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Opening Address

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Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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Opening Address

Christina Scull

“I shall not keep you long”, as Bilbo said on another occasion. At *his* Long-expected Party there were ONE GROSS guests coming from all parts of the Shire at the special supper. At *our* Long-expected Party we have more than twice that number coming from all parts of the world. One regret I have for the Conference is that my Argentinian correspondent was unable to come and South America is unrepresented. Mentioning *Argentina* brings me to one of Tolkien’s great achievements: love and appreciation of his works bring people together, overriding national boundaries and differences. Here it is no longer relevant that we are British, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Russian, Polish, Czech, Austrian, German, Belgian, Dutch, Nigerian, Japanese or from the United States, Canada, Australia or New Zealand, or even that we are members of this or that national or international Tolkien Society; but that we all enjoy reading Tolkien’s works and feel that something special has been added to our lives thereby.

I hope that during the Conference many new friendships will be made and in future a face and personality can be visualised when you see a name in a magazine or journal.

By the time you read the above it will be over three years since I made that speech in Blackwell’s Bookshop in Oxford on Monday 17 August 1992, at the Opening Ceremony of the Tolkien Centenary Conference. The hopes I expressed were fully realised and I think that those who attended will remember, among other things, the pervading feeling of

friendship and the pleasure experienced in listening to papers and discussions and exchanging ideas about Tolkien and his works. Although the Centenary Conference was a unique event, many Tolkien Societies world-wide hold their own smaller festivals, and the number of these has increased with the founding of new Tolkien Societies. Such gatherings usually have an international element, small or large, and provide opportunities to meet old friends and make new ones. Since 1992 I have attended two Mythcons in the U.S.A., two “Hobbitons” organised by the Società Tolkieniana Italiana, and “The Celebration of the Destruction of the Ring” in Prague organised by the Czech Tolkien Society. I was sorry not to have been able to attend the Northern Tolkien Festival organised jointly in 1994 by all the Nordic Tolkien Societies. In Britain the Tolkien Society’s Oxonmoot has continued to attract many devotees of Tolkien from abroad. Our enjoyment of Tolkien has led to a fellowship which encircles the globe.

Perhaps I might be permitted to introduce a personal note into this celebration of the international fellowship of Tolkien. At the Closing Ceremony of the Centenary Conference the announcement was made of my engagement to Wayne Hammond from the U.S.A. whom I had met through our shared interest in Tolkien. We were married in December 1994 and I am moving to the U.S.A. Tolkien certainly unites us across oceans and boundaries and cultural differences.