

# THE RIDER



*Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago?*

Horses for the Hof | Our Temple Steward | Feast of the Einherjar

## Charming of the Plough - Feb 20th

Join us at NewGrange Hof, on the 20th of February to celebrate our connection to the earth! Bring your favorite garden tools to be blessed, and a change of work clothes to put those tools to work.

We'll plan the general layout of the Hof property; put some plants, and possibly a new tree, in the ground; establish a compost pile; give Blot to the Holy Powers; and sit at Sumbel. We'll talk about "planting the seeds" in our lives to get what we want out of life and to be the people we want to be. And of course there will be big doses of that old fashioned AFA sense of belonging and community!

This event is open to AFA members and vouched-for guests.

NewGrange Hall

8408 La Porte Road,  
Brownsville, CA. 95919

530.675.9017



## Horses for the Hof

Glad and Gyllir, Gler and Skeidbrimir,  
Sillfrintopp and Sinir, Gisl and [Falhofnir](#),  
[Gulltopp](#) and Lettfeti; on these steeds the Æsir  
each day ride, when they to council go,  
at Yggdrasil's ash.

—*Grimnismál* (30), [Thorpe's translation](#)

Rough and Ready, a great name for an old west town, and the cedar mill there was straight out of history. Not the machinery, but the old frame buildings, the cobwebbed rifles on the wall in the office and the manner of the men who worked there. I loved everything about this place, simple, traditional and straightforward. Thorgrun Odden and I had gone to pick out the boards for the fascia on the Hof. Local cedar, milled down to 10"x2" and running around 16 feet long. We searched for good heartwood (Thorgrun also found a good size scorpion), knot free for a few feet from one end. These will become our carved horse heads, crossed at the gables of the NewGrange Hof, in the old European style.

I had long been familiar with the construction of the 'bauernhaus' (farm house), my woodworking mentor and fellow AFA member, Clark Wullenweber had a love for the style and I inherited



## Our Temple Steward

Steward. A word that stems from from the Old English 'Stigweard' meaning 'House Guardian'.

Those who know Jim Erickson, know there could be no better choice for the Steward of our hof.

Jim is an Army Ranger, and former Fire Captain at Cal Fire.

An avid outdoorsman, Jim recently took numerous medals at the US Police and Fire Championship as well as the World Police and Fire Games.

The Asatru Folk Assembly used to hold midsummer events at Camp Norge in Colfax, CA. where Jim was the manager at the time. He was always accommodating and professional, and having come to the religion of his ancestors, soon joined our tribe.

Since retired, Jim found love, marrying AFA member Diane Mary, in 2013. Wherever Jim goes, Sara the corgi isn't far behind and his cheery demeanor, extensive knowledge of facility maintenance and management and his dedication to the AFA make him the best choice for this volunteer position. We couldn't be happier and thank Jim deeply for his time and expertise in the years ahead.

many of his german books of traditional architecture. The horse head gables seem to have been predominant in Northern Germany, but are found across Northern Europe from the Netherlands to Russia. On a trip to Saxony, I was able to see first hand the simple beauty of those watchful horse heads, necks raised from thatched roofs, surveying the countryside. Simple in their beauty, they became the focus of the farm houses and halls, not a cross, but an older symbol of the country folk. It was natural, when I was asked by the Alsherjargothi to envision the old Grange Hall in Brownsville California as an Asatru Hof, that I thought immediately of those horse heads. AFA-Kin and woodworker, Tommy Ferguson, suggested the designs from the tent poles discovered in the Gokstad Ship burial (*which adorn the masthead of this newsletter*). I readily agreed, the look was perfect, just like a horse, with a hint of dragon, and we could adapt them for the Hof with relative ease.



The noble steed holds a place in the heart of the Folk. We have the archaeology of our ancient horse sacrifices, the runes Ehwa and Raidho, the chalk figures of England, the teams that pull the chariots of the sun and moon, and the first among the horses of the Æsir, Sleipnir, eight legged bearer of the Allfather.

According to Rudolf Simek's 'Dictionary of Northern Mythology', around the areas of Holstein, Horse shaped gables decorations were referred to as 'Hengist and Horsa' as late as 1875. This alignment with the fabled

twins Hengist and Horsa (Whose names mean 'Stallion' and 'Horse') is one that sits well with me. The ancient Saxon conquerors of Britain, descendants and worshippers of Woden, brought the continental Saxon, Jutish and Frisian warriors to protect the Britons from Pictish assault, and from there conquered the land, ushering in the worship of Odin to England, and largely pushing out the Roman cult of Christianity.

