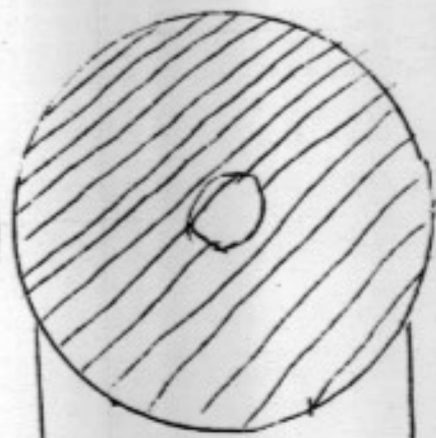
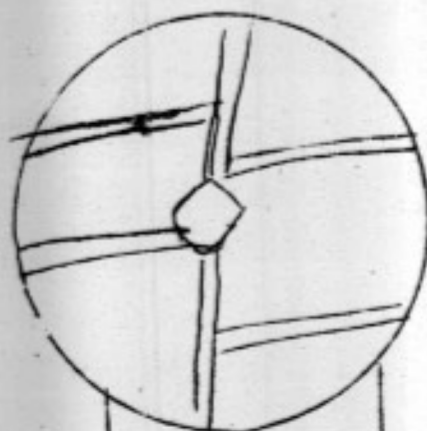


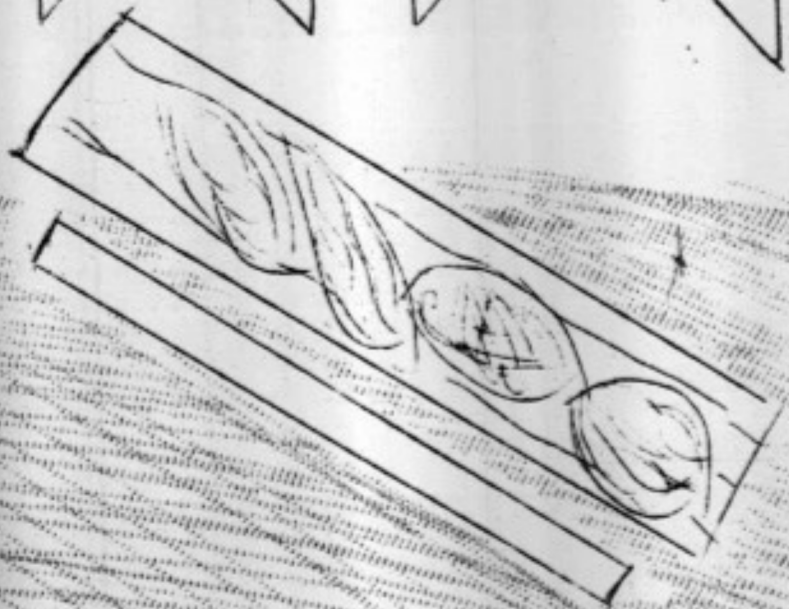
WIR RITISTIK

meta earth news
437 1/2 Hyde St. #365.
S.F. Ca 94109. 450 yr.



WIR
RITISTIK

WIR
RITISTIK



The Runestone is a journal of the old Norse religion and is dedicated to the revival of that religion as epitomized during the Viking Age, and to the revival of the values of courage, freedom, and personal independence which are associated with it. The Runestone is the official publication of the Viking Brotherhood and is published quarterly. Subscriptions are \$2.00 per year in the U.S. and Canada, \$3.00 per year overseas. Write The Runestone, Box 2552, Wichita Falls, Texas 76307.

