

# Skylands Report



The e-newsletter of the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

No. 9

[www.skylandsasatru.org](http://www.skylandsasatru.org)

July 2017

## Hail Sunna! Skylands Celebrates Midsummer!

On Saturday, June 24, members of Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship and several close friends gathered to hail Sunna and celebrate the height of Summer. The celebration of Midsummer remains one of the SAF's most popular and well-attended events. Tribe members spent the afternoon playing kubb and learning a bit of swordplay thanks to Jeremy G. As attendees snacked and enjoyed various beverages, a call to order was heard and all sat down to participate in our annual Thing. Modeled after the Germanic Thing, essentially a governing assembly, Skylands members had an opportunity to voice opinions, suggestions, and concerns to the Board of the Directors and those gathered.

The assembled folk then gathered for our Midsummer blót. Joseph goði shared the blessings of the Goddess Sunna with tribe and then made an offering of a sun-wheel to the flames of our ritual fire. Following blot, all feasted on a wonderful meal of kebabs, shrimp salad, steak

and various side dishes and desserts. As dinner came to a close, we held our first Skylands auction. We give special thanks to all who contributed items to our auction.



*Preparing for Seiðr*

As dusk arrived, Skylands had another first. Tribe members have been learning the magical art of Seiðr. In a beautiful setting amongst torches and candlelight, Lisa C. sat in the high-seat and channeled the wisdom

of the landspirits while other Seiðr -workers chanted and drummed. Those gathered had an opportunity to ask questions of the landspirits and receive answers through this magical working.

The evening came to a close with a traditional Öl (ale feast). All gathered around the fire in an informal setting. There were toasts, drinks consumed, many laughs, and comradery all around. It was a magical night and a perfect ending to a wonderful Midsummer's day. 🌲



*Jeremy G. becomes a full member*



*Skylands Midsummer 2017*

## Day Trip to Kutztown Folk Festival

Join the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship as we visit the Kutztown Folk Festival (KFF) in Kutztown, Pennsylvania on July 9.



Having had a wonderful time at the Festival last year, we decided to make the KFF an annual event on our calendar.

The Kutztown Folk Festival is the oldest continuously operated folklife festival in America (this year's event is their 68<sup>th</sup>.) The Festival runs for nine-days from July 1 – 9. The event draws visitors from all over the world, entertaining families while providing valuable insight into the traditions of the Pennsylvania Dutch and their way of life.

Last year Skylands members attended several interesting lectures about the art and craft of Hex Signs and Powwowing or *Braucherei* (the practice of ritual healing). The festival also houses the largest quilt sale in America and has an internationally attended Quilt Auction of top prize-winning quilts. There are plenty of children's activities as well. Let's not forget about the food that is available. There's nowhere else on earth where you can find as many Pennsylvania Dutch delicacies than the Kutztown Folk Festival!

Admission is \$14 for adults and free for children 12 and under. Discounted tickets and coupons are available on the KFF website.

This event is open to all and is a great opportunity to meet the members of Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship in an informal setting. 

## Asatru 101 examines Runic Yoga

On June 11, several members met at Jeremy G.'s home for the latest in our *Asatru 101* series of classes. Don V. taught the concepts of Runic Yoga. The group explored various elements of Runic Yoga (also known as *Stadhagaldr* and *Runengymnastik*) starting with the history of this practice. We considered the origins Runic Yoga with the Twentieth Century German Rune Magicians especially F. B. Marby. Marby was first to see practical magical applications of this technique, which he called *Runengymnastik*.

The class explored key concepts such as posture, location, orientation, breathing, and vocalic sound. We also examined the idea of *Runenyoga* as magic. Don provided an overview of the Five Zones of the Cosmos and how Inner Earth Space and Super Cosmic Space are zones of tranquil space that radiate energy. We also discussed the idea of the Rune Magician making himself capable of receiving and sending patterns of energy to and from all five of these zones and thereby becoming an “antenna” for the reception and broadcast of runic “radio” waves.

The class worked through Marby's 8-step approach (albeit at a very accelerated pace). Following the discussion of the history and theory, all participated in a practical workshop where students practiced Runic Yoga postures while galdering the names of the Runes.

Special thanks to Jeremy for hosting this month's class at his home. 



