CoScan Magazine

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CoScan
Confederation of Scandinavian Societies

Contents

Front cover:

Rock-carvings at Tanum, an area (150 km north of Gothenburg) that was included on the World Heritage List in 1994.

Message from the President

Mark Elliott

Looking back at my last two messages in this series, at this season in 2017 and 2018, I am slightly surprised at how little has changed. The absence of change is not always a good thing, and it is regrettable that neither on the wider political scene in this country (the B….. word), nor with our own domestic concerns in CoScan, do we have much more clarity over what lies ahead. Despite this, I remain (again, slightly surprisingly) confident about the future.

At our 2019 AGM in Stirling, described elsewhere in this issue of the magazine, Eva Robards confirmed her departure from the post of Chairman. The sadness of this moment for the rest of us is mitigated by her willingness to continue as editor of the magazine, one of her greatest triumphs. Even more importantly, she leaves behind her a taut and harmonious organisation, with personalities and intrinsic strengths which will carry CoScan forward. Her wish, expressed in Stirling, is that she be succeeded by a new person with new focus, with the aim of establishing CoScan as (in her words) 'The Voice of Scandinavia in the British Isles'. We don't, and can't, aspire to achieve this in any political sense. There is a limit to what can be done by collaboration between nation states, as the recent history of the European continent shows only too well — each national tribal grouping has a distinct character which it seeks to preserve. This applies to cultural matters just as much as politics. But the need to emphasise values and qualities and strengths which all share, within Europe and even more obviously among the Nordic nations, has never been more vital. CoScan can, and must, play its part in this.

There's one more thing I need to say about the future. CoScan doesn't really have to have a President — the Constitution (and even constitutions can be amended) uses the word 'may'. What we must have is a leader and an inspiration. Eva has been that, for eight full years — and of course that role is not achieved without strains on the individual. As President, I have sometimes been able to offer support, no more than that. After nearly twenty years in that position, and even though the strains it imposes are minimal, what I am able to do is reducing fast. The important task for us all now is to find a new leader — all else is secondary. We can, and will, cope for a while without. But we need your assistance, now.

Stirling 2019

by Mark Elliott

Guide and delegates at Stirling Castle
Photo:Garry's Photographs (also below)

For this year's CoScan AGM (26-28 April) the Scottish Norwegian Society invited us to Stirling — an easily-accessible and beautiful town, and a key strategic and historical centre. 36 individuals representing 12 member societies took part, most of us staying in a fine centrally-sited historic hotel.

A welcome reception on the Friday evening, followed by a collective but informal meal in the hotel, set the tone. Saturday was a triumph for the organisers: unexpected sunshine for our tour of Stirling Castle in the morning, and a remarkably versatile actor/guide at the Old Town Jail in the afternoon. The jail was fascinating, and some of us were bullied most effectively as inmates-for-the-day. But the castle was the highlight. Our guide there was clear and audible, hugely informative without being repetitive, with total mastery of a mass of historical detail. The site had been the focus of action through much of Scottish history, and we were given a much clearer understanding of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, and of the conflicts and inter-relationships between the Scottish and English royal families.

The formal dinner that evening, and the AGM itself on Sunday morning, were again superbly arranged by Ragne Hopkins and her team. Eva Robards's decision to step down as Chairman at this AGM is a major event. But there were other issues to discuss; the International Award for this year, and a decision on the next recipient; the trust fund and its financing; our overseas trip for 2020; our new Secretary. It all went very smoothly, and happily. We shall remember Stirling with great pleasure.

Changes to the Editorial Board

Dr Louise Sørensen has decided to withdraw from the Editorial Board. Since she joined, in 2014, she has been a highly valued colleague — we are sad to lose her.

However, we are delighted to welcome Dr Colin Roth on the Board. He is an interdisciplinary specialist in the psychology of aesthetics who trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the University of Sheffield, gaining his PhD in 1982. He has published articles and books across a wide range of disciplines, including music, ballet, art history, philosophy, history, landscape and psychology, a number of which can be found through the online service of the Danish Royal Library (www.kb.dk). There are articles about Carl Nielsen, Bournonville, and an unsingable singers' translation of Peter Heise's opera, *Drot og Marsk*. His translation of Jens Henrik Koudal's For Town and Country, the Danish civic musician system, 1660-1800 will be published by Brepols during 2019.

Colin Roth was co-director of the Centre for Nordic Studies at the University of Sheffield until it closed in November 2018.

Danish-Scottish Society

by Jesper Bach, committee member

The Danish Cultural Institute in Edinburgh was a mainstay for the Danish community in Scotland since the start in 1957. It fostered the Danish-Scottish Society in 1986. However, since the Institute's closure in 2015, the Society has had to find its own way.

Up until the 1980s, various Danish clubs in Scotland came and went. This changed when Finn Andersen took up the post of Director at the Danish Cultural

DANISH·SCOTTISH SOCIETY
A bit of Denmark in Scotland | En smule Danmark i Skotland

Institute. His wife Vivien recalls how resident Danes lamented the lack of get-togethers and she became actively involved in setting up the Danish-Scottish Society in 1986.

From the outset, the Society was closely linked with the Institute while maintaining a clear division of responsibilities. The Institute would focus on promoting Denmark through cultural events, while the Society would cater for the resident Danes with a variety of social events throughout the year. The meetings and events would typically take place at the Institute, which constituted a home-away-from-home for events such as *Fastelavn*, the Easter Lunch and the Christmas Party. Many a craft fair and film night also took place.

In the twelve years of Vivien Andersen's involvement, she found it important to provide activities for the children to help them learn about Danish traditions and enjoy themselves. Her husband Finn set up Danish lessons using the Institute as a base. Vivien recalls about ten children coming along on Saturday mornings for Danish lessons.

The Institute's last Director, Kim Minke and his wife Conny worked long and hard to keep it functioning effectively, but change was afoot. Denmark's focus was shifting away from traditional cultural institutes in Europe towards aiding developing nations and emerging economies around the world. Danish cultural institutes in countries like Germany, Hungary, Lithuania and Estonia all faced closure. The writing was on the wall and in 2015 the Danish Cultural Institute in Edinburgh closed the doors of its elegant New Town premises for the very last time. The sense of disappointment was felt through the community with people referring to it as 'a great loss' and describing the Institute as having been a 'lifeline'. The Danish-Scottish Society's venue of choice was a

Danish-Scottish Society celebrating Sankt Hans

thing of the past, and the closure deprived Danish cultural events in Scotland of a valuable source of publicity. However, according to Vivien Andersen, the closure presented the Society with an opportunity to organise cultural events.

In the years since the Institute closed, the Society has increasingly taken over the role of promoting Danish cultural events in Scotland on social media. The Society's Facebook page, Danish-Scottish Network, now provides daily news and events for everybody in Scotland with an interest in all things Danish: anything from Danish bands visiting Scotland to Danish businesses in Scotland. If the Danish-Scottish connection is there, the content is quick to reach the 650 followers of the page. The page also helps connect the various Danish groups and businesses in Scotland.

The vision is for the page as well as the Society to be the focal point for Danes in Scotland no matter where they live or how old they are. The Society carried out a 'Dane in Scotland' survey last summer and the responses have helped shape the nature and quality of the events on offer. The Society is now arranging more small easy-to-organise events, while maintaining those traditional social occasions which have been an integral part of the life of the Society ever since its beginnings in the grand premises of the Danish Cultural Institute back in 1986.

Danske Kvinder i England — Danish Women's Association

by Alette Rye Scales, committee member

The Association of Danish Women in England was founded in 1959. During the war, Danes in London had developed a strong sense of community around the Danish Church in Regents Park. The Church was pivotal and as it was — and still is — self-supporting, a group of Danish women came up with the idea of holding a summer bazaar to raise funds for the Church. This was in 1953. It was an instant success. Six years later, the women behind what was by then the annual summer bazaar established the non-profit-making Association of Danish Women in England. Since then, members

of the Danish Women's Association have worked tirelessly every year to bring about yet another successful summer bazaar, or as it has now been renamed, Danish Fair, which continues to raise funds for the Danish Church as well as being a much anticipated and joyful event for London's Danish community.

