

Skylands Report



The e-newsletter of the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

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www.skylandsasatru.com

May 2018

Skylands Celebrates Sumarmál

The Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship Sumarmál celebration began with a spirited and much-needed Thing. Thing, the old governing assembly of northern Germanic society, is the traditional meeting to voice concerns, settle disputes, and make decisions.

Our Thing lasted for two hours and many important subjects were discussed. Most importantly, it was agreed that our Fellowship is a modern expression of the ancient religion of the people of northern and western Europe before they were converted to Christianity. As modern-day heathens, it is a mistake to not include the work and ideas that have been a part of revival of heathenism over the past century. Therefore, we are not attempting to reconstruct

the religion, way, and life of a specific period or culture of the past, but rather worshipping the old Gods in the current day—fully aware of the advances and change of the past one thousand years.



Skylands gathers to celebrate Sumarmál

We also agreed that Odin, in the guise of the Wanderer, is an ideal role model for our behavior as a tribe and as individuals. As such, the Wanderer reaches out and

gains wisdom from other people, places, and groups. It is fully our intent to reach out and establish better communication, unity, and overall relations with other heathen and pagan groups in the Northeast. We have no need to agree with these groups on all matters, but we can certainly learn from them and gather wisdom based on an understanding of what they do.

Most importantly, the tribe voted to fill the vacant role of Goði. It was decided by all present that Don V. will serve our Fellowship as Goði and that Lisa C. will take on an Apprentice Gyðia role. It is our vision that the Goði and Gyðia will direct the spiritual needs of the tribe including performing rituals and providing council when required to members in need. The day-to-day running of the Tribe will be left to the work of the Board of Directors.

In her first act as Apprentice Gyðia, Lisa C. performed a Sigrblót (Victory blót) to Odin, as is our tradition for Sumarmál. All members were blessed in the names of Odin and Frigga. An offering of various food items was placed on the fire and accepted by the Gods. Victories in the year ahead seem assured.

Our Cooking Committee was in full-force at this event presenting a wonderful feast that featured Jeremy G.'s pulled pork, potatoes, vegetables, bread and honey and delicious fresh "make-your-own" strawberry shortcake.

The tribe gathered around the fire as day turned into evening. Conversations wandered from subject to subject with many laughs and an overall spirit of good will and good fortune for the future.

Randi R. led the Symbol late into the night. There were many heartfelt toasts to the Gods and their impact in our lives as well as to members both present and absent. There were toasts to Goði Joseph and his hard work to establish our Fellowship. There were toasts to Goði Don and to our future as a tribe. Overall Symbol was very optimistic — a joyful remembrance of our past, an acknowledgement of the effort of the present, and an expectation of the victories to come through the blessings of our Gods. 



Goði Don and Apprentice Gyðia Lisa begin their new roles

News from the Board

On 21 April, the Board of Directors elected Don V. to serve as President. Don V. will fill the role vacated by Joseph B. through the end of 2018 when the current term ends.

During our Sumarmál Thing, Wick M. explained his unique qualifications to fulfill the Vice-President role which was vacated when Don accepted the Board President role.

The Board voted unanimously for Wick to fill the Vice-President role —the term of which runs through the end of 2019.

In addition, the Board expressed its commitment, during Thing, to improved transparency on all matters — especially regarding the acceptance of new members and the removal or reprimand of existing members for any particular grievance. 



Tribal Milestones

Bob C. celebrates his birthday 21 May. Happy Birthday Bob!
Karen B. celebrates her birthday 24 May. Happy Birthday Karen!
Joseph B. celebrates his birthday 25 May. Happy Birthday Joseph!



The Mystery of the Runes

This month's feature article comes from the blog Tales from the Iron Wood (talesfromtheironwood.blogspot.com) written by Goði Don. In this article Goði provides another autobiographical episode in his spiritual path to Ásatrú. —Ed.

When one chooses to follow the path of Ásatrú, they will inevitably discover the Runes. While some discover Ásatrú after first encountering the Runes others, like me, may be introduced to the Runes at a gathering of Ásatrúars.

