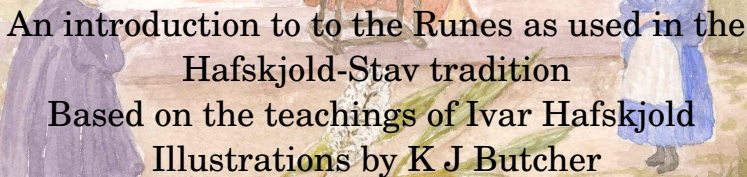


[illegible]

By Graham Butcher



An introduction to to the Runes as used in the  
Hafskjold-Stav tradition  
Based on the teachings of Ivar Hafskjold  
Illustrations by K J Butcher

kg Butcher

# A Stav Book of Runes

By Graham Butcher

Illustrations by Kathleen Joan Butcher

Published by Ice and Fire Ltd.

<http://www.iceandfire.org.uk>

















email: [admin@iceandfire.org.uk](mailto:admin@iceandfire.org.uk)

First published June 1999

This Ebook edition published April 2014

© Copyright belongs to Graham Butcher 1999

## Contents

Introduction	1
What are the runes?	3
Fe 	4
Ur 	6
Thor 	10
As 	13
Rei 	16
Kreft 	19
Hagl 	24
Nod 	27
Is 	32
Ar 	36
Sol 	38
Tyr 	42
Bjork 	45
Mann 	48
Laug 	51
Yr 	56
Bibliography	61
Appendix – The Anglo-Saxon Rune Poems	62

# Introduction

The text for this booklet originated around 1992 when I began studying Hafskjold-Stáv under Ivar Hafskjold. As well learning and practising the stances and martial training I kept a notebook of my researches into the runes and my responses to the associated mythology and meanings.

Ivar's approach has always been to give the basic details of his family system, encourage individual study and then answer the questions that arose from this ongoing process. Eventually I turned my notebooks into a volume as a basic introduction to Stáv. Eventually about 200 copies were produced and distributed to other students to facilitate and encourage their own study.

In many respects this original work has been superseded by subsequent publications which deal with specific aspects of Stáv. However, the responses I made to the runes and their mythological associations may still be of interest. So they are now reproduced in this booklet for the interest of anyone embarking on a study of Hafskjold-Stáv.

The meanings and associations are traditional to the Hafskjold-Stáv system, the myths and stories referred to have been around for many hundreds of years. Apart from these the contents of this booklet are my own thoughts and responses about and to the runes. As such they should not be taken too seriously and certainly not as carrying any authority.

Indeed the student of Hafskjold-Stáv should study, think and meditate in order to make their own responses and connections.

G D Butcher - August 2000

This version updated April 2014

# What are the Runes?

The origins of the runes are lost in the mists of time, rune-like carvings date back to pre-historic times. They were in use in Northern Europe by the Roman period. The Futhork used by the Hafskjold Clan seems to date back to the 8th century AD when representatives of the main centres of runic learning met on an Island in the Gota river and agreed on the 16 character Futhork which the Hafskjolds have used ever since.

The basic meaning of the runes is found in the Old Norse Rune Rhyme which goes with this Futhork. I have also included the Anglo-Saxon Rune Poems in an appendix on page 62. Although there are 24 Anglo-Saxon Rune Poems I have included the verses which relate to the equivalent runes in the Younger Futhork which we use. When studying the Younger Futhork then the Old Norse Rune Rhymes are the most important. However the Anglo-Saxon poems do provide an interesting alternative perspective.

We are not overly concerned with the history of the runes in this booklet, more with what the runes mean today. Please see the bibliography on page 61 for suggested further reading. There is also a great deal of interesting material available online. As with many subjects Wikipedia is a good place to start.

## Frey's Ætt beginning with ƿ Fe ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ ƿ

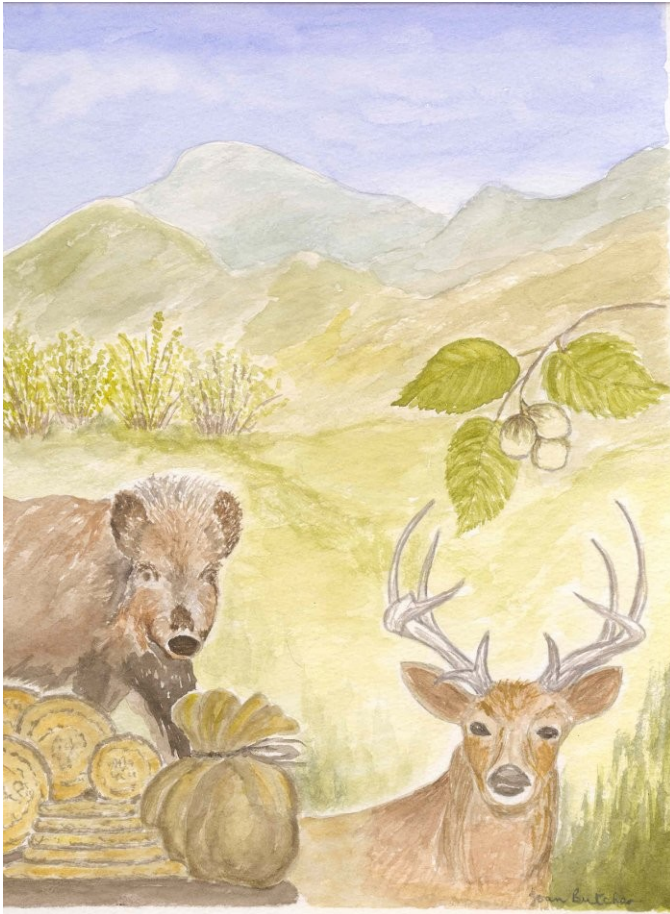
Old Norse Rune Rhyme

ƿ Fe (*Wealth*) causes strife between kinsmen,  
*the wolf grows up in the woods.*

**ƿ Fe - Means Animals (in particular, cattle). It can also mean gold. It symbolises riches, success but possibly of a portable or transient nature.**

**The mythological association is with Frey who is the brother of Freya and son of Njord. The fylgia associated with this rune are the Stag, boar, hog and the tree is the Hazel. Fe is associated with the masculine aspect of the Karl principle.**

Fe implies wealth, success and fertility but these things are meaningless unless shared and freely distributed to those who have need of them. The biblical injunction, "The love of money is the root of all evil," (1 Timothy 6 v 10) could almost have been written with this rune in mind. It particularly refers to the kind of easy come, easy go wealth that cattle represent. A herd of cattle can be acquired quite easily and quickly, by purchase, by theft or even by accident should un-branded cattle wander onto your land. But just as easily they can be lost by accident, rustlers or by hungry wolves. Also if the whole herd is slaughtered at once there will be no breeding stock for the future. It is a kind of wealth that must be nurtured and cared for and not used greedily or carelessly. The rune poem refers to the jealousy and strife that can arise from sudden increases in wealth. Consider the reaction to winners of the national lottery. The family that fights amongst itself ignores the dangers that lie outside, the wolf in the woods which waits its chance to



steal the unguarded cattle.

On a spiritual level this rune is associated with enlightenment through desire. The story of Frey and Gerda (Norse Myths page 54 to 58) tells how Frey sat in Odin's chair and saw all the nine worlds. He had no business being there, not because Odin was selfish about such things, but because only Odin had the necessary preparation through his ordeal on the Yggdrasil tree to be able to cope with seeing everything. Frey saw Gerda and was so struck with her

beauty that it totally paralysed him. As the god of fertility it was no ordinary sexual attraction that stunned Frey but an awareness of a desire so powerful that he never dared hope that it could be fulfilled and was so overawed by what he felt and what he had seen that he was incapable of taking any constructive action to deal with the situation. In the end he gave his servant Skirnir his two most precious possessions, his sword and his horse, to go to Gerda and woo her for him. Skirnir succeeded in his mission but Frey was deprived of his sword and was thus ill equipped to defend himself at the last battle at the day of Ragnarock and fell to the giant Surt.

There are various possible interpretations of this myth. The obvious one is the concept of the god of fertility melting the ice of the frost giantess Gerda in order to enable the crops to grow. However on another level it deals with the idea of desire as a motivating force for enlightenment, that once we have seen that which we desire most there is no further life unless we have the object of that desire and it cannot be ignored or dismissed without the end of life itself, even though the cost of fulfilling that desire might be the most precious things we possess.

