# CoScan Magazine

2015/1

# Confederation of Scandinavian Societies of Great Britain and Ireland

Contents:



**Front cover:** Svolvaer (Lofoten) Norway. Photo: Philip Paul

# Chairman's message

Eva Robards

CoScan is an organisation with huge potential and we are making progress in certain areas such as the Magazine and contact with member organisations, but in order to deliver value to our members, it is essential that we achieve more.

Highest on my wish list has been a well-designed, functioning website. Anna Sophie Strandli made an improved version of the existing website but stepped down as web editor last autumn. On behalf of CoScan I thank her and Helena Schmidt for all their dedicated work on the website since setting it up in 2007.

Our new Executive Committee member Tony Bray is now supervising a reconstruction of the website, with a professional web-developer to equip it with up-to-date functionalities. Louise Sørensen, a member of the Editorial Board for this Magazine, has agreed to do the updating once the site is up and running.

Over the past 36 months we have recruited 11 new member organisations; the latest ones to join us are Anglo-Norse Society in Oslo, Manchester Swedish Language Meetup Group, and UK Sibelius Society – they are indeed welcome! Unfortunately three organisations (Danish Cultural Institute, Midland Scandinavians and Shetland Norwegian Friendship Society) will discontinue and thus be lost to us.

With the ambition to expand and bring together in CoScan as many cultural Scandinavian organisations within the British Isles as possible, we are planning a recruitment campaign; for this we are developing publicity material, in the production of which Tony Bray is involved.

Raising the profile of CoScan is vitally important. An opportunity for doing this is through the International Award; for this we are seeking a company which is willing to be our partner and deal with relevant publicity. Approaching companies for financial support is another campaign in the pipeline.

CoScan wishes to promote friendship. The main opportunity for us all to meet in person is, so far, the AGM. This year it should have taken place in Aarhus but our journey there had to be postponed till next year – information about Aarhus will be sent out in August/September. Instead the Scandinavian Klubb of Lincolnshire stepped in and invited us to hold the AGM in Lincoln, in The Collection (an award winning art and archaeology museum in the centre of the historic city); eight CoScan societies were represented. We are most grateful to Kari Moss Wright and Lynne af Rosenborg for setting up this meeting, which all present greatly enjoyed.

Information about the meeting in Aarhus will be sent out late August/early September.

# Societies

## The Anglo-Norse Society in London

by Mark Elliott

CoScan has very recently had the pleasure of welcoming the Anglo-Norse Society in Oslo as a new member. High time, perhaps, for this magazine to include some account of the development of the elder sister (by three years) and long-standing CoScan member, the Anglo-Norse Society of London.

The ANS was founded on 10 April 1918. Identified most prominently among its founders were three who sufficiently represent the broad spectrum of the society's interests over the years – a Norwegian journalist, a British Member of Parliament and a professor from University College London. Fortnightly meetings took place first at a vegetarian restaurant in Holborn, and one of the early speakers was George Bernard Shaw, himself a vegetarian, who is said to have once described Ibsen as a socialist (Ibsen replied 'I never belonged, probably never will belong, to any party'). From 1924 most meetings were held at Norway House in Trafalgar Square, the premises of *Den norske Klub*. It was there that a coming-of-age party was held in April 1939, and ANS's association with Norway House continued until its sale in 1997. (I recall with pleasure visiting Norway House before my own assignment to Oslo in 1998, and hearing two speakers in particular: Wenche Foss, the grande dame of Norwegian theatre, and Aase Kleveland, Norwegian Minister of Culture.)

From 1939 ANS activities were restricted – it operated in cooperation with the British Norwegian Institute – but in 1947 the Institute was closed and the ANS reconstituted, partly through an initiative by the Cultural Attaché of the Norwegian Embassy. There were four Norwegian and four British members of the committee, and the annual subscription was 15 shillings (students five shillings). The Chairman, Dr Gathorne-Hardy, had translated Norwegian poetry, and the Vice-Chairman was Commander Frank Stagg RN, whose varied achievements included the authorship of a history of Norway. The

**1950 ball at the Hurlingham Club, London**

programme was comprehensive. As well as regular lecture meetings, there were monthly social gatherings – for bridge, or to sing folk-songs with invited Norwegian students; recitals; literary lunches at Foyles; dances, receptions, annual dinners. One dinner invitation for 1949 shows the guests of honour as the Norwegian Ambassador, the Mayors of Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger and Trondheim, and luminaries of the British civil service and military establishment.

**ANS skiing holiday at Mjølfjell Youth Hostel, 1950s**

ANS members ventured further afield. There were excursions – to historic houses, to Norwegian ships, to Oxford, Eastbourne, Folkestone, even Paris. There was 'ski-jumping on Hampstead Heath' (the mind boggles) and ski trips to Norway. Norwegian Royal patronage was secured in 1949, and British in 1951; the archives contain a letter addressed to the ANS and signed 'Harald' and 'Sonja' conveying *beste takk for den hyggelige gaven* on the occasion of their wedding in 1968. A newsletter was circulated from 1950 onwards, including news from Norway, and at that time there were 300 members.

By the 1970s membership had risen to 700, after a period of expansion. There were fund-raising initiatives, bursaries were offered to students, stocks of Norwegian books were held to support the teaching of Norwegian. Seminars for Norwegian language teachers were organised between the 1970s and the 1990s. Cheap charter flights to Norway were arranged. In 1975 the Anglo-Norse Review was launched in cooperation with the Oslo sister society. Distinguished lecturers included Thor Heyerdahl and Thorvald Stoltenberg. There was a Norwegian Festival in Coventry Cathedral, apparently with some ANS involvement. The pattern of well-supported and interesting meetings has continued even into the current internet age where membership societies struggle to survive; there are theatre visits, concerts including musical evenings at the Norwegian Residence. Book sales and bursaries continue. There is cooperation with the Norwegian Church, and joint meetings with other societies and through CoScan.

The foregoing is based almost entirely on the researches of the ANS's current Secretary, Irene Garland. I have had the pleasure of sitting with her and others on the Council of the ANS for the last fifteen years or so, albeit recently as

**Mette Marston (with husband) and Aud Dixon, members of the ANS Council, at 2005 Centenary Dinner at Norwegian Ambassador's Residence**

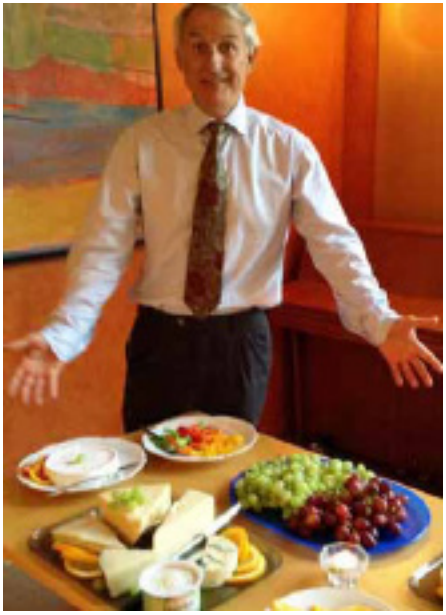
something of an out-of-town member. The challenges of running a society of this kind are not reducing, but they are being met in the ANS with undiminished vigour. In company with other London-based societies in the CoScan network, we look forward to a future of continued cooperation and development.

# The Anglo-Norse Society in Oslo

by Sybil Richardson, Secretary

The Anglo-Norse Society in Oslo is a sister branch of the Anglo-Norse Society in London. The Society was founded in London in 1921, its first President being the world famous Norwegian explorer, scientist and humanitarian Fridtjof Nansen, who in his own words wished 'to promote friendship and understanding between Great Britain and Norway'. Our patrons are H.M. Queen Elizabeth II and King Harald V. Honorary Presidents are their Excellencies the Ambassadors to Great Britain and Norway.

The majority of our members are British and Norwegian, but we gladly embrace all who have an interest in things British and Norwegian be it literature, politics, music, sport, education, culture, history etc. Members pay a modest annual subscription which covers entertainment fees, admission to the various events, refreshments, postage costs etc. Our committee of seven members, led by our Chairman Michael Brooks, work voluntarily for the society.



**Chairman Michael Brooks welcoming guests to the annual autumn event *Wine and Cheese, raffle and quiz***

We strive to strengthen the bond between our two countries, a bond which has existed over the centuries.

The Committee endeavours to present a wide range of topics and a variety of interesting events for our members at our monthly meetings which take place in the assembly hall in Frogner Church in Oslo, where we always take time to mingle together afterwards over a drink and refreshments. The highlight of the year is the Christmas Party with entertainment, traditional British food and drinks, rounded off with carol singing. Our other events include concerts, talks, quizzes, outings and visits to exhibitions. We also have close collaboration with the Anglican Church of St Edmund's in Oslo.

Please visit us on anglonorseoslo.com, which is always updated with information and newsletters, plus our events calendar, photo gallery and a link section of contacts which our members find most useful. Should you wish to make direct contact with us, please don't hesitate to get in touch: richardson.sybil@gmail.com.


**A talk on The History of Estuary English presented by Gjertrud Flermoen Stenbrenden, Associate Professor of English language history at the University of Oslo**

# Orkney-Norway Friendship Association's *syttende mai*

by Jean Crichton

As you would expect, 17th May is a big day for ONFA, with a special lunchtime concert in St Magnus Cathedral, a *tog*, an Orkney Islands Council reception in Kirkwall Town Hall and a Dinner Dance in the evening. These celebrations are all enjoyed by local members and friends as well as Norwegians. Some of them come over as a group on a holiday tour while many sail over in yachts from Bergen, Stavanger and other places on the West coast. Others join us from the Norwegian Consulate in Edinburgh or the Embassy in London.

