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Editorial

As promised in the last issue of the IASC Herald (#6) we now proudly present the first Asatru-EU Herald. The Asatru-EU Herald will be published twice in the years in between IASC. It was a joy again to work with my co-editor Nathalie Cue Gomez. What would we be without the world wide web. Enough possibilities to communicate to get things done, such as e-mail, telephone, messenger and our cloud. We would like to thank all who put their time and effort in making the Asatru-EU Herald possible.

In this Herald we look back at some outstanding heathen events and we look forward to some marvellous heathen happenings in the year(s) to come. People in the both the UK and Spain have been looking around for a nice location for IASC 2018. Due to our wish list this is not an easy thing to do. So, it is with great pleasure we can announce the venue for IASC 2018 is known! The fourth International Asatru Summer Camp will be in Spain, and our local host is the Spanish group Gotland Forn Sed. As usual, all groups who are member of our Asatru-EU Network will play their role and together we will go again for a week of fun, frith and friendship. Miquel Sancho will tell you all about the location in his article 'BE PREPARED! IASC 2018 is on the way'.

2018 is still rather some time ahead of us, but don't worry you have to wait 18 long and lonely months without heathen company until the next IASC; because, the year 2017 will bring some great annual heathen events. Lovely opportunities to meet old and new heathen friends, like Ostara Feast in Germany and the Asgardian Heathen Festival in the UK. After attending Ostara Feast many times I can highly recommend this heathen gathering. The program is already known and promising. The hospitality of our heathen friends of Asatru UK is heartwarming, so don't forget to mark the Asgardian Heathen Festival on your calendar for next year. Geoff Miles gives an impression of the first one and hopefully it is tempting enough to go there as well for many heathens from the continent.

Also in the last issue of the IASC Herald the text of a joint statement concerning the hate against Iceland's Asatrúarfélagið was published. A year later Asatru-EU Network felt the need to change it in to a general statement for inclusive heathendom. It has already been published on the internet. If you need a file of the statement please sent an e-mail to frigga@hetrad.nl

All IASC Heralds and the Asatru-EU Herald can be downloaded for free from www.asatru-summercamp.org. A pdf file of the Asatru-EU Herald will be send to all organisations part of our Asatru-EU Network and to all organisations we have contact with. You can also sent an e-mail to walkure@aanhet.net if you want to receive the Herald directly in your mailbox.

It is nearly Yule and the Wild Hunt howls over our lands. The veils between the worlds are thin and our ancestors are close. At Mothernight we call upon on all mother spirits to keep us safe and warm and protect us the Twelve Nights between the years. Yule logs will burn and Midwinter will make the wheel of the year turning once more. There are still many Yule customs all over Europe with roots, or at least remnants, of the old times. Ulrike Phol tells the reader about the 'German Rauhnächte' and shares her recipe for Suebian Flachswickel. Uwe Ehrenhöfer writes about 'Alpine hibernal masked processions and Perchta, the Janus-headed goddess '.

Remember, both the IASC Heralds and the Asatru-EU Heralds are from the heathen community for the heathen community: without you heathens and all your heathen contributions there wouldn't be a Herald! The deadline for the next issue is 1st of October 2017. It seems far away, but time flies as we all know. Please send articles, stories, recipes, riddles and poems to: frigga@hetrad.nl

On behalf of Asatru-EU Network a Good Yule and may our gods and spirits bring blessings for 2017!

Frigga Asraaf



Enchanted Seidr - SEI 2016

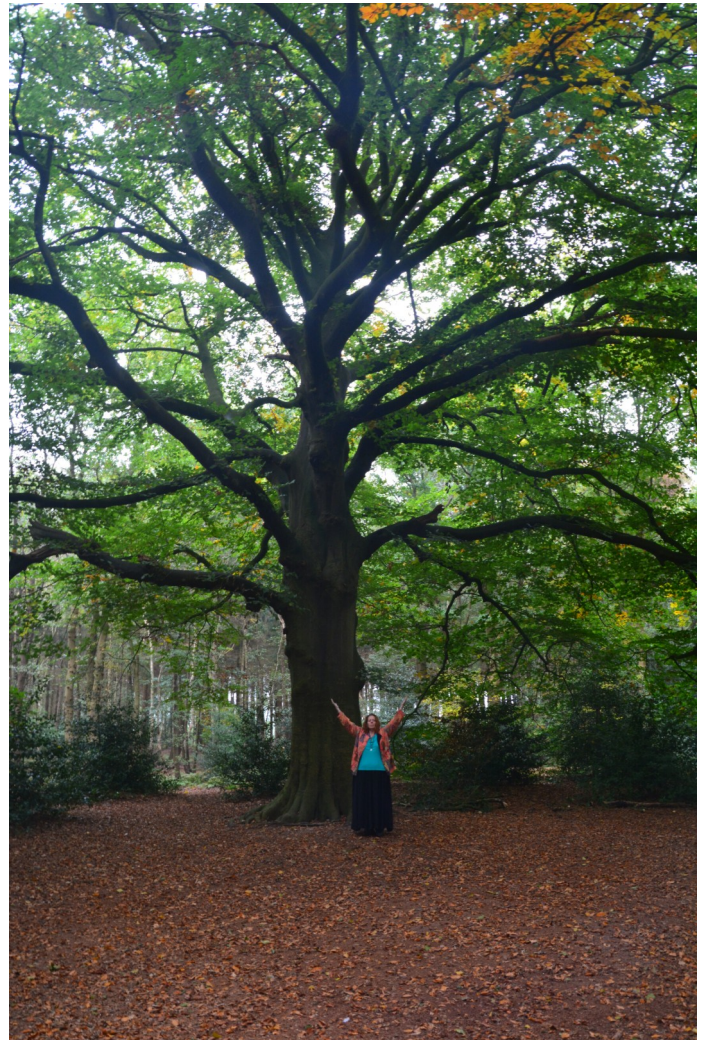
By Frigga Asraaf, Het Rad, The Netherlands

Join our journey
through nine worlds.
We wander on wings
of seidr and spá-craft,
to roots and runes,
with soul songs
and singing bowls,
landwights' wisdom
and a Flame of Frith.

For the second time Het Rad organised SEI, their international seidr event. The first one was in 2013, so an observant reader might notice that both times it was the year after IASC, which means the third edition will be in the autumn of 2019.

A nice group of people from Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany gathered for some intensive days of seidr. As always it was good to be reunited with old friends and to get to know new ones and to finally meet people until then only known from Facebook. Sometimes after years there is the opportunity to work together with people you know already for a long time. This can show a different side of someone and deepen a relationship.

We stayed at the same mansion, De Lindehorst, close to the city of Meppel in the north-east of the country. Another location wouldn't even come to mind, due to the lovely scenery and the beautiful and mighty beech tree on the estate. The moment you set foot in the little piece of woodland behind the main house you feel the presence and power of this amazing tree, the lord of his domain. In full daylight, in the twilight or in the darkness of the night, every time the path leads you around its slight corner your eyes meet the beech tree in all its splendour. I never before met a tree so conscious. He knows what is going on and willingly joined our seidr.



Shortly before the deadline of this Herald I sat down behind the PC with the thought of writing a nice report about SEI2016. I'm aware most of the time inspiration is one percent of illumination followed by ninety-nine percent of hard work. This time it was even worse. I felt frustrated, because I found myself looking at a white, empty screen without a clue what to write down. Usually it works for me to start with some key words, a single line. Nothing! Until I realized, once more, how difficult it is to express seidr in words and I asked myself if I was ready to translate so many wonderful memories into plane language. I became aware to feel not able to do justice to our fantastic seidr. So, I won't bore you with a report like 'then we did this, followed by doing so'. I'll leave it to an attempt to capture our Flame for Frith ritual on the saturday night in words, and a very short impression of the closing ceremony, but I will need the readers' imagination as well.

Before doing so I would like to talk a bit more about keeping seidr experiences to yourself. Over the years I learned, and pass this on to others, not to try immediately afterwards to translate inner seidr experiences into words. A lot will be lost in translation due to our rationale trying to interpret what is not yet for the mind to understand. Take the time you need to take in what happened to you without trying to understand, your body and soul will. Learn to trust your intuition. Give the magic a change to do its work. It may take a while, from hours to days or even longer. The moment you realize whether or not you want to talk about what you experienced or to keep it for yourself, comes by itself. I found out that mostly, unconsciously, my mind divides it into a part I want to share and what I want to keep for my self. If I allow this natural process talking about personal seidr seems to be easier. At the same time, it can be very educational for others if you share what you see or feel in a trance journey or when representing in constellation work. It is good to know beforehand that a seidr exercise beside the practice is also a teaching for the entire group and will be discussed afterwards. But, realize you always have

the choice to keep things for yourself.



Under the spell of the full moon

By the time we went out the twilight had faded into the night. It was a soft autumn evening with a cloudless sky full of twinkling stars. We all felt the calm of the countryside despite the sounds of the highway in the background. Brightly in all his beauty shone the full moon over of the foggy fields.

The Flame of Frith banner and the flames of the three candles in their lanterns danced in the dark while we set foot on the short path towards the beech tree. Withered leaves crunched and crackled gently beneath our feet. The wind rustled through the leaves still on the trees and shadows seemed to hide secrets. Night and full moon bring with them their own sense of mystery.

This evening the narrow openings between the trees that surrounded us gave glimpses of the silvery light of the moon. The air was filled with strength, silence and sounds only a forest, even one of a few square meters, can offer. It all felt like a warm and loving embrace.

In a row we walked toward the beech and formed a circle with the tree, to be part of it. Better to say our circle was part of the surroundings. Our voices, singing a frith song, merged with the nocturnal sounds. It was a moment of true peace and harmony. United with the land, the tree and a frith cord we all felt loved and being part of a greater whole.

Way too soon closing ceremony was upon us. As we walked into the Nine Worlds through a gate on Thursday evening, Sunday by the end of the morning it was time to return to the reality of Midgard, back into daily life once more. The birds joined our songs when we stood, for the last time, together under the branches of the beech tree. It is always a bittersweet moment to say farewell to the tree, the place and the people, but all of us went home with hearts filled with the sounds of songs and singing bowls and of memories of trance-journeys, talks, laughter and much more.



German *Rauhnächte*

By Ulrike Pohl

It is a curious thing that we have such a rich and diverse folklore for the time around the winter solstice, indeed for winter time in general, but we cannot tell in detail how people celebrated winter festivals and midwinter time before conversion because of the scarcity of our sources.¹ We know that Northern Germanic people celebrated Jul², although we hardly know how they did it, and we know that the Goths had a similar word so we conclude that Eastern Germanic tribes did so as well. For Western Germanic people we can be sure that there used to be festivities, because christian rantings against heathen seasonal traditions and practice tell us so, but we do not have a genuine term for the festivities which predates conversion.

For modern heathens, the scarcity of sources on pre-conversion rituals and cultic performances can be a problem if the goal is to shape and recreate their own festivals and rituals as close in intent to those of the

old heathens. It is well known that christian ideas were deliberately superimposed on existing traditions, but especially on the continent, the influence of not only christian, but also Roman and Celtic traditions as well as the profound changes brought by reformation, enlightenment and industrialization make for a conglomerate of *Brauchtum* and *Sitte* which is so entangled that their origins are hardly recognizable. Traditions which seem ancient are not necessarily so, and things which are similar aren't necessarily the same. What to do?

In this article I want to highlight three different relatively contemporary continental Germanic traditions, documented as belonging to midwinter time and which strike us as not being of christian origin. These traditions might inspire modern heathens in the re-creation of their own ways, in the spirit of how they probably were observed by the old heathens. These traditions are :

1. the burning of dried plants and resins to ward off danger during midwinter nights,
2. scrying and the telling of omens around midwinter
3. the tradition of laying a table with food for the ancestors as well as for winter goddesses like Frau Perchta and Frau Holle.

Another important decidedly non-christian tradition, mummary and masked processions has been covered by Uwe elsewhere in this magazine.


