

# Skylands Report



The e-newsletter of the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

No. 12

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

October 2017

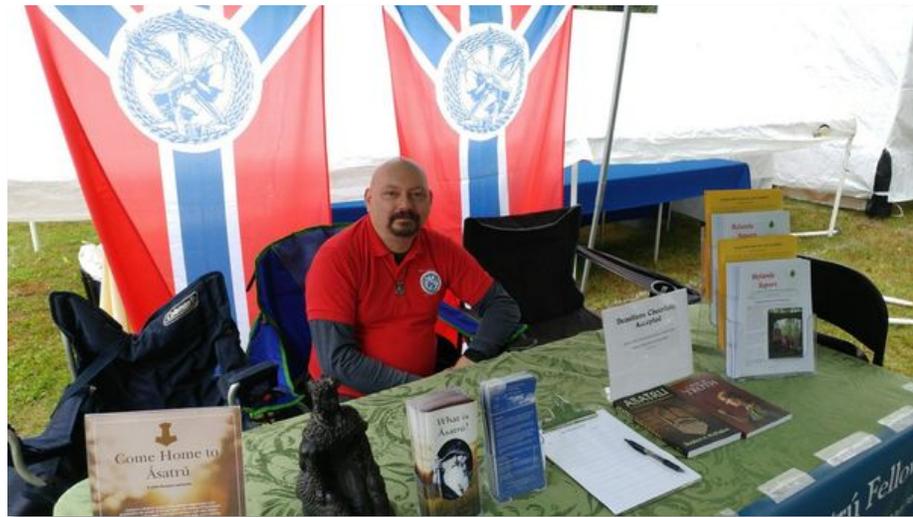
## Skylands Outreach at Scanfest

One of the Goals and Principles of Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship is outreach. In fact, unlike many other Ásatrú tribes or kindreds, we believe in a robust program of outreach. In our Goals and Principles statement we explain,

*Letting people know we are here, being active in our communities, and providing an incentive to join us through our example, is appropriate and necessary for the growth and prosperity of the tribe. We don't proselytize, but neither do we hide ourselves away in isolation*

The Scandinavian Festival (Scanfest for short) held annually at Vasa Park in Budd Lake, NJ is one of our most significant outreach events. For the past two years we have run an information booth in which we engage attendees and speak to them about Ásatrú in general and about our Fellowship more specifically. In addition to a few flyers and trifolds, this year we gave away free copies of a Special Edition of *Skylands Report* for anyone who cared to sign up for our mailing list. Once again I was surprised by the number of heathens in attendance at the Festival – not to mention the number of vendor booths run by like-minded folk.

Scanfest is always great fun. It is literally a day devoted to the celebration and promotion of the cultures, histories, and lives of the Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and



*Joseph goði mans the information booth at ScanFest*

Sweden. The event features lectures on a variety of subjects as well as bands and traditional dancing and of course, a wonderful selection of Scandinavian food. There are many vendor tables selling everything from Viking t-shirts to handcrafted *mjolnirs* (a great place to get your Yule shopping done early).



*Traditional Scandinavian dancers*

Throughout the day we had intermittent rain, which certainly scared off a few fair-weather visitors. The rain however was not enough to prevent the day from being great fun and a huge success for our Fellowship. Several of those who spoke with us at our booth recalled us from last year. We were thrilled as always to also make new friends and to speak to any and all about Ásatrú. Many visitors

were happy to sign up for our newsletter and excited to learn of our organization. One lady was a bit confused about who we were and what we do. After speaking with her for a while, she exclaimed, “So you’re Pagans... where do I sign up?” 🏹

## **Hail Idunna! Skylands goes Apple Picking**

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship marked the arrival of Autumn with a perfect day of Apple Picking. We arrived at the beautiful, sprawling Masker Orchards in Warwick, New York around noon. For over 100 years Masker Orchards has been a choice location for families to go apple picking. Masker is a 200-acre orchard in which you can literally drive up to your tree of choice. The idyllic setting is perfect for a picnic with family or friends, or tribe-mates.