## ᚱ Ur

### Old Norse Rune Rhyme

ᚱ Ur (*Slag*) *is from bad iron;*

*often runs the reindeer on the hard snow.*

**ᚱ Ur - Means Slag (from smelting ore) and it symbolises the primal forces of nature. It also suggests the processes of purification and refinement necessary to strength and perfection. The mythological association is with Vidar, the strong, silent son of Odin. The Fylgia is the Auroch (a now extinct species of large, wild ox).**

**The significant Tree is the Pine and Ur is associated with the Herse principle.**

Ur deals with primal energy and power. The Norse rune rhyme suggests the purification of iron, the process of smelting and forging to remove the hard, brittle slag which creates flaws in otherwise sound weapons and tools. The hard snow referred to in the second half of the rhyme is the brittle crust of frozen snow which covers deep drifts. If it holds up it can be walked or even run across; if it gives way, as it often does, the reindeer will fall through and be trapped, the sharp edges of the hard snow or Skadi (see notes on Is) may inflict serious injuries preventing the trapped animal from climbing out and leaving it to the mercy of predators, starvation or exposure. Ur suggests testing and refining, possibly to the point of destruction. On the positive side Ur also suggests power and strength that results from the refining and testing process. The Anglo Saxon poem suggests the power and strength that comes from this process of refining, however painful and drastic it may seem at the time. When this rune occurs it indicates a time of testing and purification that should be welcomed, if





not exactly enjoyed, by all who would progress in life.

We don't know all that much about Vidar. He is sometimes referred to as the strong and silent god. It seems that he was the son of Odin and the giantess Grid (Norse Myths page 129). His hall is Vidi, the twelfth enclosure of Asgard, a place of saplings and long grass. (Norse Myths Page 62). He was present at the feast when Loki insulted the rest of the gods but he simply obeyed his father, gave Loki a drink

and then moved aside to give the trickster room to sit down. It is noteworthy that Loki, unlike the rest of the Aesir, has nothing to insult Vidar with. Vidar really comes into his own at the day of Ragnarock when he avenges his father by destroying the Fenris wolf by ripping open the monster's mouth using a boot made from the scraps of leather that cobblers throw away and his enormous strength. It is also predicted that he will be the ruler of the recreated world that will arise after Ragnarock.

Ur suggests the strong silent hero who keeps his own counsel, fights and wins the ultimate conflict using other peoples cast offs and inherits the earth because he is blameless.

## ‣ Thor

### Old Norse Rune Rhyme

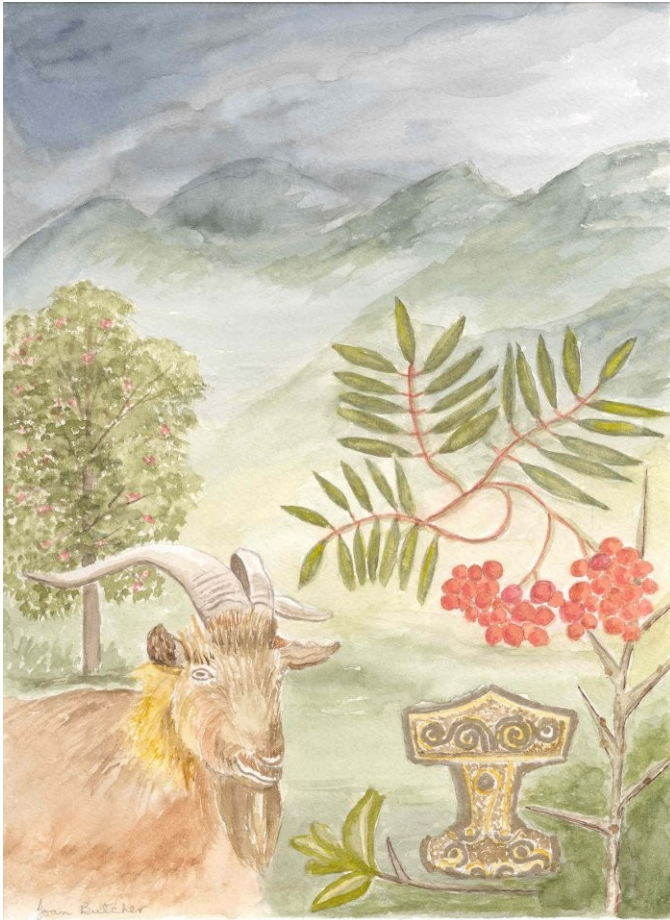
‣ Thor (*Thurs*) causes the monthly sickness of women; few are cheerful at this time.

‣ **Thor - Means thunder, war or thorn and is symbolised as protection and the famous Thor's hammer. (Which rejoiced in the name Molinor and in turn symbolised bolts of lightening). The mythological associations are with the stories about Thor, the son of Odin and protector of Aesgard. The fylgia is the goat (Thor had two of these to draw his chariot).**

**The tree is the Rowan. Thor is associated with the Herse principle but is also the protector of Trels.**

Thor is a figure of much larger than life proportions and we do know a great deal about him from the mythology. He is depicted as a big, brawny, red headed fellow with a quick temper but rather slower wits. He is the defender of Asgard, armed with his great strength, almost reckless courage and his formidable hammer, Molinor. With Molinor he slays the giants, the ever threatening enemies of the Aesir and mankind.

The rune means, and the shape suggests, the thorn, a sign of protection. The thorn provides protection against outward threats. A screen of thorn bushes is as good a security measure as a barbed wire fence. Also a stem covered with thorns cannot easily be grasped or bitten, protecting a plant from being uprooted or eaten. Even a thorn turned back against yourself is uncomfortable but protects against complacency, the greatest threat of all. The thorn is painful and rarely dangerous yet if stuck in the wrong place can cripple a strong man or animal as in the story of Androcles and the Lion.



This is a rune of contradictions, the idea of strength being weakness and the small and weak actually being very strong. Often the harmless but painful reminder to be aware and careful provides much better protection than the really dangerous weapon or heavy armour. Perhaps the most instructive stories about Thor are the ones that show that things are often not at all what they seem.

There is the account of Thor's visit to Utgard (Norse Myths Page 80 to 94) where Thor thinks he has been utterly

humiliated but in fact has terrified the giants with his enormous strength as he took on impossible tasks. Then there is the Lay of Thrym (Norse Myths Page 70 to 74) when Thor fooled the giant Thrym by disguising himself as Freya in order to win back his hammer. There is also the story of Thor and Geirrod (Norse Myths Page 127 to 132) which tells us why the Rowan tree is associated with Thor and hints at the meaning of the Norwegian Rune Rhyme.

This rune can be very applicable to the question of personal happiness. Although everything seems to be fine and there is no reason to be unhappy there can still be other realities lodged under the skin where they may be invisible from the outside yet torment us everyday. If these realities are not recognised and addressed then eventually they turn septic and cause major problems.

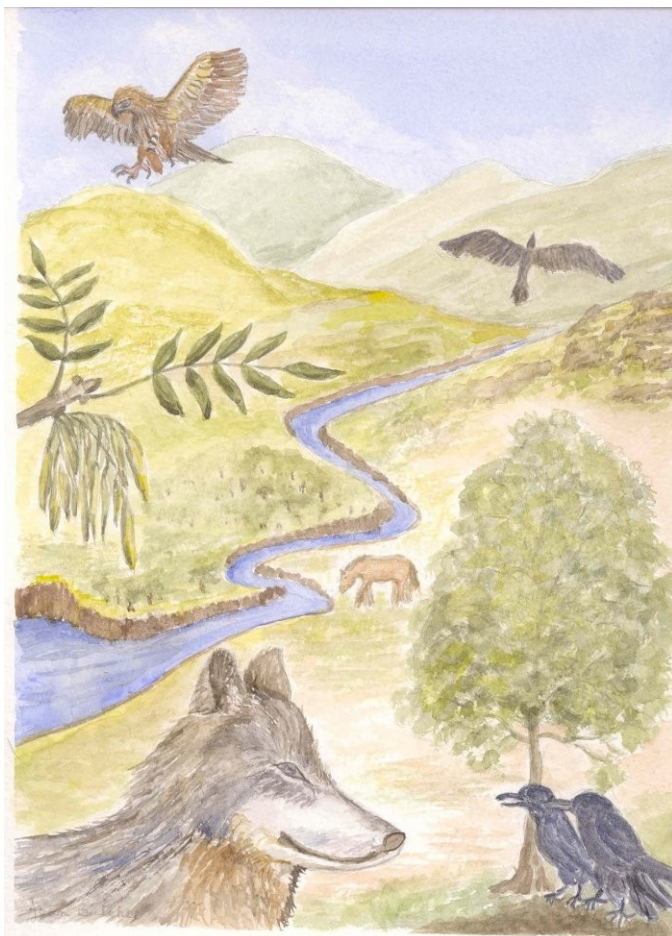
## ᚱ As

### Old Norse Rune Rhyme

ᚱ As (*Mouth*) *is the beginning of journeys;  
the sheath is that for swords.*

**ᚱ As - Means mouth as in that with which we speak and estuary, as in mouth of a river. As symbolises knowledge, wisdom and kingship. The mythological associations are with Odin, the all-father of the Aesir. He has numerous fylgia including the raven, wolf, horse, serpent. The significant tree is the Ash. Odin represents the Konge principle.**

As means the god, Odin, the all father and this rune relates to wisdom. As the Konge (King) Odin has a menagerie of Folgie which relate to every class. The two different poems show two possible meanings of this rune. "As is the way of all journeys." also has a double meaning. It can mean estuary, mouth of a river, the physical starting point of a journey. In a place like Norway, where the geography of mountains and fjords makes travel by any means apart from by boat very difficult, it is almost inevitable that a journey would start here. But it also suggests a dedication to the god (As) before beginning the journey, asking that the endeavour be worthwhile and for protection and guidance while travelling. The second line balances this by pointing out that we are also responsible for our own protection. Is your sword in its sheath before you set off in case you meet danger on the way? Even then there is a suggestion of the need for wisdom. Only the fool goes unprotected yet the sheathed sword is not a threat to others causing danger. Someone once carved on their sword blade; "Don't draw me without just cause, don't sheathe me without honour." This rune also suggests personal



responsibility.