There is, however, one special event which means a great deal to us and to our visitors. At 10.30 in the morning we meet to have a short memorial service in St Olaf's Cemetery at the graves of the 19 Norwegians whose bodies were washed up on our shores during World War II. With the flags of Norway and Orkney waving in the breeze, a piper plays as we assemble. A small choir, sometimes of schoolchildren or more usually of men, sings an appropriate song or hymn accompanied on the accordion by ONFA Chairman Ishbel Borland. Some verses of poetry are followed by a short prayer in Norwegian and English, and visitors are invited to place by the gravesides bunches of red carnations and blue & white bluebells, in vases made for us many years ago by a local potter. We finish by singing *Ja, vi elsker* and the piper plays a lament.

You can imagine that this little memorial ritual is very poignant and moving as we look over Scapa Flow and think once more of those who gave their lives for

peace. In fact we are asked to repeat it on other occasions when there are groups of Norwegians over – for the Convoy Cup yacht race for example, or for Viking archaeological conferences. Last year was very special, because of the family of one of the Norwegian seamen; having only recently learned where he was buried, they were very touched to see the individual graves so well kept and not the mass grave they had expected. [See article on page 21.]

Afterwards, tea or coffee and cakes are enjoyed, the coffee laced with some of our world-famous Highland Park whisky. On what is often a chilly morning, you can imagine that goes down very well indeed! We welcome the chance to chat to our visitors. Come and join us some time.

## A walk down memory lane with the Scandinavian Klubb of Lincoln (SKOL)

extracts from speech by Kari Moss Wright, President of SKOL, at the 40th anniversary dinner

SKOL was formed 40 years ago in the Guildhall in Lincoln. Who would have dreamt that 40 years later on we would still be here!

We had in fact held a *juletrefest* for our children in Fiskerton Village Hall earlier. Yes, we had small children then! The membership fees were: single £1, family £2, visiting 50 pence.

We did not have Ryanair or Easyjet then so to get back home was a much more difficult, expensive and long trip but in those days we did have ships we could travel on. From Newcastle we could sail

to Denmark, Sweden and Norway. What a difference from today.

So we became like a big family and our children called us *tante* and *onkel* (aunt and uncle) and still do today. We concentrated on keeping our traditional events alive – like children's Christmas parties where we were walking around the Christmas tree and singing our traditional songs. We arranged midsummer, St Hans, Lucia. We went on walks in the forests. We held fashion shows for charities as in Grimsby for the Seamen's Mission.

We went on theatre visits and concerts, and went to York to see Jorvik when the excavations had just started. We went to Loughborough to go on the King Haakon train which took the Norwegian King and Crown Prince to safety from Oslo in 1940. And Carlsberg gave us free beer as a bonus!

We used to show Scandinavian films and I must say we had some interesting people joining us on those occasions. We did talks and exhibitions for different clubs and arranged a big exhibition when *Kunstindustrimuseet* in Oslo brought over an exhibition for the Usher Gallery, and the Norwegian Ambassador came to open it – and we had him as Guest of Honour at a dinner here in the White Hart Hotel.

We used to have *Håndarbeidsklubb* and once we had a lawyer who told us our rights as mothers or rather the non-rights. We were advised to go back home and write our wills! It was not appreciated by some of our husbands.

I should also mention – Eva Robards, the CoScan Chairman is here – that we have always been a great supporter of CoScan. I have been the President and Embassy Liaison Officer, Peter was Chairman for seven years and Norman Pike an excellent Treasurer for ten years. We introduced such ideas as Individual Memberships and the CoScan International Award, and we introduced Mark Elliott when he was British Ambassador to Norway; he is now CoScan'S President. With the financial help of Norman Pike FCA we arranged the CoScan trips abroad for 15 years; the last trip to Tallinn was arranged by the SKOL Committee.

I would like to thank all for keeping our Klubb alive and we all hope SKOL will continue. As Edith wrote on the acceptance slip: *tenk vores klubb er så gammel*!

**Founder members of SKOL at the anniversary dinner**
Photo: A.W. Robards

# The United Kingdom Sibelius Society

by Edward Clark, President

The UK Sibelius Society is the only members' Sibelius society in the world. Our membership is numbered in the low hundreds and it arises from many different countries, including Finland/Scandinavia, the US/Canada, Australia/New Zealand and parts of Asia including Japan. The majority are, of course, in the UK.

This geographic separation means we take special care in communicating with everyone regularly.

Hence our Newsletter is published every six months and contains articles often written by members themselves. I have always taken the view that it helps all of us to share our common love for Sibelius. Indeed in the last edition published in January I used the word 'joy' for my love of Sibelius but felt many would use other words. So I posed the question 'Why do you love Sibelius?' The answers so far are revealing and joy does not seem to rank highly!!

The society sets out to do a number of activities:

- It hosts concerts of music by Sibelius and those composers who admire Sibelius.
- It publishes authoritative articles that enhance our knowledge of Sibelius as composer and human being.
- It performs Sibelius UK premieres; so far eight such pieces have been played, including the original version of Andante Festivo for string quartet, the first three string quartets and Kuolema, the full incidental music.
- It arranges special festivals and conferences on aspects of Sibelius's career.
- It promotes recordings of rare repertoire, of which there is much available now – songs, piano pieces, violin and piano pieces, choral/orchestral works, a cappella works and lots of early chamber music, many works from which have been performed in our concerts.

Our relationship with the Finnish Embassy is always a fruitful means of joint enterprises for concerts and receptions. I have worked with five ambassadors over 22 years and each one has been a generous source of support and enlightenment in how Helsinki ticks, in terms of culture and Finland's ability to support Sibelius as a national icon around the world, no more so than here in the UK, a country that has recognised Sibelius as a supreme genius for over one hundred years.

To coin a phrase: 'the future is bright, the future is Sibelius' – or so it seems to our members whose retention rate is extremely high.

Our web site www.sibeliussociety.info explains more and how to join.

# Nordic Horizons

(ed. from the website)


Nordic Horizons is an informal group of Scottish professionals who want to raise the standard of knowledge and debate about life and policy in the Nordic nations. Director, and co-founder, is radio broadcaster and journalist Lesley Riddoch.

Public meetings in Edinburgh started in 2010; they give Nordic experts and specialists the opportunity to share and discuss policy insights and experiences with an interested audience.

We produce audio recordings of the meetings and short video interviews with speakers. You can browse topics, content and voices on our website. Join our Facebook group, or listen via SoundCloud or watch via Vimeo, or follow us on Twitter to join live debate and discuss Nordic news as it happens.

# Anniversaries

Several of our societies have recently celebrated an anniversary. That is the similarity between them – a difference is the time they have been in operation.

Nordic Horizons is the youthful one with five years from when it was founded, while Anglo-Danish Society had its grand 90th Royal anniversary dinner in December.

Between these two extremes is SKOL celebrating its 40th anniversary in February. Likewise, the Scottish-Finnish Society and Hampshire Anglo-Scandinavian Society have had their 40th anniversaries. And Finn-Guild celebrated its 50th in March (an article about the early days of Finn-Guild is planned for CoScan Magazine 2015/2).

To all of these we say:

# His Excellency Mr Pekka Huhtaniemi, Ambassador of Finland to the United Kingdom

by Eva Robards

Pekka Huhtaniemi arrived in London as Ambassador in June 2010 and his term of office ends this summer, 2015. Despite his busy schedule, he kindly agreed to share some of his experiences with me; this article is based on an interview which took place on 9 March at the Finnish Embassy.

When asked what made him decide on his future career, the Ambassador replies that the ground was laid early. His parents had an interest in international affairs, read the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*, and were among the first in the area to possess a TV. He spent one summer in Worthing (near Brighton) learning English, and attended a school in Sweden. At the university of Helsinki he studied economics, political history, political science and communications, which could have led to a number of careers. In the end it was the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs he chose. He has now served there for more than forty years, apart from a period in the 90s as Special Adviser to the Prime Minister on economic and international affairs, and another as the first Head of Cabinet for the Finnish EU Commissioner in Brussels after Finland joined the EU in January 1995. As Ambassador he has represented Finland in Geneva, Oslo, and now London.

London was different from Oslo in very many ways: the size of the countries and their capitals, the position they occupied in the financial market and within the EU, their climate, and the level of royal events. 'London is a coveted posting', the Ambassador says, 'as it is such a vibrant place with so much going on in culture, media, sports and so on. No two days have been the same – you are certainly never bored! Additional benefits are good infrastructure, a comfortable climate, and a beautiful countryside steeped in history.'

However attractive London may be for foreign diplomats, it takes time to establish a network in the city and outside. The Ambassador has managed this with acclaim as he, in addition to his conventional ambassadorial work, has reached out to the Finnish community in

the UK in an extraordinary way. Many are the Finnish events which he has honoured. When asked about this, he replies that the expatriate community of Finns is a resource, and that they carry out work on the Embassy's behalf by building an impression of their home-country in every-day life. There are about 15,000 Finns in the UK and the Ambassador is concerned that they should live a happy normal life without too many difficulties.

'The best way,' the Ambassador explains, 'for the Embassy to keep in touch is through the twenty or so Finnish schools around the country. People working in connection with the schools (in particular active parents, but also other local Finns, often middle-aged women), are readily prepared to help in various ways.' The Ambassador finds that face-to-face meetings are especially valuable for reaching out, but he also uses social media – both Facebook and twitter.

A highlight for the Ambassador during his time in London was the Olympic and Paralympic Games. It was a demanding period, with dignitaries to look after, but it also offered opportunities to watch a lot of sports, of which the Ambassador is a fan. Among other memorable occasions were the Royal Wedding, and the funeral of Baroness Thatcher, events of the kind at which diplomats have a particular role to play.

The Ambassador is especially pleased that his Embassy has been able to secure much coverage of Finland in the context of the EU debate in the UK and the climate of euro-scepticism. On a personal level he is proud of the award he was given in 2014 as European Diplomat of the Year, for outstanding work and achievement within London's diplomatic community; the trophy is displayed in his office.

