CoScan

Confederation of Scandinavian Societies of Great Britain and Ireland

Patrons:
Their Excellencies, The Ambassadors of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden

Contents

All change at Copenhagen

From the President – Mark Elliott

It has been a busy year, and an important one for CoScan. Twelve months, as I write, since our 60th Anniversary lunch in London and the publication of our *Jubileumsmagasin*. Twelve months' delay till the publication of this issue, but for good reason. We are under new management, and that management has not been idle.

The lunch at St. Stephen's Club in Westminster on 4 October 2010 now seems a long time ago. Three Ambassadors and two Counsellors from "our" five Embassies in London attended, and we were addressed by the Danish Ambassador as the senior by date of arrival. Despite the transport strike that day, around 50 CoScan members and supporters were present, and enjoyed fine food in a beautiful setting. The Club is in Queen Anne's Gate overlooking St. James's Park, and has close associations with the British Conservative Party and many of its leaders from Disraeli to Cameron. We were there because the building is also host to the Danish Club; that day the rooms were alive with other Nordic languages too, and with music by a trio of talented flautists from Finland, Denmark and Norway. It was a great day.

Then we were looking back as well as forward, over our eventful sixty years. Since the Copenhagen Conference in April/May 2011 we are firmly oriented towards the future, with the election of Eva Robards as Chairman, and with new blood on the executive committee. More on that below. But I should first dwell briefly on the undoubted success of CoScan's Copenhagen visit.

Copenhagen was the crowning triumph of Kari Moss Wright's long and splendid career as conference organiser. She has long been threatening to step down and leave the task to others. Happily for us all, she agreed to complete her quintet of Nordic capitals this year. As always, she achieved excellently central accommodation at reasonable cost, a very fine Conference dinner in traditional surroundings, and even brisk but sunny weather almost throughout our stay. As a group we were taken around the main sights of that lovely city, with a guide who combined nice touches of humour with an admirable understanding of the tastes of our mixed-race party. Individually we had time to extend the experience in our own ways. I shall not forget enjoying a perfect and ample seafood salad with good Danish beer, while sitting in warm sunshine near one of the quiet waterways in an older quarter of the city, and recruiting strength for the 400-step climb up the spire of the local church to the best view in Copenhagen. For others it was architecture, museums, galleries – even, they tell me, shops. Each of the cities we have visited together over the past dozen years and more under Kari's auspices has had its charms, and in their way they were all special. All one should say, perhaps, is that this time the magic certainly worked, from the first function at the British Ambassador's charming residence where we coincided with his celebration of the Royal Wedding, and one of our number was able to produce a newspaper photograph showing himself as a baby in that same once-Royal house.

The relaxed Copenhagen mood extended to our meetings. As soon as Eva Robards was in place as our new Chairman, we were all aware of a new approach. On the morning after the AGM, and before our coach-tour, Eva chaired a discussion forum open

to all, with the theme "what is CoScan *for*". Debate was lively, and innovative. It set the pattern for a continuing process of enquiry and improvement over the succeeding months. The need for more openness, and more active participation by CoScan's membership whether as individuals or by societies collectively, has long been apparent. How the new approach will work to achieve this is outside the scope of my message here. Nor do I wish, this time, to single out for mention individual members of the new committee, although all are playing an important role – on the magazine and the website, on membership and on youth, on the Trust Fund, in so many areas. But I do want to emphasise my great satisfaction and confidence that we now have a Chairman with the skills and enthusiasm to bring CoScan definitively into the 21st century.

A final word. We have been fortunate in the quality of those at the centre of CoScan. Our greatest debt in recent years is owed to Peter and Kari Moss Wright. In Copenhagen, Peter agreed to extend still further his services to CoScan by accepting the post of Vice-President. Kari remains on the executive committee, but is now firm in her intention to vacate the post of conference organiser – a group of members is now considering the future pattern. Together they bridge past and future, giving us the invaluable benefit of their wisdom and experience. Without them CoScan would not exist now. I salute them.

Core business

From the Chairman – Eva Robards

We concluded at our discussion forum in Copenhagen in April this year that the main purpose/aim of CoScan is "to support member societies in their efforts and in keeping up the link to Scandinavia" (i.e. the Nordic countries). This is actually in agreement with our constitution, which states as the first objective "to support the Scandinavian Societies of Great Britain and Ireland, by acting as a co-ordinating body providing means of liaison between them, as well as between them and the Scandinavian countries". You have probably already heard this from me before but it is vitally important to know what CoScan is *for* and on what we should focus.

CoScan has three main ways of supporting the above aim: the Magazine, the Website and Meetings. It has been much debated whether CoScan should continue to produce a printed magazine, which is costly, or to have a version online only. Because there are still members who prefer the hard copy, or don't have access to internet, we still need to have a paper copy for the time being; our Editor later publishes articles on the website. The cost for the Magazine should be covered by advertising as long as there are no other major funds on hand, and this matter will be addressed once we have publicity material in place.

The content of the Magazine is of vital importance if CoScan is to support its member societies, so the weight of different subject areas within the publication must be considered carefully. In order to help the Editor in her heavy work load, we have set up an Editorial board with both the Editor and Chairman as members. The decision was taken in May, but the board still remains small. We have now acquired new board members and can start the new year as a stronger executive management team, so next year the Magazine will be biannual again. The responsibility for there only being one

issue this year is entirely mine and for that I apologise.

Activities related to our member societies should probably account for the largest number of topics in the magazine. This issue has a few contributions directly from member societies and a couple of summaries (publications and anniversaries). There is also a piece by a new member, the student organisation Scandinavian Society (ScanSoc) at the University of York. Of particular interest is that ScanSoc started its life with the name of "Nordic Society" but found that too many people were unaware of Nordic being designated to a specific geographical region and not including other northern countries like Canada and Russia. This "experiment" illustrates that all of us Nordic people will have to continue being Scandinavian when abroad.

A novel theme is a guest writer – a prominent person to address us. In this issue we are fortunate to have Dr Peter Addyman who set up the York Archaeological Trust at the time of the archaeological dig of the Viking age city of Jorvik. That will be four decades ago in 2012.

2012 is also the year that York will celebrate its 800th anniversary – not a bad time for the CoScan AGM to be held in this city (27-29 April). I am fully aware that it is not a conference year but there could still be something to tempt you to participate in the AGM, which is both a democratic right and responsibility. A subcommittee is busy organising a weekend event, that will be as good value for money as possible, with a reception in the evening of Friday 27 April, a guided tour (different than the ordinary) on the Saturday morning, AGM in the afternoon, followed by dinner in Bedern Hall, one of the many Medieval halls in York. Staying on the Sunday is optional but with the multitude of attractions in York, it shouldn't be difficult to find more interesting things to do. Further information and a booking form will be sent out to Societies and Individual members, but do already now make an entry in your diary about the event – for meeting up and having a good time together. I started on a serious note but we must never lose sight of the fact that we should also have some fun!

Photo: AW Robards CoScan Conference and AGM in Copenhagen

Jorvik – changing the image of the Vikings *by Peter Addyman, Director of York Archaeological Trust 1972-2002*

Guest writer

Gooselady (printed with permission of York Archaeological Trust)

Thirty five years ago this summer a long-running archaeological dig began in the centre of the Northern English city of York which revealed the commercial heart of its predecessor, the Viking age city of Jorvik. The discoveries in Coppergate, a street with a Viking age name, included rows of wooden shops, houses, workshops and warehouses, the yards behind them, and the junk and debris of everyday life, all miraculously well preserved by the anoxic (oxygen-free) ground conditions.

The excavation revealed an urban world concerned with manufacturing and commerce, import and export, arts and crafts and the everyday details of town life – but scarcely anything that reflected the traditional image of the Viking as a person of violence. Out of 39,000 artefacts recovered only five had even the remotest connection with military matters.

At the time the Jorvik dig became something of a nine day wonder – or more correctly a five and a half year wonder, as the excavations continued until 1981.

The media almost weekly reported new finds of exotic objects, many of kinds never seen before, like the silk headgear worn by Viking age women, or the boxwood pan pipes that once belonged to some nameless Nordic musician, or the die used by a York moneyer to make Jorvik's famous Viking age coinage. The tourists who, then as now, flock in millions to the ancient city of York began to flock to the excavation site. There they were able to watch from specially constructed walkways as the excavation staff, just a few metres away, carried out the painstaking tasks of uncovering the structures, identifying and recovering the artefacts and recording all the data.

The Jorvik excavations, unusually extensive, were also unprecedentedly expensive. A campaign to help finance them was led by Magnus Magnusson, the British-born Icelander well-known for his work in television, especially his popular quiz programme Mastermind. His campaign was honoured by the patronage of the Prince of Wales, Queen Margrethe of Denmark, King Carl Gustaf of Sweden, Prince Harald, then the Crown Prince of Norway, and Kristján Eldjárn and Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, successive Presidents of Iceland. Personalities like Piet van Deurs on Danish Television, or Erik Bye in Norway spread word of the discoveries. The result was intense interest by Scandinavians throughout the Northern world and by expatriate Scandinavians in

America in what was in effect the archaeology of their colonial period.

As the excavations drew to an end it seemed important to find a way to allow future generations also to share in the excitement of the Coppergate discoveries. A scheme was devised to create an underground display of the excavated remains below the new shopping complex planned for the Coppergate site. The fund raising campaign was extended, the now-world-famous Jorvik Viking Centre was built in the vast hole dug by the archaeologists, and the new shops were constructed above it.

This was to be no ordinary site museum. An innovative scheme was devised that invited visitors to enter a time car which started off backwards, taking them rapidly back through time until they reached the Viking age. The car then stopped and began to go forward in 10th century time. Now it was in a Viking age Jorvik street - Lundgate, named to honour American donors Mr and Mrs Russell B Lund. The street and its buildings and the activities going on in them were reconstructed in painstaking archaeological detail, building by building, yard by yard, artefact by artefact, person by person, based on the data recovered by archaeologist Dr Richard Hall and his team from the York Archaeological Trust. Even the smells, of baking bread, rotting rubbish or stinking latrines, were simulated, as were the sounds of a busy population chattering away in Old Norse.

The late Dr Richard Hall, director of the Coppergate excavations, coaxes a tune out of still-playable 10th century boxwood pan pipes found in the dig (printed with permission of York Archaeological Trust)

Their trip through reconstructed Jorvik gave visitors an understanding of what Jorvik was like. With that hugely sophisticated archaeological interpretation in their minds, visitors were then conveyed in their cars back to the 1970ies, where they found the dig still in progress. Here they could see what remained for archaeologists to find of the vivid Viking town they had just visited. They could see the 1970ies diggers uncovering it, just as had the real visitors to the site, and like them experience the excitement of discovery. Finally, alighting from their timecars, they passed through laboratories where the artefacts were being conserved and the data studied until they reached a treasure house of the actual artefacts themselves.

The Jorvik Viking Centre opened in April 1984 and was an immediate success. Almost a million visitors passed through in its first year. By the year 2001 the timecars had travelled 75,000 miles through time and were worn out. A major refit was needed. A "time machine" was introduced for time travel. Visitors then entered time capsules suspended from a monorail giving them improved views and allowing space for further street reconstructions. Still visitors flowed through – well over half a million a year. Another refit with further display changes followed nine years later – and by 2011 almost 17,000,000 people had enjoyed Jorvik.

The impact of Jorvik has been felt in many ways. Most practically the Centre has generated a continuous flow of funds to finance further archaeology in York and its

region. Most importantly it has introduced generations of schoolchildren to knowledge of the Viking age, scarcely alluded to in pre-1984 British schools curricula. Most fundamentally it has produced a new interpretation of the Viking phenomenon in British history, showing Scandinavian settlers in 9th and 10th century England as peaceful innovative and immensely successful town planners, town builders, craftsmen, traders, artists, home makers and home lovers – traits with which their modern descendants can readily identify. Most surprisingly, however, Jorvik's most important impact will probably turn out to be its influence on museum design and practice. Museums and site interpretations throughout Britain and Scandinavia and in many places throughout the world now show clear signs of having been influenced – even revolutionised – by the Jorvik display philosophy.

Anglo-Scandinavian Society of Newcastle upon Tyne *by Ditte Prest*

The Society celebrated its 60th Anniversary on 4th November last year. The event was marked with a party in the Mansion House, the official residence of the Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne, a lovely old house in Jesmond, and a very fitting venue for such a happy occasion.

A crowd of members, old and new, were gathered, and among the invited guests we were delighted to have Mark Elliott, the President of Coscan amongst us.

Irene Scobbie, who is one of the Society's founder members, and who joined as a student, was a wealth of information about the earlier years. Other members also reminisced about past events and various periods of the Society's history. Mark Elliott spoke of Coscan and the importance of keeping societies alive.

Our Treasurer Ingelise McNulty, Newcastle's Finnish Consul Geoffrey Berriman and CoScan's President Mark Elliott.