NORSE NOTES

According to a recent issue of Playboy, under Norse law contracts made in a beerhall were as valid as any made in a formal court. Likewise testimony made over beer drinking carried full legal weight.....We ran across a book on the Icelandic language, which reminded us of our resolve to learn Norse someday - anyone know of any good material and/or learning aids for Icelandic?.....The August 27 Parade had a short article on soldiers of fortune which was most interesting. Seems there's a virtual employment service for mercenaries operating in Paris now. Ex - mercenary Joe Maggio's book Company Man is being published by Putnam. What's this got to do with the Norse religion? Besides being struck by the idea of sellswords, there is the fact that Vikings served as mercenaries all over the world, and especially in the Byzantine emperor's Varangian Guard.....Rumor of the month: Those arrow-shaped traffic lights that tell you when to go are really the symbol of the Scandinavian god Tiw and are part of a plot to paganize city dwellers by gradually affecting their subconscious minds.....Seen the "Jesus is Lord" bumper stickers? Our reaction - PRIDE MEN DON'T NEED LORDS.

AN ANSWER TO MONOTHEISTS

The next time you are rebuked by someone for not believing in the O.T.G. (One True God), pull this out of your bag: The Biblical words "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" are mistranslated; the Hebrew Elohim, usually translated as "God" is actually plural. Thus the infallible Bible should read "In the beginning the gods created heaven and earth."

ODIN LIVES! bumper stickers are still available at 25¢ each from The Runestone.

A JUL GREETING

From us at The Runestone to all of our readers and brothers in the Viking faith, Happy JUL! May this Festival of Lights herald for you a year of plenty and joy; may your raids all be successful and your plunder great, your maidens (or warriors!) willing and your mead horn overflowing.

Looking over the past year, we are optimistic about the future of The Runestone and the Viking Brotherhood. From concept, to publication, to the formation of the first skeppslags in less than a year, and with ambitious plans for the future, it is apparent that we are by no means at the end of our rope. The dawning of the coming year will yield progress and projects surpassing those of 1972 as the Viking tide is again felt abroad in the land and as more and more people realize that the Norsemen have returned.

To all of our readers we extend a sincere "thank you" for supporting us and putting up with our inexperience. We have learned a lot, and we will do our best in the coming year to give you our best efforts that together we may serve the cause of the Aesir, which is the cause of free men. HAPPY JUL!

A SORT OF TRAGEDY

While rummaging through a local library recently I came across a thin volume called Once Upon a Christmas Time. This wouldn't have attracted my attention but for the fact that it was written by Thora Ferre Bjorn. As I suspected, it dealt with Swedish Christmas traditions. There are some interesting quotes. In describing the history of Sweden: "There were hundreds of dark years when the people worshipped heathen gods, and strange and mysterious are the tales of Tor, Oden, and Freja and numberless other gods. Many of the traditions and superstitions from the heathen world lingered on when Sweden became a Christian country. People seeking for the light did not discard immediately or completely their belief in evil spirits and strange beings. But as the years passed by, more and more of the old was swallowed up by the new and young and beautiful, and many ugly tales were discarded like useless tools." As can be expected, the book is dripping with nice Christian sentiments, and the manner in which paganism in Scandinavia was "swallowed up" is totally ignored. "And as long as there is a Christmas, no matter what people of ill will try to do, they will not be able to put out the light that was lit two thousand years ago and that outshines all other lights in the world." Guess she doesn't know much about Viking persistence!

It is appalling; it is tragic that one who actually comes from the Northland and who no doubt has the blood of Vikings in her veins can be so terribly misled, so absolutely sold on the virtues of Christianity and on the faults of her ancestral religion. History, it seems, is written by the victors, and the truth never quite catches up with their version of events. Still we have to try and present the truth as best we can, hoping that someone will hear and that our martyrs and heroes will not go unsung. There are some of us who remember, who revere

those of our kind who have gone before us, and who see through the fabrications of those who, for a while, anyway, managed to more or less obliterate our tradition. We are not beaten, and some of us still know where Christmas comes from, despite attempts of a certain cult to usurp it.

Viking Weaponry - Part II

ARMOR AND WEAPONS OF THE VIKING AGE

This article is complementary to the article in our last issue, "The Viking Sword", so there will be little mention of that particular weapon here. In this article we will consider the spear, axe, and protective armor which the Viking used to such effect in spreading terror throughout Europe.

