

# International Asatru-Summer camp 2009

# IASC HERALD

## Runes spread out on a cloth



**Separate signs with strength and meaning. Yet together they are the Futhark - strong, powerful and whole. Like these runes asatruars are spread across the world; like these runes each asatruar has his own strength.**



*Bogensholm Camp. Photo: Arild Hauge.*

Imagine then what could happen when asatruars from across the world come together and meet. Imagine all those strengths coming together to make a whole.

Because in Denmark 2009 this is what will happen. And we invite you to be part of it!

Will you be with us?

The first **International Asatru Summer Camp (IASC)** will take place **July 25<sup>th</sup> - August 1<sup>st</sup> 2009** in one of the loveliest areas of Denmark.



*Photo: Arild Hauge.*

### **Bogensholmlejren, Jutland, Denmark**

This will be a week during which asatruar from all over the world can get together and enjoy each others company, leaving not only unforgettable memories, but also creating everlasting friendships. It will provide a unique opportunity to meet other asatruar in surroundings of beauty, joy and learning.

The combination of recreational, educational and social activities make this



*Bogensholm Camp. Photo: Arild Hauge.*

camp an exciting opportunity for both individuals and families with children. Amongst the wide range of activities we will be offering for both children and adults there will be games, blots, bonfires, a variety of arts and crafts, as well as lectures and workshops on asatru, runes and seidr.

This first international summer camp is hosted by an independent workgroup from a wide range of the Danish Asatru environment in cooperation with the following asatru groups:

- Eldaring - Germany
- Verein für Germanisches Heidentum - Germany
- Het Rad - The Netherlands
- De Negen Werelden - The Netherlands
- Åsatrufellesskapet - Norway
- Gotland Forn Sed - Spain
- Sveriges Asatrusamfund - Sweden
- The Kith of Yggdrasil - UK



*Bogensholm Camp. Photo: Arild Hauge.*

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**Don't waste paper!**  
Please print on both sides if you choose to print the magazine.  
**Thank you!**

# We proudly present – The programme!

**One of the things that have been clear to us all along is the importance of a solid fun and interesting programme, a programme with relevant topics.**

**There should be things to learn and get wiser from, thing to have fun with and enjoy, things to participate in, something for the mind, something for the hand and something for the feelings – a various range of topics so there would be something for everyone, and while someone will enjoy a certain topic others would rather skip it. This, so there will be free time for everyone to just do nothing.**

While this is being written the programme is still in the makings. What we present here is what we have so far. There might very well be changes. We might put in some more, something may show up so that we will have to skip an other thing. One never knows for sure with these things.

But the way it looks in the beginning of June is like this:

## **SATURDAY JULY 25<sup>th</sup>**

The big day of arrival.

All that is happening this day is people arriving from 5 pm and on, and the camp being created. There will be special places for parking and others for the tents. People sleeping indoor will be given their bed.

We will serve potato soup for everyone, this night we need something that can be kept warm and served all night as people are arriving.

The office table will be open all evening so that

you can register your arrival and get your task. We have a

lot of people working on creating this camp, but we don't have any thralls. This means that we will all have to participate in the different tasks of making this camp a nice and enjoyable place to be. Everyone will be given specific tasks to perform while participating. And yes, it is all something to do with cleaning.

So now that you are here, just enjoy yourself and get acquainted with folks around you.

## **SUNDAY JULY 26<sup>th</sup>**

Still creating the camp. At one thirty pm the camp will officially be opened, this will be followed by an opening blót. We are looking at suitable sights in the area for this blót to be held at, the problem mostly being there are so many beautiful spots to choose from. After the blót there is a coffee break and then it's back to building the camp. In the evenings we expect spontaneous

Partytime!

Games, theatre, music, dancing, films, storytelling, whatever you choose!

## **MONDAY JULY 27<sup>th</sup>**

The day when the actual programme starts.

At nine o'clock Het Rad will lead us all in common powersinging. Now anyone who has ever been to a gathering where Het Rad was present knows what this means! The voice of Frigga is famous. We are into a powerful start of the week. We are keeping the morning free for a lecture we are hoping to get. Unfortunately we still don't have a final agreement, but if we succeed it is well worth attending. Keep your eyes open for programme updates.

After lunch there are several things.

First of all Mathias Nordvig, MA-student in "norrønt" at the university of Aarhus, will be talking about the Eddas and what we can learn from them. You might get a little hint of the topic by reading his article elsewhere in this magazine.

At the same time Henrik Hallgren, chairman of the Sveriges Asatrosamfund, will be talking about Asatru and ecology. A subject he knows well. Henrik is an archaeologist and storyteller, living in a small cottage in the middle of the midswedish forest. A man who actually walks his own talk. Henrik also held a speech about the topic at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference and Gathering of Elders "Spirituality Beyond Religions 2006" -- 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> February 2006 at Jaipur, India. Check out the article about Henrik, Asatru and ecology in this magazine.

And for the children Eldaringen has put on a workshop in self-defence.

Curious? Well come and check it out!

And who knows maybe we will succeed in bringing on something for the more practical people here, perhaps something to do, instead of just listening to. That is another joker in our game, something we are working on. Let's see.

Evening. Well: Partytime! Games,

theatre, music, dancing, films, storytelling, whatever you choose!

## **TUESDAY JULY 28<sup>th</sup>**

We have more or less dedicated to seidr, the old norse way of telling the future. Some say this is the old norse shamanic way, some claim it is not. This day two elders, two women of knowledge and experience, will give us their view of this. Annette Høst from Denmark and Sylvia Hild from Sweden have both been working with seidr for over twenty years. Please see Annettes own presentation of the day in this magazine.

But we do have other things on the programme as well. Haimo and Ingmar from the VfGH will be holding a blót practice intro and workshop in the afternoon. Something a lot of people have been asking for, since this is one of the most important cornerstones in our faith, the practice of the blót.

And Gotland Forn Sed from Spain will be having tales and theatre for children.

Evening. Well: Partytime! Games, theatre, music, dancing, films, storytelling, whatever you choose!

## **WEDNESDAY JULY 29<sup>th</sup>**

A more diverse programme is planned for this day. Starting in the morning with Peter the Smith from the Eldaring having a smith workshop for grown-ups only.

Any children feeling left out, don't worry. The Danish smith Bent Dahlin has promised to come and lead the smith's children workshop he normally gives at schools in the area. We still don't know when he will come during the week, but he'll be here.

Coming back to the grown-ups thinking of participating, you're in for quite an experience here. Don't miss it.

At the same time Sveriges Asatrosamfund will be talking about Asatru and racism. It is still not clear who will be talking, but the ones possible are all well worth listening to. Again look out for programme updates.

After lunch it is time for Frigga from Het Rad to talk about ancestor constellations. A topic where people often have different opin-

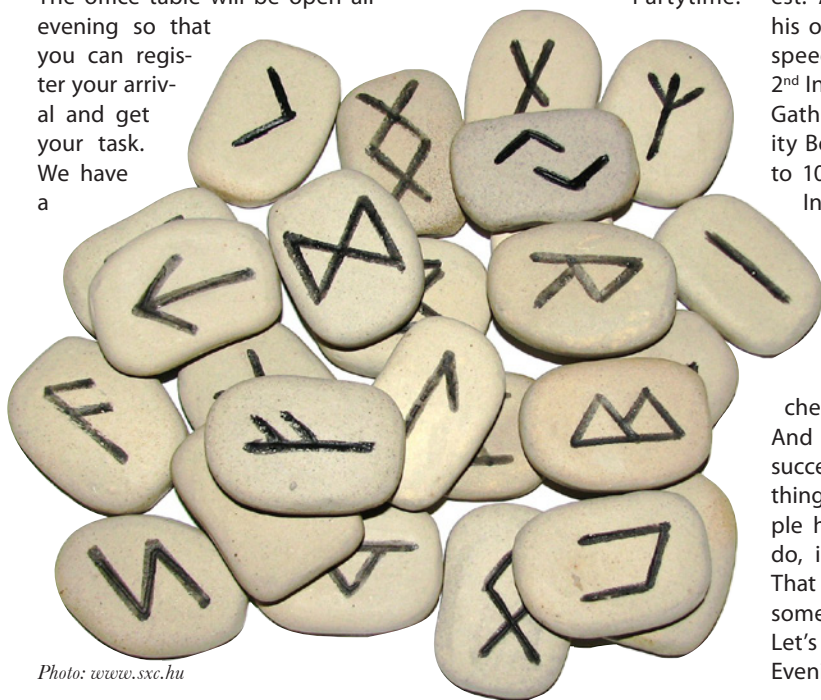


Photo: [www.sxc.hu](http://www.sxc.hu)





Bogensholm Camp. Photo: Arild Hauge.

ions. Some say it is an important part of our faith, others claim it has no place in today's modern asatru. Hear Friggas view of this and the way she works with it. Early in the afternoon, the Eldaring will be baking salt-dough-runes with the children and later Gotland Forn Sed will be painting and drawing with the grown-ups. Evening. Well: Partytime! Games, theatre, music, dancing, films, storytelling, whatever you choose!

#### THURSDAY JULY 30<sup>th</sup>

Gotland Forn Sed will be spending time with the children this morning. From morning until early afternoon it is all about traditional games for children. The adults will be busy with death in the morning. Solvej Vikkelsø will be talking about creating a heathen burial ground. Solvej is a member of Danish Forn Siðr and the one who has all the photos, plans, architect drawings and other things in digital form of the burial place of Forn Siðr in Odense - Søren Fisker and Solvej



Cooking on bonfire. Photo: www.sxc.hu

Vikkelsø are the ones who did all the planning and work up to and including the actual making of the stone-ship (skibssætning). In other words, Solvej knows exactly what she is talking about when she tells you what it took for Forn Siðr to have their own heathen burial ground.

After lunch we're in for something completely different. Arthistorian Teresa Østergaard from Århus Blotlaug will be telling you about medieval and precristian art. A topic she wrote her finishing paper about, and not very often looked into. A lecture not to be missed if you are in any way into history and/or art.

At the same time Haimo Grebenstein from VfGH will be talking about Germanic heathenry in modern times. As it is stated on the website of VfGH "Traditional Germanic spiritual experience, means and techniques. Necessary changes only in line with the spirit of the tradition." We are all looking forward to this lecture.

After a day with heavy topics like this something else is called for. In the afternoon Het Rad will be having a workshop in powersinging. Time to make sounds instead of just listening; time to express yourself in tune with the others. After the coffee break it's again painting and drawings for adults with Gotland Forn Sed.

Evening. Well: Partytime! Games, theatre, music, dancing, films, storytelling, whatever you choose!

#### FRIDAY JULY 31<sup>st</sup>

The last day before the big good bye day on Saturday.

In the morning it's painting and tales mostly for children and other childish people with Gotland Forn Sed.

After lunch it's games and stuffs for all ages. Amongst others we are working on creating a "horse"raise, led by Het Rad, and we haven't given up yet.

After the coffee break we'll have the final ending blót, led by gydjes and godis from the different organisations. Final supper and a big smashing party to end it all with.

Evening. Well: Partytime!!

#### SATURDAY JULY 1<sup>st</sup>

Is for departures – don't forget to exchange facebook profiles, email addresses and other important contact information.

There will be people with things to sell, several merchants have asked for a good spot for their tent.

And we will be having one of the best pierces in Sweden at the spot. Poul Chin from Malmö is both asatru and very skilled with the needle and scalpel. He started out at "Barbarellas" piercing studio in Malmö back in the nineties, then moved on to "Copenhagen body extreme" and now has his own studio, "Anatomorph", in Malmö. He will be brining his basic tools for piercing and some jewellery in birch wood. And otherwise just hang around and talk to people, any wishes for larger stuff, you can always make a later appointment. For further information just google the names mentioned here.

#### Things we are not yet sure of

We are hoping to have Henning Kure to lead a lecture/workshop on source texts. The problem is that so many others want him to. Henning is busy with completing

his book which will be published by Gyldendal, and he also needs to prepare for the lecture he will be giving at the Saga Convent in Uppsala the week after the summer camp. He won't know until the last moment if he will be able to come.

Who is Henning Kure? The author of the Valhalla comics (Peter Madsen is the drawer). Anyone reading the membersmagazine of Forn Siðr; Vølse, will know him as the author of several articles about what's really in the sources and what is not. Gro Steinsland and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen gives him a special thanks in the foreword of their book "Vølvens spådom", "not only for having translated the chapters of Gro Steinsland to Danish but also for his good advice and suggestions and his overall generous help in making the manuscript ready for print."

Maybe we should have a small blót to make the powers ease his burdens and make it possible for him to come.

There might be morning meditations with one of the members of Sveriges Asatrosamfund as well. This is also in the makings.

Oh yes, there was this idea about a belly dancer too ... But we can't really find the asatru angle of it, so ... we dropped it.

And then there are all the great ideas we have that we are working on to come true. It will not be a boring week, we can tell you that. And don't wait for the autumn paper to read about it, join us on the last week of July and participate in it. Be one of those able to tell the story for yourself.