Our running slide show with pictures from events in the Society's history was both entertaining and interesting.

The catering staff served us a delicious dinner, and we drank good wine, and everybody agreed that the evening had been a great success.

Irene Scobbie's speech

A founder member of a society celebrating its 60th anniversary is obviously not going to be in the first flush of youth and memory fades or distorts – or just disappears altogether. I was privileged to be one of Professor Duncan Mennie's Hons students in the Dept of German and Scandinavian Studies at what was then still King's College, and was usually caught up in his enthusiasms. I needed no encouragement where the founding of a Scandinavian Society was concerned.

There were many Scandinavians living in the Tyneside area at the beginning of the 1950s – ex-servicemen, Scandinavian wives, seamen from boats that came right into Newcastle docks in those days. Duncan was building up the Scandinavian part of his Dept at that time and was quite prepared to help in the setting up of a Scandinavian Society.

I see from the records that I was even on the committee in 1951-2. Duncan had allowed the Society meetings to take place in Sydenham Terrace, a former private house that was the departmental premises, had presumably thought it a good idea to have a student member on the committee, and volunteered me for the job.

The programmes were a good mixture of different cultures, with refreshments and good Scandinavian-type coffee afterwards.

I had the temerity to give a couple of talks at that time. One was on Pär Lagerkvist, who had won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1951. He had become my favourite author, and with the brashness of youth I was sure everyone would want to hear about him.

The second talk I remember for silly reasons. I talked about Carl Nielsen and Frederic Delius with illustrations taken from a gram record lent to me by our erudite Danish lecturer Nils Lyhne Jensen. Delius was married to a Norwegian, and both he and Nielsen had set various Scandinavian texts to music. I waxed particularly lyrical about the last song on the record. Afterwards Nils pointed out to me quietly that the last item was not by Nielsen but by a younger contemporary, Riisiger, used to fill up the reverse side of the record. Anyway, the audience was very kind and if they noticed they didn't embarrass me by saying so.

The final memory I shall bore you with remains quite vivid. Ingborg Sohlberg, our Swedish lector at the beginning of the 1950s, arranged a Luciafest and we needed white gowns. I put an advert in the local paper: "Granny's white nightgowns required". Some alert spark at the Chronicle office picked this up and came along to the Dept to enquire about it. The result was a big spread the next day – and the dept telephone never stopped ringing. So many generous people were prepared to lend us their white nighties. I had to collect them and return them in good order after the event. This was at a time when private cars were very rare, and I learned a lot about local geography and public transport. As a fairly north Northumbrian I had scarcely heard of Shields Road, Pelaw, Felling, Windy Nook (well named in December). I doubt whether I found time to open a single course book that week, but the Lucia was a success and still seems to be a feature of the Society's programme every December – and to this day I still remember every verse of the Luciasong. I left the area soon after graduation and didn't return until I retired, but I was delighted to learn that you are still going strong. I wish you many happy returns and hope you will prosper for another six decades.

Publications by CoScan Member Societies

– compiled by Eva Robards

Anglo-Danish Society*:* "News & Reviews" (around 10 pages in A5 format, with colour pictures and some advertising) printed quarterly, covering both recent and forthcoming events

Anglo-Finnish Society: Online information covering recent and forthcoming events, three or four mailings a year.

Anglo-Norse Society in London: "Anglo-Norse Review" (around 30 pages in A5 format, with colour pictures and some advertising) twice a year (winter and summer editions), mainly with articles of general interest. Also, a Newsletter twice a year under separate cover.

Anglo-Swedish Society: Newsletter, 3 times yearly (winter, spring/summer and autumn) via email and by post to those who do not have email. Its content covers events and related activities of interest to members.

The Danish Club: 3 or 4 newsletters a year, mainly with information about events but also a letter with other relevant news from the chairman, sent by post. Almost weekly email reminders for those with email.

Danish YWCA: Newsletter (which can be subscribed to via the website www.kfuk.co.uk) covering events of interest in London and at YWCA.

The Danish Cultural Institute: Newsletter, online only. Sometimes invitations on paper are sent out, but there will always also be an electronic version.

Finn-Guild: "Horisontti" (about 30 pages in A4 format, with colour pictures and some advertising) is a quarterly magazine with a circulation of 6,000.
It includes articles and interviews, and an events diary for the 10,000 Finn-Guild members both in Britain and Finland (also available on finnguild.org/en/content/horisontti).

***Hampshire Anglo-Scandinavian Society*:** Newsletter online, published in January, March, May, September and November, covering major events; a paper copy is sent to the few members without online access.

Irish Scandinavian Club*:* Newsletter, sent out as a PDF to members online, and by post to those without an email address.

Orkney Norway Friendship Association: "Orkney Norway Friendship Association Newsletter" (about 6 pages in A4 format, with colour pictures) twice yearly, with information about activities within the society.

Scottish Norwegian Society (Glasgow): Newsletter monthly from September to June, covering recent and forthcoming events, on paper but can be sent via email to those with a program that can open the attachment.

Shetland Norwegian Friendship Society: Newsletter twice a year: i) late August with information on anything interesting in the summer, and content of the four meetings September-December; ii) late December with information about forthcoming meetings, appointment of the committee at the AGM (November), and any other matters of interest from the AGM.

York Anglo-Scandinavian Society: Newsletter 4-6 times yearly with "selected cultural news" from the Scandinavian countries.

Anniversaries – *compiled by Eva Robards*

The Anglo-Finnish Society celebrates its centenary this year with a rich programme, including a reception with the Finnish Ambassador, a mini-festival of "classic contemporary" Finnish films, a visit to the British Library to learn about its Finnish collections, and an international seminar at the University of London to honour one of the Society's founders: the anthropologist and sociologist Edward Westermarck.

So, when will other societies have their anniversaries? CoScan had its own last year, and in 2010 both the Anglo-Scandinavian Society of Newcastle and York Anglo-Scandinavian Society enjoyed their celebratory events.

Below is a list with dates of birth for most of our societies (exceptions only where no information has been given).

1863 – The Danish Club is the oldest foreign club in London and the oldest Danish Club outside Denmark.
1907 – Danish YWCA in London
1911 – Anglo-Finnish Society
1918 – Anglo-Norse Society in London
1918 – Anglo-Swedish Society; the year being 1918 is according to letterheads from the first 50 years of the Society's existence and Professor Bill Mead's articles in Anglo-Swedish Review 1956 and 1959. Somewhere along the line, anniversaries started to be celebrated in 1919 but this appears to be a mistake (based on the year the Swedish-British Society was founded).
1924 – Anglo-Danish Society
1947 – Danish Cultural Institute. The British office opened in 1947 in Birmingham and settled in Edinburgh from 1957 after a couple of years in Manchester.
1941 – Scottish Norwegian Soc (Glasgow) was founded in Dumfries by the many Norwegians training in the area during the Second World War. The present Scottish Norwegian Society is the surviving Glasgow branch, formed in 1943, of that Society.
1940s – Irish Scandinavian Club began its life as the Irish Norwegian Club and was set up either during or just after the Second World War. It then joined forces with the Swedish society, and became the Irish Scandinavian Club, also taking in members from Denmark and Finland.
1950 – Anglo-Scandinavian Society of Newcastle (1 November)
1960 – York Anglo-Scandinavian Society (30 January)
1963 – Midland Scandinavians was founded in 1963 as the Midland Danes. Other Scandinavians showed an interest and after 1-2 years it became the Midland Scandinavians. Are now, unfortunately, in the process of closing down.
1964 – Hertfordshire Anglo-Scandinavian Society (29 February, as Anglo-Danish Society).
1965 – Finn-Guild; this is the working name of the organisation from the 1990s to reflect its widened work, but the official name is the Finnish Church Guild under which it started on 7 January in 1965.
1966 – Norwegian-Scottish Association (in Edinburgh)

1973 – Hampshire Anglo-Scandinavian Society was formed as the Anglo-Scandinavian Society in the summer of 1973, following the closure of the Scandinavian Seamen's Church in Southampton. The society was re-named Hampshire Anglo-Scandinavian Society in 1996.
1978 – Orkney Norway Friendship Assoc (in November)
1979 – Northants Anglo-Scandinavian Society (possibly slightly earlier)
1981 – Scottish-Swedish Society (year not verified by SSS)
1982 – Devon & Somerset Anglo Scandinavian Society (in May)
2010 – Scandinavian Society at University of York

Chairman goes to: the Anglo-Swedish Society *by Eva Robards*

The President of the Anglo-Swedish Society, Baroness Maddock, recently hosted a talk at the House of Lords where Sweden's State Secretary Mikael Sandström (Head of the Moderate Party Policy Coordination Office) portrayed recent developments in Swedish politics under the title "How has the Swedish Model influenced British Politics". After his talk, Mikael Sandström answered a range of questions from the audience. Among those present were the Swedish Ambassador Nicola Clase (Patron of the Anglo-Swedish Society), Viscount Craigavon (Secretary of the British-Swedish All-Party Parliamentary Group) and some 50 members.

Having accepted an invitation from the Anglo-Swedish Society to the above presentation, I took the opportunity to meet up with its Chairman, Alexander Malmaeus, before the talk was scheduled to start. We spent about an hour discussing CoScan issues and how the Anglo-Swedish Society has dealt with *its* concerns. Alexander explained that in order to inspire members to take part in what is on offer on their programme, they are currently focusing on high-profile events. Examples are this latest meeting at the House of Lords, and the Punch Ball in October at the Hurlingham Club, where 470 members "wined, dined and danced". The link to Sweden is taken into account, when planning the programme, but key is that people have the opportunity to come together and get to know each other. Therefore events are often combined with a meal or evening drinks. Information about events (12-15 per year) is forwarded to members via the Society's newsletters, and can also be found on its website (www.angloswedishsociety.org.uk) – which has been notably modernised.

After Mikael Sandström's talk I took the opportunity to chat to some members of the Anglo-Swedish Society most of whom had never heard about us. We need to work on spreading the message of CoScan!


Baroness Maddock


Alexander Malmaeus


Nicola Clase


Mikael Sandström

CoScan Travel Awards 2011 *by Brita Green*

The subcommittee (*Brita Green, Dagmar Cockitt and Alfhild Wellborne)* met in York on 13 April. Our treasurer showed us the audited accounts and told us that, including donations that had been received since the audit, we had £2625.57 in the bank. We decided that, like last year, we would be able to spend £1500-1600, leaving a clear £1000 in reserve for next year.

We had 27 applications to consider, 23 individual ones and a joint application from a group of four people. Two of the individual applications had been held over from last year, and we had received letters from both of them confirming that they still planned to travel to Scandinavia this summer.

The applications were of five different types: participation in a world scout jamboree in Sweden (10 people, including the group), language study (8 people), arctic and other expeditions (4 people), medical or nursing study (3 people) and art projects (2 people). As regards countries, 21 people were planning to go to Sweden (several of them also briefly to Denmark), 3 people were going to Norway, 1 to Denmark, 1 to Finland and 1 to Iceland.

We eliminated a few applicants on various grounds, but still ended up with a large number of people to share the £1500 between. Only rarely is it possible to say that one applicant is more deserving than another, and this is a real dilemma for us in years when we have a lot of applications. We have discussed whether we could possibly justify arbitrarily picking one or two from each activity area and give them a really worthwhile grant whilst completely excluding other, very similar, applications. We decided we could not, but instead had to opt for spreading our limited resources thinly – not an ideal solution perhaps, but inevitable unless we manage to raise more money. So this year we gave £50 to nine applicants, £75 to three and £100 to nine applicants, in total £1575.

We are grateful to DFDS for their offer of free travel on the Harwich-Esbjerg ferry. Two of the successful candidates had expressed an interest in the offer. It will be interesting to see whether they follow it up. Last year, when no less than fifteen people ticked the box (including a group of 13), it was not in the end taken up by anybody.

We also looked at last year's award recipients' reports. As usual, they will be passed on to the magazine, which offers two prizes of £25 each year, one for best report and one for best photo. Prize-winners are chosen by the subcommittee and the editor. In the report we look for good presentation and lay-out as well as content, even though unfortunately it is not always possible to reproduce the original lay-out in the magazine.

It would be good to be able to be a little more generous to the young applicants next year. We are very grateful to all the societies and individuals who contribute to the fund, and would ask you to continue your efforts in the coming year – remember, the more money we collect, the more we can give away.

All donations to this worthwhile cause, please, to our treasurer, Dagmar Cockitt, 41 Chapel Lane, Great Barr, Birmingham, B43 7BD, cheques payable to "CoScan Trust Fund".

