CoScan Magazine

2018/2

The Magazine for the Confederation of Scandinavian Societies
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CoScan
Confederation of Scandinavian Societies

Contents

Front cover:

Double sunset over Lake Mývatn and Mount Vindbelgur. Photo: Bethany Smith

Chairman's message

Eva Robards

There have been major events recently in the CoScan sphere. The first one took place on 17 October in the Barbican (London) where the Finnish conductor Sakari Oramo was the recipient of the International Award 2018. This award 'recognises an achievement of outstanding merit by an individual, body or group related to one or more of the five Nordic countries'.

As the concert was broadcast live by the BBC, with the presentation ceremony summarised by a broadcaster, CoScan received publicity about the award both on the BBC and subsequently in the press. Through considerable time and effort Tony Bray (CoScan committee) has developed a good working relationship with the BBC. Pages 2-3 have more about the occasion.

The next event, generously hosted by Alexander Malmaeus (also CoScan committee), was a drinks party at the Savile Club in London on 12 November. In the magnificent surroundings of this club, representatives of 20 Scandinavian/ Nordic organisations each gave a brief presentation and also had the opportunity to spend time networking.

Four Scandinavian organisations, six Danish, six Swedish, three Norwegian, and one Finnish, were represented. Twelve of them are CoScan members and eight not (yet). In addition to Londoners, there were people from Manchester, York, Lincoln, Northampton and Welwyn Garden City.

The presentations showed that many societies are facing similar problems, such as finding active members who are willing to take on responsibilities. Many also suffer a decreasing and an ageing membership. Some organisations, however, have an abundance of 'members' operating by cutting out formal membership and focussing on social activities, but this model may be difficult to transfer to more traditional societies.

The general opinion on the evening was that it had been informative and useful — and should be repeated. An appetite for reaching out to other fellow organisations had arisen, with precious friendships as a valuable by-product.

A third event I would like to mention is the finale of the Anglo-Norse Societies centenary year: a reception in the presence of British and Norwegian royalty on 15 November. More about this on pages 6–7, but my reason for bringing it up here is that it again made it possible for a number of different organisations to have productive interactions.

The value of meeting in person can't be underrated — that is the fuel for joining forces and for moving forward.

Sakari Oramo: CoScan International Award 2018

by Mark Elliott

CoScan owes a considerable debt to Sakari Oramo and to the BBC Symphony Orchestra for their staging of the presentation of this year's award. Tony Bray, responsible within CoScan, did a remarkable job in bringing it all to fruition. But as always we are in the hands of the professionals for the choice of occasion. The concert on 17 October was truly spectacular, and the recipient could not have been more charming and appreciative.

As Chief Conductor of both the BBC SO and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Sakari Oramo is a one-man personalisation of the links which bind us all together. In his words of acceptance he described music as 'the most powerful of all art forms, [which] affects our thoughts and feelings on all levels', enabling him to bring the UK and the Nordic nations together through making music in London, Stockholm and around the globe. Talking to us earlier that day, he spoke eloquently of the varying challenges of different orchestras and audiences in different countries ('musicians are the same, orchestras are different'), and of the duty which he feels so strongly to 'his' orchestras. Although his home remains in Finland, where in 2020 he is to take on an additional role as professor at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, in another sense he is a citizen of the world, with experience ranging from the brilliance of Japanese choirs and orchestras to the stellar performances of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. He is in the UK for weeks at a time with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and several times a year they tour to other European countries.

One result is that he is only too well aware of the risks inherent in the current political scene. Looking only at the practical difficulties (never mind the attitudes which underlie them), taking a British orchestra on a European tour is a major logistical exercise, and any additional complexities introduced to the process could be disastrous. He did not need to specify how this might come about, but it clearly worries him. Given the evident passion with which he views the cultural link between Britain and the Nordic countries, this concern is no surprise.

Nevertheless his life is clearly fulfilling. It is physically strenuous, as his performance that evening showed; every movement of his expressed the mood of the music, shaping the more sensuous phrases with eloquent stroking gestures, driving forward the urgent tramp of the brass with the whole weight of his body. He says that walking is his preferred form of exercise. But he maintains also that conducting is an activity of the mind, and this showed through in his profound identification with the spirit of the works performed. He must derive an additional sense of fulfilment from his son's arrival on the scene as a professional conductor himself.

Sakari Oramo expressing his thanks for the award. The trophy, an engraved 20 cm jade glass plaque award with cut edges, held by Chairman Eva Robards; President Mark Elliott beside her.
Photo: Chris Howell, CoScan

The Barbican Hall was very well filled, and the audience were given a musical treat. The reviews have brought out the qualities of the contrasting works — Shostakovitch's Ninth Symphony, wry and politically incorrect for its time maybe, but full of variety and drama and wonderful playing especially by the woodwind section; Copland's jazzy Clarinet Concerto, brilliantly presented by the Swede Martin Fröst, and followed as an encore by an amazing klezmer-style improvisation which brought some of the audience, justifiably, to their feet; and Prokofiev's tragic Sixth Symphony, where Sakari Oramo's ability to extract maximum effort from every section of his very large orchestra was brilliantly displayed. We could well believe that, as we were told afterwards by one observer, the whole orchestra loved him - not by any means every conductor receives this accolade. Maybe it was because of this positive mood that our CoScan award presentation ceremony also attracted genuine applause, and some of the reviews have given us an honourable mention. The unusually diverse company of CoScan International Award recipients has acquired new lustre with the admission of one of Finland's most famous sons and one of the world's most outstanding conductors, Sakari Oramo.

You can hear Martin Handley's BBC Radio 3 commentary on the award here: http://www.coscan.org.uk/sakari-oramo-end-of-first-half/
and here: http://www.coscan.org.uk/sakari-oramo-start-of-second-half

CoScan's drinks reception at the Savile Club

Drinks and canapés in splendid surroundings and good company Photos: Chris Howell, CoScan

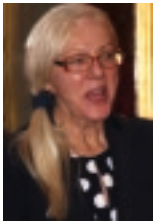
Alexander Malmaeus was moderator for the presentations. He also (as its Chairman) presented the Anglo-Swedish Society.

CoScan was presented by President Mark Elliott, Chairman Eva Robards, Committee member Tony Bray (International awards), and Brita Green (Travel awards).

Member organisations were presented by:

Wayne Harber, Chairman, Anglo-Danish Society

Paulus Thomson, Chairman, Secretary, Anglo-Finnish Society



Irene Garland, Secretary, Anglo-Norse Society

Flemming Kloster Poulsen, Rector, Danish Church in London

Karen Maibom, Chairman, Danish YWCA

Beryl Foster, Chairman, Grieg Society UK

Rae Walter, Chairman, Hertfordshire Anglo-Scandinavian Society

Tony Bray, Manchester Swedish Language Meetup Group

Manja Rønne, Northants Anglo-Scandinavian Society and CoScan Treasurer

Kari Moss Wright, Scandinavian Klubb of Lincolnshire (SKOL) and CoScan committee

Brita Green, York Anglo-Scandinavian Society

Among organisations not (yet) CoScan members were Danes Worldwide, Danish Women in England, Klub Danmark for Berkshire og Omegn, Norske Club, Bärsärkar och Vikingar, LondonSwedes, Society of Swedish Engineers in Great Britain, and Svea-Britt.

Centenary reception

by Mark Elliott

The major event of this centenary year of the Anglo-Norse Society (ANS) was a lunch-time reception held on 15 November at the Naval and Military ('In and Out') Club in St James's Square in London. We were greatly honoured by the presence of our two Patrons, HM The Queen and HM King Harald of Norway, who were able to talk to a high proportion of the 200 guests in an atmosphere which was both luxurious and relaxed.

King Harald V and Queen Elizabeth II meet on the first floor of the In & Out.

The Royals meet members of the Council of the Anglo-Norse Society: Dr Marie Wells (Vice Chairperson), Irene Garland (Secretary), Sir Richard Dales (Chairman), and Paul Gobey (Treasurer).
Photos: Phil McCarthy, London

King Harald talking with Wayne Harber (ADS), Mark Elliott (ANS and CoScan) and Alexander Malmaeus (Anglo-Swedish Society and CoScan).

