

Jack Leigh (a.k.a. Bragi) and Frankie Dubery (a.k.a. Angrboða) for ASNaC Society Presidents 2009-10¹

fögru skaltu heita ok láta fast vera leiddisk manngi gott ef getr
'make fair promises and keep them well, no man tires of good'
- *Hávamál*, 130.



Hwæt! A giantess stalks, prowls from the fen;
'Angrboða I am called, mother of Hel, night-clad.
I come seeking entry, to lay open the Asnakarhöll,
for all-wise Bragi's testing, his fitness to rule.'

'Bragi I am called, and I speak for both;²
Much have we travelled, much have we tried out,
much have we tested the Powers.'

'The presidency you won't be deprived of,'
spoke the giantess, shadow-walker,
'if you tell me all I want to know:
What makes you fit to lead the horde?''³

'We both have committee experience and between us we
have helped to arrange a weekly clubnight, to co-ordinate a
youth-group and to organise a number of large, outdoor
events. We are organised and reliable and ready for the
task.'⁴

Then spoke the giantess, Sicg-wic dweller,
'Tell me this, Bragi, if your wisdom is sufficient:
How will you continue past success?'

'We will build upon the success of previous presidents,
continuing the time-honoured traditions of the Black-Tie
dinner, ASNaC pub and ASNaC lunch, hopefully
encouraging increased attendance. We were also struck by
the success of the Christmas party this year and will
continue this, and the trips away, as well as introducing
new social activities.'

Then spoke the giantess, splitter of mailshirts,
'Tell me this, Bragi, if your wisdom is sufficient:
What new activities do you plan?'

'We want as many ASNaC social events as possible
running throughout the year. Plans so far include ASNaC

picnics and Grantchester-punting in the summer, another
run of film nights, beginning-of-term parties and a Liber
Monstrorum pub crawl!⁵ We are also in contact with *Regia
Anglorum*, the UK's largest re-enactment society for Anglo-
Saxons and Vikings, and will run a trip to their
reconstructed longhall in Canterbury in May.⁶ In addition,
we would help you keep you in the loop regarding ASNaC
formal swaps and holiday gatherings. We are eager for
suggestions for other events which you would like to see
happen.'

Then spoke the giantess, bane of men,
'Tell me this, Bragi, if your wisdom is sufficient:
How will you encourage the sharing of knowledge?'

'We want to organise opportunities for informal revision
groups during exam term and think that the Part II
dissertation seminars recently started are a great idea and
could possibly be extended to Part I. We would also make
greater use of groups and event invitations on Facebook,
helping you to stay informed. We hope to continue
improvements to the society website and the tradition of
guest lectures organised by the ASNaC society.'

Then spoke the giantess, god-cursed,
'You speak of a society of which all can be proud;
how can this pride be displayed to the world?'

'We will provide what every subject needs but what
ASNaC does not currently have —stash! Everyone will be
asked to provide suggestions for humorous and serious
designs alike, a vote will follow and we will organise the
printing of the selected designs to your size and colour
specifications.'

Then spoke the giantess, shadow-walker,
'You seem well-suited for the presidency,
have you any further words, all-wise?'

‘Bragi I am called, and I speak for both:
With much talking we say we’ve convinced you;
day dawns on you now, giantess,
now sun shines into the faculty!’⁷

- *Bragamál*, 1–14.

Hopefully *Bragamál* has explained our plans for the presidency to you and all that remains for you to do is to vote for us on the 26th February in the Common Room at 5pm. If you have any further questions about our intentions as presidents, or indeed about anything at all, please do not hesitate to contact us at fed26 or jbl29@cam.ac.uk. Just don’t ask us what Beowulf would do, because we can’t speak for him.

Love and mead,
Jack and Frankie

And what better way to end than with a recently discovered stanza of *Völuspá*:

*Völva inn mikil sá, fiöld veit hón fræða:
málefni sér hón standa, sólo fegra;
orlög fólgin, Angrboða ok Bragi,
görvir at ríða grund: þar skolo dyggvar asnakar byggja
ok um aldrdaga yndis nióta: vitod ér enn eða hvat?*

‘The great prophetess saw, much wisdom she knows:
A subject she sees standing, fairer than the sun;
Their fates concealed, Angrboða and Bragi,
ready to ride the earth: there the noble ASNaCs will live
and spend their days in pleasure—do you know yet, or what?’
- *Völuspá*; 59b⁸

¹ Please note: whilst we seem here to be favouring the Germanic aspects of ASNaC we do, in fact, embrace all ASNaCs equally! Even the Welsh. Thanks for this work go to Carlyne Larrington for her translation of *The Poetic Edda*, which we have so violently plundered, and to Cambridge for giving us a degree-course involving dragons and magic salmon.

² The use of *both* here is cryptic but should probably be taken to apply to Bragi and Angrboða. This fits with the repeated use of the first-person *plural* pronoun.

³ This stanza closely echoes stanza 8 of *Alvismál*. Which influenced the other is hotly debated.

⁴ Much of Bragi’s reply is written in prose, no doubt due to the difficulty in conveying coherent information within a strict metrical framework. Whether this is later revision is unknown.

⁵ Dressing as a unipod highly recommended!

⁶ More information on the Wychurst project is available at <http://www.wychurst.com>. It should be noted that the longhall is now far more complete than the pictures suggest.

⁷ This work follows the motif, common in Norse eddic verse, that the defeated contestant in a wisdom contest would perish. As in *Alvismál*, this is achieved by tricking the supernatural creature into exposure to the sun.

⁸ It should be noted that this recently discovered stanza, thought to fit between stanzas 59 and 60 (numbering as U. Dronke (ed. and trans.), *Poetic Edda: Volume II: Mythological Poems* (Oxford, 1997)), has strong linguistic parallels with stanzas 30, 31, 55, 60 and particularly 61. This is most probably due to the formulaic nature of oral-composition.