The *Rauhnächte* and burning dried herbs

While a Western Germanic term for the midwinter festival is lost, other terms which are used up to this day instead of the christian term *Weihnachten*³ are *Rauhnächte*⁴ and *Zwölften*. While the latter is a term which indicates the duration of the sacred time – Twelve Nights, nowadays in Germany this is usually the time between the 25th of December and 6th of January, in some places the time between 21st of December and 1st of January - and which might or might not be a term from pre-conversion times⁵, the former is more intriguing. One possible interpretation is that „*Rauh-*„ or „*Rauch-*„ means smoke, for it was custom to go through the house and the stables and burn herbs or incense, or incense-herb mixtures to ward off evil in any form during certain nights in midwinter time. Those nights were usually the 21st of December, the 25th of December, the 1st of January and the 6th of January. This custom existed in rural regions, mostly in southern parts of the German speaking area like e.g. the Alpine regions where it was observed until comparatively recently.⁶ The ritual of burning incense, albeit not restricted to midwinter time, is currently seeing quite a revival, there have been a lot of recent publications on the burning of dried plant matter and resins in a New Age spirituality context throughout the year, some concentrate on midwinter. They give instructions on the know-how and also the context, however, while all of them claim that burning during midwinter nights or around the winter solstice was an ancient pre-conversion Celtic and also Germanic tradition,

they do not refer to sources.⁷

But why did the solemn act of burning protective herbs and incense occur during a time in which christians celebrate the birth of their saviour, and which is supposed to be a time of rejoicing? Indeed it is a contradiction that during a time which should be one of great joy for christians, a very strict regimen of taboos and cultic actions seemed necessary to be installed, and resulted in the creation of Advent time, which was originally a time for hard fasting and praying. This strongly hints to the existence of a heathen festival underlying the christian one.⁸ Before conversion, people also seem to have believed that the time around midwinter and the winter solstice was a time of reduced safety, which was, in turn, more susceptible to cultic actions and performances.⁹ A liminal time. While the exact day(s) of the festival on the continent as well as in Scandinavia in heathen times is hard to determine exactly due to the impressive melange of possible roots and influences as well as calendaric issues¹⁰, the solstice as a cosmic incident marked a most important period, a celestial rite of passage when it was essential to do certain things, and do them right.¹¹ What we can conclude from Norse sources is that while the date of Jul was related to the solstice, it was not celebrated on the solstice itself, but later, on the next full moon.¹² Which emphasises on the idea that midwinter was not observed to celebrate the sun's rebirth, but for other purposes.

One of the distinct old heathen beliefs concerning the winter season was the idea that the dead were able to visit or haunt the living during the dark half of the year and especially around midwinter time. This is magnificently illustrated for example by the genuinely pre-christian phenomenon of the Wild Hunt, lead by Wodan or Frau Holle under her various names, as well as processions of dead children lead by Frau Holle as their guardian.¹³ Winter, and most importantly midwinter time, was a time to turn to the ancestors and pay them their due respect, as well as a time to ask for fertility and a good year.¹⁴



In Scandinavia, we have parallels in the *dísir* possibly being the center of Winter Nights festivities and rituals to start the new year¹⁵, and we also remember Bede's report that the heathen Angles celebrated *Mōdraniht*, Night of the Mothers, who of course make us think of the Matronae, Roman/Celtic/Western Germanic ancestral deities¹⁶, at a date which would be the 25th of December.¹⁷

Although a visitation from the ancestors has been regarded as enhancing luck and fertility for crops as well as humans¹⁸ and was therefore welcome, it was also necessary to protect oneself and one's belongings from the rage or even malevolence of the dead.¹⁹ So to ensure safety, people took various precautions which were different through times and regions: for example, doors and gates had to be closed in the dark and were sometimes marked with chalk, which is supposed to be of apotropaic effect. Also, ringing church bells was seen as protective. Having laundry hanging outside was absolutely taboo, the house and surroundings had to be perfectly tidy lest it hindered the dead to pass through without causing damage and leaving their blessing. The imperative of keeping the house and stables tidy can also be connected to housewight lore, where it is supposed to be a means of upholding social norms.²⁰ A lot of chores were forbidden, most importantly spinning, but also practically all heavy work except feeding the animals, mucking out the stable was only done very superficially during minor *Rauhnächte* nights because it is existential, and especially turning motions were regarded as dangerous.²¹ The scholar Erika Timm believes that the taboo of not performing chores which involve turning motions like spinning have their roots in sympathetic magic, people wouldn't want to hinder the course of the sun and anger the great divine spinner Frau Holle/Frau Perchta/Frija as the keeper of cosmic order.²²

And while we certainly know that burning herbs has been used for food preservation, medicinal as well as cultic purposes in many cultures²³, in post-conversion southern German regions it was also used for protection in a folk magic, if not cultic context.

Sometimes it was done with a priest officiating, sometimes it was the *Hausfrau* or the male head of the house who went around and filled rooms and stables with aromatic smoke. Incense mixtures used in church were used as well as certain plants known for protective properties, like for example juniper, which seems to have been a highly revered plant and was used often to different ends.²⁴

We know that the ancient Romans regularly sacrificed frankincense to the *lares*.²⁵ Maybe that ritual was a model and the smoldering offer to the ancestors lost its sacrifice character and was turned into an action to protect against evil? Modern books about burning claim a long tradition of burning in Germanic and Celtic communities and refer to various grave finds called *Räucher Kuchen*, which were believed by archaeologists in past to have been used for burning, and which suggested burning to have taken place as early as the Stone Age.²⁶ Modern analytical methods however identified new finds of *Räucher Kuchen* of the same shape as the older finds as tar or bitumen or e.g. birch resin which was not used for smoldering, but as some sort of glue.²⁷

So even if burning had its place in heathen Germanic cult, which is probable given its age and ubiquity, I cannot yet prove that was done during midwinter in heathen times. The only heavy (nonetheless speculative) claim for continuity lies in the fact that the need for protection against demonic beings or revenants is not rooted in christian thought and it seems logical that people who continue that line of thinking will probably use the same means of dealing with danger. In addition, christian authorities rejected magical practices because they believed magic of any kind to be demonic, even if it was used against demons.²⁸ From that it follows that burning incense and herbs was probably a tradition which people wouldn't have wanted to let go, so it was put into a christian frame.

To what degree Celtic traditions of burning incense and herbs are involved (the Alps and true German South are Hallstatt and La Tène territory) I will yet

have to find out.

A second interpretation for the term *„Rauhnächte“* is that *„rauh“* or *„rauch“* can also mean furry, or hairy²⁹ and it could refer to the demonic figures which roam winter nights, and maybe hint to the *Perchtenläufe* which were and are done around that time. This interpretation seems to be supported by the fact that midwinter time has been called *Zwölften* in the northern half of the German speaking areas and *Rauhnächte* in the southern parts, where *Perchtenläufe* and other masked processions take place.³⁰ You can read about those in Uwe's essay in this publication.

Looking into the future

Winter and midwinter was also just the right time for taking a glimpse into the future because in Germanic thinking, the new year started with the winter season. The Germanic tribes have been made famous for their enthusiasm for interpreting omens and using oracles by Tacitus³¹, and the continuity of this passion is well documented by tradition as well as the subsequent scorn of churchmen against it.³² Glimpsing into the future with the help of an oracle, or interpreting omens was also a part of Roman calendae traditions, and those traditions were sometimes incorporated into the repertoire, as well as old, genuinely Germanic or even Indoeuropean ways of oracling were kept, for example the *liodorsâza*, which consists of sitting on a bull's hide at a crossroad to learn about the future (from the dead, because who else is out and about during that night?), and which strongly reminds us of the custom of *útiseta*.³³ In some places the *Rauhnächte* are also called *Losnächte*: *Los* meaning fate or lot, and although omens were being watched and interpreted during the whole year, the high time to do it was wintertime, important dates were, for example, 30th of November and 21st of December as well as 6th of January.³⁴

The means of telling what would happen in the coming year were very diverse³⁵, and while one of the most existential things people in agrarian communities needed to know were weather predictions, there were also a lot of ways to find out

who would die, who would fall in love with or marry whom and things like that.³⁶ Still popular is the idea of putting the 12 days of the *Rauhnächte* in relation to the 12 months of the coming year, so that the weather on each day, or the dream in each night will show what the corresponding month will be like.

Laying the table

And while Wodan as the leader of the Wild Hunt is a figure who has lingered in folklore for a long time after conversion, the most prominent figure in continental Germanic tales and documented heathen practice related to midwinter traditions is the goddess who bears different names according to region: Frau Perchta, Frau Holle, Frau Harke, Frau Gode, Frau Frick, Frija and many others. She also leads the Wild Hunt beside or instead of Wodan, or she leads groups of women, or processions of dead children (those who died before they could get baptized). Winter, and most specifically midwinter is the time when she is most prominent, so much that she has been called the *„Winter Goddess“*.³⁷ The majority of the sources on her theophany concentrate on midwinter nights, and of them the evening before the 6th of January seems to have been the most important, as the date which was seen as the closing night of the *Rauhnächte* in most regions.

The goddess is an ambivalent deity because as much as she can give in terms of luck, success and fertility, she is also dangerous when she finds things not to her liking, where her anger would result in punishments ranging from befouling yarn to slitting up bellies and stuffing them with straw before sewing them shut again. This is another reason why house and homestead have to be absolutely tidy, the spinning has to be completed when the *Rauhnächte* start and must not recommence until 6th of January, the *Perchtentag*. Frau Holle controls the weather, which makes her a powerful deity, although not a mother herself, she is able to give children, and she certainly takes them into her care when they die. She is benign to those who observe her taboos and offer to her and



terrorizes those who do not with torture and even death. She instructs in and controls the spinning, which, beside having been existential for the production of cloth for millenia, also has an extensive meaning as creating fate, the spindle and the distaff being craft tools as well as magical tools. She does not dwell in human habitations but in the wilderness, usually in liminal places which are related to water.³⁸

A close inspection of all the sources on Frau Holle, Frau Percht³⁹ and her various regional emanations as well as the realization of the enormous spectrum of her power reveals that Jacob Grimm was right in his assumption that behind these noa names we see the shape of an old and great goddess emerging who was called Frija, „Beloved“.

The goddess was the recipient of food offerings, with the exception of one documented offering of flax, the importance of which does not lie so much in the preciousness of the sacrifice but in the return the giver of the sacrifice would expect.⁴⁰ From what we know, the food consisted of nourishing grain dishes like dumplings or mash with fish, usually no meat dishes.⁴¹ The fact that this practice was scorned by the church for centuries after conversion and yet still continued for a very long time also shows that it has no roots in christian beliefs whatsoever but it is certainly heathen and was deemed absolutely existential by the people.⁴² Leftovers of the sacrifice were given to the livestock or brought out and left in wells or at trees to bless them.⁴³ While food offerings for Frau Perchta are better and longer documented, there are also a few documents on offerings for Frau Holle and Frau Herke up north and northwest, and while the food may have been given to the goddess as well as to those she leads, the offering was linked to wishes for success, a good year and abundance.⁴⁴ With passing time, and well documented into the Late Medieval age, food offerings to the *Hausgeister* (preferably milk and grain products) and other beings of ‚lesser mythology‘ have also been observed, maybe as a surrogate, and it is not far fetched at all to detect, the remnants of an ancestor cult in this as *Hausgeister* lore seems to be tightly connected to it.⁴⁵

Lecoteux notes that in Germanic worldview, dead ancestors turned into elves, ON *álfar*, which reminds us of the *álfablót* held by our Swedish friends at the beginning of winter. Laying the table for the Winter Goddess and her regiment, i.e. the ancestors, on certain nights during midwinter time was a feature of a Germanic, probably Indo-European, ancestor cult.⁴⁶

In conclusion: while it is not clear whether the burning of special herbs and incense during midwinter nights has its roots in heathen times, the idea of midwinter nights being a dangerous time during which protection was needed, surely is no christian idea. It was regarded as a time where the presence of the dead was more sharply felt than at other times, and that made it both an appropriate time for offerings and rituals for fertility and a good year to come as well as a dangerous time during which protective measures had to be taken. It was also an excellent time for interpreting omens to learn what would happen in the year to come, not only due to the influence of Roman calendae rites.

So we can conclude that before conversion, Germanic continental tribes most probably celebrated midwinter not only with feasting and getting together like their Northern Germanic cousins, they also centered their cultic actions around the ancestors and gave offerings in order to have a good year, and a good harvest, to deities connected with the dead as well as fertility.

And while the masked processions of the Alpine regions are hugely impressive, it is not easy to duplicate them when you live somewhere else. What can easily and beautifully be done is to prepare your house for the sacred time by getting everything tidy and clean, to make sure that nothing hinders the passing of the dead which roam the nights and to ward off anything dangerous from your home, and to lay the table for the ancestors and Frau Holle with hopes for a fruitful and blessed year to come, and to gather with family and friends to eat and drink to good health and to the memory of those who passed away.