The Anglo-Saxon rune rhyme (see page 62) knows nothing of the fjords and dangers of Scandinavia. Instead it describes the importance of speech and suggests three reasons for opening one's mouth; to advise or ask for advice, to bring comfort to those able to understand and to bless. If any other purpose is intended from speaking then the mouth is probably better remaining closed.

As with Thor we find Odin playing some significant role in

nearly all the stories in the Eddas. The stories that are of most immediate interest are those telling how Odin acquired his wisdom, (Norse Myths page 15 to 17) and The Mead of Poetry (Norse Myths page 28 to 32). The warning that comes with this rune is that there is a painful price to be paid for achieving wisdom, as Odin found out. Once it has been gained it is not likely to bring personal happiness, as Odin found when he could not avoid foreseeing the death of his beloved son Baldur. Wisdom gives us the power to help others who do not have the knowledge we may have gained. But when we have learned to see the truth we cannot then choose not to see it when the truth is painful or inconvenient. Seeing reality, especially if we do not have the courage to act on it, can bring great pain.



## ᚱ Rei

Old Norse Rune Rhyme

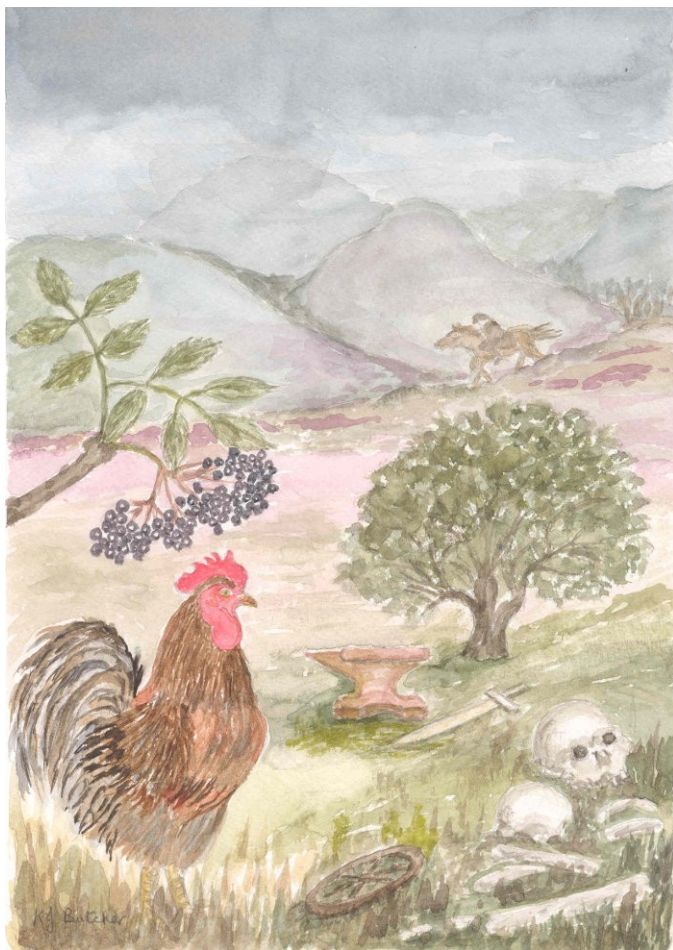
ᚱ Rei (*Riding*) *it is said, is worst for horses;  
Regin forged the best sword.*

**ᚱ Rei - Means wheel, road or ride. It symbolises the wild hunt and the process of death and transformation. The mythological association is with Hel, the daughter of Loki and queen of the underworld. She is traditionally depicted as half alive and half dead. The fylgia is the red rooster and the significant tree is the Elder.**

**Rei is associated with the Trel principle.**

ᚱ can be seen as the counterpoint to ᚦ. Odin knows all things and from his vantage point sees all that happens in the nine worlds. He also rules the Hall, Valhalla, where the heroes who have fallen in battle come for their reward. But Hel rules the underworld where there is always darkness and she takes in those who have achieved little in life and can make no claim on a heroic earthly existence. ᚦ signifies the journey of discovery by sea, a sensible way to travel. ᚱ suggests the hard journey over trackless wastes where horses break down with exhaustion and the rider does not even notice. For ᚦ the sword is in the sheath where it belongs but for ᚱ the sword may be the best but if handled wrongly or if it breaks will bring disaster, as did the sword forged by Regin in the Volsung saga.

Odin is completely alive as can be seen from his lifestyle and exploits, Hel begins life half alive and half dead and never leaves the land of lost souls except to lead the wild hunt with Odin. Even then the wild hunt can be seen as the meeting point between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Hel is always associated with death, or a state



of non living. The Anglo-Saxon poem (see page 62) picks up on the idea of a life half lived by the armchair hero who talks about the exploits he would like to undertake but never actually leaves the fireside. This rune suggests a situation that is a long way from where it ought to be.

### Conclusion for Frey's Ætt 𐌹𐌺𐌰𐌿𐌹

This completes the first ætt of Five Runes. This particular four are concerned with wealth, strength, security and

wisdom. As a counter point there is Rei which suggests the misguided effort or refusal to take chances which can negate the positive aspects of the first four or can release their potential when the problem is recognised. Rei isn't a bad rune, it is simply a very important reminder that eventually the armchair must be left behind and risks must be taken.

## ƿ Kreft

Note on Kreft ƿ: This rune does not belong to any of the ætts. It is in a category of its own but is placed where it is in the Futhork in order to spell this word. eg. ƿǫǫǫǫǫ

### Old Norse Rune Rhyme

ƿ Kreft (*Canker*) is the bane of children;  
*bolverk* makes a man pale, as in death.

**ƿ Kreft - Means canker or cancer. It symbolises malignancy, fire, deviousness and evil. The mythological association is with Loki, blood brother of Odin but rarely a true friend of the Aesir. The fylgia is a dragon. The significant tree is the Spruce. Kreft is associated with the Trel principle.**

This rune means the cancer which turns in on itself and destroys itself for no good reason. This is the sign of evil and this rune is associated with Loki, sometimes called the father of lies. Evil is not the same thing as conflict. The wolf eats the reindeer, if the reindeer is fast enough the wolf starves, if the reindeer is slow the wolf eats and feeds its cubs. This is the way of nature and survival is always a struggle between competing elements.

Diseases are always present in our environment and within our own bodies. Most of the time our own megin (life force which controls the immune system) fights the infections and protects us. Sometimes our megin level is low and we succumb to illness. Then we either die or recover with our resistance strengthened. Modern medicine usually tries to weaken the megin of the disease using powerful medicines. This can have the effect of strengthening the megin of the disease without helping the megin of the patient which means an even stronger medicine will be



needed next time.

This too is the way of nature; after all bugs and viruses have as much right to exist as we do. If we fight them with our own megin we get stronger, if we let chemicals do it then they get stronger and we become dependent.

Then we have the killers from within our own bodies, cancer cells mutated from our own tissue that will not die and thus keep growing until they kill the host. Things

which will not die are evil because they serve no useful purpose and take no part in the healthy competition of nature for survival. In fact they only survive by feeding off healthy tissue until it can no longer support the tumour. The vampire is the classical manifestation of evil, a being that should be dead but refuses to die. It must hide from the light and can only survive by drinking the blood (megin) of healthy living beings which in turn become vampires as well. The vampire has no purpose in its existence, leaves a trail of evil in its wake and to lay a vampire to rest is an act of great mercy.

