



Birka Banner

Birka Lodge, Vasa Order of America

November/December 2017

Message from the Chair

Greetings to all Birka members. As you know, Birka's biggest fund raising event of the year is soon here. The Lodge needs your help and support to make the Jul Fair as successful as it has always been. If you have not yet signed up to help at the Fair, the sign-up sheet will be available at the November 17th meeting or you can call me. We will also need help setting up and decorating the Community House on **Friday evening, November 24, starting at 5:00 p.m.** The tables are always busy when the Fair first opens, and additional help is appreciated.

We are also requesting contributions for the **Grabs Table** – new items with a **value of \$5.00 or more. Please wrap in holiday paper without a price, and labeled** as to whether it is intended for a boy girl, man, or woman. Children's gifts should also be labeled with the appropriate age range. Home baked goods are also requested for the **Bake Table** and should be priced beforehand, with the ingredients prominently listed to alert customers with food allergies.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a flyer. Please copy, post, and distribute it to family, friends, and colleagues. Many of our Lodge members and table chairpersons have worked hard to prepare for the Fair. We have imported gift items, linens, jewelry, books, Dala horses, candles and candleholders from Sweden as well as imported foods for your Christmas and holiday table. **The Lucia procession will take place at 12:00 noon.** Please mark the date and come and support your Lodge. I look forward to seeing you there. It would be great if you have a folk costume or Scandinavian sweater to wear to the fair!

At the **September 22 meeting**, the Refreshment Committee chaired by Denise Esperson, provided delicious refreshments. Following the meeting, we had our annual Harvest Auction. The Lodge raised \$100. Thank you to all who participated.

The October 27th Halloween Potluck Supper was well attended, and everyone enjoyed the delicious casseroles, salads, and desserts brought by the great cooks in the Lodge. Thank you to Janet Muller and her committee for coordinating and setting up the hall. No one went home hungry! Thank you to everyone. We had a wonderful group of costumed members. Thank you to all who participated. Prizes were awarded to members dressed in costumes. Thank you to Ann-Marie Breuer for providing the prizes. Also, thank you to our musician, Bob Landoni, for providing music.

The Activities Committee met on **October 15** at Judy Tanzer's home. We discussed the Jul Fair and upcoming events. The next Activities Committee meeting will be held in **February 18, 2018, at 2:30 p.m.** Marlys Mahajan will host us. **The Auditors will also meet to audit the Lodge's financial books.**

Your annual dues for 2018 of **\$25** per person are due in January. Lodge dues should be paid by the end of April. Make your check payable to **Birka Lodge No. 732**, and mail it to our Financial Secretary, Linda Boylan at 12 Upton Lane, Boxford, MA 01921. (Phone: 978-887-3917).

Early Bird Dues Drawing: Anyone who pays their 2017 dues of \$25 before the end of 2016 will have his or her name entered in a drawing to receive an extra year of membership **FREE. PLEASE PAY DUES EARLY!** Thank you.

The **November 17 meeting** will be the final meeting for the year. The cultural theme will be Tomte night by Ann-Marie Breuer. Thank you to Andrea and Mike Swanson and their committee, who will be providing the refreshments for the meeting. Nomination and election of officers for the 2018 term will be held. Please contact Mike Bagnulo if you do not plan on remaining in your current office. Thank you. The Lodge needs your participation.

The **Lucia Rehearsal** will be held on **Sunday, November 19, at 3:00 p.m.** at the Community House. Lucia this year is Hope Jensen. New children are welcome. Please contact me if you are interested. Also on **Saturday, November 18, at 11 a.m.** Marlys Mahajan will host the fourth annual Cookie Bake. Please contact Marlys (978-468-4423) for more details.

The first event for 2018 is our annual **Children's Tree Plundering Party**, which will be **Sunday, January 7, at 3:00 p.m. at the Community House.** Music, storytelling, dancing around the Christmas tree, gifts, refreshments, and a visit from Tomten are planned. Additional information and cost will be mailed out in early December.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the **November 17 meeting** as well as at the **Jul Fair on Saturday, November 25**, and at the **January 7 Tree Plundering Party.** Your presence is requested to support and encourage your Lodge and its officers.

Best wishes for a peaceful and joyful holiday season. God Jul och Gott Nytt Ar!

In truth and unity, Linda Christianson, PDM, Chairman



Hearty Birka Birthday wishes to these members:

. . . in November

- 4 Linda Boylan
- 5 Joanne Emerson
- 8 Andrea Holmgren
- 19 Sonja Prior
- 24 Ron Holmgren
- 25 Jane Atherton
- 30 Maggie Starrak

. . . in December

- 1 Bob Landoni
- 3 Marilyn Seaberg
- 5 Gus Blomgren
- 9 Mary Anne Hawkes
- 9 Sharon Guidara
- 10 Richard Johnson
- 11 Alison Landoni
- 17 Cynthia Olsen
- 19 Kari DeLacey
- 19 Andrea Swanson



. . . 'round the lodge

For college age and soon-to-be college age members. The national lodge, Vasa Order of America, gives out eight \$1,000 scholarships each year. The deadline for applications is February 15, 2018. [Check the Vasa website for details about the application process.](#)

Jul Fair Flyer Please post the enclosed flyer to help publicize our Jul Fair.