My first Ásatrú event was a well-organized one that lasted for several days. The organizers created a schedule and I was thrilled to see that the days were filled with several promising lectures as well as various rituals. Wanting to gain as much information and knowledge as possible, I attended each class with the enthusiasm of a recent religious convert. One such class was a profane consideration of the Runes. By “profane” it simply meant that the consideration was not going to be religious or magical – but rather a simple look at writing the runes as one might use an alphabet.



Runestone from Uppsala, Sweden

The newcomer to Ásatrú will quickly learn that the runes, on the most simplistic level, were a type of old Germanic alphabet. The set of runes are generally referred to as a “Futhark” with the letters of “Futhark” representing the first 6 runes – much as our word “alphabet” represents the first and second letters “a” and “b.” Study of the runes gets more and more complex the further one dives into the subject. One quickly learns that there are multiple Futharks. The one used in the class that I attended may be the most popularly used one – that is the “Elder Futhark.” The Elder Futhark is a set of 24 symbols and is the oldest runic system dating back to approximately 200 B.C.E. Since there is an “Elder” Futhark, it comes as no surprise to learn of a Younger Futhark. The Younger Futhark was that in use during the Viking period. It was developed around 700 C.E. and inscriptions were carved through about 1050 C.E. The Younger Futhark has several runes in common with the Elder but interestingly contains only 16 symbols – a one-third reduction from the older system.

There are several other historical runic alphabets including the 33-character Anglo-Saxon Futhorc. The newcomer may also learn of the Armanen Futharkh. The Armanen Futharkh is the result of a mystical vision that the late 19th and early 20th century occultist, Guido von List had while recuperating from cataract surgery. This system is the most controversial as its skeptics argue against its historicity. It is a system however that was largely embraced in

Germany in the early 20th Century by the leading Runic magicians of the day and was largely responsible for a revival in interest in these ancient symbols.

In all cases it is important to understand as Edred Thorsson explains in his landmark study, *Futhark*,

“A rune is not merely a letter in an old Germanic alphabet, but rather it bears the primary definition of “secret” or ‘mysterium.’”

The “rune” itself then is a mystery, an idea or a secret. The Runes hold a special place in the lore where the God Odin attains an understanding of their cosmic mystery. In the frequently cited passage from the *Havamal (The Sayings of Har)*, we read of Odin’s self-sacrifice:

“I wot that I hung on the wind-tossed tree
all of nights nine,
wounded by spear, bespoken to Othin,
bespoken myself to myself,
upon that tree of which none telleth
from what roots it doth rise.

Neither horn they upheld nor handed me bread;
I looked below me –
Aloud I cried –
Caught up the runes, caught them up wailing,
thence to the ground fell again.”

In this act of self-sacrifice, Odin hangs himself on the world-tree Yggdrasil, sacrificing himself to himself in order to gain the wisdom of the runes.

The wisdom and cosmic ideas of the runes themselves were then incorporated into the hieroglyphic figure that we have commonly come to call “runes” but are more accurately described as “runestaves.” Each runestave then is a symbol representing some cosmic idea. It also has a specific form and phonetic value. Finally there are often numbers associated with each runic symbol that associate one to another.

When people, especially Ásatrúars, think of runes, they often think of magic, and particularly divination. The idea is that, perhaps like tarot, that in a proper setting and done in the right manner, that the runes could reveal the future or answer questions that one may pose to them. First, of course, one must acquire, or preferably make a set of runestaves for themselves. These are typically small wooden discs with the runic symbols carved on each – and then colored red – perhaps with a few drops of one’s own blood. Some adherents of the use of divination through runes may perform a “rune-pull” by choosing a single runestave from a bag or bowl specially made or set-aside for such a purpose. The person doing the rune-pull is then left to interpret what may happen based on the rune that was selected.

There are several books dedicated to the subject of Runecasting and each offers various methods that may be used for such activity. One such method is to cast the runes onto a white cloth and select three runestaves to respond to a particular question or concern that one may have. The first rune indicates the past. It reveals to the runecaster what they may already know of a given situation. The second rune indicates the present. The third reveals what may come to pass in the future.

