

# Skylands Report



The e-newsletter of the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

No. 13

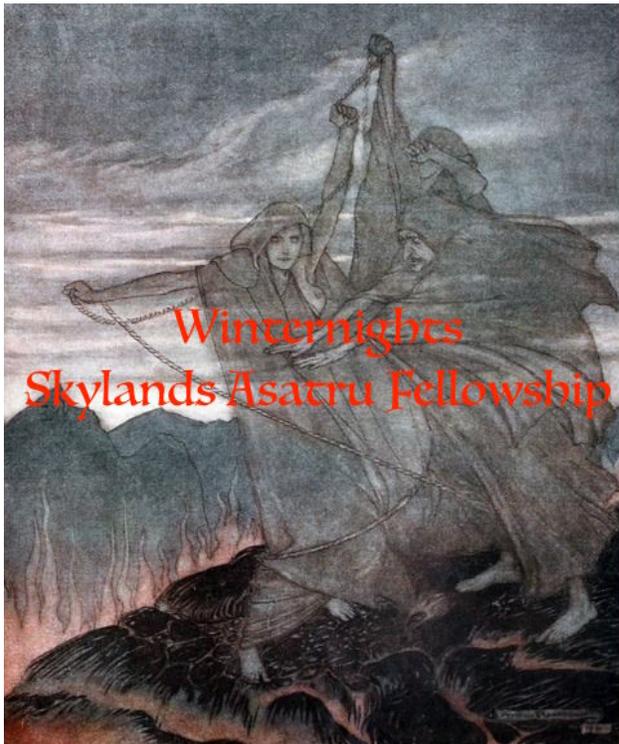
[www.skylandsasatru.org](http://www.skylandsasatru.org)

November 2017

## Skylands Prepares for Winter Nights

The turn of the year is most noticeable during the autumn. Temperatures begin to drop, leaves fall from the trees, the veil between worlds begins to thin. Our ancestors recognized only two seasons — winter and summer. The beginning of winter was marked by a major celebration known as Winter Nights. Snorri Sturluson tells us in the “Ynglinga Saga” of three great sacrifices:

*There should be a sacrifice at the beginning of winter for a good year, and in the middle of winter for a good crop, the third in summer day, that was the sacrifice for victory.*



During the Old Norse period, the sacrifices held at the beginning of winter were *Álfablót* and *Dísablót*. The *Álfablót* (Elven sacrifice) was a sacrifice to the elves. It was generally a local celebration in the home and mainly administered by the lady of the house. In contrast the *Dísablót* was a public sacrifice.

This year, Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship will be holding a *Dísablót* to honor the female spirits or deities called *Dísir*. And what an event we have planned! We will be holding an auction, conducting a Chili Cook-off, conducting the *Blót* to the *Dísir*, participating in *Seiðr*, holding *Sumbel* and partaking in great feast. There will be a \$15 fee to cover expenses associated with event. We hope to see you all there! 

## Krampus is Coming!

On Saturday, December 9, Skylands will be holding its first *Krampusnacht* celebration. For those who may not be familiar with the Krampus, he is a folkloric devil often associated with St. Nicholas in the Alpine regions of Germany and Austria. Krampus comes with threats of punishment for naughty children, as Santa Claus or St. Nicholas is associated with gifts for those children who were “nice.” Krampus Night or *Krampusnacht* is traditionally celebrated on the evening prior to the feast of St. Nicholas.

It is clear to us however that the Krampus has origins that predate the Christian celebrations of St. Nicholas and Christmas. Snorri Sturluson recounts in the *Prose Edda* the tale of Thialfi, the son of a peasant farmer being carried off by Thor and Loki after breaking the thighbone of one of Thor’s magical goats. Is this goat-like creature that carries off naughty children a reminder of this age-old tale from our distant past? Join us for our celebration that will feature a visit by the Krampus as well as Thor. There will be a luncheon of cold cuts, snacks to munch on, and story-telling and games for the children. This is a perfect run-up to the festivities of Yule. ▲



## Exciting Announcement from the Board

The Board of Directors of Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship is pleased to announce an exciting new venture. We are moving forward with the launch of a publishing arm of our Fellowship. We have a few ideas in the works and a book that we are actively working on formatting and editing.