Friends. Photo: www.sxc.hu

# See the preliminary programme on the next page

# Preliminary programme

## Saturday July 25<sup>th</sup>

- From 17.00 Arrival - There will be guides on the camp and in the house
- From 18.30 Soup will be served for those in need of nourishment

## Sunday July 26<sup>th</sup>

- 7.30 - 9.00 Breakfast
- 9.30 - 10.00 The office is open
- 12.00 - 13.00 Lunch
- 13.30 - 14.30 Official opening by The Danish Workgroup, DK
- 14.30 - 15.45 Opening blót by Het Rad, NL and others
- 15.45 - 16.30 Coffee break
- 18.30 - 20.00 Supper
- From 20.30 Games, theatre, music, dancing and films

## Monday July 27<sup>th</sup>

- 7.30 - 9.00 Breakfast
- 9.00 - 10.30 Common Powersong by Het Rad, NL
- 9.30 - 10.00 The office is open
- 12.00 - 13.00 Lunch
- 13.30 - 16.00 Self-defence class for children by Eldaring, DE
- 13.30 - 17.00 The Edda by Mathias Nordvig, The Danish Workgroup, DK *(Incl. coffee break)*
- 13.30 - 17.00 Ecology and asatru by Henrik Hallgren, Sveriges Asatrosamfund, SE *(Incl. coffee break)*
- 15.00 - 15.45 Coffee break
- 18.30 - 20.00 Supper
- From 20.30 Games, theatre, music, dancing and films

## Tuesday July 28<sup>th</sup>

- 7.30 - 9.00 Breakfast
- 9.30 - 10.00 The office is open
- 10.00 - 11.30 Seidr by Annette Høst, DK and Sylvia Hild, SE
- 12.00 - 13.00 Lunch
- 13.30 - 15.00 Tales and theatre by Gotland Forn Sed, E
- 13.30 - 17.00 Seidr workshop by Annette Høst, DK and Sylvia Hild, SE *(Incl. coffee break)*
- 13.30 - 17.00 Blót practise - intro and workshop by Haimo and Ingmar, VfGH, DE *(Incl. coffee break)*
- 15.00 - 15.45 Coffee break
- 18.30 - 20.00 Supper
- From 20.30 Games, theatre, music, dancing and films

## Wednesday July 29<sup>th</sup>

- 7.30 - 9.00 Breakfast
- 9.30 - 10.00 The office is open
- 10.00 - 11.30 Racisme and asatru by Sveriges Asatrosamfund, SE
- 10.00 - 11.30 Smith workshop by Peter the Smith, Eldaring, DE
- 12.00 - 13.00 Lunch
- 13.30 - 15.00 Baking salt-dough by Eldaring, DE
- 13.30 - 17.00 Ancestor constellations by Frigga, Het Rad, NL *(Incl. coffee break)*
- 15.00 - 15.45 Coffee break
- 15.45 - 17.30 Painting and drawing by Gotland Forn Sed, E
- 18.30 - 20.00 Supper
- From 20.30 Games, theatre, music, dancing and films

## Thursday July 30<sup>th</sup>

- 7.30 - 9.00 Breakfast
- 9.30 - 10.00 The office is open
- 10.00 - 11.30 Creating a Burialplace by Solvej Vikkelsø, DK
- 10.00 - 11.30 Smith Workshop by Eldaring, DE
- 10.00 - 13.00 Traditional Games for Children by Gotland Forn Sed, E
- 12.00 - 13.00 Lunch
- 13.30 - 15.00 Medieval Art (Brakteater) by Teresa Østergaard, DK
- 13.30 - 15.00 German Hethenry in Modern Times by Haimo Grebenstein, VfGH, DE
- 15.00 - 15.45 Coffee break
- 15.45 - 17.00 Powersong Workshop by Het Rad, NL
- 15.45 - 17.00 Painting and Drawing by Gotland Forn Sed, E
- 18.30 - 20.00 Supper
- From 20.30 Games, theatre, music, dancing and films

## Friday July 31<sup>st</sup>

- 7.30 - 9.00 Breakfast
- 9.30 - 10.00 The office is open
- 10.00 - 12.00 Painting and tales by Gotland Forn Sed, E
- 12.00 - 13.00 Lunch
- 13.00 - 15.00 Traditional Games by Gotland Forn Sed, E
- 15.00 - 15.45 Coffee break
- 15.45 - 17.30 Horserace on go-carts by Het Rad, NL
- 17.30 - 18.30 Blót by various
- 18.30 - 20.00 Supper
- From 20.30 Big Farwell Party!

## Saturday July 1<sup>st</sup>

- From 7.30 Brunch
- 9.00 - 15.00 Packing and cleaning up.

# We hope you all have a great week!



# Mols - not only the centre of the world but also the top

By Else-Julie Nordvig

**- Pretentious you might say, but if you are a 'molbo', that's how it is. And, born in Ebeltøft the 'capital' of Mols, I must insist.**



*Mols bjerge - Mols mountains. Photo: Arild Hauge.*

The peaceful looking landscape of Mols has a dramatic past, designed as it was by the climate, and constructed by the latest ice-age glaciers that roamed about like gigantic bulldozers for some 10.000 years.

In advancing they pushed up giga-tons of sand, clay, gravel and stones and, withdrawing, they dumped whatever they had picked up, letting the meltwater add the final touch to the surface. At last they dwindled into rudimentary ice-lumps in far Norway, and left the mess to be invaded. \* Waiting in the wings, we invaded as soon as the pioneers - the luxurious variety of animals - had settled in, ready to be hunted. Because of the richness in prey, we eventually named the land Djursland - land of deer/animals - and to this day it is a hunter's paradise.

Djursland as a whole bears the marks of our whereabouts since the stone-age, and so does the peninsula of Mols. You find the garbage of the first human settlers - heaps of cockle- mussle- and oystershells and the skeleton of an occasional whale or seal - all over the place close to the coastline of that time. You find the flint-smith's work and waste even-

rywhere, and traces of the Vikings comings and goings are evident. Climb the 137m of Agri Baunehøj (fuck Everest!) the highest of the Mols Mountains - on which our ancestors, when dubious vessels were spotted, lit the beacon as a warning to the city of Aros, snugly placed inside the bay - and you'll discover that you actually do stand on the top of the world. It's all just a matter of context! From here you have the grand view of the world of the Molboes of all times.

On the far side of the western bay the skyline of Aarhus and the wood-clad coast of Jylland form the western boundary.

To the south you have the southern part of Kattegat - the main sea of this island-realm - where the island Samsøe can be observed, and on a clear day even Sjælland is detectable on the horizon. The smaller peninsula, Helgenæs, is linked to Mols only by a narrow dam-like strip of land, and here the Vikings towed their ships from one bay to the other to ambush or waylay those dubious vessels they were warned about. To the east is The Cove of Ebeltøft with the 700 year old town on the far side. The city-centre is monstrously cute, with its half-

timbered, hollyhock decorated dolls-houses, and its narrow cobblestone-paved streets.

To the north is the main Djursland with the ruin of The Castle of Kalø, from c. 1300, at the bottom of the cove, and all around the barrows of our bronze-age-ancestors in the landscape. The most monumental are Tre Høje (Three Mounds) south of Agri, but there are 22 barrows on Mols alone and Odin knows how many in all of Djursland.

The Mountains of Mols are at the heart of a recently proclaimed national nature-park, and with good cause. Nature is rich, varied and spectacular in the whole area, but is as threatened as Denmark in general, by greedy farmers' monocultural escapades.

Sheep, goats, and a special breed of robust cattle have now been employed to maintain the vast grass-land with its decorative blotches of heather, juniper and modest, but colourful flowers, with horses too participating in the gnawing in some areas.

The woods are left to take care of themselves, unless a storm turns over a tree and sets a trap for the frolicking hiker. Then the lumberjack comes along with his chainsaw, and cuts the tree down to harmlessness.

Wetlands have been liberated from the above mentioned farmers, who stubbornly persisted in trying to cultivate them, got stuck in the mud every spring and autumn, and made frogs and am-



*Tre høje - Three Mounds. Photo: Arild Hauge.*

phibians homeless.

And streams and rivers, that you-know-who straightened out to rationalize things, have now been allowed to twist and curl again and take their self-appointed courses.

We love that, and so do the animals. You'll need a great deal of bad luck not to spot at least a deer or two, when you take a stroll in the nature-park, but most likely you'll see a lot more. We can't offer mammoth, aurochs, wolf or bear these days, but the risk of seeing hawks, falcons, buzzards, kites and even eagles is high, and if you are able to keep quiet for a while, and pretend to be an old mossy stump, the biggest wild animal in Denmark, the stag or red deer may pass you by, or the fox may choose to play with its cubs in the vicinity, while the red squirrel busies itself with the fruits of the trees, and the field vole devours what it spills. In any case a walk in the 'wild' is always an experience and **The first International Asatru Summer camp** is situated right on the edge of it with the camp-grounds stretching down to the beach. It doesn't get much better than that, and we, the Danish IASC-workgroup are looking forward to welcoming you to the camp.



*Mols bjerge - Mols mountains. Photo: Arild Hauge.*

*\*[www.akira.ruc.dk](http://www.akira.ruc.dk) shows the movements of the ice in a quite informative, animation.*

# List of accommodations in the area – just in case ...

## Blushøj Camping

– is gentle action, taking into account the original landscape. Most of the space is not organized or numbered. It provides some special opportunities, but requires taking into account site use and the other campers before you turn up.

We have 4 cabins of 20 m<sup>2</sup> each (Cat. 5) with 6 beds. Huts are divided into 2 bedrooms, loft with 2 beds and kitchen / living room. In the kitchen there is hot / cold water, oven / stove, fridge / freezer and equipment for 6 persons.

Blushøj Camping  
Elsegårdevej 53 · 8400 Ebeltoft  
Tel. +45 86 34 12 38  
Fax: +45 86 34 12 38  
www.blushojcamping.dk

## Blushøjgård Feriecenter

Just 150 meters from the Kattegat and in the midst of the unique nature of Djursland is Blushøjgård Feriecenter situated.

12 apartments, of which 7 have seaview. A good and comfortable base for a holiday with the whole family - only 4.5 km from Ebeltoft. We look forward to receiving you at Blushøjgård Feriecenter.

Hosts: Niels, Dorte, Silke, Lærke and Frede Brandt  
Blushøjgård  
Elsegårdevej 58 · 8400 Ebeltoft  
Tel. +45 86 34 10 13  
www.blushoj.dk

## Danhostel - Ebeltoft

Opening periods in 2009:  
01. 02. - 31. 10. (holiday)  
02. 01. - 30. 11. (groups)  
Beds: 72  
Rooms without bath: 20  
Host: Knud Peder Hansen  
Søndergade 43 · 8400 Ebeltoft  
Tel. +45 86 34 20 53  
Tel. +45 86 34 25 88  
Fax: +45 86 34 20 77  
ebeltoft@danhostel.dk  
www.danhostel.dk / Ebeltoft

## DCU-Camping Mols

This is one of the Danish Camping Union's most well-equipped places. The camp is surrounded by beaches and nature. There is a swimming-pool and water slide at the open year-round camp that has made this area one of Denmark's most popular holiday areas. There are fast ferries directly to Sealand and the motorways to most of Denmark not far from the site. Contact DCU-Camping Mols: Anni & Harald Venshøj  
Dråbyvej 13 · 8400 Ebeltoft  
Tel. +45 86 34 16 25  
Fax +45 86 34 08 32  
mols@dcu.dk  
www.camping-mols.dk

## Ebeltoft Strand Camping

(earlier Vibæk Camping)  
10 luxury cabins in the category of full-year. 12 huts near Ebeltoft Vig with a lovely child-friendly sandy beach. Cabins for rent throughout the year. 6 beds. Kitchen and bathroom / toilet. All necessary kitchen equipment available.  
Tel. +45 86 34 12 14  
info@ebeltoftstrandcamping.dk  
www.ebeltoftstrandcamping.dk

And for those wanting a little extra:

### Mols inn

In the middle of Denmark at the foot of Mols Mountains with direct access to a clean, wide and child-friendly beach - 10 km from Mols-Linien ferries, 10 km from Aarhus International Airport, 6 km from Ebeltoft city and 45 km from Aarhus.

All rooms are comfortably furnished. The large beautiful bathroom, all equipped with furniture by Philippe Starck. Comfortable and well-appointed with the best of Wonderland and Georg Jensen. The suites and rooms are all large, spacious, richly furnished and most of them have four beds. Prices from DKK 1.295,- and up.  
www.molskroen.dk

# Eco-theology Religion in the age of global warming

By Markus Skogsberg

**Over the last forty-odd years the consequences of the highly industrialised western lifestyle has been made abundantly clear over and over again without ever really staying in the public consciousness. Mercury, DDT, acid rain and ozone depletion have their modern equivalent in global warming, and CO2 is on the lips of everyone - but for how long?**

There are precious few who still talk about the sulphate emissions from cars or factories these days. However, the environmental movement have an ally in another growing movement: Heathens (and indeed other pagans) who revere the Earth as sacred generally tend to be more environmentally aware than others.

## Holy land

Henrik Hallgren is the chairman of the board of the Swedish Asatru Association, and a member of the Swedish Green Party. To him, being a heathen and being environmentally aware goes hand in hand, and has done from the very beginning.

- My involvement in and commitment to both the heathen and the environmental movements grew along side, he explains.

His interest in the old religion grew through experiences of the holiness of nature and the landscape. Being out in nature gave him a strong feeling of seeing history in the landscape, and that the landscape reflected the gods and entities there.

- It inspired me to discover the holy landscape, he says. I studied anthropology and read about aboriginal peoples around the world, and their relationship with the landscape around them - and I realised that the place names around me showed me our holy landscape: Torsberg, Friggasåker, Närlunda.

## For Mother Earth

It wasn't a big leap to make from seeing the holiness of the land around him to viewing the Earth herself and nature as holy. This of course fuelled his interest in environmental issues, and they in turn only intensified his passion for the heathen religion.

- To me heathen religion and politics can't be kept separate, he says. I don't mean that you have to belong to a particular party to be heathen, but being a heathen effects how you look at and relate to the world and therefore your political views.

He believes that our religion has the power to effect the environmental movement in a positive way. As a religion that does not disregard science, heathenry can add poetry and soul to pure fact and statistics. Seeing the world around us as our holy Mother Goddess gives us a reason to fight for her, he points out.

- We have the language for it, he says. We already talk of the World Tree and the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things in the web of Urd.

## Three theses of Eco-Theology

All heathens know of and acknowledge the connection between our gods and the natural world. The gods and entities are of and in the world, they live in the woods, hills, mountains and lakes around us. We know this, but what does that mean to us? Where do we go from there?

- We must acknowledge that such a view of the world has consequences, says Henrik. When roads are built across land that has been considered holy for thousands of years; when forests are clear cut and destroyed we must take action.

To take political action to prevent the destruction of the natural world is, to Henrik, part of the essence of what it is to be heathen. At the core of this eco-spirituality are three ideas that to him defines the heathen worldview and makes it in truth an ecological religion:



# Exploring seidr

## Introduction and workshop on the tradition and craft of seidr

By Annette Host and Sylvia Hild

**A morning session with introduction talks, focusing on knowledge. An afternoon seidr workshop, focusing on experience. No alcohol on either.**

### Introduktion talk

**Norse Seidr.** Annette will take us on a journey through the history, tradition and method of seidr. What do saga, myth and archaeological sources tell? What can be added of understanding from other shamanic traditions? We take a keen look at the craft of seidr, the purposes, the power. We will also look at the hottest issues around seidr, that is the question of ethics, and the mystery essens of seidr known as ergi.

**New Seidr.** During the last 20 years, different groups have combined a study of the sources with practical experiments with seidr. What have we learned? Annette and Sylvia represent two slightly different branches of the new seidr. We will each sum up the results and present them for you. What worked, what didn't work? What does it take to do a good, clear, powerful seidr, and which skills does it demand from us?

The purpose of this morning is not to have a discussion club. We explore seidr in order to find out what its nature is, how it works, which possibilities it offers us here and now.

### Seidr workshop

This is the chance to experience the power of the seidr in action, including preparing, learning the songs, and afterwards drawing understanding from our experiences.

We will probably do a big community seidr or two smaller seidr

rituals. It all depends on how many we are, and which job or topic is wanted and chosen for the seidr work. Let us know if you have wishes/ideas.

