**Message from the Freyr**

Heathenry rocks under political strife, as do our nations, based on the growing polarity of our peoples. How stands the Freehold in this storm? Oddly, we’re good thanks. In a world that has decided that radicalism is the comfort zone they race to, the Heathen Freehold Society remains what it was founded to be; a meeting place that celebrates diversity.

We come together to honour our gods, ancestors, and the wights of our lands and waters. We come from Anglo Saxon Heathenry, Asatru, Germanic Heathenry; some self describe as folkish, some universalist, some actively pursue instruction in our ancient magical traditions of Seidr and Galdor, others are content to live the lifeway and follow keenly the latest archeology and its insight into our ancient ways.

We brew, craft, tell story and feast, in all aspects of our life bringing the enrichment of our ancient folkway into our modern challenges in happy unconcern to the great political divides that people are convinced must divide those who don’t absolutely agree on everything.

We cheerfully disagree.
Our first Jarl will be sworn in for the Serpent Lake Kindred in the Okanagan, establishing a shire under strong leadership, binding the great wight of the Okanogan to our banner, as we bind our folk to its lands. We stand as host to Trothmoot, gathering Heathens from across North America and the world to show them how hospitality is practiced.

Rites and rituals, blots and sumbels have been held from the Island to Vancouver city, through the suburbs, and up to the Okanogan. We gather together in numbers handful or dozens by sun and moon, to keep the holy tides as best we can, and wherever we come together we weave our lives together, adding strength to strength, that all may thrive.

We bring in new folk, and rejoice at meetings with old friends, and everywhere the gods and wights smile upon us. New lives are born, and old lives pass, and Freeholders prosper, because we accept the world that is, the people we meet as they are, and most importantly, we accept the truths we learn about ourselves.

The world rushes to extremes, to polarity and division, and the Heathen Freehold disagrees, respectfully. Our ancestors were community builders, and this they did by learning to focus a community on its goals, and towards those goals apply all the energy, skills, and diverse talents and backgrounds towards those ends. They did not demand conformity of thought, they united in their diversity towards a common goal, and they generally achieved it. This is what I would do.

There is a future in front of us where heathenry will have a place alongside the religions of the book, and of the east, in the eyes of our nation, and before its laws and institutions. This will come because we work with each other, and with others, not because we shout at them. Somehow, the words the ancestors left to guide us lead me to believe they would approve of what we have done so far. I look with great delight towards the future, and what we may yet do.

John T Mainer.
Artistic Contributions

Stories

Selvage and Salvage

Selvage: an edge (as of fabric) meant to be cut off and discarded

Salvage: something recovered from disaster or wreck

His name was Charlie. He was a flower child, raised in a home with anti-war professor and social justice advocate parents. Setting out the rebellious road of his parents led him strange places, for the pagan paths lead him back to heathen roots. The child of the war protestors came to see the plight of the forgotten soldiers, who returned to their country, but to no home but the streets.

Charlie was a musician, the music had always been his, the magic of weaving words and chords to capture emotions of pain, of love, of hope, and of loss. It is hard to play long without learning to look deep, and to hear the songs unsung in the stories you hear; even the stories of the street. He was raised on the protest songs about war, but he never learned to hate soldiers, only that anyone had to do what they did. On the streets he heard their stories, young men and women, proud and strong they went when they were called. They walked in the fire again and again; and they burned. Some who came home bore wounds openly, some carried them inside. Too many came back strangers to the hearth they left, unwelcome in and unable to face the homes they returned to. Our best and brightest, now broken and discarded, starving on the streets beneath the flapping flags they were so proud to serve.
At an Occupy protest, Charlie spoke with a former Marine, living rough who opened his eyes. Not an addict, but a wounded warrior, with no place in the society he left, but not done his service. Without home is not without folk, for this heathen warrior still strove to protect those others living on the street, with the little he could find, helping those who had less. Drawn to Odin through music, drawn to warriors by the passion to change, Charlie was not drawn to weapons, and the fields of war were not his to know. This battle though was one that he had been trained for, unknowing, and one he claimed as his own. That Yule, he took the remains of the feast to the underpass where the homeless heathen had spoke to him, and gave back to those who had given themselves in service.

When he got down to the underpass, and began to unload, a crowd gathered. Not really knowing how to go about distributing, as he had never done this alone before, he had just begun to set things out beside his car when the crowd began pushing in. A Hispanic man in the remains of army fatigues pushed forward with his hand on his knife, and began to demand why he was doing this; if he thought he was better than them. Charlie was looking for the words to defuse things, when a woman’s voice cut through the crowd.

“Jose, is that how you treat our guest? Is that how you repay a gift? I thought you were a man, not a vandalo”

A blonde woman hauling a large medical kit pushed her way in. Long braids of blonde hair, lit with strands of silver set off eyes as blue and cold as a winter dawn. Her name tag bore medical caduceus, and the name Holle. The crowd parted for her like waves before a ship, and Charlie heard people muttering “Hey Holly” and greeting her with anxious smiles.

