

Skylands Report



The e-newsletter of the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

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June 2018

A Visit to Columcille Megalith Park

Columcille Megalith Park is a wondrous place in eastern Pennsylvania that resulted from the work and dream of William H. Cohea, Jr. While visiting the Isle of Iona in 1967, Cohea had a dream involving standing stones. In 1975 he purchased the land that has become Columcille and began to realize his dream of standing stones in circles and menhirs (single standing stones). There is a primal energy that fills the park. Today there are over 80 standing stones, several woodland trails and various meditation sites including a bell tower and a chapel.

On the final Saturday of May, members of Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship and close friend of the tribe, Bob B. spent the afternoon at the park. We walked the trails and took in the beauty and spirituality that is unique to Columcille. Several members commented that specific locations would provide a powerful setting for a blót. Indeed,



Our Fellowship stands at the center of the Stone Circle of Columcille

certain locations seemed custom-made for such rituals with fire rings already in place and large rocks positioned perfectly to serve as an altar.

Our group visited the St. Columba Chapel named for a 6th century Irish monk. The chapel is a beautiful six-sided stone building with a large stone positioned at the center of the room.



Members of Skylands pose beneath "Thor's Gate"

Realizing the acoustics of the building was perfect for group chant, we asked Bob B. to lead us in a series of Rune Chants. Our voices echoed around the chamber and melded together in a powerful choir that emphasized the joy and power of the experience.

After leaving the park we traveled to a local Italian restaurant and spent the rest of the afternoon talking, laughing, and devouring "killer pizza," calzones, and mozzarella sticks.

As the afternoon came to an end, we said our farewells and set off to return to our normal lives, but we did so forever moved by the timeless spirit and mystery of the stones of Columcille. 

Sneak Peak: Class Schedule 2018-19

Education has always been one of the key initiatives of Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship. As such we plan to continue our *Ásatrú 101* series of classes, which are open to the general public this fall. We believe that such classes not only bolster the knowledge of our members but serve to enlighten the public about the religion of Ásatrú – the modern expression of the pre-Christian faith of northern and western Europe.

Here's a preliminary look at our planned class schedule.

Fall Semester

September 9: What is Ásatrú?

October 7: Introduction to the Norse Gods

November 11: Ritual in Ásatrú

December 9: Wheel of the Year:
Holidays in Asatru

Winter /Spring Semester

January 13: Introduction to the Runes

February 10: Runic Yoga

March 10: The Afterlife

April 14: Ragnarok



News from the Board

We have purchased a new tribal horn — and what a horn it is! The horn will make its debut at Midsummer and will be used both during our blót and symbol. We will also consecrate the horn during our event. May it serve our Fellowship well and help us to wend our way into timeless realms as we share together in elder pathways to might and main.



The Sacrifice of Odin by Lorenz Frolich 1895

Swearing Oaths: A Message from the *Prose Edda*

This month's feature article reveals practical insight about the importance of Oaths, and why we should make them with great care. It also begins the exploration of "hidden" messages that may be found within the text of Snorri Sturluson's Prose Edda. — Godi Don

While I often have vivid dreams, they are rarely useful or revealing, especially with regard to my spiritual faith, Ásatrú. It was therefore strange and exciting when I awoke this morning with a clear and practical explanation of a key story from our lore.

I have long believed that the authors of the Eddas obscured important messages through their use of poetic form. The mysteries that lay hidden beneath the surface of the texts are however difficult to discern. Authors who recommend that we not only read the lore, but familiarize ourselves with it to such a degree that it becomes internalized, recognize that only then will we begin to rightfully comprehend the depths and richness of our pre-Christian spirituality.



Giants seize Freyja. Illustration of Wagner's Das Rheingold by Arthur Rackham (1910)

The well-known episode that was made clear in my dream is recounted in Snorri's *Gylfaginning* when Gangleri inquires as to the origin of Odin's wondrous horse Sleipnir. The Aesir had just built Valhall when "a certain builder" arrived offering to craft a great wall around their hall in order to secure the Gods from assaults from both mountain-giants and frost-giants. In return for building such a fortification the builder demanded to take Freyja as his wife.

As the story goes, the Aesir agreed to the offer but only after making the terms more difficult by shortening the timeframe to complete the building from three seasons to one. They also stipulated "he was to receive from no

man help with the work.” To the Gods chagrin the builder and his stallion Svadilfaeri made tremendous progress in their work. With three days remaining to complete the task, only the entrance to the fortification remained unfinished. The Gods, now fretting over the payment of Freyja, threatened Loki with an “evil death” if he could not somehow cause the deal to be forfeited. The shape-shifting Loki transformed himself into a mare and lured the stallion away from his work. Ultimately the job was left incomplete in the allotted timeframe. The builder revealed himself to be a mountain-giant who was promptly slain by Thor. Loki would, some months later, give birth to an eight-legged foal, Sleipnir.