This rune is the joker in the pack and as such does not fit into any of the three ætts. But the joker is important because it reminds us of the ever present danger of evil. In fact we can even consider evil a necessity because it destabilises the existing order and enables progress and development.

Loki certainly had his uses at first in that he could always come up with creative solutions to problems which a decent person would not consider. He also reduces the danger of boredom and without his meddling the Eddas would contain far less interesting stories. He also serves to prevent complacency and is an active agent in bringing destiny to its fulfilment.

However he does this in a very dangerous way through a fatalistic attitude to life. In the story of the Apples of Iduna (Norse Myths Page 38 to 43) he believes that he has no choice but to carry out his promise made to Thiassi. In one sense he does have no choice because to break his word would have weakened his powers, on the other hand Thor or Tyr would have rather died than made such a promise in the first place and Odin would have kept to the letter of the promise while altering the spirit. Loki in his fear simply

promises anything to save his own skin without considering the consequences or if he will be able to rectify the situation later. In doing so he threatens the Æsir with a slow decline into old age and death. When he is forced to try and put things right he succeeds. Evil does not struggle to survive and risk dying, it accepts fate and feeds off those who do struggle to survive.

Where Loki does serve a useful purpose is in counterbalancing the arrogance which thinks that destiny can be blocked and prevented from occurring. Frigg thought she had made Baldur completely safe and in doing so she made it very easy for Loki to kill him. A dire warning to overprotective mothers; if we would protect our children from evil the worst thing we can do is think that we have made them invulnerable. Evil is ever present and we cannot afford to ignore it. If we do it grows within us, feeds on our megin and eventually kills us.

But evil becomes a particular problem when we fight against ourselves, deny our true nature or resist the flow of the Orlog. In that sense evil is part of ourselves, the part that hides from the truth, the part that should die but will not until we confront it and force it to let go of us.

There is an interesting parallel between Loki in the Eddas and Judas in the New Testament. Judas was corrupt through and through and yet Jesus allowed him to become one of the twelve disciples. Jesus stood by Judas right to the end even though it was Judas who made the arrest and execution of Jesus possible. Unfortunately the gospels are written as Christian propaganda and thus give Judas as little coverage as possible. This is a shame since there must have been some good stories about Judas. How did he and Jesus get on in the early days?

Why was he included in the twelve in the first place even

though Jesus must have known that Judas would one day betray him?

Good must actually tolerate evil as far as it dares, and sometimes far beyond, because to destroy evil is actually to destroy part of oneself. The Æsir could have killed Loki and indeed Thor would have done so on more than one occasion if he had not been restrained. But Loki was a blood brother to Odin and as such could not be killed without a fatal compromise of honour. Even when the Æsir did finally bind Loki it brought the day of Ragnarock closer. In the end evil brings about its own destruction, as Loki did when he finally insulted the Æsir beyond endurance.

This rune suggests a warning to be taken seriously. If it indicates the future of some endeavour then the result will almost certainly be a burnout of some kind. Kreft will suggest that a particular path is against nature or one's true destiny and no real good can come of it. From a positive point of view Kreft indicates the burning, creative impulse which if not properly and fully expressed will turn inwards and burn up the healthy energy. Loki was originally of great use to the Æsir but the unfocused and undisciplined nature of his behaviour eventually brought about destruction in the day of Ragnarock.



Heimdal's Ætt beginning with ✖ Hagl

✖|/|/

Old Norse Rune Rhyme

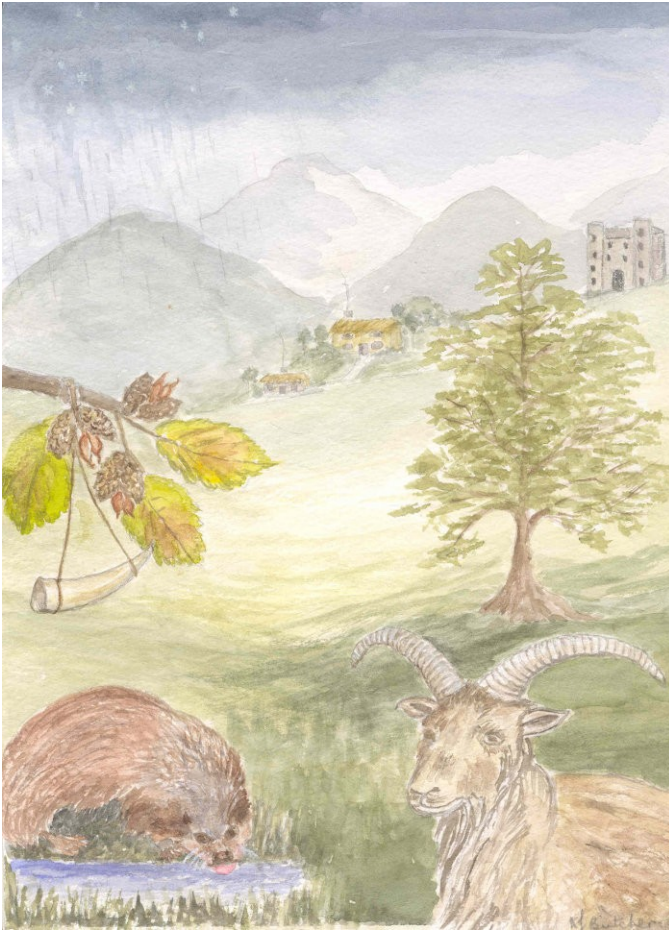
✖ Hagl (*Hailstones*) are the whitest of grains;  
*Christ formed the world in ancient times.*

**✖ Hagl - Means hailstones. It symbolises the rainbow bridge between heaven and earth, also the unexpected and sudden transformation. The mythological association is with Heimdal, son of Odin and watchman of the Aesir. The fylgia is the Ram or Otter and the significant tree is the Beech.**

**Hagl is associated with the Jarl principle.**

Hagl is associated with Heimdall, the watchman of the Æsir and Odin's agent for the education of mankind. This rune also means hailstones, the sudden change or disaster which strikes unexpectedly from a summer sky. It may destroy crops and cause temporary chaos yet it instantly changes to water and can enable new growth to take place. Hagl is an agent of fate which both destroys the old and permits the creation of the new. When Hagl occurs it means a sudden change is in the offing. It may be something completely unexpected, although since change is a fundamental fact of the universe only a fool believes that nothing can change, it always does, the question is when and how.

Everyone knows that hail can fall, it is simply impossible to know when it will be. The change that Hagl indicates may not be better or worse, simply something new. Heimdall is the god of change and his role was to bring about a new order of mankind. (Norse Myths Page 18 to 25) Not a chaotic, destructive change of the kind that Loki would be responsible for but the balanced, controlled change that the



stable shape of the Hagl rune indicates. Heimdall is a very far sighted god so he sees the consequences of everything that happens due to his actions. Thus when he fathered Jarl it was with the clear intention of raising a lord who in turn would give birth to a king. (Norse Myths Page 24) Nor did he father Jarl and leave him to his own devices, he returned later and gave the young man a full education including knowledge of the runes.

Hagl means a shock to the system, disposing of the old to

make way for the new and this should not be seen as a disaster as such. It should be regarded more as an education and the beginning of a new creation. Change never comes without a certain amount of pain and disillusionment, but Hagl should serve to remind us that change is ever present and, when embraced rather than resisted, leads to new life.

## ✯ Nod

### Old Norse Rune Rhyme

✯ Nod (*Need*) makes for a difficult situation;  
the naked freeze in the frost.

**✯ Nod** - Means need, necessity or crisis. It symbolises *fate, compulsion and destiny. The mythological association is with the Norns, the three wyrd sisters: Urd (past) Verdandi (present) and Skuld (that which is to be). Each has a particular fylgia Owl (Urd) Spider (Vardandi) Carrion Crow (Skuld). The significant trees are: Alder (Urd), Willow, (Vardandi) and Elm (Skuld).*

Some scholars have suggested that because Odin refers to eighteen spells there should be eighteen runes rather than the sixteen used in the Danish Futhork. (Norse Myths page 16 and 17) We accept that there are eighteen personalities associated with the sixteen runes because Nod has three, the Norns or Wyrd sisters; Urd, Verdandi and Skuld, who control the fates. Urd is usually depicted as an old woman who knows the past, Verdandi as a matron who weaves the web of wyrd and Skuld as a veiled maiden who has an inkling of the future.

Their role is to water the roots of the Yggdrasill tree and weave the web of fate (wyrd) that governs each person's life from their birth to their death.

