

"A Glossary of Heathen-Related Words, Mostly Old Norse/Icelandic"

Compiled by Jordsvin

Most of these terms appear in the blots. All are important and widely used in Heathenism.

Please send me any other English or non-English words you find in the blots and do not understand to me at Jordsvin@aol.com <<mailto:Jordsvin@aol.com>> and I will add them.

Please note that while we love the "Old Tongue" = Old Norse/Icelandic and delight in using a judicious sprinkling of its words, especially when there is no ready Modern English equivalent, we also have striven to make our rituals understandable even to first-time blot-goers, and so have avoided excessive "Heathenese":

Alsherjargod(h)i = a **Heathen** High Priest. Title of great respect. The Alsherjargodi of Iceland enjoys a widespread special respect, due in part to the fact that most of the information on our religion was written down in that country and in its language, which has changed little since **Heathen** Viking times, and also because Iceland was one of the first places where it was publicly revived.

Althing. See **Moot Horn**.

Alu = ale (a beverage similar to beer). Alu is a primitive Old Norse word. It occurs in magical Runic inscriptions. It has to do with alcoholic beverages as mythical conveyers of inspiration, poetic and otherwise. See the Odin's Rune Rite blot by Steve Wilson.

Asatru (OW-sah-troo) written out phonetically for native English Speakers) = faith in the Aesir (see **Asgardh**). The Germanic Pagan religion, also known by many other names. See **Folk**.

Asgardh (various spellings) = where the Aesir Gods and Goddesses live. One of the Nine Worlds.

Baneful (Baleful) Wights = harmful sentient beings, be they spirits or corporeal (Archaic English).

Blot = sacrifice, ritual or blessing. May or may not be connected to the word "blood." We use apple juice, beer, or mead (honey-wine) today. See my mead recipes

<<http://members.aol.com/jordsvin/kindred/mead.htm>>. One of the two or three major types of Asatru ritual. See also Sumbel and Seidhr.

Bolli or Hlautbolli = bowl for holding consecrated liquid used in sprinkling. Catholic Christians got this from us, not the other way around!

Draught = a drink from a container of liquid. Bigger than a sip but (a bit) smaller than an outright gulp.

Drekk(j)a(r)horn = drinking horn. used to hold liquid for consecrating with a God's or Goddess' might and essence during a blot. Some is poured into the bolli for a libation and for sprinkling.

The rest is drunk by blot participants. Drinking horns are clean hollow cattle or sheep horns with some sort of lining and stand. Here are links to Our Troth Online's article on how to make one <<http://w3.one.net/~dls/kspirits/ot/otcrafts.htm>> (scroll down past the part on mead), to Northern Winds, which has a photo of a really dandy one <<http://w3.one.net/~tomwulf/NW/index.html>>,

and to Tandy Leather <<http://tandy-leather.com>> that sell horns (unfinished) by mail for about 7 bucks US. When you get to the Tandy Site, click "search" and type in "horns," then click again.

Dvergar (Old Norse) = Dwarves. Some equate them with the Dokkalfar and/or Svartalfar (both terms usually translated as "Dark Elves"). Underground spirits who are fine metal-workers.

Some believe them to be, or at least to have in their midst, spirits of some dead metalworkers.

Elder Kin = our Gods and Goddesses. We honor and respect them, and join them in the work of maintaining life and helping it, and the Universe evolve, but do not grovel before them!

Elhaz or Elhaz-stodhur = to stand with your body in the form of the Rune Elhaz (see my Rune of the Month articles) <http://members.aol.com/jordsvin/kindred/Rune_of_the_Month/Index.htm>. If you are doing it right, you will look like an upside-down peace symbol without the circle. Folk = Heathen people/folks. Followers of our Asatru/Heathen/Germanic Pagan religion, also known as the (Elder Troth), Forn Sed (various spellings/forms), Heid(h)ni, Hedningskap, Odinism (sometimes has overtones of referring to the unfortunate racist fringe of our religion), Heathenism, and various and sundry other names. Confusing, huh? For an explanation of how this confusion came to be, see Troth. Folk ain't got nothin' to do with Hitler and his Volk, despite what some nut cases may think.

Galdr = ritual chant or spell. In the blots, often the name of a Rune intoned three times.

Gandr = (magic or ritual) staff or wand. Gandalf = wand-elf or magic elf. A dwarf from the Poetic Edda's "Catalogue of Dwarves," extensively plagiarized by J. R. R. Tolkein!

God(h)i (various spellings) = a Heathen priest. No special power to consecrate like a Catholic priest, any Heathen may do a ritual to any of our Gods and Goddesses. Godis, also known as Gothar (various spellings exist of the Old Norse/Icelandic plural form) lead public worship, solemnize marriages and other rites of life passage, and teach our religion. See Gydja.

Gyd(h)ja (various spellings) = a Heathen priestess. See Godi.

Hamarr, helga ve thetta ok hindra alla illska = Hammer, hallow this sacred space/temple and hinder (the entry of) all evil things. Old Norse. If it were Modern Icelandic, the ok = and would be og. Probably about the only difference. Icelandic and Old Norse, despite the passage of a millenium, are very close. Icelanders read 1,000 year old sagas more easily, and more often for that matter, than native English speakers read Shakespeare. More words to stick in front of helga, and referring to objects used to consecrate Heathen sacred space (NOT quite the same thing as a Wiccan circle-casting): horn = antler (in this context, and also mean horn), sverd = sword, Brisingamen = Freya's necklace or some facsimile thereof, gandr = wand or staff.