Charlie relaxed as Holly rolled her eyes like a mother before misbehaving children and continued.

“Jose be a dear, and take Craig set this fine man’s feast out on the railing so people can share without pushing. Simon, why don’t you help him by serving, and making sure all the containers make it back”

As Charlie watched, the crowd organized itself, and kept surprising order, as they lined up for their food. One of the men turned and asked; “We have to listen to a sermon or something, mister?” as this was not uncommon among the givers.

Charlie pulled out his hammer necklace and replied simply
“No man, I’m a heathen. Our gods ask we give a gift for a gift. A lot of you gave us all a gift when you went and served your country. I can’t do that, but I can do this. So I give something back to all of you.” The man seemed to think about that a bit, then nodded and offered his thanks.

Holly had been tending to the various ailments of the people while listening, and she nodded matter of factly as she changed one fellow’s dressing. “That was the old way. The last of the harvest was left to say thanks to the gods, the last of the feast was given to folk to show your thanks to the gods. It is good to see the old ways kept, that not all of the people forgot that something is owed when something is given”.

Reaching the end of her wrap with the dressing she drew a knife from her belt; forward canted like a Kurki or sickle, it flashed across like lightning. The homeless man watched in trusting amusement, having seen her ways a hundred times, but Charlie was surprised to see her choose such a tool for bandage cutting. Homing the knife without looking, she tied off the bandage and tossed Charlie the severed ends.

“The selvage” she spoke referring to the fabric cut off the end of a roll. “Selvage is something that all weavers know. Wyrd weaves as it will, and who but a weaver knows how hard it is on the threads? The bright ones we weave in the pattern, the needs of us all, the cost paid by few. Who but a weaver knows the threads we must knot, the threads we must cut, the threads we weave out. Who but a weaver knows the cost of the selvage”

Handing the tattered fabric to Charlie, she looked at the homeless now laughing and eating, the haunted and hunted now gathered skittish but restful, safe in a moment from the storm of their lives. She turned to Charlie and smiled. “English is a funny language, selvage and salvage are just a letter apart. The threads we must cut out, and the ones we may save. My work, and yours.” She smiled again.

Jose had gathered up the Tupper-ware and plates, and stacked them in the back of Charlie’s van. He flashed Charlie a thumbs up; a far cry from his earlier greeting.

“They know you now, and you won’t have any trouble. They are my husband’s children, every one. He led them out of the world, and they follow him still. If they find their way back, or ride the hunt until the end, they are still his own.”
Charlie felt his skin grow cold as he looked again at Holly’s name tag; Holle. “They are your husband’s children?” He said, asking half the question he dared not finish.

Holle laughed, hearing the unspoken half, and answering. “They are my husband’s children Charlie, every lost one of them.” She turned and looked at him with the eyes of the Mother, “Just as you are mine.”

From feast onto feast the work continues, Oakland Heathen Doorways opening a way to give back for the community, and a way to come back for the homeless. Veteran and victim, the damaged and the lost, the threads pulled tight or torn asunder by the weavings of wyrd are not forgotten by all. Easy to remember are the proud war dead, harder to remember the walking wounded, whose scars cut them off from the life they left behind to serve. Easy to spot are the warriors who bear weapons of steel, follow the banners to battle. Hard to spot are the warriors whose weapons are hospitality, and who fight for the forgotten.

For Charlie Verrette of Oakland Heathen Doorways (in memory of a Troth-moot conversation)

For Frau Holle, Mother Frigga for whom the last sheaf of wheat is left, First of the Disir, the weaver and watcher of our bloodlines.

John T Mainer

Articles

Personal Experiences

I’ve Been Branded
By: Laura Cooper

I don’t recall when or why Odin made himself known to me. All I remember is that it was swift and powerful. I didn’t get much say in the matter, not that I would have disagreed anyway. He came to me in thoughts and dreams.

One day when I was downtown walking by a tattoo shop, I had a sudden urge to get a Valknut. It was an idea that had crossed my mind previously, an earworm from the Allfather. After I walked out of the shop sporting my new ink, I couldn’t help but feel that I had just been branded; an unspoken oath between Odin and myself. My end of the bargain is still unclear to me.
I live my life by the nine noble virtues and my insatiable quest for knowledge may be what got his attention. It could be my strong will and the ability to stand alone wandering this world. Maybe he wants a written acknowledgment when my poetry book is ready for publishing because he has been an endless muse, quieting my mind so that the words can flow freely onto the page. Let us not forget it was his blessing that led me to victory of the women's axe throwing competition at a Viking event I attended in the summer. The medallion I received sits on his altar with the glory and pride that came with it.