Apart from the Association's fund-raising aim, it has another, more social

aim. Early on, it was recognized that there was a growing need for a space where expatriate Danes could get together and enjoy and uphold Danish traditions and culture. This has not fundamentally changed. There continues to be a need for such a space, although the demographics have changed somewhat. Hence, the Danish Women's Association offers a range of activities. As well as a book club where both classical and contemporary Danish authors are read and discussed, and a bridge club, our monthly events include lectures, excursions to places of interest that one would perhaps not otherwise visit, concerts, theatre outings and lunches with inspirational speakers, culminating in the festive Christmas Lunch. We keep our members informed with monthly and sometimes bimonthly electronic newsletters and we have a website with information about upcoming as well as recent events. Members pay a modest annual subscription fee as well as fees to cover the cost of outings and lunches.

The Danish Church in Regents Park is host to most of our events and it has continued to play a pivotal role for the Association and its members. The Danish Fair, which is held in early May, can be seen as the annual culmination of our Association's two-fold aims, which are essentially to provide financial support to our Church and to bring the Danish community together within a framework of conviviality, culture and 'Danishness'. The number of Danes living in London and the rest of the UK continues to grow and whilst we continue to recruit new members, our most pressing challenge is to attract members of the younger generation.

www.danskekvinder.co.uk

Outing to Greenwich organised by official guide and member Grethe Hauge

Grist to the mill

Grundtvig's narrow escape from scandal (1830)

by Sid Bradley

In the years 1829-31, N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) made three visits to England, on a royal grant to study Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. He envisaged gaining for Denmark the distinction of retrieving from obscurity the little-regarded literature of the kindred Anglo-Saxons, and of augmenting the records of early Danish history, as the Icelander G. J. Thorkelin had done through his edition of *Beowulf* (1815).

His first visit, in 1829, was punctuated by mishaps and disappointment. No experienced traveller, he was ill-prepared for the teeming London metropolis. Returning in 1830, he proved more successful at penetrating London's intellectual and higher social circles. One June evening he was guest at a rather elegant dinner party. After the meal, he settled into absorbing conversation with a stylish young woman and remained in her company for most of the evening.

Grundtvig was by no means short on physical sexuality (his last child, Asta Marie Elisabeth, named after his three wives, arrived in his 77th year); but the evidence at that London dinner party is that he was carried away not by any carnal promptings but by the lady's ability to talk about 'everything' in an unusually insightful way, as (he asserted) few men could. When she invited him to visit her at her private residence on the morrow, he delightedly accepted.

Next morning, on his way there, he called on his host to thank him for the dinner party; and he mentioned his imminent tryst with the insightful lady. His host was aghast. She was a married woman, Mrs Clara Bolton. Her husband had been among the guests and Grundtvig had not even paid his formal respects to him, let alone sounded out the propriety of privately visiting his wife. But more than this: Mrs Bolton was known about town for contriving close friendships with select politicians and using her connections to advance their careers and her own. It was hinted that her husband, a fashionable physician, encouraged these liaisons to further his own aspirations; and that the politically ambitious Benjamin Disraeli was her lover, and not only Disraeli but also his patron, Sir Francis Sykes.

Grundtvig aborted his purpose of discoursing further with Mrs Bolton about 'everything'. In his next letter home to Lise, his wife, he lightly mentioned that he had not taken up this lady's kind invitation, indeed that he would soon have forgotten even what she looked like. But ...

Eighteen years later Hans Brun, a young Norwegian from Kristiania (Oslo), who was to become the first substantial biographer of Grundtvig, sat enjoying tea and *smørrebrød* in the Grundtvigs' Copenhagen home — when Mrs Bolton,

N.F.S. Grundtvig 1831; detail of a portrait

plainly enough, though not named, materialised in the conversation.

In Brun's own words (translated): 'There was also a young woman there, dressed in mourning, who sat at the table-end by Grundtvig's side and whom he treated with much attention, and the conversation soon came round to women in general. Then Grundtvig told us that the last time he was in England, at a party, after the meal he came to sit with a young woman with whom he entered into an enjoyable conversation, and when they had been sitting a long while together the host comes over to them and says "What can you two be talking so much about?" So then she good-naturedly lifted up her eyes and answered: "We can talk about everything!" and, continued Grundtvig, "It is true: with ladies one can talk about everything but not with men — with whom one can talk only about what they have studied and acquainted themselves with scientifically, but then it depends upon getting hold of the matter from the right side, which is the side of the heart […] but women always take things in a quite different way, intuitively, with the heart." While he was talking further about woman as the expression of human nature, his son-in-law interrupted with the remark that "That all sounds very pretty." Then Grundtvig immediately turns to him and replies: "Yes, but it is also true." Such pertinent formulations were so common with him. He deftly championed the woman's freedom of heart against men's desire to conform her nature.'

Indeed, far from forgetting Mrs Bolton, Grundtvig had only recently, in 1844, celebrated her in his poem *Smaa-Fruerne* (The little women) as one of the women (apart from his wife Lise) who had been the loves in his life; and in 1842, in a poetic manifesto he titled *Kvinde-Evangeliet* (The women's gospel) he had written 'Experience has taught me — and my grey hairs have given me the courage to say it aloud — that as a rule everything that shall properly reach us to the heart must reach us through women.' In fact, there is abundant evidence throughout his life-records that Grundtvig developed a deep, often religious reverence for *det kvindelige* (literally, 'the womanly'): that range of precious and life-affirming sensibilities which he held to be innate in the female — though these sensibilities could be learnt by men, to the advantage of the collective character of the nation itself. He esteemed 'so *kvindelige* a people as the Danes' and scorned the '*Hjernespind hos Mænd*' — the 'brain-spun' intellectualisations of men —

which deplorably outclamoured those sensibilities of the heart manifesto, for example, through Mary, mother of Jesus. 'You streams of tears, flow freely,' he exclaimed in his Gospel, 'yea, pour forth over the dust, for a Church devoid of women like a grove devoid of leaves.'

Thus, the meeting with Clara Bolton, potentially an incipient scandal, seems to have served as grist to Grundtvig's mill: it effected within him some kind of significant revelation and liberation which helped to set him apart from many of his contemporaries on the issue of women's status in both worldly and spiritual spheres. Remarkable: though, as a matter of fact, there was little in Grundtvig's long life which did not eventually come to serve as grist to his busy and astonishingly productive mill.

[Sourced in part from N. F. S. Grundtvig: A Life Recalled, An Anthology of Biographical Source-Texts Translated from the Danish and Edited by S. A. J. Bradley (Aarhus University Press, Aarhus 2008)].

N.F.S. Grundtvig 1843
Both portraits by C. A. Jensen; in public domain

Nordenskiöld, an early environmentalist

by Dr Seija A. Niemi

Nils Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld (1832–1901), a Finnish-born Swedish scientist and explorer, was an environmentally literate person before the concept of environmental literacy was formulated in the 1960s. Environmental literacy involves the ability to perceive harmful development in one's environment, and to react with creative, preventive, and soluble measures.

From his observations Nordenskiöld feared, on his ten Polar expeditions between 1858 and 1883, the imminent extinction of Arctic animals and birds. Already on his first expedition to Spitsbergen in 1858, he described in his diary how greedy eider hunters collected all the eggs and shot most of the birds just because of their feathers. He thought it would be a miracle if these bird colonies did not suffer total extermination.

Nordenskiöld was one of the first people in the nineteenth century who showed concern for the environmental problems in Europe. He also suggested possible solutions for avoiding or

mending the problematic situations. In 1880 he published a short essay, *Förslag till inrättandet af Riksparker i de nordiska länderna* (A proposal for establishing national parks in the Nordic countries), which is considered to be one of the founding texts of modern Nordic conservation history.