To participate in the afternoon workshop, you must have done the morning introduction. When we are performing seidr, there are only participants, no spectators. In the evening we might continue with more freestyle singing and learning songs suitable for seidr and other rituals

**Annette Høst**, Denmark, has studied and practised seidr for more than 20 years, from a basis of shamanism, and has taught shamanism including seidr for almost as long, in several North European countries. See [www.shaman-center.dk](http://www.shaman-center.dk)

**Sylvia Hild**, Sweden, has practised seidr for 25 years, with a shamanic basis in the Swedish network Yggdrasil. She is rådsdyja in the Swedish Asatrosamfund. For the purpose of this day, we, Sylvia and Annette see ourselves in the function of Elders in the area of the new Seidr. Our wish is to seize a great opportunity in a very special group of people, to hand over what is learnt, to build further on. We both love and respect the seidr, and think it is worth an effort to do it well. *"The steps we take today, shape the tradition of tomorrow."*

### What is seidr?

For the purpose of introducing the Seidr day on the summer camp, I will just say this.

Seidr is a very old Nordic tradition of magic with strong shamanic traits. In fact so strong that we could also call it a Norse form of shamanism. In the Norse mythical poems and in the sagas, the practitioners of seidr were called seidr-women or seidr-men, or volva or just cunning folk, and they

were often professional.

In the seidr you use a combination of staff, singing/chanting and a "seat between the worlds", a seidhjaell. This combination is unique for seidr, and is used instead of drumming as means for calling power and spirits, and for the soul to journey.

The seidr ritual, when done for and by a group can go like this: the seidr-worker sits on the seidhjaell, surrounded by the singers. The song carries the volva or seidr-man into the other world. There she/he meets with spirits, gods or forces and puts forward the request for help or knowledge. When the main task is done, and the song ends, the performer is still "between worlds" and in this state can give oracular /spådoms answers to members in the group.

Well, this is how it is told in saga

hints and -stories, most clearly in Eric the Red's saga. Our written sources are all from late Viking age or early medieval times. They illuminate only the latest fragment of the lifespan of the seidr tradition. For seidr is much older than the Viking age. Much evidence suggests that seidr or its forerunners have root in the earlier fertilitycult of iron og even bronzeage.

Seidr can be used for divination, finding knowledge, as well as for changing things, using power. It can be done as a big community affair, or as a simple ritual with one or a few participants.

If you want to read a bit more, see my article "the staff and the song" on [www.shaman-center.dk](http://www.shaman-center.dk), or if you read Danish, this article "I Vølvens Spor" is better, same website.



*The Norns by H. L. M. Photo: wiki.commons.*

- The view that the Earth and all nature is holy - and that all the beings residing there are worth consideration and respect
- That mankind is not separate from nature, but part of the the whole - we do not rule the Earth
- That nature is not an obstacle to spirituality - indeed we find inspiration and power in nature.

# What are the Eddas?

By Mathias Nordvig

**The main reason there is such a thing as modern heathens today, is on the most basic level thanks to one man. His name was Snorri Sturluson and he lived in Iceland some 800 years ago. He was a learned Christian man, who had a specific interest in the original tradition and culture of Icelanders and Scandinavians in a broader sense. In the decade 1220-30, this interest brought him to write the work that has later been known as *Snorra Edda* (Snorri's Edda).**

*Snorra Edda* is a unique masterpiece of medieval literature. It comprises Old Norse mythology – the tales of Odin, Thor and all the other gods – into a comprehensible and structured story of ancient heathen beliefs. It makes use of learned Christian theories on heathenry and the existence of pagan gods to explain and understand Old Norse mythology. It is based on traditional knowledge that Snorri knew from skaldic and eddic poetry.

This story of Old Norse mythology in *Snorra Edda* is revealed in four chapters: a prologue that explains how there could even be heathen beliefs from a Christian point of view; the chapter called *Gylfaginning* (Deluding of Gylfi), which explains Old Norse myths and their worldview; *Skáldskaparmál* (Poetic Diction), which is a didactic section explaining the metaphors and metonyms (*kenningar* and *heiti*) of traditional skaldic poetry; and *Háttatal* (Enumeration of Metres), which is a 'skaldic' poem that Snorri wrote in honour of the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson and his earl Jarl Skúli.

Because Snorri Sturluson took it upon himself to write this clever work, we today have a unique window into Old Norse mythology. While Snorri did not know the ancient pagan beliefs to the point, and he did use the material from the traditional poems in his own way, there is good reason to assume that several of his explanations of the traditional mythic material hold value in terms of what Scandinavian heathens actually believed before they converted to Christianity.

Furthermore, it is quite obvious that without his work, modern Scandinavians would know very little of the historical heathen be-

liefs before the Conversion. It is the only source from the Middle Ages that makes an attempt to explain and understand pagan beliefs, and several of the myths from *Snorra Edda* are found nowhere else. It is even believed by some modern researchers in Old Norse mythology that without *Snorra Edda* there would have been no writing down of the so-called *Eddic poems*.

The Eddic poems are another source to Old Norse mythology. In modern days we know them mainly from editions called *The Elder Edda* or *The Poetic Edda*. This is a little misleading as it gives us the notion that they were all written in the same book. While this is true for most of them, some of them are found in other manuscripts. The main manuscript is called *Konungsbók* (Codex Regius), and it is a structured compilation of poems about gods and heroes of Old Norse myths.

This manuscript was written around 1270 – at least forty years after *Snorra Edda* – but some of the poems here are quoted by Snorri in his work, so it is obvious that at least those that were quoted by Snorri existed before he made *Snorra Edda*. We do not know who wrote them down, but it is clear that whoever it was, the person had some idea how to structure the poems and what to think of them – several of them contain small prose introductions and post-scripts which sometimes reveal what the author thought of the contents.

Mostly the other manuscripts contain variants of the poems in *Konungsbók*, but some of them are also separate poems. It is generally believed today that the reason the poems exist in different forms in various manuscripts is because they were transmitted orally from

# How to create a heathen burial place

By Solvej Vikkelso

**Once upon a time back in 2006 we were sitting at a meeting in the steering committee of Forn Siðr discussing burial procedures and other exciting things.**



During the discussion it turned up that apparently many of the members of Forn Siðr were afraid to leave the Christian state church, because they were afraid of troubles when it came to their future burial, (Note. Forn Siðr doesn't object to membership of other faith communities while being a member of Forn Siðr). It can't be that difficult to be buried outside the Christian church I said, but since nobody actually knew, I took it upon myself to investigate this. That was the starting point to a very long but never the less very exciting process that ended with Forn Siðr having the first heathen burial place in Denmark in many, many years.

One of the first phone calls I made in order to investigate burials outside of the Christian state church was to the municipal church office in the city of Odense, where I live. During the conversation I got to ask a lot of other question too, like if they could tell me were my grandmother, grandfather and great grandmother was buried, even though they were buried in the grave of the unknown. Oh yes that was no problem at all and the man would straight away send me a nice sketch of the burial ground with red crosses at the family graves.

In some way or another I managed to lead the conversation in the direction of non-christian burial places, which again led to a casual remark from me about how difficult it actually was to "have" a piece of a grave yard for a certain non-christian faith community. Again the burial ground manager turned out to be remarkably cooperative and very service minded and straight away he said that was no problem at all and invited us to pop by and have a chat about this. It almost sounded as if this just was a question of some small formalities and then it would all be okay.

Okay, I became wiser. At this point in time it was August 2006, and it looked as if this could be arranged before the graveyard manager would retire in March 2007. But oh, the very thing that gave me this idea in the first place, the fact that it was a municipal burial ground, and not one owned by the church itself, became the big obstacle – it was so very municipal. Things did take time ...

As you might know we got our burial place in the autumn of 2008, and what happened in the meantime, well that is exactly what I'm going to tell you about at my lecture at the summer camp.

person to person, and this would give certain variations in the material when it was written down.

In my presentation of 'The Eddas' I will explain more of the background for their existence and what they tell. I will address some of the main problems concerning how pagan beliefs are represented

in them, and how variations and differences in the information on Old Norse mythology could be understood. Moreover, I will discuss what modern heathens can use these works for today, and how modern heathenry in general can benefit from taking an interest in the medieval Icelandic literature that tells of historical heathenry.



# The Danish workgroup

## – background history and presentation

By Helena Valorinta

**The first International Asatru Summer Camp is an old dream that has been talked about in several different contexts, by several different people.**

The idea was presented in *Vølse*, the Forn Siðr members' magazine, in September 2006 by Martin P. Hansen, but there had previously been a lot of discussion about such an idea among various asatru both in Denmark and abroad. Approximately two weeks after the September *Vølse* was published, Martin presented the idea on the yahoo group Asatru-EU - a list where several European asatru organizations communicate with each other. It turned out that Haimo Grebenstein from VfGH on the allthing of Eldaringen had been talking about how VfGH had organized summer camps and had invited Eldaringen to the latest one. Het Rad in Holland, have for several years held midsummer weekends, where they have invited guests from abroad, just as Aarhus Blótlaug in Jutland every Easter since 2000 have held open house for other asatru, with guests from both Denmark and abroad. The attitude was generally very positive towards the project.

At Forn Siðrs Alting 2007 a proposal was therefore submitted that the Board of Forn Siðr should take on the task to create such a camp. Everyone thought the camp was a good idea, but no-

body wanted to impose this task on the board. The proposal was withdrawn, and the board asked for help from people who were not board members, to create such a camp. Martin took up this invitation, and the talks continued on the EU list, and in physical meetings between asatruars from different countries. The project progressed. It was agreed that the first camp should be located in Denmark because it is geographically well-situated in relation to the other northern European countries, a country where it is easy to book a suitable hut, and the country where Forn Siðr, the organization having the best financial situation, had its home. A Danish workgroup of volunteers from both outside and inside Forn Siðr, was created. Following the wishes of the Forn Siðr Althing none from the board of Forn Siðr was in the group.

Out of a range of different alternatives Bogensholm at Mols, eastern Jutland were selected. It was a suitable size and, from a north European perspective, it was easy to reach. The first real preparations for the camp were made and Haimo Grebenstein set up an international website, with all the information about the camp.

Everything was progressing according to the plan when suddenly, in November 2008, a subject turned up where opinion went in several different directions. To make a complicated story short, it ended with Forn Siðr, on the 8th December, withdrawing from co-operation with the camp. Martin P. Hansen continued as co-ordinator for the project, since the other groups still wanted him to do this.

Several asatruar in Denmark contacted the Danish workgroup with support

statements for the summer camp and a desire to ensure its continued existence. A week and a half later, the Danish workgroup had increased from five to ten persons. This group had quickly to find an internal co-operation policy and a sensible way of sharing the labour. The Workgroup didn't, as the other involved groups, have an already established co-operation, or common ground on faith, statutes and years of knowledge of each other. The Danish group only had its enthusiasm for summer camps and the fact that we all, in our own way, put our faith in the Nordic gods.

From time to time the question of racism comes up. It is a fact that some racist oriented groups also favour the old Norse faith. All of the organising groups have a clear statement in their bylaws that clearly states they do not favour this approach to our faith. The Danish Workgroup has no bylaws, and no statement around the faith itself. We decided to keep it that way, leaving everyone in the group free to have their own opinion. On the topic of racism, however, we definitely do agree and to make it absolutely clear where we stand, we made the following statement around this:

*"The Danish workgroup for IASC 2009 will not in any respect or on any level be associated with either groups or persons who equate between religion and race – blood – genes – ethnicity or in any way embraces one of these factors as a prerequisite for one of the others, or in any other way speak for, or support such attitudes."*

Apart from that we simply follow the code of conduct created for the camp. This code makes it so very easy to co-operate.

The Bogensholm camp is booked in the name of the Danish workgroup and all entries from Denmark are carried out through the Danish workgroup on their website.

As from January 2009 the work around the summer camp is running smoothly again and we expect an overwhelming success in the last week of July - when we fi-

nally all meet in real life, in one of the most beautiful areas in Frejas hall (as Denmark is called in the Danish national hymn).

We think it's a great strength for the summer camp that the people working with the camp in the hosting country are from this very wide range of different groups in the asatru environment in the country. It creates a very broad and strong foundation for the camp to lean on. This is indeed a joint venture.

### Members of the workgroup

The members of the Danish workgroup are the following individuals:

**Claus**, member of the group around the Yggdrasil forest - Responsible for food during the camp week.

**Else-Julie**, member of Aarhus Blótlaug - Responsible for the programme - editing the week's plan concerning the programme - translations Danish-English.

**Frans**, member of Forn Siðr - Our contact with the grocery retailers.

**Helena**, member of Aarhus Blótlaug, and Friðland - Creating the website for the Danish workgroup, co-ordinating the summer camp magazine.

**Jørgen**, administrator at Kindir.dk - working with the music

**Martin**, member of Forn Siðr, Aarhus Blótlaug and Friðland - Back up for Else-Julie as a programme organiser - summer camp head co-ordinator.

**Mathias**, Danish asatru - Contact with the lecturers

**Odd**, member of Aarhus Blótlaug and administrator at Kindir.dk - Overall responsibility for the bar.

**Ole**, member of Forn Siðr and Aarhus Blótlaug - Treasurer.

**Peter**, member of Forn Siðr and Uias blótlaug - Laborforce - know how - feedback.

**Peter T.**, member of Gullinkambi and Holmgængerne - Responsible for marketing.

**Want to make a donation?**

Should you be thinking of making any financial donations to the summer camp - please use this account if you are abroad:

Jyske Bank  
IBAN: DK6878350001427048  
Swift Code: JYBADKKK

If you are in Denmark please use this account:

Jyske Bank  
Reg. no. 7835  
Account no. 142704-8

Remember to clearly state who's making the transaction, and that it's a donation.

# Sveriges Asatrosamfund

## – The Swedish Asatru Assembly. What are we about?

From the website [www.asatrosamfundet.se](http://www.asatrosamfundet.se)

### The Swedish Asatru Assembly

- Is here for those who are interested in our Old Gods and ancient folkbeliefs.
- Is here for those who feel that spirituality is missing from today's world.
- Is here for those who think that Nordic Heathenism or Asatru, adapted to the relevance of modern society, is an important and positive religious alternative.
- Is here for those who believe that it is easier to meet other cultures and their traditions, when one knows oneself fully.

### Modern Asatru

The Swedish Asatru Assembly aims at reviving the kind of Asatru that takes nourishment from the past, works in the present, and looks towards tomorrow. Asatru should be of use to one's everyday life, so that one can live in harmony with nature and with other people.

We intend that Asatru supports good moral behaviour and works as a natural way of linking ourselves to tradition and roots. The Swedish Asatru Assembly takes a rather spiritual stance, however, our view is to allow each individual to find their own understanding of personal spirituality. Any kind of dogma on how or what one should believe does not exist and is something we completely reject, as pagans. Spirituality is a personal matter and a fundamental right of the individual, this is a pagan view. Since the old myths do not solely relate to the Aesir but also the Vanir and nature spirits, we prefer to refer to our faith as 'den forna seden' (The Old Way) rather than Asatru. In our old folklore there is much that is relevant today, from there we also gain a good deal of our inspiration.