After leaving London in the summer, the Ambassador will return to Finland and Helsinki. Whatever his new post may be, he says that he 'would like to continue promoting Finland – its economy and culture – to increase knowledge about Finland for the right reasons'.

## Sibelius. An Englishman's view in the 150th anniversary year

by Edward Clark, President UK Sibelius Society

Sibelius has been Finland's best known citizen on the world stage for over fifty years. Yet he carried a Russian passport until he was 53 (when Finland gained its independence) and he grew up in a Swedish speaking family, having to learn Finnish at school.

He was one of the most cosmopolitan composers of his era, studying in Berlin and Vienna in his early twenties and finally ending his many travels in Berlin in 1931. He was unfailingly courteous to visitors to his home, Ainola, during his long retirement but deserted his wife

and children for long drink binges with friends during the height of his creative years.

Rather than seeing Sibelius through the iconic photographs taken in old age we can now regard him as being a temperamental, sometimes selfish, hard drinking free spirit, not unlike other members of the human race perhaps!

None of this explains his extraordinary genius for writing an almost unparallelled list of varied works throughout his first sixty years; the composer of the world famous Finlandia, Valse Triste and Karelia Music also composed the wonderfully austere Fourth Symphony, the majestic Fifth Symphony and the utterly unique Tapiola.

Sibelius's total output (none of it bad) has conquered most audiences in the world (I once asked a French lady after a performance of the Fourth Symphony 'Was that the first time you heard the Fourth Symphony, Madame?' to which her reply was 'It was the first and the last time !!!') and he is now one of the highest regarded of all 20th century composers.

In his 150th anniversary year global audiences have a large menu of works from which to choose depending on mood and inquisitiveness . We have time to explore the many small scale (but delightfully melodic) piano pieces and the more expansive choral works, often celebrating Finland's great Kalevala national epic tale. The songs are among his finest creations and the mature Six Humoresques for Violin and Orchestra are perfect examples of Sibelius's mastery of the miniature form.

Finland can truly bask in Sibelius's fame and compositional glory; a creative spirit who always remembered his early role in giving pride to his fellow Finns at the time of distress and dismay under Russian rule. As a composer of works that contain both a very special nature poetry and also some of the most complex music of his time, Sibelius has left behind a catalogue of music that enshrines the diversity of the human spirit in all its ups and downs.

**Part of the Sibelius Monument, one of Helsinki's landmarks, by Eila Hiltunen, following a competition organised by the Sibelius Society of Finland**

# Finnish Tango is the dance therapy for the soul

by Helena Halme, Development Director at Finn-Guild

You may be surprised that in my view, out of all the Nordic people, we Finns are the most passionate. That strong emotion is a Finnish national characteristic may be a little known fact also because, as a people, we are most apt at hiding our passion – until we hear a tango piece.

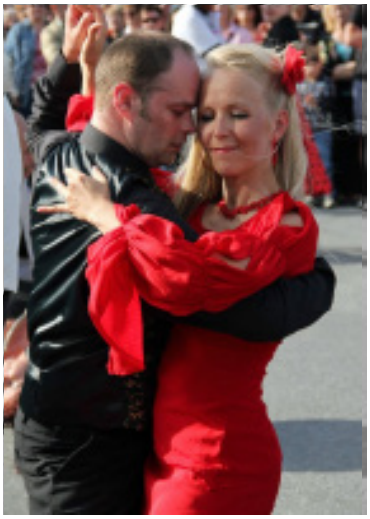


Photo: Anssi Leppänen/Yle

If you're in a dance restaurant, or at a summer dance in Finland, you'll notice that the floor will be empty until the first tango is played. We Finns love moving along to this slow, staccato beat. With serious, concentrated faces, you'll see the couples move swiftly, and expertly, along the floor. The Finnish tango is danced with close contact in the pelvis, upper thighs, and the upper body, with frequent dips and rotations. In the Finnish tango feet stay close to the floor, with no kicks as in the Argentine tango. The lyrics in the Finnish tango are important, as is the accordion, which has a prominent place in the score.

The Finnish Tango emerged at the same time as the country gained its independence. Nobody seems to know who brought the first tango music into the country around 1910, but by the 1930's Finnish musicians started writing their own tango pieces, and after the Second World War, tango became the most popular form of music in the country.

Perhaps it's the slow, but persistent, rhythm in a tango, which appeals to the Finnish sense of deep melancholy. This basic sense of drama is also reflected in the lyrics of the tangos. The most popular themes are love and sorrow, or longing for something unattainable, such as a warm, far-flung country, or one's homestead – a distant land of happiness. Tango is not a light-hearted business in Finland.

One of the most revered Finnish tangos, and the one I remember from my childhood is Finnish classic *Satumaa*; (Wonderland), sung by Reijo Taipale. This is a tale about a paradise far away, so unattainable that the singer feels he's a bird with clipped wings. Another tango, *Metsäkukkia* (Forest flowers) sung by Olavi Virta, is a song about a lost summer and lost love, rediscovered in the spring. Whereas *Kotkan Ruusu* (Rose of Kotka), sang by Eino Gron, tells the tale of a

woman of the night, told with the most passionate words allowable in the 1950's, when the song was written. Its beat is such that I'd defy anyone listening to it, not to immediately want to get up and dance – or at least tap a foot.

Although the most popular tangos were written in the 1950's, they were constantly played on the radio when I was growing up in central Finland. As a child, I'd watch my parents and other grown-ups crowd the dance floor when a popular Finnish tango was played at family parties. My first boyfriend was a passionate tango dancer and taught me the steps, although I think you'd be pressed to find a Finn even today who doesn't know how to dance a tango.

Many of the tango songs have also been re-recorded many times, and new tangos have been written. Some, such as *Kotkan Ruusu*, or *Suyyspihlajan Alla* (Under the Mountain Ash tree) sung by Arja Saijonmaa, became popular in Sweden amongst the large Finnish ex-pat population in the 1970's and 80's.

Even today, the Finnish tango, as popular music and dance, is thriving, although it's no longer the chart-topping music of the post-war era. There's a hugely popular competition, *Tangomarkkinat* (Tango Market), started in the mid-eighties and held in the central town of Seinäjoki, where a Tango Queen and King are crowned each summer. The 2015 Tango Market is a five-day affair on 8-12 July, with tango lessons, tango karaoke, concerts and most important of all the tango competition final.

The event attracts more than 100,000 visitors (out of 5 million residents) and the winners of the song competition become instant celebrities in Finland, and often have successful long-term careers in the music business.

So, if you're near a dance floor in Finland this summer, have a go and get some therapy for the soul!

Information on the Seinäjoki Tango Market can be found at www.tangomarkkinat.fi

Helena Halme is the author of three novels set in Finland: The Englishman, Coffee and Vodka [see review on p. 31], and The Red King of Helsinki.

Photo: Visit Finland

# Why the most popular book in Denmark is a songbook

by Kåre Gade, Press Attaché at the Embassy of Denmark, London

The Danish tradition of communal singing is anchored in the songbook *Højskolesangbogen*, a must-have in folk high schools, sports clubs, village halls and parish churches.

It is said that the Danish tradition of communal singing began one evening in 1838 at Borch's Student Residence Hall in Copenhagen. The Danish poet, priest and politician N.F.S. Grundtvig had just finished a speech, when the audience spontaneously stood up and started singing *Kommer hid, I piger små* ('Gather round, you little girls') – a popular song about the naval hero Willemoes, penned by Grundtvig and set to music by C.E.F. Weyse.

The story may be no more than a memorable anecdote. Nevertheless it is indisputable that Grundtvig played a crucial role in the remarkable rise of communal singing in Denmark in the late 19th Century. The phenomenon was closely linked to *folkehøjskolen*, the adult folk high school, which was founded on Grundtvig's ideas about *folkelighed* and *oplysning* - two words that are equally impossible to translate into English.

Grundtvig was a formidable and influential figure in his time. Like his contemporary Søren Kierkegaard Grundtvig was impressively productive, writing thousands and thousands of pages in different genres – hymns, poetry, sermons, essays and history books – and his works are still being studied and discussed by scholars. Unlike Kierkegaard, Grundtvig is barely known outside Denmark, but his influence on Danish society is far stronger than Kierkegaard's. Even today, almost 150 years after his death in 1872, his presence is felt strongly in the Danish approach to religion, education and politics.

*Folkelighed* means 'popularity', but in Grundtvig's use the word refers to something that is genuine and belongs to the people. The word *oplysning* means 'enlightenment', but in a deeper and more spiritual sense than how the word is often used. *Oplysning* is more than just knowledge, it is wisdom and formation too. When Grundtvig, rather reluctantly, accepted that absolutism would have to give way to democracy in Denmark, he realised that the people (*folket*) needed enlightenment (*oplysning*) in order to manage their new responsibilities.

One of his ideas was to establish *folkehøjskoler*: boarding schools where young adult men – and women – from the villages and farms could go to be taught history, literature and the Bible as well as modern farming techniques. The students would not sit any exams, they would not get a diploma, but when leaving after six months they would be 'enlightened'. Grundtvig was never involved in putting

**Communal singing from the Højskolesangbog in the garden at the Danish Church in London**

these thoughts into practice – in fact he never visited any of the folk high schools that were established in his name – but his followers developed his ideas, and folk high schools started to appear all over Denmark: Rødding, Testrup, Askov, Vallekilde, Ryslinge and many more.

Drawing on the tradition established at Borch's Residence Hall that evening in 1838, communal singing played an increasingly important role at the folk high schools. Songs would be sung before and after lectures; often songs that reflected the subject of the lecture. The importance of the Danish language and history was accentuated through the songs. Pride in being Danish and consciousness about ones national heritage was another common theme, not least after Denmark was defeated in the Second Prussian War in 1864 and lost one third of the kingdom.

