

## The proceedings of the first symbel of Bryn Madoc, held at the fourteenth gulf war

The first symbel of Bryn Madoc was held after the Meridian Court, in the large tent of Artisans Row. Master Hywel ap Ieuan, Baron Bryn Madoc, was the *symbelgifa*, the giver of the symbel. Mistress Derbail inghean Conchobar acted as the *Pyle*, the spokesman for the symbel. And Dyfn ap Meurig, called Dehfin Brit in his adopted land, was the *scop*, the court poet and tale-teller.

Two great horns were blown to gather the warriors. The *Pyle* led the guests to the table. They stood at their places, with the greatest in station at either hand of the *symbelgifa*, who bade them be seated as a huge mead-filled cup was set before him. At the left hand of Master Hywel was Duke Sir Orlando Cavalcanti, and beside the Duke was Lord Raphael Jaramillo, and beside him, Ezekiel the Slightly Demented. On the baron's right hand sat Mistress Calleja de Warre, and beside her was Lord Stephen Greyhawkes, and beside him, Michael Parmafey.

When all were seated, Hywel set the great cup before him and spoke thusly: *Wes Hal! I bid welcome to all the warriors and nobles of Bryn Madoc, and those nearest to our hearts: The worthies of the hills of Beau Fort and of the river-lands to our south, of late called Draken-ford.*

*We are met this night to be joined with those who live in memory, our mighty ancestors from the islands far across the great ocean. There in centuries long past the warriors did meet before their lord on a chosen day each year, and their purpose was four-fold.*

*They met to recall to memory those whose deeds and words brought honor to all, those who in life wrought the traditions that we live and pass on. They met to speak in honor of the deeds that they had done, deeds of valor and skill made with sword and shield. They met to pledge themselves to deeds yet to be, not in boast or deceit, but in solemn vow before their shield brothers. And, so the scholars tell us, they met to bring themselves into a timeless time, an hour made to be unlike every other, but like unto itself, year after year and lifetime after lifetime, lord and liege-men, shield-brothers assembled, and the mead cup to join them.*

And, drinking of the mead, he passed the cup to Orlando, who having drunk passed it on until all had shared. Then Hywel held the cup again, and drank in memory of those who are no longer with us. Again, the great cup went from hand to hand; some spoke of those they drank to, while others kept them in their hearts.

With the mead cup returned and refilled, the *scop* read from *The Battle of Maldon*, relating how resolutely a valiant band of men fulfilled the mead-oaths taken before their now-dead lord.

And again the great cup wended its way from place to place, hearing at each pause a tale of glory, of feats of arms and of friendships bound tight in the face of the foe. And each declaration of valor was met with cries of *Hwæt!* and the rumble of hands pounding the table. And many followed their *gielp*-boast with a *beot*, giving oaths before their comrades.

Then did Hywel give three silver rings to those whom he favored: Calleja, Michael, and Ezekiel, commending each for their worthy deeds of honor and valor.

Holding up the cup a final time, Hywel spoke:

*Friends and shield-brothers, we have spoken of noble deeds. We have recalled our brothers and forefathers in honor. We have pledged ourselves to causes and actions just and valorous. We have praised the most virtuous, and we have tasted the sacred mead together.*

*All this we have done before, through our ancestors. All this we shall do again. The world will change. Another lord may stand before you. Other shield-brothers will stand beside you. Other words will be spoken, other deeds recalled. Yet the symbol is one. In other places and other times, we stand. We stand with our forefathers and we stand with the sons of our sons and their sons after. While skill and valor endure, while one man trusts his life to another, while noble works of courage are known and praised, we stand. We stand, one body in many times and many places, each man holding all others in his thought and each held in turn. The symbol is one and we are one.*

*Wes Hal!*

And as the cup of parting finished its circuit, so ended the first symbol of Bryn Madoc.