### The old way and the world of science

Our modern age of science and technology has changed irrevocably our comprehension of the world around us. Where the so-called great religions are concerned, e.g. Christianity and Islam, these have created religious doubt. Religions that follow the



*Blót at Ales Stenar at the Alting of SAs 2008. Photo: Lars- Erik Löfgren.*

letter of their ancient scriptures seem obsolete when they can no longer relate to people's lives in the the modern world. Nature religions on the other hand, which means the Old Ways of all cultures, are built up around myths, not scriptures, which hold universal relevance and common concepts deeply rooted in the essence of human nature. Myths suit mankind as biological and social entities. Therefore myths from e.g. The Edda can even today be of use to humanity. The old ways constantly speak of creation, not as an isolated incident, but as an eternal ongoing process. According to the old ways, humanity is actively engaged in this whole. The world is not only created by, of or for God(s) and humanity is not a passive bystander in creation.

### Religion and society

In the light of history we can see that religion and politics have often gone hand in hand. This situation has been due to the way in which society has been organised. If a religious movement is controlled by a belief system which is institutionalised into the fabric of a society, it cannot then be expected to survive the developments that occur in that society. A religion that is based on the individual, such as the myth-based religions are, has a greater possibility of filling basic human needs of spirituality regardless of society. In the old way, there is a broad spectrum of myths. The forces of light and dark co-exist, not least amongst the gods and goddess-

es. In the myths they solve their problems in different ways each according to their needs. This has enabled us as people to identify with them and find wisdom therein. The old ways gives one the possibility to see the world from many different aspects, which in turn means that one is not locked into a single all powerful truth. It aids in attaining personal development and helps to understand the views of others. It is a asset to a truly democratic society.

During the Viking Age, the Ting, or parliament, was the manner of governing the people. Even the king was voted in. As the saying goes in an old by-law "Svear äga Konung taga och vräka" (Swedes can choose a king, and reject a king). Through history we know for a fact that it was a truth with some modification: that it was from among the great landowners that the king was chosen. This relationship shows that despite a 'democratic' Ting and general election, democracy itself is not a clear concept. Sweden's modern state of government, with parliament and elected assembly, is not itself a clear democracy. The concept of democracy must be constantly updated. The old ways, independent of society and its institutions are unlike 'democratic governments', eternally relevant.

### Man and nature

According to the Old Ways, mankind is not the king of creation. Humanity cannot claim priority over the whole world. Humanity has not been set here to be

the gardener of Earth. The myths warn about greed and excess, that nature's resources should be used with care and responsibility. Nature is not just a resource, which in the best case scenario we should protect, the old ways teach us that we too are part of nature, we are quite simply, natural. The ecological balance is a fundamental principle of life. Frey, Freya, and fertility rites amongst other things remind us that a humble and life affirming approach to all nature is the way to live on this planet.

### How do we worship?

As in most other religions, it is possible to ask the Gods for help. Yet nothing can be taken for granted, just because one has the "right faith". It is widely viewed that if one wishes to increase the chances that the Gods listen to your prayers, you should be damn well prepared to do something about those things yourself. In addition, one should give offerings, which in the Nordic languages is called blót, directly related to the Old English word Bless or Blessing, which originally means 'to bleed or draw blood'. This sounds grizzly, but it is a matter of fact that in order to eat meat one must take the life of an animal. This was the drawing of blood or 'blót'. The thanks given to the gods for giving food and life by the taking of another life was shared with the gods by a part-offering of the animal, as one might share food with a guest. Without the same need for meat in modern life, blots or blessings have developed. Nowadays it is commonly considered that to give time, energy or general material objects of different personal meaning or worth are adequate gifts to the gods. Sweden's Asatru Society for example openly encourages blessings of flowers, food and mead. In our organization it is not allowed to kill animals as a part of our public ceremonies.

Sweden's Asatru Society is an anti-racist body which is based on the foundation of common democratic principles.



# A little history of paganism in the UK

## Or how the Kith of Yggdrasil nearly didn't happen

By Alan Nash and Siegrune

**Odinism in the United Kingdom began with the coming of the Germanic tribes to England in the 4th Century. However much of what we know is inherited from the Scandinavians, particularly the Danes, who inhabited parts of Britain alongside the Anglo-Saxons, Angles and Jutes. Thus the foundation of our belief is a mixture of Saxon and Norse (using these terms in their broadest sense).**

The English people officially converted to Christianity under the influence of Augustine, amongst many others, who gained precedence for their religious ideology by 'converting' the kings. Naturally, this meant that here as elsewhere, Christianity was enforced rather than universally welcomed, but Odinism survived within the Church, and unofficially outside it, until a revival of interest in the Nineteenth Century championed by William Morris and his circle.

It is also possible to see the continued existence throughout Europe of non-standard Christian belief systems as a cauldron of independent thought which was just waiting for its time to come. Now we can reap the benefit of this underground or suppressed continuity, but with it comes the difficulty of sorting out what is truly Asatru from what is Gnostic, Egyptian, earth-based local tradition and the multiplicity of other systems such as Hinduism and Buddhism which have become part of our thought over the past thousand years.

Looking at the various revivals of traditional spiritual paths in the UK, it becomes very difficult to say how each path resurfaced and how, or if, they affected one another. I think that without the druids of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the freemasons, the alchemists and all the others, Asatru would not have been able to find its way back to our consciousness, but this means that there is, to my way of thinking, no 'pure' tradition to be found. As others have said, we can't return to the 5<sup>th</sup> century but we can take what we now have and through a mixture of scholarship and, maybe more

importantly, personal gnosis reclaim our inheritance and once again seek out the guidance of our gods.

The big question is about how we integrate such ideas with our own path, without destroying its uniqueness.

It is also interesting to consider the eco-revival which has changed from being regarded as the rantings of cranks (and probably vegetarians) to being seen as the only way to preserve our planet for itself, its many species and for our future generations. I think it is fair to say that the majority of Asatruar would see this as a vital part of their path, since it belongs with our relationship with land-wights, our connection with Frey and Freya, Thor and Sif (to name only four) and our understanding of our interconnectedness with everything around us.

It has often seemed to me that the day St Boniface (a saint revered near to where I live in the south west of England) cut down Thor's oak he was initiating a rupture between ourselves and the world around us, rather than reconnecting us with heaven. To replace a living tree with a dead wooden cross has profound implications for the spirituality of those involved.

However, the connection with the earth and the need to learn how to live as part of it has continued, even when the industrial revolution began to sever us from the land.

At that point the druids began their return, followed by Morris and his cohorts, the Boy Scout movement and its more earth-based fellow the Kibbo Kift, together with the 1930s revival of

paganism, which was temporarily suspended by the war and its aftermath, then the next pagan revival of the 1960s and, at that point, us - made visible at last by people like Stubba whose writings had a profound effect on the previous generation of Asatruar in the UK.

It has seemed at some points as if the heated Heathen arguments about what we should be called, and about how we should follow our chosen path would finish us off before we had really got started. Justifiable fears about right wing thugs made anyone calling themselves an Odinist automatically suspect, and I think it was largely this concern which made any name for our faith open to suspicion. Calling ourselves Odinists has certainly come with problems and it is perhaps true to say that although the inspiration behind the Kith was Odinic, with Odin being seen as the god within who acted as guide and example for us on our individual paths, it is equally true to say that our members also have deep relationships with the other gods and goddesses of the northern pantheon. Odin didn't turn up alone, usually needed the help of the others and would not have fared well had he not integrated with the feminine and with the qualities of his fellow gods.

The Kith of Yggdrasil was started by two former members of the Odinic Rite, who wanted to concentrate on the *spirituality* of Odinism rather than on the outward form it took (although those set Blots have proved helpful, especially for emotionally fraught occasions like funerals), and also wanted to make Odinism less of a tough boys' club and more like something which included the other 50% of the population, not to mention the children. This opened the whole concept out in ways which I think were probably unforeseen by the founders, and which perhaps made them a bit uncomfortable, but change is part of any life and is a necessary part of growth.

Concentrating on spirituality was a brave and a tricky course to take, as deep thinking about (and acting upon) spirituality is not something which is sexy. It also means that the mysterious ways of personal gnosis makes it likely that we will naturally take widely different paths to the same stream - down here in the south west we have a meditation hearth, in other places people are into re-enactment, in yet others we still follow the typical blót format. But all of this is about discovering our own path from the background of Asatru and with it as the solid foundation from which anything can happen.

One of our founders, Mike Robertson, said that we were the Odinic equivalent of monks and nuns - although I have to say that we are pretty odd monks since we seem fond of our partners, are not averse to downing one or two pints of ale and don't seem to be that cut off from the world. We are even odder in that we each go our own way, trusting to our common ground to keep us together.



The beauty of our land inspires us to remember who we are and where we draw our strength from, and of the need to celebrate the many differences between groups and individuals, whether within Asatru or outside of it.

Anyway, against all the odds we are still here, still thinking, still arguing, still following the path of Odin, regardless of the myriad forms he takes and, like him, unable and unwilling to manage without the other gods and goddesses of Asgard.

# De Negen Werelden

## – answer questions about the organisation and their beliefs

### The name of your organisation is “The Nine Worlds”. Isn’t one world enough?

Aswulf: Well, don’t we all live in different worlds in the course of just one day? And yet those worlds – work, family life, sports – are all part of the same reality; just as the nine worlds of our mythology are all linked by Yggdrasil.

More seriously, though, we want to underline that “The Nine Worlds” is an organisation where a broad variety of approaches are welcome. We are open to people who honour the dwarfs and the giants, just as we welcome those whose focus is more on the ancestors and the land spirits. The Aesir and Vanir occupy a central position in our faith, but Asatru goes deeper than that – and that is what we try to convey.

Stilleward: Nope, one world is not enough! We want all of them! Alright, that was too easy, but I could not resist. A saying I am quite fond of is that there are as many forms of asatru as there are asatruar. It is something I quote and which gives me the freedom to believe as I see fit, to worship as I see fit, to stumble and falter as I do, to find a home in asatru as I did. Nine worlds occupied by many different beings, each with their own desires and thoughts and perhaps dreams. And all connected by the World Tree. You could say that each asatruar is a little world, but that we are all connected by this one tree called ‘asatru’. Like the nine worlds connected by Yggdrasil.

Etje: No, one world is not enough, not for ‘De Negen Werelden’. Nine worlds signifies the pluriformity of our belief, that characterises itself by so many various aspects, beings, manifestations and ways of experiencing. Our name not only harks back to the world view of nine worlds as depicted in the Edda. For us, it also indicates that all asatruar, despite the commonalities, (must) form their own views of the world and their faith; that they have to experience their own world. Yet all those worlds are connected

by their shared traits and by the community. Indeed, all these worlds of ours are linked by this magnificent, majestic Ygg-bearing tree.



### But your logo is a picture of a boat...

Aswulf: A boat, yes, but a boat with a tree on it. Our inspiration is from a recurring motif in the Scandinavian rock carvings from the Bronze Age. For me, it symbolises the world tree Yggdrasil, sailing forth from our past to explore the uncharted waters of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It encompasses at the same time the notion of roots providing safety and steadiness, and the challenges and freedom associated with sailing the open seas.

Stilleward: Also, we like to think of the Nine Worlds as a sort of safe haven, a port of call from where people can start their journey into asatru. In that sense each of us is a ship seeking its way through sometimes stormy waters, or uncharted waters, or arriving in familiar waters and finding a home – a port of call. I know it felt like that for me, when I first came across asatru.

Not only that, another purpose of the Nine Worlds is to further knowledge about asatru and share it with those who are interested. The tree on board is Yggdrasil, the world-tree that connects all the worlds. Perhaps you could see it as a sort of ambassador sailing to show people that just as there is place for all the worlds in the Tree, so is there for all those who believe in asatru.

Etje: A boat and a tree, that is right. Our logo stands for this area of land and water, the Netherlands.

1. In the first days that our lands

were inhabited, they mostly consisted of marsh, which still can be found. More to the point: marshes and bogs played an important role as residences of gods and beings and through that as places of worship and sacrifice. This primeval landscape of swamp, marsh and bog can be seen as the fusion of land and water. Our logo refers to this landscape and our core layers.

2. Already, long ago, the inhabitants of our lands interfered with nature in order to be able to live with both land and water. Terps\* and canals have been found that ensured dry feet, drainage and transportation-possibilities. Through these interventions of our early ancestors, land and water co-existed in this area, together but separated. Our logo refers to this as well.

3. Later, but still before written history, land was embanked and settled. And later again areas were diked in. Because of this people could live below sea-level, live on the bottom of the sea, on land that actually belongs to the sea (and which it still tries to reclaim). This dichotomy of where we live is reflected in our logo.

4. Also, the eternal fight between land and water, so typical for our lands, is reflected in it as well – or is it an alternating going together? This division as well is expressed by our logo.

### And what about your motto, then? Where does that fit in?

Aswulf: We very much feel that we are treading “in the footsteps of our ancestors”. As we follow the path that our forebears have trodden before us, we discover vistas and sights that are new to us, but we also stop to drink from the pool which has slaked the thirst of many before us...

Stilleward: Well, let us be honest. We did not invent asatru. The reason we know of it is that enough people thought it important enough to keep it alive through the ages. Not only the Eddas for instance, but also people who

kept old uses and folklore alive, who remembered and retold old stories, who kept faith in the old beliefs and so passed them on us. Not only that, footsteps suggest a trail, a direction. Not necessarily one you can define in the sense of a wrong direction or a right direction, but at least and hopefully a forward direction.

We live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We believe, but in a world that can’t be compared to that of our forebears. We do not wish to re-enact what little we may know of what our ancestors believed and how they worshipped. For asatru to be a viable belief it must be rooted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So we do not do as they did, but continue in their footsteps to add our own beliefs and ideas to asatru, so that those that come after us have something they can add their thoughts to. We add our footsteps to the path so that it will continue and eventually consider ours ‘the footsteps of our forebears’.

Etje: ‘In the footsteps of our ancestors’ for us means that we hark back to customs, beliefs and knowledge of old. Not that we follow everything unthinkingly, but rather that we test these footsteps against our own honour and morality and give them our own interpretation. Though we follow in older tracks we also add our own footprints. Because of that, asatru for us means we tread ‘in the footsteps of our ancestors’, but not necessarily on the beaten tracks.

\*A ‘terp’ is a term cognate with the English word ‘thorp’, which could be translated as ‘mound’ or ‘knoll’. A terp is a specific type of mound, used to create a dry surface mostly for buildings such as farms or strongholds, to protect them from the water.



# Het Rad: An introduction

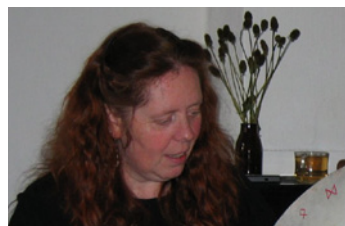
By Frigga Asraaf

**Although the postal address of blotgroup Het Rad is in the city of Dordrecht only three of its members actually live in this town, the two others are to be found further north near the coast and in the wooded middle of the country.**

Het Rad is spinning well for both the *raddraaiers* themselves and for friends and the people of various traditions joining our gatherings. It might be useful to explain the name of our blotgroup and the word *raddraaiers*, a pet name given to the members of Het Rad by a participant at one of our first public gatherings. The Dutch word *rad* means 'wheel' and *raddraaiers* literally translated would be 'wheel-turners' but usually means 'troublemakers'.