1 Weber-Kellermann 1987, p. 17
2 Simek 1995, entry Jul
3 Kluge 2011, entry Weihnachten
4 Kluge 2011, entry Rauchnächte
5 Zautner 2013, p. 114
6 Erich 1974 // 1996, entry Rauchnächte, map
7 Bader 2007, Fischer-Rizzi 2001, Rätsch 1999 throughout. Lovely
burning mixture recipes though.
8 Weiser-Aall 1923, p. 41
9 Timm 2010, S. 253
10 If you want to go down that computational rabbit hole of
calendaric issues and comparisons, I recommend Rood 2013
for starters and if you're able to read German and want to go into
detail, by all means read Zautner 2013.
11 van Gennep 1986, p. 172
12 Zautner 2013 p. 108 and 112
13 Simek 1995, p. 478f., Timm 2010, p. 262ff. and, very interesting
p. 271
14 Vries 1970, p. 449f., also Weber-Kellermann 1987, p. 13
15 Gunnell 2000, p. 129ff.
16 Simek 1995, p. 260ff.
17 Simek 1995, p. 279f.
18 Vries 1970, S. 450
19 Bächtold-Stäubli, p. 874f.
20 Lindig 1987, p. 149 ff.
21 Baechtold-Stäubli 2005, entry Zwölften
22 Timm 2010, p. 253ff.
23 Rätsch 1999, p. 10
24 Rätsch 1999, p. 194ff.
25 Nilsson 1916-1919, p. 56
26 for example Lisch 1873, Fuchs 2013, p. 240f.
27 Fuchs 2013, p. 240f.
28 Kieckhefer 1992, p. 50
29 Erich 1974, entry Rauchnächte
30 Erich 1974, entry Zwölften
31 Germania 2000, chapter 10,1
32 Kieckhefer 1992, p. 59, see also Baechtold-Stäubli 2005, entry
Orakel
33 Nilsson 1916-1919, p. 116ff.
34 Erich 1974, p. 952
35 Baechtold-Stäubli 2005, Orakel
36 Weber-Kellermann 1987, p. 18f.
37 Motz 1984
38 Timm 2010, p. 232 - 272.
Frau Perchta though has a lot of celtic and south-eastern european
features and traits which give her a special place. Timm 2010, p.
324
39 Timm 2010, p. 244ff. as well as Lecouteux 1988, p. 87 ff.
40 Timm 2010, p. 245f.
41 Lecouteux 1988, p. 87ff.
42 Bächtold-Stäubli, entry Speiseopfer
43 Timm 2010, p. 244ff.
44 Lindig 1987, p. 135. Compare also the Nisse and the Tomte in
Scandinavian lore.
45 Lecouteux 1988, p. 95

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"We, the groups and individuals behind Asatru-EU Network support and share a general non-discriminatory stance.

We believe in a reality populated by uncountable beings, such as gods, ancestors, land-wights, etins, humans, etc., all co-existing with equal value and unbreakable interdependence.

We are firmly committed to Asatru as a non-exclusive religious approach, heathenry is open for everyone who chooses so.

We strongly believe in frith, in respect, in respecting others, in open-mindedness and the courage to grant others their space."

Eldaring e.V. (ER), Germany
Verein für Germanisches Heidentum e.V. (VfGH), Germany
Het Rad, Netherlands
De 9 Werelden (D9W), Netherlands
The Kith of the Tree and the Well (KTW), UK
Asatru-UK, UK
Forn Sed Sverige (FSS), Sweden
Åsatrufellesskapet Bifrost, Norway
Nordisk Tingsfællig , Denmark
Clan Ostara, France
Les Enfants d'Yggdrasill (LEY), France
Gotland Forn Sed (GFS), Spain
Ásatrú Ibérica, Spain
Asatru Polska, Poland

Non-affiliated groups supporting this statement:
NornirsAett, Germany
Asatru Schweiz, Switzerland
Heidenvlam, Netherlands
Nordisk Skik, Denmark
Hendon Heathens, UK
The Troth, USA/International

Be prepared! IASC 2018 is on the way

by Miquel Sancho, GFS international spokesperson

We have all been longing for IASC to happen again. So after looking for a while, the GFS teamwork in Spain has found a nice location: Alberg la Bruna a hostel near the village of Bellver de Cerdanya in Spain, www.alberglabruna.com

Alberg la Bruna, a cosy mountain hostel, has a large hall with fireplace and views to the Pyrenees, a dinningroom for 150 people and 4 rooms for workshops, talks and meetings. Beside this, there is a bar/stage hall fully equipped with PA and projector, where auctions, performances of any kind and any other activities can be done. There is free wifi and we are allowed to bring our own drinks.

Outdoors, the hostel has a nice garden, fitted with a playground for kids and a little acclimatized swimming pool and a terrace. Last but not least, there

is an adjacent field for our blóts and other outdoor activities, including a bonfire. The whole building is equipped with elevators, and fully adapted for wheelchairs, prams and bikes.

It is a hostel with capacity of 260 beds in all, mainly distributed in 4 to 6 people per room. Being IASC participants will be the only guests so as to attain the most intimate and fruitful experience.

Room distribution:

26 bedrooms for 6 people

12 bedrooms for 4

8 bedrooms for 3 people

8 bedrooms for 2 people

Extra bedrooms:

1 bedroom for 10 people

1 bedroom for 8 people



For your information: it is located 7.9km from Talltendre, the coldest spot in Spain with nature at the tips of your fingers. Even though it can be hot and dry at times, the highest average temperature in July is 18,8°C and the lowest average temperature in January is -0,6°C. The total average yearly rainfall is: 786 mm. (data according to the Catalan Meteorological Institute: www.meteo.cat)

With its 2028 inhabitants, Bellver de Cerdanya is a little village in the Catalan Pyrenees, 40 minutes (about 50km) away by car to the border of Andorra, 36 km from Puigcerdà, 22km from the French border, 149 km from Girona and 151 km from Barcelona airport.



Just a bit of history: the valley of the Segre river has been inhabited for a long time. Human presence in the area can be traced back to 4500 BCE according to dating from the cave paintings in la vall d'Ingla shelter, only 5 km from the hostel.

However, the area seems to have been quite fruitful during the neolithic period as there is massive amount of prehistorical remains as the dolmen of Oren (Dolmen de Ca n'Oren). Just to give yourself an idea, check: <http://www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=38508>



During the Iron Age there have been Ceretan settlements, a local Iberian tribe from about 300 BCE. It was occupied by Romans and even used later in medieval times. About 15 km from Bellver, in Bolvir, there is a Ceretan Settlement, open to public and worth paying a visit. Unfortunately their website is in Catalan. However, tours in English may be arranged: <http://www.bolvir.cat/promociodestacada/jaciment-arqueologic/>.



Enrolment and program announcements will not start before winter season 2017, but please bookmark the event if you'd like to attend: IASC 2018 - 28th July (Sat) - to 4th August (Sat).

More news will come as the date comes closer. We will make it happen again.

Heathen reflections - Where are we, and where is the tide taking us?

By Andre Henriques, Kith of the Tree and the Well, UK

Heathenry as a spiritual path can have different overlapping dimensions, from belonging to a like-minded-community, finding our roots, discovering the Cosmos, or knowing ourselves. And it's a journey that can be a lot of fun too, as we all who have been to an IASC and other events from our groups well know! The International Summer Camp however gives us the opportunity, in a focussed environment, over the longer time of a week, to share with others in a deeper level the discoveries we make along the way, the changes we go through, what we have learnt and experienced in the last three years. Considering a week as a longer time is relative of course, it always goes so fast! An IASC may go in a flash, but those three weeks over the last six years in Denmark, Germany and Sweden, have created this sense of enduring community, bound together by frith. And of course, the jokes, the laughter, the communal meals, the struggles with this or that, strengthened how we are bound together. One of the key components of how this binding happens is through ritual, and certainly many great rituals we have had over the years! In any close interaction with another person we are dealing at different levels, say physical, mental, and emotional, but when all of these come together with a spiritual dimension, by calling gods and other beings into our sacred space, we are inviting a deeper level of interaction than what the mundane everyday world can offer.

I cannot help thinking that the lack of depth and meaning in people's lives may be at the core of our current societal deconstruction. Nevertheless, the mundane society is yearning for roots too, for purpose and meaningful existences, and the continuous appeal for enchantment in movies, series and books shows that, I believe. At the 2012 IASC in Germany, in a seidr session, I asked one of the seers on the High Seat, Michiel from Het Rad (the Netherlands), how our tradition could grow. The answer was 'trade', we needed first to spread our

objects and symbols through trade, so we could grow. He saw boats with flags and banners, and people moving from country to country to trade. In the last couple of years, especially with the emergence of the Asatru-UK facebook page, the 'trade' trend is clearly noticeable in the UK. Many people are doing god poles, runes, drinking horn carvings, and gods statues and paintings. The Asgardian Festival's market was fascinating for the huge amount of skilled craftsmen and women who are creating Heathen related artwork! In many other markets in pagan events across the UK this Heathen trend is also very visible. And it is also visible on the Wardruna (Fans) facebook page, home to a larger community of people who enjoy the Norse 'mystical folk' band, not all of them interested in Heathen spirituality for sure, but with many seemingly to be at least open to it, passionate about the songs' context, and who are exposed too to the seduction of Heathen artwork through the page. Maybe for some that will spark the soul to look a bit further.



Freya pole carved by Chris Corvus Aston for his project Gungnir Godposts. He has inspired many others to take up this craft in the UK. Published with permission.

Speaking of Wardruna, as I write this article their third album is being launched, and another major success is expected, with rave reviews and a sold out tour. Many Heathen inspired bands have through the years made some impact, and nowadays there are more than ever, but Einar has taken Norse folk to a whole new level in the sense of combining his own understanding of the runes and Norse cosmology with his unique musical creativity. And as he mentioned when discussing his artistic creative process, both in a workshop in London in a pre-gig event in February, and more recently in June in Oxford, at an academic conference about Old Norse Poetry in Performance, he is making music for the present, not reconstructing the past! His motto is 'sowing new seeds, strengthening old roots'.

I think in a sense that's what most of us in Asatru-EU Network are also doing too, we are re-discovering aspects of how our ancestors understood the world, but framing them in our modern conceptualisations, and adapting our rituals accordingly. I don't think our organisations have an aim of reconstructing ancient ritual practices, and if we were trying, it could possibly end up with endless research and not doing any ritual practices, because we still didn't have all the answers about how people were practicing it back then! Experimenting and seeing what works now seems an easier and more adaptable solution, though of course the more we research the better! One can wonder, with Wardruna collaborating in the Vikings series soundtrack, their music being exposed to a much wider audience, could it be that many more people will be looking out for our organisations searching for spiritual answers, for roots, for communities, for belonging? For events, ceremonies, feasts, or the like, where they can start feeling a deeper connection, and the realisation that paganism is a lot more complex than what they were originally told by a modern 'advanced' person and 'oh they were so primitive and didn't have a clue back then' perspective? As Einar also said in that workshop in London, speaking to a very diverse audience, the gods can be much more complex than children's

stories! I think all of us, in our very own personal ways, can agree with that.

I may be coming across as a Wardruna fan-boy (which I definitely am!), but I believe Einar is indeed riding a wave, that is becoming bigger, from a tide that has been rising for decades. The Lord of the Rings movies, Tolkien's Old Norse/ Anglo-Saxon inspired mythology, gave mainstream audiences a striking visual taste of elves and dwarves, many worlds and beings, and rings with runes. Marvel's Thor movies cemented the Norse mythology background (Anthony Hopkins as Odin, what a casting! Even if the script was poor, but hey it's mainstream entertainment), and Game of Thrones opened the way for the Vikings series. Of course there were many books before (Neil Gaiman's American Gods may be the highlight, and his retelling of Norse tales is coming out in February!), but I think this can all be seen as a continuum, an ever deeper 'infiltration' of Heathen ideas on a global world that speaks an Anglo-Saxon language. That the Anglo-Saxons were themselves a melting pot of Germanic tribes of Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Frisians who forged a language that, with add-ons from Old Norse, would rule the world's speech, is a wonder in itself. Though the Wyrd Wanderer Woden could be blamed for that!

Here in the UK this 'infiltration', or maybe 'inspiration', of Heathen ideas seems to be gaining momentum. I don't think it's a coincidence that in this year's edition of the high-audience BBC cooking show Great British Bake Off one of the contestants baked a two-piece bread shaped as a phallic Thor's hammer and a World Serpent. Memories of Mjolnir and Sleipnir breads baked by Tabby and Amanda for the Wednesday ritual in Germany at IASC 2012 were instantly revived.

The Bake Off contestant, a project manager, with no known Heathen connections that I know of, got to be the Star Baker that week as his breads were really well made. There were lots of jokes and media mentions of how phallic the Hammer bread was! One other example of this 'inspiration' just appeared on

facebook as I was finishing this article, about an East .