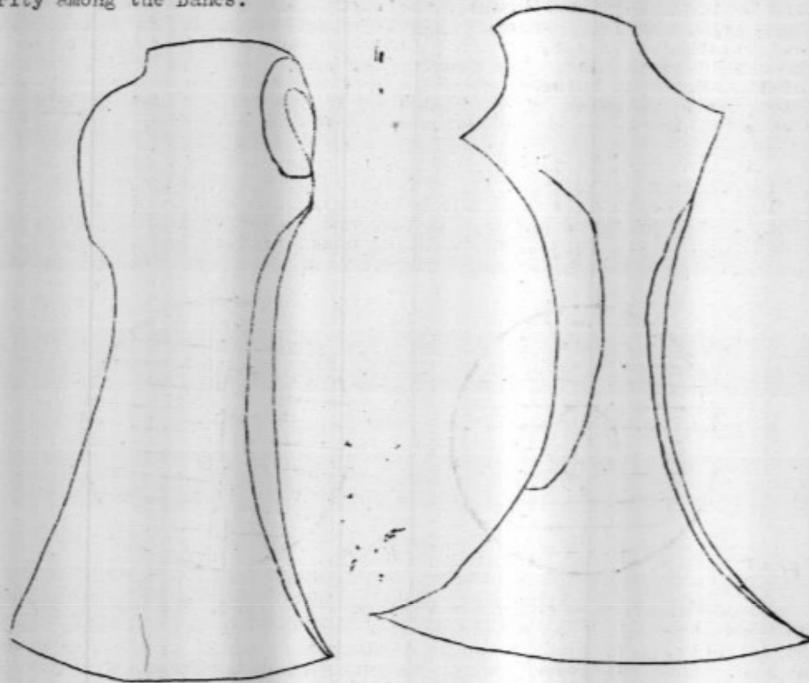
The sword, as we have said, remained the constant weapon throughout the Viking Age. The spear was a popular weapon early in the era, and only later became supplanted by the axe. Because of its seniority, let us first consider the spear. Spears were of two basic categories, throwing and thrusting. These types may be distinguished by the fact that thrusting spears have heavier, broader heads, often with long sockets to protect the shaft from being broken by enemy weapons. Because there was less chance of losing them, they were more likely to be heavily decorated than the throwing spears. Throwing spears were lighter and more expendable. The technique of using these two kinds of spears was, of course, to expend all of one's throwing spears at some distance, then move up for the close-in work with the thrusting spear.

Two other spear designs are worthy of notice. One of these is the "twisting spear", thrown with a cord looped around the shaft to make it spin in flight. This type of spear goes back to the Migration Age. Another spear variation is one with projections extending out from either side of the socket. The exact purpose of these projections is unknown, but conjecture is that they served as "stops" to keep the spear from penetrating too deeply into the target and thus making removal difficult.

Originality in the use of the spear is necessarily limited, but several "tricks" were developed and used by the Vikings. One of these was simply to throw a spear in each hand at the same time, a feat which is not nearly so easy as it sounds. A more elaborate technique was to dodge to one side to avoid an enemy's spear, catch it with a backhanded motion, and, swinging the arm around in a backward circle, bring the spear around for a return cast at the one who had thrown it. This trick is described well in Njal's Saga.

Eventually, the spear lost much of its popularity and was largely replaced by the axe, which became the standard Viking Weapon. There existed three classes of battleaxes. The first was a simple hand axe which was used interchangeably as a tool or a weapon. It featured a relatively light head and a hammer on the opposite blade, on a long iron-covered shaft. Another axe was the "bearded axe" featuring a

square-cut projection on the lower edge of the blade which made it especially useful in sea battles for grappling and boarding enemy ships. Finally, there is the fearsome broad axe - a heavy, two-handed weapon. The blade on this awe-inspiring piece of iron might be a foot across, and was inlaid with gold, silver, or niello to produce the characteristic intricate Norse patterns. These axes gained great popularity among the Danes.