My doctoral thesis includes, in addition to the leading text, four articles published in international scientific books and journals. The articles discuss different sides of Nordenskiöld's life and career, his interests and environmentally literate expressions of opinion. They also analyse his position in the history of Nordic conservation. For example, fossils greatly fascinated Nordenskiöld. Fossils reveal information about the Earth's origins and the natural phenomena of ancient environments, as well as about the extinction of animals and vegetation in the past. The discovery of fossil mammals in northern Europe in the nineteenth century indicated that drastic climatic change had taken place over time. Moreover, this demonstrated that fossils play a fundamental role in explaining earlier climate change.

Nordenskiöld was influential in the conservation movement in Finland and Sweden. The first national parks in Europe were established in Sweden in 1909 and followed proposals made by him.

Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld was born in 1832 in Helsinki, the capital of the Russian Grand Duchy of Finland. He studied chemistry, natural history, mathematics and physics at the Imperial Alexander University of Helsinki.

Nordenskiöld, from his book *The voyage of the Vega round Asia and Europe with a historical review of previous journeys along the North coast of the Old World*

Meteorites and cosmic dust, which fall to the surface of the earth, were among his geological interests. The cosmic dust theory, as well as some other ideas and hypotheses advanced by Nordenskiöld, were not accepted by contemporary scholars. But, in time, some of his theories have turned out to be worthy of further development, such as the origin and composition of cryoconite, which he discovered during a trip to the Greenland ice cap in 1870. He observed the brown multicellular alga substance partly on the ice and partly among fine gravel, and named this dust *kryokonite* (ice dust). Nordenskiöld deduced that cryoconite is the worst enemy of ice caps. The dark mass absorbs a much larger amount of the sun's warming rays than the white ice and it burrows deep holes all over the ice, which accelerates the melting process.

Nordenskiöld's observations and experience of nature also had practical consequences. His observations about how floating drift ice was able to calm

stormy seas and therefore facilitated safe sailing conditions within or behind the ice, led him to come up with the idea of floating breakwaters. When he saw that the ice in the Arctic Ocean in the summer was very weak, he concluded that a powerful steamer could easily break through it. This finding led to another technological innovation: the ice-breaker. The invention of drilled wells was a result of his observation of geological formations that contain water deep beneath the earth. He had observed that there is always running water between the geological layers at the depth of between 30 to 60 metres under the surface. When he conducted tests, he found that it was possible to obtain between 500 and 2,000 litres of good drinking water per hour by means of light pumping.

Seija A. Niemi is a Finnish environmental historian with a wide range of interests. She has researched Olavi Virta, the Finnish Tango King, and also the history of the birch tree in the Finnish forests. Her doctoral thesis in 2018 was on Nordenskiöld.

The explorer Nordenskiöld

The Vega Expedition of 1878–1880, named after SS Vega and under the leadership of Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, was the first Arctic expedition to navigate through the Northeast Passage, the sea route between Europe and Asia through the Arctic Ocean, and the first voyage to circumnavigate Eurasia. On his return to Sweden he was made a baron and a commander of the Order of the North Star. In 1900 he received a medal from the Geological Society of London and he was nominated for the first Nobel Prize in Physics but died before the prizes were awarded. His huge personal collection of early maps, donated to the University of Helsinki, was listed in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register in 1997.

Nordenskiöld with the Vega
Painting by Georg von Rosen

A (dual?) anniversary of Swedish women's voting rights

by Brita Green

Establishing exactly where and when women first got the vote is no straightforward matter. Are we only interested in sovereign countries, or can dependent or colonial areas be considered? Do we mean the right to vote for parliament, or do local elections count? Should we discount voting rights that were later rescinded? Do we start counting when only certain women, depending on age or status, can vote, or do we wait until men and women vote on the same terms?

In 1755, the 'Corsican Republic' included female franchise in its constitution, but that republic only lasted for fourteen years. It is New Zealand that is usually named as the first country to introduce women's suffrage — even though it was at the time a (self-governing) colony within the British Empire and did not become fully independent until 1907. Since 1893, New Zealand women have had the right to vote in parliamentary elections, with all 'British subjects' aged 21 and over, including Māori, being eligible to vote. But they had to wait until 1919 before they gained the right to stand for Parliament.

And it was in that same year, 1919, that in Sweden a law was passed to give women the right to vote for the *Riksdag* and, after the first election (in 1921), five women took their seats in the second chamber. It was not a pioneering act: in fact, Sweden was the last of the Scandinavian countries to bring in female franchise. In 1906, Finland had been the first European country to give women the right both to vote and to stand for parliament; the others followed in 1913 (Norway) and 1915 (Denmark, including Iceland). In the UK, it was not until 1928 that female franchise was made equal to that of men — though women over 30 could vote from 1918. This was something that was actually seen

Minnie and friends (from her photo album) — apparently not quite convinced

as a mixed blessing by some young women. All her life, my husband's aunt remembered her humiliation on an election day in the early 1920s, when her father, spotting her on the other side of the village street, had shouted across the road in his best sergeant-major voice, 'Have you been to vote yet, Minnie?!', revealing her age to all and sundry.

So, this year, Swedish women have for a hundred years had the right to vote, and on the same terms as men. By coincidence, exactly two hundred years earlier, when parliamentarianism was introduced in the constitution of 1719, the sex of the voters was not specified, and women got the vote — by default. There are records to show that women did indeed take part in about half of the more than forty elections (local and national) during the 'Age of Liberty' (1719-72), after which they again lost the right. There were conditions, and in fact most of the 18th-century voting women were widows. There was a smaller number of unmarried female property owners, but married women did not have the vote: they were under their husbands' guardianship. So, even if 1719 was the year when some Swedish women first had a chance to vote, the claim for tercentenary celebrations this year looks somewhat shaky.

In 1863, new Swedish laws again gave all tax-paying citizens, including (some) women, the chance to vote in local elections. Again, married women were excluded and, whilst men could vote at 21, women had to be 25. But it is good to know that somebody like Selma Lagerlöf (1858-1940), Nobel-prize-winning author, was not totally disenfranchised during the first six decades of her life. By virtue of being a tax-payer, and unmarried, this world-famous and influential writer and landowner did at least have a say in who was on her local council before, at the age of 61, she could vote for parliament for the first time.

Suffragettes marching in Gothenburg in June 1918

Selma Lagerlöf had in fact herself contributed to the cause as a speaker, and had given the opening address at the International Suffrage Congress in Stockholm in June 1911. She also spoke at the victory party of the Swedish suffrage movement after the law had been passed on 24 May 1919.

‘Here two young Danish Soldiers lye’

by Hanne Hamilton and Barbara English

On an exterior buttress on the south side of the chancel of St Mary`s Church in Beverley, east Yorkshire, is an oval plaque showing two crossed swords with gilded hilts above a dramatic inscription:

> Here two young Danish Soldiers lye.
> The one in quarrell chanc`d to die;
> The other's Head, by their own Law,
> With Sword was sever’d at one Blow.
> December the 23d 1689

The antiquary Abraham de la Pryme (1671-1704), curate at Holy Trinity Church in Hull from 1698, records in his diary that late in 1689 ‘about six or seven thousand’ Danish soldiers, ‘the best equip’d and disciplin’d of any that was ever seen’, had disembarked in Hull from Danish ships, in support of William of Orange (crowned William III, April 1689, after James II vacated the throne).

In August that year, William had signed a treaty with Christian V of Denmark, hiring 7000 men, including officers, priests (‘whom they call’d pastours’), cooks and women — for which Christian received 350,000 *rigsdaler* while William was to be responsible for pay and provisions. Many of these mercenaries were temporarily billeted in and around Beverley. On 9 December 1689, near York, the Danish Corps swore an oath of loyalty to King William.

This proved an ill-fated transaction, and not only for the two memorialized soldiers. The mercenaries duly embarked from Hull for Ireland to help William’s second-in-command, Frederick, Duke of Schomberg, quell the Irish Catholic rebels; but a storm in the North Sea scattered the fleet. Some ships were blown to Catholic France, where (as non-Catholics) the men suffered imprisonment and torture. Other ships were blown to Holland; some got back to Hull.