Cookie Bake Our sixth annual Cookie Bake will be held at Marlys Mahajan's home on **November 18**. Join us any time between **11 a.m. and 3 p.m.** and you can mix, mold, decorate, bag, or label cookies for as much time as you want. Marlys will provide the basics — flour, butter, sugar, oven, mixer, etc. You can bring a favorite recipe or use one of ours. Just let Marlys know (978-468-4423) and we will put you to work!

Website Remember to check [Birka Lodge's website](#). The web address is found below. The website is maintained by Richard Lilja. Thank you, Richard.

Sick Benefit Fund If you have been a Vasa member for five years or more and have paid your dues, you are entitled to receive assistance with medical expenses from the Grand Lodge. Each member is entitled to receive up to \$3,000. If you would like an application, please contact Recording Secretary, Judy Tanzer.

Change of Address Please notify Recording Secretary, Judy Tanzer, of any address changes, either in writing at 3 Anthony Road, Hamilton, MA 01982, or by phoning her at 978-468-7407.

REFRESHMENT COMMITTEES

Tomte Night

November 17

Andrea and Mike Swanson, co-chair
Karin Caves
Sharon, June Guidara
Sheila and Richard Sunman

January 7

Marlys Mahajan, chair
Gus, Eric, Greg Blomgren
Denise Esperson,
Mary Anne Hawkes
Mike, Andrea Swanson



Hexan Fun at the October Meeting

The October meeting was a howling success! The potluck dinner was sumptuous, and to celebrate the season, members came dressed in creative Halloween costumes. Anne-Marie Breuer judged the show and had prizes for all the wonderful costumes. Thank you, Anne-Marie!



Viking Exhibit at Mystic Seaport Museum

One of the world's finest early Viking age collections is coming to the Mystic Seaport Museum. The exhibit, [*The Vikings Begin: Treasures from Uppsala University, Sweden*](#), includes priceless treasures such as helmets, shields, and household items of the time. It is the first time many of these artifacts have ever left Sweden. The exhibit runs from **May 19 until September, 2018**. Why not plan to make it a day trip next summer?

The museum is also looking for persons interested in supporting this project. Please contact them if you are interested.

Reminders . . .

Jul-Fair: Table Chairs and Workers: Please refrain from taking down your displays before the Fair ends at **2:30 p.m.**, no matter how much traffic we have. Last minute shoppers find it distracting if we are closing down the displays rather than serving our customers. Thank you.

- Dues that are paid before December 31 are eligible to win free dues for 2019. Pay your dues early and be entered to win!

- Remember to sign up with Linda Boylan if you wish to join us for dinner after working your shift at the Jul Fair. The last time to sign up is at the Lodge meeting on **November 17**.

Calendar of Events

November

- 17 Lodge meeting, Tomte night, **7:30 p.m.**
- 18 Cookie Bake at Mahajan's, **11 a.m. to 3 p.m.**
- 19 Lucia Practice, **3 p.m.**
- 24 Setup for Jul Fair, **5 p.m.**
- 25 Jul Fair, **9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

December

God Jul!

January

- 7 Tree Plundering, **3 p.m.**
- 26 Lodge meeting, **7:30 p.m.**



Jul Marknad

You can help by

- Lending a hand at set-up time, **Friday, November 27, at 5 p.m.**
- Contributing one to four \$5 gift grabs, labeled for men, women, boys, or girls
- Donating baked goods for the bake table,
- Signing up to help at one of the tables on Saturday morning.

Thank you!

Birka Banner is a bi-monthly newsletter, published by Birka Lodge 732, Vasa Order of America, and on the web as www.birka732.com

Linda Christianson, Chairperson
Marlys Mahajan, Editor
Richard Lilja, Webmaster

10 Nordic Christmas Traditions You Can Try At Home

By [Conde Nast Traveler](#)

by CNT Editors, Elizabeth Stark and Brian Campbell

The Nordic countries' long winters force their inhabitants to be masters of Christmas cheer. From St. Lucia's Day (or St. Lucy's Day), to folklore about helpful holiday gnomes, the joyful traditions of Nordic Christmases are sure to make any winter traveler's holiday bright.

© ARCTIC IMAGES / Alamy



children's shoes.

© Kati Molin / Alamy

1. Yule Lads

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If you've always felt like Santa Claus didn't engage in enough petty crime during his visits, maybe it's time to celebrate the holiday with Iceland's Yule Lads. These 13 troll-like figures visit in the days leading up to Christmas, and each has a name that describes his particular brand of mischief (Pan Scraper, Meat Hook). Over time, these once-terrifying figures become more benign and now leave small presents in

2. Glögg

Christmas is a time for revelry, and few things get that going like a fragrant pot of glögg—a mulled wine made with red wine, brandy, or aquavit, and spices like cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves. You'll find glögg across the Nordic world throughout the winter, and pre-made versions are available at many stores. Still, the best place to enjoy glögg is at one of Scandinavia's famous Christmas markets, where it's often for sale.



