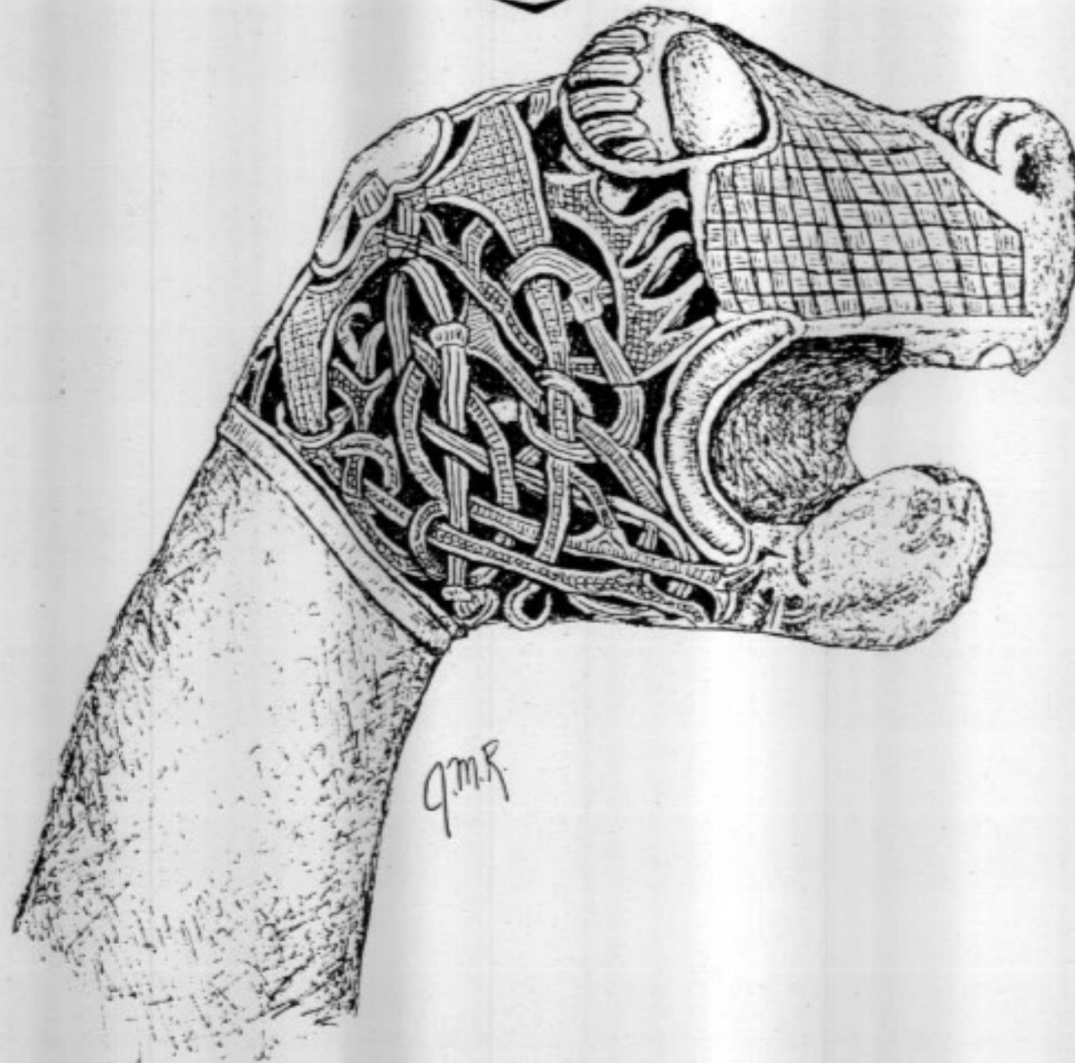




THE



RUNESTONE



THE RUNESTONE is a journal of the ancient Norse religion and is dedicated to the revival of that religion as epitomized during the Viking Age, and to the values of courage, freedom, and individuality which are associated with it.

THE RUNESTONE is the official journal of the Ásatrú Free Assembly and is published quarterly. Subscriptions are \$5.00 per year in the U.S. and Canada, and \$6.00 per year overseas (airmail). Write to Ásatrú Free Assembly, 1766 East Avenue, Turlock, CA 95380. Please make checks payable to Ásatrú Free Assembly.

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September - November 1980

September 21 - This is the festival day of Winter Finding, celebrated at the Autumn Equinox. Day and night are of equal length now and we continue the chilling path to Júl, or the Winter Solstice. In our tradition it is in honor of Freya.

October 8 - Today is a Day of Remembrance in honor of Erik the Red. Everyone remembers his son Leif, who discovered America, but the old sire himself is much neglected. Erik clung to the religion of his ancestors despite the defection of his son and the conversion of his wife, who then refused to live with her heathen husband. Nevertheless, he allowed her to build a small church in the Greenland colony--as long as it was so situated that he could not see it from the house! Praise Thor for such men.

October 9 - Leif Erikson Day, a secular holiday in the United States declared by President Johnson in the mid 1960's. Some cities have celebrations on Scandinavian themes on this day, in which Odinists are encouraged to participate.