In the words of my friend John, “Odin is one hell of a recruiter.” He could have been looking for another follower. I don’t know his intentions, maybe I never will. What I will say is that I am glad he found me when he did. I am a better and more successful person for it.

I have been studying Heathenry for about two years, more in depth within the last year. One thing I have noticed is the unfortunate attitude towards Loki. It is so ingrained that I have had Heathens flat out tell me, they did not want to get to know me because I like Loki. Since Loki is a trickster, it must mean that I am untrustworthy so they will not give me the time of day. If I like horror movies does that make me a serial killer? Let me remind you that Loki is not the only trickster God, but he is the one who gets the short end of the stick.

I don’t understand where the animosity against him stems from. I have studied many pantheons and he is hated more than any God I know of. I often hear arguments that Loki is responsible for Baldr’s death. Fair enough. I didn’t realize you were perfect. That time that you cheated on your wife, no big deal. That time you stole money from your friend, you’ll give it back and they won’t even notice. Please, tell me more about how you’re going to judge me and I’ll tell you how ridiculous you are. But instead of blaming Frigg for her oversight of the mistletoe, thinking it too insignificant to harm her son and therefore not getting an oath from it, blame Loki for exploiting the one thing she failed to do so that he could teach a lesson. It’s easier to do that anyway.

Yes he is the God of chaos and change, but why is that such a bad thing? Where did the negative connotation come from? Loki has been in my life since before I even knew who he was. He has been present since my childhood. Let me tell you some of the lessons and guidance he has bestowed upon me.
I have learned to be cunning. I know what you’re thinking, I’m deceitful! Yes, I can be and it has saved my life more times than I can count because I can talk my way out of anything. Not once have I used my cunning for ill purpose. I am incredibly intelligent. My life experience has given me an array of street smarts. Without that, I would be dead.

I have learned to be adaptable. You have no choice but to be that way living in a constant state of change. Due to this, I have learned wisdom and it makes me a great leader. Being open minded and open to change I have more colourful experiences I can add to my life roster. I am also a better person for it because nothing in my life is rigid. Adaptability makes me sought after by everyone because they know I am capable of getting the job done and that I will do it well.

Most importantly, following Loki allows me to easily live life by the Nine Noble Virtues. I have moments where it is challenging depending on who I have to deal with, but, I deal with it swiftly and move on. I am never stagnant. One thing I can say is that I’m not bored haha.

Could Loki be the cause for all of the things that have happened in my life, absolutely. Do I blame him for that? Not at all. I am a force to be reckoned with and I thank him every day for the outstanding human being I have become. Think twice before shunning the followers of Loki. You have no idea, the prices we have paid, for the knowledge we have gained. Quite frankly, we deserve more credit than we’re given. We are amazing people.

Academic

Abandonment of Greenland
By: Freydis Heimdallson

The Norse were not driven out of Greenland by worsening weather, after all. Since the colonization and abandonment of Greenland by the Norse coincides so nicely with the warming and then cooling of Europe in the Middle Ages, it has long been assumed that the Norse abandoned their settlements there due to the weather, which had briefly been warm enough to grow crops, cooling again during the Little Ice Age. However, new studies show that the warming trend didn't reach Greenland at all, and the conditions there didn't change, weather-wise, when they cooled off in mainland Europe.

As stated in an article this past December in the Iceland Magazine by Magnús Sveinn Helgason, it looks like the main factor may have been the decline of the trade in walrus ivory. It became a valuable commodity in the first place when Europe lost access to elephant ivory because of hostilities with Muslims; but when hostilities cooled and Europe gained access to elephant ivory again, traders stopped visiting Greenland.
By this time cattle had all but disappeared from the land, replaced by sheep and goats; nevertheless, up to 80% of the diet of the Greenlanders was made up of seal meat.

Graves from the latter days of the colony have fewer and fewer young women in them; the population wasn't dying off, but—probably fed up with their isolation and monotonous diet—more and more young people seemed to simply have moved away.

The Black Death had left plenty of room in mainland Scandinavia; it now seems most probable that, rather than dying off of disease (studies now show that the settlers' bones evinced no more disease than others in Europe and Scandinavia at the time) and hunger (there seems to have been plenty of seal meat, and growing conditions did not change after all) as previously believed, the settlers simply gave up on Greenland and moved back home.

http://icelandmag.visir.is/article/what-happened-viking-settlement-greenland-new-research-shows-cooling-weather-not-a-factor

**Germanic Belief and the Experience of the Divine**

By: Jamey Martin

One can experience the divine in the small and familiar as much as in the great and majestic. I personally have even experienced it in a random “street fight” (assault, jumped) of all things! And aye, as much in joy as in sorrow as well. But all of these experiences are … an expression of the divine in human terms, an uplifting of our awareness and appreciation for what surrounds and/or comprises us, and our sense of “belonging” or relation to it. One might use the term sublime, “impressing the mind with a sense of grandeur or power; inspiring awe, veneration, etc”, as the general category of spiritual experience that all of these varied experiences, in all of their differences and nuances, in all of their varying intensities and artfulness of expression, can confidently be lumped under.