In a way, we are like the armies of Hengist and Horsa reaching that nearby shore. We are needed, to bring our folk home to the ancient faith of our forefathers. Under the guidance of Odin, we sons and daughters of Europe have crossed the wide waters and are claiming a place for the Gods of our folk. Just as the Æsir gather at the world tree, we ride together and gather at the NewGrange Hof, for wisdom, for council and community. Under the watchful eyes of the the Ancestors, and the wooden horse heads that remind us, that while we have a place to gather, we must always be ready to ride forth for our descendants. May the thundering hooves of the celestial horses gallop across the sacred lands of our people, and stir them to wonder and might.

- Brad Taylor-Hicks

**Woodworker, Tommy Ferguson**

## The Call went out...

...and was answered. 40 AFA members and friends came, armed with paint rollers, weed whackers, hammers, chainsaws, post hole diggers and a lot of energy. We built fences, cleared land, painted the inside of the hall, forged hinges for the new doors and put our hearts into the NewGrange Hall.

We certainly raised the interest of the locals in Brownsville, many stopping by and inquiring about our activities. The Grange Hall has been a part of this rural community for many years, and we discovered that it had gone through many different incarnations, a school, a church, even a youth center. Some of the folks we talked to were relieved that it was wasn't being turned into a bar and many were just happy that it was occupied and that we weren't going to paint it purple! One local just asked us a simple burning question 'You don't vote for Obama, do you?'

Exhausted, but well fed from the meat cooked on our impressive grill, the evening brought us to the most important event, our first ritual. The Alsherjargothi, Stephen McNallen, stood in the candlelit hall, with his folk around him and gave blót to Oðinn. The echo of his words shook the old boards, and the shadow of his hand raising the mead-brimming horn seemed to pass through the high gabled roof. We gave our troth to the Allfather into that horn, and mead was scattered, sanctifying the assembly and the hall itself.

**Joe Sigmundr with his son, Riot and Maddie Rose****Blacksmith, Jessica Rose**

We stepped quietly away from the blót to internalize the momentous occasion that we had witnessed. Our Gods, our Folk, our Gothi, our Hof...it all came together. This is our Wyrð. We came back to share in our revelry, raise glasses and horns together, share stories and eventually, sleep. As I rose in the early morning, I couldn't help but see my kinfolk, asleep at the corners of the hall after a great feast and think of how much like our ancestors we really are.



The next morning, our stove roared to life, cooking up a splendid breakfast. With such a well equipped kitchen and able hands, we knew we would not go hungry. We set to work again, anvils ringing, joined by a chorus of power tools and Wardruna, carried from someone's speakers.

That afternoon, we carried the folk flame, person to person, staged like sentinels around the border to our land. Mead rained from the evergreen sprig as the Alsherjargothi blessed the land as we walked together, our words simple "*Æsir and Vanir, Wights, all holy! Hallow and hold this place!*" We ended our rite between the Godpoles, facing our mighty altar stone. A close look at the altar stone reveals an Othala rune, which I placed there the day after AFA Midsummer in the Sierras, when a small group of us first saw the property.

That day, we poured mead upon the rock, watching it run over and into the soil, seeping in the shadow of the pines. Just a few weeks later, we would have the keys in our hands. This is merely the beginning...



The Hearg (Altar stone)

**Through your hard work and your donations, we will turn this grange hall into a Hof worthy of our Gods. Even though our indigogo campaign has ended, donations to the Hof can still be made using the Donate button at <http://asatrufolkassembly.org>. We are in the process of sending out donation perks, if you have not yet received yours, please email Sheila McNallen at [afa@runestone.org](mailto:afa@runestone.org)**

**The Temple at Uppsala, Sweden**, was attested to by Adam of Bremen in his 11th century work *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* (Deeds of the Bishops of Hamburg). He tells of three statues in the temple, dedicated to Odin, Thor and Frey. He writes that "*For all their Gods there are appointed priests to offer sacrifices for the people. If plague and famine threaten, a libation is poured to the idol Thor; if war, to Wotan (Odin); if marriages*



*are to be celebrated, to Frikko (Frey). It is customary also to solemnize in Uppsala, at nine-year intervals, a general feast of all the provinces of Sweden.*" Snorri Sturluson in his 13th Century work *Heimskringla* attributes the building of the temple to Frey himself saying he "...erected a great temple at Uppsala and made his chief residence there, directing it to all tribute due to him..." Much archeological controversy surrounds the site and scale of the temple as well as its demise, but it is generally accepted that the temple was destroyed in the late 11th century. NewGrange Hof represents the first large public Hof since that time. Hail the AFA!