October 11 - Winter Nights marked the beginning of winter in the old Icelandic calendar, and always falls on the Saturday between October 11-17. Winter Nights celebrates the bounty of the harvest and is held in honor of the goddess Freya and her subsidiary spirits called, collectively, the *disir*. These beings are responsible for fertility and growth of living things.

October 31 - Variously called Samhain or Halloween, this is an ancient harvest festival with overtones of somberness, of an awareness of the departed dead. As Nature slips deeper into winter, the chill in the air rubs off on our souls while we await the joy of Júl and conserve our resources, spiritual and physical, awaiting renewal. In the revived Vanir-faith, we call this festival *Vanadis*--after the goddess Freya, upon whose conserving and preserving aspect we call.

November 11 - Feast of the Einherjar, when we honor those dead kinsmen who have sacrificed their lives for their family and tribe. The Einherjar, the "chosen ones," are the heroes who feast in Odin's Hall, having been carried there by the valkyries.



## Announcements

The AFA Land Fund has gotten off to a slow start. We want to remind you of the importance of this project, for it will give our faith a permanent center for religious activities, seminars, meetings, and future Althings. We've had a couple of very interesting offers--but we can't make a move on them because we don't have the cash. Once we have the land we can use it in a variety of ways to more than pay for the original expenditure. So help us in our determination to establish, on land of our own, a new holy place for Asatrú! Your contributions are tax-exempt, remember!

The Varangian Guard is our warrior fraternity, made up of men who are interested in the Warrior Way, to include veterans, military personnel, and others. The Guard has its own publication, *Wolf Coats*, which is \$4.00 for four issues. Inquiries from interested persons are welcome.

People of the Lord and Lady is our emerging group dedicated to the Vanir-faith. For a better idea of what this sub-group is all about, see the seasonal festivals article in this issue. "Norse Wicca"? Sort of--with differences!

The Committee on Odinst Social Concerns is the AFA sub-group dealing with social issues from the standpoint of Asatrú--things like gun control, inflation, care of the aged, reverse discrimination ("affirmative action"), and the retribalization of people of Northern European descent.

The C.O.S.C. will soon be starting its own publication. Write us for more information.

Peter Seymour dropped off a few of his fantastic armor, weapons, and ritual items catalogs while he was visiting us. So we have a few (about eight) of these catalogs for \$3.50 each. If you're into weapons and armor--of almost any period, not just Viking--you need one of these! He also makes Norse and Germanic ritual items--shrines, statues, sacrificial bowls, drinking horns, Thor's hammer amulets in several styles, cape fasteners, brooches--you name it!

The world's largest Viking museum exhibit will be in New York City starting in October, at the Metropolitan Museum! This has been in London since June, and is unique in that it is a one-shot affair assembled temporarily from the museums of many European countries.

Free Poet Gambrell! Poet is a long-time member of the Asatrú Free Assembly. Currently he is in prison for murder--but unjustly so. He is a scapegoat--a victim of minority legal and political pressure. If you would like to help this kinsman, write us. A few stamps for postage would be nice. Or you can write to Poet. His address is: Michael R. Gambrell  
#89071  
Box BMP  
Petros, TN 37845

A SPECIAL THANKS TO JEANNE-MARIE ROUSSEY FOR THE ILLUSTRATION ON OUR COVER!

## ALTHING - 1980

The first Althing of the Asatrú Free Assembly was held June 28-30 in Lafayette, California--and it was a success that speaks well for the potential of our movement.

Our goal was not so much "unity" in the sense of conformity, as harmony--using our diversity to further our common objectives. We succeeded in that goal. Some participants were motivated by the strictly religious and metaphysical aspects of Asatrú, others were there because they identify with the social, political and ethnic ramifications of our faith. Despite these differences we were able to work together with only a minimum of friction, each faction listening to and learning from the others.

Peter Seymour traveled from London to be with us, and this worthy *goði* brought along a selection of Thor's hammers, brooches, cape pins and other jewelry that hints at his expertise as a craftsman and armorer. He spoke to us on the status of Odinism in England, and described their use of pageant and show groups to propagandize for the faith while entertaining the public with mock battles and other historical reenactments. He set us to thinking that such techniques might be workable in this country, where the Viking mystique also holds the interest of the public, once they are exposed to it. Peter hopes to bring more of his comrades with him for next year's Althing, which should greatly boost liaison with our English co-religionists.

Peter also read a message of greeting and well-wishes from John Yeowell, of the Central Council of the Odinic Rite, formerly the Committee for the Restoration of the Odinic Rite, or Odinitist Committee. We're going to try to have John with us next year.

Edred Thorsson, scholar and rune expert, flew in from Austin, Texas and presented two classes on runes that added tremendously to the event. The first class was a basic introduction to runes, and the second was a workshop in runic meditation techniques. Although the latter was mainly for the purpose of showing ways in which a person could meditate alone, the results were remarkable and more than one rationalist achieved a most unexpected contact with the deeper levels of the psyche.