I’d prefer to categorize them the “holy” of course — from the Old English “hal” root, which is also seen in such other Modern English words as health and, more poignantly, whole — but either way this general category of experience is at once comfortable, warm, empowering and uplifting. You could say it is the “experience of the masses”, both high and low.

But there is another experience of the divine … raw, primal, jarring, and anything but comfortable. It is what Rudolph Otto, in his book Idea of the Holy, called the “mysterium tremendum et fascinans” and described as an encounter with something “wholly other”. But to get the full sense of what Otto meant I’ll provide a definition of the Latin words he chose to use and based on his work,
Mysterium (Mystery): wholly other, experienced with blank wonder, stupor.

Tremendum (Tremendous): awefulness, terror, demonic dread, awe, absolute unapproachability, “wrath” of God, overpoweringness, majesty, might, sense of one’s own nothingness in contrast to its powe, creature-feeling, sense of objective presence, dependence, energy, urgency, will, vitality.

Fascinans (Fascination): potent charm, attractiveness in spite of fear, terror, etc.

This is an experience, as I’m sure one can gather, that overwelms one, terrifies one, leaves one feeling small, insignificant, and at a complete loss of how to describe, symbolize, or otherwise express the experience; but which the fascination-aspect nevertheless incites us to at least try to come to terms with.

A likeness of this “terrible and fascinating mystery” can be found in a “holy experience” of course, and is in fact the source of the holy, as I’ll touch on later. I recall as a youngster going to church with my grandfather, and that eerie sense that would fall over me when I entered the church. I didn’t like it. And for a while in my young life I deemed it a bad thing … the harsh and unapproving glare of the god of the Christians, but honestly, the experience is by no means limited to Christianity, or the Abrahamic religions. Some would say, as seems fitting I suppose, that it is not even confined to religion or spirituality, ie. religious/spiritual people, in general and that atheists can be struck by an identical experience. It can arise, or better said “impose” itself irrespective of culture; which again seems quite fitting that it should.

Needless to say perhaps, our preChristian Germanic ancestors knew of this experience of the divine as well. And for all intents and purposes they had a word for it, as seen in Old English “weoh” (Old Norse – ve, Gothic – weihs) and it’s sibling terms; all of which reference things given over to the divine (altar, idol, etc.) or issuing from the divine (hallowing power, consecration). At it’s root the terms mean “separate, other, set apart” and carry strong connotations of “mystery” (see definition above).

We get a sense of this “otherness” in Tacitus’ 1st century work Germania where he (blunderingly) relates,
they judge it altogether unsuitable to hold the Gods enclosed within walls, or to represent them under any human likeness. They consecrate whole woods and groves, and by the names of the Gods they call these recesses; divinities these, which only in contemplation and mental reverence they behold.”

The Germanic people did in fact fashion idols, and had been doing so since, ahem, at least the Nordic Bronze Age, so it is likely that Tacitus and/or his equally Latin go-between misunderstood what was actually being expressed here, but it seems to speak toward the “wih-nature” of the divine. And indeed, while the Germanic peoples did fashion idols, the early one’s, closer to Tacitus’ era, show these to be only vaguely anthropomorphic in nature, accentuating natural features but utterly unconcerned with detail; despite a culturally high degree of wood carving skills, ie. the lack of detailed expression was intentional here and speaks towards the understanding of the divine as wih.

The Broddenbjerg idol, 6th century BCE, Denmark, stands 35 inches tall.

We also get a sense of the overwhelming and humbling nature of wih, comparable to Moses and the Burning Bush, in another of Tacitus’ remarks,
“At a stated time of the year, all the several people descended from the same stock, assemble by their deputies in a wood; consecrated by the idolatries of their forefathers, and by superstitious awe in times of old. There by publicly sacrificing a man, they begin the horrible solemnity of their barbarous worship. To this grove another sort of reverence is also paid. No one enters it otherwise than bound with ligatures, thence professing his subordination and meanness, and the power of the Deity there. If he fall down, he is not permitted to rise or be raised, but grovels along upon the ground. And of all their superstition, this is the drift and tendency."

Despite the very modern Asatruar fancy of standing proudly in worship, not to mention their general contempt for kneeling and the like, evidence of such postures in Germanic worship (as touched on in my last entry) span the Nordic Bronze Age to the Viking Age and point directly toward the experience of “wih” … of the “mysterium tremendum et fascinans”.