Hammarsetzung = German (our Alsherjargodi speaks it) or maybe Norse, Hel I don't know, for Hammer Hallowing (of a sacred space). One makes the Hammer-Sign facing North, East, South, West, and then with the fist aimed at sky/ceiling and finally at ground/floor in order to clear sacred space. The Elhaz Rune is often used in the same way and for the same purpose.

Hammer Hallowing = using the Hammer-Sign to consecrate sacred space for a Heathen ritual. See Hammer-Sign and Hammarsetzung.

Hammer-Sign = religious gesture symbolizing Thor's Hammer. Invokes the hallowing and protecting presence of Thor. To Hammer-Sign yourself: with clenched fist, touch forehead, just below breastbone, just below left breast, then just below right breast. You have essentially made an upside-down capital T. You can also make the same gesture in the air over anything you wish to hallow. Ben Middleton once made it in the air in front of him while calling on Thor to successfully stop a persuing pack of feral dogs! Don't go out of your way to test that out yourself; Thor helps those who help themselves! Seems to have been a pre-Christian sign, although this is open to debate.

Handstodhur = to hold the hands still over something. Sometimes in the form of the Ing(waz) Rune, sometimes just with one partially over the other, palms down, to project the might and main of the God(s) or Goddess(es) being bloted into the liquid being consecrated.

Harrow = an (outdoor) altar for Heathen worship.

Heathen = a follower of the Asatru religion.

Hof = a Heathen temple. Several are currently in existence in the USA, with at least one more currently (Jan. '01) under construction.

Ing(waz) handstodhur = to shape your hands together into a diamond shape, which is the form of the Rune Ing/Ingwaz in the Elder Futhark.

Landvaettir (Old Norse) = Landwights (Heathenese) = nature spirits, spirits of the land, roughly equivalent to devas (Sanskrit). Sometimes equated with Ljosalfar (Light Elves).

Mete = proper or right and fitting. (Archaic English).

Midgardh (various spellings) = Middle-Earth (where do you think Tolkein stole it?). Where we humans live.

Might and Main = an archaic English expression meaning something like "strength and power."

Moot Horn = a cow's horn made into a blowing horn by carving the pointy end and putting a hole in it. A Moot is a word for a Heathen Gathering. So is an Althing (with more legal overtones).

You can make the cow's other horn into a drekkjarhorn (also in this glossary).

Oath Ring = big arm ring, often silver or partly thereof, to swear religious oaths on. This is an English word, but an unfamiliar concept so I'm including it here.

Recel (RAY-kell) = incense (Anglo-Saxon). Derived from a word meaning "to smoke." Cognate with Modern English "to reek," German "rauchen" = "to smoke" and to the Rekja in Reykjavik, capital of Iceland.

Recels-pot = censer or incense-burner. Used to clear sacred space. Many times the godi or gydhja stops and censes each person, and that person often "bathes" him/herself in the ritually cleansing smoke.

Seidhr (SAY-thuhr, with the TH sound found in "this") (various spellings) = trancework in the Norse tradition. Its Oracular version is a sort of ritualized seance in which seers and seeresses seek answers to folk's questions from the Dead, from our Gods and Goddesses, and from other spiritual beings.

Stalli = an (indoor) altar for Heathen worship.

Stead = a particular place, especially a ritual one. Anglicized Old Norse, from stadhr.

Sumbel (Symbel) = ritualized toasting. Ancient Germanic ritual also used by modern Heathens.

Food is not served, and it is bad form to get drunk. First round in contemporary useage is to the Gods, the second round is to ancestors and heroes, and the third round is open. Folks typically make boasts or oaths, tell a story, sing a song, or just pass the horn along if they have nothing to say (seldom happens). Blots and Sumbels are the two main Heathen rituals, with Oracular Seidhr sessions possibly being the third major category.

Sunwheel = a symbol used since pre-Christian times by Heathens and other Pagans, especially Celtic ones. The Celtic cross, which has a circle around the point where the two bars of the cross meet, is a Christianized version of the sunwheel. The sunwheel consists of an equal-armed cross with a circle traced around the end points.

Swastikas are a symbol related to the sunwheel which has unfortunately gotten a bad reputation due to the Nazis use of it. Nazis abuse both Christian and Heathen symbols to suit their nefarious purposes. Remember those Iron Crosses! Heathens are divided as to whether or not we should try to reclaim the swastika, which is also used by Hindus, Native Americans, and others.

Teinn or Hlautteinn = twig or branch used to sprinkle consecrated liquid on altar and blot participants. Traditionally we put it back under the tree or shrub it came from when we are done, along with a bit of the consecrated liquid as a small gesture to the plant for its sacrifice. An English cognate is tine, as in the tines of a fork.

Troth or Elder Troth = yet another name for our religion. Religion wasn't compartmentalized in the old days (it was more integrated into life and culture as a whole), so it never really even HAD a name. When a name for what we Asatruars believe and do became necessary in modern times

(the modern view of religion is not all bad; for one thing it lets people of different religions and no religion live and work peacefully together under a secular government), a number of names were coined and no one of them won out over the others. See Folk.

Vanaheim = where the Vanir Gods and Goddesses live. One of the Nine Worlds. Traditionally, edged weapons (including the ritual athame knives of Wiccan guests) are forbidden in the ritual area where a blot to one of the Vanir Deities (Njordh, Nerthus, Ingvi Frey, and Freya Vanadis) is being held.

Wend = go, travel. (Archaic English)