David James journeyed from Connecticut to share with us his metaphysical expertise and information on what Oak, Ash and Thorn, of which he is director, is up to. Their work has been so significant that I've devoted space to describing it elsewhere in this issue.

In addition to the powerful presentations of these three luminaries, Stephen McNallen presented classes on seasonal festivals and on the spiritual implications of heredity and the clan mystique.

The 29th was the busiest day of the Althing, including classes, sword and shield demonstrations by friends who are members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, and culminating in a Viking feast complete with roast pig, freely-flowing mead, and an axe-throwing contest. Isaac Moll, our Washington *goði*, entertained on the bagpipes. No-one who was there will soon forget it.

Next year we're going to do it again--with more guests (overseas visitors and domestic), more classes and workshops, and more people. If you missed this one, start planning to be with us next June!



## ORGANIZING FOR TOMORROW



The current structure of the Asatru Free Assembly has served us well - until now. But we have grown both in size and in an understanding of our potential, and we find ourselves at a point where we must adapt or fossilize. Our choices are two: We can continue to exist indefinitely as a small group whose primary role is to publish a newsletter and hold interesting meetings, or we can accept the challenge of the age and seek greater things. If we choose the first we can continue to exist for years in the background, but eventually vitality would give way to dry rot, the spirit of the age would seek a better vessel, and we would be one more empty husk littering the trail of our people's migration. But if we choose the second course we can play a role equal to our noblest dreams - and usher in a new era in the process.

Six months ago I stated my intention of making Asatru a real force in the affairs of the world. I restate that intention now: Not for one minute can we be satisfied to see this movement subsisting on a spare change, spare time, back room basis. We must dream greater dreams and in realizing those dreams we must think and act fearlessly, on a grand scale.

It is for this that the changes below are offered.

FIRST we need a new role for the skeppslag. The skeppslag has been almost exclusively a body of people who come together for religious study and ritual. This is good, but it is not enough. It must change in accordance with our new understanding of our role and of the particular situation with which we are faced. Henceforth, the skeppslag must become the vehicle for the retribalization of our people. It must become a tight group of Asatruarar (Odinists) bound together by friendship, mutual respect, and the bonds of kinship. It will be an artificial extended family with a multitude of functions - primarily religious, but also social, psychological, defensive, and financial. It must become a key "in-group" which offers members a way of overcoming the alienation of the city, serving as a spiritual refuge in a hostile world, and supporting the member in times of material and financial trouble. There are a multitude of programs that this artificial kin group will sponsor - everything from group food buying power to rape prevention classes to escort services for elderly members in crime-ridden areas. This new skeppslag will offer its members tremendous advantages, but admittance to this group will not be casual. Active skeppslag membership is a privilege, not a right. Members may not always see eye-to-eye, because they are individuals. Unity does not mean uniformity. But they will take their kinship obligations extremely seriously and their loyalty to each other must be beyond doubt.

Again - the skeppslag will be an artificial extended family with all the benefits and obligations that implies. But the skeppslag will in no way replace or supercede the member's biological family. On the contrary, membership in the skeppslag will actively serve to enhance and strengthen these bonds. Nor, lest there be any misunderstanding, will the new skeppslag be some sort of commune; the difference is that between communalism and community. In fact, members may live miles apart and with full privacy - but the spirit of "One for all and all for one" will be there.

SECOND, although we have been using the term skeppslag because it is familiar to most of our regular readers, that word is now outmoded. It has served its purpose and we must move on. Originally it meant "ship's crew", a legal subdivision in ancient Iceland. It denotes territory more than it does an organic grouping of people as such. I propose a new word which precisely describes the function of the extended family and which is linguistically rooted in our culture. That word is kindred.

THIRD, the enhanced role of the kindred as opposed to the lesser role of the old skeppslag demands a new membership classification. For a long while we have enrolled members - Associate Members, the form says - primarily as a way in which people can express their special devotion to Asatru. Those who have been admitted to this category of membership will retain it but no more such memberships will be accepted; that category will be frozen, those individuals will have the distinction of a unique status - as trailblazers, as "old fighters". Our new class of members will be either people who are actively involved in kindreds or lone members equally committed to supporting the Asatru Free Assembly. Those who are accepted as members of a kindred will donate one percent of their gross income to the AFA. Of this one percent, nine-tenths will be kept by the kindred so that members can directly benefit from it, and one-tenth (i.e., one-tenth of one percent of his or her gross income) will be used to support the organization as a whole. Members who are not affiliated with a kindred will apply the entire one percent of their income to the furtherance of the AFA.

We realize that one percent of a member's gross income is tiny in comparison with the amounts demanded or suggested by many churches. Several churches require ten times that amount, a full tithe. Other religious bodies, like the Black Muslims, expect much more of their members. No Odinist would take a back seat to Christians or to Black Muslims, needless to say, but we want to stress that we value our members' creativity, devotion, and kinship more than their pocketbooks - hence the low fee (or as they called it in the old days, hof-toll). Of course, dedicated individuals may donate more if they wish.