In the Old English Exeter Book we read, “Woden worhte weohs” (Woden fashioned the weohs), while in Eddaic Creation he is brothered up with a god named Ve. In fact, one of the terms the speakers of Old Norse used to refer to the gods collectively was Vear, but clearly Woden stands in special relation to wih. And among Woden’s many bynames we find YggR (the Terrible One), Fjolnir (the Concealer), Grimnir (the Hooded), while his very name is rooted in the word wod; meaning fury, possession, madness, but also inspiration (fascinans).

All of this speaks towards Otto’s description of the mysterium tremendum et fascinans.
At its root the concept of wih stands in sharp juxtaposition to holy, ie. separate vs. integrated respectively, and yet we see them compounded on the Gothic ring of Pietroassa (wihailag) and used in complimentary manner in the Old Norse phrase “vē heilakt”, and used in a manner which might be described as bordering on interchangeable. Of course, as wih is the hallowing power it seems fairly evident that holiness is it’s (temporal) product; the gist of which is glaringly evident within the context of Germanic creation myths and legends in which the gods shape Creation, in which the gods shape Mankind, in which the gods establish the innangeard (inside the yard, the community, the dwelling/s of the race of man), in which the gods give the gifts of language and culture, and in which the life of the “World Tree” itself hinges upon the nourishment it receives from the heavenly realm (reflected in the Hindu concept of the World Tree growing down from out of the heavens).

Holiness is the product of wih … or as I’m using the term here, ie. in relationship to experience and resulting speculations/culture (as opposed to sheer quality of life), holiness is the experience/expression/evolution of the divine mystery within a culturally specific human framework, rather than on the ineffable, “wholly other” terms of the gods themselves. The distinction is important to note.

Too often in modern Germanic Heathenism do we see an over emphasis on the cultural/holy forms of the divine and a profaning of ultimate nature of the Ymir, eg. “Thor doesn’t have blonde hair! It’s red, idiot!” or “Woden talks to me all of the time! We had tea and biscuits yesterday at lunch”. Certainly there are many and varied “soft” experiences of the divine, as mentioned above, but we would be wise to chose our words carefully if or when we chose to talk about them. And really, if Woden is talking to someone “all of the time”, I would expect to see something more than average, exceedingly exceptional actually, ie. the product of wih, in their endeavors and accomplishments, in the quality of their life.
This sense of mystery and magnitude, and the resulting “humbility” and reverence, is what most needs to be (re)kindled among modern day Germanic Heathens. The knowledge that while we might speak of our beliefs about the gods, the fruits of our relationship with them, and while we might be insistent regarding our beliefs, ie. what is and is not Germanic belief for instance, we cannot speak toward the fundamental being of the gods. And while some might fear that this is but a step away from monotheism, ie. God is “the” Mystery, the reality of “the mystery” is that it is ineffable and defies all mortal categories of thought and experience; monotheism for instance. For our own part as heathens, we simply *believe* there are many gods, as this seems the healthiest way to go for a community. Either way, there is that point in seeking the nature of the divine where words, figure, metaphor, and symbols all fail, where they prove even at their most glorious to fall short and prove inadequate, where the highest honour is silence, and where only shameless profanity dares to tread. And there, what we are left with, really, as a matter of honesty, is “our beliefs”.

### Examination of Heathen Marriage

-By John T. Mainer

There has been a lot of talk in North America these days about traditional marriage, and family values. That is awesome, but while people have thrown around the words, no one has really defined them, even in popular culture terms. Since we are Heathens, we do things a little differently, starting with the need to consider just what we mean by traditional marriage and family values. Our ancestors were not renowned for flights of romantic fancy. There is a reason for this; the North punishes failure, badly. To live in a marginal environment where survival requires the collective effort, and where success requires that each person lends their particular skills and strengths to their maximum advantage, there was little drive behind flights of fancy, histrionics, or grand gestures. Practical was important, in fact, it was critical.

Folk flows from family, and family flows from marriage. Heathen ritual is a very interesting thing, in that its symbolic form is a very pure statement of its function. The ritual itself serves to break down all the levels of function that are present, and define each of its terms separately to be considered and individually before this most sacred covenant, and most important contract, becomes binding.
Marriage is a contract. There is no contract as complex as a marriage; the partnership agreements that business partners enter into contain many of the same elements, and yet cover only a fraction of what is contained in the marriage itself, without any sentiment or sacral implications at all. Oddly, the incredible number of promises implicit in marriage, the number of understandings being agreed to, implicitly or explicitly goes almost completely unnoticed by most couples today, and our divorce rates show the consequences of treating marriage as primarily a celebration of love, and not a contract negotiated between two parties about coming together into a union, as our ancestors understood it. Celebrations of love are awesome, but without honouring the elements of the contract itself, divorce leaves that love in ruins, and the potential of the union in the rubble.

