

The Knight of the Oak

Ere sovereign's decree || sundered homeland
split burning sands || from sylvan realms
a kingdom vast || for crown to travel
but duties are done || as tradition demands.
So subjects gathered || to give their homage
in eastern barony || that burned long ago.
The king decided, || crown-bearer bold,
to honor a yeoman || young in winters
but worthy regardless || to wear a chain.
The lad took his arms || and offered his vows 10
and so did King Robert, || Roundpounder named,
that Sir Galan-Schol || should stand as a peer.

My mind scans the years: || a score and ten more
The journey long traveled || in joy and sorrow.
We look at this man, || We mark what he's done,
and what can we show? || A chivalry old,
older indeed || than even the word.
His heart like the oak || that augments his shield.
Galan will not follow || the fashion of late 20
Of flowery words || but fickle in heart
For duty to him || is dear as the glory
and steadfast is he || as stalwart no matter
if sounding the charge || or striking the tent;
though chores are not glorious || they gotta get done.

Nor cares he for swordplay || with single opponents
with all eyes upon him, || the envy of men.
Much better the battle || and brazen war-trumpets,
with friends at his side, || where foes are aplenty,
where words are clear-spoken, || not wielded as weapons.
For war is his calling || and wise is his council 30
Keen generals heed him || in guiding of armies.

No love has Galan || for long courtly speeches,
but see him now hearken || and hither stride
when hears he the words, || "Hwaet! There we were,
our shieldwall beset, || surrounded, hard-pressed,
with dozens of dukes || to die on our spears!"
For chief of the joys || this champion holds
is to hear in bold words || the war-play of heroes
in company of comrades || 'round campfire burning
and war-stories flowing || as free as good ale. 40

So this is Galan: || gallant in battle,
stalwart in peace, || the pride of Bryn Madoc
Atenveldt's loss || now asset Meridian,
a warrior truly || and a warrior true. 44

Notes

Anglo-Saxon style poetry is alliterative style rather than a rhyming one; that is, the structure is based on repeating consonant sounds. Lines are divided into two half-lines separated by a slight pause (often shown either as an exaggerated space or two lines).

For more information, download the Anglo Saxon Poetry Guide located here:

<http://www.gemyndeseld.net/stories-by-the-hearth.html>

This poem was performed at Danelaw in 2005, in honor of 30th anniversary of the knighting of Sir Galan-Shol of Eirmeathe in 1975.

(by line)

1: Meridies became a principality of Atenveldt in 1976, and a kingdom in its own right a year later.

2: Atenveldt spanned the southern US; it currently centers in Arizona.

6: South Downs, in Atlanta.