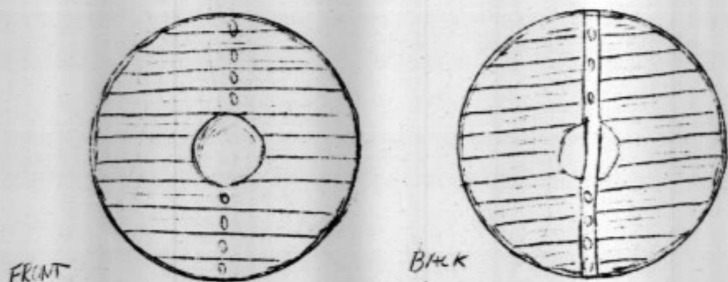


Now that we have surveyed Norse weapons, let us consider their armor. The shield leaps first to mind when considering defense. The Viking shield was round and fairly small. Those on the Gokstad ship were about three feet across, but those shown in drawings seem to be smaller still. The disk was made of thin boards, with an iron bar on the back to hold them together and to serve as a grip. The user's knuckles passed through a hole in the center of the shield which was protected by an iron boss. Around the rim there may have been a band of iron, and the shield may have had a leather-covered face. A leather strap enabled the owner to sling it around his neck. The shield was painted and sometimes decorated with simple geometric designs. Decorative shields, as opposed to actual combat shields, were hung in

the halls of chieftains and kings and were inlaid with gold, precious stones, and intricate story-carvings.

In actual use, the shield was held out from the body and was kept in constant motion. If possible, an opponent's blow was taken on the flat surface of the shield face rather than on the rim. A strong blow to the shield edge would either break the enemy's sword or split the shield. Should, however, a sword become wedged in the shield without splintering either, then a quick twisting motion by the wielder of the shield could disarm the swordsman or even break the blade. Viking shields were soon reduced to uselessness and were considered expendables, as is revealed by the fact that in the formal duel or holmgang each participant was supplied three shields to demolish.

In the sagas it is told of men being carried on their shields and taking shelter under them. The shields we have been discussing seem inadequate for this, especially considering the stature of the average Viking. Perhaps there existed another and larger style of shield. In addition to these types, some rock carvings picture long, pointed shields, no examples of which have been unearthed by archaeologists.



Body armor as worn by the Vikings was varied. The common fighting man generally had to make do with leather and bone padding, or, more likely, do without body armor altogether until he could capture some or amass sufficient wealth to purchase such things. The byrny, or brynja, was a mail shirt made up of linked metal rings. Generally it covered only the upper half of the body. Plate armor, called spanga-brynja, has been described in the sagas but no examples have been recovered. According to tradition the spanga-brynja was longer than the mail version. Beneath byrnies was worn a woolen shirt to prevent pinching of the skin.

The helmet worn by the Viking was a much simpler and unostentatious piece of headgear than is popularly conceived. Hollywood and artists of our era have pictured the Northmen as wearing helmets bearing huge horns and the wings of birds. There is no evidence whatsoever that wings figured in helmet fashions at all, and horned helmets were limited only to the great chieftains, or, according to some authorities, were worn only in an era long before the time of the Vikings. Basically, the Viking Age helmet was a conical metal cap which later developed a simple noseguard. Sometimes it seems not even to have been

this, but a leather cap reinforced by metal bands at key locations. Often the helmets were decorated in typical Viking fashion by small figures around the rim of the helmet. More elaborate decorations have been found on a few helmets, such as the boar-crested helmet described in Beowulf. A direct descendant of the simple conical helmet is the headgear worn by the Normans centuries later.

Thus we close this survey of Viking armament. As the quality of their weapons was one of the factors underlying Viking success in battle, they thus helped to write a colorful page in the history books and hack out a place for heroes in a thousand stories. This clash of arms sounds down to us even to this day.