Writing of his encounter with the mercenaries around Beverley, Abraham de la Pryme records that they were ‘all stout, fine men […] mighty godly and religious. You would never hear an oath or ugly word come out of their mouths’. They adhered to a strict discipline in social conduct and church observances. ‘Although they enjoyed strong ale,’ Abraham wrote, ‘I only witnessed when

I was amongst them — and that was all winter — five or six who were drunk.' They were, however, allowed to play cards on Sundays when the church service was over — though 'in many places the people would not abide the same but took the cards from them.'

During their crossing from Denmark, two of them, Lieutenant Daniel Straker and Cornet Johannes Frederick Bellow (clearly the Yorkshire folk's version of their Danish names — perhaps, in Danish, Streicher and almost certainly Bülow), had been quarrelling — perhaps (the old, old story) over a girl? On 15 December they found themselves alone. During an ensuing duel Straker was gravely wounded and died. According to Danish Articles of War duelling was forbidden and when it caused death it carried the death sentence. Bellow was court-martialled under the jurisdiction of the Danish Commander-in-Chief, Duke Ferdinand Wilhelm. The grim outcome was known in advance.

In Beverley's archives there is an account of what local tradition preserved of events on the day of the execution. Mr Empson, freeman of Beverley, who was alive in 1892, recalled having been told it in 1830, by the 86-year-old Mrs Southeran of Westwood Road, Beverley.

A scaffold was erected in the market-place and two cartloads of gravel were scattered around the base to soak up the blood. Mounted soldiers surrounded the scaffold to ensure order, for the event drew crowds from near and far. As St Mary`s bell tolled, shrieks were heard from the many women present when the sword (the last ever used for execution in England) fell upon Bellow's neck. Mrs Southeran had the story from her mother who lived to be 80 and who in turn had it from her mother, Mary Hopwood who lived to 104 years of age and, as a girl, had accompanied her mother to witness the execution.

The soldiers' burials (Straker's on 16 December, Bellow's on 23 December) were recorded in St Mary's burial register. Entries in the Danish archives record that the two were interred side by side at St Mary`s and that the memorial plaque was made and engraved under instruction from, and at the expense of, the Danish Chief Cuirassier who himself composed the English verse inscription.

It was unusual for a church to commemorate such a violent secular incident; but Abraham asserts that the Danish troops were 'mighty good-natured and kind and civil' and that 'the English were, all over hereabouts, extreem kind to them and gave them free quarter' — perhaps the good folk of Beverley were deeply touched by this tragedy just as they were preparing to celebrate Christmas.

The plaque has historical interest for Anglo-Danish relations *c.*1690, and for the important role Danish soldiers played under William's leadership. It is also the earliest among modern written records of Danish mercenaries serving in a foreign land. It has not yet proved possible to establish precisely who the two officers were, or their dates of birth. Whether any family members still exist to preserve a memory of ancestors commemorated thus in Beverley is a question it could be interesting to resolve.

The plaque was originally inside the south transept of the church, where its shadowy outline can still be seen. Probably in the 19th century, the authorities decided to move it outside. Unfortunately, the soft stone, exposed to weather and traffic pollution, is now at risk of becoming unreadable and a project has therefore been launched for it to be removed, lightly refurbished, and then stored with other treasures in the Priests' Rooms of St Mary's. A carved stone replica will be placed outside the church. Work begins in the summer of 2019. The organisers would welcome any donation towards this project: St Mary's Restoration Fund, ref. Danish Plaque, sort code 20 43 47, acc. no. 00776203.

Danish soldiers c. 1700

Urkult, a cultural festival

by Märta Kero

Urkult is a music and culture festival that takes place the first weekend of August every year in Västernorrland, Sweden. Since 1995 people have travelled to the remote and scenic village of Näsåker to experience music, workshops, poetry, family activities, ecological food, nature camping and encounters with both new and old friends. This summer (1-3 August) Urkult celebrates 25 years of festivals, but the astonishing festival site by the great rapids of Nämforsen has an ancestry much older than that.

Rock carvings, Nämforsen Photo: Sture Marklund

For thousands of years people have gathered by the rapids called Nämforsen that flow straight through what we today call the village of Näsåker. We know this thanks to the rock carvings along the shore which indicate that people have been active around this area for 6000 years. Rock carvings are illustrations carved into a flat stone surface; they are found in several places in Sweden and are considered of great historic value. Recurring symbols are humans, boats and wild animals such as moose, birds and fish. The intriguing history of Nämforsen has been an inspiration for Urkult from the start. Look at the logotype on the previous page for example: it illustrates a boat-shaped rock carving beneath a full moon, and a raven.

Visiting the Urkult festival is a special experience — it is not like any other festival. Part of its uniqueness is the location: its history and scenic nature with steep hills, high pines, the river and the majestic rapids. Other elements that make Urkult stand out from the crowd are that the visitors are people of all ages (families, young people, and the elderly), and that instead of focusing on well-known artists Urkult takes an interest first and foremost in traditional and creative music from all over the world, presenting for the audience exceptional musicians and not just popular music. Another important element is the atmosphere of exhilaration and relaxation infusing the festival and turning it into a sanctuary, a place to breathe and enjoy.

The festival site itself is located among the pines atop a steep hill, with a view over the river and Nämforsen. Here you find three stages (the biggest stage surrounded by a natural amphitheatre), food vendors offering ecological festival menus, a beautiful and imaginative playground for children, a craft market, hammocks among the trees and other spots for relaxation and enjoyment. Outside the festival site the festivities continue. They include a poetry stage, concerts in the church, a market with a 'fair' profile, a family area for theatre and workshops, courses and workshops for adults, seminars — and all are within walking distance, scattered around the village.

But how did it all start? The festival was founded by a group of friends, of whom many had moved to the region of Västernorrland in the 70s to get away from the cities. Their ambition was to arrange cultural events for people in the rural areas, and not only a festival but also smaller events all the year. It was hard going to begin with, financially, but it got better and better and the festival found its feet after a few years.

There are two reasons Urkult has been able to stay alive all these years, while other festivals have not. Firstly, they have not always striven to grow but have got to know the capacity of the organisation and the location and aimed to keep the proportions of the event reasonable. Secondly, they have remained a nonprofit organisation based on volunteers, where the only economic interest is making ends meet, all income being invested in the next festival.

During a festival about 600-700 volunteers work in exchange for entrance to the festival, and about 60 people work all year round (still voluntarily) to plan and arrange every part of the event down to the last detail. Without these people there would be no festival. Though the work is often a lot of fun, it is also hard work, so why do people do it year after year? There are probably many different answers to that question but one is the feeling that they are contributing to something important, to creating a space for celebration, love, learning and inspiration.

Photo: Per-Johan Nylund

Birka: life in a Swedish town from the Viking Age

by Neil Price and Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson

The Viking town of Birka is one of the most famous archaeological sites in Scandinavia. Situated on the small island of Björkö in Lake Mälaren, now in the backwaters of Stockholm, it was once on the crossroads of communications in eastern central Sweden. Together with Hovgården on the neighbouring island of Adelsö, Birka represents a complete and exceptionally well preserved archaeological site from the Viking Age and is listed on UNESCO's World Heritage list.

Established in the mid-8th century, Birka quickly developed into a major centre of crafts and trade, both in the surrounding region and beyond. Throughout the following century (*c.* AD 750 – 860) it was part of a network along the Baltic rim that included other urban settlements in today's Norway, Denmark, northern Germany and Poland.

In the latter part of the 9th century, the significance of these connections declined as Birka became an important node in the Eastern trade network, sharing close contacts with similar sites in ancient Rus (present day Russia and the Ukraine), with the Byzantine metropolis of Constantinople (today's Istanbul), and even with the peoples of the Eurasian steppe. Specialised workshops produced jewellery, textiles and other valuables which, together with slaves, could be traded for silver and prestigious and exotic goods.

Birka acted as an important seaport for trade in and beyond the Baltic, and the harbour was at the heart of activities. It constituted a commercial space, where merchandise was bought, sold, and re-loaded into smaller boats for further transport inland. The town was centred on the port and supplied its needs in terms of repairs, manpower and supplies.