Reports from CoScan Travel award recipients

Prize winning report: Norway expedition 2010 – or: "Pasta, porridge and roup" *by Emily Giddings*

Photo: Emily Giddings

***Fact**: Over the course of the expedition we travelled 72 km trekking and 44 km canoeing.*
What you begin to read may surprise you. A group of six 17-year-olds, left to their own devices for twelve days in the middle of the Scandinavian wilderness, may sound like a recipe for disaster. But to us, not only was it the challenge of a lifetime, but it was a haven of independence.

For the first day, after our flight, we were transported to TrollAktiv - a rafting centre which World Challenge uses as a base camp. Here, we purchased all our supplies for the duration of our expedition which was a task in itself – to fit all this into our 75-litre rucksacks, along with our tents and other equipment. That night, we slept at the centre in teepees which, what we didn't realize at the time, was a luxury.

The second day was when the real hard work began. We left the centre and began our trek in the Setesdal Valley, trekking on the Eastern side of the river so that water was always readily available. What surprised us all was how clean Norway was as a country. The water, at points, was clean enough to drink without having to add any solution such as iodine.

After 5 days of exhausting trekking up and down mountains, camping in the wilderness and being eaten alive by insects, we began our canoe phase.
At first, the idea of rowing down a river without anything heavy on our backs seemed idyllic. But the muscles used, teamwork involved, and unpredictable weather conditions soon hit home. However, it all became worth it as we reached our chosen campsite – an untouched, unmanned beach. It truly could have been Paradise Island.

After three days of canoeing, it was back to trekking, with the aim to trek back to the TrollAktiv centre for our last day. This is what, I feel, was the most challenging part of the trip. After climbing and camping at the top of a mountain one day, on the last day, we had to come down into the village. However, after a night of torrential rain, the morning was so misty that it became easy to lose each other within a space of 5 metres. Not only this, but we had to tackle the rocky, now slippery, pathless way down. On numerous occasions, the dominoes effect came into mind. With the rucksack being so heavy, it dictates entirely where you go, and so when one of us falls down onto another, the whole group end up rolling on the ground like helpless upside down tortoises!

Despite the continuous diet of pasta, porridge and roup (our own inventive recipe of rice and soup), spirits were kept high and even when we were at our lowest, we knew we had a goal to achieve by the end of the day, and that motivation kept us going.

Photo: Emily Giddings

The skills I learnt from the expedition were invaluable: I *could* survive by myself. I am honestly proud of myself and honoured that I was given the opportunity to experience something that will stay with me for years to come. So, I'd just like to say a huge thank you to the CoScan Trust Fund for the contribution towards the costs of my trip. It was the hardest, yet most brilliant thing I have done.

Tenacious afloat *by Peter O'Maolain*

With the tall ships race from Kristiansand, in Norway, to Hartlepool, I certainly managed to achieve my aim of partaking in something adventurous: I spent time at sea as one of the voyage crew racing a large barque rigged ship, called Tenacious. Sailing on the Tenacious has given me a broader outlook on life. I learnt new skills, made some great friends and was inspired by many of the people that I met on board, especially some of the wheelchair users.

Photo: Peter O'Maolain

We joined the ship and were thrown straight into the swing of things, receiving a talk from the captain, medical purser, chief engineer and first mate on subjects ranging from the toilets, to getting off the ship safely when it is about to sink (try not to jump on anyone's head as you go into the water!). I quickly learned there would be nautical words for everything. Pulleys became blocks, left port, and right starboard. Just as I was about to go aloft, I was made to stop. Being diabetic, I wouldn't be allowed to until later in the voyage.

Later in the day we were allowed shore leave, so a few new friends and I went into the town of Kristiansand to explore and eat. It was a very nice, attractive, clean town, with many friendly people. We were back on the ship later that evening for the impressive fireworks launched just off our port side from small boats milling around in the harbour. After that it was straight to the bunks, as we would be leaving harbour early the next day.

After breakfast the ship became very hectic. Our leaving time was moved forward two hours, so no one was allowed ashore. We were given a brief introduction on how to pull different ropes, and how to tidy them up afterwards.

We were soon out of the harbour, and on the parade of sail. It was my first opportunity to see the whole fleet, from the largest ship to some of the smaller class D vessels.

It was a busy day, with our first watch, and my first chance to take the helm and act as a lookout. It was also an early night, as we were on early call for breakfast. We had watches from 8 o'clock to twelve, both am and pm the next day, which would prove to be very tiring.

The evening watch was very exciting, with wind speed reaching 30 to 40 knots and our boat speed reaching 12 knots, which I was told is fast for a Tall ship. We tried not to remind ourselves that all the other boats would also be getting this wind.

The next day was the start of my Youth Leadership at Sea program. This would involve me taking charge of a watch, organising the ships entertainment, going around the ship blindfolded to learn what it was like for some of my fellow crew with sight problems, and learning how to make an eye splice in the oldest, crustiest, and roughest piece of rope. I also learned that day that I would be leading the 4 am to 8 am watch in a few days time.

Next watch was the Midnight to 4 am watch. This was tiring and cold, only made possible by regular tea and coffee runs. We learned celestial navigation, and revised the names of the many types of rope onboard. Sleep never felt so good as after a watch. Later in the day I finally had my chance to climb to the first top, something I'd been looking forward to all week. I made my way and it really became clear to me up there the joy and attraction of working at sea full time.

Being woken up at four is never easy, especially if it is bucketing down with rain. The added responsibility of being a watch leader made waking up a lot more challenging, but I managed it somehow. I had to coordinate and shuffle the actions of 10 people, to ensure the boat carried on going straight and didn't crash. I managed this with some success and we again reached speeds of 12 knots, this time in exactly the right direction. I enjoyed this part of the voyage the most and gained many useful skills, including delegation and leadership.

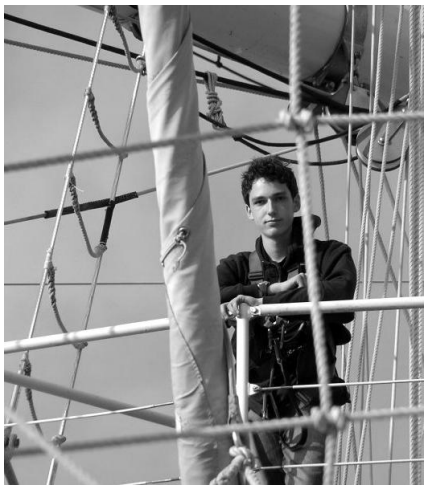


Photo: Peter O'Maolain

The next day was our last one at sea, and I had a full night's sleep, only being woken at 6 o'clock this time. I also tried the disability exercise, walking around a tipping and keeling boat, not being able to see. This was exceedingly difficult, made slightly easier for me because I had a mental picture of the ship, but everything seemed to be twice as far away as I imagined it. I was very impressed with the crew members who were blind and didn't have the luxury of my mental picture. Wearing the blindfold, I missed the ship coming in to Hartlepool.

Photo: Peter O'Maolain

While in the marina I was busy with my turn at mess duty, showing people around the ship, and the crew party, before returning home for a well deserved rest.

Cycling to Norway, 2010 *by Matthew Christmas*

Our cycle tour to Norway in September 2010 was overall a massive success. Apprehensions concerning fitness (or lack of it) were redundant as we managed to cycle an average of 85 miles a day and reached Oslo in good time.

In all honesty, the riding from France to Germany was tedious at times owing to the very similar views and landscapes. Navigation was tricky and often frustrating, but with a more detailed map we were able to use smaller roads and travel in a straighter line. Another factor contributing to faster days was that we decided no longer to use the North Sea Cycle route because it was far too scenic: by the end of the second day of riding, we had followed the cycle route 130 miles but only travelled around 60 miles east of Calais. That was a crushing realisation.

The true excitement and sense of adventure began when we reached Scandinavia, particularly Sweden and Norway. In Sweden we rolled through vast evergreen forests and past picturesque lakes, all on superbly smooth winding roads.

Upon reaching Oslo, our suspicion that it was an expensive city was confirmed when I went to a tourist information centre. Thirty quid a night for a shared hostel with no shower was not within our budget, but the steep cost of hostels was in many ways a blessing in disguise, as the next five days were undeniably the best of the trip.

After an evening of research, we discovered "one of the most dramatic cycle routes in Europe": Rallarvegen (the "Navvies Road") – a construction road built alongside the Bergensbanen and Flåmsbanen rail lines. Nowadays it is used by walkers and cyclists and winds its way through beautiful wilderness from Haugastøl to Voss. Given the route runs alongside a railway, navigation was pretty simple and we got away with using a very rudimentary hand drawn map copied from a website.

After stocking up on supplies, which included 5kg of lamb, 3 kg of muesli and 6 loaves of bread, we caught the train to Haugastøl where the 5 day adventure began. The first thing we noticed as the train pulled away, leaving us alone at the station, was the silence and feeling of isolation. We knew we would see very few people over the next few days but this made the whole experience far more thrilling since there would be no one to help us if things started hitting fans. We were dwarfed by the surrounding mountains, which reminded me of the Scottish highlands, only more wild and vast.

The track started in a valley where wildlife was abundant and autumn colours vivid, before climbing to a height of 1,343 m where the only life was *us*, shivering furiously in a tent and trying to keep a fire going. We cycled between stunning snow capped mountains, past dramatic waterfalls and lakes and skidded down rubble strewn hairpins, completely wearing our brake pads out. Each night we managed to camp in a spot more impressive than the last and by the time we reached Voss, although smelly, damp and weather beaten, we were sad to leave the rugged landscape we'd just experienced.

Those truly self supported days through the raw wilderness were the most enjoyable of the trip and are what characterises adventure cycling. Since returning from the trip, I have learned that there are countless more routes like this further north across Norway and Sweden. The vast sparsely populated nature of Scandinavia is testament to how much exploring there is to be done.

Discovering Europe's "Last Wilderness" *by Olivia Taylor and Eleanor Earl*

Photo: Olivia Taylor

On one of those rare sunny mornings in July, over forty young explorers, aged between sixteen and twenty, from as far afield as Dundee, Belfast and Guernsey met at Heathrow Airport. We were to take part in a five-week expedition to the beautifully Named Oscar II Land, Svalbard – roughly half way between Norway and the North Pole.

We, Olivia and Eleanor, did not know each other before but were both members of a British Schools Exploring Society expedition which aims "… to advance the education of young people by providing inspirational, challenging, scientific expeditions to remote, wild environments and so promote the development of their confidence, teamwork, leadership, and spirit of adventure and exploration". We both wanted to meet new people with an appetite for adventure, and be part of a proper expedition. Learning to journey and live in Europe's so called "Last Wilderness" presented an awesome opportunity and challenge. One of us had visited the Subarctic before, but it was our first High Arctic experience.

What was the purpose of the expedition? Science! The forty-eight young explorers were split into six independent groups each led by a mountaineer and a science leader. The groups were each assigned investigations to carry out. These incorporated: collecting fossils, studying glaciers (including the mapping of glaciers), researching the optical properties of snow (basically, assessing how much carbon was present), and flying kites attached to a weather station in order to study the local climate (thanks to the Royal Meteorological Society). In addition, all the groups investigated the calving characteristics of a local glacier (the way ice falls off), taking note of wildlife, and re-taking old landscape photographs.

The science projects were not just for fun. In many cases the work went towards PhD research. Results were also sent to organisations including the National Snow and Ice Data Centre and the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust.

What was it like at 78˚N? The scenery was incredibly beautiful, yet barren and rugged at the same time. We all found out that Svalbard weather is fickle and quickly changing – we were very much at its mercy as we were living in tents.

On sunny mornings, unzipping the tent door to a vista of clear blue skies, huge peaks and white glaciers was truly unforgettable. Having said that, towards the end of the expedition we were forced to spend almost two days tent-bound in white-outs, where the visibility outside our tents was zero, and it was too dangerous to move. We definitely learnt how to make day-to-day life surprisingly comfortable cooking inside the porch, using our imagination to construct a "washing line" inside our tents and "real" pillows out of down jackets.

The midnight sun was a phenomenon that none of us had ever experienced before, and although we found it odd trying to sleep in the sunshine at first, we grew to appreciate its benefits. Not only did it mean that we had a lot of flexibility in our plans because we could walk throughout the night if necessary, but the sun also heated up our dark-coloured tents!

What did we learn? Through science we, both directly and indirectly, developed a greater understanding of the arctic environment. We gained knowledge about how to cross glaciers safely, build snow shelters and climb out of a crevasses successfully to name just a few skills… One of us had no previous mountaineering experience so it truly covered some new ground! There was a lot of teamwork involved – from loading and unloading the boat that transported us to and from base camp and Longyearbyen (Svalbard's main "city"), to sorting out the food required for the three week main expedition.

It was fabulous to have time to learn about and appreciate nature - watching arctic terns swoop, arctic foxes scavenge along an arctic beach, the midnight sun fall behind the mountains. When everyday life is removed you have the chance to just think.

