

A little bit of history

The lantern (1)

The lantern room was built in 1804. The small round tower next to it has a spiral staircase inside and also serves as a support for the lightning conductor. The light characteristic is a group of 4 flashes repeated every 20 seconds.

The Round Room or Giannini Room (2)

Circular in shape and topped by a dome, it was designed by Eustaquio Giannini and was built in what was originally a Roman rotunda. Opposite the stairs there is an inscription that reads: "DIRIXIO ESTA OBRA EL THENIENTE DE NAVIO ING° ORDINARIO DE MARINA D. EUSTAQUIO GIANNINI". It retains the original Roman floor as well as the interlocking ashlars in the shape of an I that serve to reinforce the vaults and prevent the building from collapsing in the event of an earthquake.

The inner rooms (3)

The Roman inside of the tower is divided into three floors, each of which has four square rooms with barrel vaulted ceilings. All the rooms still show the typical features of Roman construction techniques: a) opus quadratum: large stone blocks for doors and windows; b) opus vittatum: square blocks of dressed stone laid in rows to form the walls; and c) opus caementicium: pebbles mixed with limestone mortar in the vaults.

The Latin inscription (4)

At the foot of the Tower, protected by a small stone hut built in the 19th century, there is a Roman inscription bearing the name of the architect who built the Tower, one Calo Sevio Lupo, born in Aeminium (Colimbra), who probably dedicated an image to the god Mars Augustus in fulfilment of a promise.

The archaeological site (5)

The basement of the Tower contains an archaeological site with remains of the original foundations and the additions made to the tower when it was converted into a fortress.



THE TOWER OF HERCULES

A World Heritage Site

Built by the Romans in the 1st century AD, the Tower of Hercules is the only lighthouse of Antiquity that is still in operation today. It was originally somewhat lower (about 41.5 m high) and wider (about 14 m wide), because it had a ramp that wound its way up round the outside to take the fuel up to the beacon. It has undergone several transformations over the centuries, of which the most important was carried out in 1788 by the engineer Eustaquio Giannini, who, acting on the advice of José Cornide Saavedra, built the present-day façades around what remained of the Roman lighthouse. The memory of the outer ramp was preserved by Giannini in the form of an ascending diagonal band that forms a continuous line from bottom to top, and he completed each façade with a series of blind windows, in keeping with the Neo-classical tastes of the time. Later additions were the top section, housing the lantern, the small building that houses the Latin inscription and the platform around the base. Each of the four sides of the lighthouse measures 11.4 metres across, whilst the tower itself, which stands 120 metres above sea level, is 59 m high. The Tower of Hercules was declared a World Heritage Site in 2009.