The wealth gathered in Birka was likely to be exposed to constant threats. Fortifications on land and in water were constructed, along with the town, and then further strengthened and enhanced as the trading network expanded. In the early 10th century a permanent garrison of troops was established, overlooking the town and the harbour. The fortifications were not for defensive purposes only. Control over the town and the harbour also meant control over valuable goods and movement of people, with the

Birka's urban area, with the hillfort on the skyline, seen from the great cemetery Hemlanden
Photo: Jonathan Olsson, used under licence CC BY

concomitant potential for taxation and other levies. One of the strongest features reflected in the archaeological remains is the extent and diversity of contacts and influences from other places. From dress to religious practices, Birka's closest parallels were to be found in other Viking towns, especially along the Eastern trade route.

For the visitor today, Birka is dominated by its cemeteries, some nine different grave-fields dotted around the island, most of them broadly encircling the town rampart and the hillfort. More than 3000 burial mounds make an extraordinary sight as the peaceful open field where the town lay seems surrounded by a landscape of the dead, its inhabitants still watching over what was once their home. From field surveys using ground-penetrating radar and other non-destructive methods, we know that

Burial mounds crowd one another in the Hemlanden cemetery, the largest of the island's grave-fields.
Photo: Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson

at least another 1500 or so graves are there, invisible beneath the soil.

Most of what we know of Birka's people comes from these cemeteries, and from the excavations of about 1100 burials in the late 19th century by the antiquarian Hjalmar Stolpe. A pioneer of archaeological recording techniques (he was the first to use graph paper for his field drawings, for example), his work produced insights into the urban population of the Viking Age that remain unsurpassed even today. Most of the dead were cremated and buried under mounds, while the wealthiest were interred in underground wooden rooms known as chamber-graves. Among them are the remains of what has been interpreted as a female warrior of high status, the now-famous grave Bj.581 that went viral around the world in 2018. The thousands of objects buried with the dead of Birka still form one of our primary sources of reference for the Vikings' material world, especially for Sweden.

These people clearly had extensive foreign contacts, with clothing and equipment that show evidence of travel in the east along the Russian rivers and even as far as the Asian steppe. Birka's population was a cosmopolitan one, and a walk through its streets would have been an immersion in many languages, fashions and customs. The town serves today as a symbol of the Viking Age as a multicultural, multi-ethnic place, of interaction and encounters, and of a northern world very much open to expanding its boundaries rather than closing them — a lesson for us all today.

Visiting Birka: Birka today is accessible only by water, with regular tourist boats running daily from central Stockholm between late April and September. The island has a small museum and reconstructions of Viking-Age buildings, with craft and market activities in the summer season. There is also a café and picnic area. For boat trips and guided tours of the Viking town, see the website of the Strömma company: www.stromma.com/en-se/stockholm/excursions/day-trips/birka-the-viking-city/

Neil Price is Distinguished Professor of Archaeology at the University of Uppsala, Sweden, and formerly held the Sixth Century Chair in Archaeology at Aberdeen. A leading specialist in the Viking Age and the pre-Christian religions of the North, his researches have taken him to more than 40 countries. For the next ten years he is directing one of Sweden's largest archaeological research projects, The Viking Phenomenon, leading an international team to explore the origins of this critical period in world history.

Dr Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson is a researcher and co-investigator of The Viking Phenomenon research project. With a long-time engagement in the archaeology and research of Birka, she has explored issues of warfare, identity and mobility in the Viking World.

A Viking roadshow

by Sarah Maltby

York is very used to welcoming hordes of Vikings in February to celebrate the annual Jorvik Viking Festival, but in 2019 a further Pan-European dimension was added to the mix when the Follow the Vikings Roadshow arrived in the city with a cast and crew of enthusiasts and specialists drawn from across the Viking world and prepared to retell the story of Egill Skalla-Grímsson in story, song, dance and drama.

In 2015, the Destination Viking Association, made up of over fifty Europe-wide partners, including York Archaeological Trust / Jorvik Viking Centre, received funding of €4-million from Creative Europe to develop a wide ranging four-year project that brought together a network of partners from across the Viking world with, at its heart, the objective of creating an audience for Viking heritage narratives across Europe.

One of the largest and most innovative elements of this project was led by the team at York Archaeological Trust, who were tasked with creating a travelling roadshow that explored the cultural and historic impact of the Vikings. Using the expertise of the Viking specialist community across Europe, who made up the Destination Viking Association, the touring show that they developed included specially commissioned performances by contemporary artists, including actors, musicians, dancers and film makers, to create a stunning visual celebration of European Viking heritage.

FOLLOW THE VIKINGS

Performed live between August 2017 and February 2019, at eleven significant Viking locations, in seven different countries, each show was unique; adding a spectacular and complementary experience to an already existing Viking events programme delivered by museums and re-enactors.

DESTINATION VIKING

Cultural Route of the Itinéraire Culturel du COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Working with staff and volunteers from each participating partner, professional and amateur artists and performers were sought out, as well as members of the public, both young and old, to be involved in their local event. These groups and individuals were given the exclusive opportunity to work with the Roadshow's Creative Director, Craig Morrison, the troop of international actors, and the professional Norwegian choreographer Anna Katrin Granhus, who toured and performed with the production, as well as specialists drawn from the local region including make-up artists, musicians and dance professionals.

The Roadshow performance took as its starting point the *Höfuðlausn* or 'Head Ransom' — a skaldic poem written in the 13th or 14th century and attributed to Egill

Skalla-Grímsson in praise of King Erik Bloodaxe. It appears within *Egils saga* which claims that he created it in the span of one night. The following morning Egill recites his poem in the presence of king Erik and receives his freedom. *Egils saga* is one of the 'family sagas', or 'sagas of Icelanders', which represent the high point of Icelandic medieval literature and record the traditions of the first generations of settlers in the land, from the late 9th century up to the early 11th century. Of these sagas, the saga of Egill is one of the longest and best-known.

Encouraging artistic collaboration, the poem was translated into the native language of each location visited by the roadshow and transformed by local poets to reflect their individual cultures and their own Viking heritage. Projected backdrops of stunning landscapes or dramatic battles, sea voyages and flame-lit halls created a spectacular stage for the actors to perform this remarkable story through song, poetry, proclamations and dance.

Throughout the three-year run, the production was performed in longhouses, cinemas, agricultural buildings and even on swampland in the shadow of a Spanish castle built to repel Viking attacks. It travelled from Warsaw to Norway, to Denmark, Dublin and Waterford, to Sweden and back to Norway, to Shetland, Iceland and finally to York — where it had had its fitting finale — bringing the story of Egill Skalla-Grímsson and his conflict with Erik Bloodaxe back to

A stage production in Copenhagen (October 2017), in the yard of the national museum of Denmark
Printed with permission of the Destination Viking Association and York Archaeological Trust

Jorvik. Throughout these journeys the show was performed to a total audience of over 12,500 people in six different languages.

For its climax in York the roadshow was performed in a spectacular tented venue, erected especially for the event in the Museum Gardens. Reminiscent of a Viking longhouse, the venue saw the show performed three times to packed houses including, for its *grande finale,* every project partner who had made their way to York to celebrate this great and unique Viking journey.

Sarah Maltby is Director of Attractions, York Archaeological Trust. She leads and manages the Trust's five attractions. In 2014, she was made York's Ambassador for Tourism.

Scandinavian trio take top spots in the Bocuse d'Or

Denmark, Sweden and Norway landed a gastronomic clean sweep in France's prestigious culinary competition Bocuse d'Or early this year. Out of 24 competing chefs Danish Kenneth Toft-Hansen took the first prize, and the Swede and the Norwegian came second and third. In fact, at least one Scandinavian contestant has finished in the top three every time in this biennial event since its start in 1991.