Nod suggests need or hunger. It is not a comfortable rune as the rhymes suggests but it is not a sign of disaster. It should prompt us to face up to a problem and get on with putting things right. The big danger in life is complacency, of procrastination, of leaving until tomorrow what should be dealt with today. In English we have the cliché, 'Necessity is the mother of invention.' the Scandinavians have a more picturesque saying, "The frost teaches a naked woman how



to weave." All genuine progress takes place in response to the often very painful stimulus of need. The Anglo-Saxon rune poem takes this constructive view of need, painful at the time but actually something to be grateful for if we respond in time.

Failure to recognise need and to take the appropriate steps to correct the situation is the single greatest source of failure and misery. But this rune also reminds us of the difference between desire and need. We may desire fine,

expensive and fashionable clothes which have little value in protecting us against the winter storms. Need prompts us to stock up on our survival requirements even if it means buying shabby but serviceable clothes at a jumble sale. A desire for status, style or perfection may often prevent us from seeing our real needs and fulfilling them now.

The idea of the Orlog is really quite simple and does not mean fate dealing terrible and unexpected blows. It simply means that each of us has a past which has furnished us with everything we have now, a lot of it invaluable, some of it unnecessary baggage. We are in a present situation that is unique in itself and then we have options for the future. These options depend upon what has happened in the past and what steps we take from our present situation. The Orlog is usually an ongoing process rather than a blinding flash of the totally unexpected. If you planted barley in a field in the autumn and it is now winter time then it is barley that is going to grow there in the spring. But how successful the crop is does depend upon what care is taken of the field now. The difference between a good crop or a mediocre one may depend upon what efforts are made now, but nothing can be done to change the crop from barley to oats.

The principle is used all the time coupled to our modern magic of mathematics and statistical theory. If you were to buy a new car and ask for an insurance quotation all that the assessor does is look at your past record and recorded statistics for your choice of vehicle and risks for the area in which you live. He then considers your present situation and gives a quote which is simply a prediction of how likely you are to have an accident. All of life is a process of considering the past, assessing the present and predicting the future; last year the winter was cold, therefore this

years probably will be as well. Last year I didn't have a warm enough coat, I still don't, I had better buy myself one. The predictable need teaches us to organise and regulate our lives. The unexpected need prompts us to innovate and be creative as well as showing us that much of what we treasure is actually so much junk when the frost of need really strikes.

On another level the Orlog shows us what we really are. All of us are created differently with different needs, potential and purpose in life. It is very easy to be channelled into inappropriate paths by outward expectations of parents, society, circumstances and education. The need of the Orlog, perhaps in the form of some thorn in the flesh, (see notes on Thor rune) will always resist this and sooner or later we have to face up to the path we should be taking and change direction. The big problem comes when those who think they have our best interests at heart try to block the Orlog for us. Perhaps the classic example is the fairy tale Sleeping Beauty. It was predicted that one day the princess would prick her finger on the needle of a spinning wheel and sleep forever. Her parents thought they could prevent this by banning all spinning wheels from their daughter's presence but all this meant was that when she did come across a spinning wheel she had no idea what it was or of the danger that it presented and of course she pricked her finger on it. If she had simply been warned of the special danger that spinning wheels presented she would have been far less likely to fall victim to the prophesy.

Frigg's attempts to protect Baldur created a similar situation. (See notes on Bjork) But as well as trying to block the Orlog there is also the opposite problem of fatalism, the attitude that it is frosty, I am naked therefore I am going to

freeze to death and there is nothing I can do about it. There is always something and we grow as human beings when we recognise the Orlog, work with it rather than against it and let it teach us who we really are and where we should be going. We cannot beat the Orlog and just giving into it is suicide, but in struggling with it we become fully human.



## | Is

### Old Norse Rune Rhyme

| Is (*Ice*) *we call the broad bridge;  
the blind need to be led.*

**| Is - Means Ice. Is symbolises Winter, the hunt, or a state of stasis. The mythological association is with Skadi, daughter of Thiassi and sometime wife of Njord. The fylgia is the polar bear or polar fox, and the Ptarmigan. The significant tree is the Juniper and Is is associated with the Jarl principle.**

This rune means "ice" which has slightly different connotations depending upon which side of the North Sea you happen to live. The Anglo-Saxon poem (see page 62) suggests the inhospitable and treacherous nature of ice and then contrasts this with its purity and beauty. This fits in rather well with what we know about Skadi the daughter of the frost giant Thiassi. She threatened a terrible revenge on the Aesir for killing her father and was only mollified by the possibility of marriage to Baldur. In the event she was tricked into marrying Niord with whom she found she got along quite well. Unfortunately they discovered that they were quite incompatible since he was not happy living in the mountains away from his beloved sea shore and ship yards. She could not settle away from the snowy uplands and the wild creatures which she loved to hunt. Eventually they parted, she to roam the frozen mountain wastes on her skis, hunting the wild creatures with her bow and arrows, a lonely figure bringing death with her and unable to yield for more than nine days to the God of plenty who loved her but could not satisfy her. (Norse Myths page 44 to 47)

A rather sad little tale but useful when Is occurs as it raises the question: Is this person in the environment in



which they belong and can flourish? It is all too common for people who should be in the mountains to find themselves living by the sea and vice-versa. It also raises the question of being tricked by circumstances into accepting something other than what we really hoped for and having to live with the consequences. The Norwegian rune poem implies a slightly different concept. In Northern Scandinavia the rivers and fjords freeze so hard in winter that motor vehicles can drive across them. Open expanses of water,

sometimes literally miles wide, become broad bridges. This can be very convenient in that it is possible to travel almost anywhere on flat open surfaces. It is also very dangerous because it is possible to lose one's way on these trackless expanses and drive endlessly round in circles or even out to the sea which does not freeze. Hence the second line in the poem, the blind need to be led, again implying that ice can be deceptive and treacherous.

Is can indicate wide open possibilities, so wide open in fact that guidance is needed to avoid getting completely disorientated. Having said that, Is is a neutral rune, not good or bad, indicating more a state of stasis. Stasis certainly has its uses, for example in the refrigerator or deep freeze. At the same time, how long can a situation remain frozen before time passes it by? A theme sometimes explored in science fiction concerns the person frozen at sometime in the past and thawed out hundreds of years later. This is very interesting for scientists but seriously traumatic for the being concerned who finds him or herself in a time where they do not belong. Sometimes situations need to be put on ice; a cooling off period can save a great deal of grief. 'Revenge is a dish best served up cold' as Machiavelli might have put it. A Norse equivalent of this goes: 'The Trel takes his revenge at once, the coward never does.' Implying that everyone else waits for the right moment. On the other hand things left in the freezer too long pass their sell by date and have no relevance to the present situation or they decay and must be discarded. Is can also be a warning to be very wary when the thaw does come as the result is often flooding and avalanches. Balance in all things must be maintained. Finally Skadi's cruelty should not be underestimated as it was she who placed the venomous snakes to torment the bound Loki. (Norse Myths

page 172) Ice is indeed both beautiful and cruel, glistening and treacherous, pure, yet only arresting decay.

## ✧ Ar

### Old Norse Rune Rhyme

✧ Ar (*A good harvest*) is the profit of men;  
*I say that the lord has been generous.*

**✧ Ar - Means a good Year, fertile land and a plentiful harvest. Ar symbolises plenty, the earth and the bounty of nature. The mythological association is with Jord (mother of Thor). The Fylgia is the Honey Bee. The significant tree is the Holly and Jord is associated with the feminine aspect of the Karl principle.**

Ar is the flip side of Nod as the shape of the rune suggests. Nod is the need or necessity which prompts the planting of the seed before the coming of the winter, Is. Ar is the harvest, the reaping of what is sown when the sun, Sol, has melted the ice and the combination of warmth and moisture has enabled the seed to germinate and grow. Ar is associated with Jord, the earth Goddess, who was Odin's first wife and the mother of Thor. She represents the earth crops of grain, fruits and vegetables as opposed to the livestock represented by Frey. Livestock is mobile and can be acquired or lost very suddenly but the fruits of the earth take time and effort to cultivate and only reward those who plant and nurture them in accordance with the cycle of the seasons. When this rune occurs it usually suggests a beneficial pay off for labours undertaken. The relationship between Odin and Jord produced Thor the bravest, strongest and most respected of the Aesir. On the other hand it can also suggest a repetitive cycle in which to be trapped that needs to be broken out of. It is also worth noting that the folgie is the honey bee, a very hard working and productive insect but one that spends its short life working itself to death and never displays any kind of



individuality.

On a deeper level there is the concept of the Earth Mother as the most powerful agent with which we have to contend, even though she seems to be the most passive. If we nurture her and care for her then she sustains and fulfils us. If we neglect, exploit or abuse her she patiently bears the torment without apparent complaint yet we die as she suffers.