Legends

The legend of Hercules

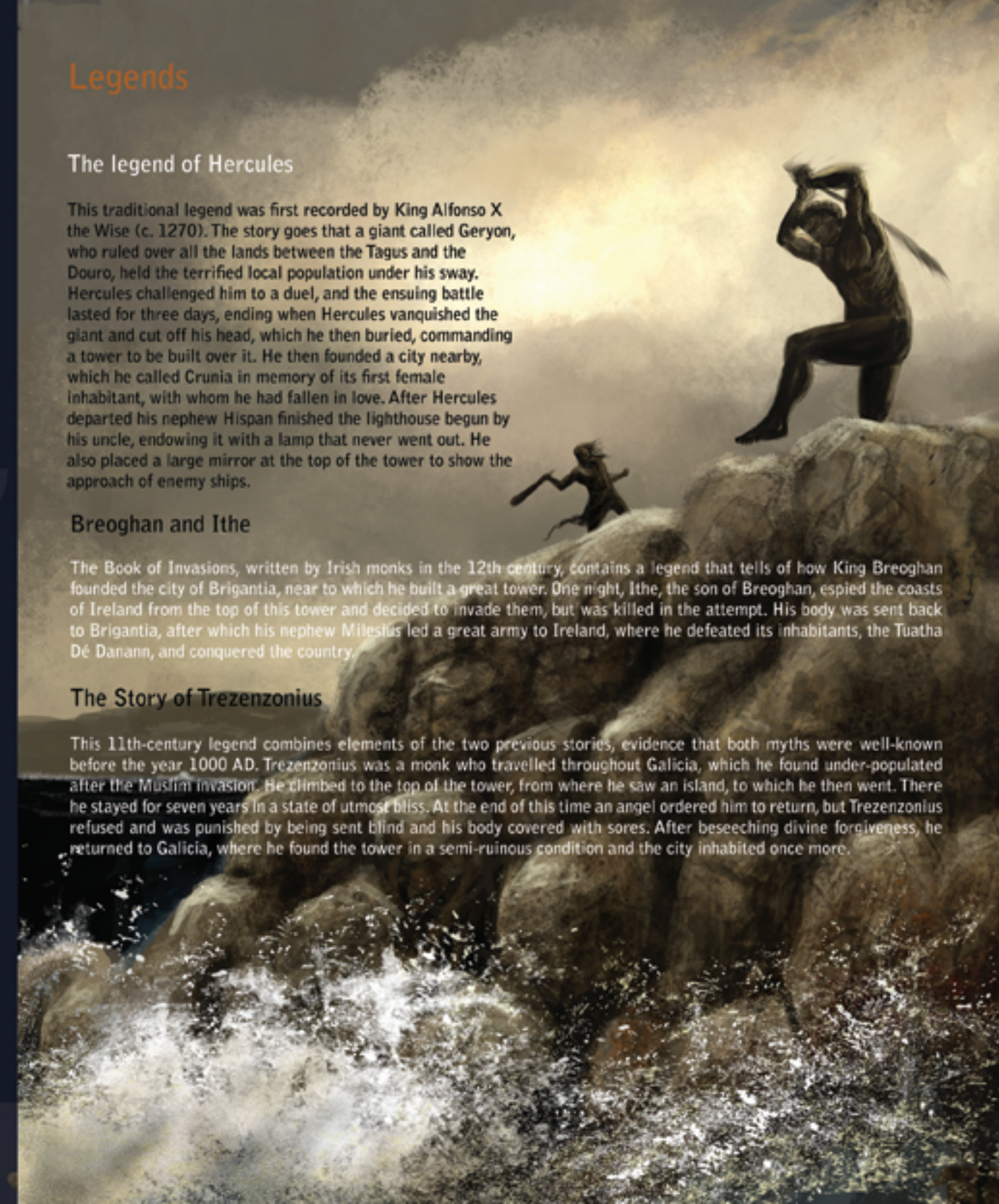
This traditional legend was first recorded by King Alfonso X the Wise (c. 1270). The story goes that a giant called Geryon, who ruled over all the lands between the Tagus and the Douro, held the terrified local population under his sway. Hercules challenged him to a duel, and the ensuing battle lasted for three days, ending when Hercules vanquished the giant and cut off his head, which he then buried, commanding a tower to be built over it. He then founded a city nearby, which he called Crunia in memory of its first female inhabitant, with whom he had fallen in love. After Hercules departed his nephew Hispan finished the lighthouse begun by his uncle, endowing it with a lamp that never went out. He also placed a large mirror at the top of the tower to show the approach of enemy ships.

Breoghan and Ithe

The Book of Invasions, written by Irish monks in the 12th century, contains a legend that tells of how King Breoghan founded the city of Brigantia, near to which he built a great tower. One night, Ithe, the son of Breoghan, espied the coasts of Ireland from the top of this tower and decided to invade them, but was killed in the attempt. His body was sent back to Brigantia, after which his nephew Milesius led a great army to Ireland, where he defeated its inhabitants, the Tuatha Dé Danann, and conquered the country.

