "Then I'll help you. Grandmother says you should always start with what's real."

Together they explored. They climbed past windows that looked out towards **Segontium**, the old Roman fort, where soldiers had marched even before the castle was dreamed of. They peeked into empty halls where, in **1911** and again in **1969**, crowds had gathered for the investiture of the Prince of Wales.

"It's all so big," sighed Seren. "The whole thing cost a fortune, somewhere between **£20,000 and £25,000**, and the work didn't finish until **1330**."

Bryn laughed kindly. "Then no wonder you got lost!"

They searched all morning. At last, Bryn felt a warm draught drifting from behind a worn stone near the tallest tower. He gave it the gentlest push, and it swung open like a tiny door.

Inside was a cosy nest of moss and feathers, glowing soft and golden.

"My home!" cried Seren, spinning with joy. "You found it!"

"The walls were keeping your secret safe all along," said Bryn.

Seren nuzzled his hand. "Then I shall keep watch over them forever, and over every child who comes to wander here. The castle is looked after now, you know, by the kind folk of **Cadw**. It's even a World Heritage Site."

That evening, as the mist rolled off the sea, Bryn waved goodbye. High on the battlements, a small golden shape waved a wing back.

And if you ever visit Caernarfon Castle and press your ear to a stone, you might just hear a tiny, happy *atishoo*, the little dragon, still keeping the secret of the walls.

What's real?

- Caernarfon Castle in Gwynedd, North Wales, was begun in stone in 1283 by King Edward I of England.
- Caernarfon Castle was sacked and captured by Madog ap Llywelyn in 1294 and recaptured the following year in 1295.
- Caernarfon Castle was unsuccessfully besieged during the Glyndŵr Rising of 1400 to 1415.
- The walls of Caernarfon Castle were built to resemble the Walls of Constantinople, and the Roman fort of Segontium stands nearby.
- Caernarfon Castle was used for the investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1911 and again in 1969, and is now managed by Cadw.

Now colour it in!



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