////////////////////

In the fields no man should stir one step
From where his weapons are,
For it's hard to tell when he'll need a spear
As he walks out on his way.

////////////////////

A WARRIOR'S REFLECTION

They tried to tell me the other day that you had died, Odin, that Asgard was gone and that Hugin and Munin had no place to perch. I knew better, though, because I had been with you recently - I had heard your rumble in the propellers of a bird larger than your ravens, and felt you rising in my soul as I stood in the door, trembling with fear and joy, static line in hand. I touched you briefly when I felt the wind blast and the awful drop. My soul shouted to you to feel the opening shock and to see the canopy whole over my head, white as a Valkyrie's breast. Together we knew the ecstasy of freedom that comes to those who jump, that freedom which washes away all the doubt and apprehension. Odin, you are alive and well in Valhalla, and wherever your warriors are.

THE NORSE RELIGION - YESTERDAY AND TODAY

One thoughtful question which all of those who seek to follow the Viking Way must have asked themselves at one time or another is "How closely can we of the twentieth century follow the religion of the Vikings?" This question is a valid one, since the gap of a thousand years between today and the time when the religion was being practiced creates enormous problems, which are made worse by several complicating factors.

Certainly part of the problem is that the persecution of pagans by the Christians was remarkably thorough and complete. The fury with which the adherents of White Kris felled our temples and the sacred groves and tried to destroy all traces of our religion was almost beyond belief. Anyone who refused to become converted to Christianity was usually killed, and there were a number of pagan martyrs. A few fragments of our faith survived - Beowulf in England and the Niebe-

lungenlied in Germany. Finally, in Iceland, some of the old "mythology" was written down. In about 1223 A.D. Snorri Sturluson, an Icelandic chieftain, wrote down the Prose Edda, and in the second half of the thirteenth century the Poetic Edda was likewise recorded. These men were Christians and despite their honest desire to preserve their culture some distortion is likely to have crept into their interpretations. What is more, remember that Iceland adopted Christianity as the state religion in the year 1000 A. D. - how much of the pagan tradition must have been lost in the next two centuries? We can tell that much is missing, as some of the allusions in the Eddas baffle us and obviously refer to stories which have not survived. Any edition of the Eddas is full of footnotes to this effect. Of equally great importance is the sad fact that the cultural environment of the Viking Age religion had been destroyed and the innate understanding which would have accompanied it is forever lost. Christians and pagans do not see the world in the same way, and this affects interpretation even when no distortion is deliberately intended.

In addition to the obstacles caused by the destruction of the old pagan tradition and culture, things are complicated still more by the fact that the Christian Church made an attempt to reconcile some of the pagan teachings with the teachings of the new religion. One example of this is the idea of Ragnarok, the final great battle between the Aesir and the giants in which the gods were to be defeated. According to the Elder Edda there would come after this the rule of One higher than Odin, so Christianity pounced upon this as a tool for "saving" the Norsemen, telling them that Ragnarok has occurred and that the Christian god now ruled. Another instance is the missionary's use of the concept of Christ as a brave warrior at the head of a group of faithful thanes. This is a most misleading representation, but it was a ruse which worked.

This blending and reconciling distorts the old religion and infects it with Christian concepts which were not a part of the original. Thus it is all the harder to separate the true pagan beliefs from foreign influences.

Because of all these factors, it would be ridiculous to claim that we of today are truly following the religion practiced by the Vikings. Even if we knew precisely what that religion stood for and how it was practiced there remains the truth that, like all religions it has seen changes in its doctrines and beliefs and in the emphasis placed on its particular portions. So what are we to do? The answer is a simple one and one which must suffice simply because there is nothing else that we can do - we must extract the essence of the old religion - those key principles which distinguish it and which form its very heart - and build a consistent philosophical and religious system around them. Taking the Viking values of courage, independence, and individualism we must weed out that which is contradictory or extraneous and work to bring them to the fore, adjusting lesser matters accordingly. The result will not be identical to the old religion, but while it may not be historically faithful it will be spiritually faithful, and not only spiritually faithful to the old religion as practiced, but, even more importantly, spiritually faithful to the old Norse religion as idealized.