The birth control pill broke the tie between sex and procreation. With adoption of unwanted children being an option long before our technology gave same sex couples the chance to produce their own children, the justification for restricting marriage to heterosexual couples was lost. Two male, two female, or a male/female pairings had the same choices to have children, or not have children, as their life plans dictated, not as the consequences of their sex lives demanded. That being said, the reasons for forming a marriage now lie equally across couples of whatever configuration. For simplicities sake, I am going to refer to the bride and groom, because that was the ancient form, and as a poet I just cannot write something as beautiful as a marriage with “the party of the first part” and the “party of the second part”. The ceremony works more or less the same, with differences between individual relationships mattering more than genders, so we will work off one model, with the understanding that it will be modified to suit each and every couple involved, however constituted.

The ceremony itself is below, my own commentary will occur after the >> marks.
ITEMS

– Groom’s Keys
– Hand-geld (To the Bride’s Family)-gift at wedding
– Brides-gift (To the groom’s family)-gift at wedding
– Morning-gift (To the Bride)-gift morning after first night as man and wife
– New Sword-given by the bride as the symbol of his duty to the hearth they will share
– Ancestral Sword-symbol of grooms duty to his ancestral hearth
-Keys (actual, or big black iron symbolic)
-Cord-made by couple with symbols of important events of their lives, or virtues they feel important to their union.

Wedding Feast

– A “Loving Cup”, a bowl or kasa (Old Norse {ON}) with handles, but a horn will also serve
– A cake of some form
– Hammer

Wedding Day (Or at engagement if this is done in multiple days)

– The Groom, with a party of distinguished friends, approaches the Bride and her family.

GROOM: – The Groom asks for the Bride’s hand in marriage, flattering her family, boasting of his worthiness and his gifts, and negotiating the Hand-geld and the Morning-Gift.

BRIDE: – The Bride and her Family express their satisfaction.

GROOM:

“I declare before witnesses that __(Bride’s Name)__ will bond with me in holy betrothal;
And that your pledge is to marry me in exchange for the hand geld and morning geld I have promised.
And that you will engage me to fulfil and observe the whole of the oath between us which has been said in the hearing of witnesses without wiles or cunning as a true and honest oath.”

BRIDE & GROOM: – Shake hands, and go with their respective parties which should not see each other again until meeting at the wedding enclosure.

>>Why do we do this? Are we buying the bride? No. This is about establishing the worth of the individuals to each other. For ancient couples, often times the marriage would be arraigned between senior family members with little or no consultation. This is not the recipe for a long and frithful marriage, so the groom does not show up and announce, “well I guess we’re stuck with each other”.
No-this is the groundwork for making a couple. The groom arrives with his close kinsmen and friends to be flyted by the brides kin. His friends will boast of his worth, and hers will challenge it. Let any questions of character or worth be settled before considering marriage. This is about showing the bride what she will be getting in the marriage; who is this that seeks her hand and why does he think himself worthy of it?

In modern times, this is an absolute blast. I have seen a groom’s female friend literally treat him like a stud bull at auction, testing his muscles, showing his teeth, the excellence of his hair, and making him demonstrate his ability to perform automotive or household repairs. Other times I have seen it be serious, where friends have laid out the kind of trust they hold for him, and the kind of partner she will be getting.

The Hand Geld: now I never understood dowry, but hand geld I understand. You come to seek the hand of your bride, you deem her to be the partner with whom you will build your life, to whom you will entrust your name, your heirs, and all that you may have or hold in this life. You have found THE ONE. How do you show this person what they mean to you? Talk is cheap, but the amount of work that is represented in a gift of great cost, and great beauty shows that not only your hard work and labour went into the giving, but great thought and consideration. This shows the commitment of the groom to honour the bride whose hand he seeks, and promises that he holds her favours highly. This matters. The reciprocal gifting relationship is important, so is the reciprocal respect. This foundation is important, so put some thought into it.
Hand Geld is to secure the acceptance of the marriage, but the morning geld, the morning gift, this is different. While the wedding itself is public, the consummation (outside of some areas of California) usually isn’t. The morning geld is a gift from groom to bride after their first night together as man and wife, it is personal and will set the tone for their relationship in those private moments. When duty is done, when it is just the two of them and such love and care as they have forged together, the little joys they give each other will renew and restore them. This is nobody’s business but their own, and likewise, no one but the couple can make sure they get this right.

Main Wedding:

- The Groom is prepared by his groomsmen and family members.
- The Bride is prepared by her hand-maidens and family members.
- They separately proceed to ship, where they will join the wedding party. The Bride is preceeded by a kinsman who carries the GIFT-SWORD. The Groom carries the ANCESTRAL-SWORD.

>>Hold your horses, what is with all the weaponry? Ah yes. At this point I should point out that the wedding feast is actually derived from funeral customs. You can make all the jokes you want about the link between weddings and funerals, but our ancestors got this right rather more often than we do now, so perhaps we should hearken to their rede in such matters.