What were the best and worst bits? Starting with the worst, we both found the rigours of the environment challenging. Within a few days, the wet slushy snow low down on the glacier and damp conditions in the tent soaked boots, and with no way to dry them, I (Olivia) spent nine days with wet boots. On the positive side, what we decided neither of us would ever forget were the utterly beautiful views. Standing together as a group, looking down onto a huge expanse of the icecap, no-one wanted to break the silence.

Our expedition to Svalbard was a remarkable experience, which is incredibly difficult to put into words. We learnt so many lessons whilst in the Arctic, from the obvious, for example not packing your Primula cheese rations underneath crampons, to the less tangible, such as lessons about our personalities and how far we could push ourselves. By the end of the trip, we noticed the sun almost dipping below the horizon for the first time in five weeks, and when a surprise snowstorm hit base camp, we knew the Arctic was telling us that the summer was drawing to a close – it was time for us to say farewell and leave… We would both like to thank the CoScan Trust Fund for the generous support of the expedition.

Photo: Eleanor Earl Studying and mapping glaciers

If anyone would like further information or is considering going on a similar trip with the British Schools Exploring Society, we would be very happy to answer questions and assist in any way we can (elli_7@hotmail.co.uk) or (o--taylor@hotmail.co.uk).

Photo: Morag Brown

Swedish Scottish folk music exchange

by Morag Brown

Inspired by a curiosity to discover more about a closely-related musical tradition, a group of young Scotland-based folk musicians seized the opportunity to be hosted in Sweden by an enthusiastic troupe of fiddlers, wind players, dancers and singers based at Uppsala University. Having enjoyed a wonderful visit from these musicians the previous summer, we were thrilled that this time around the Swedish group would not only organise music workshops and spontaneous jam sessions, but they would also take us on a tour of several "spelmansstämmor", the incredible traditional music and dance festivals that take place every year around the county of Dalarna.

We tumbled off the train into sunny Uppsala station, alerted to our hosts by a prominent Swedish flag amongst hugs and excitement upon the reunion with our friends of the previous exchange. The music jamming commenced that afternoon in Cafe Hi-jazz, culminating in a performance from Scottish group Whirlypit who were part of the Scottish team, and then more music and partying into the night. No rest for the wicked, however: the next two days were spent in Uppsala – sight-seeing, jamming, learning tunes, playing frisbee, eating communally, hanging out in the sunshine, and painting a gigantic 'SweScot' flag – a saltire coloured blue and yellow. One evening we provided Scottish and English fiddle workshops for the Uppsala University folk society, in exchange for a little extra funding towards our trip.

After these initial few "settling in" days, we repacked our bags and set off northwards in two comfortable rented minibuses for the forests, fiddles, folklore and wooden huts of Dalarna. We spent an evening en route at a wonderful community cafe venue in the countryside near Rättvik. It consisted of a central grassy area surrounded by several of the traditional style wooden buildings for which Dalarna is famous. As well as housing the cafe kitchen and some rooms for accommodating passing travellers such as ourselves, a couple of these displayed traditional local folk artefacts and artwork.

That evening, we sang for our supper, literally! We managed hastily to mould the melodies we had shared in the previous days of jamming into a mega performance from all the musicians on the trip. This was received with rapturous applause and cheering from the warm and welcoming audience, and we were rewarded with plates piled high with delicious food traditional to the region. A long night of fiddle tunes and whisky galore put us in high spirits for the mammoth adventure to come.

On arrival at the first "spelmansstämma" at Bingsjö, we put up a huge ex-army tent, acquired for the trip and which would accommodate everyone. The SweScot flag was

proudly hung across the entrance. Through that evening and the following day, literally thousands of fiddlers gathered up and down the hill of the farm, forming small tune-sharing circles wherever you looked. If there was ever an opportunity to be completely, utterly and inescapably immersed in Swedish fiddle music, then this was it.

Amidst the outdoor musical buzz, more traditional wooden huts lay scattered about the farm. Step inside one of these, and the mood immediately calmed. You found yourself surrounded by silent dancing couples, moving to the sound of a single fiddler in the centre of the room, accompanied by nothing but the sound of shuffling footsteps on the wooden floor. Accustomed to noisy, disorderly, rampant ceilidh dances, us Scots looked on in bewilderment. The end of a dance was followed by no applause or chatter – merely a brief pause before the fiddler started up once more and the dancers followed suite, their bodies instinctively flowing with their partner's to the rhythms of the melodies, and gliding in a continuous anticlockwise circle. We were lucky enough to have some expert male folk dancers amongst the Swedish contingent of our group, who persuaded the ladies (and some gents!) among us to have a go at being led round the dance floor. We certainly proved our inelegance, bumping into the other dancers and tripping through various types of "polska". However, we were blown away by the gentle guiding movements of our partners and the simple beauty and repeating steps of the dances. Mastering the dances, we understood, was the key to internalising the steady Nordic rhythms which seem so irregular to the Celtic ear.

The second night at Bingsjö a mysterious "Sausage Shack" was set up by our tent, handing out sausages to any peckish festival goers who happened to be passing. Encouraged by our Swedish hosts, we seized the opportunity of an audience distracted from their fiddles and started up a Scottish ceilidh dance, with lines of dancers learning the "Strip the Willow" stretching down the hill and us musicians playing top volume in order to cut through the festival noise surrounding.

Our initial Swedish fiddle immersion at Bingsjö was followed by nights at two more spelmanstämmor – both smaller, more intimate affairs, but with much the same set up of fiddling circles and dance huts. The tent was set up once more at a local campsite at the edge of a calm scenic lake, which proved wonderful for late night and early morning swims. Even here, away from the musical festival madness, Nordic melodies were to be heard late into the night, fiddlers silhouetted on the walls of the surrounding tents.

The final riotous night of the exchange was spent back in Uppsala before we departed homewards: our last chance to play music, dance, sing, climb trees, swing from lampposts and let loose together until the next trip is organised.

We are extremely grateful to CoScan for the generous donation towards the costs of the trip.

Anna Sophie's Kitchen

The idea of illusion food was first introduced by the Romans and again became popular during medieval times. It was quite customary to bake living birds into pies to amuse and surprise a king or a wealthy knight. If you feel like doing something really silly this Christmas there is a recipe in the 1598 recipe book *Epulario* that would guide you through the making of *one empty covered pie, spacious enough to accommodate 3 parakeets or 6 finches comfortably*.

Imagine a banquet in Tudor-times. A lavishly decorated table, spectacular dishes, hungry and loud guests, toasts and speeches and finally - an expectant silence as a huge turkey, glistening golden and reddish-brown in the glow of the candle lights, is brought to the table. Then, as the knife touches the bird, a big commotion arises when the turkey wakes up, protests and runs cackling and terrified out of the room. The bird had been hypnotized (it is said that if you stroke birds under the neck in a special way they fall asleep), stripped, head tucked under one wing and then rubbed with saffron and fat to get the same colour as a roasted bird. When the worst uproar had subsided and the host had received compliments for his creativity, a new turkey would appear. This time roasted.

The turkey became popular in Europe because of its size. It was also considered better than its predecessor – the swan. But the turkey is demanding and it requires that you are good at adding flavours and careful with the preparation and cooking. These are 8 tips to ensure that you get a moist and tasty turkey. A bird that you wouldn't want to rise from the table and say thank you and goodbye.

1) Salty brine: Place the bird in brine (40-50 grams salt per 1 litre water) in a cool place over night. This gives the bird moisture and to enhance the taste you can add flavours to the water such as: herbs, peppercorns, bay leaves, allspice or cloves. Bring the spices to the boil in 1dl of water to 'free' the aromas. If you are in a hurry you can add the double amount of salt to the water and leave the bird in for 2 – 3 hours.

2) Leave it: When removed from the brine the turkey should be left for at least 4 hours in room temperature before doing anything to it.

3) Ways to add aroma:

- Tarragon, fennel, sage, rosemary, parsley and garlic mixed with oil add lots of flavour. Get the oil in to breast and thighs (using a syringe) before roasting.
- Rub the bird with butter or goose fat to get a crispy, golden skin.
- Saffron adds character and a touch of luxury and ½ gram is sufficient for one bird. Pour one tablespoon of boiling water over the saffron and let it infuse. Mix the saffron water with butter, salt, pepper and cinnamon and rub the entire bird with the mixture. Try to get some of the butter mix into open spaces under the skin.

4) **Stuffing:** By stuffing the turkey it takes longer to cook and this increases the possibility of ending up with a dry bird. It is better to fill the turkey with quartered oranges, lemons, onions and a couple of bay leaves for taste.

5) **Protect the breast:** One of the challenges when cooking a turkey is that the breast cooks faster than the legs. By pushing the stuffing in between the skin and the breast the thick layer of stuffing will insulate the meat and slow down the cooking time. One can also ensure an even result by cooling down the breast (ice cubes wrapped in a kitchen towel) half an hour before the bird goes into the oven. Cover the breast with aluminium foil for the first hour of cooking, remove the foil and lay bacon rashers over the breast.

Photo: newrecipesforlife

6) Chose the right bird: Free range, ecological turkeys are tastier than those who have lived in captivity on a small area. If you buy a frozen bird it should be defrosted slowly (3 days) in the fridge. It can also be defrosted directly in the salty brine which would take about 24 hours.

7) Roasting: Preheat the oven to 200°C. Let the turkey roast for 1 hour, take it out of the oven and baste with the pan juices (remove the alum. foil and lay the bacon rashers). Lower the setting to 150°C and leave the bird until the thermometer shows a temperature of 65°C. Baste occasionally. Lower the setting to 120°C and let the temperature in the bird reach to 70°C. If not using a thermometer the cooking time is about 30 min. per kg.

8) Resting. Let the turkey rest, uncovered, for at least 2 hours. It may seem a long time, but the texture will be improved the longer you leave the bird to rest. Piping hot gravy will restore the heat. The stuffing can be rolled like a sausage in aluminium foil and baked separately on a rack on top of the roasted potatoes/vegetables. Use the wings and other bits and pieces as a base for the gravy.

Cranberry and orange relish

Finely chop (in a food processor/grinder) 4 cups of cranberries. Peel 2 large oranges, remove seeds and white membrane and put oranges and rind through chopper. Mix together with 2 cups of granulated sugar and leave in room temperature until the sugar has dissolved. Store in a covered container in the fridge. An elegant accompaniment to the holiday bird.

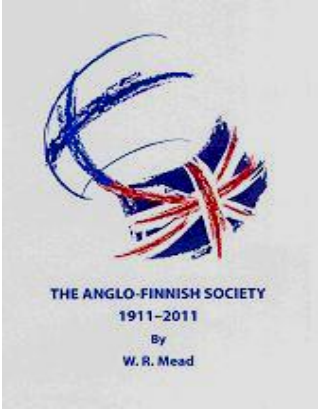
Photo: Erik Hannemann

Chocolate and Christmas!

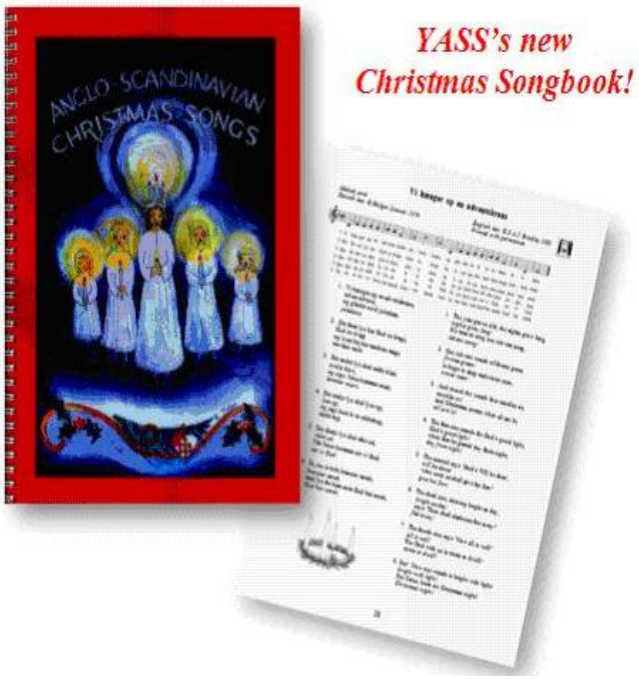
Why not make a fantastic chocolate cake using for example Julia Child's *Queen of Sheba cake* as a fundament (*The French Chef Cookbook*)

The edge: Cut a strip of baking paper, an inch higher than the cake, and long enough to just reach around the cake. Place another wider paper underneath the strip to avoid mess. Pour dark melted chocolate in to a plastic bag. Make a small hole in one corner. Make a zigzag pattern of chocolate all over the paper and let it set. Place it around the cake and carefully pull off the paper. You can put a marzipan lid on top and then decorate as uninhibitedly as you like!