*The class forms the Stadha for Gebo*

## **Tribal Milestones**

Allie W. celebrates a birthday on July 11. Happy Birthday Allie!



## Thoughts on Midsummer

Midsummer is a holiday I choose to celebrate as an Ásatrúar. I do this not because, but despite, the fact that it is regularly included in the neopagan “wheel of the year” which places holidays at the solstices, equinoxes, and cross-quarter days. I also place it not on the actual date of the solstice, but on June 24th, St. John's Day, which is the traditional day of celebration in Scandinavia (and, it seems, throughout the Germanic world).

While it is quite true that Midsummer is not one of the three sacrifices mentioned in Snorri's *Heimskringla* and *Óláfs Saga helga* (Winternights, Yule, and Summer Meal), the date was most certainly not unknown as significant to the people of the North. We see it mentioned in several places in the Icelandic sagas and other Old Norse sources, such as Grettir's *Saga*, *Grágas* (the old Icelandic law code), the *Rymbegla* (where it is noted as a feast day), and the Saga of the Norwegian king Magnúss Erlíngssonar, wherein we find the word *miðsumarskeið*, which means “midsummer time,” in the same sense that people today still use the word “Yuletide” to mean a span of days relating to Yule:

When King Sigurd came south in Denmark in Schleswig, he found Eilíf Earl, and celebrated him well, giving him a banquet fit for a hero. That was at midsummertime.

Still, only *Rymbegla* specifically speaks of any sort of celebration specifically associated with the day (or the span of days), although King Erlíngssonar's banquet for Eilíf Earl could certainly have been coincident with such a celebration.

If we move but a little southward, however, we begin to see a more definite pattern emerge. In the *Vita S. Eligii* (who lived in the 7th century in France, which at that time was well-entrenched in Germanic Frankish culture), we see the following admonition given to the people of northwestern Gaul:

No Christian on the feast of Saint John or the solemnity of any other saint performs *solestitia* [solstice rites?] or dancing or leaping or diabolical chants.

Here we see a clear linkage between the Germanic Midsummer (centuries of domination by the Franks had lent the land a decidedly Germanic cast, although a Celtic or even Roman origin for the tradition cannot be ruled out) and the performance of non-Christian celebrations. (As an aside, I will also note the reference to dancing and chanting/singing, which is a theme I'm developing as part of my own contemporary Asatru practice.) So, it is most certainly not a Christian invention to celebrate on the date, else Eligius wouldn't have admonished against it.

I would also note that just because the holiday was not mentioned by Snorri does not mean it was not practiced, as his was not an exhaustive list, since we know of other attested celebrations such as *Alfablót*, *Disablót*, *Dispíng*, *Porrablót*, etc., not to mention the Anglo-Saxon celebrations mentioned by Bede.

That Midsummer is an important holiday in Scandinavia today should be news to no one. Celebrated with fires and drinking, it is a tradition going back at least centuries. I would argue it goes back considerably farther, based on the evidence in *Rymbegla* and Eligius. A quick

glance at the Wikipedia page on Midsummer (never a good source for hard evidence, but illustrative nonetheless) shows traditions of bonfires and other celebrations associated with the day across the Germanic world and beyond.

In Sweden, the *midsommarstång* (“Midsummer pole”) functions much like a May Pole elsewhere, just moved back a month and a half (possibly explained by the differences in climate between Scandinavia and the Continent), and even in Elizabethan England the association of Midsummer with magic and the fey survived strongly enough for Shakespeare to write *A Midsummer Night's Dream* around those themes.

It's entirely possible that the celebration of Midsummer with fire, and its association with fertility, is something that isn't completely Germanic in origin. However, I think the fact that it was noted and celebrated is pretty difficult to deny, and the form in which it is celebrated today in the Germanic and Scandinavian nations is as good as any, in the absence of any definitive evidence to the contrary. 

*By Joseph godi 9 May 2015*

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# Skylands July Calendar

## **Kutztown Folk Festival**

Join the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship as we enjoy the Kutztown Folk Festival!

"The Kutztown Folk Festival is the oldest continuously operated folk-life festival in America. This nine-day event continues to draw visitors from all over the world, entertaining families while providing valuable insight into the traditions of the Pennsylvania Dutch and their fascinating way of life. Children's activities abound and admission is free for children 12 and under. The festival also houses the largest quilt sale in America and has an internationally attended Quilt Auction of top prize-winning quilts."