## ᚱ Sol

### Old Norse Rune Rhyme

ᚱ Sol (*The Sun*) is the light of the lands;  
*I bow to the holiness.*

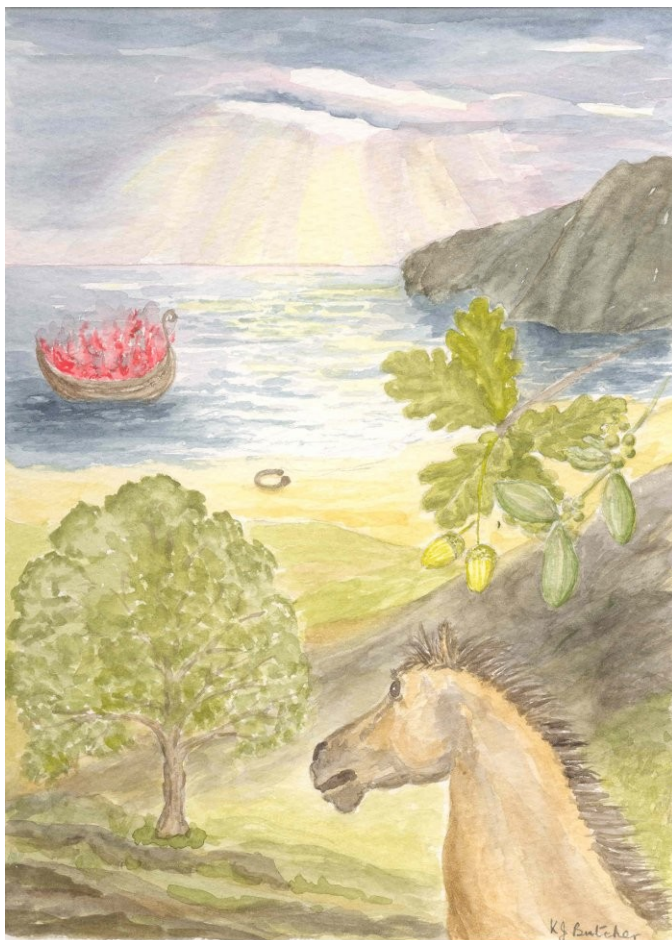
ᚱ **Sol** - Means the Sun. Sol symbolises the peaceful warrior who brings harmony and justice.

The mythological association is with Baldur the son of Odin and Frigg and Forsetti, son of Baldur and Nanna. The fylgia is the war Horse and the significant tree is the Oak. Sol is associated with the Herse principle.

Baldur, for this is his rune, seemed to have everything going for him. Youth, beauty, wisdom and the ability to bring peace and justice. He was the one that Skadi quite understandably set her heart upon marrying.

This is of no great surprise since the sun is the only power capable of melting frozen ice. But although Baldur is the most favoured of the gods he is also the most tragic of the Æsir, struck down by Loki's cruel deception and prevented from returning to Ægard before Ragnarok by the trickster's refusal to weep for him.

When the Sol rune occurs it generally suggests hope and success; the sun is shining on your endeavours and all is well. The second half of the poem shows the appropriate response to this situation. 'I bow to the holiness.' The sun doesn't need anything in return for shining upon you, it doesn't even notice your acknowledgement. All that is required is that you should bow your head in order to get the dazzle of success and good fortune out of your eyes and see clearly. This rune warns us of two things. Firstly that Baldur's goodness and beauty drew Loki's animosity and jealousy, which led to Baldur's destruction, and delayed his chances of resurrection, despite all the efforts of the rest of



the Æsir. This was in keeping with Baldur's Orlog and thus for the best in the long run but it caused much suffering at the time. Secondly, because he was considered to be so important the rest of the Æsir took extraordinary steps to protect him, leading him to believe that he was invulnerable, which in fact made it simple for him to be killed.

Sol reminds us that even when everything seems to be so much in our favour that nothing can possibly go wrong evil



may be more determined than ever to destroy us. The stronger Baldur seemed the more animosity he attracted from the evil Loki. When evil is sufficiently aroused it will always find some way to cause harm if given the opportunity. Ironically the safer and more secure you feel your position to be the more vulnerable you are. What Baldur really needed to protect him was not the illusion of total invulnerability but a thorn pricking him now and then to remind him to be careful. Enjoy the warmth and blessing of the sun but also take time to bow your head, get the glare out of your eyes and keep aware of what is going on around you. No one is so well favoured that evil cannot harm them.

### Conclusion for Heimdall's Ætt ✕|✗|✗|✗

This is the ætt of balances; need (✕) driving us towards invention, effort, investment and preparation for the future before the ice (|) freezes us, leading to plenty (✗) when the sun (✗) arrives again. But there is no harvest without realising the need to plant first, there is no water without the ice and the sun; ice alone is a state of stasis, the sun alone creates a parched desert. Each of the four runes balances the others to create the cycle of the seasons and the balance between motivation to succeed and the fruits of that success which are just rewards but cannot be expected to last forever.

As with each ætt there is the counterpoint which reminds us of the role of the Orlog in all matters. In this case Hagl, which is the result of the clash of sun and ice, hail, flash floods, avalanches, the sudden unexpected upheaval which changes everything in a moment. We would like life to be a smooth progression from seed time to harvest, a peaceful cycle of the seasons and this ætt suggests that is as it should be. But we cannot afford to be complacent.

Sometimes we are forced to re-evaluate our lives in shocking and painful ways. This is simply the way of the Orlog and the hailstone melts almost immediately giving way to new growth.

## Tyr's Ætt beginning with ↑ Tyr



Old Norse Rune Rhyme

↑ Tyr *is the one handed of the Æsir;  
the smith has to blow often.*

**↑ Tyr - Means war and justice. Tyr symbolises victory, self sacrifice and honour.**

**The mythological association is with Tyr, the son of Odin who lost his right hand to the Fenris wolf. The fylgia is the war dog. The significant tree is the Lime and Tyr is associated with the Herse principle.**

↑ is the symbol of warriors. It has always been the favourite rune with which to inscribe a sword. It can't be a coincidence that the war department used the broad arrowhead symbol for nearly a century to stamp all military issue equipment; every item so marked was literally dedicated to the God of War.

The Norwegian rune rhyme is simple and straightforward in keeping with the character of Tyr, the one handed of the Æsir. The main story which we have about Tyr concerns the Fenris wolf, one of Loki's three monstrous children resulting from his union with the giantess Angaboda. Hel and the Jorgmund serpent were dealt with quickly enough but Odin allowed the wolf to remain in Asgard where he grew daily larger and more dangerous.

Tyr was the only one brave enough to approach the monster. When it came to binding the wolf, because the danger he presented could no longer be ignored, it was Tyr who placed his hand in the creature's mouth to quieten him long enough to be bound. As a result the hand was bitten off. (Norse Myths page 33 to 37). Tyr represents the kind of



courage which pays the price of containing the evil that others have brought into the world. The soldiers who daily faced death or maiming on the streets of Northern Ireland must have known how Tyr felt. The troubles of Northern Ireland were not of their making, it was beyond them to solve them, yet still they had to patrol the streets wondering which one of them would take a bullet or lose a limb from a bomb or mine. However Tyr was not altogether the innocent victim of the situation. He was so sure of his courage and

strength that he went on feeding the Fenris wolf and caring for the beast long after any sensible man or god, including even the mighty Thor, would have realised the potential danger and have neutralised the monster.

Once the threat had reached the point that even Tyr could no longer cope with it only the sacrifice of his right hand, the warrior's greatest asset, could control the menace. The result was that Tyr fell at the day of Ragnarock, unable to defend himself fully because of his disability. The Tyr principle suggests a degree of determination and rigidity which can go too far. This can result in situations that could have been contained without sacrificial maiming had a little forethought, flexibility and healthy cowardice been applied. Tyr can be a warning not to put too much faith in our courage and strength.

The Tyr rune normally suggests that there will be victory if the cause is just and there is sufficient courage and willingness to sacrifice. This does not just mean warfare. Tyr can also suggest the lawyer and has as much to do with fighting for justice in everyday life as victory on the battlefield. The second line of the poem suggests that this might not be easy, there will be much work for the weapon smith before the conflict is finished. Tyr is also the symbol of male energy, the male creative force, as used in the classic modern symbol for the masculine. So Tyr can also suggest the need to 'be a man' and the occurrence of this rune can suggest that a man is in some way afraid of his masculinity and is repressing it in some way. The Tyr principle can be quite ruthless yet is never cowardly or dishonest. Tyr is a very positive symbol of all that is good, just, honest and brave but we must not forget as well the pain and self sacrifice that sometimes has to go with doing the right thing.

## Þ Bjork

Old Norse Rune Rhyme

Þ Bjork (*Birch*) is the greenest of trees in springtime; Loki brought the luck of deceit.