This fantastic tale is, beneath its surface, an explanation and a warning to believers about the importance of oaths and the dangers of leaving them unfulfilled. I had often wondered why the Gods agreed to the offer to have a wall built only to become concerned when it neared completion. The offer however did not originate in Asgard but rather with the builder who offered to perform the work. This



Loki lures Svadilfaeri by H.A. Guerber (1909)

builder not only made an oath to build the fortification but also asked the Gods for something in return. Heathens and Christians alike have been known to make oaths or promises to the Gods in the form of “I will do x for the God(s)” and in return “God(s) will do y for me.” Following this formula, Martin Luther, hero of the Reformation is reported to have called upon a Christian saint (oftentimes a stand-in or replacement for a God or Goddess of pre-Christianized Europe) during a tremendous lightning storm, “Save me Saint Anne, and I shall become a monk.” The storm dissipated and Luther promptly made his way to the monastery. The formula is a simple albeit dangerous one.

The tale of the builder and his horse is surely a sharp warning not to make oaths of this kind. The builder set a high price for completing the work of his oath – the Goddess Freyja herself. The episode reveals that the Gods may not “play fairly” in such circumstances and in fact may prevent someone from fulfilling an oath that should never have been made. The failure of not delivering on this oath was death through a hammer blow from Thor himself:

“Then [Thor] paid the builder’s wages and it wasn’t the sun and moon, instead he stopped him from living in Giantland and struck the first blow so that his skull was shattered into fragments and sent him down beneath Niflhel.”

When I awoke from my dream, I reached for my copy of the *Prose Edda* that I keep on my nightstand. In the two pages that it takes Snorri to tell this tale, I was astonished to see the number of references to oaths:

“But at their agreement there had been mighty witnesses invoked and many *oaths*, for the giants did not think it safe to be among the Aesir without a guarantee of safety...”

“And [Loki], being afraid, swore *oaths* that he would manage things so the builder would forfeit his payment...”

“But when the Aesir saw for certain that it was a mountain-giant that they had there, then the *oaths* were disregarded and they called upon Thor and he came in a trice and the next thing was that Miolnir was raised aloft.”

And finally Snorri quotes from *Voluspa*:

“*Oaths* were gone back on, pledged words and promises, all the solemn vows that passed between them.”

As Ásatrúar we take our oaths very seriously. Many kindreds and tribes have special procedures for those who choose to make an oath during *symbel* so that failure to complete what was promised does not impact the *hamingja* (luck) of the group. Let Snorri’s tale of oath-making and oath-breaking remind all of the consequences of inappropriate oaths and the punishment for leaving, even appropriate, oaths unfulfilled. 🏴

6 May 2018

Tribal Milestones

Lisa C. celebrates her birthday on 16 June. Congratulations Lisa!

Bob C. celebrates one year as an Associate member 24 June. Congratulations Bob!

Jeremy G. celebrates one year since his Oath of Membership 24 June. Congratulations Jeremy!

Sam B. celebrates two years as Associate member 25 June. Congratulations Sam!



Skylands June Calendar

Midsummer Celebration

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship will be celebrating the official start of summer in true Germanic style! This event is limited to members of Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship and special invited guests. A \$15 donation is requested to cover the costs of the event. Our action-packed agenda includes our annual Kubb competition, Thing, the Great Midsummer Auction, a blot to Balder, a Seidr working, a feast, and Symbel. You won't want to miss this one!

Date: Saturday, 23 May 2018

Time: 1:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Location: Middletown, NY

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 Runic Yoga. Following on our introduction to the Runes, we will consider the ideas of the 20th Century Rune Magicians and their work with forming the Runes with various postures. We will practice the forms as well as consider the history of Runic Yoga.

Date: Saturday, 2 June 2018

Time: 02:00 PM to 03:30 PM

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

Full Moon Offering

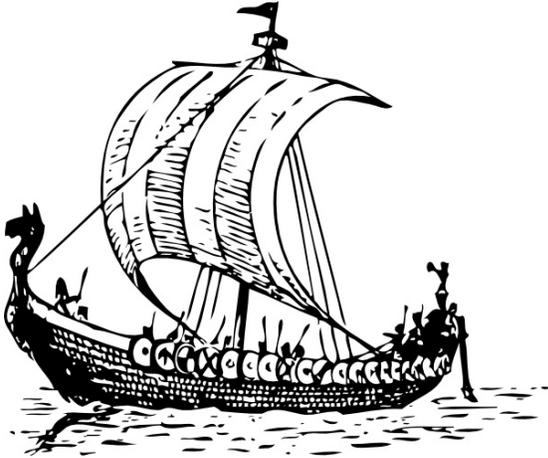
Date: 28 June 2018

New Moon Offering

Date: 13 June 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!



- **Midsummer** – Sat., 23 Jun.
- **Kutztown Folk Festival** – Sat., 7 Jul.
- **FSH (hosted by Irminfolk)** – Thurs-Sun, 16-19 Aug.
- **Scanfest** – Sun. 2 Sep.
- **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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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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