

# UTILE ET DULCE

ALEKSANDR BOLDYREV

In Russia there are wonderful translations of the books by Lewis Carroll. But it is not easy to find someone in Russia who is not only fluent in English but is also a fan of Lewis Carroll. I was lucky to meet such a person. One day a young lady came to my studio to look for a sundial for her garden.

For many years one of the walls in my studio has been decorated with a picture you must have seen a thousand times (Fig. 1). “Oh my God!”, the young lady exclaimed, “it is a drawing by John Tenniel, Lewis Carroll’s friend. This is exactly what I would like to have in my garden.”

An exceptional customer! Even I did not know the name of the artist who drew this picture. It would be extremely pleasant to work with such a customer, I thought. Besides, you see, it is not every day one has the opportunity to work in collaboration with such a famous artist as (Sir) John Tenniel (1820–1914). I cut the pedestal of limestone. I think that my co-author John Tenniel would have approved of it. The pedestal height is 1100 mm. I usually make sundials with a diameter of 300 mm. But not this time: my customer demanded that the diameter should be exactly equal to one English foot (304.8 mm).



Fig. 1. John Tenniel’s illustration for ‘Jabberwocky’. Note the fluted column of the pedestal.

This sundial is set not far from Moscow. It measures the local time and the time for the GMT + 4 time zone. One of the scales measures the true solar time on the meridian of a small village Darsebury, Lewis Carroll’s birthplace. The motto is *Utile et Dulce*. My highly enlightened customer says that this motto is invented by Lewis Carroll himself.\* I believe her.

Of course you remember these lines:

Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

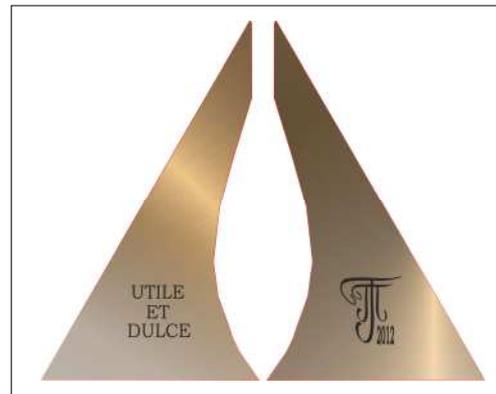
I really wanted to cast of bronze one of the animals mentioned in these lines. There are difficulties with the translation. I mean an animal which by Carroll’s definition is a hybrid of a badger, lizards and corkscrews. I even made a little clay model.



Fig. 2. The complete ‘Utile et Dulce’ dial with happy client.



*Figs 3 and 4.  
The engraved  
dial-plate and the  
gnomon with  
motto and  
signature.*



“I do not need this terrible zoo in my garden”, my client said, “I just want a little piece of Victorian England to live

here in my garden.” Now she has this little piece of Victorian England. Look how happy she is. *Utile et Dulce*.

*sundials@mail.ru*

[\* ‘*dulce et utile*’ (pleasant and useful) is attributed originally to the Roman poet Horace. Note too that ‘The Tove’s Nest’ is a regular feature in the *NASS Compendium*. Ed.]