The occasion will naturally be a highlight of the Society's annals, and was commemorated by a celebratory ANS Almanac prepared especially for this day and signed by both Queen Elizabeth and King Harald. We are deeply grateful to them for their continued interest and support.

The Royals are shown the Almanac by longstanding member Angela Christophersen. Sir Richard Dales on the right.

Further reading in the press:
https://bit.ly/2KlxeXe
https://dailym.ai/2QUmQZ6

The guests included members not only of the London-based Anglo-Norse Society but also of our sister society in Oslo, and others travelling considerable distances within Britain to be there. There were representatives of CoScan and of CoScan member societies; the Lord Lieutenant of London and the Lord Mayor of Westminster; and people distinguished in various fields, artistic, commercial, and other, often with a connection with Norway dating back many years. A number were wearing the traditional *bunad.* Queen Elizabeth, at 92, was not the oldest present — Rolf Christopherson of the ANS at 98 must surely hold that title, and there were others in their 90s. But, happily, the younger generation was also represented.

The Anglo-Norse Society has celebrated its centenary also with other events, such as the Norwegian buffet lunch (*koldtbord*) with an illustrated talk (by Irene Garland) on the history of the Society on 18 October at the Norwegian Seamen's Church in London.

Still to come is the Carol Service on 16 December at the Norwegian Church, followed by a Christmas lunch with *ribbe og tilbehør*.

Norwegian Church celebrates150 years

by Garry D. Irvine

A celebration of the 150th anniversary of the world's first Norwegian Seamen's Church outside Norway took place in Edinburgh on Friday 31 August. It was organised by The Helping Hand Trust, who maintain the church.

Hon. Consul General David Windmill opened the event. The Rev. Torbjørn Holt told the story of Johan Storjohann from Bergen, who was posted to Edinburgh to address the urgent need of Scandinavian seamen and residents to meet and worship. Torbjørn Holt also gave the same sermon as was given at the first service in 1868 by The Rev. Andreas M. Hansen. Espen Selvik, composer and musician from Bergen, played his trumpet, which helped create a special atmosphere. He also gave a talk on the Viking *þing* ('thing') — the true origin of the Scandinavian democratic model. Professor Gunnar Akselberg, Bergen, then spoke on the linguistic relationship between the Norwegian and Scottish languages.

The successful event was concluded on the Sunday with a service in St Mary's Cathedral.

Norwegian Seamen's Church in Leith, Edinburgh, built in 1868.

The anniversary was also celebrated at the Norwegian Church in London during a weekend in September.

Orkney Norway Friendship Association 1978–2018

Forty years ago, on 8 November 1978, the first meeting of the Orkney Norway Friendship Association was held in what was then the Royal Hotel in Kirkwall. Two sister organisations had developed at the same time, one in Orkney (ONFA) and one in Hordaland in Norway (VNO). VNO no longer exists but links and friendships made in those early days are still strong.

The aims of the organisations still prevail: 'to promote and foster friendships with understanding between the peoples of Orkney and Norway; to encourage visits by individuals and groups to and from Orkney and Norway and the development of personal contacts; by so doing to broaden the mutual understanding of the cultural, recreational, educational and commercial activities of Orkney and Norway.'

From Orkney Norway Friendship Association Winter Newsletter, by kind permission

Anglo-Danish Society (A-DS)

Two long-serving officers have stepped down: Chairman Christian Williams, and Margit Stæhr who has served in practically every capacity during 16 years but in particular as Scholarship Secretary and Chair of the Scholarship Committee. She will continue to maintain the Society's website and newsletter design for the time being.

Wayne Harber OBE is the new Chairman of the Council of A-DS from September this year (photos of Wayne on pages 5 and 7). He was born in New Guinea, was educated in London, has a degree in Politics and has spent 33 years in the Army.

Wayne joined the Society in 2012, was co-opted to Council in September 2017 and elected at the following AGM in May 2018 before being appointed Chairman of the Council in September. He has also taken over Margit's role as Secretary of the Scholarship Programme.

From the Anglo-Danish Newsletter, by kind permission.

The Finnish Church in London

by Marjaana Härkönen, Rector and Chaplain

The Finnish Seamen´s Mission was established in 1875 as there was a clear need to help Finns who were experiencing problems during their stay abroad — mostly, therefore, seafarers and immigrants. The word of God needed to be proclaimed in the concrete language of deeds.

Four years later the first port chaplain was sent to the ports of Grimsby and Hull in England. However, London's position was the most demanding workwise, and Chaplain Elis Bergroth was soon transferred there in 1882. It is told that pastor Bergroth, being a keen boxer, visited the ships and challenged the ship's master boxer to a match, which he tactically lost. Entitled to a rematch the following Sunday after the Holy Mass, he thus ensured that the crew attended church. The work of the Finnish Church in London continues to this day, although in somewhat different ways.

Countless people have visited and worked at the Church through the years: many have left their mark on the life of the Church through their valuable contributions. The Church is full of stories about people getting help, meeting long lost friends and experiencing the miraculous effects of the sauna. And of course new stories are created every day.

The Finnish Church in London is located in the former dock area: South East London, Rotherhithe — but it serves the entire area of Great Britain and Ireland.

The current church is actually the third building of the Finnish Church. It dates from 1958 and is designed by the Finnish Architect Cyrill Mardall-Sjöström. It is a modern 'Scandinavian' building with lots of light and a sense of space. The building doesn´t actually look much like a church from the outside, but the bell tower with the cross and the Finnish flag guide visitors to the Church. And when you enter the building, you will definitely know, even in the cafeteria, that you are in a church.

The Church Hall is the heart of the building. We celebrate High Mass once a month, we have 20-30 baptismal services held every year, 10-20 weddings, some funerals, and confirmation training for the young members of the Finnish community. The Hall is also a multifunctional space. We have a Bouncy Castle there for the children´s events; at Midsummer we have a dance with a live band; several concerts and events are held there; and in November a 'supermarket' is being built in the Church Hall for the Christmas Fair.

The Church building also accommodates a cafeteria and a small shop with Finnish food and gifts, two meeting rooms and a hostel; and, last but not least, we have a sauna in the basement, said by many to be the best public Finnish sauna in London.

The Church is an important meeting place for the Finnish community and friends of Finland. We have some 30,000 visitors a year — many of them during the Christmas Bazaars. Around 10,000 visitors make their way to the Church in the five days of the Christmas Bazaars. During the fair and the preparation and building of it we have around 100 volunteers giving their time and talents for the Church. Without our volunteers we could not make it happen.

For the weekend the fair expands to Albion Street as the ScandiMarket takes place between the Norwegian and Finnish Churches. Christmas carols are sung, Christmas gifts are found, and cinnamon buns, Karelian pies, reindeer hides, plum jam, chocolate, rye bread and sausages are available, among other things. There´s also a possibility of

Children and angels

meeting a Moomin troll! It´s worth a visit — a warm welcome!

The Finnish Church in London is a religious, cultural and social meeting place for all Finns and friends of Finland. The church is here to help all those who find themselves in trouble — even when the trouble is the lack of Finnish black rye bread, or just the need to relax in a Finnish sauna! We are here for everyone.

The Finnish Seamen's Mission co-operates with the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Finland, and observes its confessional Christian, social, cultural and diaconic work among seafarers and Finns living abroad, and carries out international Christian work at Finnish ports.

https://lontoo.merimieskirkko.fi/the-finnish-church-in-london

Anglo-Finnish Society

Marjatta Bell has stood down as Chair and as a Council member; she was first elected to the Council in 2005 and had been Chair since 2012. She was the first woman and the first Finn to have held the post.