The folk high schools' first attempts at curating and publishing collections of songs suitable for communal singing were made in the 1870s and contained mainly hymns and songs written by Grundtvig. But when the first edition of *Højskolernes Sangbog*, or just *Højskolesangbogen* ('The Folk High Schools' Song Book') was published in 1894, it presented older hymns and traditional folksongs as well as contemporary songs alongside Grundtvig's works.

A great many of the songs that are still among the most popular in *Højskolesangbogen* were written around the turn of the century and adopted by *Højskolesangbogen* in the early 19th Century. Their authors were part of what came to be known as *det folkelige gennembrud*, a movement within the arts, which wanted to describe how modernity and industri-

alism challenged the traditional way of living, and which aimed at telling the story from the common man's perspective. Many of these songs – by Johannes V. Jensen, Thøger Larsen, Johan Skjoldborg, Ludvig Holstein and Jeppe Aakjær – describe an agricultural society that was already vanishing.

The vast production of new songs was followed by an equally industrious production of new melodies. *Fornyelsen af den folkelige sang*, the 'revival of the popular song' (again, not a very precise translation), were fronted by four different composers with a shared ambition to write tunes that were simple, yet beautiful and firmly rooted in tradition. Thomas Laub was an organist who mainly wrote melodies for hymns. Thorvald Aagaard and Oluf Ring were both teachers and wrote 500 melodies between them, but never ventured into other genres. None of these three composers are known outside Denmark.

The fourth composer however, was Carl Nielsen, whose 150th anniversary is celebrated worldwide in 2015. He was already an internationally renowned composer of symphonies, operas, concertos and quartets when he took on the job of writing melodies for communal singing. He wrote modest, plain and beautiful melodies as effortlessly as he composed modern and groundbreaking symphonies, and he saw no contradiction in doing both. Together with Laub, Aagaard and Ring he published the first official melody collection for *Højskolesangbogen* in 1922, setting a high benchmark for singable and durable tunes for communal singing. The four composers are still the most well-represented in the current edition of *Højskolesangbogen*. 36 of the melodies are by Nielsen, more than anyone else.

Abroad Carl Nielsen's popular songs are about as little known as Grundtvig's poetry, but their impact on Danish culture can hardly be overrated. Far more than Nielsen's symphonies it is songs like *Jeg ved en lærkerede*, *Jens Vejmand* and *Den danske sang er en ung blond pige* that are loved by the Danes. All Nielsen's songs have recently been translated into English and can be downloaded from the Danish Royal Library's website, as can Nielsen's sheet music. Whether this translation will open the British Nielsen fans' eyes to his

**Communal singing at the Danish Embassy (London) weekly staff meeting**

songs remains to be seen. After all, the songs are closely connected to a tradition of communal singing, which is not easily shared with non-natives.

For the folk high school students the communal singing came to epitomise everything they learned and experienced at the folk high school, and when they went back to the farms they brought the songbook and the songs with them. From the folk high schools the tradition of communal singing spread to the rest of the Danish society. Sets of *Højskolesangbogen* soon became a must-have in sports clubs, village halls and vicarages. To this day *Højskolesangbogen*, now in its 18th edition, remains the undisputed canon of communal songs in Denmark. There are currently 572 songs in *Højskolesangbogen* and it is the best selling book in Denmark, with the recent edition having sold more than 300.000 copies.

*The translations of Nielsen's songs can be downloaded from the Danish Royal Library's website (bit.ly/1xpekUG). All Nielsen's works are also available at the website (three bindings contain songs): bit.ly/1Hu4ELk. The Unknown Carl Nielsen', a gift CD with Nielsen's songs in English sung by the Danish Ars Nova choir and soloists, has recently been published by the Royal Library and DaCapo Records.*

# It's Sonja with a J and Larsen with an E

by Sonja Crisp,
Lord Mayor of York (since May 2015)

By English standards the spelling of my name is incorrect. This was always a very sore point with my father, and so from a young age I had learned to introduce myself as 'Sonja with a J' and 'Larsen with an E', which often led to a conversation about my Danish heritage.

Tage Larsen, my father, was born in Aarhus. His parents were unmarried and left him at birth at an orphanage from which he was adopted at a very young age. Tage was a fisherman during the German occupation; small fishing vessels were still allowed out to fish within a limited distance from the mainland providing they returned to port by a certain time.

With news of forced labour camps and, increasingly, rumours of death camps in parts of Northern Europe, Tage feared that there would be mounting pressure on their government to give up Danish Jews, some of whom were friends and neighbours. It was a frequent topic of conversation between him and the other two crew members whilst out fishing. He became increasingly frustrated by the feelings of helplessness at not being able to do something about what he saw as a growing menace.

In 1943, on one fishing trip, the weather worsened and the two older crew members told him that they were not setting off back to port or weighing anchor to ride out the weather; instead they were going

to attempt to escape to England in their small wooden seiner. Tage had no prior warning of the plan, and as he was only 19 years old, the crew feared he would be tempted to say goodbye to his family, which could have jeopardised their plans. They reasoned that the occupying German forces wouldn't be too keen to send out patrol boats in bad weather for one late fishing vessel. When they failed to return at all, it would be assumed the boat had gone down with all hands. So, using the storm for cover, and after a nerve-racking journey across the North Sea, they eventually arrived in England, hungry and tired.

After a brief stay in an internment camp in Whitehaven until the British authorities were sure they were who they claimed to be, and still speaking no English, they were put to work. Tage served as a fisherman and on the convoys of supply vessels in the North Atlantic. This was dangerous work, though vital to the war effort. At last he felt able to do his bit to fight the rising threat of fascism in Europe. Supporting the war effort in England was his way of fighting against the Nazi threat, his way of speaking out.

His family thought him dead for three years until he was repatriated to Denmark in January 1946. By then he felt disenfranchised and after a brief stay with family returned to England, eventually becoming a Naturalised British Citizen.

This is not a story of exceptional personal suffering and it was certainly not an unusual occurrence, as other Danish fishing crews did the same, but to me it was an example of how we can speak out in different ways by doing whatever we can to oppose the unacceptable.

Tage was very proud of his Danish roots and of what we now know to have been the stance of the Danish Government: when requested by the Nazis to hand over Danish Jews, they used delaying tactics for as long as possible, thus saving many thousands of lives.

A friend who knew Dad's story asked me if I, as a newly elected politician, could influence the City of York council to hold an annual Holocaust Memorial Commemoration, as he had tried several times without success. Like the terrier that I am – very much my father's daughter! – I set out to do exactly that. Holocaust Memorial Day has now been held annually in York as an official civic event since 2008. The city marks the day by coming together to remember and reflect on the past and on ways to ensure everyone has a safer and better future.

Dad and I spent many hours talking global politics; he called it 'putting the world to right'. He inspired within me the belief that not only should we do our best to speak out when we see injustice unfolding, but also how important it is to pass on the message to future generations, lest the lessons of the Holocaust and other genocides be lost.

I believe that the passion I have for rallying against injustice was my father's legacy to me. If Dad were here, he would probably say my achievement in securing the annual commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day in York is the thing I should be most proud of in my career, and he's probably right.

# A heartwarming story

by Einar Johannesson

Johan Oluf Brandsvik was a sailor who at the age of 24 years signed on the SS Faro. He had spent five weeks back home in Kristiansund in the autumn of 1939 but not been able to find any work there.

On 28 January 1940 his ship, together with another Norwegian and two Danish ones, was torpedoed by the Germans. Out of the 15 men on board D/S Faro eight died, and Johan was one of these. His mother is said to have died from grief. On 1 May 1945, the Norwegian peace day, the Brandsvik family was the only one in town flying their flag at half-mast.

In 1949 a book was published in Norway called Our fallen men. The book listed all the Norwegians who had died in WW2 and had a photo of Johan with a text saying that he was buried in Kirkwall in Orkney. The foreword of the book stated that all families of the fallen Norwegians would receive a copy of the book, but the Brandsvik family never got theirs.

A few years ago I found a copy of the book in a second hand shop. On an internet page on war sailors, I found that the ship sank off Copinsay (Orkney), and on the Scottish War Graves Project page I found a picture of Johan's tombstone at Kirkwall cemetery. Then I found the Orkney Norway Friendship Association on Facebook, and I read all about the ceremony and celebrations you have every 17 May.

My wife Jorunn comes from Kristiansund and is the daughter of Johan's sister Hansine. Jorunn and I, our daughter Hanne, and Jorunn's younger brother Terje decided to travel to Orkney to participate in the events of 17 May 2014. As far as we know, no one from Johan's family had visited his grave before. It was a great experience for us. We will never forget that day: the ceremony at the cemetery, the procession in the streets and the following celebrations. We are very grateful to see that the grave is taken care of so nicely with flowers and attention – thanks to all of you!


Written for ONFA.
Edited, and published with permission

# My Norwegian connection

by Roy JL Cooney, Taunton, Somerset

During my childhood my mother often mentioned her grandfather, Nicolai Simonsen, which meant little to me until, in the 1960's, she gave me some letters and his Norwegian passport. The document had been folded many times and was in a very delicate condition. My mother's wish was that I should make enquiries to learn a little about any Norwegian relatives there may have been.


REISE-PAS
POLITIMESTEREN
I STIFTSSTADEN BERGEN I NORGE

**Nicolai's passport issued in Bergen 1859**

The last known contact was a letter (dated 1913) to my grandfather from a relative in Naustdal, Sunnfjord, in western Norway. In this letter the writer said that Nicolai's brother, Ole, had bought a farm at Svorstøl and she also wrote that the family was then quite poor and there was no legacy for Nicolai.