Tabby and Amanda's Sleipnir bread, baked at IASC 2012 in Germany for the Wednesday blot.

London rooftop bar called Queen of Hoxton, that is going Viking this Winter, calling itself 'Skye Halla' and designed as a 'Nordic Viking feasting and drinking hall in the clouds'. It looks good enough from the photos, with old looking wooden tables and benches, walls and roof decorated with shields inside a yurt-style tent, and a Viking longship-shaped bar outside. They serve a hot mead punch named 'Thor's Courage', and serve a 'Týr's Sloe Gin Turkey Leg', not sure if Týr would approve this link with turkeys, or if he would just laugh at the downgrade from wolf to cold turkey! The bar will also offer workshops on drawing "Viking Gods" throughout November, chain mail jewellery, hair braiding ('unleashing your inner shield maiden - just in time for Christmas party season'), and an Anglo-Saxon drinks tasting led by a food historian, whose project 'champions the use of food as an artistic medium'. Maybe the 'trade' trend prophesised in 2012 is indeed happening in front of our eyes?

Returning to the thoughts on the English language, thinking deeper about it, it's not only that this hybrid Germanic language rules the world, but maybe the mind-set, concepts, and culture do too! Very few global music mainstream acts sing in a language other than English. Same with movies and TV series. Technology, hardware and software words are... in English. Many business management terms are also used in English throughout the world (from

downsizing to franchises, and including the 'Fehu related' cash cow!). Allow me to throw in a possible provocative idea now: it could be argued that the capitalist mode of warring companies trying to rule market share could be compared to the Germanic tribes warring against one another, and at some point internationalising in the Migration period, creating corporations, kingdoms! Warlords giving armrings to their close employees while enslaving the rest, with the CEO of the tribe getting the most of it, in a world of inequality, all sounds too familiar! However, from what we know, honour and one's reputation seemed to have been much more important then, surely due to the practicalities of being killed if too many people were unhappy, but also probably due to a spiritual outlook where they cared about the name they left behind after death, and about the journey they would undergo to the different afterlife worlds. A belief in some kind of otherworldly consequences for one's actions can shape decisions. Nowadays, what is the accountability of bad rulers, both in companies and governments, why would they care about consequences? They are just being smart and successful right? Of course these are sweeping generalisations, but I find them helpful to make sense of the human condition, what we can learn from the past to understand the present, to ask the question - what actual choices do we have to shape our future? We can learn from the past about a connection with nature or other realms, that can be helpful and meaningful to us now. It's less useful to know how to fight with an axe, as our everyday struggles with others are mostly on the psychological side, and our Summer holidays are less about pillaging, thank the Gods for that! However I think most people realise by now, even if only in the foggy background of their busy lives, that the modern materialist outlook of grabbing all one can while here in this planet is not really helpful in shaping the big decisions nationally and globally, creating consequences that generations down the line will suffer. Any spiritual tradition that teaches responsibility and care towards other people and the wider environment sounds good to me, but

unless we are deeply touched by the path, are we really going to shape ourselves to the standards that we believe are right for us? I believe ritual is part of how a heart can be touched, and have wondered many times how our Heathen rituals can inspire us towards more conscious actions and behaviours. How ceremonies can be able to spark an individual quest, as each personal path is different, to know oneself, to grow both within and without in positive steps towards balance, seeking a good meaningful life, and what feels right to our souls?

Back to Wardruna, I keep seeing comments about how their music is touching people's souls. Most will not delve deeper, that is a step too far to take in our current materialistic world. But if seeds are planted, and at some point nourished by going to an inspiring Heathen event that also speaks to people's souls, then maybe the fire of Heathen passion will arise, study and practices strengthening trunk and branches may follow, and of a godless tree one more Heathen could be forged! How then, can our groups kindle that fire, provide that nourishment, to seekers of growth? I don't think anyone has a complete answer to this multi-dimensional question! I do believe however that sharing and discussing ritual practices is part of the answer, so that we can learn from each other, and that the 'Blots experiences' project that we discussed last year in Sweden could be part of that. That project is by no means forgotten, though very delayed at the moment from my side.

The challenges that we face in our mundane lives steal a lot of precious time that otherwise could be spent in projects, studies, practices, writing, or performing rituals. I try to remind myself that all the boring stuff I need to do professionally is also a way to interact with the middle world, where, at the end of the day, all is interconnected anyway. I try to remind myself that times and tides cannot be chosen, only ridden, even the Gods have to accept the Norn's' weaving. It's not easy, but all challenges can possibly be better burdened with regular moments of connection, be it with meditational, galdr chanting, or ritual practices, or through other archaic soul-

fulfilling practices such as crafts, spinning, knitting, cooking, or spending time in nature. Even spending time with friends and loved ones or listening to music is pretty archaic and meaningful, and can allow for a deeper connection if we are looking for it! That is I guess, the human story for millennia. Whatever allows our connection with the whole, and/or with different parts of ourselves, is all part of this life's journey.

It's still a year and a half to go till next summer camp, and even though it sometimes feels we're apart with our individual and local struggles, and run out of time for the projects we want to do for Asatru-EU Network, I know our community is there, and has become strong and solid over the years. On facebook, by skypeing, visiting one another, and most importantly contributing what we can to the development of groups and ideas, we are solidifying communities. Maybe not in numbers yet, but in strength and depth. And I'm sure I'm not speaking alone, and feeling alone, that our Asatru-EU community is there to support that. As I'm sure that when we come together once more, this time in the Pyrenees, to share and learn once more, we will be again strengthening our roots, expanding our branches, aspiring for flowers of inspiration, and reaping fruits of consciousness. May the threads we are weaving keep growing stronger and stronger.

Wassail!

Ango-saxon Wæs þu hæl, for 'be thou hale', be healthy, be whole!





Dear friends,

You are cordially invited to attend our great annual

Asatru community building event:

OSTARA FEAST 2017

www.ostara.vision

Taking place

Thursday, March 30 through Sunday, April 2

At castle Ludwigstein

<http://www.burgludwigstein.de/>

in Witzenhausen, Germany



Since 2004, Heathens from various Asatrú associations have come together once a year around spring equinox in order to discuss issues of our religion and its current revival, to honour Ostara and our community with all our relations, and to have a jolly time together. Hosted by a team of friends affiliated with Eldaring e.V., this event provides an opportunity for trú folk to get to know and explore common ground with each other, and to weave frith and friendship among those who seek to promote Asatrú as a spiritual path open to all people regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation.

If you are looking forward to come to our Ostara Feast this year, please send an E-Mail for your registration and accomodation to hermann.ritter@homomagi.de and for any information on scheduled activities to Acushion@web.de

*We would be pleased to receive your registration by the end of January
and honoured to welcome you as our guests.*

Sincerely yours, Hermann Ritter and Andreas Cushion

Lange Nacht der Religionen 2016, Berlin

(Long Night of Religions)

Haimo Grebenstein – additional information by Lutz Nikolai

For the 5th time the „Long Night of Religions“ (LNR) took place in Berlin on September 17th 2016. What is LNR? Imagine this event somewhere between a fair and a festival. There are 2 main purposes to this: it is a fabulous chance for any religious group, well-known or not, to present itself to the wider public and a wonderful place for exchange and getting to know each other.

The core event is organized and sponsored by the Berlin authorities, but unlike a usual fair it is rather „decentralized“ so that participating churches, groups and organizations can and do hold their activities at their own or their desired locations all over the city. Due to the „official“ character it actually draws a lot of attention and media coverage far beyond the city borders, although the focus is on groups located in Berlin itself. Over the years more and more smaller religious groups have joined in LNR. Eldaring has participated for the 2nd time this year, VfGH made its first appearance.



Due to the de-centralized setting there are only a few and small „official“ parts of the event like the opening and closing ceremonies. Altogether, almost 100 events were offered during this Saturday between noon and midnight, spread across the whole city. Final adjustments and some cancellations were made due to the fact that a couple of big demonstrations were taking place on this very day.

First, there was a big demonstration against the CETA

and TTIP treaties that gathered more than 70.000 people according to the police. This was part of a general demonstration day with more than 320.000 demonstrators all over Germany. This demonstration did clutter the streets of the capital, but then again, a lot of LNR participants and visitors joined the demonstration for 2 or 3 hours, and I also had the impression that a lot of demonstrators visited some of the LNR events, at least at the place I was at which was located not too far from the demonstration site.

But there were other large demonstrations that day, as well – one being a „pro-life“ demonstration with some thousand participants as well as a counter-demonstration with about the number of people. Plus some smaller demonstrations – Berlin has an average of between 7 and 8 demonstrations every day. Anyway – originally it was planned to start the event by an inter-confessional cleaning ceremony in the city centre. But this would have been right between the 3 mentioned demonstrations, so it probably was the right decision to cancel this. So much for the general setting.

Being a member of Eldaring and VfGH as well, my task at this LNR was to be present at the VfGH appearance, and I shall start with a report on this. Lutz of Eldaring was so nice to send me a text about and pictures of their appearance, so their event will be covered, as well.



VfGH had decided to be part of a collective event for our first appearance. We joined the activity „*Pagane Wege und Gemeinschaften*“ ('pagan ways and communities') that had rented a place normally used as something like an „alternative“ Kindergarten, located not too far from the city centre and having a pretty large green outdoor area as well as a central building with several large rooms and all other facilities needed. Ten groups and organizations were part of this activity, members of these had met many times within 7 months prior to LNR and I have to say that really every organizational detail had been covered very well.

I arrived around 9:30 in the morning and many people were already there, carrying stuff and starting to set everything up. Weather was good at this point and when it started to rain around 12:30 almost everything had been done. Fortunately, the rain ceased around 2 pm and the rest of the day was dry and fairly warm.



The ten participating groups were from diverse traditions: Druids, Celtoi, Asatru, Reclaiming, PFI. As you can see on the pictures, a large part of the outdoor area was covered by tents and pavillions of all the groups, presenting their information as well as books, brochures and many crafted items of all sorts. The event officially started at 3 pm and outdoor and indoor areas were crowded pretty soon. There were doorkeepers for security reasons who counted approximately 300 visitors for the whole day.

The program started with a short opening ritual, open

to everyone. During the day there were 4 other public rituals: an Asatru ritual, a Druid ritual, a Reclaiming ritual and a full moon ritual in the dark that also contained a lot of Asatru components.

Besides the rituals there were 6 lectures offered that were held in the building. Topics were „Goddess Spirituality“, „Runic Workshop“, „European Shamanism“, „Germanic Heathenry today“, „Herbal Magic“ and „Rituals in Asatru“. All the Asatru lectures were held by members of VfGH, all lectures were visited very well, some of them more than crowded.

During the complete event one could buy food and beverages in the building, most of it self-made, and a soup was cooked on an open fire in the evening. All the money taken in for this helped to cover the expenses of the event, and some donations were given, as well. The official closing of the event was at 10 pm, taking everything down and cleaning up took about 2 hours and I left the place around 12.30 pm.

My review of the event is very positive. Coming from far away and being at LNR for the first time, my expectations were actually surpassed. I had expected less visitors. I had expected that most of the visitors would be from the pagan/heathen community - of course, a lot actually were, but about half of the visitors were interested citizens of all ages, even from other religious groups, we had christian pastors, jews and quite some guests from all over the world. There were many interesting and intense talks with visitors. I can't speak for the other groups, but we handed out far more Ringhorn magazines, booklets and flyers than expected and had to get a fresh supply twice. Actually, I even missed some time to talk to members of the other groups as I had originally planned.

Of course, VfGH will be at LNR 2017 again, planning has already started. Next year, LNR will be on May 25th 2017 already, taking place simultaneously with the „*Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag*“ (the main national event of the Protestant Church) expecting around 120.000 visitors coming to Berlin.

A very nice film was made of the event (German language, only) that may be viewed on youtube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RXY39Go2yw>



The Eldaring participated in LNR for the second time, again hosting their own individual event a little away from the centre of Berlin. The local group of Berlin was supported by quite some other members from outside of Berlin, presenting a full day program of lectures and performances.

For LNR special folders had been prepared presenting information about the ER and its activities.

Besides this, books and crafted materials of different kinds made by ER members were presented and some crafting workshops were held during the complete day, like carving, weaving and making ritual accessories.

Musician and author Luci van Org read from her book „Frau Hölle“, a family book of nordic sagas. Author and art director Axel Hildebrand read from his book „Aussen – Asgard – Tag“ some never-filmed screen-plays by Thor and Loki. Andreas Mang held a lecture on „Enlightened Heathenry“ and Uwe Ecker held another lecture on „Deities or Jungian Archetypes“. Food and beverages were offered all day, mostly hand-made by Eldaring members.