Membership in this class - let us call it the General Member Class, to separate it from the now-frozen Associate Member rolls - enables one to participate in the affairs of the AFA and to gain all the advantages that involves. Combined with acceptance by a kindred (which as always is a privilege, not a right) it enables full involvement in the renewed life of our people. By opening this class of membership we also provide the AFA with the money we need to finance our many activities at the local, national, and global level - everything from candles used in local kindred rituals to the purchase of land for a religious colony to the carrying of the word of Asatru to all our scattered brothers and sisters.

Three elements of reorganization - a change in the role of the local group (until now the skeppslag) to make it the vehicle of a renewed people and of total religious/social/material support; a new name "kindred", for this local group; a new concept of membership. These three changes will, very quickly, elevate us out of the religious minor league. Once again our faith will become a force to be reckoned with, and with that resurgence will come the rebirth of our people and culture. The challenge is before us now. Let us accept it! Inquiries from our readers who are interested in personally participating in this active structure are earnestly solicited.



#### A SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR THE VANIR-FAITH

In our reconstruction of the Vanir-faith--that portion of Asatru which deals with fertility and with the agricultural deities Frey, Freya, Nerthus and Njord, rather than with Odin, Thor, and the rest of the AEsir--we realize the supreme importance of the changing seasons. To restore the worship of the Vanir to the popularity it so richly deserves, it is necessary to examine the old festivals carefully and, using a combination of recorded scholarly sources and instinct, to compose a consistent calendar for those who wish to give devotion to those deities. This work was recently done, and tentative results are ready for examination by our readers. The results show patterns--and provide the basis for religious and philosophical insights--which were not foreseen when the study was begun.

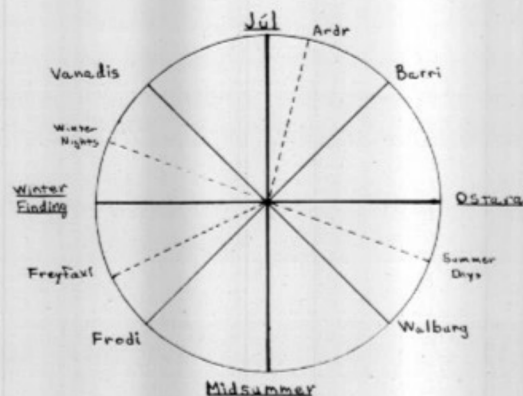
We begin by considering the year to be a circle or wheel as do other religious systems, such as Wicca. Around the circumference of this Wheel of the Year we will place the various festival days we wish to designate.

Looking over the festivals or holy days, we find that these are of three basic kinds. Some--the solstices and equinoxes--are based on the Sun. Another type of festival day falls about midway between these solar dates; these are usually called "cross-quarter days" in Wiccan lore. A third group appears to be uniquely Norse.

In order to readily appreciate the pattern that emerges, it is necessary to take them by type.

#### SOLAR FESTIVALS

Jól (Yule) - December 22 - The winter solstice, when nights are longest and the Sun is at its most southerly point. Jól, we know from written sources, was sacred to the god Frey and hence is masculine in nature. This is the time of dormancy, and symbolic of the seed, and the darkness of night. Jól captures the potential of spring, but the realization of renewed life is still far off. At Jól we celebrate the clan as a time-transcending unity, and the turning point of the Sun in the sky.



Wheel of the Year

Putting Jǫl at the top position on our wheel, and going one-quarter around the wheel, we come to

Ostara - March 21 - The Spring equinox. Day and night are now of equal length as a result of the gradual lengthening of the daylight which began (at first unnoticed) just after Jǫl. We know little of Norse springtime celebrations in ancient times, but Ostara, whose name was corrupted to Easter, was an ancient Germanic goddess. From this, and from the general theme of this holy day, we see that this festival has a feminine nature to it. Where Jǫl was the seed, Ostara is the flower, and where Jǫl was the night, so Ostara is the dawn. In fact, her very name is related to the dawn. Her festival is one of rebirth and regeneration. For our purposes, we may consider Ostara to be another name for Freya.

Traveling another quarter of the way around the wheel's circumference, we find

Midsummer - June 22 - The summer solstice. This is the exact opposite of the winter solstice, for now the Sun is in its northernmost position and the days are at their longest, the nights at their shortest. All the connotations of Midsummer are strongly masculine--Scandinavia has its proudly phallic Midsummer poles, and the Wiccans sing of "The Spear to the Cauldron, the Lance to the Grail, Man to Woman, Sun to Earth." In the Chinese system, Midsummer is YANG, or of active, masculine connotation. We have moved from the flower of Spring to the fruit of Summer; from Dawn to Noontide.

Taking one more ninety-degree turn about the circle we come to

Winter Finding - September 21 - The autumn equinox. Again, day and night are equal--due this time to shortening days. The final harvest is brought in and Nature begins to prepare for the long slide into the dormancy of winter. We do not have a lot of material on how, or if, the Norsemen celebrated this festival, but a festival close to it (which we'll consider later) was in honor of Freya and the *dísir*, feminine spirits connected with fertility and the life processes. Because of this and the general theme of Winter Finding--which is conserving and in-gathering for winter's rigors--we can say that this festival is of a generally feminine nature.