From the book shelf



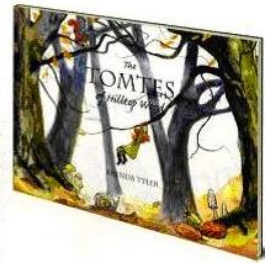
Copies of the history of the Anglo-Finnish Society by Prof. W R Mead are available from the Hon.Sec. Paulus Thomson at: 44 Elfort Road, London N5 1AZ priced at £10 hardback and £5 paperback (plus £2 for post and packing).



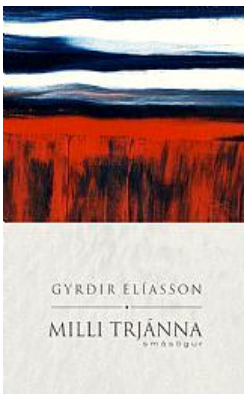
This exciting new song-book contains over 50 songs including favourite English carols and a wealth of songs from the five Scandinavian countries. The original texts are included together with English translations, many of them specially made for the book.
This attractive volume will grace any Scandinavian Christmas celebration and will make an ideal gift for anyone interested in Scandinavia.
Price: £8 (Postage and packing within the U.K. £1.50).

Orders to: Margot Blanchard, 94 Heslington Road, York, YO10 5BL

Brenda Tyler, ***The Tomtes of Hilltop Wood,*** Children's Picture Book, Age 4-6.
230 x 320 mm, 32 pp
978-086315-772-1
Hardback £9.99
tomtecards@btinternet.com



A charming story inspired by Elsa Beskow's stories of little folk.



Nordic Council Literature Prize 2011

The Icelandic author Gyrðir Elíasson was awarded this year's prize for his short story collection ***Milli trjánna,*** (Bland träden/Mellom trærne), for *"stylistically outstanding literary art which depicts inner and outer threats in dialogue with world literature".*
ISBN 9979659394, 9789979659396
Published by Uppheimar, 2009, 270 pp

An unusual AGM *by Iain Robertson*

At York Anglo-Scandinavian Society's AGM last April there was an upbeat atmosphere with authentic live Norwegian folk-music and dancing. How did this come about?

It all started with a holiday in Lillehammer. I was invited by a Norwegian friend to go along to a rehearsal of the local *spillemannslag* where I experienced a lively programme of *halling*, *pols*, *polka* and the like, many of them composed or developed in the Lillehammer region. During the coffee break I explained I was from York, whereupon someone said dreamily, "Wouldn't it be nice if we could play there!" Well of course it *would* be nice, but our Society is not so rich that it could afford to pay for a group of musicians to come over to play just for us. It seemed unlikely that anything would come of this. I recalled later that evening that our programme for the AGM featured an 'evening of Norwegian music', though at the planning stage the Committee hadn't much idea of what shape this was going to take. The most likely scenario seemed to be a talk plus CDs together with, if we were lucky, showing a Hardanger fiddle: in other words it looked like being a very low-key affair. The second 'wouldn't it be nice' of the evening came when I mentioned to my friend that Norwegian music was on the programme, and that if they *really* wanted to come, this would offer just the opportunity. At this stage, however, it seemed little more than a dream that the *spillemannslag* would come and play for us.

Yet come they did, four players in all. At the AGM we got the "business" part of the evening out of the way as quickly as decently possible and were then treated to a delightful evening of Norwegian folk-dances. It would be an exaggeration to say that all of our Society's members got to their feet in response to the music, but many did, and even those who didn't could be seen engaging in some discreet foot-tapping. With the help of a plentiful supply of Scandinavian food and non-Scandinavian wine the atmosphere quickly became festive – not at all the sort of thing one associates with AGMs.

The Norwegian musicians hugely enjoyed meeting our members, and one had the feeling that the CoScan aim of cementing Anglo-Scandinavian relations had been well and truly realised.

Of course after coming all this way, the musicians wanted to see York and to play at other venues besides our AGM. They enjoyed tours of many of York's tourist attractions, and played for half an hour outside one of them, the Jorvik Viking Centre. One of our members discovered that a local pub-owner has a Norwegian partner, so they were able to play live music well into the night at a pub evening, something which was greatly enjoyed by performers and audience alike.

In all, then, a very successful event. Maybe the best aspect, though, was our entertainers' question, "When can we come again?"

(images: clker)

Midlands Scandinavians
In memory of Bernard W.H. White *by Dagmar Dahl Cockitt*

17 January 1919 – 17 November 2010

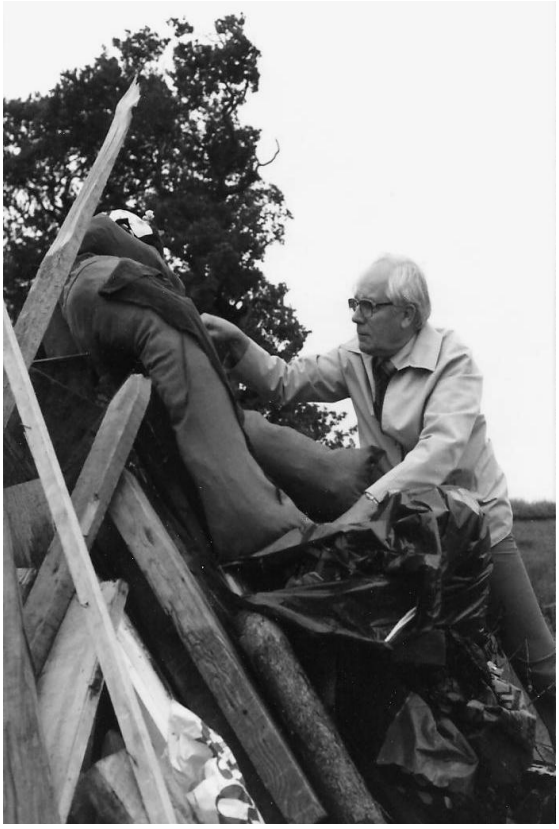
Bernard was born and spent most of his life in the Midlands. After school, he joined a building firm in Lichfield where he enjoyed working on buildings and with wood. He was twenty when war broke out, and he joined up with the South Staffs Regiment in October that year. Serving with the Royal Army Service Corps in the Middle East, North Africa, Sicily and mainland Italy, he was on his way to Rome the day war ended in Europe; he was told the news by a German prisoner-of-war on a train that had halted on the opposite track.

Bernard left the army in November 1945 and took up an offer of further education. On one of his courses, in Wales, he met a Danish couple – his introduction to Scandinavians – and they became lifelong friends.

Bernard's studies led to teaching at the Central Technical College, where he stayed through its transformation into Ashton University.

Bernard and Jean were married in 1952, and they have three girls. Their home was always a warm and friendly place. A few years ago they moved 20 miles north of Birmingham, but that didn't stop them supporting Scandinavian gatherings.

I can't remember exactly when I first met Bernard. In the late 60s he and his family had joined the Midlands Scandinavians to help their Danish "au pair" meet other Danes, and he and Jean remained active members for the rest of his life. Bernard quickly became a valued member on the committee. His enthusiasm and organisational skills, always freely given, meant natural progression to the post of chairman, followed by the position of president.



Bernard on top of bonfire June 1984

During that time he became a staunch supporter of CoScan and was one of the founding members of the CoScan Trust Fund which was set up in 1985. Bernard was also very involved in the two CoScan Conferences hosted by the Midland Scandinavians. I remember well the late night phone calls and meetings to get the last-minute problems solved – it was always done with a sense of fun.

I could go on, but those of you who knew Bernard have your own memories, and I would just like to end by remembering Bernard and his very positive look on life.

A Scandinavian in York *by Mikala Sørensen*

As treasurer of the Scandinavian Society (ScanSoc) at University of York, I am continuously questioned about the Nordic cultures, and therefore also inclined to ponder what it means to be Scandinavian.

For one, I have realised that "Nordic" and "Scandinavian" are identities that cannot be used interchangeably. As society we have re-named ourselves Scandinavian Society from previously being known as Nordic Society, because the associations which most people have to the cultures we wish to spread and inform about, are somehow all linked to Scandinavia, not Nordic countries.

Secondly, I've been surprised to find how many non-Scandinavians, not just British students, but a broad range of ethnicities, seem highly fascinated by and interested in Scandinavia. I like to think that the crucial role ScanSoc has to fill is one of authentic story-telling. Scandinavia is in some ways like a fairy tale, a saga about societies where welfare and equality permeate the body politic as well as public affairs more generally. In a time where it appears to me that abundant inequality and lack of social justice are rules rather than exceptions, I am honoured to be of Scandinavian kin, and to defend our culture and model of society whenever possible.

That brings me to the third experience ScanSoc has illustrated for me. Do we have to see Scandinavia through the foreigner's eyes to understand our virtues? The desire to stand up for Scandinavian culture has only entered my personal agenda after leaving my home country, Denmark, and I have met a number of Danes who seem unaware of the cultural treasure they possess. If it is the case that we only recognise the value of our heritage when we leave its context, I consider it to be of ever greater importance to celebrate it in whatever cultural context we are. That is not to say it should be a species of stubborn, ethnic isolationism; on the contrary I think inclusiveness and extending the invitation to all interested is the way forward.

ScanSoc has been met with plenty of interest from students, both Scandinavian and others, and I am very excited to kick off this academic year with a bus trip to a little piece of Sweden here in Britain, namely IKEA in Leeds.

Newcastle Anglo-Scandinavians welcome Patron

Correspondent: Douglas Robinson, the President of the Anglo-Scandinavian Society of Newcastle

The Anglo-Scandinavian Society of Newcastle upon Tyne held its annual Welcome Party on 21 September 2011 with a buffet supper at the Literary & Philosophical Society, where members and guests had the pleasure of talking with their Patron Kate Adie OBE.

Ms Adie gave a short introduction to her early life in Sunderland, leading to a degree from its University in Scandinavian Studies, and her eventual move to the BBC.

The book Painting the Toon by John Coatsworth, signed by all present, was presented to Ms Adie as a reminder of her time in the North East.

Crossing Continents – The Artistic Spirit of the North *by Jan Cox, PhD in Scandinavian Art 1880-1920 (University of Leeds)*

In October 2011, an exhibition of Canadian art opened at the Dulwich Picture Gallery entitled "Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven". There is a clue in the catalogue that this excellent display may have a Scandinavian connection – it contains an essay by Nils Ohlsen, Director of the National Museum in Oslo. But in order to grasp a story that spans several centuries, we have to find a very unlikely "Swedish" artist.

Caspar David Friedrich is the most important Romantic German artist of the nineteenth century. The only problem with this statement is that Friedrich was born in Sweden and lived in Scandinavia until he moved to Dresden at the age of 24. How can this be?

Friedrich was born in Greifswald in 1774. Although now part of modern Germany, until 1815 it was in Swedish Pomerania, an area ceded to Sweden after the famous victories of "the Lion of the North", King Gustavus Adolphus. It was here that Friedrich spent his first twenty years, and four more in Copenhagen. Friedrich then took up residency in Dresden, but his love of homeland was always evident, and he painted the famous "Chalk Cliffs on Rügen" after his honeymoon there in 1818.

It was around this time that an artist from Bergen, Johan Christian Dahl, arrived in Dresden. Dahl was so taken with Friedrich's work that he eventually moved there, and Dahl and his family shared a house with Friedrich for the last seventeen years of his life. Dahl, much influenced by Friedrich's "divinity of nature", came to be regarded as the father of Norwegian landscape art and was instrumental in the preservation of Norway's ancient stave churches. In turn, another promising young Norwegian, Thomas Fearnley – of Yorkshire descent – came to study with Dahl, but died of typhus in 1842. The remains of both Dahl and Fearnley were taken back to Norway in the twentieth century.

Scandinavians continued to travel to Germany both to teach and study. Hans Gude was a particularly important professor in Düsseldorf, Karlsruhe and Berlin. Gude tried painting in North Wales in 1863, but described his subsequent unsuccessful exhibition at the Royal Academy in London as "useful but bitter medicine". One of his many students was the Swede Edvard Bergh, who returned home to become the first teacher of landscape painting at the Stockholm Academy. Edvard's son Richard Bergh had a more varied repertoire. He created the composition "Nordic Summer Evening" (1899-1900), based on separate sketches of the singer Karin Pyk and Prince Eugen of Sweden (himself a painter), placing the pair of them staring wistfully across a Swedish lake.

In the second half of the 1870s Munich was *the* place to go for art students including many from Scandinavia, and Henrik Ibsen was there too. However, the lure of the "Exposition Universelle" in 1878 and a highly-influential exhibition of French art a year later had many Scandinavians on "the next train to Paris". The 1880s in Paris were a great time for Scandinavians and over sixty artists studied at the atelier of Léon Bonnat – Finns like Schjerfbeck, Swedes like Prins Eugen (who used the alias "Monsieur Oscarsson"), Danes Krøyer and Tuxen, and Norwegians Werenskiold and Edvard Munch. Although living abroad, these Scandinavians invariably returned home for the summer; later in the decade most returned home for good – their own art academies had become more progressive.