Around 40 visitors could be welcomed during the day, many of them stayed for a longer time and all lectures and readings were visited and received very well. A few visitors were thinking of joining ER activities in Berlin, so this event can be called a success which has strengthened ER's position in the religious presence of Berlin.



In this night light will be reborn
For all life springs from the mother's lap.
For all life is cherished by the mother, cared and nurtured,
That it may grow, flourish, and bear fruit.
For in the end all life will return to the mother.

Just as the wheel of life turns,
Turns the wheel of the year
And this is the night of the end
And the morning of the beginning.

So let us honour the mother today,
The life donor.
In this long night the promise of the new life will be fulfilled.

Nordic Native Faith

Stand with Standing Rock

An Ancient Norse Prophecy on the consequences of violating Nature

A Norse myth tell of two giant troll women who drove a magic millstone with this magic millstone they created the wealth and happiness of the ancient land of King Frothi here on Zealand But the king violated these forces of nature on which his civilization rested So they turned against him and prophced the downfall of his kingdom

with their ancient words of warning against the unjust leadership

We stand with the Standing Rock Sioux

Picture by David Becker - Cross Ranch State Park, North Dakota

18. Hands shall hold hard spears,
The weapon slaughter-gory.
Wake thou, Frodi!
Wake thou, Frodi!
If thou wilt listen
To our songs and sagas old.

19. Fire I see burning
 east of the Castle;
Tidings of war are rife:
An omen this will be named;
Armies will come rushing,
And burn the layer of the leader.

20. Soon you will have lost
the throne of Lejre
The golden rings
and the good grinder'
Come sister, hold harder
Soon the warm blood
of the fallen will flow.

21. My father's daughter
has stoutly ground,
Because the fate of
many men she saw.
Huge fragments spring
from the mill-stone
Into the Örnefjord.
Let us grind on!

22. Let us grind on!
Yrsa's son, takes vengeance on
Frothi with the Halfdanes
He will be famed as
both her son and brother
As we both know

23. With giant power
The maidens ground,
Children of Giant strength,
The shafts trembled;
The frame broke
Mighty grindstone
split in two

24. The old world will fall
while the maidens
of the mountain sing
"we've milled, Frothi,
more than we care to
Long enough the maidens
have been Standing by the Rock

Scholars and leaders of Nordic Native Faith made a youtube movie in support of Standing Rock: Rune Hjarnø Rasmussen (Denmark, Historian of Religion); Kári Pálsson (Iceland, Folklore student and board member of Ásatrúarfélagið); Magnus Lindegren (Sweden, actor and sacrificial priest in Native Nordic faith); Andrea Hejlskov (Denmark, author and gydje, priestess of Native Nordic Faith); Teresa Njardhvík (Iceland, Medievalist, and board member of Ásatrúarfélagið); Kevin French (USA, Linguist); Maria Kvilhaug (Norway, author and Historian of Religion); Birka Skogsberg (Sweden, author and gydje, priestess of Native Nordic Faith).

Youtube adress: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjipHq8Awos&t=14s>

Alpine hibernal masked processions and Perchta, the Janus-headed goddess

By Dr. Uwe Ehrenhöfer

The Alps and its inhabitants represent a very special cultural space within Europe. Being a rather seclusive geographical region in former times mainly dependent on agriculture, forestry and - to a lesser extent - on mining, the side valleys being inaccessible from late autumn to spring, the mountain passes difficult or impossible to cross during large parts of the year, its inhabitants developed a unique collection of traditions.

Geographically, the Alps represent a natural border between the Italian peninsula and the Mediterranean parts of contemporary France with its Mediterranean, fertile climate and the moderate climate of the regions north of the Alps. Imagine Europe 2000 years ago: the rather densely settled and developed regions south of the Alps, in contrast to the vast woods east of the Rhine, separated by high mountains that could only be crossed over mountain passes with a minimum of 1400m above sea level...

A short summary on history

Archaeological findings prove a very early population very shortly during and after the last ice age approximately 13500 years ago. Agricultural development, mainly livestock farming and settlement of the more remote and high-lying grounds started to a larger extent with the immigration of Indo-Germanic tribes approximately 3500-2500 BC (Bronze Age), later developing a very distinctive Celtic culture in pre-Roman times approximately 800 to 400 BC called the Hallstatt culture after the location of burial sites in the Austrian region of Salzburg. It features similarities, but also distinctive differences to the far more widespread La Tène culture. During the Roman Empire and its insatiable hunger for land and influence, the first military conquest took place - as well as one of the first documented genocides especially in the western

parts of the Alps, leading to the extinction of different tribes. Tribes that arranged themselves with Roman rule survived, though. After the breakdown of the Roman Empire approximately 400 to 800 AC, northern Germanic tribes started a settlement movement southwards, called the Migration Period that intensified the contacts between the Germanic culture north of the Danube and the Roman-Celtic culture south of the Danube - a "culture clash" I will refer to later in the text, forming a cultural mixture with Celtic, Roman and Germanic influences and also a mixture of old pre-Christian Celtic and Germanic beliefs as well as the early spread of Christian Catholicism, encouraged by Irish monks. The middle ages were a time of cultural stagnation in a politically, geographically and economically difficult region, the rule over the alpine passes giving enormous power over European trade, whilst extraction of mineral resources was difficult without modern technology (and sometimes hard-fought) and agriculture was hard, leaving the alpine population mainly poor and thus retreating to religious orthodoxy. A more cultural opening started with the development of more modern techniques in agriculture (i.e. making dairy products more non-perishable and thus exportable like the development of hard cheese around 1650) and mining, leading to a stronger trade with the extra Alpine regions and a further development of transport infrastructure. A further step was the era of nature romanticism that led to the touristic exploration of the late 19th century and increasing mass tourism in the first half of the 20th century, thus leading to an even stronger longing for native folklore.

As a conclusion, we have a separated mountain region with a rather secluded population, poverty and harsh living conditions leading to an own style of culture and religious beliefs, not completely cut off

the rest of the world but less influenced by external cultures. Relatively short timed opening and development led to an economic boost and increasing external influence that made the Alpine people try to conserve and retreat to their own culture by a strong feeling for their traditions.

Seen in this context, I want to deal with Perchta, the Janus-faced goddess and the tradition of the Perchten.



Alpine hibernal mask traditions

The list of winter traditions in the Alps is quite long, very much different depending on the local traditions, mostly Christian, of course. But except for the *Rauhnächte* – the twelve silent nights after Yule (winter solstice assumed on Dec. 22nd) lasting till today's *St. Berthold's Day*, the former *Perchta day* (sic!), Jan. 2nd with its tradition of sacril burning – there is one strikingly similar tradition in the whole German speaking parts of the Alps – that is the very south of Germany, Austria, South Tyrol and eastern Switzerland – as well as in parts of Slovenia and in the adjacent areas of French and Italian language.

In these regions a special kind of parades can be found, the so called *Perchten-*, *Krampus-* or *Klausen*

runs. (Swiss: *Chlausen*).

Beginning with St. Nicholas Day around Dec. 5th and ending with Jan. 1st, you will find masked parades all over the regions detailed above, the unmarried young males hiding themselves in fur and wearing traditional wooden masks. These masks resemble animals or goblin-like faces (*Perchten* and *Klausen* in the Salzburg region, western and southern Tyrol and Germany), demonic or devilish faces in case of the *Krampusse* (south eastern parts of Austria) or even with plant-like facial features (Salzburg region of Austria as well as eastern Switzerland). Additionally, the masked figures wear iron chains and/or cow bells. Some masks are very distinctive as in the case of the *Schnabelperchten* or “beaked Perchten”, wearing bird-like beaked masks, the hide of old women and carrying scissors. Other very special masks are the masks of the *Chlausen* in the Swiss Appenzell region – in fact, they do not really wear masks, they wear the traditional garb with special, very huge and splendidly designed hats that resemble buildings or events of local importance. In the German region of Berchtesgaden, the *Perchten* may just paint their faces coal black, and the most special masks can be found in the Austrian Salzburg region, where the masks might be double-faced, one a beautiful woman, the other side demonic. The *Krampusse* are mostly accompanied by a person impersonating St. Nicholas.

The tradition is not at all a peaceful one, in most regions these masked figures may hunt trespassers and bystanders and hit them with whips, in former times it occurred that these masked persons even hit people with iron chains leading to serious injuries, a reason why this tradition was forbidden in the 1920s. This tradition was revived in the 1960s and 1970s, the authorities allowed the processions again under special constraints. The masked persons had to be registered and wear an identification number, the whips were controlled by an official that no serious harm could be done, they were only allowed to perform their parade in an enclosed area only during a defined time, hits above belt level were forbidden, children, pregnant or old persons, persons carrying

beverages or electronic devices should not be hit.

Interestingly, similar traditions can be found in Sweden (*Oskorei*), in the middle of Germany in Thuringia as well as in other European regions (Romania: *Ceata*, Greece: *Karkantzeroi*, Bulgaria: *Koledari*, the Ukraine: *Koljadanti*).

In case of the *Schnabelperchten* mentioned above and for example in my home region of southern Germany, Allgavia, these figures visit the people at home – is the house tidy and clean, they bless the house, is the house untidy and unclean, the punishment will follow by further derangement of the house...

As mentioned above, the *Krampusse* and also the *Klausen* might accompany Christian St. Nicholas who is the Catholic patron of the children and the seamen. The mask is also called *Knecht Ruprecht* (that is menial or farmhand *Ruprecht*), in my region also *Wuotes* - a detail worth remembering. In former times, good children were rewarded by St. Nicholas while bad children were punished by the masked men. Of course, modern tradition is more diluted with a more ironical stance from parental side, the person resembling St. Nicholas being briefed by the parents of the good and bad deeds of their offspring, St. Nicholas lauding good behaviour and mildly reminding the children how to behave properly, giving small rewards like little presents, sweets, fruit, cookies and nuts – a certain similarity to Santa Claus, but this tradition being timed on Dec. 6th – at Christmas the people of southern Germany and the Alps are given presents by the Christ Child on Christmas Eve – a little difference to the British-American tradition. Nonetheless, still with this reassuring measures the children are afraid of the mask. Can you imagine how it must have been 100 years ago when there was physical punishment? From my family history, my grandmother's sister living in eastern Austria was so afraid of the *Krampus* that she fled under her bed. After St. Nicholas and *Krampus* had left the house, my great-grandparents went looking for her and found her dead under the bed, assumingly dead by fright - the reason why my

mother never saw a *Krampus* in my grandmother's home during childhood.



Main strings and etymology

Summarizing all these features of the Alpine mask traditions, following leitmotifs can be defined:

1. Masks of different kinds, some even double-faced
2. Iron gadgets
3. Blessings and punishment, ambivalence as in some masks
4. A rather regional domination, but not restricted to the Alps

But that was not all. If one takes a closer look at etymology, you will find two main traces and a smaller one as well as a misleading trace that might lead to the clue how this entanglement of mythologies can be resolved. The most important etymologic similarity is *Perchten*.

You will find the word stem *percht-* or *bercht-* again in the name of St. Nicholas's companion, *Knecht RuPRECHT*, possibly from *rauh-percht*, meaning the

wild or rough Percht. Even more interesting is the Catholic Saint that is worshipped at the end of the *Rauhnächte* on Jan 2nd (a work free day in Switzerland), St. *Berthold*. *Bert-hold* is also written as *Bercht-hold*, the *percht-* stem easily to be identified.

Percht or *bercht* seems to be derived from *beraht*, being old high (southern) German meaning gleaming, beautiful, radiant. What a coincidence that this Catholic saint is worshipped on Perchta day, the last day of the *Rauhnächte* and the day of worship for the old goddess called *Perchta*! (Though strangely, St. *Berthold* is male and not female...)

The second linguistic and clearer string is *Klausen* or *Chlausen*, being derived from German *Klaus*. *Klaus* is a rather common German name, a short version of *Nikolaus* with the Catholic name patron of St. Nicholas. The close connection between the mask tradition and the Catholic St. Nicholas found its way into the naming of the masks.

A further hint to the roots of this tradition is the word *Wuotes*, a southern German articulation for *Wuotan* or *Wotan*, that god called *Woden* in English. Just a coincidence that the Alpine mask traditions are linked to two old Germanic gods?

In contrast to this, the word *Krampus* seems to be derived from Italian *cramponi* meaning claws, considerably a dead end.

Summarizing all this, the following can be added to the leitmotifs:

5. A connection to the old Germanic goddess *Perchta*
6. A connection to the Catholic St. Nicholas
7. A connection to the god Woden.