She had the vision and ambition for the Society to organise events on a bigger scale both for the Society's centenary year 2011/12 and for Finland's Centenary year in 2017. She encouraged Bill Mead to expand some old notes about the history of the Society into book form and to get it published in time for the start of the Society's centenary year. She deserves particular credit for managing three major projects: the Westermarck conference in 2011, the donation of 100 Books from Finland to the London Library and the Centenary Conference. The two conferences in particular involved a great deal of planning and she had the foresight to begin this work years in advance.

Under her leadership the Society adopted new rules which were intended to be more transparently democratic.

Paulus Thomson (Chairman, Secretary) in the Newsletter of 4 May 2018, by kind permission.

Priest and storyteller

by Flemming Kloster Poulsen, Rector, The Danish Church in London

Priest and Storyteller. I have been serving as a priest in Denmark for many years and since 2016 I have been the vicar at the Danish Church in London. In addition to my clerical duties I have been a storyteller, touring all over Denmark. I have been telling stories at schools, folk high schools, festivals, cafes, pubs, churches, libraries, hospitals and prisons. Storytelling has been half of my life over the last 20 years.

Storytelling is an art of both interpretation and performance. As a storyteller you must dig deep into the characters of the story, their emotions and actions. But you must also take care of your delivery and performance in order to make the story open up and reveal its content to the audience. It's a fascinating process, full of curiosity and creativity.

Storytelling Café. For thirteen years I ran a monthly Storytelling Café where I retold stories from contemporary literature. My repertoire was mainly modern Scandinavian literature by, for example, the Dane Ida Jessen, the Norwegian Jan Kjærstad, or occasionally a detour to the Russian Dostoevsky.

I condensed each of the novels into a story which took me one hour to tell. Along with the storytelling, people could have coffee and cakes, and we sang a couple of songs that everyone could participate in. The Storytelling Café became hugely popular and for several years all 150 seats were sold out every time.

Bible stories on a beer crate. Another storytelling project was 'Bible stories on all platforms' (online, video, television, newspapers, books) which took place over the years from 2010 to 2015. The main idea was to tell the Bible stories outside the church in places not normally known as places for telling Bible stories. The core part of the project was 'Bible stories on a beer crate'. I used to stand on a beer crate telling my stories in lots of places like pubs, libraries, societies, clubs for business people, wards in prisons and hospitals. The combination of a beer crate and Bible stories became a popular concept and I got lots of invitations from the wider society, among others from the Danish national broadcasting company.

Writing books. An important part of my storytelling business has been writing

three books. The first one was *The Art of Storytelling* — a work book providing a toolbox on how to tell stories from literature, from the Bible, and from your own life.

My second book was *The Imperfect Life* which focused on Bible stories. Here I retold 42 stories from the Bible and in addition I gave my own personal take on a contemporary interpretation of each story. My main point was to show that Bible stories are an alternative to today's narrative of the perfect life. According to the Bible, flaws, defeats and suffering are part of our basic conditions as human beings.

In my third book, called *In the Mirror of Literature*, I focused on stories from contemporary literature and how to use them as wisdom and guidance in our everyday life when we are wrestling with identity, joys and defeats, illness and death. Stories from good literature can provide enlightenment and 'learning', not in the sense of academic studies but in the practical understanding of life.

Storytelling and the church. Finally, some words about the church and storytelling. I believe that the church is an important place for storytelling. Basically, Christianity consists of stories about God and man. From the stories about Adam and Eve over the great story of Christ and his disciples to the story of the initial church and the very first congregation.

Bible stories are ways of narrating and interpreting our life in relation to Christ, the world, other people and ourselves. They are concerned with faith and the meaning of life, our basic conditions, how to deal with our failures, sorrows and losses, how to find joy and relief and love in the middle of a modern, urbanized world.

Therefore, one of the church's main tasks is to tell the old Bible stories and combine them with our contemporary society and life experience. I don't need a happy ending, but I am looking for meaning and purpose.

I'll conclude by saying that in a time dominated by materialism and an enormous media flow it's important that we have great stories which shed light on our very existence, ethical dilemmas and current society. Often, we find that a story provides more wisdom and meaning than scientific data and analysis.

Happiness — in the eye of the beholder? Mary Wollstonecraft on the state of Denmark

by Sid Bradley

While the Scandinavian countries have jostled for top ranking in the world happiness league, the more curmudgeonly world mutters it's not 'happiness' that is being measured but 'subjective wellbeing' or 'life satisfaction'— and what you say you are satisfied with depends upon how much or how little it takes to satisfy you. In Denmark, these issues have been recently aired in a television series (presenter, Michael Booth, British author of *The Almost Nearly Perfect People: the Truth about the Nordic Miracle*, 2014; reviewed in CoScan Magazine 2014/1 pp 30-31) which compared the external assessment of Denmark and the Danes: and this on an historical basis. But the evidence from without can prove no less equivocal than that from within, for outsiders are disposed to judge others in the light of their own national interests and own cultural prejudices.

In 1796 the *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–97) were published. Esteemed today as a pioneer for women's rights (*Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* 1787, *The Female Reader* 1789, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 1792), Mary was an intrepid supporter of radical causes. She also made two suicide attempts because of the infidelities of her partner, Gilbert Imlay, an American — yet it was for Imlay's sake she made her long journey around Scandinavia.

Mary Wollstonecraft

While the British Coalition mounted a trade blockade against revolutionary France, Imlay ventured into the profitable use of ships flying the flags of neutral Denmark/Norway and Sweden to pass through the blockade. But a Norwegian sea-captain, Peder Ellefsen, engaged by Imray to carry French silver to Gothenburg to pay for commodities needed in France, disappeared with his cargo. Mary took it upon herself to track him down and, through the courts, recover Imlay's silver. With her 13-month-old daughter Fanny and a French nursemaid she set out from Hull.

Ever the indefatigable enquirer into the human condition of people she encountered, and never so deferential to rank as to hold back from approaching the highest available authorities, she would then express her feelings in letters home, in what her modern editors describe

as a language rooted in the affections, which represented a reorientation from masculine questions of politics and philosophy — 'joining to a masculine understanding, the finer sensibilities of a female', as a contemporary reviewer put it. Her *Letters* is often regarded as contributing to the significant genre of 'sentimental' literature of which the *Sentimental Journey* of Laurence Sterne was a pioneering work.

Mary reached Denmark in the autumn of 1795. Tragically, the absolute monarch, Christian VII, was prone to periods of insanity. English opinion had reacted in horror when (1772) Johann Friedrich Struensee, Denmark's chief statesman and dynamic liberal reformer (and therefore foe of much of the Danish establishment), was publicly executed with medieval barbarity for his sexual relationship with Christian's Queen, Caroline Mathilde, sister of George II of England. Mary's sympathy inclined towards Mathilde, partly because she was treated as an accomplice in Struensee's reforms, but not least for her efforts to refine the culture of the Danish court, particularly the oppressed status of women — an aspiration which 'offended the rigid Lutherans. The elegance which she wished to introduce, was termed lasciviousness.'

Mary's own horror over the savage dispatch of Struensee was renewed when she met a Copenhagen crowd of well-dressed women and children returning from a public execution following which the body had been burned — because popular but false rumour said the victim had started the great fire of Copenhagen

Johann Friedrich Struensee

(1795). She looked forward to the day when capital punishment would be abolished.

In response to an elegantly lucid letter she wrote to Andreas Peter Bernstorff, Denmark's Foreign Minister and in effect Prime Minister, hoping that Bernstorff could intervene in the Norwegian courts, Mary gained a personal audience — but nothing came of it. She nevertheless judged that in his domestic policies he genuinely had the good of the people at heart.

Yet the citizens of Copenhagen had little to feel happy about: Christiansborg palace had burned to the ground in 1794 and months before Mary's arrival a great fire destroyed a quarter of the city. Homeless people were still living in an 'asylum' of tents outside the walls.

Effects of the conflagration aside, Mary observed that 'A want of taste is very conspicuous in Copenhagen, so much so, that I am not surprised that poor Matilda offended the rigid Lutherans, by aiming to refine their pleasures'. She found ordinary Danish women dull

housewives without accomplishments or social charm, weak indulgent mothers who thereby raised spoilt children.