We've gone around the Wheel of the Year once, now, in placing these festivals. Already a pattern emerges--that of alternating male-female polarity. But let's go further and look at the second group of festivals, those called the cross-quarter days.

February 2 - Known as Candlemas in some non-Christian traditions, this is the date of the old Lupercalia, or feast of Pan. Other traditions link it with the recovery of Mother Earth after having given birth to the Sun at the winter solstice. The former attribution is closer to the Indo-European traditions in which our own Norse beliefs are a part, and so we consider this to be a basically masculine festival. The masculine aspect is further strengthened by looking at the invocation used in Wiccan covens of the Alexandrian tradition, which calls upon the "Dread Lord of Death and Resurrection." On the calendar, Candlemas falls close to an old Scandinavian day called Charming of the Plow--and, in terms of sexual symbolism, plowing would be considered a masculine activity.

Still, we Norse folk can hardly be happy with a name like Candlemas--so I propose instead the name *Barri*, which means "barley." The connection here is with the story from the Eddas telling of Frey's wooing of Gerð, and how their union was consummated after nine days in a field of barley. This myth should be central to this whole season, as it deals with planting of the seed, symbolically and in actuality.

April 30 - May Eve, or Walpurgisnacht, falls about halfway between Ostara and Midsummer. This is the Celtic Beltane, possibly dedicated to the god Belenus although elements of goddess worship also may have been present. For a most important clue to the sexual polarity of this festival, let's look again at the word *Walpurgisnacht*. Walburg was an ancient Germanic goddess. Christianity obscured this by invoking a Saint Walburga, who supposedly was a Sussex-born woman saint who moved to Germany and died there in about 780 C.E. So May Eve seems to be a goddess-dominated festival, and we can call it Walburg.

July 31 - August Eve, known in some traditions as Lammás. This is also the Celtic festival of Lughnasadh, an ancient harvest festival which has been called the Feast of Bread, since up until recent times it has been the custom to bake a huge loaf in the shape of a man which is then divided into pieces and scattered in the field. Supposedly this represents the sacrifice of the divine priest-king for fertility. The overall influence is masculine. Our name for this festival is *Froði*, after a very early Scandinavian king who brought peace and prosperity to the land. His name translates as "fruitful" or "luxurious" and this is another appellation of the god Frey.

October 31 - Halloween, or the Celtic festival of Samhain. Most descriptions of this festival dwell on the idea of spirits of the dead roaming about, and give few plain indications of gender. We note, though, that it comes only a couple of weeks after an Icelandic festival honoring Freya and the female spirits called *dísir*, and that the theme is one of conserving and warding of resources. This being the case, we suggest that this festival be held among Vanir-worshippers as sacred to Freya and that it be called "Vanadis", one of her names meaning "Lady of the Vanir." In the grim aspect of this season we may recall that Freya claims half those who fall in battle, thus linking her with the world of the dead.

Again, we note an alternating masculine-feminine, god-goddess emphasis in these festivals.

Finally we come to a group of festivals of peculiarly Norse character:

Charming of the Plow - This old feast day has typically been celebrated on January 3 in recent times. As it deals with plowing, with all the sexual symbolism implied, and with making the Earth bear fruit, it has a strong masculine aspect. We call it *arðr*, the Old Norse word for plow.

Sumarsdag - The first day of summer by old Icelandic reckoning, this fell on the Thursday between April 9 and April 15. In order to best express the theme of rebirth associated with this time of year, in our reconstructed Vanir-faith we have made this day to be in honor of Freya.

Freyfaxi - In ancient times there was a harvest festival held toward the end of August. One feature of this festival seems to have been horse fights, although by the later Viking days this lost its earlier sacred character and became simple amusement. As the stallion is the animal sacred to Frey, it seems fairly certain that this festival was in the god's honor. We have references in the sagas to horses especially dedicated to Frey--Olaf Tryggvason defiled one such animal by riding it, and *Hrafnel's Saga* deals with a priest of Frey in Iceland who had such a horse. In both instances the horse was named Freyfaxi, or "Frey's Mane." This would be an excellent name for this festival in our modern revival of the Vanir-faith.

We do not know exactly when in late August this festival was celebrated in the old days, but the last Saturday in August is appropriate today--if for no other reason than that modern job-holding Pagans often end up celebrating holy days on the nearest weekend to the day in question, anyway.

Vetrnaetr - Winter Nights is the first day of winter in the old Icelandic calendar, and falls on the Saturday between October 10-16. It is a distinctly female festival, noted in historical sources as being in honor of Freya and the female tutelary spirits called the *dísir*, of which she is the leader. The theme of this festival seems to be identical to that of Winter Finding, and of Samhein/Vanadis.

Digesting all the above information, we find that the pattern in all three kinds of holy days is the same. Male and female deities alternately preside over each festival. Moreover, if we divide the Wheel of the Year into quarters (making a Sunwheel of it) we see that all the sacred days in any one quarter are of the same sexual polarity. It is as though, for example, the masculine festival of Jól presides over or "controls" the polarity of the entire quarter which follows. Likewise, when Ostara rolls around, its feminine character presides over all the festivals on the Wheel until Midsummer, when the polarity again changes.