Of course we don't see ourselves as troublemakers, and we use it more in the sense of freethinkers and pioneers when it comes to Asatru and heathenism/paganism in general.

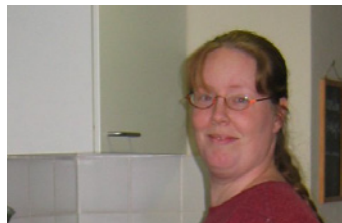
But, before going on, let me first introduce the *raddraaiers*:



**Frigga Asraaf** was born and raised in Holland. She came to Midgard in 1960 in Rotterdam, on 'Hillegersberg' (Mountain of Hillegonda). A folktale states that this hill was raised by the giantess Hillegonda. After wandering around Holland, moving to several towns and villages, Frigga now lives in Dordrecht, already for more than five years.

Frigga is a creative and talented woman: skald, writer and skilled with seidr and runes. Amongst her specialities in this field is working with sound and singing.

Frigga has been editor in chief of the quarterly magazine 'Balder' since 1997. Meanwhile, four books have her name on the cover and she is writing articles and poems for magazines in the Netherlands as well as internationally. Since the beginning of 2009 Frigga has been part of the informal *Heidens/Paganistische Ronde Tafel* ('Heathen/Pagan Round Table') for interfaith and intrafaith, mainly for The Netherlands.



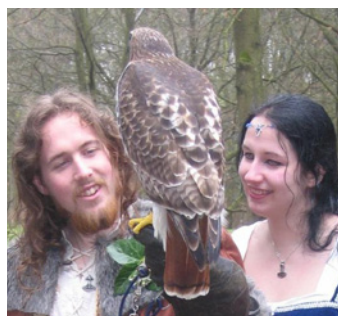
**Pauline Tuymelaar** is a working mother and lives in Ermelo with her husband and two children. As payroll administrator she is employed by a temporary workers agency. She started her life in Midgard in a small town in Holland in the year 1970.

In 2000 she joined a private yule gathering of Het Rad for the first time and this was her introduction to Asatru. She never left and grew slowly into being a *raddraaier*.

For most gatherings she is in charge of the food department. The recipes in 'Balder' are from her hand and beside that she also writes an occasional article. Pauline also is a skilled seidrwoman and seeress.



**Michiel de Nijs** was born and raised in Heemskerk, a village next to the dunes, near the coast of the North sea. As a writer and artist Michiel is also known as Draak or Dreki. He uses both names too on the internet as nicknames. Amongst his skills as an artist are drawing and horn and bone carving. Michiel also has a strong interest in seidr and runes and has found his own way of working over the years. He is a trained seer. Michiel has written articles and short stories for the quarterly magazine 'Balder' since 2003. He provides illustrations for all kind of things, such as articles and poems. Also he has made some illustrations for books and is the designer and webmaster of the website of Het Rad.

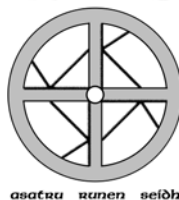


**Wilco and Rachèl Belgraver-Thissen** were both born in 1982.

Wilco is a child of the flat lands of Holland and Rachèl came to Midgard in the hills of Limburg. Wilco is finishing his bachelor's degree in computer science at Eindhoven University of Technology, and has already started to study to become an Embedded Systems master. Rachèl is studying Art History at the university of Leiden.

They became *raddraaiers* midsummer 2006. Six months before they registered at *Het Hof*, our message board, and Rachèl told us about their in search for somebody who could assist them with their marriage ritual. Half seriously, half for fun, Frigga mentioned that they could stop looking as she would probably be able to help them. The three of them found out they all lived in the same city and one thing led to the other. Wilco and Rachèl occasionally contribute to 'Balder' with articles, clippings and other things.

## HET RAD



Without even the slightest hindrance of any knowledge, so to speak, about our own point in time we all jumped into the nine worlds, and our paths have crossed. Over the years it became clear that Het Rad and the *raddraaiers* developed their own style with Asatru, runes and seidr. One of our present slogans is: *Asatru Anders!* ('Alternative Asatru!').

Unofficial as we are our official moment of coming into being was midsummer 1997. Now after 12 years, 48 magazines, 6 midsummer weekends, many public and

private gatherings, workshops and visits to other Asatru organisations abroad, we are really proud of what Het Rad has achieved.

These have been turbulent years, and were even really rough for a period, but as we say in Dutch: *in nood leert men zijn ware vrienden kennen* 'in times of need one will find out who is a true friend'.

We have survived and this year, 2009, at the age of twelve Het Rad is even more lively than ever and we see an increasing interest in Asatru, seidr, runes, our blotgroup and our gatherings. Every three months around 45 copies of our magazine 'Balder' are finding their way to subscribers, even one to New Zealand, and beside this we have an exchange of magazines with friendly organisation of various traditions in The Netherlands as well as abroad.

We as *raddraaiers* are very proud to be part of Asatru-EU and IASC 2009 and are thrilled with the idea of spending a whole week with asatruars from many parts of the world. We hope to welcome a lot of visitors to IASC to our party-tent for a chat, to share a horn, sing-along and to the workshops we will provide throughout this week as 'Ancestor constellations' and 'Powersongs and runes'. Just look for a tent with cheerful prayer flags and you can be sure it will be us!

### Some words from two friends of Het Rad:

We, Ap and Dolly, are a couple and we are living in Amsterdam. One of us was born on the banks of the river Rhine and the other one on the banks of the river Amstel, both in 1952. The heathen heritage we have in Europe is vast and beautiful! We are discovering our roots and about two years ago we 'accidentally' stumbled across something called Asatru. We have been reading about it on the internet, took on a basic training shamanism and halfway through we heard about a rune-workshop by Freya Aswynn organised by Het Rad. She gave a fantastic workshop. We immediately felt at home, and Het Rad has become a new spirit kindred for us!

Now we have a chance to learn, experience, laugh and socialize (the latter not our real talent).

And of course we are looking forward to the Asatru Summer camp



in Denmark - at such a beautiful location - workshops about seidr and runes (yummy), a walk by the sea, a big campfire, fresh air ... and many asatruar to extend our spirit kindred! The workshops of Het Rad sound promising again and we know they are always worthwhile!

**Workshop ancestor constellations:** For those of you who are familiar with family-constellations: Ancestor constellations is a variation of this method focused on connecting with the ancestors. The core of constellation work is people presenting family members. An ancestor constellation is a

way to look at the ancestral family line and, if needed, bring back balance. It as a way to seek strength, comfort and support from ones own ancestors, but also from our foremothers and forefathers in general. We will demonstrate various constellations with people, as well an alternative with pebbles.

**Workshop powersongs and runes:** Sound is one of the most easy and powerful ways to connect with the other worlds and the spirits. We will explore both singing and chanting with and without words and runes. The songs we will sing during this workshop are mainly composed by Frigga Asraaf.

# Asatrufellesskapet Bifrost

*From the website [www.bifrost.no](http://www.bifrost.no)*

**The asatru fellowship Bifrost, is a religious organization for modern asatru in Norway. Our religion is based on the religious tradition in Scandinavia and Iceland before the Christian era.**

The organization was approved by Norwegian authorities in 1996 and connects blotslag (local or regional groups of practitioners) and individual members. The blotslag are largely self-governed and have different points of focus within the faith. Members may be connected to a blotslag or directly to Bifrost. No kind of discrimination based on origin, sexual orientation or other personal trait is acceptable within Bifrost – or anywhere else, if you ask us. Unfortunately and sadly, Norse symbols have been heavily abused in the past and even today by far right-wingers and outright nazis. One of our missions is reclaiming the expressions of the old customs so that they shall no longer be associated with hateful ideologies. Though different, all human beings possess indispensable intrinsic value, as do all living things. Bifrost brings together people who wish to worship the old Norse gods and keep the old traditions alive and strong, as a living community for anyone interested in asatru. We strive to be a forum for practice and discussion of the heathen understanding of history, myths and the divine forces. We aim to increase the awareness and understanding of arts, culture and traditions with roots in pre-Christian times. We want to keep the heathen cultural and religious heritage alive as an updated faith for people of today, through study of historical sources and adaptations to the modern way of life.

Asatru, the way it is practiced in Bifrost, is based on an individual understanding and interpretation of what it means to follow heathen customs. Opinions people have, how they understand the histori-

cal sources and their personal relationship to the forces of nature, is none of Bifrost's business. This tolerance and freedom to think for oneself is in our opinion a central part of asatru. There are no religious dogmas in Bifrost.

The religious practice is mainly maintained locally in the different blót groups. Every group is led by a Hovgode/gydje (priest/priestess) chosen by their group. Their responsibility is to arrange and lead the blots. Most goder/gydjer are members of the Råd (council).

The main activities of the Bifrost umbrella is keeping membership lists updated, distributing economical support from the government and arranging the annual meeting, the Thing. The Thing is the supreme organ of the organization and all matters of importance are discussed and decided here. All members are encouraged to take part, forward their causes and give their votes. The Thing is led by the høvding (chieftain) who is also the person responsible to the federal government.

There is also an administration of currently three people, responsible for the daily administration of Bifrost between the Things.

Anyone agreeing to follow the laws of Bifrost is welcome as a member. You can not be a member of any other Norwegian religious organization due to federal regulations.

## **Ethics and Mankind**

The society of the Viking age was very different from that of today. Without any police force, each person or kin was required to take justice in own hands – acts of re-

venge were even largely expected at the time. The fact that a person believes in the Asatru does not mean they support or endorse such behavior in our time, or can be taken to account of actions done by others a thousand years ago. Though we let ourselves get inspired by thoughts and traditions of the Norse society, we are of course children of our time, based in the ideas that shape modern society. Our goal is not to recreate the morale of the old sagas.

Heathen morale and ethics are built on the relationships between people, and is not directed by any supreme entity. Nothing is considered good or evil in its own right, but actions may lead to good or bad consequences. Significantly, there was no word for "evil" in old Norse. The Christians had to invent one! There are no absolute commandments, no concept of guilt or sin, no salvation, and every individual is responsible for their own actions and have to bear the consequences themselves. This is the basic principle of the part of the law that is considered the ethics.

If anything could be considered the basic idea in the heathen tradition it must be the concept of balance; the way creative and destructive forces in the world balance and equalize each other. This principle is seen in the interpersonal moral as expressed in Hávamál, with its emphasis on moderation and following a middle course. The principle of balance applies also to the interpretation of Hávamál: The rules are not to be followed so strictly that they turn into commandments; on the other hand, do not interpret them so loosely they lose their content and intention.

Honour is another central concept in the Norse way of thinking. All

people start out having a dignity and the right of receiving respect. However, they may lose this right if their actions limit the dignity and freedom of others. In our tradition, humans are not separated from the rest of nature, but a part of it. This view educates us that nobody can exist independently of nature, and we all need to find a way to live in and with it. This does not necessarily make all asatruers nature preservers, but most of us will be conscious that the ruthless exploitation on nature is an unbalanced and therefore destructive act. Asatruers reap from nature but strive to give back sufficiently for the cycle to continue.

## **Traditions and religious practice**

One of the most important goals of Bifrost is to carry on old customs and traditions, and establish new ones when there is a need. Traditions performed in a group gives a sense of community. This is as much a task for each single member, as a task for the organization. Not least because most of the activity in Bifrost takes place in the blót groups and private gatherings. It is important that we manage to adjust the customs to our own modern everyday life, so that they continue to be meaningful actions, also to people of today. We want to live the wisdom and knowledge of the old ones through following their customs, but we do not necessarily want to live like Vikings.

Like languages evolve with changing needs, any viable community needs to adapt new customs to fit new needs. Minor tweaks and more comprehensive adaptations are introduced frequently in Bifrost, in and around blots and other communal activities. The value of customs is not necessarily their age or origin, but the cultural values they express.



# Wellcome to Eldaring!

*Translated from the website [www.eldaring.de](http://www.eldaring.de)*

**The Eldaring is a young group that was created to bring information about Asatru to the German-speaking area. With Asatru we mean the reconstruction of the pre-Christian religion of Europe and Scandinavia.**

Our members mainly comes from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, but also from other parts of the world. The Eldaring was founded in August 2000. The first Alting took place in 2002.

It's time for people to gather. We are called by the country and the sky. Attracted by the majesty of the mountains, the deep beauty of the forests and the vastness of the sea. The deep roots, which connect us with our ancestors, are waiting for

us to rediscover them. The time is the dawn of the Old Way, the time when this way again will emerge in the hearts of men and women. Gather to once again forge the hammer of the North. There are many ways. The Eldaring offers a variety of signs and paths to the old gods and goddesses, because their very nature is diverse.

We expect from everyone that joins us that this is done for reli-

gious and cultural reasons and that you will respect all others who have joined to. This community, its publications and activities will not be tolerated as a platform for political or racist activities in any form.

## **The nine heathen virtues**

Courage  
Truth  
Honour  
Loyalty  
Discipline  
Hospitality  
Industriousness  
Self-confidence  
Perseverance



## **About the name "Eldaring"**

"Eldr" in Old Norse means "fire" in many meanings. "Elda" is the genitive plural form, so Eldaring can be translated with "Ring of Fire" or "fire ring". This is an amalgamation of "fire". Of course it should strictly speaking be Hringr Elda or Elda Hringr, but the name should be easy for a modern German tongue to pronounce and also have a pleasant sound to it.

# Verein für Germanischer Heidentum

*Translated from the website [www.vfgh.de](http://www.vfgh.de)*

**Verein für Germanischer Heidentum (The Association for Germanic paganism) (VfGH) is a religious community based on the traditional pre-Christian Germanic religion and culture. We follow the idea of a free paganism, the various individual values at a common goal together.**

Members are free to integrate content and practices of other naturebased traditions in their personal and religious practice, the VfGH as a community is, however, dedicated to the pursuit of traditional Germanic paganism.

The VfGH was established in March 1995 in Cologne, and has members in several German speaking countries. We pursue exclusively religious targets and is independent of other pagan organizations, but works with reputable and democratic groups in joint projects.

## **General concepts of the VfGH at a glance**

The VfGH sees its task in reconstructing a modern interpretation of the traditional religion of the Germanic paganism in a valid form for the present and future, based on the authentic tradition and the results of serious historical research. To this aim the VfGH has developed three concepts:

- Traditional Germanic paganism today
- Guiding free Paganism
- Ethnic Natural Religion

## **Traditional Germanic paganism today means:**

- Experience and devotion to the Germanic deities.
- Nature Religious worldview and responsibility for nature and the home.
- Connection with ancestors, land and homeland albums and Dises Rooted in the mythical and ritual inheritance.
- Connection with the Germanic culture and history.
- Germanic ethics on the basis of the "Nine Noble Virtues".
- Acceptance of fate and the circle of becoming and passing.
- Traditional Germanic spiritual experience, means and techniques.
- Necessary changes only in line with the spirit of the tradition.