We must also not forget the, at this time, lively artists' colony initiated by Michael

Ancher, who went to the fishing village of Skagen in Denmark and married the daughter of the owner of Brøndums Hotel. We know her better as that great character painter Anna Ancher. Skagen became a mecca for Scandinavian and German painters, writers and composers.

We now leap forward to January 1913. An exhibition of Scandinavian art toured the USA and arrived in the city of Buffalo, near Niagara Falls. Two Canadian artists, J E H MacDonald and Lawren Harris, crossed the border and were thrilled at what they saw. Harris recalled: "Here were a large number of paintings that corroborated our ideas...here was an art bold, vigorous and uncompromising, embodying direct first-hand experience of the great North". Macdonald continued "one we liked especially" was Otto Hesselbom's "Our Country": "the rich quiet colour, the detailed drawing of the forest masses, and the fine receding values of the distances shimmering into the sky". Highly important for Harris's painting was the Norwegian Harald Sohlberg, and also the Swede Gustaf Fjaestad, described as "perhaps the most attractive of all".

Lawren Harris *"Snow (II)"*

To conclude this trans-continental story, Harris and MacDonald were founder members of 'The Group of Seven' in 1920, and in 2012 their Dulwich exhibition (closes 8 January) travels to Oslo.

In 2005, a work by Harris found in a hospital broom cupboard was sold for C$1.4 million, while in 2009 Harris's "The Old Stump" fetched a record C$3.5 million.

Those pioneer Scandinavian artists certainly started something!

Gustav Fjaestad "*Winter Moon Light"* 1895

Dag Hammarskjöld and the UN

Ambassador Nicola Clase on 2 September 2011 in her blog on the Swedish Embassy's website.

Dag Hammarskjöld

On 1 September, an event was held at my residence in London to mark the 50th anniversary of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld's tragic and untimely death.

Hammarskjöld did great service to the world. He was a true internationalist whose exceptional intellectual capacity and diplomatic skills made him a much admired and respected UN Secretary-General. He managed to combine both tradition and modernity in his leadership role at the UN. Hammarskjöld is the only person to have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize posthumously. The special programme for the event thoughtfully combined music by Ludwig van Beethoven with readings from Hammarskjöld's diary *Markings*, and reflections about the former Secretary-General by prominent speakers with extensive UN experience. Former British UN Ambassador David Hannay's speech captured the spirit of Hammarskjöld in a most wonderful way. Dag Hammarskjöld's nephew Knut Hammarskjöld attended the event. Also present was Dame Margaret Anstee, who served under Hammarskjöld during his time as Secretary-General and knew him personally. She wrote about her experience in her autobiography: Never Learn to Type: A Woman at the United Nations.

On a more personal note, I brought with me a letter that Hammarskjöld sent to my grandfather in August 1953. In the letter Hammarskjöld writes that Sweden has a moral obligation to promote peace and freedom for all people. He further writes that as a Swede in his post he feels that the Swedish legal tradition provides a solid base and that he has a great sense of international responsibility. He realises that there is a need to increase knowledge about the values of the UN. The letter used to hang on the wall next to my bed when I visited my grandparents as a child. It was the last thing I looked at before falling asleep and it made me curious to know more about Hammarskjöld and his legacy.

The event was recorded by the BBC World Service as there are plans to produce a programme about the legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld.

Slightly edited, and reproduced with permission from Ambassador Nicola Clase

'In the point of rest at the centre of our being, we encounter a world where all things are at rest in the same way. Then a tree becomes a mystery, a cloud a revelation, each man a cosmos of whose riches we can only catch glimpses. The life of simplicity is simple, but it opens to us a book in which we never get beyond the first syllable'.
— Dag Hammarskjöld

Right Livelihood – "the Alternative Nobel Prize"

The Nobel Prize is topical this time of the year, but there is also the "Alternative Nobel Prize". It started in 1980, when the journalist and professional philatelist Jakob von Uexkull approached the Nobel Foundation suggesting that they establish two new awards, one for ecology and one relevant for the lives of the poor. He felt that the Nobel Prize categories were too narrow and too focussed on the interests of the industrialised countries to provide adequate answers to the challenges now facing humanity. His proposal was turned down despite his offer to contribute financially. Therefore he set up the Right Livelihood Awards by himself, and provided the initial funding of $1 million. The first Awards, in 1980, were presented in a rented hall. Five years later, the ceremony took place in the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm – and still does.

Unlike the Nobel Prizes (for Physics, Physiology/Medicine, Chemistry, Literature, and Peace), the Right Livelihood Award has no categories. It recognises that, in striving to meet the human challenges of today's world, the most inspiring and remarkable work often defies any standard classification.

The idea of "right livelihood" is ancient. It embodies the principle that each person should follow an honest occupation, which fully respects other people and the natural world. It means being responsible for the consequences of our actions and taking only a fair share of the earth's resources. In every generation, there are groups of people and individuals around the globe who courageously uphold these principles of right livelihood. The Award honours and supports such people. Jakob von Uexkull says: "*The Right Livelihood Award aims to help the North find a wisdom to match its science, and the South to find a science to match its ancient wisdom."*

Over the years, the Right Livelihood Award Foundation has been able to continue to give out the Award and develop its support to the Laureates thanks also to other private donors. This year the four recipients share €150,000.

Huang Ming, the first Chinese citizen to receive the prize, is an engineer and entrepreneur who received the award for "his outstanding success in the development and mass-deployment of cutting-edge technologies for harnessing solar energy".

Lawyer Jacqueline Moudeina (from Chad) was lauded for "her tireless efforts at great personal risk to win justice for the victims of the former dictatorship in Chad and to increase awareness and observance of human rights in Africa".

The international non-profit organisation GRAIN received the award "for their worldwide work to protect the livelihoods and rights of farming communities and to expose the massive purchases of farmland in developing countries by foreign financial interests".

Ina May Gaskin (USA) was awarded "for her whole-life's work teaching and advocating safe, woman-centred childbirth methods that best promote the physical and mental health of mother and child".

The Northern Periphery Programme – British-Nordic collaboration is alive and well *by Mary Wakeling*

Apart from centuries of historic interaction from the Vikings onwards, the northernmost regions of Finland, Sweden, Norway, Scotland and Ireland share certain geographical characteristics. Tracts of inhospitable terrain, mountains, moorland, deeply indented coastlines, islands, and harsh winter weather conditions; sparse population, remote settlements, transport challenges, an ageing demographic profile and out-migration.

The Northern Periphery Programme addresses these problems, offering European Union funding to bring positive and practical change. The current programme runs from 2007 to 2013. During these years a total of €45 million will be allocated to projects, with roughly 25% earmarked for non-EU member states. There are several key conditions for acceptance of a main project:

- partnerships must span at least three non-adjacent countries (the combination Sweden-Norway-Finland is unacceptable, as is Scotland-Ireland-Northern Ireland)
- 40% of funding must be guaranteed in the form of 'match funding' from public sector bodies in the partner countries; non-EU member states make a higher contribution of 50%
- projects should contribute to one of the programme's priorities, 'promoting innovation and competitiveness in remote and peripheral areas' or 'sustainable development of natural and community resources'.

Ideally a project's partners should be drawn from the public sector, academia and business, and use the insights of all three sectors to produce tangible and workable solutions. In the current programme 40 main projects have been set up; 23 link Scotland or Northern Ireland with one or more of the Nordic countries. They span a wide range of issues, from the natural environment to transport, from health to tourism.

I was the Scotland Project Coordinator in the 'Competitive Health Services' project based in Inverness. It spanned five countries and comprised universities, a research institution, municipalities, other public sector health services and several business partners. The key centres were Oulu, Umeå, Tromsø, Inverness and Galway; project team meetings took place in all these locations. I will not quickly forget the contrasts – Umeå at midsummer 2009, late evening sun on an inland lake, fresh foliage on the myriad birch trees; and Tromsø in December the same year, dog-sledding over fresh snow by starlight and stained-glass colours glowing from the Arctic Cathedral in the midwinter darkness.

The purpose of the project was to bring together all eHealth applications in the area and to transfer carefully selected services from one country to another. eHealth (or telemedicine or telehealth) is the use of modern information and communications technology to deliver health services at a distance, so that the patient and health professional do not have to be present in the same location.

The intention was that pilot schemes should be developed to become a normal part of the health service in their host countries. A shared database allowed clinicians, technical experts and managers to search for applications which could address similar problems in their own health services. A shortlist of seven services with high potential for transfer between countries was drawn up. All parties then met in Inverness for what became known informally as the 'Matchmaking conference'. After two days of intensive discussions and demonstrations, the final choices were made. In the process, our Nordic guests came close to being snowed up at Urquhart Castle by Loch Ness when we discovered at midnight that several inches of snow had fallen while we were enjoying traditional Scottish fare (haggis, neeps, tatties, whisky) and a lively ceilidh! The bus just made it back to Inverness....

The Northern Ostrobothnia Hospital District in Finland piloted three different services, NHS Highland in Scotland two, and Sweden and Norway one each. The 'Checkup Bag' from Sweden was introduced to Finland and Norway as a way of measuring patients' heartbeat, lung function etc using a mobile kit in nurse-led rural health centres, with results transmitted wirelessly back for evaluation by a doctor. In Norway, there were problems over access to the Norwegian healthnet from remote communities on Senja island. Västerbotten county council borrowed a trailer from Finland, which was fully equipped to carry out diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma screening; parked at two remote health centres, it saved patients a long journey to Lycksele hospital for testing.

The other pilot services all used video conferencing to link rural centres with specialists. In Finland, visual technology was used successfully to treat complex wounds, and to deliver speech therapy to rural primary schools. Scotland also piloted remote speech therapy in the Highland region using a video link based on improved local broadband, following the example of a service established in 2005 in Västerbotten. The other pilot, based on a model pioneered at Tromsø, linked the small haemodialysis unit at Caithness General Hospital, Wick, with the main renal unit at Raigmore hospital in Inverness, and is used regularly by nurses, consultants and dieticians; less travel, less carbon, less expense, less stress.... A valuable feature of this project was the opportunity to take clinicians from NHS Highland to Scandinavia to see the services working 'in situ'. I must say I was a little nervous when a renal consultant and two nurses braved Arctic Norway with us in December 2009 – what if they became stormbound, and I had to explain to NHS Highland that we had 'mislaid' three senior renal staff?! But they returned safely, marvelling at the sub-zero temperatures, and keen to start their own service in Caithness.

I hope I have succeeded in giving you a flavour of UK-Scandinavian collaboration on issues important to us all.

The CoScan International Award *by Peter Wright and Anna Sophie Strandli*

Since the first Award was given to the city of Lillehammer for the extraordinary achievement in hosting the Winter Olympics in 1994 we seem to have had no difficulty in finding suitable candidates for our Award. When you consider that it is now hanging with Mika Häkkinen in Monaco, on the top of Roque de los Muchachos in the laboratory of the Nordic Optical telescope, in the study of Dr. Hans Blix, in Stefan Edberg's trophy collection and in the office of the Øresund Konsortiet. It has been a recurring problem to identify which part of space Christer Fuglesang is currently occupying and we are hoping that Magnus Carlsen, the recipient of the 2011 Award, will again be playing chess in London at the end of this year when we would seek an opportunity to make the presentation. This follows the latest recipient which is Oslo Opera House and the Norwegian architectural firm Snøhetta.

The spectacular building houses The Norwegian National Opera & Ballet and after the opening in 2008 it soon became a landmark and a style icon. It has three performance spaces for opera, ballet and concerts and a gross area of 49,000 m2 in about 1,100 rooms. The Opera has also become a major tourist attraction as the first opera house in the world to let visitors walk and picnic on the roof.

On October 31 we at last reached the Opera to make the presentation of the CoScan International Award 2010 and we found waiting a most enjoyable reception. Receiving on behalf of the Opera were Tom Remlov, General Director, Prof. Tarald Lundevall, Senior Architect of Snøhetta and Senior Architect Sigrun Aunan. The reception was attended by key people from the Opera: Head of Marketing and Communication Cathrine Pia Lund, Head of Press Lene Jacobsen and PA to Tom Remlov Kari-Anne Amundsen. And from CoScan: Kari Moss Wright Embassy Liaison, Anna Sophie Strandli Editor of CoScan Magazine and Helena Schmidt Youth and International Officer. There was particular appreciation shown of the list of previous recipients and no doubt what so ever of the value of the Award and the significance it gave to the recipients.