As the strongest linguistic connection is the goddess *Perchta*, we should do some deeper exploration on her.

Who is Perchta?

Perchta is no goddess that is dealt with in primary sources, but there are many traces of *Perchta* in folktales mainly in the German language area of the

Alps but also in northern Bavaria, the Alemannic regions (that is southwestern Germany, Switzerland and western Austria) as well as parts of the Czech Republic and Slovenia. There are quite a few names for her, but all etymologically connected to the *beraht-* stem: *Perchta*, *Bertha*, *Berte*, *Perchtölterin*, *Perchtel*, *Eisenberta* (iron Berta – ironically, a giant cannon was named this during WWI).



If you analyse the folktales following characteristics can be found:

1. *Perchta* is connected to the *Rauhnächte*, she mainly reveals herself to people in this time.
2. She drives on a coach, often accompanied by dead children or the army of the dead
3. She rewards people that are industrious and attentive with fertile farming or special success in cattle-breeding, sometimes giving them kindlings that transform to gold when taken home. In a way she is a goddess of fertility and wealth.
4. She blesses houses, the farmyards and their inhabitants.
5. She has a special relationship to waterbodies.
6. She has a special relationship to iron, she has a nose of iron and carries iron devices like scissors, chains, ploughs.

7. She hates untidiness and sloth as well as the non-observance of the spinning forbiddance or the food commandment during the *Rauhnächte* – she prefers fish and porridge.
8. If she punishes someone, the penalties can be quite harsh, she spoils or burns the flax or the harvest and makes the cattle infertile. Alternatively, she imposes one-year punishments, she uses an axe to harm an extremity or blinds the people, reversing the penalties one year later. Naughty children are fed with iron lumps. In heavy cases of disobedience to her rules, she cuts open the belly, fills it with debris and closes it again using iron chains.

So three main motifs can be identified, we have the maternal aspect of Perchta, connected with spinning and keeping care of the household, the house and the farmyard, with domestic blessings, fertility and wealth, a goddess offerings were given to.

The second characteristic is her connection to the realm of the dead, being a kind of death demon that takes care of the deceased children and that walks the *Rauhnächte* with the army of the dead, in some folktales as the female companion to Woden – remember that St Nicholas is accompanied by Woden in some regions of the Alps? This makes her to one of the leaders of another strong motif in European pre-Christian mythology – the Wild Hunt.

The third characteristic is her strong connection to iron and her drastic punishments using iron items.

If we leave all the characteristics featuring iron aside, this numen called Perchta has all the attributes of other Germanic goddesses like middle German *Frau Holle* or *Holda* (remember *Berthold*?) or the more northern versions *Frau Gode*, *Frau Wode*, *Freke* – and the Scandinavian *Frigg*. (The word *Frau*, in Germany used accordingly as the English “Mrs.” originally means “Mistress” and was reserved to women of higher and noble status; this changed with the rise of the bourgeois. Also the use of a coach is a hint to a high status). Different scientific essays see them as

related if not identical, and the fact that you have quite different names in three different regions of Germany is seen as a hint that the names are quite old and possibly of pre-Christian origin (Dr. Erika Timm, in German language there were two linguistic shifts, the first finished around 100 AD, the second around 800 AD). Different historical sources also define Perchta as a goddess (Klaret 1365, Haltaus 1729).

Interestingly, all these attributes can also be found in the Celtic mother goddess of *Brixta/Brigid/Brigitta* that at least was worshipped in the Alemannic regions of the Alps as can be derived by geographic names like the Austrian town of *Bregenz* (Latin *Brigantium*) or the little river called *Breisach* in the Black Forest.

But the ambivalence between fertility and death, the care of the households and the children even after death is strengthened by that gruesome use of iron items. How could that be explained? Especially the eastern part of Austria, a region called *Noricum* (parts of today’s Austrian provinces of Lower Austria, Styria and Carinthia), already had a strong iron mining and smelting industry. The iron motif shows strong parallels to a Celtic local goddess called *Noreia* wearing an iron beak, an aspect that even today can be found in the Hungarian *Vasorrú Baba*, in the Slovenian *Koranti* or in the *Schnabelperchten* mentioned above.

As a conclusion, Perchta as conveyed in folklore seems to be a local intermingling between the Germanic goddess of *Frigg/Holda* and the Celtic goddesses of *Brixta* and *Noreia*, fostered by a special geography in which Celtic and Germanic influences mixed up, a goddess of which lore tells us that she is the companion and wife of the other great god of death, Woden / Odin, co-leading the Wild Hunt – defining her as the highest goddess of the southern Germanic pantheon.

The masked processions and the Wild Hunt

Masked processions with animal disguise in winter times and as a worship of the dead ancestors are a very old tradition, already found in the antique Greek tradition of the *Trietaris* around Delphi to the praise

of Dionysos, a god that has a similar connection to spiritual trance and inebriation as Woden/Odin, and Hekate. Also the Latin *Saturnalia* seems to have been similar. The fact that this ecstatic group, which has a relationship to the world of the dead and gives fertility to people, can also be observed with the Indian *Maruts*, which are mentioned in the *Mahabharata* as well as in southern and northern branches of Indo-Germanic settlements, indicates a very old tradition. (I personally believe that the observation that new trees grow upon the dead ones is a very old one...)



That these masked processions were a living tradition can also be proved by the fact that these processions were forbidden by the clerics on the council of Auxerre 573 AD. Still though, perhaps not uninterrupted but regularly revived, the masked processions were performed as can be seen in historic sources of the 2th century, the *Zimmersche Chronik* of the 16th century and in the chronicle of Füssen 1816, the last two sources openly calling the masked processions the Wild Hunt.

In mythology and folktales, in winter times and especially in the *Rauhnächte*, animal-like or demonic entities roam the nights, led by the Wild Hunter that is named *Oden* (Sweden), *Wode* (northern Germany)

or *Wuotes/Muotes* (southern Germany), a clear connection to Woden/Odin. The iconography of Woden/Odin is especially impressive with his animals: ravens, wolves and horses that have a spiritual relationship to the underworld, even his heiti *grimmir* or *grimr*, „masked“ or „hidden“ show his connection to the masked procession. This Wild Hunt also has a female leader, directly called *Perchta*, *Frau Holle*, *Frau Wode*, *Frau Freke* or *Holda*.

When the Wild Hunt roams the lands it can be a blessing for the living, giving wealth and fertility, but also punishment.

To define this as a paranormal, mythical process does not fit to the whole phenomenon. In shamanistic societies all over the world, ecstasies and trance are seen as a portal to the otherworld – especially when masked, people in trance are not themselves, the spirits have taken over and speak and act through these persons (a nice word for this is used in Haitian voodoo, where the loa *ride* the medium).

As Kris Kershaw mentioned, the dead souls seem to have been impersonated by the young, unmarried men. As unmarried warriors they had a special relationship to death, the ancestors and the spirits, a detail that can be found in today's masked processions when only the young unmarried men are allowed to participate under the masks. (In some regions, this is a little bit diluted by emancipation – in my region there are groups of unmarried females with a witch-like disguise called the *Bärbele*. But this started just a few years ago.)

The ancestors and the dead impersonated by the young men roam the land in the *Rauhnächte* when the borders between our world and the otherworld are more open, the ancestors control their heirs if they keep their houses well... whoever manages well with his heritage is blessed, those that misadminister are punished. Historians even described complete destruction caused by uncovering the roof and pulling out the doors – can you imagine what that meant in historic winter times, making the residents prone to death? What I personally find interesting is

the fact, that the heirs-to-be control their direct ancestors if they do it right...

What has St. Nicholas to do with all that?

Christianisation did not automatically mean the extinction of the old beliefs, the Catholic saints being a kind of substitute for polytheism, serving as “undergods” under the Catholic trinity. It is no coincidence that the St. Anna chapels in the Alps are located on the same holy grounds where the great mother goddess *Nanna* was worshipped, that in Alpine folktales and legends some attributes of Perchta are given to St. Mary (what will be shown in a folktale used to conclude this article) and that the Catholic patron of the children with his disciplining character – St. Nicholas – was connected to the ambivalent blessing and punishing tradition of the masked processions. Due to the more dualistic character of christianity, the sharper defined difference between good and evil and of course to discredit the old religion, the benign and blessing role was given to the Christian saint while the original gods were attributed the demonic, malign character of the punisher.

This is directly documented in a historic source of the Tyrolean Lech valley of 1812, where the companion of St. Nicholas is named *Wotan the Wild Hunter*.

In Folktales, often these two persons are named the “Good Klaus” and the “Bad Klaus” (remember the derivation from the Name Nicholas), which defined the term *Klausen* for the masked men, so the animal-like or more vegetable *Perchten* and *Klausen* can be seen as synonyms.

A little bit more difficult and controversial is the tradition of the *Krampusse*. The *Krampusse* are far more demonic and devil-like and do not reflect the animistic/shamanistic archetype of the *Perchten* and *Klausen*. Additionally, mentioned by critics, in some regions an intermingling of both traditions can be found when *Krampus-Passen* around St. Nicholas Day as well as *Perchten runs* around New Year’s Eve can be found. On the other hand, there are so many parallels between these traditions, that they might

have a common origin based in pre-Christian times, the *Krampusse* being far more changed by Catholic belief.



Conclusion

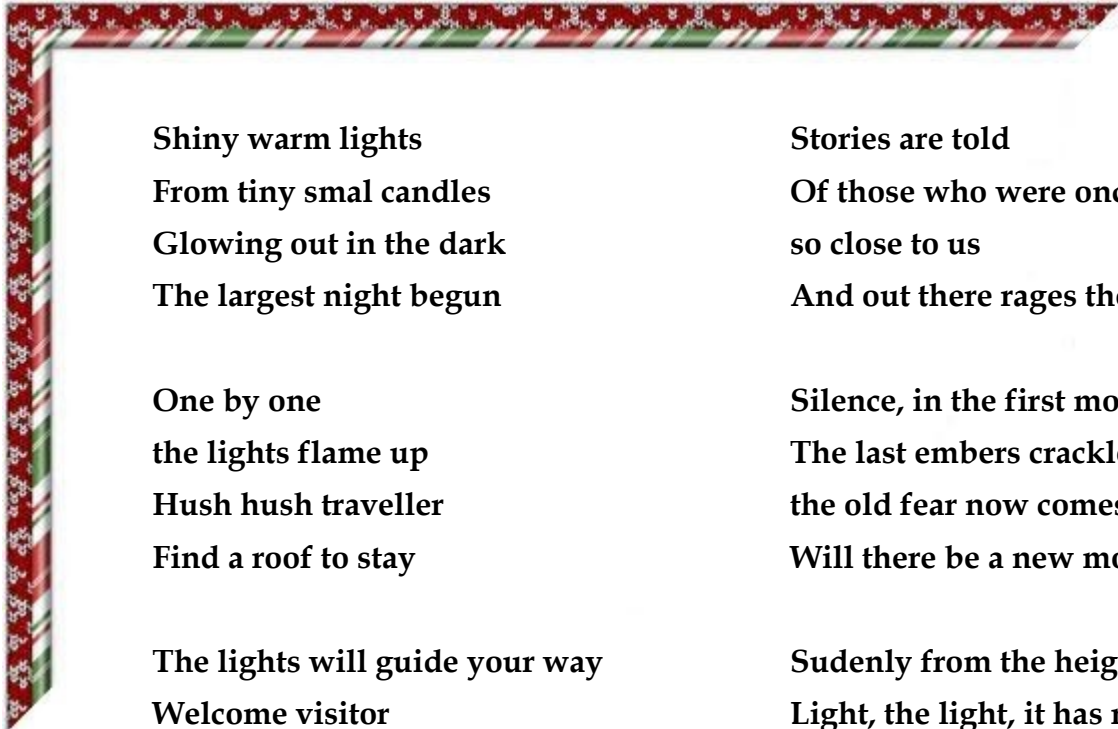
There are so many parallels between the tradition of the Alpine masked processions and the pre-Christian motifs of the Wild Hunt and Perchta as well as Woden and the ambivalent character of blessing and punishment that these Alpine hibernal masked processions can be seen as successors to the pagan and assumingly Indo-Germanic rituals for fertility and control as well as death cult and ancestral worship.

Of course, over the centuries the tradition has been christianised and changed due to the mainly Catholic orthodox local believers, but an astonishing amount of older remnants have been preserved, possibly a kind of archetype in the cultural memory of the Alpine population in a relatively culturally enclosed area of Europe.

I think that these processions can be seen in the same tradition as the other masked processions in Europe.