## **The idea of free Paganism:**

- Free mediation, religion without dogmas and doctrines.
- Free design of personal religiosity.
- Free formation of opinions on ethical and political issues.
- Equal rights of all members without ranks and grades.
- Equal access to the gods without mediator and spiritual leader.

- Joint Ritual design through freely chosen cult leader.

For guiding free paganism, there is an extended essay from our Ewart pagan Yearbook 2006, published by Daniel Junker, used here with permission of the publisher: The freedom of a human heath.

## **The concept of the ethnic nature of religion means:**

- The Teutonic Paganism is the religion of the gods who are in the nature of North and Central Europe and in all living beings and things of this nature has produced.
- The Teutonic Paganism is the religion of the historic Germanic peoples and their culture. It does not claim to global validity and does not missionise.
- The Teutonic Paganism is the religion of today's people who by birth or recording of a Germanic community and are committed to their heritage.

## **What the VfGH NOT represents:**

- "Folkish Asatru" as the exclusive religion of the people of Germanic descent.
- "Universalist Asatru" as citizens of the country and detached "world religion".
- Ceremonialmagic, Wicca and other teachings that are not traditionally Germanic.
- Ariosophie doctrines of the

popular and esoteric like "Neu-germanentums".

- Mixing with other pagan traditions or neuheidnischen.
- Interpretations according to other traditions, mystification and fantasy lessons.
- Abuse of the Germanic paganism at the service of political ideologies, or for the purpose of personal profiling.

## **The VfGH is cooperating with:**

- Representatives of the traditional Germanic paganism in other associations.
- Representatives of other traditional and reconstructed pagan religions.
- Representatives seriously natur-religiös oriented "neuheidnischer" Teaching.

## **The VfGH is NOT cooperating with:**

- Satanists, and speculative Rassenmystikern Esoteric and occultists.
- Representative dogmatic interpretations of the Germanic paganism.
- Missionary movements and "religious leaders" of all kinds.

# Gotland Forn Sed

## – Old Lore Of Gothic Land

## Presentation Of Catalan Blotlaug

From the website [www.fornsed.es](http://www.fornsed.es)

**Gotland Forn Sed - Old Lore of Gothic Land is a Blotlaug (Godord/Kindred) situated in Catalonia. We also have members from other sites of Spain. We are inspired by the old way of Vikings and Goths in heathen time. Gotland Forn Sed is a member of Swedish Network of Old Lore (Nätverket Forn Sed).**

Our Blotlaug welcomes all people interested in the old lore of Goths and Viking and seeking in modern interpretation or reconstructionism. Our organisation has no political interpretation. We are against people who use old germanic-gothic, scandinavian, celtic symbols to spread hate, racism, bigotry, xenophobia, satanism or homophobia. We have no authoritarian interpretation of our lore. We tried the Gothic Forn Sed way because we wish to differentiate ourselves from Folkish people (Some kind of Odinist and Folkish Ásatrú).

Gotland Forn Sed began in 1992 as a small collective called "Colectivo Ásatrú" and we changed the name to "Hermandad del anillo - Kindred of the Ring" some years ago. Today we are formed in a Blotlaug.



Our path is reconstructionist and traditionalist inspired by some Scandinavian organisations. Our principal way is the Viking way, because this is a path more seriously to reconstruct than Visigothic. But, we have some influences in our path of Visigoths, Suevians and Vandals. Our Spanish History is joined to these gothic folk. However, we are not folkish. We believe that all people can be Ásatrú, it's not necessary to be of Germanic or Vikings origins. We think that the main objective of Ásatrú is to follow the gods, goddesses, wights, hiddenfolk, elves and the forefathers, and not to be a club of white people. Mankind in general has the same right as germanics to be Ásatrú

The Forn Sed is a spiritual way for the practice of the religion called

Ásatrú, Heathenry or Sed. We honour and present offerings to the Gods and other beings in the world around us: Wights, Elves and Ancestors. Our religion is a response to mankind's encounter with the spiritual through the generations, and these encounters and our ancestor's understanding of them became this religion. Therefore we feel a spiritual bond to all other religions formed in this way, whether that religion is called Shinto, Hinduism, Romuva or something else. We strive to create a close relationship with the Gods and other entities around us.

## *The IASC Code of conduct - IASC Council*

The International Asatru Summer camp (IASC) has the aim of bringing together asatruar for the furthering of understanding between asatruar, the knowledge of the different aspects and practices of asatru and hence expanding our horizon on asatru today.

As a participant at the IASC you commit yourself to comply with the IASC Code of Conduct.

- Each participant at the IASC is expected to treat the other participants with respect and to conduct him- or herself honourably.
- Racist or discriminatory conduct, and more generally: causing a nuisance at the IASC for other participants and/or the area wherein the IASC is held, will lead to the expulsion from the IASC of the person(s) concerned.
- The IASC Council reserves the right to exclude individuals or groups, of which it has reason to suspect that they might not comply with this code of conduct or otherwise threaten to upset the frithgarth, of the IASC.
- The organizations involved in setting up the IASC cannot be held responsible for the acts and/or deeds of individual participants at the IASC. The IASC and its organizers carries no collective responsibility. They are also not responsible for damage arising during the IASC and inflicted on persons or personal property.
- Please note that due to Danish law indoor smoking is prohibited.
- Dogs and other pets are allowed at the camp. They are always the responsibility of their owners and should be kept on a leash if necessary.

- All problems and violations within the Code of Conduct will be taken care of by the IASC Council. (Matters concerning breaking Danish law will be handed over to the police.)

### **The IASC Council**

- The Council consists of one representative from each of the organizing organizations.
- The Council will take care of all disputes that may arise within the terms defined in the Code of Conduct.
- The Council will also take care of other disputes that may arise amongst participants if these disputes in any way could hamper the camp. If a dispute arises the Council will assemble immediately.
- Things brought before the council will be taken care of by the following procedure:
- The people involved in the matter are entitled to tell the version of the matter to the Council. They speak one at the time and may not be interrupted.
- The members of the council may then ask questions to the case.
- The Council will then retire and find a solution to the matter.
- The solution will be announced through a spokesperson elected by the council.

The decisions of the IASC Council are final.

Failure to comply with the decisions of the Council will result in immediate expulsion from the IASC.



# Meeting landwights

By Michiel de Nijs

**When walking in the forests that cover part of the dune area near the town where I live, I sometimes encounter them: *kabouters*, bearded gnomes with a pointy hat that appear quite often in Dutch folklore.**

Actually, the fellows I meet have been cut out of tree-trunks, but they reflect the stories that were told over here for a long time, and that have, for example, been drawn up into some of the saga-books that were written in the Netherlands at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Local folklore from all over the world usually is teeming with all kinds of lower mythological creatures, as some mythologists tend to call gnomes and other nature-inhabiting beings. As I see it, these creatures can be reckoned amongst the landwights.

The naming 'landwights', or actually *landvættir*, as they are called in old-Icelandic, is Icelandic in origin. They appear in some sagas and folktales as the creatures that the Icelanders encountered when they first colonised their land and that have played a living role in folk belief for a long time. Though the belief in landwights might have been strengthened by the imaginative natural features of Iceland, traces of belief in similar spirits can be found all over the Germanic world. All kinds of creatures inhabiting nature that are connected to specific natural features like hills, hollows, forests and so on appear in folk tales throughout northwestern Europe. They show up as gnomes, elves, fairies, trolls, giants or similar creatures. Usually the form they take in the tales, and in front of my minds eye when I search for them, is connected to the surroundings in which they are found. Giants and dragons are usually connected to some larger natural feature, like a hill, mountain or sometimes even a complete peninsula or island. Trolls live in dark and shady places like caves and canyons. And there is a whole range of creatures, like gnomes and fairies, that seem to populate the forests.

Stories concerning landwights in many cases seem to concentrate on natural features that stand out in their surroundings. A free standing tree, for example, will more often be haunted than some tree



Photo: Michiel de Nijs

that's part of a forest. It is usually the lone hill or mountain where a dragon or giant lives or once lived. In my personal experience I feel indeed a much stronger presence of wights at such places, and I suspect many people will. My explanation for this latter fact is that landwights are strongly connected to the identity of a place. A tree, hill or other natural feature that stands out will be more easily remembered. In other words, it will have a stronger identity. Places that are easier to remember will more often play an important role in tales told, as well. The atmosphere a certain place or object has around it plays an important role too, of course. And often these places or objects standing out from their surroundings can give us an uneasy feeling, especially when the weather gods play their roles as light- and/or sound editors in their most dramatic way. And it is just in this way that, in my opin-

ion, stories about spooky wights tend to stick to these places.

So, landwights are connected to the identity of places, and the stronger this identity is, the stronger the presence, the feeling of landwights being there, will be. I think it is interesting in this light to call into mind a concept I learned about in my studies on landscape architecture: *genius loci*. This term literally means 'spirit of the place'. Nowadays it is used to denote the identity, the soul, of a certain place. The ancient Romans first used this term for a kind of protective spirit, protecting a specific person, somewhat similar to the Norse *fylgja*. Later on the *genius loci* became a spirit that protected a certain place or a house. In that way it is not dissimilar to the Germanic house/landwights. In some stories they seem to protect the land they're connected with and all that lives on it, includ-

ing the people. A strong example of this is the story told in *Landnámabók*, in which the Danish king Harald Gormsson, intending to invade Iceland, orders a wizard to travel to this land and tell what he sees there. When arriving at the coast of Iceland, the wizard sees that the land is full of landwights. When he tries to get on shore, the wizard is attacked by a dragon, an eagle, a bull and a giant on each of the quarters of the island. But usually the landwights aren't portrayed as being that beneficent in stories. In many cases encounters between humans and wights end up in humans being scared, held captive or even killed. This especially is the case when it concerns landwights connected with places that are outside people's daily surroundings, let's say in Utgard. Landwights are said to lure people into swamps or caves, they are said to be the reason that people get lost in forests and so on. ►





Well, if we allow ourselves to consider this true in the real world, why would they do such things? I think it is simply because we are intruders in their land. We disturb their rest and, when we stay, their lives. Many people just walk into a place as if they own it. They did so in the past, and they do it even more so in the present. And when you do that, nature, the land, the landwights might just turn against you. When you step into a swamp as if it is your back garden, you might very well drown. Or be lured into the water, to put it in the language of the tales.

But even if you live in a place in good harmony with the landwights, they might turn against you because of someone else's doings. An example of this can be read in Egil's Saga. Because of his dispute with king Eirik Blodøks, the protagonist Egil erects a *nidstang*



Photo: Michiel de Nijs

*stang* ("curse-pole") on the island of Herdla, where King Eirik has his house, saying the words: "*Here I set up a nidstang against King Eirik and Queen Gunnhild - and I direct this against all the guardian spirits of this land, so that every one of them may go astray, neither to figure nor find their dwelling places, until they have driven King Eirik and Queen Gunnhild from this country.*"

The words in the curse make clear that the *nidstang* is actually meant to upset the landwights, so that

they'll drive Egil's opponent away from the land. In this story the curse seems to work, because shortly after this, King Eirik leaves for England to settle over there.

The way the landwights are portrayed and the way in which they act in the stories mentioned above correspond quite well with my personal views on them. I consider it healthy to maintain good relations with the wights that are part of the place where I live and with those inhabiting places where I intend to stay for a while. When I first moved into the place where I live now, one of the first things I did was to perform a little ritual to introduce myself to the landwights living here and honour them. Even if you don't consider landwights to be real living creatures, this is a nice way to create a bond with the place you live, to feel really connected with it. A way to

maintain this bond is by making small offerings to the wights regularly, like I do myself in my small garden, sacrificing some milk, beer, mead or food.

For me, creating and maintaining a bond with the landwights is a good way to get a connection with the land that I live on or the place that I am visiting. It helps me to understand the land better. Because of the way landwights are in my view connected to the identity of a place, it helps me to get some basic understanding of that place. And that in turn helps me to get more involved in the place and feel more at ease in it, like it might do for many other people as well. You could say that the landwights work like an intermediary between humans and the land on a symbolic and perhaps energy level.

# Runes and Wights

By Frigga Asraaf

**Both runes and wights play a significant role in my life. To me, runes represent primal powers, forces which go beyond our imagination and perhaps even beyond our universe. Runes are a key to the gates leading to all secrets, knowledge and wisdom hidden behind them.**

In my opinion, both scientific and esoteric knowledge are equally worthy for those who want to learn more about these signs. One of my mottos regarding runes is: play with them as long as you are fully aware of the fact that they are not toys.

Wights I perceive as individuals and I also approach them that way. The various life forms in the other eight worlds are simply different from Midgard, our own realm and our human life form. Each world and group of wights have their own possibilities and impossibilities. The spirits I'm most connected with, beside the ancestors, are elves, thurses and dwarfs. To me, thurs is just a word for these huge and powerful spirits which in English are known as giants. From my point of view, spirits might be connected with runes instead of the other way around. In fact, this difference could give a good opening for a debate on Ansuz, Tiwaz and Inguz since these three runes either mean literally 'god', or there is a correla-

tion with the name of a god. My main rune row is the Elder Futhark, or Common Germanic Futhark and it is by use of these 24 symbols I want to share some of my thoughts concerning runes and wights with the readers of this unique magazine. The following part has come from my playful mind and experience.

How do all these different spirits relate to the runes? Do they even know them? Well, the Hávamál (143) tells us that elves, dwarfs and giants are actually familiar with the symbols:

en fyr alfum Dáinn,  
Dvalinn ok dvergum fyrir,  
Ásviðr jötnum fyrir,  
ek reist sjalfr sumar.

and Dain for the elves,  
Dvalin for the dwarfs,  
Asvid for the giants,  
I myself carved some.

The runes have proven themselves to be useful in many ways to me. Beside their use in things that are common to me, such as

healing, insight and magic, they can make it easier for the wights to introduce themselves to us. Sometimes a new spirit shows up, and since I prefer to work with names I ask for one. If they can't tell me their name I ask them to show themselves by using runes, letting them represent who and what they are. These runes, along with an old book with first names and a table of roots for early-medieval given names and bynames in The Netherlands and Flanders, have given me and my co-seidrworker Ellynn several names for dwarfs, elves and thurses. A name given to us this way is Logwer for a fire-dwarf. The runes he showed us were Isa, Nauthiz and Algiz. Isa and Algiz gave us the impression of protection and keeping and we found in the mentioned list 'wer' with means 'keeper'. Nauthiz felt in this case as (need)fire and for this we found loga 'fire'.