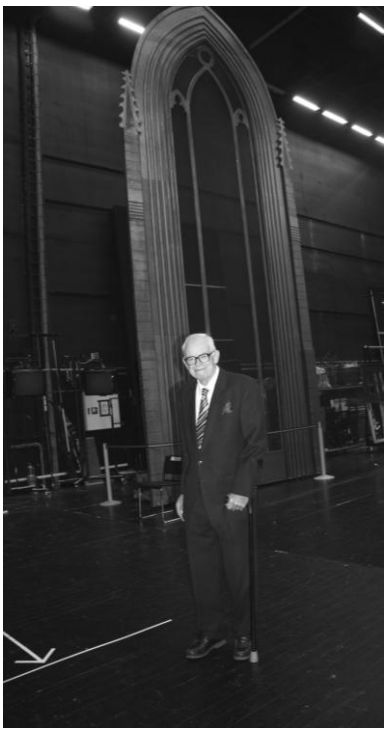


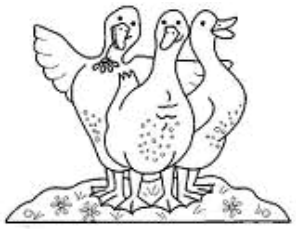
Photo: H Schmidt Peter on Stage

As always Peter Wright identified the importance of the networks of clubs in CoScan and their capacity to act as many embassies. He outlined the functions of CoScan including the preservation of traditions; the Travel Awards and the AGM meetings held in all the capital cities of Scandinavia.

After the reception we had the privilege of a complete tour back stage conducted by Kari-Anne Rasmussen. Everywhere we noted the sense of commitment and dedication and share enjoyment. A key to this has been the capacity of the architects to listen and incorporate the ideas of the staff in the design.

This has been an award that was widely appreciated by all people involved and we are most grateful for the superb reception in this magnificent building; an iceberg stranded at the head of the Oslo Fjord.

Mortensaften in Skol Style *by Peter Wright*



Apart from providing a network of friends and contacts throughout Lincolnshire and beyond (a tradition started by Viking colonisers in early days) SKOL, the Scandinavian Klubb of Lincolnshire, maintains a tradition of holding Nordic events that bring members together to sample memories of yesterday.

Examples include a Julebord, a Juletrefest, and just recently a Mortensaften where the goose population of Lincolnshire is reduced in a good cause.

This year, in November, members met in Goltho near Wragby where under the guidance of Lynne af Rosenberg the staff at Goltho Manor produced a splendid dinner of goose, new potatoes and red cabbage followed by almond rice pudding with cherry sauce. What a meal!

Wine and coffee on demand and then, as you sink back sated in your seat, Victor Nash, a former oceangoing Chief Engineer, led an evening of Andespill with much laughter and delight.

The SKOL toast? *"Our Queens and our Kings and our Presidents".*

Grand old diva died *by Anna Sophie Strandli*

Photo: Stian Lysberg Solum

The beloved theatre queen and great diva Wenche Foss died earlier this year, 93 years old. Her career span eight decades and she was the leading Norwegian actress of stage and the star of numerous movies, comedies and major musicals. At the National Theatre she played more than 55 principal roles, of which she may in particular be known for her interpretation of Mor Åse in Ibsen's Peer Gynt.

Wenche Foss was made a Commander with Star of the Order of St. Olav in 1988 and is one of few Norwegian civilians to hold such a high rank in the King's order of chivalry. She also was appointed a Knight of the Order of the Dannebrog and a Knight of the French Legion of Honour. She was also awarded the Red Cross Badge of Honour.

Wenche Foss was known for speaking out on behalf of the less fortunate. In 1953 she had a son with Down's syndrome who died at young age and her passion has been to raise public awareness about disabled individuals. She publicly announced that she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1971 and over the years she worked tirelessly to end taboos around cancer. She also campaigned for gay rights.

She was honoured with a state funeral, attended by King Harald and Queen Sonja. In his speech at her funeral the Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said: "Wenche Foss was a diva and a rebel and with her Norway was a greater, warmer and more beautiful country". "I have never met a person who in such a friendly, caring and amiable manner could explain to me where I was wrong".

Wenche Foss in front of the National Theatre
Bronze statue made by Per Ung

Scandinavian Christmas Traditions

Christmas in Denmark *by John and Karen Christmas*

Year after year we try to keep the traditions of a Danish Christmas in our home in England; in 42 years of marriage we've had 38 Christmases at home. People have said that we keep the traditions going more than those back in Denmark!

So, what's special about our version of a Danish Christmas? First of all, we try not to let the season start too early. It's our daughter's birthday on December 6, so nothing happens until after that; we would then start to prepare home-made cookies and sweets. The main focus is on the evening of December 24; the celebrations really take off around then.

The tree traditionally goes up that morning but we tweak things a little depending on when guests are coming and what other demands on time we have. And, we get a big tree! It reaches up towards the ceiling and is covered in decorations we've collected over the years; they all have a meaning and a story to tell. Some were made by our children when they were toddlers. Most are handmade and of wood, paper and straw. Typically, red and white is the theme and notably, we have real candles on the tree which we light on a number of occasions during the festive period. The tree is draped in strings of tiny Danish flags to round things off.

If we can, we go to church but that's something of a rarity since services are timed to fit in with English traditions. We eat early evening on Christmas Eve. We enjoy roast pork and crackling; cooked red cabbage; caramelised new potatoes; and then a range of other vegetables like potatoes, sweetcorn and the final beans from the allotment. To follow we have ris à l'amande. This is cooked rice from the previous day to which has been added cream, vanilla and chopped almonds. It comes cold from the fridge and is accompanied by a warm cherry sauce. Inside the ris is a whole almond. Whoever finds this wins a prize which is traditionally a marzipan pig; again home-made. Sometimes we might find another prize, often something fun. The trick is to secrete the almond in your mouth so nobody knows; or even to pretend you have it when you don't. The idea is to make sure the sweet is eaten up before anyone produces the winning almond.

After the meal we all lend a hand clearing away – this is very important. The tree is then carefully moved out into the middle of the room and presents put under. The candles are lit and (if there are enough of us) we join hands to circle the tree and sing Christmas songs both in English and Danish. This sounds a little forced but it's great fun

and goes on for some time. Then we settle down to open gifts and we like to do this one at a time so we can all enjoy the pleasures involved. The candles continue to burn and we continue to drink our wine and eat small homemade sweets.

So, Christmas Eve finishes late and we all go to bed tired. Next morning we sleep in and the day is very relaxed. We have some English customs that day like stocking presents and home-made crackers. In Denmark it's common to have The Cold Table on the 25th but after breakfast we often have nothing until later that day and a cheese fondue has become the norm with "Det Kolde Bord" on the 26th. For a short time we did Danish Christmas on the 24th and then English Christmas on the 25th but that didn't last long; it proved much too much!

Finnish Christmas is private and warm *by Ossi Laurila, General Secretary of Finn-Guild*

I have just had a discussion with a couple of my Finnish friends about the real start of Christmas. Is it when the shopping spree starts? The Christmas tree is brought in? Beetroot salad is on the table? Father Christmas arrives?

In Finland, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are just for family, with visits to friends and other relatives coming on Boxing Day. We also remember past generations by visiting the cemetery to light candles on the family graves.

I have only spent two Christmases in Finland since the beginning of the 1990s so I have to go back to my early memories to recall the perfect Finnish Christmas as it was in my childhood.

First of all, Christmas was always white. I come from peasant stock, so on Christmas Eve I went out into our forest with my father to cut down the tree. I remember wading up to my thighs through the snow and helping choose the best possible fir tree. I still have battles with my British family about when to bring the Christmas tree into the house as some neighbours seem to do it in early December, or even earlier. In Finland, decorating the tree is part of Christmas Eve's activities – it also keeps the children busy while waiting for Santa to arrive.

The traditional way to celebrate Christmas Eve Finnish-style is to have a sauna and then gather for the meal. For me, the proper dinner menu includes a huge oven-cooked ham, with casseroles of potatoes, swede and carrots. Most importantly, there has to be rosolli: a colourful salad of beetroot, carrots, potatoes and apples topped with slices of eggs and served with a cream and vinegar dressing. An excellent dish all year round, it's essential for Christmas dinner. All this is followed by rice pudding with a mixed fruit soup.

As the world knows, Finland has many events that feature alcohol, but Christmas isn't one of them. Having enjoyed several jolly and boozy Christmas lunches over here, I had almost forgotten that there was hardly any alcohol involved in Christmas meals. Today, Finns probably have a civilized glass of wine with the meal and maybe toast Santa when he arrives either by reindeer (left hidden behind the barn) or, if there is no snow, in his beaten-up old Volvo that somehow looks strangely familiar.

My son will probably hate me for this, but children really are both nervous and excited to meet the Man himself. It's much more thrilling to see Santa in person rather than just collecting presents from under the Christmas tree. And of course, Santa wants

to know how well you have behaved and do you really deserve presents this year?

Then it's time for Santa to leave, maybe with a small toast for the road, and head back to his home in Korvatunturi, in Finnish Lapland. Some have tried to claim that he lives in Swedish Lapland or even in Greenland, but there is only one comment to those wild theories: bah, humbug!

Christmas in Iceland *by Ruth Ellison*

(with some information from the Embassy of Iceland added)

Today in Iceland Christmas is celebrated in international fashion with Christmas trees and a gift-bearing Father Christmas figure, but these are both recent imports: when your only native evergreen is a prostrate juniper, the concept of the Christmas tree is unlikely to arise naturally.

As to the gift-bearer, though St Nicholas was a popular saint for church dedications, he never brought Icelanders presents. The imported figure was given the traditional Icelandic name of "jólasveinn", but the original jólasveinar (9 or 13 in number) so far from bringing gifts, were malicious creatures, offspring of the ogress Grýla.

Thirteen days before Christmas children put a shoe in the window in the hope of these Yule lads leaving them a little something if they have been good. The Yule lads are not very well behaved themselves. A new one arrives every day, during those 13 days. The most hideous ogres that ever existed in Iceland are the Yule Lads' parents Grýla and Leppalúði – particularly their mother, Grýla. Not only are they descended from trolls, they also present an overwhelming threat to children. Unlike their sons, they have changed little in this respect over the course of the centuries. To this day they are used to frighten children, and those children know well that Grýla likes nothing better than feasting on naughty children. In the folk tales of Jón Árnason, the description of Grýla is not exactly flattering: "Grýla has three heads and three eyes in each head ... Horribly long, curved fingernails, icy blue eyes at the back of the head and horns like a goat, her ears dangle down to her shoulders and are attached to the nose in front. She has a beard on her chin that is like knotted yarn on a weave with tangles hanging from it, while her teeth are like burnt rocks in a grate."

Traditionally Christmas gifts were not as important in Iceland as gifts for the first day of new summer (in late April), but everyone had to receive at least one item of new clothing or risk falling prey to the monstrous "Jólakötturinn" (Christmas Cat), who could only be bought off by tossing a pebble onto the bed in which you were born.

Christmas food and Christmas baking have changed over the years. Traditional baking of the "laufabrauð" (leaf thin piece of bread) is again becoming a family tradition with the whole family decorating their bread in various patterns. In the Westfirths and the fishing areas of West Iceland it is still the custom to eat mashed skate on Thorláksmessa (celebration of the saint Thorlákur, 12th century Bishop of Skálholt, on 23 December) but inland the special dish is smoked mutton eaten hot. The rest of the mutton ham will be eaten cold over the Christmas season, though the preferred dish for Christmas is ptarmigan, followed by a creamy rice pudding made with raisins and sprinkled with cinnamon.

At least from the 18th century and up to the present day, dancing has been a feature of New Year's celebrations. Bonfires are then lit in towns and villages, sometimes

preceded by processions of people dressed as elves or trolls, who later dance round the fires. In some places, when conditions permit, the procession may take place on ice. This is connected with the old belief that elves move house at New Year and may therefore be encountered then, especially at cross-roads.

Epiphany is called the 13th day of Christmas and offers the last opportunity to enjoy Christmas food and games – also bonfire if the weather has been too bad on New Year's Eve – but does not seem to have special traditions of its own.

A guided tour through the Swedish Christmas *by Björn Knutson-Ek and Eva Robards*

It all starts with Advent, in particular the first one, when people come together for a *glögg* party. All Christmas electric light decorations are put up on that day – a star in the window, candlesticks on the window sills, and light garlands in the garden are the most common ones. An Advent candlestick is a must: each Advent Sunday a new candle is lit.

Advent also means Advent calendar. From the first of December all kids have their own paper copies and watch the daily episode on the TV.

Cooking and baking for Christmas used to be intense during December. These days most can be bought in the supermarket, but families with children usually try to bake some saffron buns (*lussekatter*) and gingerbread – the smell makes you feel "Christmassy". Those with patience and ambition make a gingerbread house.