The Scandinavian medallists 2019 Photo: AP Photo/Laurent Cipriani

‘Scandi’ food in Macclesfield’s Treacle Market

by Bridget Morris

I love to chance upon a Scandinavian café or restaurant in an unexpected place. Having grown up in Birmingham in the 1960s I can still remember the Danish Food Centre on the ramp at the junction of New Street and Corporation Street leading up to the station. I can still smell the coffee, apple and cinnamon and the sight of the exotic *smørrebrød*, somehow not quite the same as the *kanelbullar* and *smörgåsar* that my Swedish mother used to make.

Perhaps that Danish Food Centre was my first insight into the subtle differences between the Scandinavian cuisines — similar, familiar, yet each so different. Today they have grown into hybrids — the word is Scandi — that are a welcome sign of our having moved towards a more integrated world.

Last year I stumbled upon a similar delight — this time in Macclesfield, a town that was once the heart of the silk industry in Britain. It was on a cold, wet, windy, winter’s day that I climbed up a steep set of steps from the lower town and up to the so-called Treacle Market. While regaining my breath I put my head into the parish church where members of the Northern Chamber Orchestra from Manchester were rehearsing for an evening concert.

Close by is ‘The Salt Bar.’ With wooden panels painted in muted colours, and a stylish reindeer motif decorating the walls amid bunches of drying herbs

and fairy lights, the Scandi scene was set; and I was ready for some food.

The lunchtime menu offered a good selection of open sandwiches, or else meatballs and burgers with Västerbotten cheese and Norwegian slaw. I opted for Prawn Skagen, a simple classic of fried sourdough topped with prawns in dill, leek and horseradish mayonnaise.

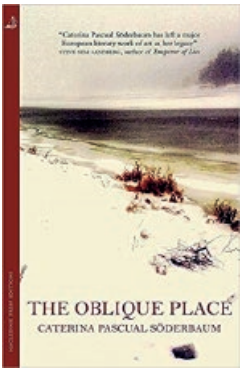
The evening menu included Bury black pudding salad (a fusion dish that surely cannot be on offer anywhere in Scandinavia!), and a creamy lamb stew with dill flavouring (from the southeast of Sweden).

Cheeses from Jarlsberg and Västerbotten as well as Danish Blue added to the specially chosen Scandinavian flavours that altogether created a very enjoyable meal served by friendly and accommodating staff.

Having discovered this little gem in the heart of Cheshire, I’m now on a quest to find more of these small independent Scandi places. Any ideas anyone?

Address: The Salt Bar, 23C Church Street, Macclesfield, SK 11 6LB

From the bookshelf



Review by Bridget Morris

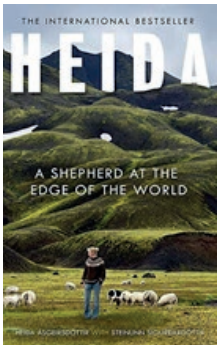
Caterina Pascual Söderbaum, *The Oblique Place*, translated by Frank Perry
Quercus Publishing, Sept 2018
ISBN-978-0-85705-723-5

Caterina Pascual Söderbaum's semi-fictional chronicle was published after her death in 2015 at the age of 53. It captures a family's long involvement in Nazism in an attempt to come to terms with its troubled and disquieting past.

The book opens with Caterina travelling with her husband and little daughter in 2006 to the shores of Lake Attersee in Austria, where the officers of the extermination camps had enjoyed their holidays. The Schloss Hartheim psychiatric hospital, a short distance away, had been a clinic where the Nazi euthanasia by poison gas programme was implemented from 1940 onwards.

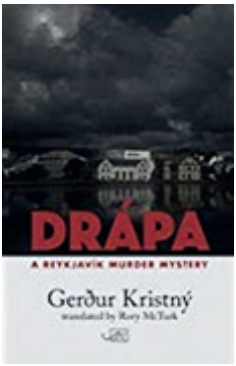
The contrasts between extreme evil and cruelty and a dream-like lyricism are drawn out in the restless stream-of-consciousness prose of this powerful book, excellently rendered into English by Frank Perry.

Caterina Pascual Söderbaum, author and translator, was born in Sweden to a Swedish mother and a Spanish father. She grew up in Spain, studied in Sweden and divided her time between the two countries.



Steinunn Sigurðardóttir, *Heida: A Shepherd at the Edge of the World,* translated by Philip Roughton
Hodder & Stoughton, Apr 2019
ISBN-978-1-47369-650-1

Heida is a solitary farmer with a flock of 500 sheep in a remorseless area bordering Iceland's highlands, known as the End of the World. One of her nearest neighbours is Iceland's most notorious volcano, Katla, which has periodically driven away the inhabitants of Ljótarstaðir ever since people first started farming there in the twelfth century. This portrait of Heida written with wit and humour by one of Iceland's most acclaimed novelists tells a heroic tale of a charismatic young woman, who walked away from a career as a model to take over the family farm at the age of 23.

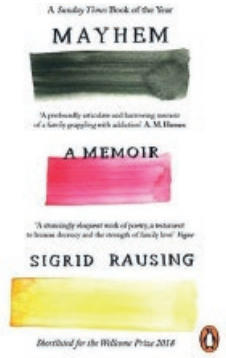


Gerður Kristný, *Drápa: A Reykjavík Murder Mystery,* translated by Rory McTurk
Arc Publications, March 2018
ISBN-13 978-1-91146-926-1, 978-1-91146-926-1

In the frozen January of 1988 a young woman was murdered by her husband, The couple had been drinking for four days when a physical argument broke out. Ten years later, the celebrated Icelandic writer Gerður Kristný interviewed the husband in the very apartment where the crime had taken place.

This novel-poem, which takes its form from Old Norse poetry and its mood from modern Nordic crime, is the product of that interview: a commemoration of one woman's death and, through this lens, of all women's deaths at the hands of violent men.

This is Viking poetry at its most contemporary.



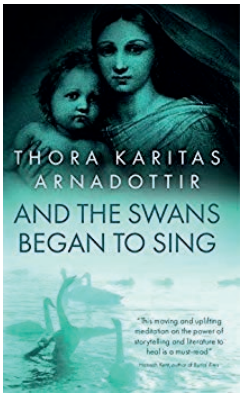
Review by Bridget Morris

Sigrid Rausing, *Mayhem. A Memoir*
Published by Penguin, July 2018
ISBN-978-0-24197-706-4

The occasion for Sigrid Rausing's memoir hit the news headlines a few years ago. The book tells of a sister's heart-rending experience of living with addiction in her close family.

But what stands out in this loosely structured chronicle is the raw reflection that the tragedy of addiction is a very human problem. It is written in elegiac language and with pyschological insight and empathy. Rausing's descriptions of her childhood summers in the south of Sweden are particularly poignant. She conveys the whole range of reaction to the unfolding of events, and the role of guilt, privilege, freedom and responsibility in these.

In the end, one is left thinking that this book can be considered as an exploration of something more than addiction: unconditional family love.



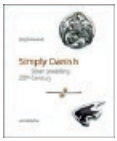
Book suggestion

from Eyrún Hafsteinsdóttir, Embassy of Iceland:

Thora Karitas Arnadottir, *And the Swans Began to Sing*
Published by Wild Pressed Books (UK), Jan 2019
ISBN-10 1-91648-960-5, ISBN-13 978-1-91648-960-8

Gudbjorg Thorisdottir has been hiding from the ghost of an ugly secret for most of her life. When she finally faces the truth of what happened in her childhood, the ghost floats away. Painting an evocative picture of life in Iceland, this is the story of a little girl who didn't know how unnatural it was to experience both heaven and hell in the same house.