Perhaps this is what is really important, anyway - to get down

to the essentials of the old religion. One feels this is more important today than ever before, as it is only in our current era that we can truly appreciate the importance of our religion, by contrasting it with what we see around us. The world is a far different place today than it was when the Vikings sailed the sea, but, far from making our beliefs a thing of the past, this fact makes them all the more relevant to now. The noose of tyranny - a subtle tyranny - and an awful collectivism is tightening around the world, and the independence which was the heart of Vikingdom is faced with its greatest threat. None of this was apparent in the olden days, so the Vikings saw not the true nature of the mortal struggle in which, even way back then, they were involved - the combat between the individual and the collective. Today we are in a better position to see this situation in its fullness, and thus our responsibility to our ancestors and to those yet to come is all the greater.

It is up to us, then, to carry on and to see that we do not make the mistakes made by our lusty but non-historically oriented forefathers. These mistakes were several. As H.P. Ellis Davidson says in Scandinavian Mythology, "The pagans had no central organization, no fixed creed, and no firm beliefs for which men would be prepared to die." We must attempt to remedy these faults, without destroying that which is essential to Norse paganism. We feel that The Runestone is a step in this direction in that finally, a thousand years after it was supposed dead, Norse paganism has enlisted the art of writing to its aid. The runes, despite their power, were not suited to this task, whereas the romance languages were used to the utmost by our enemy to spread the poison of his Gospel. So once again we are in the fight - and using one of Christianity's favorite weapons.

For the first time, an actual organization to spread the Viking religion is developing - the Viking Brotherhood, of which The Runestone is the official organ. It is barely on its feet yet, but that makes it all the more flexible.

And finally, there are those of us willing to die for our beliefs. We know what we believe and we hold these beliefs dearly. We will not give them up. No threat of death or of hell will make us submit.

////////////////////////////////////

The Theft of Yule

Yule, as you probably know, was originally the Norse festival of Jul, celebrated at about the time of the winter solstice. For a period of twelve days all work ceased, and especially any work which involved turning or circular motion. It was a time for merriment and relaxation, for renewal and a looking forward to the coming year and to the coming year and to the coming again of the sun which had for so long been hidden and stingy of its warmth and light.

Yule was celebrated in honor of Freyr, as the god of fertility. We can be sure that it was marked by feasts and drinking and merry-making of all sorts, and probably pork was served, as the boar was sacred to Freyr.

The Yule festival was also a time for togetherness for the clan members, both alive and dead, and often food and drink were set at empty seats around the table in the belief that the dead members of the clan would be visiting and sustaining warmth and nourishment from the family fireplace and table.

Christianity came along, and as was its policy, changed and adopted the pagan ways rather than forbidding them outright. Yule became Christmas, and the concept of the clan, living and dead, fitted neatly into the "communion of the saints." Some things die hard, however (or not at all?) and we still have the evergreen tree and the Yule log as part of the stolen Christmas.

Pagans, take pause during this Yule season and remember, through all the glitter and Bible verses, what it originally stood for the celebration of life and renewal by a people close to nature, a people who are our spiritual ancestors. This Yule there will be followers of the old Norse religion celebrating the festival in the old tradition.

Maybe at long last the winter is on the way to breaking, and the light will yet return.



Book Review: The Viking by Edison Marshall

This book is by no means a recent one - the copy on my bookshelf was printed in September 1958 by Dell Publishing Company and the original dates from 1951 when it was printed by Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, Inc. About the only place that is can be found today is in a second-hand book store and libraries. This book struck this writer as so important, however, that all adherents to the Viking religion should attempt to find a copy and read it.