We began our adventure with a potluck picnic lunch to celebrate Harvest Home. We feasted on fried chicken, German potato salad, Greek Tortellini Salad, potato chips, and delicious fudge brownies.

We performed a brief ritual in which we hailed Idunna, the Goddess associated with apples and youth. We also shared an offering with the local landwights. 🏹

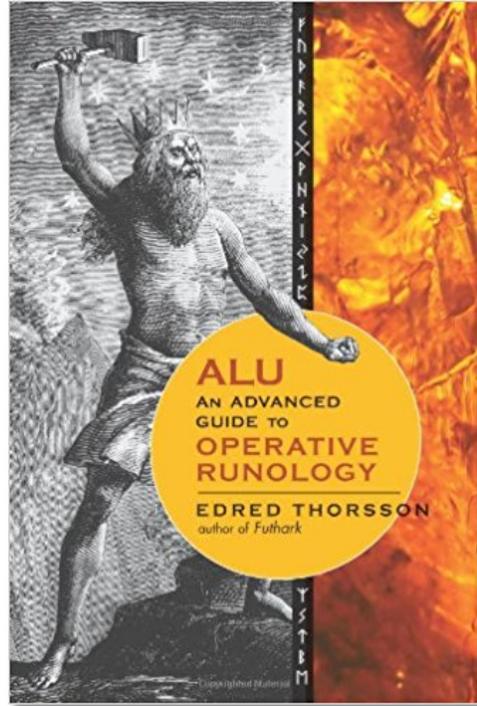


*Apple picking at Masker Orchards*

## A New Series of Rûna Workshops Begins

In September, we launched our second year of Rûna Workshops. Rûna Workshops are runic-study groups sponsored by the Rune-Gild. In this month's class, Joseph goði provided a first-hand account of the recent World Gild-Moot, which he attended. It was thrilling to hear of the quality lectures and rune-work that occurred over the course of the week. Joseph goði announced that we would be using *ALU: An Advanced Guide to Operative Runology* by Edred Thorsson as our primary text for the year. He also provided an overview of the Younger Futhark, the writing system that was in use throughout the Viking era. Throughout the forthcoming series of classes, students will learn and use the runes that comprise the Younger Futhark. Classes will feature a combination of learning from the text and hands-on work including rune carving.

Remember Rûna Workshops are non-religious in nature, and are open to all. 🏴



## Fall Classes Begin with “What is Ásatrú?”

Our *Ásatrú 101* classes have begun at an exciting new location. We're thrilled to be conducting classes at the Morris County Library in Whippany, NJ. The accommodations are great and enable us to reach out to the community and those with an interest in Ásatrú in a public space.



Joseph goði leads “What is Ásatrú?” class

Fall classes began with the topic “What is Ásatrú?” This well-attended lively class provided a high-level look at the key concepts of our religion. We were also able to take advantage of video equipment and are planning to add edited videos of our classes to our YouTube channel. Stay tuned for more news on this front.

Interested in Ásatrú but don't know where to start? Our *Ásatrú 101* series is the perfect place. Hope to see you at a class real soon! 🏴

## When Does Reconstructionism End?

*Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship believes that our religious, magical, and social practices should be performed in a way that is as close to that of our ancestors' as possible. Not only does this include doing things we know our ancestors did as we believe they did them, but it also extends to not importing foreign and/or modern ideas into our practice unless we are filling a gap we know exists. We aim towards the reconstruction of "the pre-Christian Germanic mind-set" which is both un-Christian and un-Modernist. – Ed.*

By the title of this article I do not mean when does the process of reconstructionism end (which might be an interesting topic in and of itself), but rather when does reconstructionism stop looking for source material? To use a term popular in the SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism), what is reconstructionist Heathenry's “period”? In other words, when can, or must, we stop looking at sources, because they're too far removed from the Heathen period?