The new publishing venture will be open both to new authors and new works that deal with Ásatrú or related subjects as well as reprinting of old classics. Stay tuned for more information in the weeks ahead. ▲



Fig. 1. [oldbookillustrations.com](http://oldbookillustrations.com)

## Beyond the Eddas and Sagas

One of the things that I lament most about the state of current Ásatrú is the seemingly self-imposed limitation to look at written sources such as *The Sagas of Icelanders*, the *Poetic Edda* and *Prose Edda*, and a handful of other sources (*Beowulf*, usually, and maybe Saxo Grammaticus and a few others), and then stop. This is usually supplemented by a little bit of information from archaeology, inscriptions, and the like.

I think this is an enormous shame and missed opportunity. There's so much other material out there of interest and relevance to our re-creation of the religion of our pre-Christian ancestors.\*

First, of course, there's medieval Saint's feasts. I'm finding this a very fruitful avenue of exploration, as has been seen with my investigations into Yule and other holidays on the calendar. Sure, most of it was documented way past the conversion period, but when we see Christian saints with uniquely Scandinavian, English, or German attributes mapped onto dates that coincidentally happened to be close to or on holidays celebrating the Aesir, it's worth looking into.

I mean, Christ on a stick! Can you look at Krampusnacht and think there's not a pagan undertone there??? And there's tons more where that came from.

Then there's post-Conversion folklore. This comes from several different sources; Scandinavia, Germany, Iceland, and England. All of which were centers of Germanic activity, either during the Migration Era or the Viking Age. There are princesses and trolls, and a ton of lore on how to deal with the huldufolk/elves, tomten/nissen, and the like. It's here that we see a lot of the day-to-day practices captured; how to deal with the landwights of stone, stream, lake, and tree, and the housewights as well.

It's worth digressing for a moment into a particular avenue of research that I think has incredible potential. That's the lore of the Pennsylvania Germans and especially the Amish. Two historical events did more than anything else to obliterate traces of paganism in modern culture; the Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution.

With the coming of Protestantism (and its Anglican analogue in England), came a gut-instinctual revolt against anything that was perceived as "Popish" or Catholic. The problem from our point of view is that the Catholic Church, in its zeal to put an "official" church



A Good Yule Card featuring St. Lucy

stamp on the whole of Europe, was more than happy to incorporate all sorts of local customs, many (most?) of which were pagan in origin, into their own customs. Thus, we see previously-pagan holidays completely co-opted by Saints' feasts, but the customs that accompanied them -- the songs, the practices, the games, the myths, and the food -- endured. With the coming of the so-called reformers, all that was swept away by an austere, even Puritanical in some places, stripped-down Christianity that lost almost all of that pre-Christian practice.

What the Protestant Revolution couldn't destroy, the social disruptions of the Industrial Revolution did short work of. Primarily by encouraging the old peasant class, in whose quaint customs and celebrations, handed down from time immemorial, a lot of potentially pagan custom survived, to move into the cities and take factory jobs. With the rhythm of the peasant-farming life disrupted, there was no reason to pass down the old customs that went along with it. Indeed, the energetic actions of the Victorian folklorists, both in Britain and on the Continent, were an attempt to at least catalog and capture some of this lore before it was lost forever by this process that was recognized at the time as destructive to these

complex memeplexes.



The Water Tsar dances from the Russian Fairy Book (1916)

Both of those disruptive forces are why the Pennsylvania Germans, and in particular the Amish and related folk, are so important to the work of reconstructionism. They represent a sort of crystallized "time capsule" into 16th century southwestern Germany. Because the society of the Pennsylvania Germans (especially the Amish) is so conservative,\*\* it is incredibly resistant to change. It is precisely this sort of religiously-inspired agricultural life that has enabled certain pre-Christian beliefs and practices to endure, and that's what makes them such a treasure-trove of potential lore. If one is interested in continental German lore in relation to Ásatrú, one cannot ignore the Pennsylvania Germans.

And that includes the practices of *Hexerei* and *Braucherei* among them, which has very specific parallels to Scandinavian

*Trölldomr* magic.

And that brings in a whole other level of source material; the still-living traditions in Scandinavia (which seems to have gone through the Protestant Reformation somewhat less vehemently than their southern neighbors; a number of Saints still endure despite the general aversion of Protestantism to the whole idea). Don't forget that runes were still used in some of the more remote regions of Scandinavia into the 20th century, and there remains a whole body of lore (not to mention a large number of actual practitioners) that still practice the art.