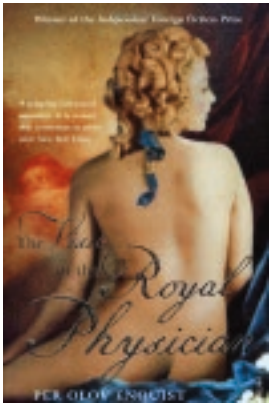
Danish men she found to be ‘domestic tyrants’. ‘The only period of freedom and pleasure that the women enjoy’ was the period of young courtship — ‘the interregnum between the reign of father and [that of] husband’ — which tradition she felt the Danes indulged rather commendably. But as for gaiety, she looked in vain for the cheerful demeanour she had known among the Norwegians

The Danish folk were too readily satisfied with too little. Their happiness was a ‘negative happiness’ — they tacitly accepted a kind of vassalage in always attributing it to the magnanimity of the king. She acknowledged that the physical slavery of serfdom, at least, was declining across the country. But even so: ‘The Danes, in general,’ she wrote, ‘seem extremely averse to innovation, and, if happiness only consist in opinion, then they are the happiest people in the world; for I never saw any so well satisfied with their own situation.'

Peder Ellefsen was eventually tracked down and heavily fined by the court, though what happened to the silver remains unclear. Mary eventually married William Godwin. She died of complications following the birth of their daughter Mary, who later became the wife of the poet Shelley and the creator of Frankenstein.

Quotations are from the edition of Tone Brekke and Jon Mee, Oxford World’s Classics paperback, 2009. ISBN 978-0-19-923063-1.

Book suggestion:



Per Olov Enquist (author) and Tiina Nunnally (translator), *The Visit of the Royal Physician*
Published by Vintage Publishing, April 2003
ISBN- 13 978-0-099-44705-4

Against the backdrop of political turbulence and the enlightenment, the narrative revolves around the court of the mentally ill King Christian VII, and the romance between the king's physician Struensee and the queen Caroline Mathilde.

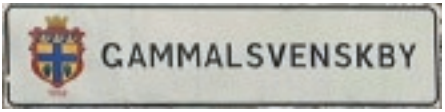
It is historical fiction, but also a literary work, and Enquist's scenes, motives, conversations — are plausible, suggesting how it might have been. The tone is almost dispassionate, yet Enquist clearly is passionate about much of the material: the injustices, the senselessness, the small-mindedness, the outright insanity.

The novel won the Swedish 'August Prize' and 'The Independent Foreign Fiction Prize'.

A Swedish village in Ukraine

by Brita Green

There is a village in Ukraine called Zmiivka, where a handful of elderly people speak an old Swedish dialect. In their emblems, both the village and the region incorporate three crowns, the Swedish national symbol. What is the explanation?



The population of Gammalsvenskby (= Old Swedish Village), a part of Zmijivka, can trace its ancestry to the Estonian island of Hiiumaa (Dagö in Swedish). Northern Estonia was part of the Swedish Baltic empire for 150 years (c.1560–1710), a period referred to as the 'Good Old Swedish Time', during which there were legal and educational reforms. But in the 18th century, the rights of peasants reached their lowest point, and in the early 1780s a group of Swedish-speaking peasants, who were in conflict with the local aristocracy, petitioned the Russian Empress Catherine II for help. She agreed, on condition they were prepared to resettle in newly conquered territories in southern Ukraine. Attracted by the promise of fertile land, about a thousand of them trekked south. Almost half of them died during the long journey, and many more died in their first year in Ukraine. 18 months after they had left Estonia, only 135 people were still alive.

In the early 19th century, the Swedish-speakers soon became outnumbered by German settlers, as three German villages were established in the area, but they still maintained their Swedish traditions, their Lutheran faith and, remarkably, throughout the many years of living among Estonian, Russian, Ukranian and German speakers, the descendants carried on speaking their Swedish dialect.

This year a project has been set up to document and describe the Gammalsvenskby dialect. One feature of it is that it retains the old system of three grammatical genders for the nouns (neuter, feminine, masculine) whilst standard Swedish has two (neuter and common).

Links were maintained with the old homeland, and when Gammalsvenskby's original wooden church burned down in the mid-19th century, considerable sums were raised in Sweden and Finland, and a new church was opened in 1885. For a time, before the First World War and the Russian Revolution, visits from Sweden became frequent, and some villagers subscribed to Swedish newspapers.

One tradition that was kept up much longer in Ukraine than in Sweden was the use of the medieval perpetual rune calendar known as a 'rune-stave'.

It could tell you when there would be a new moon, what day of the week any given date was, and when the major Christian holidays would fall in any year. They were commonly used in Sweden, until the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1753 rendered them useless. In Russia, the old Julian calendar continued to be used until the Revolution in 1918, and in Gammalsvenskby the rune-staves were in use until then.

With the onset of the First World War, communication with Sweden was cut off, and in 1921 the Swedish government asked the Kremlin to allow residents of Gammalsvenskby to leave for their historic homeland. After lengthy negotiations, nine hundred of them arrived in Sweden in 1929.

While nearly a hundred moved on to Canada, and some returned to Ukraine, the majority stayed. Many of them settled in Gotland. The village of Roma has three church bells that were brought from Ukraine in 1929. In 1954 a *Svenskbyborna* Society was established in Roma by the Gammalsvenskby immigrants and their descendants, and in 2006 links were established with a similar society in Canada.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Gammalsvenskby's contacts with Sweden and Canada were re-established. In 2008, the Swedish King and Queen paid a visit.

Another recent visitor has recorded his very personal impressions: Valentin Tinnis tells the story of his father, who was born in Gammalsvenskby in 1899, but who ended up in Finland after many hardships during the two world wars. The father would often talk about Gammalsvenskby with sadness and longing, of how 'the climate was mild and the country beautiful. The white houses

with their pretty gardens lined the straight streets. The village was surrounded by the steppe where beasts of prey lay in pursuit in the high grass. Vines, melons the size of horses' heads, walnut trees, herbs and vegetables and rose bushes grew in the gardens. The majestic Dnieper River had sturgeon, pikeperch and perch and other fish one could almost catch with one's bare hands or with the help of a shirt. The river beaches had thrilling sand dunes that fell steeply down into the river.' He dreamt of visiting his birthplace, but it was not to be. He urged his son to go if he ever had the opportunity.

What Valentin Tinnis found when he did eventually go was not quite the paradise of his father's memory: 'By our standards, the population is very poor. This is reflected in the way people dress, talk, shop, and live. There are few affluent people in the village. Perhaps the richest man is the shopkeeper, who drives his own car and dresses smartly. The equipment used in the gardens and stables is old-fashioned, but the Gammalsvenskby inhabitants don't complain. Despite very scarce circumstances they have maintained a positive and generous disposition, although one cannot help but notice a sad remembrance of better times gone by.'

Today the village has about a hundred people who share a Swedish cultural heritage, even if only a very few of them now speak the language.

Sources:

Various Gammalsvenskby websites, including (for the Valentin Tinnis account) finlander.genealogia.fi/sfhswiki/index.php/Gammalsvenskby,_Ukraine

Alexander Mankov, *Dialekten i Gammalsvenskby* in *Sverigekontakt* 3 September 2018

Sven-Göran Hallonquist, 'Primstaven, en run-almanacka' in *Runmärkt: Från brev till klotter* 1994

Source flickr https://bit.ly/2TxMzs3

2018: Centenary of Iceland's independence

On 1 December 1918, Iceland became an independent and sovereign state when Iceland and Denmark signed a Union Treaty, effectively freeing Iceland from Denmark. This was the culmination of nearly a century-long campaign for Icelandic self-determination.

The Icelandic Independence movement (*Sjálfstæðisbarátta Íslendinga*) was the collective effort made by Icelanders to achieve self-determination and independence from the Kingdom of Denmark.