The obvious off-the-cuff answer is “after the conversion to Christianity.” Which is all well and good, but does pose a few problems. The first is that the Germanic nations weren't converted at the same time. The process was a long one spanning centuries, and every time a barbarian tribe was converted, another Heathen one seemed to spring up behind them. So one would have to go place-by-place and tribe-by-tribe.

The second problem is that conversion wasn't an instant process. More often than not, a king or other leader would himself convert, or marry a Christian woman who would pressure him to convert, and this new faith would trickle down to the nobles and eventually to the peasantry. Sometimes this was a peaceful process, and sometimes it was done in an orgy of violence to promote the religion of the Prince of Peace. So the “official” dates of conversion are a misnomer; long after those dates, there would still be thriving Heathen communities and the folk-faith would endure. In many cases, we are told of Heathen “revivals” where the new faith was (temporarily, at least) cast off and the old ways reinstated. So during this “period of dual faith” there is still useful information that can be gleaned, although it is possible that it will be influenced by Christianity.

The third problem is that even purely Christian sources hold much value to those of us attempting to learn more about pre-Christian practices. This could come in the form of penitentials, sermons, Saints' Lives, histories, and the like that list out (often in great detail) what the Heathens did as a tool for helping Christians avoid such practices. Or, it could be more subtle, in the use of language and terminology that provides insight into pre-Christian religion, because in



order to describe Christian concepts, the author had to use Heathen vocabulary, such as we see in the Gothic Bible of Ulfilas, or the Anglo-Saxon poem “The Dream of the Rood” (which paints Jesus as the leader of a war-band, and the Apostles as his *thegns*, and which itself might be modeled on a now-lost myth of the god Ingve).

The fourth problem is that even long after the people were nominally converted to Christianity, there remained a living undercurrent of pre-Christian remnants, often surviving under a Christian veneer. These can take many forms; popular superstitions, belief in and practices around elves/fairies/hidden folk/brownies/etc., holidays and folk-celebrations, nursery rhymes, dances and songs, and even Saints' feasts, as we have seen in other articles.

Personally, I'm inclined to cast a wide net when I look for sources, and I don't see that as in any way against reconstructionist principles. 

*By Joseph goði 7 May 2017*

Copyright © 2017 Jön Upsal's Gardener

## **Tribal Milestones**

Jeremy G. celebrates one year as a member of the Fellowship on 1 October. Congratulations Jeremy!



# Skylands October Calendar

## Ásatrú 101

*Ásatrú 101* classes are designed for both the beginner who wants to learn the very basics, to the advanced Ásatrúar who is interested in hearing new perspectives, and learning how we at the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship do things.

The subject of this month's class is "What is Reconstructionism?" Why do we try to practice our religion as our ancestors did, how do we go about it, and what are some of the pitfalls?

Date: Sunday, October 1, 2017

Time: 02:00 PM to 04:00 PM

Location: Morris County Library, 30 E. Hanover Ave., Whippany, NJ

## Haustblót Celebration (Harvest Offering)

Join the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship as we celebrate the Autumn harvest. Events will include an offering to Freyr in thanks for the bounty of the harvest, seiðr, an autumn feast, games, and sumbel.

Participants are invited to bring a representative of their garden's bounty for the offering to Freyr, if they have some to bring.

This event is limited to members of Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship and invited guests.

There will be a minimum \$15 donation to offset the cost of food and beverages at this event.

Date: Saturday, October 7, 2017

Time: 02:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Location: Stanhope, NJ

## Rûna Workshop

Learn the magic of the North, both ancient and modern. Rûna Workshops are designed to focus on aspects of Germanic magical practices, including runes, divination, seiðr, trolldomr, spá, and others. They are non-religious in nature, and are open to all.

We will be using Edred Thorsson's *ALU: An Advanced Guide to Operative Runology* as our principle text. Please be sure to acquire a copy for this class.

Don't worry if you missed some of the previous classes; as long as you're prepared for this one, you'll be fine. This class is explicitly open to all seekers.