© Chad Ehlers / Alamy

3. St. Lucia Day

St. Lucia Day (December 13) is a festival of light that kicks the Christmas season into high gear. Traditionally, the celebration involves a girl wearing a white gown and a crown of candles leading a procession of candle-bearing women singing songs about the saint. Prior to the 1700s (when calendar reforms shifted things around a little), St. Lucia's feast day coincided with the winter solstice, hence the association with the coming of light. You can see a St. Lucia procession in many Nordic countries—in big cities like Oslo and Stockholm, there are often several celebrations happening.



© Bon Appetit / Alamy

4. Lussebullar

While you're taking in the St. Lucia festival, swing by a bakery and pick up some Lussebullar. These sweet buns with raisins are a traditional St. Lucia treat in Sweden. Saffron gives them a bright yellow hue, lending the gray northern winter a much-needed splash of color.



© Jef Maion / Alamy



© Peter Forsberg / Europe / Alamy

5. Visiting the Cemetery

While a trip to the cemetery may seem like a strange way to spread holiday cheer, in Finland, it's a common Christmas Eve tradition. While at the cemetery, Finns light candles for the deceased and then stroll through the illuminated graveyard. It's not a private ritual, so visitors are welcome to take part—it can make for a peaceful time to reflect before starting your Christmas ballyhooing.

6. Tomtes

In Swedish folklore, the tomte was a small creature similar to a gnome who occupied a homestead and helped its inhabitants—sort of like a helpful elf. In modern times, he has become a gift-giver as well (and in some cases has merged in appearance with Santa Claus). Children leave out a bowl of porridge for the tomte to thank him for his work throughout the year and get gifts in return. To buy your own tomte to bring home, check out Tomtar & Troll in Gamla stan, Stockholm's Old Town.



© Johner Images / Alamy



7. Yule Porridge

Perfect for the cold Nordic winter, Yule porridge (known as risalamande) is a rice pudding flavored with cinnamon and sugar eaten across the region. According to custom, an almond is hidden in a single bowl and the lucky one who finds it either has a year of good luck coming or receives a present. If you're not making your own, Yule porridge is frequently on the menu at inns and casual restaurants during the winter months.

8. Grýla

The keeper of the ultimate naughty list, Grýla is an Icelandic giantess who comes down from her mountain at Christmastime to eat misbehaving children. Her pet, the Christmas Cat, tags along and eats anyone who didn't get new clothes for Christmas, a tradition that probably makes Icelandic children a lot more grateful for those socks from grandma. Travelers taking Iceland's Ring Road around the island can get a snapshot of their naughtiest travel companions in Grýla's pot at a large statue of the giantess at Fossatún, a little detour about an hour north of Reykjavík.



© Robert Matton AB / Alamy

9. Yule Goat

Once the giver of Christmas gifts, the Yule goat has now been mostly crowded out of that department by various iterations of St. Nick, tomtes, and the like. But In Finland, the name Joulupukki (Finnish for "Yule goat") persists as the gift-giver's name. For a more traditional Christmas goat, you can check out enormous Yule goats in many Swedish town squares—the most famous one, in Gälve, was first erected in 1966. Try to get there well before Christmas, though; there's also an unfortunate tradition of arsonists burning down the goat.



© Pictorium / Alamy

10. Sauna-Smoked Ham

While the advent of the modern sauna has meant there are fewer traditional smoke saunas around Finland, the custom of smoking Christmas hams in the sauna still persists—in fact, it may be on the verge of a comeback. But even if you can't find sauna-smoked ham, saunas themselves are plentiful throughout the country; you can get a steam and call it your own version of this Christmas tradition.



SWEDISH YULE FAIR

(Traditional Jul Marknad)

Saturday, November 25th

9:00am-2:30pm



Hamilton/Wenham Community House

(Bay Road Route 1-A)

FREE ADMISSION

Lucia (Bride of Light) 12:00 noon

Scandinavian & American HOLIDAY MUSIC (all day)

LUNCH AT NOON: Assorted, Open-Face Sandwiches

Coffee & Coffee Bread, Glögg & Pepparkakor (all day)

Gifts, Handcrafts, Imported Linens, Ornaments, Jewelry

Cards, Wrapping Paper, Candles, Candle Holders & Rings

Dala Horses, Straw Goats, Jul Tomtes (gnomes) etc.

VÄLKOMMEN!

BIRKA LODGE NO. 732 OF HAMILTON, MASSACHUSETTS

VASA ORDER OF AMERICA

Non-Profit Fraternal Benefit Association

WWW.Birka732.com