Iceland received a constitution and limited home rule in 1874. A minister for Icelandic affairs was appointed to the Danish cabinet in 1904. Full independence was granted in 1918 through the Danish-Icelandic Act of Union. This Act recognised Iceland as a fully sovereign state (the Kingdom of Iceland), joined with Denmark in a personal union with the Danish crown. Iceland established its own flag and asked Denmark to represent its foreign affairs and defence interests. The Act would be up for revision in 1940 and could be revoked three years after that if agreement was not reached. The Act was approved by 92.6% of Icelandic voters (turnout at 43.8%) in a referendum on 19 October 1918.

In May 1944, Icelanders voted to dissolve the personal union with Denmark, and in June Iceland formally became a republic, with Sveinn Björnsson as its first president.

On 1 December, all of Iceland joined in the nationwide celebration of the 100-year anniversary to commemorate the day.

www.iceland.is
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icelandic_independence_movement

Projects in Dumfries

by Bill Faerestrand

Katharine Wheeler, a 'Doonhamer' (a person from Dumfries, Scotland), visual artist and project producer for the Stove Community in Dumfries, gave an interesting talk to the Scottish Norwegian Society (Glasgow) in October about the 'Stove project'. Katharine also talked about her special one-year project to showcase the connections between Norway and Dumfries, entitled 'Norwegians in exile 1940–1945: Our Norwegian story'.

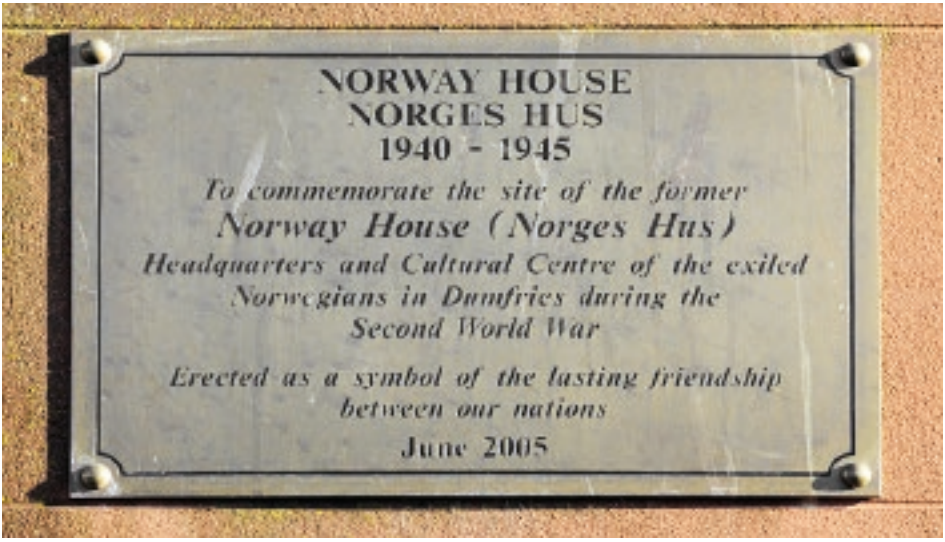
The Stove Network started about six years ago as a charitable Arts Network. As in most small towns the city centre in Dumfries has become run down and has many vacant properties. Stove is an attempt to revitalise the city centre and bring people back in to engage. It is essentially a network that creates opportunities and connections for the creative community and integrates with the local economy and wider society. The Stove teams work with artists, young people, local people and groups to facilitate public art events and activities in Dumfries. They have also built national and international connections for the arts in South West Scotland and places further afield, such as Tønsberg.

Katharine gave us an overview of the many projects run by the Stove network. These included the Midsteeple Quarter project, Stitching our story, School arts projects, Open Mic for writers, artists, musicians and songwriters. (Further

information on www.thestove.org)

Our 'Norwegian Story' was a year long project running from March 2016 to April 2017 to explore Dumfries's unique connections to Norway. With the aim of sharing, learning and celebrating, Dumfries people have been eating waffles and exploring stories and ideas across the generations. Further aims are the forging of friendships and the strengthening of the relationships locally, in Norway, and looking to other Nordic collaborators.

A bit of history: as a result of Norwegian whalers and exiles arriving in Dumfries during WW2, the population was at one point 20% Norwegian. It became



Norway House rapidly became an institution in town offering a true homely Norwegian atmosphere, especially for the Norwegian soldiers. www.ournorwegianstory.com/location/norway-house

a headquarters for the Norwegian Free Army and the birthplace of the Scottish Norwegian Society and subsequently the Norwegian Scottish Association we know today. The recent discovery of the Galloway Viking Hoard highlighted the fact that Dumfries' Nordic blood runs strong but remains a lesser known part of its history.

'Our Norwegian Story' captured a chapter of this connection in Dumfries's story, finding creative ways to interpret and showcase. Ideas of conversational seats, football in the streets, public art installations and journeying trails all helped to form the Heritage Lottery funded phase, now completed with the launch of a town trail. There are many interesting details on the website www.ournorwegianstory.com.

In conclusion, Katharine Wheeler recommended a visit to Dumfries and an exploration of the Norwegian Story Town Trail. This trail visits, among other landmarks, Troqueer Church where there are a number of Norwegian war graves.

From the Scottish Norwegian Society (Glasgow) Newsletter November 2018, by kind permission.

The Norwegian flag flown at the Midsteeple in Dumfries in honour of the links to the Norwegian army. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-south-scotland-11685262

An Aquavit experience

by Eva Robards

The word aquavit derives from the Latin *aqua vitae*, 'water of life'. A restaurant in London by this name is listed among the UK's best restaurants in *The Good Food Guide* 2019 (Waitrose and Partners). I thought it would be worth trying to see how they live up to this recognition.

Aquavit London is said to have been inspired by architect Gunnar Asplund's design of Gothenburg City Hall in Sweden. You enter a sophisticated world, which however is not austere, as some fashionable new eating places are, and you are met with friendly and attentive staff.

Aquavit opens as early as 7.30 a.m. on a weekday (11 a.m. on Saturdays and Sundays) and closes at 11 p.m., thus catering for all meals during the day. When I arrived mid-morning it was fairly quiet, but at lunchtime it was busy — though certainly not hectic.

Being in time for breakfast I chose eggs Benedict with eel, the smaller of two versions, as I would also be staying for lunch. The amount of eel (farmed?) was generous and the egg creamy with a nice touch of acidity in the sauce. Despite being covered by the runny egg, the bread underneath had not gone soggy and even had the crisp crust that I like bread to have.

When it was time for lunch, it was difficult to choose — I wanted 'one of

each'. The *smörgåsbord* was especially tempting, and you could have it with Aquavit *snaps* (the flavoured spirit). In the end I chose *kroppkakor* (filled potato dumplings). A symphony in colour arrived on my table.

So what did it taste like? Delicious, but with a difference. The filling was mushroom, and thus suited also for vegetarians; I had expected something of animal origin, in accordance with traditional recipes. Further, the dumplings had had a quick exposure to the frying pan, which to me was a novelty for the presentation of this dish.

Being self-disciplined I didn't have a dessert, a decision that made me award myself a piece of cake with the coffee — who could resist *prinsesstårta*? Well, this one I actually will resist next time as, to my taste, the layer of whipped cream was far too dominant.

No shortage of bottles Photos: Eva Robards

Coffee in classical Rörstrand East India cups. (It is possible to pop in for just a cup of coffee.)

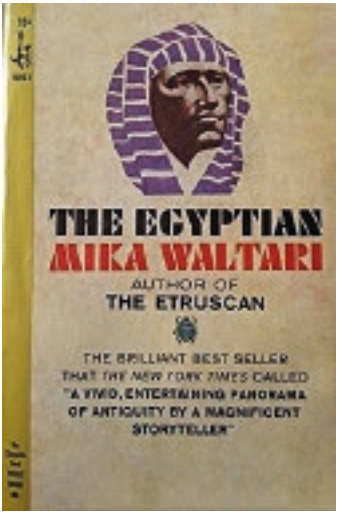
The Good Food Guide had given Aquavit a cooking score of three out of ten. I will not give a numerical rating but use another criterion: 'would I go back?'. My answer is a definite yes — and I am looking forward to it!

