

Report on the Pilgrim's Shield known as "Oath-Heart"

Greetings, Cardinals. Greetings, Imperatrix. You have tasked the Silent Bell with an investigation into the location of *Oath-Heart*, the legendary shield of Loyalty, borne in times long past by Drumlin the Sworn of Wintermark.

In summary: We have not located *Oath-Heart*. However, we have gathered information that should guide you towards the next steps in finding it.

The Shields of the Seven Pilgrims

Oath-Heart is only one of seven symbolic shields, created by the master Highborn smith Ezkiah the Benefactor, back in the days of Teleri the Pious, who bolstered the Imperial Synod to safeguard the Empire. There was, naturally, a shield for each Virtue. We have in our investigations identified the names of all seven as follows:

- *Excelsis*, shield of Ambition
- *Torchbrand*, shield of Courage
- *Oath-Heart*, shield of Loyalty
- *Ajax*, shield of Pride
- *Glistening*, shield of Prosperity
- *Bawn-Watch*, shield of Vigilance
- *Measure*, shield of Wisdom

There have been countless rumours of each of these shields since their loss during the battle of Reikos in 367YE. We have, naturally, focused our attentions upon any information relating to *Oath-Heart*.

The Nature of *Oath-Heart*

Our task has been somewhat stymied by the abundance of counterfeits and copies made of the true *Oath-Heart*. It seems no shortage of merchants hoping for a quick sell have had a Pilgrim's Shield made, found a priest to give it an appropriate Loyalty Hallow (and imprint the name "Oath-Heart"), then sold the shield claiming it to be the original.

Naturally, the Vigilant keep wary for such dishonest practices, though many do not know how to rightly tell a fake from the real deal. We all know that the real *Oath-Heart* was made by none other than Ezkiah the Benefactor, as the simple Autumn

ritual Hand of the Maker will reveal. And, of course, the original Shields of the Seven Pilgrims were all artifacts - and your average charlatan cannot afford a single ring of ilium, never mind the 10 required for such an endeavour.

Thirdly, it would be natural to assume that the relatively new ritual, Skein of Years, codified but a few years ago, would reveal its history - most notably, carried by Loyal heroes on the field of battle against the Empire's foes.

Naturally, we trust that, if the Assembly of Nine is searching for these lost relics, they are not so easily taken in by a virtuous aura and the sense of a familiar name.

Establishing Oath-Heart's Location

Pushing past the facsimiles and fakes, however, we have made some progress in establishing recent history and current location of *Oath-Heart*. Records show its last Loyal bearer was Hap of Stockland, a Marcher, who was buried after his heroic death against the Druj. His tomb lies amongst those of his kinsmen in a field north of Stock March in the territory of Upwold.

By all accounts, Hap was buried with *Oath-Heart* - but it has been verified that the shield is no longer there assuming it ever was. There are numerous - and disparate - reports about what happened to it, why it was taken, and for what purpose.

Curiously, a single name comes up with disturbing frequency in connection with these reports - Sinokenon, the Eternal of Day. Quite why that inhuman monstrosity has become embroiled in the whole affair is beyond us, but locals have named its Heralds as being somehow involved.

Our investigations have located a coven of Marcher Landskeepers in Upwold, calling themselves the **Circle of Humanity United**. They claim to have had contact with these Heralds - possibly, they have hinted, they were the ones that told them of where *Oath-Heart* was to be interred - and the suggestion is that those Heralds bore the shield away under "the Apex's orders".

Their leader, **Paula of Redston**, seemed to know that important folk were seeking the shield, and said that "the Turning Mirror seeks to witness the Empire's understanding of Loyalty". When asked if she would correspond further on that subject, she became tight-lipped, but indicated she can be reached by Winged Messenger at **Sunny Heath, Stock March, Upwold**.

We can only recommend that you either get in touch with Paula directly, or else

petition the Archmage of Day to reach out to Sinokenon and demand the return of the shield to its rightful bearers.

Future Considerations

We are pleased to provide this report, and note with interest the Assembly's interest in the Shield of the Seven Pilgrims - such important artifacts belong squarely in Imperial hands. Though we are best-placed to seek out threats to the Empire and bring them to your attention, rather than look for lost relics, the matter of Bawn-Watch intrigues us as a symbol of Vigilance.

We would be most interested in seeking out the location of Bawn-Watch, if its location is not already known to you. Of course, we would be guided by the direction of the Nine - if more pressing matters require our attention to protect our people and Empire, then we shall cleave to your guidance.

For the Silent Bell,

Tuulikki the Jay

To be delivered at the Winter Solstice, 381YE