The cross-quarter days and the purely Norse festivals largely duplicate each other in function. August Eve/Froði is essentially the same as Freyfaxi, Samhain/Vanadis is functionally the same as Winter Nights, and so on. Norse purists would perhaps insist on celebrating the Scandinavian ones and forgetting about those which derive from Celtic or Wiccan usage. This may be justified in the extreme northern nations, where the climatic conditions make such a scheme logical. However, most of us today live in countries and climes where the cross-quarter system makes more sense, seasonally. Besides--in a broader sense, Asatru cannot neglect those ancient kinsmen of ours, the Germanic tribes which lived on the continent and in the British Isles. The strictly Scandinavian conditions did not apply to them any more than to us, and the timing of their seasonal festivals would have been similarly affected. We see echoes of a Germanic influence in the name of Walpurgisnacht, for example, as previously noted.

The cross-quarter days were observed by the Celts and in some cases by the Greeks and Romans. We must remember the Indo-European roots of all these peoples. The Celts in particular were closely related to the Germanics, nearly identical in physical description and very similar in culture and value system. To cast out the cross-quarter days, except for Asatruarar in extreme northern climates, would be a mistake.

This, then, is our modern Vanir calendar, partially a reconstruction of what may have been the essence of the ancient system, and partly an idealization of what such a system should be to meet our present-day needs. It can be a valuable tool in restoring to our people their native religion, and in particular to reviving much deserved devotion to Frey and Freya.

Hail to the Life-Givers!



## Woman of the Mounds

by Paul Edwin Zimmer

MORTAL AND IMMORTAL LOVERS TRAPPED IN AN ANCIENT FEUD...

For generations of men there had been war between  
Clea Corneo and...Cloerloth...for the 817-818  
do not die, none in battle, and the hatred of men  
flows through the ages, passing from father  
to son...

\* Introduction by EMMETT L. BALTON  
\*Largely illustrated by Harry Blair

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OAK, ASH and THORN. . .

. . . is a group coordinated by David James which should interest every reader of *The Runestone*. Its self-description, in a recent issue of their publication *Boreas*, is a "collection of people interested in the indigenous cultural heritage of Northern Europe." Included within Oak, Ash and Thorn is a small group called Oakrune Circle, whose self-description is "high church' Odinist." So while the overall interests of the organization include Odinism, they also include Celtic knotwork, Scottish folk dance, and bardic poetry--among other things.

The latest issue of *Boreas* (\$5.00 per year, payable to David James, from P.O. Box 1182, New Haven, CT 06505) contains the first of a series of articles on runes (starting with the ↑ rune), a piece on the Morris dance, a May ritual, a recipe, reviews, and other useful material. The style is light yet literate, and is eminently readable. David contributes a lot of the material, as does Alice Rhoades (who also draws the birds. See a copy and you'll understand).

What more can we say? We recommend them highly. Drop them a line. Better yet, subscribe to *Boreas*.

### RAVENS' FEAST

The black plain was filled with ravens  
As is every field after the reddening of spears.  
Many Normans had kissed the thin-lipped ax,  
But not enough.

William's archers had pierced Harold's eye,  
And Anglia fell to Normandy.  
Now stone towers grew everywhere,  
And Angles were ruled by strangers.

Angle-speech gained strange words,  
And customs slowly changed.  
But bards forgot not Harold,  
No matter that ravens feast deeply.

- Allen Hooper

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## THE BATTLE WITH THE SKOLDUNGS

*From the viking saga of Hrolf Kraki, Icelandic, late 1300's*

*Translated and edited by Jeffrey R. Redmond*

King Hrolf and his champion warriors lived peacefully at their stronghold Leire, in Denmark. No one attacked them, and all of his vassal kings paid him homage by giving their tribute--including Horvarth, his brother-in-law. But one day it happened that Queen Skulda spoke to King Horvarth, her husband, and sighed deeply.

"It does not please me that we must pay tribute to King Hrolf, and bear his oppression, and it must not continue that you remain his subject any longer!"

"It would be best for us to tolerate it, as the rest of them do," held Horvarth. "Let sleeping dogs lie."

"What a worthless creature you are!" she shrieked at him. "You are willing to bear every kind of shame which is done to you!"

"It is not possible to fight against King Hrolf," he said, "For no man living dares raise a sword against him."

"You are all worthless creatures!" she screamed. "There is no heart in any of you! If nothing is ever ventured, then nothing is ever gained. One simply cannot know until the thing is attempted, whether King Hrolf is immune to blows, and if his champions are, too. The situation is now at such a state that I believe he will prove bare and empty of victory. I should think it no bad thing to attempt, and even though he is related to me, I shall not spare him. That is why he is always at home. He himself suspects that he would not see a victory. I shall now devise a plan, and hope it will sink home. I will use witchcrafts of every kind in my attempt to vanquish him."

Skulda was a great sorceress. She had come from elves on her mother's side, and because of this King Hrolf and his champions were to pay dearly. She outlined her plan.