Address: St James's Market, 1 Carlton Street London, Mayfair, SW1Y 4QQ
Nearest tube station is Piccadilly Circus

Cost for a light meal at lunchtime: £7-19.

From the bookshelf

Book suggestion by Pirjo Pellinen, Embassy of Finland



Mika Waltari, *The Egyptian*
Published by Bantam Books, 1949
ISBN-13 978-0-55306-408-7

Pirjo explains: 'I chose the book because — after some 35+ years since it was first introduced to me — it made a huge impression on me once I got to it! So much so that I intend to read it again at some point. Definitely a book everyone should read and have on their bookshelf.'

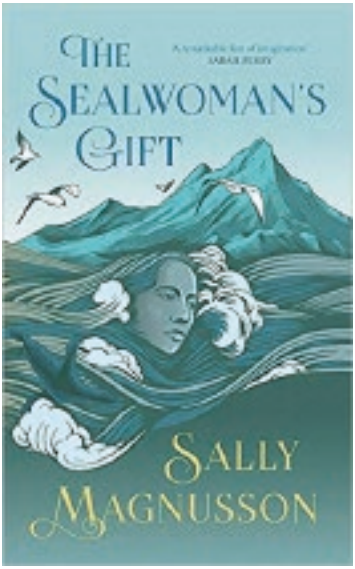
The Egyptian is a historical novel. It was first published in Finnish in 1945, and in an abridged English translation by Naomi Walford in 1949, from Swedish rather than Finnish.

The novel is set in Egypt during the 18th dynasty when Akhenaton, who ruled from 1353 to 1336 BCE, established a new monotheistic cult. Narrated by its protagonist, a physician named Sinuhe who is in contact with both rich and poor, the novel describes the daily life, religion, and politics of the era. His travels take him as far away as Syria and Crete. A confidant of pharaohs, he eventually lives in permanent exile.

The novel is known for its high-level historical accuracy of the life and culture of the period depicted. At the same time, it also carries a pessimistic message of the essential sameness of human nature throughout the ages.

Mika Waltari (1908–1979) studied theology and philosophy at the University of Helsinki. His early novels were concerned with the crises of the generation that came of age between the world wars. He gained international recognition with the appearance of *Sinuhe, egyptiläinen* (1945; *The Egyptian* 1949), which was made into a Hollywood film in 1954. Other works include *Mikael Hakim* (1949; *The Wanderer* 1951), *Johannes Angelos* (1952; *The Dark Angel* 1953), and *Turms, kuolematon* (1955; *The Etruscan* 1957); *Valtakunnan salaisus* (1959; *The Secret of the Kingdom* 1961); *Ihmiskunnan viholliset* (1964; and *The Roman* 1966).

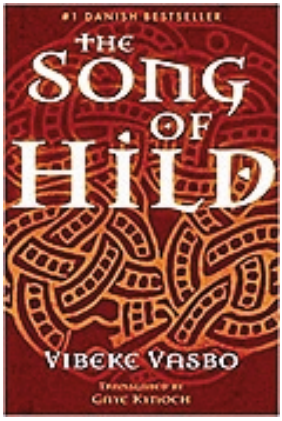
Web sources, incl. https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Egyptian



Review by Rory McTurk

Sally Magnusson, *The Sealwoman's Gift*
Published by Two Roads, Feb 2018
ISBN-978-1-473-63895-2

Based on historical fact, this novel tells the story of Ásta Thorsteinsdóttir, snatched from her home in the Westman Islands just south of Iceland by Barbary corsairs in 1627 and sold into slavery in Algiers along with her husband, the Rev. Ólafur Egilsson, three of their children (the youngest born at sea en route to Algiers), and other Icelanders. Her husband is released soon afterwards and sent as an envoy to the Danish king with a view to his securing a ransom for his family and fellow-countrymen. This leaves Ásta (and the reader) with many questions. Will the ransom be paid, and if so when? Will she ever see her husband again? What will happen to her children? What sort of relationship is developing between her and her Muslim master of dual heritage, whom she regales with Icelandic sagas, rather in the manner of Scheherazade? All these questions are answered in a compassionate and at times heart-rending narrative which makes clever, imaginative use of history without deviating very far from it.



Vibeke Vasbo, *The Song of Hild,*
translated by Gaye Kynoch
Published by Sacristy Press, July 2018
ISBN-978-1-910519-86-8

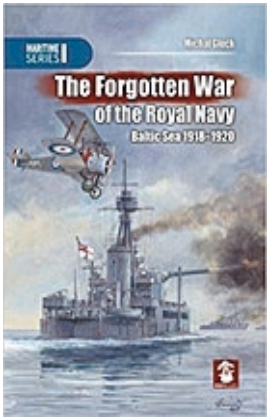
Abbess Hild (or Hilda) of Whitby was an extraordinary woman living in extraordinary times.

In the political and religious upheavals of the seventh-century British Isles, tensions between the Danish-German invaders and native Celts mirror the power struggles masquerading as religious struggles that reverberate internationally today.

Carol Gold, *Women in Business in Early Modern Copenhagen,1740–1835*
Published by Museum Tusculanum Press, April 2018
ISBN-13 978-8-76354-597-6

This volume tells the stories of women who worked legally, under their own names, in early Copenhagen. They could be found selling goods on the street, managing shops and schools, working in metal trades or the construction industry, even running factories and merchant fleets. Carol Gold shows that these self-sufficient women, regardless of marital status, were an integral part of the production and distribution of goods in the flourishing Danish capital's golden years.

Carol Gold was the Arthur Fathauer professor of history at the university of Alaska Fairbanks. She is the author of *Danish Cookbooks: Domesticity & National Identity, 1616-1901*.

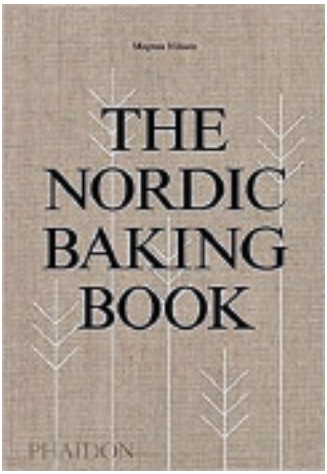


Michal Glock, *The Forgotten War of the Royal Navy* (Maritime Series)
Published by Mushroom Model Publications, Mar 2018 (paperback)
ISBN-13 978-8-36528-177-7

This book covers the little-known period of naval warfare in the Gulf of Finland, sparked by the German intervention in Finland and Estonia in early 1918 and the evacuation of the Baltic Fleet through ice to Kronstadt.

When the German Empire was defeated on the Western Front and the country was engulfed in revolutionary flame, British forces and also, sporadically, American and French ships appeared in the Baltic Sea. By the end of the year the Soviet fleet tried to attack Tallinn, which ended in the British capture of Soviet destroyers, which were then handed over to Estonia.

All the ships involved are described and illustrated with full technical specifications. The book is profusely illustrated with scale drawings (side views).

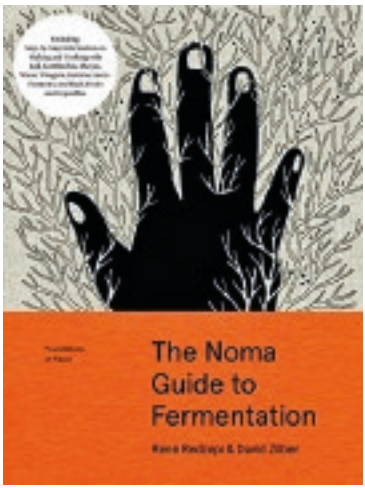


Magnus Nilsson , *The Nordic Baking Book*
Published by Phaidon Press Ltd, Oct 2018
ISBN-978-0-71487-684-9

Magnus Nilsson, the head chef of *Fäviken Magasinet* restaurant in Sweden, delves into all aspects of Nordic home baking — modern and traditional, sweet and savoury — with recipes for everything from breads and pastries to cakes, cookies, and holiday treats.

