

# Symbel: a Saxon ceremony of Bryn Madoc

The *symbel* [pronounced SYOOM bel] was a ceremony used to define and strengthen the bonds of community, especially between a lord and his hearthmen. A structured affair of social and religious significance, the *symbel* was festive yet serious. The lord would give honors and gifts due to his followers and important guests, and would in turn receive honors, gifts, and/or vows of service from those attending the *symbel*. Beyond this, however, those assembled shared in the honor of a place at symbel. Like many rituals, the *symbel* served to connect the participants with those who had gone before, through unchanging traditions. Though specifically Anglo-Saxon in style, variations on the form could be found among the Britons, Norse, Irish, and other warrior-elites of the Early Middle Ages.

**At this Danelaw, we now gather in the spirit of the ancient *symbel* to honor members past and present of the Barony of Bryn Madoc, and to strengthen the bonds of our folk.**



## What to Bring:

- Mug and beverage for toasting
- A chair (just in case)
- A willingness to witness what is spoken
- (A willingness to speak as appropriate is welcome but not required)

# The Symbol of Bryn Madoc

## I. THE SUMMONING

- A. Horn Summons the **Guests**.
- B. **Guests** are greeted and shown their place by the **pyle** (THUL-a; the Order Keeper).
- C. The **Lord** welcomes those assembled. The **Lady** charges the meadcup.

II. **THE TOASTS OF MEMORY:** Words of Commemoration for those who have left us.

III. **THE TOASTS OF THOUGHT:** Words of Appreciation for those around us and what we have.

IV. **THE TOASTS OF DREAM:** Words of Aspiration for the future.

## V. Closing

- A. Cups are refreshed as the **Lord** brings the ceremony to a close with fitting words.

**As the ceremony ends, you are invited to stay for a bardic circle.**

## What do I do? A quick etiquette guide

**-Show respect for the setting.** It is a happy ceremony, but it's still a ceremony. The hall becomes a space apart from the rest of the event; help maintain that mood for everyone.

**-Show respect for the officers.** The Lady brooks no discourtesy; she isn't a tavern wench, she is nobility. The *pyle* is the master of ceremonies and should be treated as such.

**-Hold your liquor.** This is a drinking *ceremony*, not a drinking game. Overindulgence is *strongly* discouraged. There will be lots of toasts, so learn to *sip*.

**-Short speeches are better.** Under 2 minutes is best. You are part of a *communal* effort, not the main attraction.

**-"I just want to watch."** You are welcome to do so. If there is a crowd, sit by the wall; let those who wish to speak have first chance at the table.

**-"I don't want to drink."** That's fine. When toasting, simply hold your vessel up in salute, without drinking.

**-"I need to leave early."** The best time is to leave during a momentary break, but any time is fine -- please leave quietly.