Plus the whole grimoire tradition in Scandinavia. There are Black Books, Cipriana, and more. Did you know there's a spell in one of the books that mentions Odin and Satan drinking together in a hall? 'Struth!

Then there's nursery rhymes. The vast majority seems to refer to historical events or political happenings from the 16th and 17th centuries, but there are a few bits and pieces that seem to go back way further. It's a potentially great resource that, as far as I'm aware, hasn't been systematically studied. And there are many more nursery rhymes than I ever knew existed. I've been starting to collect some sources...

I could go on, but I think you get the idea. There is of course the field of comparative mythology; the Vedic Hindu Indra has a lot in common with Thor, as of course do gods like the Slavic Perun. And oh my gods is there a lot of Slavic material, the surface of which has barely been scratched in an Ásatrú context. And of course I'm a huge fan of drawing inspiration and details from the old Christian penitentials, sermons, and Saints' lives; a lot of it comes from the Conversion era, but they often go into exacting detail as to what good Christians are not supposed to do. Absolute gold!

So for you, my dear readers, I implore you; don't stop with the Eddas and *Egil's Saga*. Never stop seeking out potential avenues for research, but also be wary of being too optimistic. Sometimes there really are coincidences, and sometimes something that looked like a good idea at the time pans out badly. Never be afraid to discard an idea that doesn't work out, no matter how cool it seemed at first.

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\* I say "religion" here, but it's probably more accurate to say religions, as there wasn't one single unified pan-Germanic pagan faith, but a complex of closely related practices, myths, and beliefs that varied quite consistently from tribe to tribe and geographical region to geographical region. Look, for example, at the use of the name "Holde/Holle," "Perchta," and then "Frigga" for what appears to be the same, or at least a closely related, goddess as one moves north from the Alps to Scandinavia.

\*\* To this day there are Groundhog Lodges at whose meetings English is not spoken. And that's not just the Amish; that's the "ordinary" Pennsylvania German folk. 

*By Joseph goði 17 February 2017*

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# Skylands November Calendar

## Winternights/Dísablót Celebration

Join the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship as we celebrate Winternights. Events will include a Blot to the Disir, seiðr, chili cook-off, auction, games, feast and sumbel.

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, November 4, 2017

Time: 02:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Location: Stanhope, NJ

## 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 "Ritual in Asatru." We will examine the two main types of ritual (blót and sumbel), some of the lesser-known types of ritual, and the calendar.

Date: Sunday, November 12, 2017

Time: 02:00 PM to 04:00 PM

Location: Morris County Library, 30 E. Hanover Ave., Whippany, 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, November 26, 2017

Time: 06:30 PM to 08:00 PM

Location: Stanhope, NJ

### **Full Moon Offering**

Date: November 4, 2017

### **New Moon Offering**

Date: November 18, 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.

*Spirits of the land,  
accept our gift of friendship  
and drink freely offered  
with none but friendship sought.  
May our friendship never end.*

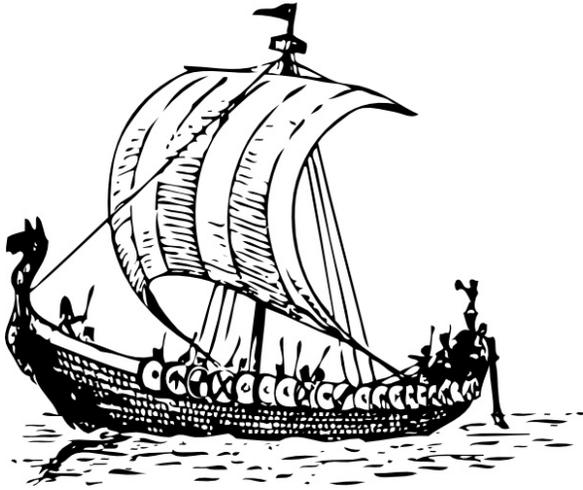
## **Tribal Milestones**

Jeremy G. celebrates a birthday on 3 November. Congratulations Jeremy!

Don V. celebrates a birthday on 17 November. Congratulations Don!



## Save the Date!



- **Winter Nights / Dísablot Celebration** – Saturday, November 4
- **Krampusnacht!** – Saturday, December 9
- **New Years Eve** – Sunday, December 31
- **Yule Celebration** – Saturday, January 13
- **Sumarmál** – Saturday, April 21
- **Midsummer** – Saturday, June 23

## 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

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