To end this article, I want to cite a folktale of my Allgöian home region just a few kilometres north of the northern Alps between Lake Constance and the region south of Munich. This tale was chosen to demonstrate the just superficial layer of Christianity over an older heathen core, the Wild Hunt (animals and winter night), the female high goddess (St. Mary/Perchta on a coach/sleigh) that protects the children and gives fertility (the smell of spring), an example for the naive syncretism of former polytheistic populations when just a thin layer of Christianity was painted on the core of a much older heathen lore.

“A couple of Eschers prayed for children when they went to church on Christmas eve. They could hear the church bells ringing, when suddenly three black goats sprang into their way. The woman nearly cried out loud, but her husband held his hand over her mouth as three giant black wild boars and three pitch-black deer placed themselves before them. In this moment, St. Mary’s sleigh appeared in front of them. Celestial music and the smell of spring filled the air. Mother Mary bowed before them and pointed her finger at three little angels on her sleigh. Suddenly, all were gone. The blessed couple joyfully went home, and by next Christmas eve three cradles could be found in their house.”



**Shiny warm lights
From tiny small candles
Glowing out in the dark
The largest night begun**

**One by one
the lights flame up
Hush hush traveller
Find a roof to stay**

**The lights will guide your way
Welcome visitor
Come in,
Make yourself comfortable**

**Flames dance in the fireplace
The table is already covered
Honor the ancestors and gods with us
The horn will circling many times**

**Stories are told
Of those who were once
so close to us
And out there rages the wild chase**

**Silence, in the first morning hours
The last embers crackle in the fireplace
the old fear now comes
Will there be a new morning?**

**Suddenly from the height horns sounds
Light, the light, it has returned
Quickly now clean the stove
A new log has to burn**

**Out, out, to welcome the light
With joy and noise
The first new day has just arrived
Life now will go on**



FRITH, HONESTY AND COMMUNITY

Reflection and experience

Frigga Asraaf, Het Rad, The Netherlands

A heathen community is no different from any other kind of community. The way I feel about community, one of the most important things is that people should be able to feel safe and respected.

I guess in our heathen community the majority of people, as I perceive it, are aware of the basic thought that religion and seidr are about personal choices and preferences. In this sense there is no right or wrong, no proper or improper. We agree to disagree, and I guess I could assume most of us come from the standpoint of not trying to impose our own views onto others and especially our own sentiments and assumptions. Be aware if you use words like ethical and moral! They too are assumptions and our own choice. You might not agree with the thoughts and deeds of another person, but that does not mean the other person is wrong or unethical. Just different! It might not be your 'piece of cake', that's all. More and more when people express their view as 'this is the way it is', my simple response is: 'And all the other billion possibilities?'

Having my personal opinions about how other people see and practice their religion and/or seidr is entirely different from being judgemental about it and classifying it as improper. One could wonder why people feel the need to tell others their way is wrong, and sometimes even going so far as trying to stop somebody. Insecurity and/or jealousy might play a role.

Growing up, to me, is to learn about boundaries, respecting both your own and the ones of others. We set our own boundaries and make up our own minds. We have our own view of ethics and morals. We all have our own beliefs and each have a unique way we perceive the world(s). The sum of this (and much more) defines who we are and how we approach the world. This is written down so easily and yet is so complex in daily life.

I think that the more we feel secure about ourselves then the less we feel the need to judge others or need to force them into our own framework. The better we know ourselves the more we are aware of our boundaries, and the more we are able to respect the boundaries of other people. It becomes natural. Besides this there is such a thing as good manners and a friendly way of dealing with each other, which is independent of whether you are fond of a person or not.

Good intentions

Remember the christian saying: "the road to Hell is paved with good intentions"? Great wisdom! Are you really sure you are commenting and/or act on something for the right reasons? Reflection! What if someone would do it to you? The latter is one of the criteria on my list of things I think over before taking action. The principle of – let the other side be heard – is one of the fundamental preconditions for real dialogue. Do you really think yourself to be respectful, honest and honouring frith without informing or discussing with people, or even go behind their back? When you are sure the reason to act is justified – for example concerning seidr, were the safety of others must be ensured – there is no reason for concealment afterwards. But, even if the reason is true, taking action is making a choice and comes with responsibilities, and should make one check and reconsider their motives again. Could ulterior motives play a role that you rather would not acknowledge to yourself? I guess most of us have learned by now that, if it involves other people, only they themselves can tell you what is in their mind and what is really going on. Without checking it is just guessing and making assumptions. I learned the hard way that it is not a respectful personal way to deal with people, and it is sure not how I want people to treat me.

Do you really understand what others tell you? Passing on what has been transmitted to you by a third person calls for caution. All too often a messenger turns it into something quite different, and will often colour their report with their own thinking and motives. Ain't it a fact that if you have been told that someone felt upset by your way of working, and then when you ask the person directly, to your surprise their response is "what I said is that I would like to learn more about it". Truth has a tendency to reveal itself sooner or later.

Maybe it is because I'm Dutch that I prefer to be honest and speak my mind. Blunt I can deal with. I guess we all know that to avoid facing what is really going on doesn't make it go away, it only gives the chance for it to lurk in the darkness and often to undermine our feelings of security and trust in the long run.

Community

All of the above applies, as far as I am concerned, even stronger for seidr. I'm still grateful for one of the first lessons I learned at the start of my long path of learning shamanism/witchcraft/seidr/magic, which I translate today for myself as: If you want to be a healer/seidr bearer you must be willing to be really honest about who you are and what your true motives are.

This does not mean one has to be perfect! He! we are all human beings and do stupid things, make mistakes, quarrel and see things wrong every now and then! What is important to me is to be open minded and have the guts to look above and beyond your own comfort zone. It means self reflexion every single day of your life, and to reflect on your true motives, good, bad or ugly, without judgement.

In a nutshell, to me seidr is about restoring balance and giving support. Heathen gatherings are outstanding opportunities to work together and to be able to help one another. To me this is a part of the support a community can offer. Perhaps the most well-known example is the Spá-ritual. But there is more, much more, such as personal healing or

strengthening people.

A few find my seidr chaotic. In a way it is, but I would rather express it as 'going with the flow'. A structured chaos I call it, for I know what I'm doing. Generally I have a plan, but often only the core of the plan remains once I start working and invoking the spirits. They have their own ways...

As I feel free to stay away from workshops, lectures, blots, seidr and other things offered, of course this is likewise the other way around. People have a free choice whether or not they want to join what I have to offer. For all events offered by Het Rad and myself the following applies: People are free to leave activities, talks, blots or workshops which make them feel uncomfortable at any time. No one should ever feel pressured into participating, attending or staying. This also applies for only a part of a blot, activity or workshop.

Regularly, it is almost a relief I do not have to go to all the different kinds of workshops offered by all kinds of people in all kinds of traditions and techniques. The subject might be interesting, but sometimes the approach makes it not my piece of cake. At the same time I'm glad to be able to see and acknowledge that other people enjoy it and that it brings them what they need. Isn't it a fantastic thought we have this freedom? The freedom to dislike what others do, but be able to be grant them what is theirs without any envy?

The great thing is that mostly you can find like minded people with whom you share enough of a framework with which to work harmoniously, so why bother if others do it in a different way?

Gebo

After all the years as a seidr bearer the joy, healing, (re-)connection and all other things seidr can bring is still a wonder to me. It might be hard and heavy work in the moment, sometimes even scary, but good things often ask for the necessary commitment. Seidr is a gift to both the ones willing to do the work and the one(s) the seidr is for. Still, so often I am deeply

touched by how willing people are to work hand in hand for an individual, for the land, for what is needed. Still, I'm amazed how much we can achieve, sometimes in a short time. People have been suffering for years and I'm allowed to be part of their healing which can vary from a tiny opening they have been looking for so desperately up to a major life change. I'm grateful for the trust that people put in me and in each other. The thought that people feel safe and

secure to open up at gatherings and as a community makes me smile.

This, and more, is what seidr is about to me and is where I want to continue to focus my attention. Part of my seidr is the Flame of Frith, being a frithkeeper. Many of you are part of the Flame of Frith and that means a lot to me. Feeding the flame together for a better world, a world in balance and respecting all life forms!



*Hail mighty mothers!
Hear me grandmothers!
Hail earth mothers!
Hear me seidhmothers!*

*Hallow and hold our hearth and home.
Hallow and hold family and friends.
Bring blessings, warmth and well-being,
The Twelve Nights, time between years,
Wintertide, while the wheel is turning.*

Piigga Aeraaf 2016



Asatru.UK and the Asgardian Heathen Festival 2016

By Geoff Miles, Asatru UK Kinsman

Asatru.UK

On a cold wintery March weekend in 2013, 13 people met up in a room of a haunted old pub in York. Most of us had never met each other in real life before, but over the course of 3 days and nights we talked, feasted, drank ale, shopped, did rituals and generally got to know each other better... and a spark was ignited.

After have such a great time, we all agreed to do this again, and Asatru UK was born. We now meet in York as a yearly event to coincide with the Yorvik Festival. Then later the Kin (the council of Asatru UK) was formed and in time a decision was made to have a Annual Summer-Camp/The Lindum Thyng. Which has led on to us now having Spring and Autumn Moots in different areas of the UK each year. This meant at least one Moot a year would be within reach for our UK wide members to attend. All these Real-World Moots are held for 3 or 4 days/long weekends over school holidays, so that families are able to attend too.

Then the idea of a bigger national event was forwarded: The Asgardian Heathen Festival.



The Asgardian Heathen Festival

The Asgardian 2016 was the biggest project yet, and would be a make or break gamble because of the great amount of expenditure involved. It would be open to our international friends as well as our UK

members. It was held over the first weekend of August, and it offered a good range of crafts stalls, a few good blacksmiths and a Mead Shop. There was also on-site hot and cold food vendors catering for both meat-eaters and vegetarians, and a real-ale tavern too. We had workshops, talks about runes and seidr and demonstrations and tournaments of ancient games.



Entertainment was in the form of Viking re-enactors, folk and medieval music, and the Saturday night was headlined by a up and coming young Swedish band called 'Hindarfjall' who were a great success.. And of course there was the usual late night parties around the camp-fire. Which now seems to be the 'norm' with us here in the UK and in the other international Asatru camps that I have attended.

Ritual

On the Friday night we started with the opening ritual. We had 95 people in the circle with many more looking on, and we were all awestruck by a totally amazing flaming sun-set in the west with a crescent moon above the lowering sun. In the east there was a rainbow hanging over the tavern. God and goddesses had come to visit our little part of Midgardr.

On the Saturday we were treated to an excellent blot to Ing-Frey by Marcus and Birka Skogsberg from Sweden. Saturday evening there was a lifting Flame of Frith Ritual led by Frigga Asraaf from Holland assisted by Annette Schroeder from Germany. By the time that it came to the closing blot on Sunday, we knew that The Asgardian Heathen Festival 2016 had become a great success, with people asking "will you be having another one??"

Well! The answer to that question is a big YES. The Asgardian will now become a yearly event.

The Asgardian Heathen Festival 2017 will be held on 28th-30th July 2017 (Friday noon until Sunday afternoon).

Sherratts Wood Camp Site
Morrilow Heath. Leigh.
Staffordshire.
ST10 4PF

This is the event page on FB: <https://www.facebook.com/events/179569405784756/>

and the FB group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/asgardianfestival>

Website: <http://asatruuk.wixsite.com/asgardianfestival>

There will be talks, workshops, market place, blots and ritual, and music, just like last year. Tickets are already on sale, with early bird tickets available until 31st Dec 2016.



Come and join us and bring us a blot or ritual to enrich the international feel of this event!



Suebian *Flachswickel* for Frau Holle

By Ulrike Pohl

While we do know that food sacrifices for Frau Holle and Frau Percht were mostly hearty and nourishing non-meat dishes like Klöße and fish, we also know that people did offer what they had and ate themselves. The nature of the offer will probably have changed with region and time. Therefore, in my house, we give a special sweet cake to Frau Holle, even more precious because it is called Flachswickel which means hank of flax. We know Frau Holle is the divine spinner like so many other truly great goddesses, so giving her a gift of cake which resembles something used with her craft seems to be double meaningful.