"For the beginning, I will send men to King Hrolf, to ask him if he would permit us to not pay any tribute at all, for the next three years. Then to pay him all of it at once--as much as he is correctly owed. On the whole I think it possible that this trick will work, and if it progresses, we must keep it a secret amongst ourselves."

Messengers passed between them, just as the Queen requested. King Hrolf agreed to the tribute payment, just as it was requested. Meanwhile, Skulda was assembling all of the men who could give the best account of themselves, along

with all the ruffraff from the bordering lands. This treachery was kept so well hidden, that King Hrolf knew nothing about it. Neither did his champions get the slightest suspicion of it, as the greatest witchcraft and sorcery were used. Skulda employed the most powerful incantations to vanquish King Hrolf, her brother. In league with her were elves and other evil creatures so numerous that no mortal man could withstand them.

King Hrolf and his champions held great revelry in their fortress, Leire. They played every kind of game known to men, with both courtesy and skill. Each of them had a mistress for his pleasure. Meanwhile the Skoldung army of King Horvath and Skulda was fully ready, and they marched on Leire, and arrived at Yule time. King Hrolf had made great preparations to be ready for the Yule celebration, and his men drank great quantities on the Yule eve. Horvarth and Skulda set up their seige tents outside the stronghold. They were very large and long, and well fitted out. There were many wagons, and all of them were stuffed with armor and weapons.

King Hrolf paid no heed to any of this. He was more concerned with his abundant lavishness, his pomp and pride, and with all the noble bravery which filled his chest--with feeding all those who were gathered there, and with spreading his fame far and wide to the very ends of the earth. He had everything on hand which might increase the honor of a king of this world. But King Hrolf and his champions never bothered to worship and respect the gods at any time. Instead they trusted in their own strengths and abilities.

One champion, Halti the Generous, went to the house where his mistress lived. He could clearly see that things were not of peaceful intent in the Skoldung camp of Horvarth. Yet, he did nothing about it--not so much as even raising an eyebrow. Instead, he laid down with his mistress, who was the fairest of women. When he had been there awhile, he suddenly sprang to his feet, and asked the woman, "Which to you is the better, two at twenty-two, or one at eighty?"

"Two at twenty-two are better than old fellows at eighty," she answered.

"You whore! You shall pay for those words!" cried Halti, and going up to her he bit off her nose.

"Blame it all on me if anyone comes to blows over you. Yet, I think most men will think you no great treasure at all from now on."

"You used me ill," she wept, "and not as I deserved!"

"One cannot keep track of everything," replied Halti.

He then took up his weapons, for he could see that the area all around the

stronghold was surrounded by men in armor, with their battle standards all set up. He realized that it was useless for them to keep trying to hide from themselves any longer, now that hostilities were soon to be at hand. He made for the hall where King Hrolf was seated with his men.

"Arise, Lord King, for the enemy is at the gates, and there is greater need to fight than to be fondling women!" he cried. "I think the gold in your hall will not be added to from any tribute of Skulda's, your sister. She has the grim heart of the Skoldungs, indeed! This is no petty bunch, with their hard swords and weapons of war, and they are marching all around the stronghold with their swords drawn! King Horvarth is not here to have friendly business with you. So, get up now, all you men, and bid a quick farewell to your mistresses. A different prospect now awaits you, and you must make yourselves ready for what is now going to come. Up all you men, in haste, and arm yourselves!"

Then King Hrolf sprang up, and fearlessly cried, "Let us partake of that drink which is best, and we will drink before fighting and be merry! We will show by this what men we are, Hrolf's champions! And strive only that our valor never be forgotten. For here are assembled the greatest and bravest of champion warriors, from all the lands around. Let it be known to Horvarth and Skulda, and to their "heroes," that we are first drinking to make us merry, and then we are coming out and collecting our tribute!"

This was done as the King commanded.

"King Hrolf, my brother, is not like any other," exclaimed Skulda. "Such men are the greatest loss. But our fight must be to the finish, nonetheless."

Such greatness was there in King Hrolf, that he was praised by both friend and foe alike.

King Hrolf sprang up from the high seat, where he had been drinking awhile before, together with all his champions. They left the good drink behind, and were out of doors in an instant. Just as soon as they came outside, a great struggle began. King Hrolf himself drove forward with his standards, and his champions too, on both sides of him, who were not few by the count of heads, though their total sum was but little.

There were great blows on helmet and shield, and many a sword and spear was seen flashing through the air. There were so many corpses that the entire battlefield was littered.

The fight grew fast and furious, and nothing could withstand King Hrolf and his champions. King Hrolf dealt great blows with his sword "Skofnung" that were overwhelming. They fell heavily upon King Horvarth's host, who fell in

heaps. King Horvarth and his men saw that a huge bear attacked them in front of King Hrolf's men, and that it was always near the King. It killed more men with a blow from its mighty paw, than did five of the King's champions. Spears and arrows bounced off of it, and it beat down both men and horses in King Horvarth's host. All that came within reach were crunched in its teeth, and great alarm arose and spread through King Horvath's ranks. However, the bear suddenly disappeared from King Hrolf's host, and the battle began to turn against them.