The Viking is not a scholarly dissertation on the history of the Norsemen. It is a novel, however, the author has an anthropological background and manages to capture the spirit of what it is to be a Viking better than any other book, fact or fiction, that has come to my attention. Mr. Marshall has that special gift of feeling and empathy which which great authors must have. This, combined with his knowledge of the era about which he is writing, makes The Viking the best of its kind.

The book was adapted to make a movie some years ago, titled The Vikings, which starred Kirk Douglas, Tony Curtis, Ernest Borgine and Janet Leigh. I enjoyed the movie, but somehow the book the book totally eclipses it. Incidentally, scenes for the movie were taken in Somes Sound, Maine, where Frederick Pohl believes Norsemen may acutally have landed during their Vinland explorations.

Find a copy of The Viking and read it. I do not think you will regret it.

Jul With the Varangian Guard

One of the oldest descriptions of Scandinavians celebrating Jul is found in a book by the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus of Byzantium De Ceremoniis Aulae Byzantinae (Concerning the Ceremonies of the Byzantine Household) These Vikings were far from their frigid homeland, serving as mercenaries in the Varangian Guard, in what is now called Constantinople. The rites described are probably well mixed with local customs, yet the Norse elements are unmistakable.

On the ninth day of the festival, people would gather at both doors of the Emperor's dining hall to perform the "Gothic game". at the left hand door waited the admiral of the Fleet with a few chosen men and flute players. Behind him are two "Goths" wearing masks and dressed in fur coats. At the right hand entrance was stationed the commander of the royal bodyguard and a select detachment. When the emperor arrived, he had the Master of Ceremonies bring both groups in and "they then hurry into the room, and at the same time they hit the shields which they carry with their spears, and thereby produce a big noise, and they cry Jul, Jul: and they do not stop until they reach the holy table. There the two units run togater from both sides so that they form a double circle. After having run three times around the holy table in their way, both units withdraw to their places, the navy at the right and the army at the left, and those out of the two units who are called Goths then read out the so-called Gothic song!"

This account, in referring to Goths, is speaking of none other than our own Viking relatives. True Goths had not been seen in the royal court for several hundred years.

THE PASSING

- John W. Dalrymple

One summer they listened to the gaunt Saxon,
The old man in the tattered cassock.
They drew their ship from its winter shed,
And they left their swords with their wives and thralls,
And they went fishing.

The catch was good, and the crops were good.
They did not want for food or drink,
And they feasted that winter and listened to tales
Of the hunting and fishing and sowing and reaping,
And wondered why they were unhappy.

__ADS__ __ADS__ __ADS__ __ADS__ __ADS__ __ADS__ __ADS__ __ADS__ __ADS__ __ADS__ __ADS__

Some people we'd like to acknowledge and to thank for their co-operation are the following:

Green EGG is published 8 times per year, and a subscription is \$5 per year. GE is a broad-spectrum publication of the pagan movement. Write:

The Church of All Worlds
P.O. Box 2953
St. Louis, Missouri 63130

Here's another fine publication, known formerly as The Waxing Moon, which survives by donation rather than by a set subscription fee.

The Crystal Well
P.O. Box 18351
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19120

Still another basic pagan outfit is

The Pagan Way
Box 7712
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19101

Pagan Way has worship groups established in a number of cities, too.

An occult journal with articles on magick, spiritualism, the Craft, and a wide selection of similar topics, at \$4 a year, is

Insight
118 Windham Road
Springbourn
Bournemouth, Hants
England

Send for The Silver Ankh, a newsletter of the old Religion. \$1 for their introductory issue. Write

The Silver Ankh
565 Howard Drive N.E.
Sierra Vista, Arizona 85635

This is a young publication and one which has really been kind to us - We wish them the best of luck.

Last but not least by any means, we have learned of another group of followers of the old Norse gods. We are still in the process of arranging cooperation with them as yet. Write

The Odinit Movement
P.O. Box 731
Adelaide St.
Toronto 210
Ontario Canada



Guten

Jul !!