Lucia's Day falls on 13th December and is celebrated in every home, nursery, school, office, everywhere – and a sophisticated version is broadcast on TV. There are many variations on the theme of traditional procession with a Lucia, her attendants and "starboys". This is especially the case in the nurseries where democracy prevails and every child who wants to be Lucia can be so, with the result that there may be a whole herd of little Lucias with candles (electric!) on their heads. The saffron breads, gingerbread and glögg, for grown-ups, are necessities at Lucia.

During the month running up to Christmas, a good meal out with family, friends, or work-mates is the *julbord* – a smörgåsbord with food adjusted for Christmas. Christmas fairs are also enjoyable outings.

The Christmas tree indoors is decorated as close to Christmas Eve as possible. Ornaments are often made of straw, there may be garlands of flags, certainly garlands of tinsel, the usual mish-mash of items kept from year to year, and the lights of course.

On Christmas Eve it's time to display and eat all the delicacies that hard-working people has/have brought home. Again, for the ambitious, there will be a smörgåsbord. *Lutfisk* is not liked by everybody, but is regarded as typical for Christmas Eve, and rice pudding as dessert. An almond should be hidden in the pudding, and the person who finds it will know that he/she will be married in the year to come. It's a good gesture to put a bowl with rice pudding for the *jultomten* (Santa), who then will be happy to hand over his gifts. He knocks on the door, and when it's opened, he asks if there are any well-behaved children around. A yes! is required for the gifts.

A tradition on Christmas Eve, established in the 60's, is the Walt Disney special on TV at three o'clock in the afternoon. This one-hour programme regulates the time for meals and presents in many homes.

Christmas Day is a quiet day, after the festivities the day before. The early (somewhere between 6 and 8 am) morning mass in church is a possibility – and rewarding for those who manage to get themselves there. The togetherness, all the candles and the communal singing of old favourite Christmas hymns is what Christmas is about for many.

Boxing Day used to be a day for parties, but there are no firm traditions about this day anymore. It may just be a day at leisure, or spent on favourite activities, or family rituals.

New Year with parties and fire-works, New Year's Day with the Eurovision Concert, and then Epiphany which is the final Christmas church celebration; the Epiphany is not celebrated much these days, but the Twelfth Day (6 January) is a public holiday. People are also well aware of the Twelfth Night, and for many there is usually some coming together for meals on either of these days, or both.

The definitive end of Christmas is on the 20th Day, the name-day of Knut, so the day is called "20th Day Knut". That's the day when "Christmas is danced out" of the house, and the tree and all decorations taken down, if that hasn't been done earlier. And the new fresh year has started its race towards next Christmas.

An English experience of Christmas in Norway *by Angela Hasselgreen, currently English lecturer, Bergen University College*

To a regular Norwegian, the account of Christmas I'm presenting here may seem unorthodox, verging on irreverent. As a non-Norwegian, having lived in the country 36 years, married into a Norwegian family, I feel qualified to talk about the subject, but must be excused for viewing it as one who spent my first 28 Christmases in England.

My mixture of sentiment (well, we all loved the Christmases of our childhood ...) and ignorance of the set Norwegian customs got me off to a bad start Christmaswise in Norway. Sending Christmas cards to all my neighbours and hoping for an invite to a Christmas morning drop-in were both met with a blank. The presents we'd hidden for the kids had to be severely plundered so that they could be put round Farmor's tree, leaving Santa Claus hard-pressed to fill that pillowcase at midnight. The Christmas cake I had lovingly made turned out not to be suited to the Norwegian palate. There were no merry carols being sung, only some awfully sad ones, at apparently regulated moments. And why on earth were there flags on the Christmas trees?

My first Christmas Eve dawned with something missing; the usual bustle of one of the busiest days of the year was stilled to a hush, and we found ourselves in a state of suspended animation, lasting until dark (4 o'clock) when we could set off for Farmor's. The wait was over. This was IT. The children managed to contain themselves during the meal: ribs of lamb (nice, I had to admit). After an abortive attempt by an elderly aunt to get the children singing round the tree, they were allowed to hurl themselves on the presents, while the adults ate seven kinds of (barely distinguishable) cake, with "gløgg", a mulled wine with a distinct bouquet of Friar's Balsam.

Well of course, I gradually got used to it and devised my own semi-British adaptations for Christmas survival. We got hold of some very jolly carols (yes, even some happy Norwegian ones). We discovered the Disney cartoons and Christmas fairy tales on telly that keep all Norwegian parents sane as Christmas Eve progresses (my grandchildren watch them now). The kids worked out a rota for speedy present handing

out, and I taught myself to make ginger wine and mincemeat. My like-minded British gang in Bergen send each other cards and take turns having open house on Boxing Day. It's very much the same procedure as every year of course. The entire nation comes to a standstill for "the Butler" every Little Christmas Eve, but there's something comforting about it all. The kids got to love it, and when I took them to England one Christmas they missed the Norwegian Christmas routines. These days, I buy in a miniature Christmas cake (M & S), and as I sit with a slice in one hand, a glass of Croft's pale sherry in the other, under my flagless tree, I realise it's actually not so bad!

Our Norwegian Christmas *by Helena Schmidt and Anna Sophie Strandli*

Christmas and Christmas preparations, the words fill us with so many good feelings – and memories.

We *once had a farm at the foot of* the mountain plateau of Hedmarksvidda. There, Christmas would start in early September. When the harvest was done and many of the animals had met their maker the preparations for the festive season would begin. There was lots to do; sausage making, curing of various meats and fish, making flatbread and lefser (thin potato bread), fermenting trout, cloudberry picking, pâtés (posteier), cheeses, jams and gelées. And the pickling – anything from gherkins and herrings to pigs heads and feet would be pickled. The baking on a farm is a chapter too long for this short story.

These days Christmas starts on the first Sunday in Advent and lasts until Epiphany and as we light the first candle in the Advent wreath we always recite Inger Hagerup's advent poem: "*Så tenner vi et lys i kveld, vi tenner det for glede*". The first candle represents joy, the second is for hope and joy, and the third for longing, hope and joy and finally we light the candle for longing, hope, joy and peace, and then – it is Christmas! The ritual symbolizes what Christmas means to us; anticipation, togetherness, joy and light. Not only light in a dark period of the year, but the Light that Christmas brings with the celebration of our Lord.

Photo: A S Strandli

In the preparations that follow the making of gingerbread (pepperkaker) is a highlight. It involves the entire family and is something the children are looking forward to for months. Over the years we have built up a fairly extensive collection of moulds and each one, like the Christmas decorations, has a history and a memory attached to it.

The annual challenge is the gingerbread house. Somehow it manages to survive until the Three Kings' Day, the 13th day of Christmas, when the children, each equipped with a hammer, tear it down and eat it. On this day the men in our family dress up as Caspars, Melchiors and Balthasars with golden crowns, robes and turbans - carrying sweets and small gifts for the children.

For some years now we have been good at giving away home made things such as marmalades and those everlasting fruitcakes, and knitting has also had a come-back.

This year, for the first time, we have made candles and angels from bee wax. It was such an enjoyable thing to do that it probably will end up as a – tradition.

Advent is also a time for giving the house a thorough clean (we eventually get there), put up decorations and bake the famous *syv slag*, seven sorts of cookies. The idea with these cakes, apart from showing how wealthy you are, is that they are made with such huge amounts of sugar and butter that they will keep until way over Christmas. We have limited ourselves to *three sorts* and in addition we make various types of sweets made of marzipan, chocolate, nuts and dried fruits. And the *Delfiakake*. Without the Delfia cake there is no Christmas. This is a cake made with tons of dark chocolate, coconut fat, eggs, sugar, strong coffee, sweet bisquits, marzipan, walnuts and jellied fruits. An energy bombe that can give you sleepless nights – and should be absolutely forbidden for children under the age of sixteen.

On December 23rd we go to the forest and chose the prettiest tree we can find making sure it is tall enough to reach the ceiling! We also visit the graves of our beloved ones and light candles in remembrance.

Luckily we have a Nativity Crib that has survived for generations and every year it is special when we put all the figurines in place, making sure the sheep have hay, that the baby Jesus is comfortable and finally place the star of Bethlehem on top.
Later on *lillejuleaften* we have rice porridge with butter, cinnamon and sugar and the person who finds the hidden almond wins a prize – a marzipan pig.

In all, the 23rd is a busy day and after the children have gone to bed the Christmas Fairies are coming to decorate the tree…

On the 24th we dress up and go to Church at 4 pm and at 5 pm the church bells ring to announce the beginning of Christmas. Before the meal we read *Juleevangeliet* from the Gospel of Luke.

The menu varies from region to region and the three most common dishes are: *ribbe* (pork belly) with crackling and braised red cabbage, *pinnekjøtt* (cured ribs of mutton) with mashed swede (not Swede) or *lutefisk* with puréed peas, crispy bacon, mustard and potatoes. Cod is also a traditional Christmas dish and is served complete with liver, roe and the head. For dessert we either have cloudberries with whipped cream, *troll cream* (lingonberries, whipped egg whites and sugar) or sweet rice pudding.

After dessert we join hands, dance around the tree while we sing Christmas songs. When it is time for the presents, a member of the family is assigned the honourable duty of collecting one present at a time and handing to its recipient. Each present is opened carefully as we all watch in excitement. On the 25th we have *første juledags frokost,* an extensive breakfast accompanied by Aquavit and *juleøl* (a local dark beer) that goes on for the most of the day.

There is something about the scents of Christmas. The wooden floors scrubbed with *grønnsåpe (*pine soap), the *Apotekets kongerøkelse*, (a type of inscense only available at Christmas), hyacinths, roasted almonds and oranges with cloves stuck in them.

According to the folklore of rural Norway, each farmstead has a gnome living in the barn and in the evening of the 24th we still place the left over rice porridge in a bowl outside. This is for the gnome to keep him quiet for the whole of next year and excited children run out in their pajamases to see if the porridge has been eaten, and it has…
We also must remember to put out the sheaf of wheat for the sparrows and red robins!

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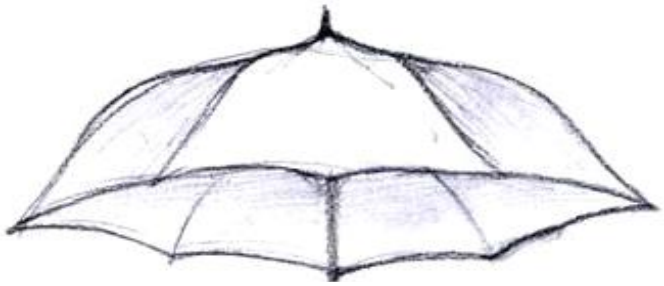

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From the Editor *– Anna Sophie Strandli*

Oslo 25th July Photo: A S Strandli

Four months have passed since a bright and warm summer day in Oslo was turned to chaos. First the bombing of the Parliament Square and then the shooting of young people attending a Labor party summer camp at the island of Utøya. No one will ever forget where they were and what they did on 22nd July 2011. The events made headlines globally and condolences to the Government and the families of the victims came from all over the world.

Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden flew flags at half-mast and on the 25th of July they joined Norway in a minutes silence to dignify the victims of the two attacks.

How can a nation defend itself against the murderous hate from one person? Oslo became a *city of flowers* as over 200.000 people attended a 'flower march', each holding a rose, and this spontaneous reaction marked what was to become the slogan: we shall meet bombes and terror with flowers! Tens of thousands attended in similar events all over the country and flowers were laid everywhere.

In his address to the nation the Prime Minister spoke of: more tolerance, more openness and extended democracy. The Church showed ability to unite people, regardless of religious background and the Royal Family's engagement helped an entire nation in grief. King Harald's tears in public affected us all and his message was clear: "Freedom is more important than fear".

The country responded to terror with a clear message of peace and still, national unity dominates our reactions. Let us hope that we can continue to combine our need of security with openness and bring the experiences of these last months with us in our hearts.

As I write the first snow is falling in Oslo and it looks promising for another magical and wonderful Christmas. A time of togetherness when we also must remember that it is a lonely and difficult time for many. In the true spirit of Christmas let us make a difference by engaging in a conversation, paying attention – and go out and buy the Big Issue!

Photo: A S Strandli

We thank all of you who have contributed with articles to this magazine and special thanks are owed to Eva Robards, our Chairman, for her hard work and commitment.

Wishing you all a Peaceful and Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Deadline for next issue will be announced on the website – www.coscan.org.uk

Presentation of the CoScan International Award

Tom Remlov, General Director of the Opera and Peter Wright, Vice President of CoScan

Prof. Tarald Lundevall, Senior Architect of Snøhetta, Peter Wright and Embassy Liaison Officer Kari Moss Wright

Tom Remlov and Tarald Lundevall

Peter Wright and Youth and International Officer Helena Schmidt in front of The Opera

Senior Architect Sigrun Aunan and Editor Anna Sophie Strandli

'At the head of the Oslo Fjord'

'

Back stage with Kari-Anne Amundsen, PA to Tom Remlov

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