While there is considerable evidence for the use of runes in various magical workings, the evidence for historical divination through runecasting is quite limited – and generally depends upon one's interpretation of a passage in Tacitus's 1st Century *Germania*.

The class I attended taught us how to read and write using the Elder Futhark. The idea was not to simply replace an English letter with its equivalent rune, but to replace it with one that had the same or similar sound. By the end of this relatively short class, I found myself able to read basic inscriptions and spell out my name using this ancient Germanic alphabet.

That weekend also included a course in Rune-chant. With several other early risers, I arrived at a small building at 7:00 a.m. after a night of ritual and celebration to learn about the art of *Galdr*. Originally this word “galdr” meant “incantation” and later came to mean “magic,” but it is often used to connote the singing or chanting of the runes.

As the sun rose, our small group chanted the runes creating a glorious harmony. With eyes closed, I listened as the sound reverberated around the wood-framed room. The simple chant was a spiritual reawakening. The sound that morning struck me to my very core. I knew I must seek to learn the mystery of the runes – they were in my blood, just as my blood was in that first set of runestaves that I carved as surely as my ancestors had, many generations ago.



Early 20th Century controversial Runemaster Guido von List

18 March 2018

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Skylands May Calendar

Day Trip to Columcille Megalith Park

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship will be spending a relaxing and awe-inspiring day at Columcille Megalith Park. Join us as we appreciate the inspired work of William Cohea Jr., enjoy the natural setting and honor the spirits of the land who undoubtedly dwell throughout this property. We'll wander the paths and take in the sights, and catch an early dinner somewhere nearby.

Details on the park can be found on their website: <http://columcille.org/>

Date: Saturday, 19 May 2018

Time: 12:30 PM to 5:00 PM

Location: Columcille Megalith Park, 2155 Fox Gap Road, Bangor, PA

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 week's class is an Introduction to the Runes. We'll consider the Runes and their appearance in the *Poetic Edda*. We will also look at the variation in the various Futharks. The class will also learn some basic rune skills including writing names and words with the Elder Futhark.

Date: Saturday, 12 May 2018

Time: 02:00 PM to 03:30 PM

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

Full Moon Offering

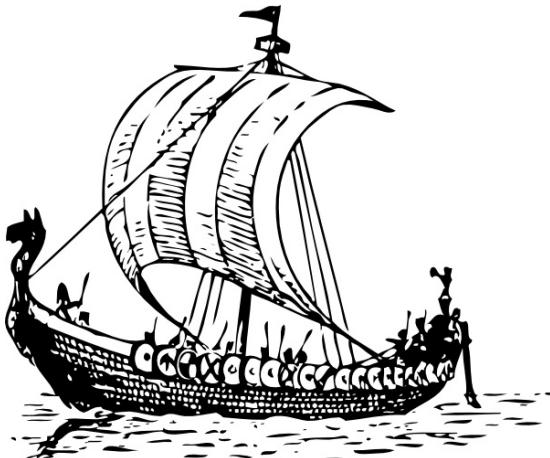
Date: 29 May 2018

New Moon Offering

Date: 15 May 2018

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!



- **Columcille Hike** – Sat., 19 May
- **Midsummer** – Sat., 23 Jun.
- **Kutztown Folk Festival** – Sat., 7 Jul.
- **FSH** – Thur-Sun, 16-19 Aug.
- **Haustblót** – Sat., 22 Sep.
- **Winter Nights** – Fri.-Sun., 12-14 Oct.
- **Krampusnacht** – Sat., 8 Dec.
- **Yule Celebration** – Sat., 5 Jan.

Help Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship teaches a variety of classes including our popular *Ásatrú 101* series. 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.com/donate/>

Follow Skylands On-line!

For more information about our tribe and upcoming events, please visit our website at
www.skylandsasatru.com

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

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.

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Edited by Donald van den Andel

We welcome submissions of essays, short stories, poetry, and artwork. Write to us at skylands@skylandsasatru.com. We would love to hear from you.

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