Queen Skulda sat in her black tent on her witches' scaffold, and did not use any of her magic trickery so long as the bear was with King Hrolf's host. But now there came a change as great as nightfall after daylight. King Hrolf's men saw an enormous bear suddenly attacking them from out of King Horvarth's ranks. It was no less than a full grown ox in size, and as gray as a wolf in color. It had bristles like arrows, and was filled with such evil that it slew King Hrolf's men in multitudes.

King Hrolf defended himself bravely and well, with greater courage than any man had known before. They went at him hard and fast, and a ring was thrown around him by the best of Horvarth's and Skulda's host. Skulda now came to the battle, and anxiously pressed her evil followers to attack King Hrolf. She noticed that his champions were not nearby to him, then. The King's entire bodyguard had been felled, and none of them survived. Most of his champions were fatally wounded, and began to fall on top of each other. King Hrolf staggered out from behind a wall of shields that had been erected around him, exhausted. King Hrolf fell there, along with all of his champions, and died gloriously. Such a great slaughter had been made there that it was indescribable.

King Horvarth fell with all of his men--except for a few who survived with Skulda. She took over King Hrolf's lands, and ruled them harshly. A burial mound was erected for King Hrolf, and his sword "Skofnung" was set beside him. Each champion also had a mound with a weapon beside him, as well.

Thus ends the story of Hrolf Kraki, the son of Helgi, and his champions.







## MOOT POINT

## LETTERS

Waes thu, McNallen, hal!

On reading the letter of J. F. Mayer in the Ostara issue of *The Runestone* I realized that a very important point had finally been brought up: How are we to revitalize the religion of the North, Asatrú? M. Mayer makes a basic error when he assumes that the Norse religion is only preserved in the Eddas, and that the Eddas themselves are very late in composition. The Norse religion has been preserved in countless ways; from observations made about it by Classical writers such as Tacitus, Caesar and Plutarch; through folk-tales and folk-wisdom that has been passed on from pre-Christian times; through archaeology and toponymy; and through a vast body of Germanic literature of which the Eddas are only a small part. As to the date of the Elder Edda, and parts of the Snorra Edda, one would do very well to read Prof. Lee M. Hollander's "Recent Work and Views on the Poetic Edda," *Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 35, May, 1963, pp 101-109. Much of the Eddas is as old as any Viking could want, coming as it does from the Migration age, the Vendel period, and the Viking age.

M. Mayer's basic point is well taken, however; we must not make a caricature of the old ways. Your reply is reasonable and I accept it almost without reservation. I would add that we must be extremely careful. We might well take several lessons from the various British and Gallic "Druid" movements of the past century or so: many of them devolved into groups of men brandishing false beards, burning mock wicker sacrifices, and in receipt of cryptic messages from the moon goddess(es). That must not happen to Odinism. I have noticed a tendency towards such things, like a guide to holding a Viking Ship funeral with a model ship, a tray of lighter fluid, and a dark room, as is found in *The Religion of Odin, A Handbook*. I do not doubt that the individuals who wrote the ship funeral plan were well meaning or serious, rather, I wonder if they have not had a bit too much Francis Ford Coppola and too little of the Havamal. As we must not devolve into Eddolatry (as M. Mayer puts it), neither must we become a Northern Knights of Columbus.

That is not to say, however, that we should be some bland group of high-minded deists, or that we should be anything that any one man desires. We must merely be careful in the exercise of our faith, moving cautiously, and not letting our rituals (if any) approach mummery. As one true believer, Sam Three Arrows, said:

Truth is not known like a dog who barks in the night;  
it is more like the unexpected sound in the woods  
that must be cautiously identified after hard thinking.

-Jace Crouch

Worthy Einar Priestbani,

Now safely back in my native surroundings, and having sorted myself out after the journey and all that had piled up whilst away, may I take this opportunity to thank you for your hearty welcome to a fine experience at your first Althing and the warm hospitality given me in true Nordic fashion - by both you and your good Lady during the subsequent days of my stay in Turlock...

People here agree with me that there is great potential in USA's virtually untouched field of public interest the path to the Old Religion could engender and the cash supplement it could promote your efforts with at little or no cost to the present pioneers of Asatrú.

The orders for regalia that you and your comrades so generously made, will be attended to at the earliest convenience and I shall be happy to be instrumental in arming the "warriors" of your future plans. All hail the Varangian Guard!

Dave Hackett, the former Goði of the Sons of Woden (an earlier outfit), spoke to me yesterday and is very keen to fly over next year and see you all-- I have yet to see the others about making up a party to travel. (Dave is very interested in America because of various connections - one being that a Civil War Period relative of his was a sailor on the CSS "Alabama" - sunk in action in 1864, and he wants to somehow check out the crew list [all English except for the officers]; can anyone help there?) [Editor-How about it, Civil War Buffs? Any ideas?]

Well, Steve, thanks once again and I shall write again as soon as possible.

þ6rr Heill,

-Peter Seymour

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