Frank Egholm, *The Danish Art of Whittling: Simple Projects for the Home*
Published by Pavilion Books, Nov 2018
ISBN-10 1-84994-503-9, ISBN-13 978-18499-450-3



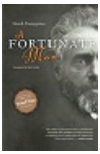
Jörg Schwandt, *Simply Danish: Silver Jewellery —20th Century*
Published by Arnoldsche (Germany), Oct 2018
ISBN-10 3-89790-526-4, ISBN-13 978-3-89790-526-9

Norwegian Knitting Designs: A Collection from Some of Norway's Leading Knitting Designers
edited by Margaretha Finseth
Published by Search Press Ltd (UK), Feb 2019
ISBN-10 1-78221-712-6, ISBN-13 978-1-78221-712-1

Andy McConnell, *Swedish Glass Design: Six of the Best*
Published by ACC Art Books (UK), Sep 2019
ISBN-10 1-85149-738-2, ISBN-13 978-1-85149-738-6

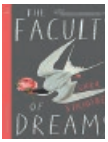
Erling Kagge, *Walking: One Step At a Time*
translated by Becky L. Crook
Published by Penguin, Apr 2019
ISBN-13 978-0-24135-768-2

Steinar Bragi, *The Ice Lands*
Published by Macmillan, Jan 2019
ISBN-978-1-50983-206-4



Henrik Pontoppidan, *A Fortunate Man*,
translated by Paul Larkin
Published by Museum Tusculanum Press (Denmark), Oct 2018
ISBN-13 978-8-76354-424-5

Niklas Natt och Dag, *The Wolf and the Watchman,*
translated by Ebba Segerberg
Published by Hodder & Stoughton General Division, Feb 2019
ISBN-978-1-47368-212-2
'The latest Scandi sensation'



Sara Stridsberg, *The Faculty of Dreams*,
translated by Deborah Bragan-Turner
Published by Quercus Publishing, Mar 2019
ISBN-13 978-0-85705-472-2
First Swede to be nominated for the Man Booker International Prize 2019

Ivo De Figueiredo, *Henrik Ibsen: The Man and the Mask*
Published by Yale University Press, Feb 2019
ISBN-13 978-0-30020-881-8

Jan Kokkin, *Gerhard Munthe: Norwegian Pioneer of Modernism*
Published by Arnoldsche (Germany), Aug 2018
ISBN-10 3-89790-517-5, ISBN-13 978-3-89790-517-7

Neil Price, *The Viking Way: Magic and Mind in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*
Published by Oxbow Books (UK), 2nd ed. June 2019
ISBN-10 1-84217-260-3, ISBN-13 978-1-84217-260-5

Rory McTurk, *Chaucer and the Norse and Celtic Worlds*
Paperback published by Routledge, Aug 2018
ISBN-10 1-13837-815-1
ISBN-13 978-1-13837-815-5

CoScan Trust Fund

2019 report by Brita Green

The Trust Fund group — Tony Bray, Brita Green, Hugh Williamson — met in York on 2 April. John Christmas having resigned as treasurer, we welcomed Hugh Williamson as his successor. We decided to send John a card to thank him for his years of work with the Trust Fund, and wish him well.

Hugh had met up with John for the handover, and was able to present the Income and Expenditure report for the calendar year 2018. With some further donations since 1 January 2019, the balance now stood at £2,219.80. In line with our usual custom of leaving a minimum of £1000 for next year, we had a maximum of *c*. £1200 available for this year's grants.

We are, as always, very grateful to all our donors. This year, our warm thanks go again to the following societies: YASS (whose successful Lucia in the Minster has brought us over £500 every year in recent years), Hampshire Anglo-Scandinavian Society, Anglo-Scandinavian Society of Newcastle, Norwegian Scottish Association and SKOL. Donations have also come from the CoScan executive committee, and from several generous individuals, foremost among them our regular contributor, Mr Michael Smith.

Even though our grants are very modest, the recipients are always grateful. The more money that comes in to us, the more we can give away. This year, we would have liked to be able to be a little more generous than our resources allowed. Please consider giving us your help, either individually or by organising some fund-raising event in your society.

We had twelve good applications from young people wanting to take part in projects ranging from climate change policies and oceanic and glacial research to Viking archaeology, manuscript studies and history of art, and from medical students choosing to do their electives in a Scandinavian country. Because of the limited resources and the number of deserving applicants, we had to stick to our guidelines fairly strictly, and regretfully rejected the application from a group and from one of the individual applicants. We gave out ten grants ranging from £75 to £150, amounting to a total of £1075. Three of the recipients will be going to Denmark, three to Norway, two to Sweden, one to Finland and one to Greenland.

We also had a look at the reports from 2018 in order to make recommendations to the editorial board, and you can read some of them on the following pages, including the prize-winning report. As usual, we are holding some back for the winter issue.

If you would like to make a donation, you can download a form from our website www.coscan.org.uk/travel-award or just drop Tony Bray a line (tony.bray@coscan.org.uk) and he will send you a form to fill in. Or send a cheque made out to 'CoScan Trust Fund', directly to the Trust Fund treasurer: Hugh Williamson, 20 Appleton Ct, Bishopthorpe, York YO23 2RY. (Please do NOT send donations to the CoScan treasurer.)

CoScan Trust Fund
PRIZE-WINNING REPORT 2018

The best time of my life

by Jodie Lilley

I vividly remember the day I got the email from my University telling me that my application had been successful, and that I would be coming to Lund University in September 2018 to undertake a research project in the Evolutionary Ecology department. Applying as a Biology BSc from the University of Manchester, I wasn't sure what to expect from my placement year in Sweden. Would I make any friends? Would I live up to the high standards expected of me? Would I be able to cope with the colder days and shorter daylight hours? The one thing I knew for certain was that I was determined to make the most of this opportunity, and to travel as much as possible.

Waving goodbye to my family at the airport, I was filled with anxiety and excitement in equal measure — but my anxieties quickly melted away when I arrived. Immediately, I was taken aback by how beautiful the city was. Quaint multi-coloured cottages lined every cobblestoned street, and there were lush patches of greenery left, right and centre. With the sun shining brilliantly, it couldn't be more opposite to what I was used to in Manchester, but it was a very welcome change. My first week was jam-packed with social activities aimed at getting international students integrated into life in Lund. It did a very good job! A lot of the people I met that week went on to become some of my closest friends.

My first introduction to the Swedish lifestyle was when I asked a stranger in a supermarket what the word *lagom* meant in a *lagom ägg*, which Google translated as 'so-so eggs'. He was amused that I

had somehow managed to ask him about the most quintessential Swedish word; one that doesn't have a direct translation to English. *Lagom* means 'just the right amount'. It can be applied to so much more than just eggs — it's the Swedish way of living. It's something that I have really valued and appreciated here, especially in the workplace environment. Whilst Swedes are very hardworking people, it isn't so common to see people staying late in the office, pouring all their time and energy into their work. Hobbies and rest time are highly important here, and I am very thankful for this, as it has meant that I have had the flexibility to spend time travelling around Scandinavia.

Once I had got settled into work, my first adventure destination was Norway. My inner geography-geek was thriving the whole time, but particularly as we went hiking up Jostedal glacier. Sliding back down in a re-purposed kayak, I felt overwhelmed with how lucky I was to be able to have such memorable experiences. We travelled on to Bergen, Oslo, and eventually Voss, rounding off the weekend sampling the local delicacy of brown cheese.

My next stop was Kiruna, in Swedish Lapland. Some friends and I stayed in a wooden cabin in the thick of the forest, surrounded by huskies in training to become sled dogs. The highlight of this trip for me was driving a snowmobile over a (barely) frozen lake — I don't think I've ever been so focused in my life as I was behind the wheel of that snowmobile! Although the ground was treacherously slippery, we were determined to go

hiking. After reaching the top of the trail in Abisko National Park, we realised that we had to somehow get down. It was then that my backside really could have used that re-purposed kayak …

Continuing on with my adventures, I journeyed over to Helsinki for a weekend. Like a true Finn, I found myself plunging into an ice-cold Baltic sea pool, unsure as to why on earth I had made this decision (although the feeling of ecstasy afterwards was worth it!).

Next, I went to Iceland, visiting all the obligatory geological places of wonder, such as waterfalls, geysers and active volcanoes. The week ended in enchantment as we were lucky enough to spot the northern lights from the hot-tub outside the Airbnb we were staying in, glass of wine in hand. This was absolutely an experience I was able to tick off my bucket-list.