My first attempt to make contact with possible family was by writing to the Norwegian embassy in London and although they could not help me with information, I was advised to write to the priest in Naustdal. I sent a long letter in English to Soknepresten but lost patience waiting for a reply. I then bought a copy of 'Teach Yourself Norwegian' and had the temerity to compose a letter in Norwegian. Shortly afterwards I received a letter from Sønstegård who said both letters had been received and understood – very polite, but I am sure the first more easily than the latter. He wrote that he had traced a family descending from Ole. My *firemenninger* were three sisters and two brothers. The priest invited my family and me to visit him and take the opportunity to meet my long lost relatives. It was an invitation I couldn't refuse, despite the fact that we had two young sons, Robert and Michael, and my wife Jean was six months pregnant with Elizabeth.

The pre-motorway journey by car to Newcastle was long and tiresome but made in good time to catch the ferry to Bergen. We spent the first night in Bergen but it was impossible to book a taxi from the hotel for early the next day. Despite that, we eventually arrived at the quayside only to see the ferry ready to sail. We were lucky, however, and the gangway was re-lowered especially for us to embark!

After about eight hours we arrived at Vadheim in Sognefjord and were met by the priest's son, Per Ivor, who drove

us to Førde i Sunnfjord. We spent the night in the vicarage and were excitedly introduced to my cousin Idrun. She had cycled about fifteen kilometres from her farm to Førde and asked us to stay with her for a few days. She apologised that it could not be longer but explained that her sisters wanted us to also spend some time with them. The following three weeks were full of visits to other members of the family and to spectacular fjords, *fosser* and *fjeller*.

At that time few of my older relatives spoke English but my pathetic attempt at Norwegian – based on the book and an ancient Linguaphone record course – helped to bridge the gap. Despite this major obstacle, we did manage to make contact with the help of younger members of the family and friends invited to meet us and act as interpreters. The mutual limitations of language meant that I was unable adequately to convey our gratitude for the superb hospitality that we, as complete strangers, received. Things progressed, however, and with repeated exchanges of holidays, verbal contact has improved tremendously. Indeed, I learned enough Norwegian to provide a translation service to my old employer, the UK Hydrographic Office and to *Sjøkartverket* in Stavanger, translating numerous nautical publications.

Norway has been an inspiration in so many ways, not least as subjects for my copperplate engravings of Norway's famous *stavekirker*.

My main treasure from Nicolai's effects is a manuscript map of *Syd Norge*. It is contained in a leather case and consists of thirty-six panels on linen. It is superbly drawn in fantastic detail, dated 1815 and commissioned by the King of Sweden. I understand from The Norwegian Mapping Authority that the map is one of only four that were produced: the whereabouts of the other three is unknown. Also a complete mystery is how it came to be in Nicolai's possession when he came to England.

Stamps on the back of the passport show that by the time Nicolai reached England he had travelled via Germany and then on to the Orkney Islands, where he married Mary Thompson before settling in London.

**Fantoft church**
Illustrations: Roy JL Cooney

**Lom church**

# St Olaf in England

by the Revd Canon John Toy, PhD FSA

The patron saint of Norway, and much celebrated in the rest of Scandinavia, also makes his appearance in England from the first decade or so after his death until the present. He was killed in battle near Trondheim on July 29th, 1030 by the forces of Cnut (Canute), King of Denmark and England. Cnut was trying to enforce his claim over Norway at the time, but soon after 1030, when the English Bishop of Nidaros (Trondheim), Grimkel, had declared Olaf to be a saint and martyr in the cause of Christianity, Cnut promoted the cult throughout his dominions. Most Scandinavians by this time were professing Christians because they saw the advantages of, on the one hand, being part of Christian Europe and, on the other hand, the superiority of the 'White Christ' over the trinity of Thor, Odin and Freja.

Although we mainly know the Vikings as raiders and settlers (they were both on a large scale), by the early 1000s many were living as peaceful citizens, as farmers, peasants, thanes, priests and bishops and, apart from their accents and remnants of their culture, were indistinguishable from their neighbours. This is why Cnut's campaign took root throughout England.

What evidence is left to us of this? Churches under the patronage of St Olaf in London, York, Exeter and Abbotsbury (Dorset), known to have existed in the 11th century; others in Norwich, Chichester, Chester, Gatcombe (Isle of Wight), Fritwell (Oxfordshire), Poughill (Cornwall), and Creeting (Suffolk). Wellow Abbey, Grimsby (Lincolnshire) and Herringfleet Priory (Norfolk) were under the patronage of St Olaf and both

**The seal of St Olave's Priory, Herringfleet, Norfolk**

have representations of him on their seals.

So to pictures of him: usually recognised by holding an axe or halberd but also often a crown, an urn or orb, holding three stones and standing on a dragon with a king's head. There is a fine representation of him on the rood screen at Barton Turf, Norfolk, where he has a label with his name 'Sanctus Holofius', wearing a crown and holding a spear/ halberd and three stones.

The same three stones appear in a window in Holy Trinity, Goodramgate, York where Olaf crowned appears without any other symbol. The three stones relate to one of the legends of St Olaf about an evil man in Denmark who would not keep St Olaf's Day (29 July) as a feast day when no work was done

but commanded his pious servant to make bread buns on that day; she, greatly distressed, put the dough in the oven but

**Sanctus Holofius from the rood screen of Barton Turf, Norfolk.** With permission of the Rector

St Olaf turned them into stones to punish the impious man.

On a rood screen at Catfield, Norfolk, Olaf appears with his crown and halberd, and St Mary's Abbey, York used to have a window to him, as we know from notes made of the windows in the 14th century. York Minster also has a possible representation of him in the vestibule to the Chapter House and St Olave, Hart St in the City of London has a fine modern figure of the saint in its east window with a crown, halberd, orb and standing on a crowned human-headed dragon. This church has much information about Olaf for its many visitors, with a card to take away with a figure and a modern prayer. Just over London Bridge, on the east of the Southwark side, is the site of the earliest known Olaf church in London, now demolished and replaced by a modern office block called St Olaf's House with an image of the saint on its corner facing the bridge.

These testimonies to the cult of St Olaf through the centuries in this country are extended by evidence from surviving liturgical manuscripts: his feast day was kept in many churches as he appears in the 11th century calendars of Exeter and Ramsey Abbey in Cambridgeshire and later manuscripts of Barking and Syon Abbeys near London, Launceston Priory in Cornwall and Faversham Priory, Kent, Norwich Cathedral Priory, Barnwell Priory, Cambridgeshire, and Fotheringay church, Northamptonshire.

The two most interesting however are the famous Red Book of Darley from the 11th century, which has the three Latin prayers for the mass of St Olaf, exactly as celebrated throughout the middle ages in Norway itself. The other is a psalter of Carrow Priory, just outside Norwich, where the first letter of the first psalm (B for Beatus, usually highly decorated) has six scenes of the life of St Olaf, two being given to the legend of an English priest, suspected by jealous brothers of intentions towards their sister; they mutilated him, cutting off his hands, feet and tongue but when the poor man called on Olaf for help he was fully restored.

Thus Olaf has been and still is a link between Britain and the Nordic lands.

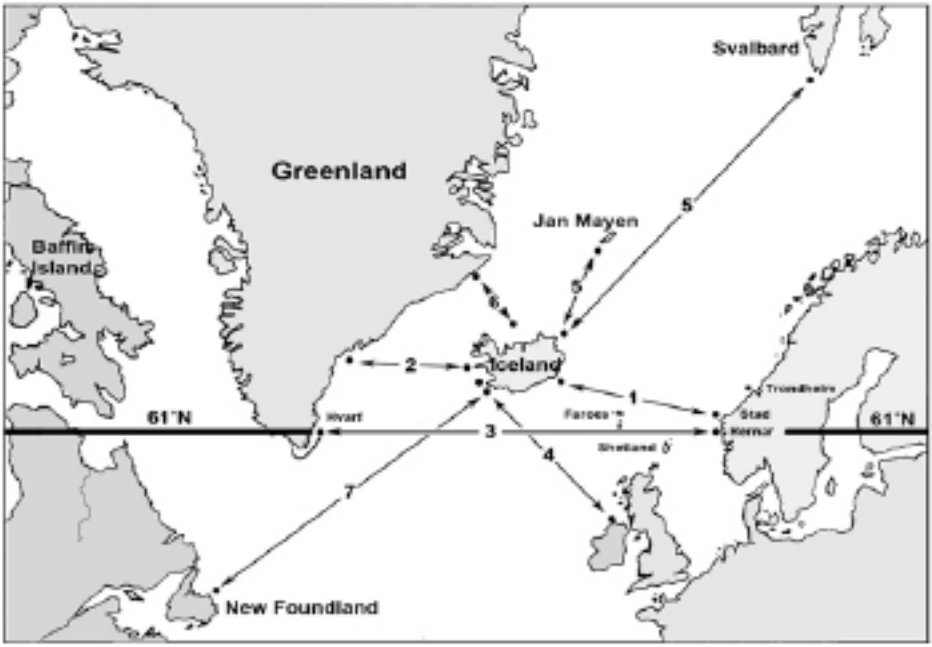
# Viking Navigation
## part 1

by Prof. Anthony W. Robards

More than a millennium ago seafarers from countries that we now know as Norway, Denmark and Sweden roamed the oceans and waterways from the Black Sea to North America and from Iceland to the Mediterranean. We call this diverse group of people The Vikings and they were at the height of their maritime powers between the 9th and 15th Centuries.

A big question that has taxed marine historians and archaeologists over many years is how the Vikings managed to find their way around the seas, especially when they were out of sight of land. They undertook formidable passages in their sturdy boats, to and fro across the North Atlantic, without the help of navigational aids that a modern sailor would consider to be absolutely essential.