**Þ Bjork - Means Birch Tree. Bjork symbolises female energies, magic, childbirth and family life.**

**The mythological association is with Frigg, wife of Odin and mother of Baldur.**

**The fylgia is the Cuckoo and Hare. The significant tree is the Birch. Bjork is not associated with any particular principle, but does have a particular significance for women.**

Þ is the symbol of Frigg, Odin's second wife and mother of Baldur. It also means the Birch tree, the first tree to show its leaves in spring time and apparently the first timber to re-establish itself on the barren landscape revealed by the retreating glaciers at the end of the Ice Age. In Northern Europe the Birch tree has long been the symbol of fertility. This tradition has continued even up to modern times with the maypole which is usually made from a birch trunk.

Bjork is the symbol of family life and childbirth and is the female counterpoint to Tyr. It represents female energies with both their positive and negative aspects.

If this rune occurs it often indicates matters relating to marriage, children and family life in general. It would tend to suggest that a union is likely to be successful and fruitful. It is also symbolic of a mother's love, care and devotion. But as we have seen all things need to be kept in balance.

By all accounts Frigg was a good wife to Odin and a devoted mother to the esteemed Baldur. So devoted was she that she became over protective. When it was prophesied



that Baldur would suffer a premature death (Norse Myths page 148) she determined to do everything within her considerable power to protect him. To this end she persuaded all things to take an oath not to harm her son.

All things, animal, vegetable and mineral readily agreed and she was convinced that Baldur's fate was now changed. Baldur, believing his mother to be capable of such a feat, considered himself to be invulnerable and became the focus of games that involved attacking him with all manner of

lethal objects. It was this seemingly innocent pastime which gave Loki his opportunity to have Baldur killed with the mistletoe dart, the one thing in all creation that Frigg had overlooked. (Norse Myths page 150 to 154).

Bjork can suggest the over protective mother figure who believes that her love is so strong that it can change the Orlog for her offspring. The Sleeping Beauty tale tells a similar story. (See section on Nod). Just as Tyr suggests the over confidence in male courage and strength Bjork warns that even the powers of female persuasion and all her wiles, intuition and capacity for self sacrificial love have their limits. In fact a determination to take protective steps to avoid the inevitable simply brings the fulfilment of destiny, however tragic, closer than ever.



## ◆ Mann

Old Norse Rune Rhyme

◆ Mann (*Mankind*) *is the increase of dust;  
mighty is the grip of the Hawk.*

◆ **Mann-** Means mankind and the moon. Mann symbolises sexuality, witches, humanity and death. The mythological association is with Freya, the sister of Frey and daughter of Njord. The fylgia is the cat, the sow and the hawk or falcon. The significant tree is the Hawthorn and Mann is associated with the feminine aspect of the Karl principle.

This rune is primarily associated with sensual love. This is indicated by the first line of the Norse rune poem; 'Mankind is the increase of dust.' Sexuality is the force which creates human beings out of the dust of unformed matter. The second line; 'Mighty is the grip of the Hawk,' suggests that this is a universal force affecting all human beings, the hawk, or falcon, being one of the manifestations of Freya and one of the folgie associated with her. Very few human beings are exempt from the motivating power of sexuality. This applies even to those who seek to sublimate this motivation into other areas within a celibate lifestyle. If this rune occurs in connection with sensual relationships then it suggests that the force represented by Freya either is, or will be, very much present. In connection with other areas of life it suggests that there will be sensual rewards in terms of money, status and possessions. There will probably be little benefit in terms of rewards on other levels. Perhaps the story that indicates this best is the account of the Necklace of the Brisings when Freya agreed to spend four consecutive nights with the four dwarfs who had made an



amber necklace set in gold of great beauty and value and would accept no other price for it. Freya was quite content with the deal but it didn't exactly improve her standing with the other Æsir. (Norse Myths page 65 to 69).

Mann represents the force of desire that can lead to the stable joys of family life as represented by Bjork, or wealth represented by Fe, her twin brother's rune, or Laug, her father's rune. But this same force can drive us to reckless

acquisition which leads to the kind of envy and mischief that Loki made when he couldn't wait to tell Odin about Freya's deal with the dwarfs. (Norse Myths page 67) It was also the desire of various giants to take Freya away and make her their own that brought about some of the most dangerous situations for the Aesir. See The Lay of Thrim, (Norse Myths page 70) and The building of Asgard's wall, (Norse Myths page 9 to 14). Mann suggests the power of desire leading to reward. But not without the very real risk of arousing jealousy in others and possibly even violence. Nothing is created without desire, yet once it gets a grip on you it is all but impossible to shake it loose again.

It is also worth considering the Anglo-Saxon rune poem which points out that although desire creates humankind with the delight that this brings there is of course a flip side. All of life is impermanent and ends in death sooner or later, with all the pain and sense of loss that this brings. But even then life is an ongoing process. There is a Northern European tradition that following death there is rebirth into one's own family line. So it is still worth accomplishing all that we can in a lifetime and leaving the family in as good a position as possible so that we may benefit in the future when our turn for rebirth comes around.

## ‡ Laug

Old Norse Rune Rhyme

‡ Laug (*Water*) *falls from the mountains as a force; but gold objects are costly things.*

‡ **Laug-** Means Water, bath or lagoon. Laug symbolises washing, bathing, coastal areas, wealth and gold. The mythological association is with Njord, father of Frey and Freya, and (briefly) husband of Skadi.

The fylgia is geese and sea mammals. The significant tree is the Apple and Laug is associated with the masculine aspect of the Karl principle.

Laug is the sign of water and is associated with Niord, the god of the sea. The rune poem relates to both the power of water and the value of gold. These two concepts are related in a number of ways. Firstly water falling from the mountains can be a considerable source of wealth. It may be a source of clean, safe water for drinking, by people and animals, and for irrigating crops. Without a consistent and reliable source of water the life of any community is precarious to say the least. Beyond this there is the power of fast flowing water that can be harnessed to drive water wheels for grinding corn and driving machinery such as textile mills and machine shops for shaping wood and metal. Before the coming of steam and electric power those who successfully harnessed the power of water from the mountains could look forward to attaining considerable wealth. In modern times hydroelectric power stations provide cheap domestic electricity and power such profitable ventures as bauxite smelting plants for making aluminium. Harnessing the force of water from the mountains also has the advantage of exploiting an infinitely renewable source of energy that is clean and in harmony



with the environment. On a personal level this rune suggests that we should harness the power already flowing through our lives rather than let it escape without drawing on its potential.

The second line suggests that there are always nuggets of gold to be found in life if only we are prepared to search for them.

The sea can also yield great wealth, from the harvest of

fish, if we are prepared to brave the ocean swells and cast our nets in the right places. Also from trade in goods, if we travel to foreign shores and negotiate a fair deal. These are never easy ways to gain wealth, with risks of shipwreck, piracy, or simply misjudging the market. Opportunities to attain wealth on all levels are open to all of us but few have the nerve or judgement to reach out and grasp the rewards that come from taking the gambles involved. The producers of wealth, the force of flowing water from the mountains and the riches of the sea must be harnessed and grasped before they yield their rewards and to do this requires courage, ingenuity and perseverance.

We first meet Niord when the Æsir find themselves at war with the Vanir. The war began when Gullveig came spreading mischief and greed amongst the Æsir. Three times they tried to destroy her with spears and then burning the body. Each time she stepped from the flames intact and stronger than ever. It has been suggested that the figure of Gullveig symbolises the madness caused by desire for gold and the indestructibility of that particular metal. The Vanir, who it seems had sent Gullveig, were rather miffed at the inhospitable treatment meted out to her and declared war on the Æsir. After much destruction and suffering, a peace conference agreed to exchange hostages to cement a permanent alliance. Niord came to live with the Æsir, bringing with him his twin children Frey and Freya. Niord taught them how to trade, Frey how to tame animals and Freya the magic arts. (Norse Myths page 7 to 8) It may be that this story symbolises the folk memory of the first contacts between settled farming and trading people (the Vanir) and warlike, hunter/gatherer nomads (The Æsir). At first the desire of the innocent hunters for the rewards of the settled life (gold) caused distress and

violence. Eventually a combination of the courage and vitality of the warlike Æsir and the productive potential of the Vanir produced the pantheon of mythological figures representing a balanced picture of human life.

The other important story about Niord concerns his relationship with Skadi. (Norse Myths page 44 to 47) Also see notes on Is. A union of opposites where neither could exist in each other's environment. This can be seen as the ice being the source of water that flows to the ocean.

