

= Unicorn (ship) =

The Unicorn (French : La Licorne) is a fictional 17th @-@ century three @-@ masted armed Royal Navy vessel appearing in The Adventures of Tintin , the comics series by Belgian cartoonist Hergé . The ship plays a leading role in both The Secret of the Unicorn and Red Rackham 's Treasure , published in 1943 and 1944 , respectively . The Unicorn also appears in the 2011 film adaptation The Adventures of Tintin : The Secret of the Unicorn .

In the Tintin adventures , the Unicorn is the setting of a battle between pirates and sailors followed by a duel between Sir Francis Haddock (an ancestor of Captain Haddock) and the pirate Red Rackham . The Unicorn is scuttled and sinks , only to be discovered years later by Tintin and his friends in an attempt to locate Red Rackham 's treasure .

= = Creation = =

The Unicorn was inspired by Le Brillant , built in 1690 at Le Havre , France by the shipwright Salicon and then decorated by the designer Jean Bérain the Elder . In 1942 , Hergé had decided that his latest Tintin adventure , The Secret of the Unicorn (1943) , should depict images of his fictional Unicorn as detailed precision drawings . He used the services of his friend and local model ship maker Gérard Liger @-@ Belair , son of a former naval officer and who owned a shop in Brussels that specialised in model ships , to find an appropriate historical vessel that he could customize to meet his historical needs . Liger @-@ Belair 's research produced three possibilities : A British frigate , a Dutch merchant vessel , and a French battleship . As Hergé preferred the battleship , Liger @-@ Belair continued to research and discovered a historic document titled Architectura Navalis , which contained detailed drawings of French battleships . One in particular was from 1690 , in the navy of Louis XIV of France : a fourth rank battleship with 56 cannons : Le Brillant . Liger @-@ Belair soon completed a plan on a 1 : 100 scale followed by an extremely precise model .

Hergé consulted the archives at the National Museum of Natural History and the then recently published L 'Art et le Mer (" Art and the Sea ") by Alexandre Berqueman . He also studied other vessels from the period , such as the Le Soleil Royal , La Couronne , La Royale and Le Reale de France to better understand 17th @-@ century ship design . It was from the Le Reale de France that he gained a basis for his design of the Unicorn 's jolly boat . He adopted the fictional ship 's unicorn figurehead from a British frigate which had been built in 1745 . When Liger @-@ Belair 's model was complete , Hergé realised it into the panels of his comics , regularly showing his renditions to Liger @-@ Belair to ensure he was depicting the vessel with no technical errors . In its finished appearance in the book , the Unicorn is a ship of the third rank , a vessel with three @-@ masts and 50 guns , more than 40 metres long and 11 metres wide .

After publication of The Secret of the Unicorn , Hergé 's Dutch publisher Carlsen Verlag gave him an antique model of a 17th @-@ century Danish ship called the Enhjornigen (Unicorn) . Until that moment , Hergé had no idea that a ship with that name , complete with unicorn figurehead , had ever actually existed .

= = In The Adventures of Tintin = =

= = = Fictional history = = =

The Secret of the Unicorn is partially set in 1676 . In the English translation , the Unicorn sails under the Union Jack during the reign of Charles II of England and is commanded by Sir Francis Haddock , an ancestor of Captain Haddock . In Hergé 's original French version , however , la Licorne flies the French flag for the French Navy under King Louis XIV and is commanded by Chevalier François de Hadoque . No ship named the Unicorn was listed in the annals of either the Royal Navy or the French Navy .

Red Rackham 's Treasure (1944) tells of the adventure Tintin and his friends undertake to recover the lost treasure of the pirate Red Rackham , believed by Tintin to be aboard the shipwrecked Unicorn . Sir Francis had built three models of the Unicorn and had hidden a treasure map inside each one . The adventure , told across both books , leads Tintin to the Unicorn and to the lost treasure .

A 2011 feature film adaptation of both Tintin books retells the story of the Unicorn . The Adventures of Tintin : The Secret of the Unicorn directed by Steven Spielberg and produced by Peter Jackson was released October ? December 2011 .

= = = Plot role = = =

While sailing in the West Indies in 1676 , the Unicorn , commanded by Sir Francis Haddock , is seized and captured by a group of pirates led by Red Rackham . The pirates hoist a red pennant ? no life would be spared . During the battle , Sir Francis is hit and loses consciousness . Later , the members of the Unicorn crew still alive are killed or thrown overboard . Sir Francis regains consciousness , finding himself tied to the mainmast . The pirate ship is damaged and sinking , so Red Rackham moves his treasure on board the Unicorn . The ship then sails to an uninhabited island . When anchored near the shore of the island , Sir Francis manages to free himself and goes below deck to the Unicorn 's gunpowder stores . Whilst there , he encounters Rackham for the final time , killing him in a sword fight . Before escaping in the ship 's jolly boat , he is able to set fire to the gunpowder by means of a slow @-@ burning fuse , causing the Unicorn (with Rackham 's drunken crew and presumably Red Rackham 's treasure still aboard) to explode and sink .

In the present day , Tintin , his dog Snowy , and his friends Captain Haddock and Professor Calculus follow coordinates that Sir Francis had left his three sons in a strange riddle hidden in three model ships of the Unicorn . Reaching the coordinates , they discover the island and , upon diving , they find the wreck of the Unicorn . Although they recover various artefacts from it , they do not find the treasure . Back in Belgium , Tintin realises that Sir Francis ' message referred , not to the location of the Unicorn , but to a globe mounted on a statue in Sir Francis ' former country home . Understanding now that Francis would never have left the treasure but would have taken it with him to his home , Tintin locates the coordinates to the treasure on the globe , presses a secret button he finds there , and discovers Red Rackham 's treasure hidden inside .