For thousands of years, sailors across the world have moved mainly along coastlines, drawing on accumulated local experience and skills in pilotage. Heading out further from shore, they still have




**Diagrammatic representation of the North Atlantic Ocean showing the seven sea routes used by the Vikings, as recorded in the Sagas. Route 3 is 1500 nautical miles along parallel 61°N from Hernar in Norway to Hvarth in Greenland. (Adapted, with permission, from Thirslund, S., *Sailing Directions of the North Atlantic Viking Age (from about the year 860 to 1400)*. Journal of Navigation, 1997. 50(01): p. 55-64.)**

numerous indicators to help determine their position and direction of travel. Even when out of sight of land, clouds, sounds, smells, wind speed and direction, sea swell, wave direction, set of the current, water colour, water temperature and taste, appearance and flight direction of birds, and the presence and movement of migratory mammals such as whales, would all have provided these mariners with valuable clues about their position and heading. All of this would have been in the memes of the Vikings who proved to be such masters of the ocean in their small boats.

However, such skills would need augmentation when the ship is significantly offshore with the horizon less than 10 miles away from the eye level of a sailor standing on the low deck of a Viking boat. It is this aspect that creates such interest in the astonishing navigational achievements of these brave seafarers.

Until the invention of the marine chronometer by John Harrison in the mid-18th Century, navigators could never be sure where they were around the globe (longitude) even though their knowledge and understanding of the movement of the sun and stars allowed them to make reasonable estimates of their position up and down the globe (latitude).

For hundreds of years, sailors used a method of navigation termed 'latitude navigation': that is, they would head up or down a coast line until they reached the latitude that they required, at which point they would turn either east or west towards their intended destination. That's when things become tricky because, once their starting point is long behind them while the destination is hundreds of miles ahead, how do they manage to keep on the right heading? That appears to be one of the cardinal skills perfected by the Vikings.

It is reasonable to suppose that most of the early Viking expeditions would have followed along coastlines rather than headed out to the open ocean. For example, it is now thought that the early raid on Lindisfarne (Holy Island – North East coast of England) in 793 was by Vikings from the west coast of Norway. They could have arrived without ever having been far out of sight of land although we do not know the actual route taken or whether there was an open sea crossing. Over the next three or four hundred years Viking sea passages became more and more adventurous and, no doubt, navigational skills became correspondingly honed.

So what did the Vikings have at their disposal to help with navigation and, equally importantly, what did they not have? I have already mentioned the pilotage and navigational skills that would have been acquired by experience but long ocean passages need more than that. We are all familiar with the magnetic compass which is a basic tool for any sailor and yet this does not appear to have been available in Europe before the 13th Century after having been invented by the Chinese hundreds of years earlier. The magnetic compass is actually a fickle friend anyway in the high latitudes of the Viking homelands thanks largely to variable magnetic fields. It has sometimes been suggested that the Vikings used

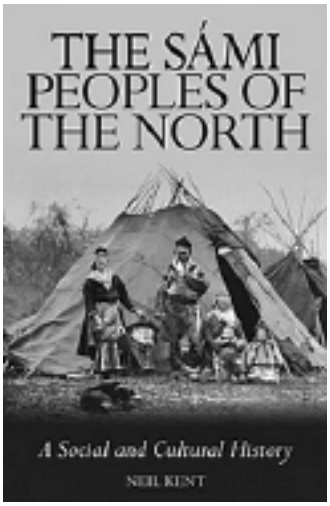
lodestone (a naturally occurring mineral – magnetite) as a primitive compass but there is no evidence for this. However, they developed a good representation of what we would understand as compass bearings through their *áttir* ('main directions') system. Lack of written records or log-keeping meant that their ocean passages were essentially planned from a starting point to a destination that would have been passed on from navigator to navigator and mainly stored in their memories.

By the eighth century Norsemen had already settled in the Shetlands, Orkneys and Hebrides. Iceland was first discovered by Vikings sometime between 860 and 870, although Irish monks had actually beaten them to it by a hundred years or so; and by the tenth century the Norsemen had spread west to Greenland from where they eventually discovered North America. It is clear that these venturesome seafarers were now masters of the North Atlantic and, for the first time, their sailing instructions, rather than being passed on by word of mouth, were written down as parts of the Icelandic Sagas in the early fourteenth century. Two relevant works are the *Landnámabók* and the *Hauksbók* which, between them, defined seven different sailing directions along with estimates of passage time (Fig. p.26). Here is just one example from the *Hauksbók*: 'Wise men … say … from Hernar [one of the northernmost islands in the Øygarden archipelago just north of modern Bergen – a perfect stepping-off point to sail west] in Norway, head due west towards Hvarf in Greenland, and you will have sailed north of Hjaltland [the Shetland Islands], so that you just glimpse it in clear weather, but south of the Faroe Islands, so that the sea [the horizon] is right in between the distant mountains, and thus also south of Iceland.'

Starting from Hernar and staying close to latitude 61° North would guide the sailors over the 1500 nautical miles to the southern reaches of Greenland where they could return to coastal sailing and navigate around to the western side. Falling much below latitude 60° would be disastrous because the voyagers would miss Greenland altogether, as Bjarni Herjólfsson found to his cost (albeit setting out from Iceland) in 896 when storms and currents swept him south of Greenland and he became the first Viking to see, but not land on, the North American continent. Departing directly westwards from Stad or Trondheim would similarly provide reliable latitude sailing to the Faroes or to Southern Iceland. But how did these seamen repeatedly manage to accomplish these extraordinary feats of navigation and what aids did they use? I will tackle this exciting, topical and controversial subject in the next part of my article on Viking Navigation.


Illustration: Roy JL Cooney

# From the bookshelf




Review by Brita Green

The book is advertised as 'the first comprehensive history of the Sami people'. It aroused my interest because, like most Scandinavians who do not live in the far north, I have very little knowledge of the indigenous population of our countries.

In English, 'Lapland' usually means the area inhabited by Sami people, 'the region which forms the most northerly portion of the Scandinavian peninsula, divided between Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia' (OED). In both Sweden and Finland, 'Lappland' has a more restricted meaning: both countries have counties with that name, so there the word 'Sameland' has been introduced with a more general meaning. Neil Kent uses the Sami word *Sápmi* or 'the Sámi homeland'. His book is a very detailed account of how the Sami people settled in these northern countries, how they have interacted with other populations, and how things have developed over the centuries.

The Sami people may have lived in northern Scandinavia and Russia for thousands of years: 'The oldest presence of human settlements in the Sámi homeland dates back to 9000 BC', though it is not certain that these people were the direct ancestors of the present-day Sami. There are Sami rock engravings from 6000 years ago. 'Already by the first millennium BC it is clear that a Sámi people with a distinctive ethnic identity and commonality of language becomes recognisable'. And by the beginning of the Christian era the Sami were established in northern Norway and Sweden, in the whole of Finland, on the Kola peninsula and in Russian Karelia.

The earliest mention of the Sami in writing is in Tacitus' *Germania* (AD 98), where they are referred to as *fenni*. A Byzantine historian who wrote about them in the 6th century called them *skritiphinoi* – skiing *fenni*. The first illustration of a Sami (or a Norwegian?) on skis is on Hereford's *Mappa Mundi*, which dates from about 1300. Their association with reindeer is first mentioned by an 8th century Lombard historian.

In the Sami religion a shaman (named *Noaidi*) plays a central role. The famous yoiks (chanted songs, often accompanied on decorated drums) were 'central to the

* using the usual English spelling without an accent

Sámi's expression of their place in the universe and their relationship to one another and the rest of the natural world'. Christian missionaries and governments tried to suppress what they regarded as Sami sorcery, and in the 17th century shamans were burnt at the stake for witchcraft. During the 19th century, the most important Christian revival leader was Lars Levi Laestadius, who had a Sami mother and who, in order to find common ground with his parishioners, borrowed the Sami's own familiar concepts and adapted them to Christianity. His vision 'emphasised not only the forgiveness of sin but also an abhorrence of alcohol, a substance which created many social problems among the Sámi'.

There are several Sami languages or dialects, not all mutually intelligible. They belong to the Finno-Ugric group, which is not part of the Indo-European family, so they are not related to the Scandinavian languages or to Russian. They are closer to Finnish and Estonian, and also to Hungarian. Today, it is the linguistic heritage, the culture and way of life that most unite the different Sami groups. The book has chapters on family life, on their society, education and culture: their dwellings and arts and crafts, their literature and music, and on their reindeer herding and other livelihoods. Since the end of the 20th century, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish Sami have had their own parliaments. The book brings us right up to date, with presentations of feminist writers of the 21st century and discussions of the conflicting interests of ecology, reindeer grazing and the forestry industry.

With his emphasis on historical detail, Neil Kent has produced quite a dense book, packed full of dates, names and other facts, and (to quote another reviewer) he certainly shows us that there is more to the Sami 'than reindeer and Yuletide tourism'. The book has no illustrations. It would have been nice to see what the Sami rock carvings look like, or the skier on *Mappa Mundi*, without having to resort to the internet. There is an extensive bibliography and an index to names and facts.

Neil Kent, *The Sámi Peoples of the North, A Social and Cultural History*. Published by Hurst & Company, London, 2014. ISBN 978-1-84904-257-4.

**A reindeer among the rock engravings in Alta, northern Norway (World Heritage Site)**


Helena Halme's books make easy reading, but underlying are disturbing conflicts. The main ones in *Coffee and Vodka* are integration into a foreign country and family secrets. The title of the book presumably refers to a Scandinavian cocktail [*kask*].

The storyline is that the seemingly happy family, living in Tampere, leave for Stockholm where Pappa has found better paid work – as many Finns did in the early 70s. Mamma supports the move, and the two daughters (teenager Anja and younger sister Eeva) accept it despite leaving their beloved grandmother behind.

Pappa, Mamma, and their daughters experience a range of reactions in Stockholm: hostility/indifference/helpfulness – and they deal with these in different ways. Vodka is what Pappa turns to when he finds the going tough, Mamma learns the language and disappears into the new culture, Anja is even more radical about getting integrated, and Eeva is doing the best she can to juggle cultural and family issues. The family is split up when Pappa, not having been able to handle the new demands, turns to violence against Mamma.