The pure but inhospitable ice of the mountains feeding the streams that eventually fill the salty, fruitful sea. An ocean that is not continually renewed by pure water becomes a dead sea where nothing can live and yields nothing worthwhile. But the ice cannot move to the sea without melting or becoming contaminated. Also the ocean cannot move to the mountains except as water vapour leaving everything else behind. This rune can indicate being in the wrong environment for one's own nature. It can indicate purifying or cleansing as in the act of washing either in pure or salt water. It can indicate the medicinal value of the leek as a purge for the body. Or it may indicate the need to leave everything behind and return to the purity of the icy mountains and once again begin the journey to the sea.

Continuing with the seafaring symbolism of the Laug rune there is also the idea of drifting aimlessly with the tides and currents which can only lead eventually to shipwreck. Coupled to this is the notion of an inner sea of deep psychic knowledge and intuition that comes with understanding the ocean. Polynesian navigators were magicians specially selected for long and arduous training who navigated by a combination of observation of natural phenomena, invisible to those not trained to see them, and intuition. With these navigators to guide them the

Polynesians explored the vast Pacific ocean in primitive craft made with Stone Age technology. Likewise the Vikings crossed the mighty Atlantic in craft only slightly more advanced technically. The Vikings apparently used crystals for navigation which focused the psychic/intuitive powers of the navigator. Laug can indicate this kind of psychic awareness.



## Yr

### Old Norse Rune Rhyme

Yr (*Yew*) is the greenest of trees in wintertime;  
when it burns there is singeing.

**Yr - Means the Yew tree, male energies, a bow and arrow and shield. Yr symbolises archery, single combat and protection.**

**The mythological association is with Ull, patron of skiers and hunters. The fylgia is the brown bear and brown fox. The significant tree is the Yew and Yr is associated with the Jarl principle.**

Yr is associated with Ull, the god of winter. He plays very little part in the stories which we have available to us so that we do not know all that much about him. According to Odin, Ull dwells in the hall Ydalir, which means the dales where the yews grow. (Norse Myths page 61). The direct meaning of the rune is the yew tree, the poisonous evergreen which commonly grows in country churchyards. It is a very long lived tree and some specimens pre-date Christianity in Northern Europe. One interpretation of the shape of the Yr rune is that it represents the three roots of the world tree, the Yggdrasil, usually referred to as an Ash, but these things are flexible in mythology. It is thus a doorway to the underworld of the dead where knowledge can be obtained which is only available to the denizens of that region.

According to H.A.Guerber, Ull was a special friend of Baldur and following Baldur's death spent six months of the year in Neifelheim with his friend while Odin ruled and then came back for the six winter months while Odin took a break. (Myths of the Norsemen Page 139 to 141) It is also suggested that he married Skadi after her separation from



Njord since they were perfectly suited by virtue of their shared love of skating, skiing, hunting, archery and the mountainous terrain.

We learn most about this rune from the characteristics of the Yew tree and the best known product of its timber, the long bow. As both the rune poems suggest the yew is a very important tree in winter. It remains green throughout the winter and is rooted very deeply and securely in the earth.

Trees such as the birch lose their leaves in winter and

thus any value in protecting against the winter storms. Other evergreens such as pine trees simply don't have the strength or depth of roots to stand singly against the wind and driving snow. But a strategically planted yew tree provides an invaluable protection against the violent elements. Both poems also allude to the qualities of Yew timber as a fuel for the fire, slow burning yet yielding a considerable and consistent heat. The Yule log, as part of the winter solstice celebration, was traditionally the trunk of a yew tree.

The reason that the timber of a yew tree is particularly suitable for making long bows is that it is outwardly smooth and hard, yet inwardly quite soft and pliable. It is this balance of softness and hardness that gives yew its extraordinary qualities for bow making as well as enabling it to survive the rigours of the winter storms. This quality of outer rigidity combined with inner flexibility and deep roots suggests the delicate balance which a person needs to find in their own personality to cope with the pressures of life. Ull and the associated qualities of the yew tree are traditionally invoked for protection in single combat. This rune suggests eventual victory if outward hardness can be combined with inner flexibility. Yr also suggests the need to reach deep into the realm of the dead, to die in order to find one's self, to know the past, culture and family influences which have shaped us. This can be a painful and distressing process, though is ultimately worthwhile.

Yr is a rune of paradoxes, combining life and death, with its roots in the graveyard yet living a very long time. Green leaves which survive even the bitterest winter storms. Immense resilience from a combination of outer hardness and inner flexibility. A poisonous tree which provides a most efficient method of hunting fresh food. A timber that

burns with an intense heat yet sustains the fire longer than any other. A rune that symbolises death, yet it is in facing death with calm acceptance that gives the best hope of surviving single combat.

## Conclusion for Tyr's Ætt

This third and final ætt is concerned with the different energies which sustain the human race. There is the extreme of male energy represented by Tyr, balanced by the genial and flexible disposition of Niord.

There is the caring, nurturing mother figure of Frigg and the seductive manipulative beauty of Freya. All these principles have their purpose at the right time and place but can bring suffering in equal measure to their benefits. As with each ætt there is a balancing rune, in this case Yr, which demonstrates that for survival on any level we need the wisdom and protection that comes from balancing hard and soft, life and death, strength and flexibility, loving with knowing when to let go.

# Bibliography

**Edda** Snorri Sturluson (Everyman) isbn 0-460-87616-3

**The Poetic Edda** Translated by Carolayne Larrington  
(Oxford University Press) isbn 0-19-282383-3

**The Penguin Book of Norse Myths** by Kevin Crossley-  
Holland (Penguin) isbn 0 14 017 993 3

**An Introduction to Old Norse** by E V Gordon (Oxford  
University Press) isbn 0 19 811184 3

**The Myths of the Norsemen** by H A Guerber (Harrap)

**The Wisdom of the Runes** by Micheal Howard (Rider)  
isbn 0 90 159911 3 This book deals with the Elder Futhork  
but it has nice translations of the Anglo-Saxon rune rhymes  
and some good background stuff on the runes.

**At the Well of Wyrd** by Eldred Thorson (Samuel Weiser,  
INC.) isbn 0 87728 678 7 Also concerned with the Elder  
Futhork.

Also published by Ice and Fire Ltd.

**A Commentary on the Old Norse Rune Poems**

**Along the Lines**

**Festivals of Stav**

**Daily Stav**

By David Stone,

see <http://www.iceandfire.org.uk/elit.html> for more details  
and to purchase.

## Appendix 1 – Anglo-Saxon Rune Poems

Please note that there are twenty four runes in the Futhork that is recognised as the Elder Futhork. A great many books have been written on the twenty four runes and I have listed two in the bibliography.

Here I have taken the liberty of selecting the sixteen poems which correspond to the runes in the Younger Futhork, the one we use in Stav. In terms of understanding the runes of the Younger Futhork these are secondary to the Old Norse Rune Rhymes but you may still find reading them helpful, as I do.

ƿ Feoh *Wealth is a consolation to everyone but he must share it who hopes to cast his lot before the gods.*

ᚢ Ur *The wild ox is bold with horns ascending high a fierce fighter who stamps the moors.*

ᚦ Thorn *The thorn is very sharp and can hurt if gripped by anyone who comes to rest among them.*

ᚷ Os *The mouth is the origin of all speech it supports wisdom, brings comfort to the wise and blesses everyone.*

ᚱ Rad *Riding a horse for a hero while inside the hall is soft. It is more strenuous when astride a great horse riding the mile paths.*

ᚲ Cen *The torch is the living flame, pale and bright, it burns most where noble folk are settled within.*

ᚷ Haegl *Hail is the whitest of grains, it sweeps from the sky, is whirled by the wind and turns to water.*

ᚢ Nyd *Need is narrow on the breast but can often be a help if attended to early.*

ᚱ Is *Ice is cold and slippery, it glistens bright as glass like a gem, the field covered with frost is beautiful to see.*

ᚷ Ger *The season is the hope of everyone when the gods allow the earth to give her bright increase to rich and poor.*

᚛ Sigl *The Sun to seafarers is always confidence when they ferry across the fishes' bath until the seahorse brings them to land.*

↑ Tyr *Tyr is a token which has the confidence of nobles. It is every moving and in the darkness of the night never rests.*

ᚷ Beorc *The birch is fruitless, but has twigs without increase, is beautiful in its branches and is laden with leaves heavy in the air.*

ᚫ Man Folk *in their happiness are dear to their kindred and yet must everyone depart from each other because the gods will commit their bodies to the earth.*

ᚠ Lagu *Water to land folk seems tedious if they venture forth in an unsteady boat, the sea waves whirl them and the seahorses do not heed the bridle.*

ᚢ Eoh *The Yew is outwardly a smooth tree hard and fast in the earth, a shepherd of fire, a pleasure on the land.*