No other book on Nordic baking is as comprehensive and informative. Nilsson travelled extensively throughout the Nordic region — Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden — collecting recipes and documenting the landscape. The 100 photographs in the book have been shot by Nilsson, who is now an established photographer, following his successful exhibitions in the United States.

Other books by Magnus Nilsson: *Fäviken* and *The Nordic Cookbook*.



René Redzepi and David Zilber, *The Noma Guide to Fermentation.*
Published by Artisan Books , Oct 2018
ISBN-978-1-57965-718-5

Rene Redzepi, chef and co-owner of Noma, and David Zilber, the chef who runs the restaurant's fermentation lab, share never-before-revealed techniques for creating Noma's extensive pantry of ferments. More than 750 full-colour photographs, most of them step-by-step how-tos with every recipe approachably written and meticulously tested, take readers far beyond the typical *kimchi* and *sauerkraut* to include *koji*, *kombuchas*, *shoyus*, *misos*, lacto-ferments, vinegars, *garums*, and black fruits and vegetables. And — perhaps even more important — it shows how to use these game-changing pantry ingredients in 100 original recipes.

Breathing in Denmark

by Martin Lee

At the end of May 2017, I set off from my university in Sheffield to Aalborg's hospital. I am a medical student, and as a part of our course we get the opportunity to study anywhere in the world (or anywhere that will have us!). While many of my colleagues went to sun themselves on the beaches of Sri Lanka, I chose to go to the slightly cooler beaches of northern Denmark. This was mainly because I have always admired the Danish ideals of government and their work-life balance, and thought this would be a good opportunity to investigate them in more detail. I had managed to arrange to spend seven weeks at the respiratory department in Aalborg — and so began my summer.

When I arrived at the student flats in Aalborg, I was quickly informed by the other students that I was going with them to the city carnival the next morning. Walking around the sun-soaked streets of Aalborg with the thousands of other revellers was a very nice introduction to the city! I had a slightly more low-key, but still very good, introduction to the hospital. Troells, my mentor, showed me round the hospital and department. I then had dinner at my supervisor's house, where she told me about the highlights of Aalborg and showed me a slice of Danish home life.

As I settled into the placement, I noticed several differences between the UK and Denmark. There was palpably less pressure on doctors, and greater investment in the future of the hospital (they were in the process of building a megahospital). They also give junior members of staff more independence in looking after patients, while still making themselves available to offer support to them. One example of this is that students are allowed to take on some of the responsibilities of junior staff during the summer holidays, freeing up the doctors to cover for their absent colleagues. They also let me get involved in more procedures than I would have been permitted in the UK — even letting me do a bronchoscopy (a camera test into the lungs)! There were also more social events for staff, including hospital Olympics and several birthday parties, which I went to.

In the evenings, I would relax with the other students from across Denmark and Europe — learning more about their healthcare, and about how to beat them at cards. This was really good fun and gave me a lot of insight into how they see their hospitals. It was also very interesting to hear their views on Brexit and Britain — they were often better informed than many people back home on Facebook seem to be. I also found out that a plate of super noodles is not, apparently, an acceptable meal for Danish students!

At the weekends, I would go away to see other parts of Denmark, using the impressively good rail network to full effect in getting me up to Skagen, where the North and Baltic seas meet, as well as down to Fanø, a beautifully windswept island just west of Esbjerg. I climbed Himmelbjerget (the sky mountain!),

one of Denmark's highest points at 147 metres — before kayaking in the lakes around it. A friend of mine came over from Sweden to visit me and we went to explore the wonders of Aarhus. I also took in some more cultural sights, like the historic town of Ribe, and the stunning Egeskov *slot* (palace) near Odense – which wouldn't have felt out of place in a H. C. Andersen fairy tale.

Before I left for Denmark, I had attempted to learn some Danish to help my integration into the department. However, when I arrived I found that although I could understand some of what was being said, I struggled to understand the patients in clinic or the doctors at their meetings. This meant I had little idea of what was really happening until a doctor explained to me in English what had been said in the conversation, which I found very frustrating. However, after about a month of being in clinics and on ward rounds, which were conducted predominantly in Danish, I felt that I could get the gist of most conversations, if not all the details.

My biggest three tips for any future travellers would be: don't be afraid to ask for things, as if you don't ask there's no way you will ever get them; having a bike makes life so much easier, and someone will have a spare one in Denmark; and, finally, take some proper tea with you — it can be very hard to find unflavoured tea in Denmark. It took me a month and a trip to Silkeborg to get mine. But, all in all, I had an incredible time and will truly cherish the summer I spent in Denmark.

Memoirs of Mývatn

by Bethany Smith

In the summer of 2017 I spent an incredible three months working on Lake Mývatn in the Northeast of Iceland. Mývatn is biologically fascinating being home to lake balls, which are extremely rare aggregations of the green algae *Aegagropila linnaei,* and a unique assemblage of waterfowl. But perhaps the most remarkable biological occurrence is the abundance of midge larvae that can reach densities of over 500,000 per cubic metre on the lake bottom. It is these midges that give the lake its name; *mý* meaning 'midge' and *vatn* meaning 'water' or 'lake' in Icelandic. Every summer, the midge larvae grow into adult midges and emerge from the lake forming huge swarms.

Over the years there have been seemingly unpredictable fluctuations in the numbers of the midges that emerge from the lake, with some years seeing an almost total crash in the numbers. I was at Mývatn to help with a project and gather data that will hopefully enable us to understand the causes of these fluctuations, and the consequences that they have for the connected aquatic and terrestrial food webs. The project is run by Professor Tony Ives from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and all ten of us working on it (two professors, a post-doctoral researcher, two PhD students, a research assistant and four interns) lived in a farmhouse at Kálfaströnd, an idyllic spot right next to the lake, which has been used to film scenes for the popular HBO series, 'Game of Thrones'.

Throughout the summer the other interns and I helped with the routine sampling of six different sites on the lake and several sites onshore. For the lake, this typically involved boating to the different sites and taking sediment cores, water samples, emergence trap samples and environmental readings. These samples would later be processed back in the lab to identify, count and measure midge larvae and zooplankton. Onshore we would set up infall and pitfall traps, which capture adult midges and ground-dwelling invertebrates respectively. These would then be identified and counted back at the lab. I must admit, as a borderline arachnophobe, I never imagined I would spend days examining spiders under the microscope.

Natalie, another intern, and I were also responsible for the sampling of five lakes north of Lake Mývatn — Másvatn, Vestmannsvatn, Miklavatn, Botnsvatn and Víkingavatn — during which we would collect and reinstall sticky cards around the edges of the lakes to catch flies as they emerged. These trips were always fun, but we had one particularly crazy day where we accidentally almost kidnapped (or dognapped) a dog, got attacked by territorial Arctic terns and got the car well and truly stuck in sand, which

was only resolved by lying on our stomachs and digging the car out with our bare hands like two badgers.

We also all had our own individual experiments running, which added an array of exciting extra tasks, such as: picking 4,500 midge larvae from sediment samples until 2 a.m.; taking readings from in-cubation experiments on the lake until past midnight; running (and driving) through midge swarms with nets; capturing harvestmen to build 'spider arenas'; and treacherous journeys to the North basin of the lake (the equivalent of the dark side of the moon, as we conducted all the routine sampling in the South basin). I personally spent my spare time coaxing midge larvae to rebuild the tubes that they live in after removing them from their original tubes.

Black fly swarms around our infall traps

Outside of our research we had plenty of fun exploring the surrounding area. We hiked along the River Laxá, around lava fields at Krafla and Dimmuborgir and up Hlíðarfjall, Vindbelgjarfjall and the volcanic crater Hverfjall. We went camping and hiking in Siglufjörður, a small fishing village on a northern fjord overlooking the Greenland Sea, and wandered around Iceland's largest urban areas, Reykjavík and Akureyri.