The Story of Trezenzonius

This 11th-century legend combines elements of the two previous stories, evidence that both myths were well-known before the year 1000 AD. Trezenzonius was a monk who travelled throughout Galicia, which he found under-populated after the Muslim invasion. He climbed to the top of the tower, from where he saw an island, to which he then went. There he stayed for seven years in a state of utmost bliss. At the end of this time an angel ordered him to return, but Trezenzonius refused and was punished by being sent blind and his body covered with sores. After beseeching divine forgiveness, he returned to Galicia, where he found the tower in a semi-ruinous condition and the city inhabited once more.





TOWER OF HERCULES

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Opening times:

October – March:
Mon – Sun
10.00 – 17.45

April, May, June & September:
Mon – Sun
10.00 – 18.45

July & August:
Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu & Sun
10.00 – 20.45
Fri & Sat
10.00 – 23.45



Offices:

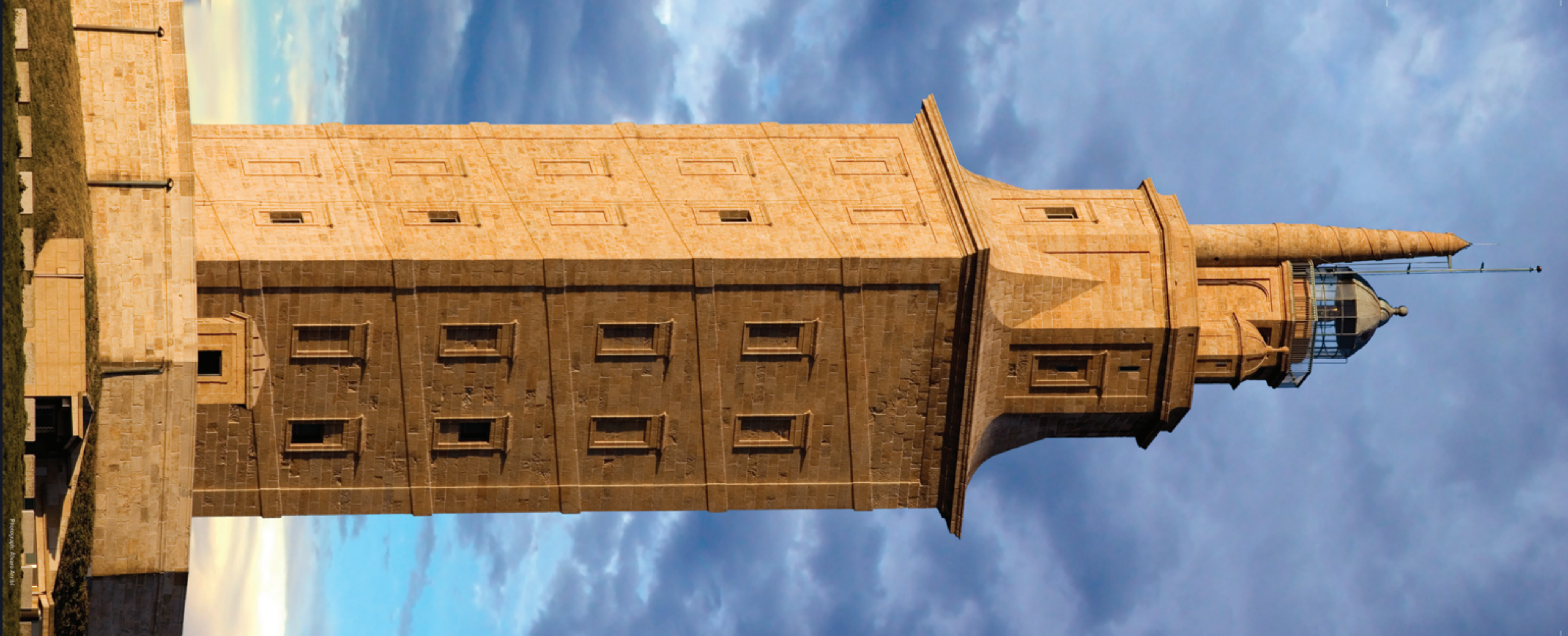
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