

A Song for Geoffrey

Being a poem in memory of Laird Geoffrey MacRaighallaigh of Greenlaw, Companion of the Order of the Dreamstone, Squire of the first Baronial House, and Sustainer of the Byn Madoc Chorister's Guild.

In finding Madoc's new-born tribe, he smiled,
Young Geoffrey, who would dwell with them awhile.
None knew the path that he sought, open-handed,
And none could foresee Greenlaw lad beguiled
By Field of Honour, place of prowess wild.
'Twas at the verge of Autumn when he landed,
And in the fullness of first frost, demanded,
For all that he might learn of fighting styles,
And all that honour and good grace remanded.

This stalwart youth, from Scottish borders came,
From vale of Lammemuir, his clan of fame,
To find a place with Madoc's chosen kind
To carve a space and give his voice a name
He founded Choristers, and sheltered same.
'Gainst Winter's chill, their voices all combined
In lofty hymns, and folksongs, less refined,
And so he led them, salamander-flamed
His proud flown ensign, blue and gold, undine.

So Spring found Geoffrey sharpening his skills
And seeking to bend sword and shield to will.
He wore his shirt of steel to every task,
As Squire to Baron's house, he had his fill,
Yet ever-seeking, restless, never still,
An always-ready servant, none need ask
And in reward, he drank from Madoc's cask,
His destiny, a hard one to fulfill
His ever-seeking spirit, often masked.

In Dreamstone's company, he proudly numbered,
And yet, life's sterner challenges encumbered.
Denied much of the joy he might retrieve,
While deep within the heart of Summer, lumbered
A beast that sought to steal, in savage hunger.
Yet, even from that distance, Geoff believed
And still had hope for pain yet unrelieved
But desolation's curse brought final slumber
And, in High Summer, Madoc folk bereaved.

But Geoffrey was, in all, a Scotsman, truly,
So raise your glasses, keep his memory duly,
And celebrate the life of brave MacRaighallaigh,
Sing loud the song, and dance the wildest ceilidh!

AEdwardus fecit
11.1.2018/ A.S. LIII

A Note About the Text:

The form of this poem derives from the form most in use from the era of Geoffrey's persona, 15th-16th Century Scottish poetry, in particular as it was practiced by the leading Scottish poets of the era, the Castalian Band, who were court poets to the Scottish Royal house. In particular, this poem is modeled structurally after *The Golden Targe*, a poem written by William Dunbar c. 1500. It is built on 9-line stanzas in the A/A/B/A/A/B/B/A/B rhyme scheme. I also chose to tell Geoffrey's tale as one of the seasons' passing.

Stanza 1: This verse is Geoffrey's finding of Bryn Madoc, a place he had been looking for without knowing it, and in particular the early hold that fighting had on him. It also mentions the Scottish Border country which was home to his persona (including, though not mentioned in the poem, Blackadder Water, near Greenlaw).

Stanza 2: I chose Winter as the time to underscore Geoffrey's nurturing of Madoc's singing community and fusion into a Chorister's Guild. At the end of the verse, mention is made of Geoffrey's arms, and his chief charge, a Salamander (or Undine) enflamed, azure and or.

Stanza 3: Here, Geoffrey's firm commitment is celebrated. He did, in fact, for several years, wear a chain mail shirt under his clothing to work, in an attempt to build stamina. He was also stalwart in service to the Barony, and that was true until life intervened and took him in a different direction. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, though, it was a Spring of celebration.

Stanza 4: Though celebrated as a Companion of the Dreamstone, the tidal pull of life took Geoffrey away from Madoc's regular day-to-day, and we drifted apart. The high summer of A.S. LIII parted him from us.

Quatrain: Geoffrey would have insisted on a happier ending, and so I have supplied one here, so that all who knew him can dwell upon happier days of fellowship, and remember him as we loved him best.