Full details, including directions, maps, and a list of attractions, can be found on their website: <http://www.kutztownfestival.com/>

Date: Sunday, July 2, 2017  
Time: 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM  
Location: Kutztown, PA

## **Rûna Workshop**

Rûna Workshops are designed to focus on aspects of Germanic magical practices, including runes, divination, *seiðr*, *trolldomr*, *spá*, and others. The class is non-religious in nature, and is open to all.

The subject of this week's class will be the first part of chapter 4 "Rune Work" in Edred Thorsson's book *Futhark*. We will be going through pages 95 ("Runic Meditation") through 116 (up to "Further Talismanic Formulas.")

Please make sure you've done the reading so you can participate in the discussion. We will also be continuing our other exercises.

Date: Sunday, July 23, 2017  
Time: 06:30 PM to 08:00 PM  
Location: Stanhope, NJ

## **Full Moon Offering**

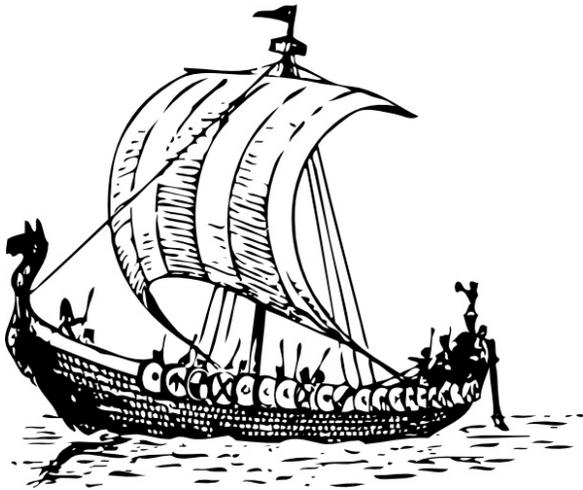
Date: July 9, 2017

## **New Moon Offering**

Date: July 23, 2017

Everyone is encouraged to make an offering to his or her local land-spirits. By making regular offerings, we increase our bonds of friendship with the spirits of the earth. Such offerings may be made on the Full Moon or the New Moon.

## Save the Date!



December 31

- **Folkish Summer Hallowing** (hosted by the Irminfolk) – Thursday - Sunday, August 17-20
- **Hrattablót (Sacrifice to the river-goddess Hratta)** – Saturday, August 26
- **Haustblót Celebration (Harvest offering)** – Saturday, October 7
- **Dísablót Celebration** – Saturday, November 4
- **Krampusnacht** – Saturday, December 9
- **New Year's Eve** – Sunday,

## Help Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship runs both *Asatru 101* classes and *Rúna Workshops*. We hold celebrations for the major holidays in the heathen calendar. We run several on-line sites and produce this newsletter. All of this is possible through donations from members and friends. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship.

Donate today! [http://www.skylandsasatru.org/?page\\_id=183](http://www.skylandsasatru.org/?page_id=183)

## Follow Skylands On-line!

For more information about our tribe and upcoming events, please visit our website at [www.skylandsasatru.org](http://www.skylandsasatru.org)

Don't forget to *friend* us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/skylandsasatru/>

Remember to sign up for our events on our Meetup page: <http://www.meetup.com/NJ-Asatru/>

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship is also on Twitter. Follow us at: [https://twitter.com/Skylands\\_Asatru](https://twitter.com/Skylands_Asatru)

## About Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

The Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship is a recognized 501(c)(3) religious organization based in northwest New Jersey. We practice the religion called Ásatrú, which is the modern expression of the ancient religion of the people of northern and western Europe before they converted to Christianity. We hold regular gatherings, some religious, some educational, and some social.

We encourage anyone whose ancestors once worshiped the Gods and Goddesses of the North to “come home” to Ásatrú. You're welcome here!

***Skylands Report*** is the official newsletter of the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship (SAF). It is a celebration of the accomplishments, the activities, and the plans of the SAF.

We welcome submissions of essays, short stories, poetry, and artwork. Write to us at [fellowship@skylandsasatru.org](mailto:fellowship@skylandsasatru.org). We would love to hear from you.

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