When I'm not adventuring, I spend my time working on various research projects at Lund University. I am a part of the plant-insect interaction group, and my specific project looks at the contribution that greya moths (a floral parasite which both lays eggs in and pollinates its host)

make to the fitness of its host, woodland star plants, in different populations. It has been an invaluable experience to work alongside scientists and gain insight into what their day-to-day life is like. Weekly departmental seminars give me the opportunity to learn about topics within ecology being studied all over the world, and I have found them truly inspiring.

I feel incredibly fortunate to have been able to combine work, study, and pleasure in such a dynamic, adventurous way, seeing parts of the world that I never would otherwise have had the time or opportunity to visit. It's crazy to think that my time here in Sweden began almost eight months ago, even crazier to think it will be over in only three. The time that I have spent here, as cheesy as it sounds, has genuinely been the best time of my life. I am extremely grateful to CoScan and would like to thank them for supporting me with their generous Travel Grant. I have found a second home in Scandinavia — I'll be back in no time.

The Nordic scholars' 'World Cup'

by Kimberly Anderson

The Saga Conference has been referred to as the World Cup of medieval Nordic scholars. Every three years, a rich mix of academics at varying points in their careers make this expedition. They spend a week engaging with old friends from across the waters, innovative papers and the latest news in their field. Rumours abound about which country will be chosen to host it next.

The 17th International Saga Conference was held in Iceland in August 2018. After so long studying the Icelandic family sagas and imagining Iceland's fantastical landscape in my mind, it was a stroke of luck that my first Saga Conference should give me a reason to go there. A firm sense of the importance of saga literature to Icelandic culture and heritage settled over the conference-goers when the President of Iceland himself opened the conference. The entire week turned out to be an unparallelled opportunity to hear papers that will influence and advance my own research, and to make connections with speakers who, like me, have a special interest in medieval Icelandic law.

On Wednesday 15 August, exactly a year from the day I had a life-altering thymectomy (major chest surgery), I found myself speaking at the seminar session 'Law and Legal Culture in Medieval Iceland'. This session involved only three speakers, Hannah Burrows, Valgerður Sólnes, and myself, and there was much opportunity for individual discussion within our timeslot with our chair, Viðar Pálsson, and the audience.

The topic of my paper was 'Legal Culture and Advice-giving in the *Íslendingasögur',* i.e. in the Icelandic family sagas. The giving of advice often proves a turning point in decision-making within the *Íslendingasögur,* yet little has been said of its cultural and narrative significance. Advice-giving involves a transaction of loyalty or obligation in the relationship between advice-giver and receiver. That relationship, I argued, could be disturbed by the giving of destructive advice or by the ignoring of beneficial advice in a legal context. In addition to this, I touched on the question of whether the giving of advice is a narrative tool for the purpose of advancing saga events, or whether it reveals the relationships between characters.

The questions and comments that arose during the session were golden to me, raising areas for further enquiry. After the panel, I received some very positive feedback from the audience. The greatest compliment came from those who believed that I, a mere first-year PhD

student, must be nearing the completion of my PhD course, from the thoroughness of my research.

During the conference week, I also had the opportunity to participate in several other events that have given me a broader understanding of the period and place that I am studying. One of the conference days took place entirely at Reykholt, with the chance to visit Þingvellir when returning to Reykjavík.

We heard from archaeologists how various aspects of landscape were used to shape court and social proceedings at assemblies, and watched an actor use the acoustics of Þingvellir to enact a saga scene. It all brought to life the world of the sagas. I could imagine a young man following the tips of his father's cloak to his first assembly, having been an isolated figure among the small population of medieval Iceland, and the distance between his home and other farmsteads. I could imagine his surprise and awe, arriving among the assembly booths, seeing a great crowd of people for the first time in his life, socialising, bustling and prosecuting to the full extent of formal law. I could imagine how assemblies continued to thrive for centuries.

There were other trips included in the conference. I joined an excursion to the south of Iceland to see some of the sites that are the backdrop to *Njáls saga*. However, I was unfortunately very ill that day, and spent much time at the Saga Centre at Hvolsvöllur simply resting. The Centre houses the *Njáls saga* tapestry and a replica of a Viking long house, so it was nevertheless a very pleasant place in which to recover.

In the periods outside conference hours, I made the most of my time by visiting places of historical significance within Reykjavík, such as the Settlement Exhibition, and took full advantage of the Culture Night that occurred just after the conference to experience a number of museums.

For a disabled student daily living is more expensive than for an average person. The CoScan support has enabled me not only simply to afford the travel expenses necessary, but also to stay at a hotel close enough to the Saga Conference to ensure my attendance each day, despite my fluctuating mobility and poor health. These career and confidence-boosting experiences were made possible in a large part due to the generosity of the CoScan Travel Award, and for that I am incredibly grateful.

Viewing the *Njáls saga* tapestry at the Saga Centre

Twinned parishes in Essex and Värmland

The visit of the St Augustine's Thorpe Bay Youth to Östra Ämtervik

by Jonathan Collis

Thorpe Bay is a suburb of Southend-on-Sea in Essex, and Östra Ämtervik is a village of some 700 people in Värmland in central Sweden. The link between them started in 2011, when the vicar of Thorpe Bay discovered that the diocese of Chelmsford has had a link with the Swedish diocese of Karlstad since the 1980s. The Church of England and the Church of Sweden have much in common, sharing both a continuation of Catholic tradition (such as bishops and sacraments like confirmation) and a Reformation in the sixteenth century which put services into the language of the people and permitted priests to marry. Since 1994 there has been an agreement between the Anglican and Scandinavian churches of mutual recognition, and as part of that there is a network of twinnings between dioceses and, increasingly, between parishes.

Since 2011 young people from Östra Ämtervik preparing for confirmation have visited Thorpe Bay, and an increasing number of church-going teenagers from Thorpe Bay have visited Östra Ämtervik in turn. This year, nine secondary-school-age children, with three leaders (the vicar, his wife and a leader in her early twenties) flew from Stansted to Oslo, which is the nearest airport of any size to Östra Ämtervik, which lies an hour's drive north of Karlstad on the way to Sunne, a skiing resort. Even so it was a long drive though many, many trees ...

Östra Ämtervik itself is probably best known as the home and final resting place of Selma Lagerlöf, the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Our hosts were the former vicar, the Rev. Joakim Bråkenhielm and his family, who occupy the beautiful old vicarage, and two local families.

The visit had a number of aims. The obvious one was to give English children an experience of a place and a culture that they would be unlikely to visit with their families — food, countryside, language, customs etc. Staying with families was a great way to experience Swedish hospitality and to encounter some ways of doing things quite alien to English suburbia (like leaving one's car keys in the car in the confident expectation that no-one would steal it). Every morning we had a lesson in conversational Swedish, and then headed off for the day's activities.

One aim, given the church sponsorship, is to show that God is God everywhere, and not just at home. We were fortunate to be able to share in a service held in the marked outline of an earlier medieval church in Östra Ämtervik, and to visit the cathedral in Karlstad to see how the buildings themselves differed (or not) from an English church. Outside Östra

Floss dancing outside the church

Ämtervik church is planted a medlar as a physical token of our relationship — and it is now flowering and will soon bear fruit in a nicely symbolic way. The group also made, with Fr Joakim, the 'Pearls of Life' prayer bracelets, which are widely used in preparation for confirmation in the Church of Sweden.

Something hard to do in England but typical of Värmland is cross-country skiing, and at Torsby we spent an hour slithering around the mile-long skiing tunnel, and no bones were broken. On the way back we enjoyed the magnificent ice-cream café of Lysvik, and later took a boat trip round Karlstad. Other cultural highlights were the Alma Löv Museum (very odd indeed ...) and the Brunskog Heritage Fair, which if nothing else made us realise how hard country life was in Sweden well into the twentieth century.

The weather was much as it was in England this summer — hot and dry, which meant that the favourite activity of all was bathing in the local lakes. Moreover, the dry weather had kept the mosquito population well under control, so we were able to enjoy the swimming long into the evenings. A splendid and enriching time was had by all, and the grant from the CoScan made all the difference!

Jumping into Lake Fryken

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Inside of the famous Rainbow Tunnel of ARoS (Aarhus Art Museum)

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