Interwoven is the story about Eeva 30 years later; she decides to return to Tampere to see her dying grandmother whom she hasn't met since moving to Stockholm. Confronted with the past in various ways, she discovers family secrets with which she has to come to terms. But in the end she appears to be reconciled to both past and present, so despite her doubts about returning to Tampere, the journey has enriched her.

Helena Halme, *Coffee and Vodka:* published by Newhurst, 2014.
Paperback ISBN 978-0-9573711-7-0.


A true story about Kaisu who leaves her war-torn country for England and comes to end up in a difficult marriage.

Kaisu Cornish, *From Finland with Love*
Paperback, Perfect Publishers Ltd, April 2014.
ISBN-10: 1905399960, ISBN-13: 978-1905399963.

*Kaisu Cornish is a member of the Anglo-Finnish Society.*


A historic tale about the human will to survive: 1867, a year of devastating famine in Finland, Marja sets off on foot through the snow with her two young children. Their goal is St Petersburg, where people say there is bread. Translated from the Finnish by Emily and Fleur Jeremiah.

Aki Ollikainen, *White Hunger*. Published by Peirene Press Feb 2015.
ISBN 978-1-908670-20-5, ebook 978-1-908670-21-2.

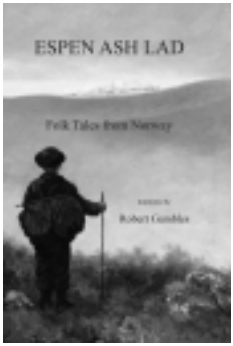

*Helsinki Noir*, edited by James Thompson. Published by Akashic Books Aug 2014. ISBN 161775241X (ISBN13: 9781617752414).


Swedish Lapland, 1717. Maija, her husband and two daughters arrive from their native Finland, hoping to forget the traumas of their past and put down new roots in this harsh but beautiful land.

While herding the family's goats on the hostile mountain Blackåsen, one of her daughters finds the mutilated body of a neighbour of theirs. The death is dismissed as a wolf attack, but Maija feels certain that the wounds could only have been inflicted by another man. Her investigations encounter a wall of indifference, and ugly secrets are soon brought to light at the cost of great danger to Maija and her family.

Cecilia Ekbäck, *Wolf Winter*. Published by Weinstein Books Jan 2015. ISBN 13: 9781602862524, ISBN 10: 1602862524.

*Cecilia Ekbäck was born in the north of Sweden; her parents come from Lapland. During her teens, she worked as a journalist and after university she specialised in marketing. In 2010, she finished a Masters in Creative Writing, under Andrew Motion, at Royal Holloway. She lives in Calgary with her husband and twin daughters.*




This is a translation into English of the collected folk tales of P. C. Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe, first published in 1852 (following the example of the Brothers Grimm in Germany).

The tale of Espen Ash Lad is about a 'little man who wins the princess and half the kingdom when bigger men bite the dust'. Espen's struggle can be considered against the historical context of Norway and the undercurrent of it striving for recognition as a nation in its own right.

*Espen Ash Lad - Folk Tales From Norway*, translated by Robert Gambles. Published by Kirkby Stephen's Hayloft Oct 2014. Illustrated with 24 original Norwegian line drawings. ISBN: 978 191 023 7045.

*Robert Gambles was born and grew up in Derbyshire. After a professional career in Education, he has lived in Cumbria and written a number of books and many articles on various aspects of its history. Through his Norwegian wife he acquired a special interest in the life and history of Norway.*


For anyone interested in Nordic contemporary culture, the book presents profiles of over a hundred of the most important figures and institutions active on the Scandinavian art scene today, including artists, curators, galleries and gallerists, critics and collectors.

Extensively illustrated (over 830 colour illustrations) and based on up-to-date research, it provides a survey of current trends and key players, including such internationally renowned figures as artists Elmgreen & Dragset and Ólafur Elíasson; major private institutions and foundations including the Astrup Fearnley Museet of Modern Art (Oslo) and Wanås Foundation Museum/Art Gallery (Sweden); established museum directors, among them Daniel Birnbaum and Lars Nittve; and emerging talents Ida Ekblad and Fredrik Værslev.

*Nordic Contemporary. Art from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.* Edited by Hossein Amirsadeghi (Executive Editor Sophie Braine). Published by Thames & Hudson 2015. ISBN 9780500970652.

# CoScan Trust Fund

2015 report by Brita Green

The group administering the Trust Fund now consists of Tony Bray, John Christmas, Brita Green and Alfhild Wellborne. I have agreed to remain as chairman for another year, while John and Tony are taking over much of the work. Because of my long absence from the country this year which included the deadline for applications, John, our treasurer, agreed to receive the applications. In future, they should be sent to Tony Bray. Deadline for applications: 31 March, as always.

At our meeting on 16 April, John reported that our finances were slightly down from last year. Early April 2014 saw us with a balance of just over £3000 before we began distributing money to applicants. This year, before our meeting, we had £2659. We continue to have our regular monthly payments from Mr Smith, for which we are very grateful, but the call for additional standing orders has not yet produced any significant results. We have had three individual donations during the year, but only two Societies have sent contributions: Newcastle Anglo-Scandinavian Society and York Anglo-Scandinavian Society. As often before, YASS was the outstanding contributor, having sent donations adding up to £875 during the year, raised from various activities including the Lucia in the Minster, as well as generously dipping into Society funds.

We had ten applications for this year's grants, nine from individuals, of which three were for Sweden, two each for Denmark and Norway, and one each for Finland and Iceland. Several applicants were medical or nursing students, but Renewable Energy, International Relations and Ceramics were other interests of applicants. We gave grants to all nine: four of £175, three of £120 and two of £75. We also had one group application, from 'Sail Training Shetland' which will involve ten young Shetlanders being crew members on a sailing ship and taking part in *Nordisk Sejlads* in early July, giving them the opportunity to meet and become friends with young Scandinavians. We decided to support them quite generously with a grant of £400. If all offers are taken up, it will leave us with just over £1000 in the kitty, which is our usual policy.

If you think the travel grants are a good idea, I would appeal to all Societies: please send our treasurer a donation – however modest – for next year's round!

**Donations, please!**
to the Trust Fund Treasurer:
John Christmas
22 Hobgate, York YO24 4H
Cheques made out to
*CoScan Trust Fund*

CoScan Trust Fund
**PRIZE-WINNING REPORT 2014**

# Dog-sledding in Abisko – or the worst time of the year to visit Sweden?

by Rosie Pritchett

An 'elective' is a short period of time, when dental or medical students can stay in their home country or go abroad to experience health care in a different setting. Having previously spent four weeks within a dental clinic in India, I was interested to learn that I could also go abroad on an 'Erasmus exchange' which would last three months, January to April. This exchange was with the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, a university widely known for its research and affiliation with the Nobel Prize. So I applied, and on January 16th boarded a plane to Stockholm with a brand new Didrikson's coat and knee-high faux-fur lined walking boots.

Most of the Swedish students I met were amused that the exchange was January – April; 'the worst time of the year to visit Sweden', and sometimes it was a challenge to wake up in the dark for the 8am starts on clinic. They found it even more amusing when I told them that a group of us exchange students had booked flights up to Kiruna, 145km north of the Arctic Circle, to stay at a hostel in Abisko National Park.

The group met at Stockholm airport and consisted of eight people from the UK, France, Switzerland, Spain and Germany. We joked we had enough thermals to clothe the whole of Abisko, which wouldn't actually be that difficult as the population is only around 80 inhabitants. Arriving into Kiruna airport, I looked out of the window to see miles and miles of white snow interspersed by dark scraggly-looking trees and shrubs. Kiruna is a town which came into existence as a result of iron-mining in the area, a fact we were frequently reminded of as the hostel was situated next to a train track. Every so often, hardy looking trains would stream past with endless carriages filled with iron exports. Apart from a small train station, a couple of hostels and a Coop supermarket there were just a few houses in Abisko town, which borders the edge of the National Park and a large lake. One of the main

**Abisko hostel with cross country skis in front**

attractions of Abisko is the lack of light pollution, drawing travellers who hope to catch a glimpse of the *aurora borealis*, Northern Lights.

Abisko, unsurprisingly, doesn't have a great public transport system. The passenger train runs twice a day at around 12 and 2pm, which makes a day trip virtually impossible. The really determined visitor can book a taxi but the best way to travel is via snowmobile or dog-sled.

For those staying at the hostel, a morning's dog-sledding is included. I was fairly anxious as we began clicking the dogs into each sled, they were powerful looking and howling with anticipation for the run. The leader of the pack was a large dog on sled 8, which kept trying to attack the other dogs, who would bow down in front of him in a show of submission. I gave him a wide berth, choosing sled 4 which had four smaller looking, calmer dogs.

**The dogs during a more peaceful moment**

**Four dogs pulling me along on the dog-sled**

We set off through the wilderness, a long winding chain of 10 dog-sled beginners with the expert up front leading the way. On downhills it is important to brake so that the sled doesn't catch up with the dogs. This requires some degree of skill, as the brake is a metal bar towards the front. Stepping on this slows the sled but leaves you slightly off-balance. If someone does fall off, it is up to the person in front to try and grab their rope as the dogs run past. Each set of dogs is racing to be at the front of the pack, if they feel no resistance in the sled, they just keep forging onwards. Flying through the blank wilderness at high speed was exhilarating and I found that choosing the smaller dogs was actually an advantage. The larger dogs at the rear became lethargic and less sprightly towards the end, requiring a bit more encouragement.

The next day we put on cross-country skis and went down through the village and onto the large, frozen lake which had an island in the middle. Behind the island, a man from one of the local towns had bored a hole in the ice, using what looked like a cross between a large screwdriver and a chainsaw. The hole showed the depth of the ice to be about 40cm. He had passed a fishing line through the hole, but had not caught anything yet. He'd travelled to the lake on his snowmobile, and on hearing that we had never driven one before, put the keys in the ignition and let us each take a turn.