I live in Suebia, which is a region in South-Western Germany, with Stuttgart as capital. The name Suebia

stems from a large and notorious Germanic tribe, the Suebes, a part of which settled here after they left the North East of Magna Germania and the Elbe regions during the migration period. Caesar writes in length about them and Tacitus describes them as being one of the tribes that venerate the enigmatic Nerthus. Seeing as some scholars propose a connection between Nerthus and Frau Holle/Frau Percht and thus, Frija, we come full circle here. Flax has long been grown and spun, and linen produced here, especially on the Schwäbische Alb, a very rural region, until imported cotton became more successful. The Flachswickel are a reminder of the hanks of dried, broken and heckled fibre, wound to hanks to be further processed, namely spun and then woven

into fabric. This is an authentic Suebian recipe, but alas not an authentic heathen bread offering, as it is first documented quite late and made with baker's yeast. This kind of yeast and baked goods made with it have first been mentioned in the late medieval age, and I guess that the Flachswickel themselves are not

older than 250 years. Nevertheless, they are very tasty and well loved in Suebia as well as in my family, the whole year round, so we are not afraid to offer these to the goddess at the end of the Rauhnächte. I wish I could share them with you, too!

You will need:

42 gr fresh yeast (baker's yeast)

80 ml milk

500 g wheat flour. I always use very white flour.

250 gr soft butter

3 eggs

5 g salt

15 gr vanilla sugar

hail sugar (pearl sugar) to roll the Flachswickel in



How to make them:

Take butter, eggs and milk out of the fridge roughly one hour before you start baking so they have room temperature. Warm the milk to ca. 30°C, crumble the yeast into a large bowl, add milk and stir. Add all other ingredients and knead with the knead hooks of your handheld mixer or by hand until the dough is smooth. Cover the bowl with a clean towel and let the dough rise for about 20 minutes. It should double its volume in that time.

Now portion the dough into 20 balls of 50 gr each,

and roll them into long worms of about 30 cm length, the ends being thinner than the middle. Roll those dough worms in hail sugar, then lay them double and twist the ends two or three times. Place them on two greased baking sheets or covered with baking paper and let them rise for another 10-15 minutes. Preheat your oven to 180-200°C. The Flachswickel will take a baking time of around 15 minutes, they should not get too dark, so watch them.

Share with your loved ones and Frau Holle or the deity of your choice. Enjoy!



The Gollenstein at Blieskastel, Europe's largest standing menhir.

By Nathalie Cue Gomez



Walking from the specially arranged parking in direction of the stone, about 5 minutes, you can see it standing in the background on its little hill. It stands there inconspicuously, fitting itself into the landscape, and if you do not know that it is there, you would hardly notice it. The closer you get, the more it grows, spread out and dominate your field of view. It begins to capture the landscape. Reaching the foot of its little hill there it stands mightily and majestically above one: the Gollenstein, and the sight is every time overwhelming.

Of a bright, pink shimmering sandstone it rises 6,58m into the sky and although today it is missing about 60cm, it is still 2m higher than the Stonehenge in England. Experts assume that the Gollenstein was erected between Neolithic period and the Bronze Age, that is, around 4000 years ago. It lost the missing 60cm in World War II. Fearing that the enemies aircraft or the French artillery could use the Gollenstein as a point of location, it should have been laid down like many others of its kind. For this purpose, in 1939, the German Army engineers, carved a pit and filled it with straw. Unfortunately the calculations were not exact and the pit proved to be too short, and as the cords torn, the stone fell on the edge of the pit and broke into 4 large and several small pieces. In 1953, at the instigation of the mayor of Blieskastel, the parts were

reassembled, not quite expertly, with wide concrete filling and the stone erected again. In 2002 the stone was fully restored.

Thus also the Gollenstein has received its scars of the time, which shine brightly in the moonlight. The Christianization did also not pass without leaving its mark a pointed niche was carved in the lower third, and the initials IHS and a cross were engraved in their back. It is generally accepted that this "vandalism" was made in the apogee of Christianity, like the medieval age. But not obligatorily, there is a detailed report from 1809 which describes the Gollenstein as a menhir in one piece of local sandstone without any outcrop. Also on a drawing from this époque there is nothing to be seen of a niche or a figure. It is therefore to be assumed that both were first sculptured after 1809 in the stone. It seems strange however that there is no folklore about changes being made to the stone in recent times.

The figure that is referred to, is interpreted by some to be a prehistoric god, perhaps the Celtic weather god Taranis, it is hard to tell, but nonetheless must first be found. Head, parts of the body and the legs can only be seen if you know exactly where they are, so weathered is the stone already. On by examining the stone with special lighting, can it be found to the left below the niche.

The spindled stone is supposed to have its name from the word "colus", for the stock used for the fibres when spinning. However, the name "Guldenstein" is handed down from 1553 and on a map from 1564 of the Zweibrücken office it is written as "Güldenstein" but also "Pirmanstein", name which it shares with the nearby Spillenstein of Rentrich. Hans Cappel, who has written a few books about the region, traces the origin of the name to the golden or gilding broom that has been growing there in former times. The place name researcher Hermann Albert Prietze takes the name back to the "Gold", which was sacrificed in the Bronze Age. Despite an early and intense interest of science in this menhir, such as the excavation conducted in the 18th century, the original and true function of the stone has so far remained unclear.

Although today one assumes the place is one of ancestor worship or sacrifice to the gods, it could also have been a Thing-stone or a border marker. A hardly widespread but therefore no less interesting theory sees the Gollenstein, together with many other stones, which for the most part no longer exist, as a signpost or marking to a much larger cult place in the

region. And in this region there are several places which could qualify to have been such a place. Only several kilometers further, hidden in the woods there is a well-sanctuary principally dedicated to Epona, which a lot of archaeological findings prove, but there also have been found the breast part of a live size bronze statue of Mars Cnabetius, a romanized Celtic war god. Whatever the Gollenstein may have been in the past, today he is visited and used by heathen and pagans from all kind of traditions.

Strangely there are no legends about the Gollenstein. The giant Goliath is said to have used it as a whetstone, and at midnight it will turn round its own axis. However, it has been standing there for more than four thousand years, powerful, guarding and protecting the country, and yet one has the feeling that the stone is kindly pleased with visitors. It is a place that invites to rest and stay. I recommend to anyone who is nearby or drive past to make the detour, only a few will remain untouched by this visit.

Sources: Wikipedia, Web of Blieskastel city, www.suehnekreuz.de, tw.strahlen.org



Picture by Sascha Wettmann

The Troth, International Conference Europe 2017

and **Heathen Adventure Tour 2017**

By Haimo Grebenstein

This year I was approached by Amanda Leigh Hawkins, currently in charge of international relations for The Troth, an American Asatru organisation. They wanted to sign the statement in support of the Asatruarfelagid we published last year. Besides that I was invited to a facebook group run by the Troth for international exchange and we also had a couple of Skype and phone calls which were partly joined by Robert L. Schreiwer, the current steerman.

To keep it short: the Troth is now listed below last year's statement as well as the current general statement we issued this year. Some more members of the Asatru-EU Network have joined the exchange group.

The Troth is quite interested in a closer communication and, if appropriate, co-operation with European groups and has decided to host a European conference in 2017. The main purposes of this conference are

- meeting face-to-face, getting to know each other on a personal level and
- build frith between inclusive Heathen/Asatru organizations and individuals around the world.

The conference will be on October 6th to 8th 2017 in or near Hamburg. At this point we have not yet found a suitable location, but this will be a matter of a few days or weeks. When the location is settled, an official invitation will go out to all groups and individuals in Asatru-EU Network, to all members of the Troth in Europe and everywhere else and, of course, to other groups that The Troth co-operates

with.

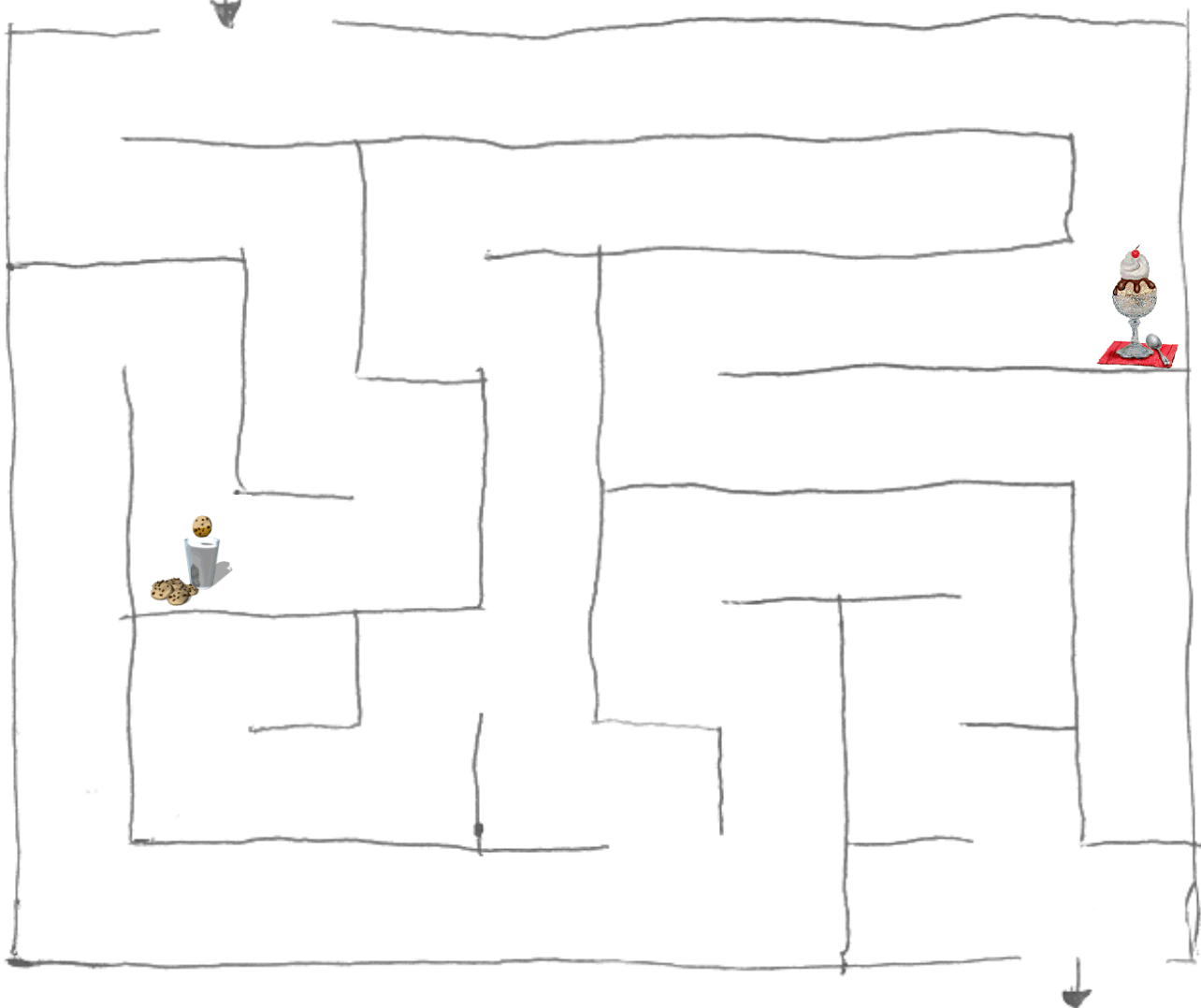
The conference program will presumably start on Friday afternoon and last until Saturday night. The schedule is not fixed yet, but we are working on a number of high-quality lectures and workshops. Besides these there will be plenty of time to introduce everyone to each other, at plenum level as well as in some workgroups. There is a website <http://www.troth-conference-2017.org> showing information about the the conference, its program and registration.

While configuring this event, we had the idea that it might be a good idea to extend it beyond the conference since for people coming from far away it might be interesting to connect this event to a short vacation. So I designed a „heathen sightseeing trip“ through northern Germany and Denmark that starts right after the conference on sunday October 8th and ends in Copenhagen or Hamburg on Saturday October 14th. We will be traveling by bus and visiting many heathen-related sites along the way. Details regarding this trip will also be available on the conference website.

At this stage there is only a rough calculation for this trip. The road-map will be to find out how many people are generally interested since a big chunk of the costs is dependant on the number of participants. By April or May 2017 a solid calculation will then be presented along with a final pricing and the trip can then be finally booked. If you're interested in the conference and/or the trip, please bookmark the dates, already.



Children's puzzle



Asatru-EU Network



Het Rad
Netherlands



De 9 Werelden
Netherlands



Asatru UK
United Kingdom



Les Enfants d'Yggdrasil
France



Forn Sed Sverige
Sweden



Verein für Germanisches Heidentum
Germany



Nordisk Tingsfællig
Denmark

The Kith of the Tree and the Well

United Kingdom



Åsatrufellesskapet Bifrost
Norway



Eldaring
Germany



Clan Ostara
France



Gotland Forn Sed
Spain



Asatru Polska
Poland



Ásatrú Ibérica
Spain