At this time, a mother loses a son, for the duty that he bore to her ends this day. At this day a father loses a daughter, for the name that he gave her to bear at her birth she will give up, even as she takes on the name and obligations to its worth of her husband. There are ties being forged, and great gains being made and celebrated, but in order to bind to each other, each must surrender existing ties to enter into new ones.

The groom bears the ancestral sword. When he became a man, the men of his house would have girded him with that sword, admitting him to the commonwealth of the tribe, and to the family as a man. His passage from boyhood dependency, to independent manhood came with the giving of that blade. With this sword he defended the hearth and name of his mother. This sword is the groom’s commitment to the family of his birth, and he will put it aside today.
The bride’s family bears the new sword. When she rose this morning, a daughter of her mother’s hearth, she will go to bed this night mistress of a new hearth. She will accept from her husband not only his name, but the sword of his ancestors. She will take his name, and his duty to his house, and hold it until such time as she may pass it to his heirs. It is hers now to see his duty to that name is done. She grants to him the new sword, with which he will undertake to defend her hearth and name from this day forward, as she deems necessary.

We are modern people and don’t need to do all that!

Not so fast. We don’t generally do a lot of carving each other up with swords anymore, this is true. We don’t even always take the spouses name anymore. However, the symbolic form of the ritual shows us something we need to pay attention to. The act of marriage is a commitment from both parties that while they honour and respect their commitments to their families, and accept the duties to each others families that their marriage entails, they also publically undertake to ALWAYS PUT THE HEARTH THEY FORM TOGETHER THIS DAY FIRST.

Was I shouting with that last bit? Its important. Go back and read it again, it’s is that important.

GODHI: By fire I mark this sacred space, I name it Frithstead, let all who gather herein be peace holy. Mighty Thor, defender of the folk make sacred this space and protect all who gather herein. Odin Allfather, let all vows made herein be heard by the gods and our sacred ancestors. Mother Frigga, great Disir, guardian of our lines, let those who would join their lines together in this place know your blessing. Great Norns, weavers of fate, let those who entwine their lives, and join these two great houses know only joy and good fortune so long as they cleave together.

GODHI: We gather before the folk, in the sight of the gods and our sacred ancestors not to forge a bond, but to make holy a bond that has already been formed. I bring before you (Groom) and (Bride) who are bound together by love, who ask to be bound together in marriage. Marriage is forged not only of love but of Troth.
>>We do love. We really do love. We do love so well that we separate the oath of love from the duty to the greater families (shown with the sword exchange), and the oath to do the work of the marriage (which follows). This oath is simple, stark, and the whole reason for being here. Do you love each other? Do you love each other enough for that love to be reason enough to struggle through whatever may come?

(Groom) Do you love this woman before all others, with your whole heart, and without reservation?

GROOM: I DO

GODHI: Then give to her family the Hand-Geld, a gift in return for the great treasure you seek from them.

The Groom then gives the Hand Geld to the bridal party who show it to the crowd, and pronounce it worthy of their daughter.

GODHI:(Bride) Do you love this man before all others, with your whole heart and without reservations?

BRIDE: I DO

GODHI: Then give to them the Bride Geld, a gift in return for the strong defender you seek to win from them.

The Bride offers the gift to the Groom’s party, and they acknowledge it worthy of the son of their house.

GODHI: Before the folk and sacred ancestors, in the sight of the gods, for all time I pronounce these two houses to be joined by the loving union of these two. Let the groom now set aside the ancestral sword, and with it his duties to the hearth of his mother.

GROOM: I give to you my ancestral sword, from this day forth, it is your hearth and honour I defend.

BRIDE: I will hold your ancestral sword for our strong heirs to take up, and I give to you the new sword with which I charge you to defend our hearth, home and sacred honour.
Bride and party now gird the new sword onto the Groom, he is now her defender.

GROOM: As your honour is mine to defend, so are my house, chattels and goods yours to hold. Receive now my keys, for all that I own or will possess is yours to hold, as it is mine to defend.

Grooms party ties the keys to her waist.

>>Bride and groom are joined in love, both families are joined by the union of the two in love. This something beautiful, precious, and fragile. It is not enough to bring a thing of beauty into existence, for this world has a hard way with beauty that is not defended, and life that is not nurtured. What came before was easy, what came before was about want. Want is enough to get you here, but it is not enough to get you through what is to come. No couple gets married with the intent to divorce, but it is almost the default end state in our lands today. Work is hard, but work is what will make a partnership successful. Our ancestors were practical and romantic. It is romantic to see love blossom and grow, it is depressing to see it die of neglect. Practically, it behooves us to make sure the work gets done that the relationship we celebrate today becomes a source of joy and strength for generations to come, not simply another momentary fancy, discarded when it was no longer fun.
GODHI: Now you are joined by love, but love alone is not enough. I speak now of Troth, of the bonds of duty and obligation. Before this day you were two, you faced the challenges of your lives alone, and grew strong and worthy in the doing. That was good, but tomorrow, it will not be enough. You have chosen to enter into marriage, to join yourself and mingle your bloodlines for all time through the gift of children. In this task you have given up all right to fail or falter. In the challenges that will come, you will grow stronger when you face them together, and bring some of your partner’s strength with you even when you stand alone. Before the gods and these good folk, I ask, will you plight to each other your troth, your pledge to face whatever comes side by side, that each challenge faced, each hardship overcome leave you both stronger and closer than before?