Turning to these wights for runelore was a whole new experience for me. Singing the runes with dwarfs is more like grunting, with the jotnar it feels like shouting and with the elves it is a mysterious whisper. As long as we, human beings, respect the wights and their way of life, we can get along fine. Needless to say that it is very important to

ask permission for roaming their lands and it also takes some courtesy from our part to wait and see who amongst these groups are willing to work with us. I would say it's just common sense, and other seidrworkers would probably agree with me.

Every rune could be perceived as a diamond with many facets, and due to the changing lights and the different angles from which we look at a rune, it might reveal an immense variety. Imagine, for example, Gebo as a three-dimensional sparkling blood red coloured ruby and step into it. Can you feel the spokes of the sign itself as a connection to the eight worlds around us and through these worlds to the spirits who dwell there?

Gebo is one of the runes connected to relationships and in my opinion it could be seen as a general connection between mankind and spirits. Therefore, it can be used with all kinds of wights to establish a connection with them. I will take a little detour here before continuing with runes and wights. Besides the earth we live on, represented by Othila, other heavenly bodies strongly influence our lives: the stars, the planets, ►

the sun and the moon. Tiwaz can represent all stars for I see a relation between this rune and the polestar. The sun in all her power and glory we have in Sowulo. Although one might come up with some valid arguments to explain the fact that there is no rune in which the power of the moon could be found, I sometimes miss a moon-rune. I particularly love the full moon and each month it is a surprise to discover what he would look like and what kind of energy this phenomenon will bring.

After some pondering I thought Raido and Laguz to be two proper runes when I want to call upon the powers of the moon. Raido is connected to the cycles of nature. One of these cycles is of course the turning of the moon which has its influence on another cycle: the tide, the cycle of water represented by Laguz. The cycles of nature are also found in Jera: the cycle of the year and the harvest.

Back to runes and wights: the rune most related to giants is, of course, Thurisaz. The Flemish writer and Assyriologist Vincent Ongkowidjojo states that the etymological meaning of Thurisaz is 'the powerful' which is, as he says, a typical quality of the thurses. (*Ongkowidjojo, Runen in de noordse traditie, p. 19*) This is something I can relate to. Because of their size and the way they are mainly portrayed in the myths it is amazing how gentle, careful and prudent they tend to be in their contact with humans. When it comes to runes and riddles they can be really good teachers.

The elves seem like an intriguing group of beings to me, known and yet unknown. I really like to spend time with them and maybe someday I will really get to know them. Somehow I mostly connect elves with the elements air and water, because they often feel so tenuous, especially next to jotnar and dwarfs. Therefore, I would say that the obvious runes for the elves are Ansuz and Laguz. Since I prefer to work with groups of three runes, a third rune would be Berkana. Trees and healing are part of elfdom as well, in my opinion, coming together in the rune Berkana, the birch tree known for its healing powers.

In the rhythm of dwarfs hammering on iron I can hear Raido, sometimes even the 'heartbeat' of the earth herself. After all, the

inside of the earth is their dwelling. In their teamwork I can recognize Mannaz and the earthly strength of Uruz shows their stamina. Singing these three runes after calling the dwarfs feels like being wrapped in their energy, their essence.

Wunjo, Nauthiz and Dagaz are three runes I sometimes use to call upon Loki, one of my favourite giants. Loki in his own inimitable way can teach us about the joy of life, one of the aspects of Wunjo. The paradox of life, represented by Dagaz, is shared by the rune and this giant. Nauthiz stands like a bridge between these two runes. The needfire Nauthiz can be the necessary change Loki often brings. With some fun and laughter, the unexpected and absurd sides of life can become a bit more bearable.

Let us go back to the beginning of the rune-row, to Fehu and, in a way, also to time and tide.

Among other things, Fehu represents the power of spring to me and in this aspect I connect the elves with this rune. Contemplate on Fehu's fire a little longer and ice comes to mind. Fire and ice are to be found in respectively Fehu and Isa, both primal forces of the universe. These powers brought forth a giant they once came across in Ginnungagap, so Fehu can be related to giants as well. If we see Fehu as a representative of Ginnungagap which is the home of Audhumbla, the power of the primal cow is part of the power concealed by this sign. In Isa the rime-thurses can be recognized. These giants are able to decorate the land so beautifully with hoarfrost or snow in wintertime. And, when asked in a friendly way, they are willing to leave by the end of February to make place for spring.

Hagalaz is related to ice as well, as hail is a strange phenomenon of nature and a giant power, I would say. But, because of the in-between state of hail, it can be elfish as well, for it is elusive: once in our hand it will melt to become fluid water again.

In the runes Fehu, Uruz and Ehwaz the animal kingdom could be recognized, including mythical animals, animal spirits and power animals. The literary meaning of Fehu is 'cattle', Uruz stands for the wild ox and Ehwaz can be translated as 'horse'. Algiz can be

a fourth rune in this row as it represents another animal: the elk. There are many mythical animals, for example, Ratatosk the squirrel, Heidrun the goat, Audhumbla the primal cow and Nidhögg the dragon, to name a few.

Originally, Ehwaz meant 'horse' and, according to Rudolf Simek, the German scholar of Scandinavian Studies, the horse had a special meaning for Germanic peoples, for the practical reason of riding and because of Indo-European traditions. (*Simek, Dictionary of Northern Mythologie, p. 157*). This significance becomes apparent in horse sacrifices as described by Adam von Bremen, or the many horse names Snorri gave us in his Prose Edda: at first Odin's horse Sleipnir and his offspring Grani, but also Gladr, Skeidbrimir, Falhófnir and Léttfeti, to name a few of them.

I remember one time I used Ehwaz to calm down a horse. I was sitting next to a coachman on the box of a coach. One of the horses was still in training and rather nervous because of all the city traffic around him, and the coachman had some problems controlling it. After I softly and unnoticed by others sang the Ehwaz-rune over the horse, it walked much more at ease.

While Uruz and Ehwaz illustrate the animal kingdom, at least two runes show the vegetable kingdom: Eihwaz and Berkana. I would add Inguz to make this set of three complete.

Inguz could represent seed, a bearer of life. I've bumped into the assumption that a translation for Perthro could be 'fruit bearing tree' or 'apple tree', again a tree. Laguz compared to laukar 'look', is a plant force.

Experiments gave me two combinations of three runes to be used for working with the ancestors. The first combination I will mention here has something to do with the direct family-line: Wunjo, Inguz and Othila. The second combination would be Mannaz, Inguz and Othila which suit the ancestors in general, every person that once lived before us. The distinction between direct foremothers and forefathers or ancestors in general can be seen in Wunjo as the family's solidarity and in Mannaz, which is related to mankind in general.

An important part of the force of Inguz is DNA that has been

passed on from generation to generation and will be passed on as long as living organisms inhabit this planet. This ongoing line of Inguz flows into Othila: the rune of the land to which we will give back our blood.

If we place the underworld beneath the earth, it leads us to another rune. The underworld is reflected in Hagalaz and therefore it's a runic force that could be used to dive deep into the collective subconscious of which ancestral power and knowledge are significant parts. Another rune ready to be used for this kind of work is Perthro, which I mentioned before with the possible meaning of a fruit-bearing tree, but which to me is foremost a representative of a well, specifically the well of Urd, the well of Mimir and Hvergelmir. In this way Perthro might represent the ancestral part of the whole Germanic field.

I work with a specific symbolism: everything comes forth from the well and everything will return to the well(s). So it is in the well, Perthro, we can find ancestral lore, knowledge and skills. Especially with a little help from Kenaz, the rune that lights our way to and through the well.

These are some of my thoughts and experience with runes and wights so far. One never gets bored with wights or runes, I would say. Due to my years of experience I'm convinced both wights and runes will teach me many a thing yet beyond my imagination, something to look forward to!

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# Offering to the Norns

By Helena Valorinta

**In this process of creating the summer camp, a whole new community has been established. A European community. Let me tell you about one of my experiences during this spring.**

My husband Martin and I were expecting our second child in May. Well it is my fourth, but it's the second that we are both parents to. When I had the first two ones in 89 and 90, I was still searching for a spiritual home, when my third, our first, came in 06 I had had one for long.

I gave it some thought then, about the norns and the life thread they are spinning for all of us. I wondered if anything could be done to make them create a good and strong one for the baby to come. But in the end all I did was to draw a rune to check if everything would be alright. The one in the beginning of the pregnancy was clear enough, but the one I drew in the end was blank. I did ask specifically about the birth though, and I'm happy I wasn't given a hint on beforehand. It did end with a caesarean birth.

Anyway at that time I forgot about the norns when we got close to birth.

Since then I read a part in Helge Hundingsbanes saga where the norns created his thread, the night he was born. It is a very powerful description, and once again I thought about how to best contact them. This time, however, I thought about sharing my thoughts and sent a question on the summercamps message board, to see if anyone had anything to say about it. This is what I wrote:

*"Okay - entering the last four weeks,*

*or so of pregnancy. Being the fourth child and my age being 42 - I know this is the last time.*

*Weird.*

*I'm fed up with being this big - and the baby is starting to take up so much space, breathing is getting difficult in certain positions, like lying flat on my back trying to sleep...*

*And still the feeling of someone completely unknown moving around inside of me... this will soon be over never to be repeated...*

*Life is a strange thing - I do hope the Norns will spin a strong thread. In the saga of Helge Hundingsbane the Norns show up to "spin" the thread the night he was born and they created it with gold ribbons...*

*I wonder... are the Norns open to sacrifices like the gods are, or do they just act?*

And there were some answers indeed.

From Holland came a personal gnosis about the Norns and how a sacrifice to them might work: *The norns weave the threads of our lives and so may present us with events and occurrences we cannot foresee or avoid. They do not, however, tell us how to act in those instances. That is our freedom and responsibility. By our words and actions do we make sacrifice to the norns, because by our words and deeds we give them new threads to*



*From the spring equinox blót. Photo: Helena Valorinta.*

*weave into the tapestry of our life."*

With the note that of course one could always raise a horn to their honour.

From Sweden came a very specific description of a Swedish tradition, that was unknown to me: *"Here in Sweden there is an old tradition to offer porridge to the Norns on the night following the birth. That would suggest that they are open to sacrifice, at least according to tradition."*

Now that was inspiring news.

From Holland there was also a wish that Frigg would help me and the baby when the time came. Thank you for that, I believe she did.

A then, from Germany came this note of plain common sense: *"I would say, just do it. Nobody, not even the Nornes, will be unhappy about a gift - which, for me, a sacrifice is."*

The message thread did however evolve into an exciting discussion about being true to the sources and old traditions today. About personal views and what can actually be said to be "true". Not bad at all to see a thread evolving like this, while you are pondering about the norns and their work.

So with these messages from around Europe, Martin and I went ahead and made a little ritual. We made some porridge from oatmeal, milk, butter, honey and salt. We poured milk over it and

put in three spoons. We raised our horn to the gods and powers, poured some mead and beer on the stone for the Landwights and gave the bowl with the porridge to the Norns, asking for a long and strong thread for the baby to come. We left it all there on the stone, and went to bed.

The next morning all the porridge was eaten and all three spoons were gone!

Well, I did expect the porridge to be eaten, living in a small hamlet there are plenty of animals to appreciate that kind of offerings. But the spoons?! And all of them?!

Well, we decided to make that mean that our offering had been accepted.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May our second little daughter was born. All went well and the baby is healthy, strong and beautiful. We decided to name her Alva Solrun and time will show how her thread does look.

But I would like to say thank you, to the people responding to my message, it was really fruitful. Both the answers and the fact that we are so connected in faith though separated in geography.

Hail Urd, Verdandi and Skuld, the three females from beneath the Tree.

År og fred  
Helena, Martin,  
Ronja, Jonatan, Disa and Alva



*Disa Gunnbjörg and Alva Solrun. Photo: Helena Valorinta.*



# On God and gods

By Stilleward

**It was a cold, dark evening. Outside the wind howled and someone inclined to go out would have seen foam-crowns on the waves in the bay. Rain fell in stinging gusts and nothing outside remained dry. The long-house though was shielded on two sides by the rising hills, tree-covered slopes with rock for bones.**

On the third side the trees continued like a spreading blanket. Only on the fourth side, the seaward side, there were no natural buffers, but the rugged palisade on top of a modest earthen wall took most of the brunt of the fierce winds. And the house itself was sturdy and had stood through worse storms already.

The inside of the house was in stark contrast. In the middle of the main room the dancing flames of a big fire gave off heat and light enough. Part of the fire was in use for cooking, with a kettle on an iron stand. A tall, blond-haired woman stirred the contents and shot a warning look at a man who approached with bowl and spoon.

"You'll wait until I tell you!", Gudrun said sternly, but the sparkle in her eyes belied the tone of her voice.  
"But it smells good!" Thorgil com-

plained. "Almost as good as you" he added with a smile.

"Oh, so my cooking smells second-grade, huh?"

"Compared to you anything smells second grade."

She made a swatting motion and he retreated to a seat outside her reach. He put bowl and spoon down and leaned back against the fur-covered rest. His eyes were drawn to his wife's hips. Seeing the direction of his gaze, she shook her head.

"Leif's coming, so behave." He looked back with a brave attempt at sad eyes, but all he got for his troubles were a grin and after a moment a teasing sway of the hips.

Thorgil rose again, though this time not to pester his wife for food or other things. He felt restless. He always was when he expected guests. He knew he would feel better again when his friend had arrived, especially with this weather. Leif's farm was only a

short walk away and Leif himself was a stout man who had seen his share of bad weather and storms, so there really was nothing to worry about. But the knock startled him nevertheless. He hurried to the small room that was the buffer between the cold outside and the warm hall. When he opened the door it struggled against the wind, but Thorgil had strength in his arms. He was more surprised by the fact that Leif was not alone. And that in itself was no problem; the people of Leif's sib were as welcome as Leif was. But, unless Thorgil had missed something, a Christian priest was not part of his friend's sib.

"If found him wandering along the road" the sturdy farmer said. "He asked for a roof."

"I... cla...claim... hospatility..." the priest stammered through clattering teeth.

His grasp of the language was not faultless, but the meaning was clear. Thorgil stepped aside so that the two men could enter.

"Be welcome then, both of you. Guests will find warmth, food and drink, and company" he spoke more formally than he would have with just Leif.

The two men did not have to be

told twice. Thorgil closed the door and took the mantles of his guests. He was not surprised the priest was cold. His woollen mantle was old and worn thin and made him wonder what the man was doing here in the first place. But he wondered that anyway. He opened the door to the hall and the warmth rolled in as a welcoming wave.

"Gudrun, we have guests!" he spoke to warn his wife.

He stepped aside to let them step inside. Closing the door behind them so no warmth would be lost, he introduced his wife and himself.

"This is Gudrun Hrothgarsdottir and I am Thorgil Egilsson."

"I am Father Ignatius. May the Lord bless your house for your welcome" the priest said.

He spoke slowly, but it was clear he was no stranger to the language and Thorgil appreciated the effort.