We visited mud pots and several incredible waterfalls, namely Dettifoss, Selfoss, Goðafoss and Aldeyjarfoss, where we also looked for Arctic foxes. We went whale watching in Húsavík, relaxed at the Mývatn Nature Baths, celebrated Christmas on 25 July, watched the entirety of Twin Peaks, played too many games of 'Mafia', and I spotted 50 different species of bird. We experienced 24 hours of daylight, freezing temperatures, snow, brilliant sunshine, eerie fog, countless beautiful 'sunsets' and the Northern lights. I must add that we also discovered, to the dismay of my stomach, that it's perfectly possible to roast marshmallows over candles.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that science, and Iceland, are awesome. I would also like to thank Professor Ives for this amazing opportunity and the people I lived with, now life-long friends, for making the experience truly unforgettable.

To find out more about the project, you can visit the blog 'A Smidge of Midge' here: http://uwmyvatn.blogspot.co.uk.

How to live Norwegianly

by Beth Dixon

I am half-way through my time studying abroad, at the Norwegian Veterinary School. It didn't take me very long to settle into life here. Relaxed working environments, high standards of living and, of course, the favourite Norwegian pastime, cross-country skiing, have all made for an easy transition. I fell in love with skiing quickly, but but it took me longer to reconcile myself to my utter lack of control — and what a liberating feeling it was! When skiing downhill, you can chose to ski either in the *løype* (tracks) at the side where you have no speed control, or down in what could be called the 'central reservation' where you risk head-on collisions with oncoming skiers. The result was a slightly hysterical British girl, hurtling downhill crying out *Unnskyld*! ... Excuse me! ... Oh God, please can you move ... Oh, I'm so sorryyyyyyyy!' and leaving a trail of grumpy Norwegians behind her.

I am a final-year veterinary student at the University of Liverpool and am spending my last three months of rotations in Oslo. These rotations are divided on a weekly basis across different areas of veterinary medicine, designed to give students experience of the full breadth of the industry, from public health and food safety to equine orthopaedics and surgery. The basis of rotations is much the same in Norway as in the UK, but the priorities vary to relate to the differences in industry. There is for example a relatively high emphasis on fish welfare and aquaculture here in Oslo as there is on equine race-horse industries back at home. These differences have been fascinating for me, allowing me to assess different attitudes and managements, not only in the veterinary field but also regarding societal and cultural issues.

We always look to the Nordic countries for inspiration for a more healthy work-life balance and atmosphere. I can confirm that the pace of life is much more relaxed here, and I enjoy the lack of a strict hierarchical society. In the UK we tend to consider our lunch break a luxury, not a basic human right, and initially I thought it was highly amusing that the students here were very disgruntled if their lunch hour was five minutes late, but now I find myself eager to defend every minute of my lunch break too! I find that I am in a better learning environment, more comfortable asking questions, and much more time is dedicated to teaching, which has been a fantastic experience for me. On the other hand, I find myself frustrated at the inefficiency of the Norwegian clinics, while in the UK the clinics are required to be viable businesses (which however sometimes results in student learning being cut short in order to keep on time). It also surprised me that there are much lower expectations of students, regarding independence and responsibility, which I have always felt were the best aspect of rotations at home — the last stepping stone before the 'L' plates are removed, before the transition to working as a professional.

Working here has been a fantastic way of truly beginning to discover a country and a people I thought I knew. I have been brought up with a very strong Scandinavian influence, thanks to a Danish grandmother and a close and very extensive Scandinavian family. Besides being the only girl in school to eat liquorice and have candles on the Christmas tree, it was only at university, after reading the book 'How to live Danishly' that I realised just how great the influence had been.

I have often found myself with differing opinions and a much more pragmatic attitude to life and death. I'll give an example: Marius the giraffe from Copenhagen Zoo. Marius was a young male giraffe, whose genetics were over-represented in the captive breeding population, thereby making him useless for conservation purposes, so Copenhagen euthanised him humanely and fed him, publicly (in front of children!) to the lions. This caused a public outcry in the UK, and it was a topic of very hot debate at vet school. I found myself in a minority in thinking that zoos have two functions: to conserve species and educate the public and Marius fitted into one of these. The opposing arguments were based on two principles: it was cruel, and children shouldn't see such things! This sugar-coated attitude and avoidance of the realities of life is something that I have always clashed with fellow Brits about, as it is something that I have been brought up to be very open about.

I am so glad to have come here and have learnt so much more than I had expected, made some fantastic friends and proven to myself that I can and will become a good vet. Not only this, but I have had the opportunity to become much closer to my family, some of whom I have been fortunate enough to

New life diagnosed

live with during my time here. There's just one more thing I had hoped for, that as yet I haven't discovered. Where do I belong? When I came here I expected an epiphany: to discover an overwhelming affinity for either Britain or Scandinavia. Perhaps I have always seen Scandinavia with rose-tinted glasses, and now that I am better informed the decision is much more challenging. I am so proud to be British, the culture is so rich and alive, but I equally feel a strong connection with my Scandinavian roots. For now, I suppose I will have to accept that both and neither are home.

The 16th European Turbulence Conference

by Mark McCorquodale

August 2017 saw a global meeting of academic students and researchers at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, to discuss and present new research within the field of the physics of liquids and gases, which I was fortunate enough to attend.

I am a PhD student at the University of Nottingham completing a degree by conducting new scientific research. Trips to academic conferences offer an excellent opportunity to enrich my studies not only by learning from the talks of other researchers, but also by enabling me to present and gain feedback on my own current research. Although billed as a European conference, the 16th ETC embodied the international collaborative nature of modern academic research and showcased research currently conducted around the world. 25% of the approximately 550 delegates were from academic institutions outside Europe.

The conference itself featured a mix of academic talks and social events designed to showcase the best that Stockholm has to offer, and it certainly did not fail to deliver. The academic talks given were as varied as they were engaging, covering topics ranging from how the earth maintains its magnetic field, the physics of the early universe, ongoing developments in the modelling of aeroplane flight, and how medical technology (such as ultrasound devices typically used for pregnancy scans) can be used to provide new insight in complex laboratory experiments.

Following the talks of established researchers with a talk of my own was always going to be a nerveracking experience, but it is an integral part of developing experience within academia and offers new perspectives on my research. Fortunately my talk went without incident! My own research investigates the particular effects that solid boundaries have on a turbulent flow — a chaotic state of energetic liquids and gases commonly encountered in rivers, oceans and in the atmosphere. It is our hope that by developing a better understanding of this process we may ultimately contribute to the development of new engineering solutions, such as the ability to reduce drag on cars

and aeroplanes, thereby improving fuel efficiency and offering both environmental and economic benefits to society. The feedback offered following my talk from researchers based in the Netherlands, Japan and the United States has now provided new avenues for me to continue to develop and improve my research.

Alongside serious discussion during the day, the evening events made possible the exchange of ideas and experience in more relaxed surroundings. Firstly, an evening reception in the Stockholm City Hall, with its stunning Blue Hall, gave an insight into the splendour that surrounds the annual meeting of perhaps the finest scientists in the world (by which, of course, I mean Nobel Prize recipients). However, even this venue was surpassed by the Vasa Museum where the conference banquet was held — traditional Swedish food, accompanied by the imposing shipwreck of the majestic Vasa ship, was a fine way to spend the final evening of the conference.

Stockholm City Hall

Before the conference started, I also had time to explore the history of the Stockholm Royal Palace and Riddarholm Church and enjoy some of the many stunning waterfronts dotted throughout the city. Unfortunately, as I approach the end of my PhD studies, I had little time to explore the other sites of Stockholm or Sweden generally — the daunting task of writing a 100,000 word thesis awaits me when I get home. However, having thoroughly enjoyed not only the conference itself but also the city of Stockholm on what was only my first trip to Scandinavia, I am sure I'll be back in the future to explore more widely what Sweden and other Scandinavian countries have to offer.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to once again thank the CoScan Trust Fund for financial support for this meeting which has, without doubt, been a highlight of my PhD studies and which I would have been unable to attend without your help.

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