Continuing on our journey round the island, we came across a group of people sat around a fire. Earlier in the day we had unsuccessfully attempted to dig a hole in the snow with a view to lighting a fire in the evening. We saw our opportunity and, remembering the spot, went to buy wood and marshmallows. It also happened to be the night predicted to have the clearest sky and a good chance to see the northern lights.

Over dinner at the hostel, we mentioned our plan and a few extra were keen to tag along. This quickly turned into a large group who seemed to think we were leading some kind of 'northern lights viewing' tour. It was nearing 10pm as we left the hostel and headed across the dark frozen lake to find the fire pit from earlier. With the fire successfully lit, we kept an eye out for a glimpse of the elusive lights. Although cloudy, the lake had an area of clear sky above it. After about an hour we finally saw the white lights streaked in the sky. This highlight marked the end of our trip to the far north and we returned to Stockholm the following day.

The rest of my time in Stockholm flew by quickly. Aside from attending clinics at the dental school, I spent my time visiting museums, enjoying the outdoor spaces that surround Stockholm and meeting up with friends for a *fika*. I have already booked my next Scandinavian trip!

# From Liverpool to Stockholm, Erasmus 2014

by Dr Patrick Bogue, Junior doctor at St. Thomas' Hospital, London

This journey started on a cold, crisp and dark January evening – arriving on a flight into Arlanda with a backpack full of winter clothes. The *Storstockholms Lokaltrafik* railway conveniently tracks south from Arlanda to my new home on the southern edge of Södermalm, Stockholm. The first winter snow had recently fallen and the Scandinavian idyll was complete.

I lived at the university halls of residence located on a hillside overlooking the frozen and bare woods of Årsta Skog. *Karolinska Institutet* offered a simple, functional and sociable living place and I was in a dormitory with hundreds of open-minded international students. I spent the next few months meeting people from as far as Argentina, Ethiopia and Australia, exploring the cobbled streets of Gamla Stan, the forests of Tyresta national park and scheduling trips to our local *Systembolaget.*

**Stadshuset — Stockholm City Hall**

As a global health graduate, I arrived aiming to learn from a world-leading health system. *Karolinska Institutet,* my host university, were offering a four month clinical program in maternal and child health. In hospital, introductions are customary in first name terms, irrespective of your position. Doctors and nurses always make time for *fika*, and take a protected lunch hour. The strength of this social and realistic version of delivering modern medicine struck me as a refreshing contrast to our over-stretched working culture in the UK National Health Service. Everybody in the hospital wears the same scrub uniform, which reflects a lack of hierarchy and perhaps, contributes to the very low rates of hospital-acquired infection. I was attracted by the egalitarian working culture and was well received by both staff and patients.

The *Karolinska Institutet* student union, known as *Medicinska Föreningen*, holds a fully furnished cabin by the shore near Värmdö, Beatelund, about 40km outside Stockholm. Discovering the countryside; boating, hiking and relaxing after a few weeks of a busy clinical program at *Karolinska Sjukhuset* was the perfect way to unwind. With the help of some enthusiastic Finnish students, we stoked up a sauna and made plenty of dips into the ice covered lake. We made full use of the right to roam, *allemansrätten*, a custom allowing us to take the boats out and go hiking through oak and pine woods.

I completed a second clinical placement at the Paediatrics department at *Södersjukhuset*, one of the largest hospitals in Stockholm. Strangely, beneath the hospital lies an underground complex with approximately 4,500 square metres of space used mainly for research and training. In the unlikely case of a sudden-onset disaster or war (Sweden celebrated 200 years of peace in 2014), it can become fully operational as a hospital.

**Arriving each day in pitch darkness and leaving in ocean blue dusk — *Karolinska Sjukhuset***

Sweden has one of the lowest child mortality rates in the world. It achieves this through public provision of comprehensive health services with health spending averaging around $3,000US per person. Hospital records, like most data in Sweden, are almost completely digitalised, allowing for clear and consistent communication between health professionals. During this placement in Paediatrics I worked in *Barnakuten*, the children's emergency department. The most striking observations for me were firstly, the remarkably high staff morale, and secondly, the extraordinary amount of *snus* (chewing tobacco) which they consume. I haven't figured out whether there is a significant correlation here.

I left Stockholm in the early summer with a strong desire to return. The Erasmus program has been an exceptional way to discover the capital of Scandinavia, make meaningful connections and learn about a world-class health system. I feel this experience has helped me become a more well-rounded and informed doctor. I hope to return in the very near future to work, basing my decision on the extremely high living standards and the balanced lifestyle. I am extremely thankful for the generous support provided by the CoScan and I hope to continue to explore Scandinavia throughout my career. *Tack så mycket!*

# Making music in Stockholm

by Francesca Le Lohé

In April 2014, I was fortunate enough to receive a grant from CoScan to go towards my flights to Stockholm in August, where I was to attend a residency at the Elektronmusikstudion (EMS) for two weeks, researching and developing some new music in their state-of-the-art studios.

A residency seemed like a fantastic way to access the things I have missed since graduating in July 2013: expensive software, powerful computers, soundproof studios with excellent speakers, and advice from technicians and recording engineers.

And EMS is a fantastic place. The studios are located in an old brewery along with other arts organisations, with a gorgeous view of the water and the other main islands of Stockholm. (Mind you, it is pretty difficult to not find a gorgeous view in Stockholm.) The ethos of the studios is great; they run courses for musicians to learn how to use the studios and technology, then they are free to use them afterwards to create music 24/7. The studios attract international artists, from those in the early stages of their career (like me) to well established artists, working in all fields such as electro-acoustic (me again), techno, acid house, noise art, sound art and installation work, and those who play analogue electronics, which is no surprise as they have perhaps the biggest synthesizer in Europe, the Buchla. The staff are all musicians and artists in various fields themselves and are incredibly helpful

and friendly. I would recommend anyone interested in working in a music studio to get themselves to EMS, sharpish!

Thanks to CoScan and EMS, I was able to attend my first residency, an important step for an emerging composer. I made some sound recordings of objects around the house before I went – an old kettle, grinding seeds in a mortar and pestle, a wooden spinning top, water boiling and many others – and when I arrived at EMS, I listened to the various recordings carefully and explored how I could manipulate them, pair them and transform them into something musical. I had never recorded found objects before; whenever I had made electronic music before, I had used recordings of instruments and voices, so this was a new way of working and thinking about music for me. Over the course of the two weeks, working 10am - 5 or 6pm every day, I certainly made some rubbish. But, this was as much a research opportunity as it was time to create something new and I learnt from the rubbish I made, and so many new ideas were sparked. By the end of my residency, instead of one finished product, I had created various materials and had ideas of how to use these materials for at least two new pieces. In October I will be writing a piece for a workshop with a new music group in Manchester, Sounds of the Engine House, and I want to use some of the music I made at EMS for this piece. My idea is to have interplay between an instrumental section and an electronic section; the instruments would start but then the electronic part would seep in, imperceptibly at first. The electronics would then alter and transform the piece. The instruments would then have their turn to seep in and adapt the electronic music, eventually taking over and taking the music somewhere new, and so on. The idea is inspired by how we can adapt to and then change our environments, for better or worse.

Another section of music I developed at EMS will become part of a flute and electronics piece I am writing to be premiered in a concert later in the year. And I still have many more materials I created at EMS. I've built a sort of 'sound library' for myself which I hope to use in many future projects – so a very productive residency!

**Working with Pro Tools in Studio 6**

# Curating in Aarhus

by Rebecca Starr

Having graduated from the University of Leeds with a degree in History of Art with Museum Studies in July, I thought that a Curating course at the University of Aarhus seemed like a useful and interesting way to spend the summer, before starting my Master's degree in Art History. The course syllabus, devised by international curators and academics, allowed me to develop my critical understanding of curatorial practice. I'd definitely recommend studying at a Danish university, there was a lot more freedom of expression, and ideas were discussed openly amongst students and tutors. Aarhus was such a friendly city with lovely buildings and so many places of interest, in particular the *ARoS Kunstmuseum* and the *Museum Ovartaci.*

I found it interesting to be able to view the landscape that inspired many of the paintings that I'd seen in Aarhus and on a previous trip to Copenhagen. I also had the opportunity to visit other Danish cities. Despite its industrial areas, I found Aalborg to be warm and welcoming and enjoyed weaving my way through the streets in the city centre. I was impressed by the architecture and collection housed at the Utzon Centre, which looked so picturesque and modern in its waterfront setting. One of the definite highlights was having the opportunity to visit Lindholm Høje, stone circles at the Viking burial ground that had been there for over a thousand years – the sheer volume of stones put Stonehenge to shame!

I had the opportunity to spend some time in Copenhagen relaxing in the city's Botanical Gardens and exploring the Nørrebro district of the city, where I was staying. I also had the chance to travel over the Øresund Bridge and spend a few days in Malmö. Having been an avid viewer of 'The Bridge' I was expecting to be greeted by moody, stark buildings. It couldn't have been more different! The sun was shining, the city felt so friendly, and I found a local deli that could cater to my newfound obsession with smørrebrød. The view of the Øresund Bridge was amazing, with families, business people and tourists taking the time to enjoy the walk and views along the waterfront.

My summer in Scandinavia was intellectually stimulating yet relaxing at the same time. I'll definitely be back again and I'd like to thank CoScan for so kindly awarding me funds toward my trip. Thank you so much for your generosity!

**CoScan travel grants**

are awarded once a year to people aged between 15 and 25 who are planning a journey of an educational nature to Scandinavia.

Further information from Tony Bray (see p 44 for contact details).
Deadline for applications:
31 March each year.

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**Deadline for contributions to the next Magazine:**
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**CoScan Travel award – Prize Winning Photo 2014: Rebecca Starr**
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark

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