BRIDE AND GROOM: WE DO!

GODHI: From our most ancient times, the symbol of oath-taking was the ring. Perfect in form, the circle is without end, as is the strength of the oaths taken here today. (Groom) place the ring that symbolizes your oath upon your brides finger and repeat after me:

I (Groom) [repeat] do plight my troth [repeat] and give my oath [repeat] to face all challenges together [repeat] with honesty and courage [repeat] until death separates us [repeat].

GODHI: (Bride) place the ring that symbolize your oath upon your groom’s finger and repeat after me:

I (Bride) [repeat] do plight my troth [repeat] and give my oath [repeat] to face all challenges together [repeat] with honesty and courage [repeat] until death separates us [repeat].
GODHI: It is not in the power of a priest to make a marriage, it is only for a priest to stand before the folk and acknowledge what has been woven by the Norns, and forged by the love and troth of these two. As I take this cord that you have fashioned from the fabric of your separate lives, so do I show the sacred ancestors, the assembled wights and these good folk what the gods already know, you are now bound together as husband and wife.

>>Best symbol of being bound together is..... being bound together. Who knew? The oath rings worn stand as testimony for all time of the oaths sworn, and they will have exactly as much magic in them, as the couple puts work into the marriage. That makes the best of them potent indeed.

Godhi joins their hands with the cord to symbolise their union and raises their bound hands before the folk.

GODHI: (Groom) you may kiss your bride.

The couple then opens the wedding feast by raising the loving cup, the cup from which each will serve the other, and then the cake with which each will feed the other.

>>It is hard to do this, much laughter frequently results. You are each others sustenance, each others joy. This is new, and you will have to find new ways of doing things, but it is deeply rewarding. Bound together in joy, we can do the binding, but the joy you must bring to each other.
At the wedding feast, the hammer is laid in the brides lap as blessing of fertility and pledge of fidelity.

>>>The Heathen marriage ceremony recognizes a marriage for what it is, and separates each level of function so that it can be considered, understood, and accepted, before a marriage is complete.

Marriage is a contract entered into by two people who wish to come together in love to make a family. Each comes from a family, but they agree to put the family they make together first. Each understands that in joining to each other, they join not just themselves, but their whole families back to the most distant ancestors, and forward in time to the last of their descendents yet unborn.

Marriage is a contract in which two people who are free thinking individuals with wants, needs, desires, and the capacity to change make a solemn oath to come together and jointly strive to face what comes together. It is an act of will, as much as an act of love. Each marriage is different, as each couple is different, but the act of union creates a new thing, a new hearth, a new family just the same, whenever it is performed.
Freeholder Volume 2016 Issue 1

Announcements

Boasts

New Boasts
No new boasts have been made.

Continuing Boasts
Aaron Brookes has sworn an oath to have the Freehold registered as a religious body for the purposes of the Marriage Act, thus enabling the Freyr and Jarls of the Freehold to solemnize marriage within the province of British Columbia.

The Freyr has sworn an oath that the Freehold shall create a third volume of Kindertales, a book that contains rituals, and a book that contains ritual dramas. These books shall be published and available for sale by Yule 2016.

Oaths
Kathleen Brookes boasts of swearing her Journeyman's Oath on the 1st of November 2015.

Graeme A. Barber Boasts of having sworn his Jarl's Oath in regards to Serpent's Lake Kindred on the 19th of March 2016.

Upcoming Events
Serpent's Lake Kindred shall host a Sigrblot Ritual on Saturday the 16th of April. Any and all Heathens or Heathen Friendly individuals are invited to attend.

The Freehold is one of the host Kindreds for Trothmoot 2016, which shall be held in Ft. Flaggler State Park WA the 9th to 12th of June 2016. This is a Troth event that is open to any and all that wish to attend. Tickets will be available for either the whole weekend or for single day passes.

From the Editor
Hail the Hall! I do not have much to say, I was pleased by the high return of interest in submission of items for the Newsletter. I hope we can continue to maintain this level of activity and perhaps grow out small newsletter into a must have periodical for the local Heathen community.

An update on the registration of the Freehold with the Vital Statistics Agency: all paperwork has been submitted and we are waiting on a reply from VSA.

In Frith,
Aaron Brookes, Secretary