Date: Sunday, October 22, 2017

Time: 06:30 PM to 08:00 PM

Location: Stanhope, NJ

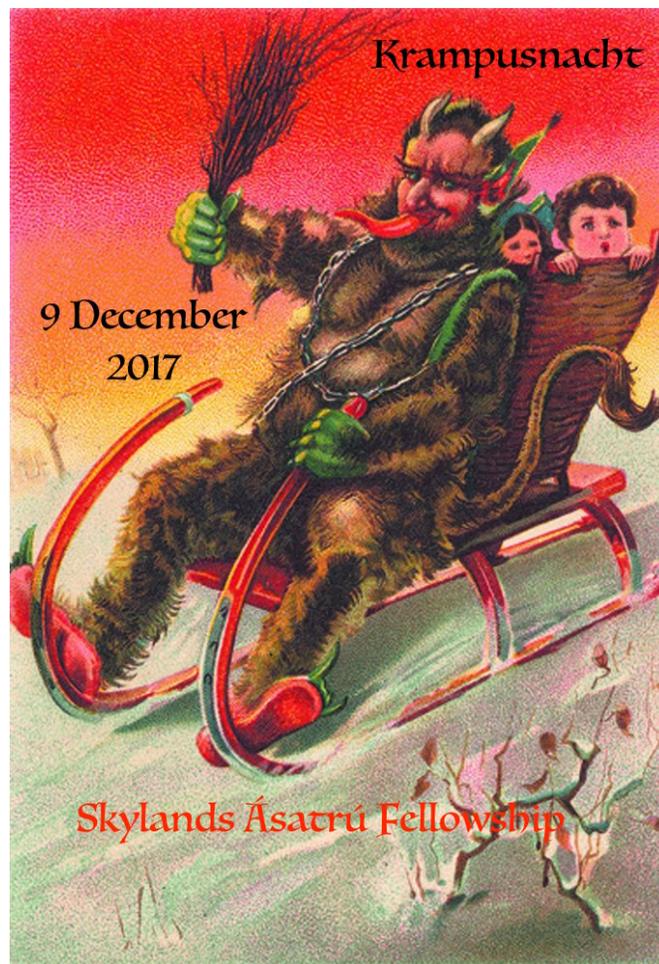
**Full Moon Offering**

Date: October 5, 2017

**New Moon Offering**

Date: October 19, 2017

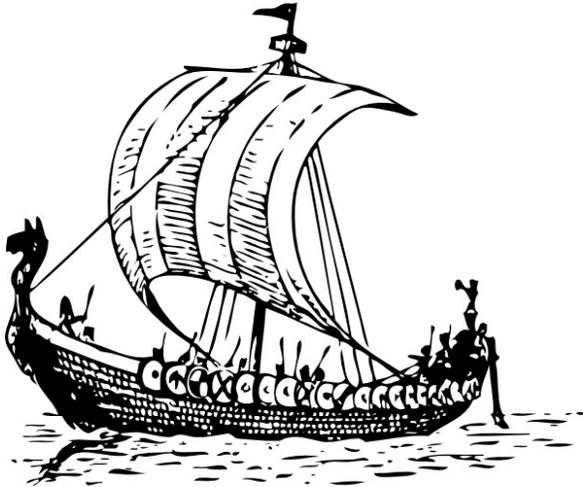
Everyone is encouraged to make an offering to his or her local land-spirits. By making regular offerings, we increase our bonds of friendship with the spirits of the earth. Such offerings may be made on the Full Moon or the New Moon.



*You Better Watch Out! You Better Not Cry!*

*Krampus is Coming!*

## Save the Date!



- **Haustblót Celebration (Harvest offering)** – Saturday, October 7
- **Winter Nights / Dísablót Celebration** – Saturday, November 4
- **Krampusnacht!** – Saturday, December 9
- **New Years Eve** – Sunday, December 31
- **Yule Celebration** – Saturday, January 13

## Help Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship runs both *Ásatrú 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.

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship  
Post Office Box 471  
Mount Olive, NJ 07828

All rights reserved. No part of this newsletter, either in part or in whole may be reproduced, transmitted or utilized in any form or by means without the permission in writing from the publisher.