"For your words I thank you. A hot meal will be ready soon and I will draw you beer. If you wish, I have dry clothes too."

For a moment it looked as if the man wanted to object, but his own teeth, still chattering, persuaded him not to. Gudrun busied herself with the beer and Thorgil went to fetch kirtle and trousers. Leif settled himself on the bench and rubbed his hands appreciatively. He took the wooden mug of beer and raised it silently. The priest too took it.

"Thank you, good woman" he said.

Gudrun had to restrain herself from saying something like 'But you wouldn't know a good woman if she sat on your lap' and simply nodded. Thorgil returned with the tunic and only after an awkward moment of silence did the priest realise he would have to change here. Recognising his sensibilities were a little finer than a longhouse allowed for, the three others turned away until the rustle of clothing had stopped. Thorgil took the soaking wet habit and hung it on a wooden rod suspended from two ropes. It was close enough to the fire to dry out, but out of reach of the hungry flames. Thorgil drew his wife and himself a mug of beer as well and sat down, looking at the priest.



Photo: [www.sxc.hu](http://www.sxc.hu)



Photo: [www.sxc.hu](http://www.sxc.hu)

"It is a bad night to be out on the road" he commented.

Hospitality did not only mean food and drink, but also attention for a man's story, if he wished to share it.

"The Lord provides" Father Ignatius said. "Though he provided me with a mantle for warmer climates than this."

The second part came out with wry humour. It made him rise a notch in Thorgil's esteem. Most Christians he knew, were either too full of themselves, or hypocrites.

"What brings you here then?"

The priest looked at his beer. His expression betrayed a measure of discomfort.

"I am here to tell people about God" he finally answered.

"Which one?" Gudrun asked.

Her tone was one of interest if you did not know her, but Thorgil caught the sharp edge.

"Well, God, of course" he said with a smile.

"Ah, the Straw-God," she nodded. Their guest looked at her questioningly.

"Because his son was born in a stable" Thorgil said quickly.

"Ah" Father Ignatius nodded. "You know of God and Jesus our Saviour?"

"I know some of the stories" he said.

He did not add, 'It pays to know your enemy', although he, unlike his wife, did not consider each and every Christian his enemy.

"Whom do you believe in?" the Father asked.

"Freya, and Tyr!" Gudrun said fiercely, the challenge clear.

"Freya is the goddess of fertility" Thorgil explained, casting a warning look at her. "Tyr is the Ting-god."

"And you?"

"I follow Thor and Odin. Thor is the god of thunder. He fights against giants. And Odin is the god of wind and words."

Thorgil smiled.

"You should pray to him. He's a traveller too."

Father Ignatius laughed and took a swig of beer. He smacked his lips contentedly.

"Good beer" he spoke appreciatively.

He returned his attention to his host.

"God does not need to travel. He is in our hearts. He is everywhere."

"Not in mine" Gudrun spoke from the kettle.

If their guest took offence at her tone he did not show it.

"Perhaps he does. Have you ever considered that what you call 'Freya' or 'Tyr' are some of God's many facets? Or Thor, or Odin?"

"We are free people" Thorgil answered him. "Our gods and goddesses are free, except from wyrd. They do not serve your god."

"Nonono", the man shook his head hastily.

He was well aware that the north-men were a proud and often fierce people.

"Not serve. Err..."

He struggled for words.

"Like a sib" he said after a moment.

"A sib consists of many people, but they are a whole. You could say that the sib is a gem and each person in it is a facet of that gem. What you call Tyr or Odin are but some of the many facets of God."

The sound of a good spoonful of stew being ladled into a bowl was either an interruption or a pointed comment.

"It smells delicious" Father Ignatius said.

"It certainly does" Leif agreed.

The meal signalled a short truce and while they all ate there was little talk and none of gods, or God. Father Ignatius, for all that he was not a very big man, proved a worthy eater. He even accepted a second helping, which was served with a modicum more grace. Gudrun had always admired a healthy appetite and that the Father certainly had. Thorgil poured them all another tankard of beer while Gudrun cleaned away the bowls. It was short work and when she was done she settled behind a loom. Using small, carved plates of bone, each with a hole in all of the corners, the result was a decorative band that could be sewn onto the hem or collar of a dress or tunic. With deft motions she turned the bone cards, running the thread through it, adding extra lines to the weave. Thorgil watched her work and knew she was far from happy. He

got up and ran his hand along her spine. He saw the corner of her mouth twitch in a smile meant for him and him alone. Glad for it he sat down again, though he now dearly wished they had the house just to themselves.

"You made a nice comparison, Father" Thorgil returned to the previous topic.

It was slightly against better judgement, but there was one point he wanted to make. Father Ignatius inclined his head.

"But I have a comparison of my own" Thorgil continued. "You have saints, yes?"

"We do."

"And people worship them."

"People can dedicate a prayer to a saint" the church-man nodded.

"So, you have a many gods as well. God, saints, many." Thorgil shrugged his shoulders easily.

Father Ignatius burst out in laughter and the north-man whose guest he was grinned. Both men inclined their head at the other, wordlessly speaking their appreciation.

Since both Father Ignatius and Thorgil were well-travelled men the rest of the evening was filled with the much safer stories of faraway places, such as Rome for the church-man and Miklagard for the north-man. As the evening progressed and stayed well away from further religious discussions, even Gudrun relaxed and joined the others at the fire.

The next morning the worst of the storm at least had passed. A watery sun hung in a clouded sky and it was clear there would be rain during the day. Father Ignatius fastened the much thicker and warmer woollen cloak Thorgil had given him around his shoulders. He turned to his host.

"May God watch over your family."

His smile and eyes showed the wish was sincere and Thorgil laughed. The tone and mirth made it clear no sting was intended.

"For you one god may be enough" he said merrily. "But I have love for many. I will ask them all to watch over you while you are here in these lands."

The traveller raised a hand in salute and set out down the road. Thorgil shook his head, still grinning, and followed Gudrun back inside.



# On Celts and Vikings

## – a personal note

By Agnethe Ouren, [murmeldyr.no](http://murmeldyr.no)

**For this International Asatru Summer Camp I would like to explore a question that's been on my mind recently. One that would be very rude to post within the strong, viable Norse community: Why do the descendants of Celts in Britain have a closer relationship to their pantheon than we have to ours?**



*Tunhovd fjord, Numedal. Photo: Agnethe Ouren.*

I consider myself an agnostic spiritually, and have had some few strong meetings with Norse Gods so I know they're there in some sense or another, in addition to experiences with creatures from other pantheons, so I know there's more than one truth out there. My firsthand experience is limited to northern Scotland and eastern Norway, but I've had enough contact with spiritual groups and individuals in both places to feel the question is real and worth discussing. Other than this I have no formal background for my claims.

I consider the Norse and the Celtic pantheons to be equivalent and coexisting. Also I feel strongly that the Norwegian and the Scottish mentality – what some call heritage – are strikingly similar. And I can see some reasons why. Although I believe we are all citizens of the world and that nations and borders will slowly outplay their roles, where we're born and grow up will always play a large part in defining us, and I will do some broad generalizations to make my point: Both peoples have been targets of much domination throughout

history and have acquired a similar sturdy quality, which becomes visible in comparison to more delicate Continental citizens just a few borders south (who on their part might consider the northerners bit crude). Both communities have gone from relative poverty to knowledge and resource-based prosperity in the last century or two (but the notion of the Scots as greedy must come from the naughty jokes people make about their neighbours, because they really are very sharing). Also - this is important - both are blessed with incredible natural areas and know to use them wisely, reconnecting and absorbing the purer energy found in areas with little human activity. These things all play parts in shaping us as rational and real peoples.

This down-to-earth-ness should be a good foundation for contact with deities in nature, right? Why then did I encounter more everyday references to old gods and –esses during six months in Scotland than in a lifetime in Norway? References abound in children's tales and proverbs, and non-spiritual individuals show their awareness through exclamations like "I hope Brigit will be heading this way soon, I'm sick of winter!" The solstice festival of Hogmanay is a bigger celebration than Christmas, and active re-enactor groups keep traditions running. Not to say we don't up here, but the Norse deities are rarely mentioned outside of the community. I will skip the obvious fact that



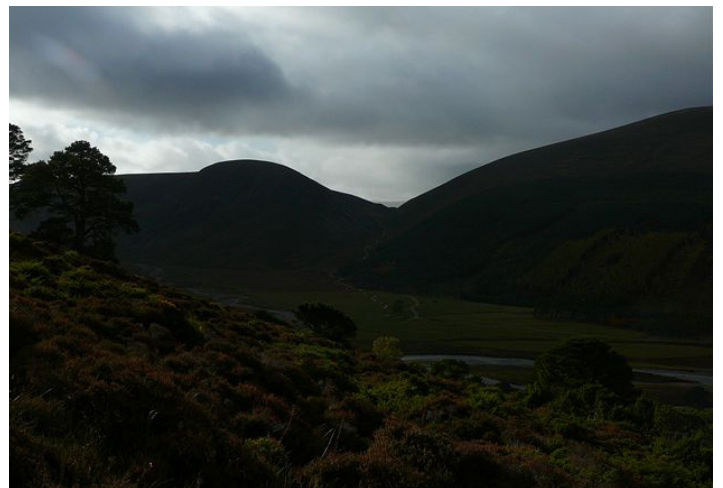
*Mountain vegetation. Photo: Agnethe Ouren.*

the largely Celtic-based Wiccan movement from overseas has had some influence, and the stigma which doubtless followed from association with a certain fascist regime, and go straight to another interesting aspect of the matter, what I in lack of less fuzzy wording could call a higher energy state. To expand on this: Walking in mountains has always uplifted me, but in the Highlands it felt as though I was physically growing. If I could feel presence in nature before, I could communicate with it now. Half a year since I've been there, I still get emotional whenever I think or talk about it. The sense of being greeted warmly welcome is so strong it's poetic.

New Agers will have many things to say here but I won't go there. I will only say there is a huge difference in the subtler interactions between humans and nature and that this difference shapes us on a more or less conscious plane, influencing our abilities to have a relationship with other nonphysical entities.



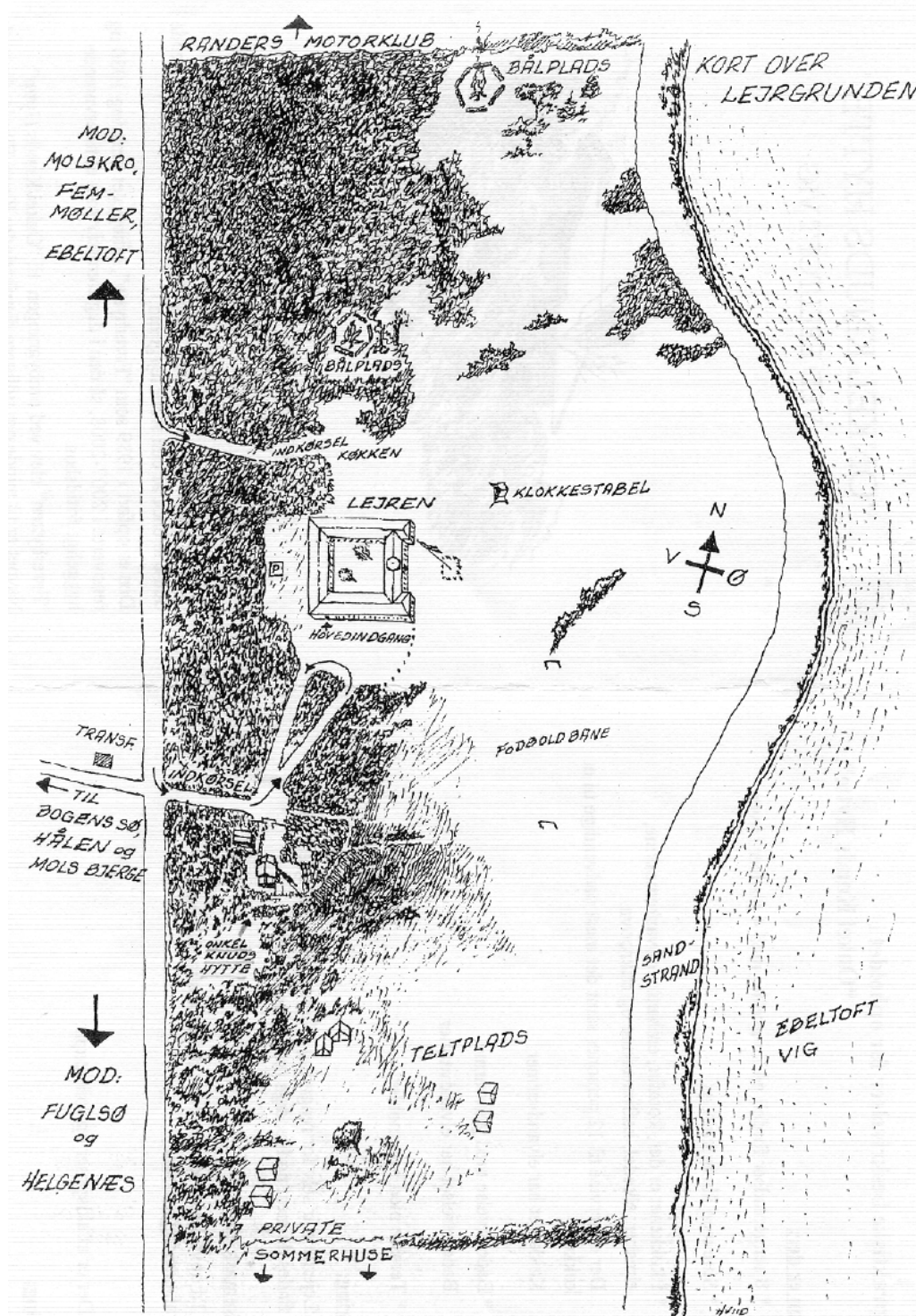
*High plain, Ruigh Aiteachain. Photo: Agnethe Ouren.*



*Dram Nam Bo, Eastern highlands. Photo: Agnethe Ouren.*



# Map of Bogensholm camp and surrounding area



[www.bogensholmlajren.dk](http://www.bogensholmlajren.dk)

## The Editorial group of the camp magazine IASC Herald

- **Helena**, Denmark – coordinating the magazine and gathering material from Denmark.
- **Lynn**, Kith of Yggdrasil – proof-reading the texts, British liaison and gathering material from the UK.
- **Frigga**, Het Rad – writing and gathering materials from Het Rad.
- **Markus**, Sveriges Asatrosamfund – Swedish liaison and gathering material from Sweden.
- **May-Britt**, Bifrost – Norwegian liaison and gathering material from Norway.
- **Michiel**, Het Rad – creating and gathering materials from Het Rad.
- **Migiuel**, Gotland Forn Sed – Spanish liaison and gathering material from Spain.
- **Stilleward**, De 9 Werelden – gathering material from De 9 Werelden.
- **Mitzie**, Denmark – layout.