# CoScan Magazine

## 2020/2

The Magazine for the Confederation of Scandinavian Societies
Published twice yearly (June & December)

CoScan
Confederation of Scandinavian Societies

## Contents


CoScan, News and Societies

1 Editor's note
2 CoScan Nordic Person of the Year Award 2020: *Tony Bray*
4 CoScan AGM and Drinks Party 2020: *Eva Robards*
6 SveaBritt: *Ulla Gustafsson*
8 Consulate of Sweden in Newcastle
9 Anglo-Swedish Society: *Alexander Malmaeus*
11 News in Brief

Language and culture

12 When Dickens met Andersen: *Peter Roberts*
15 Aksel Sandemose – a Pan-Scandinavian writer?: *Steen Andersen*
17 Anna of Denmark, Queen of Scotland and England: *Margot Blanchard*
20 Jenny Lind, on the 200th anniversary of her birth: *Brita Green*
23 Pippi and the Moomins: *Richard W. Orange*
26 From the bookshelf, with a review of 'Pocket Museum, Vikings': *Katherine Holman*

Travel award reports

31 Summer school for manuscript studies: *Nikolaus Frenzel*
33 A more relaxed approach to healthcare: *Rhodri Thomas*
35 Land of forests and lakes: *Lidia Shafik*

Contact details

38 Member Societies 2020
39 Executive Committee
40 CoScan Trust Fund, Editorial Board
Back inside cover: CoScan Patrons

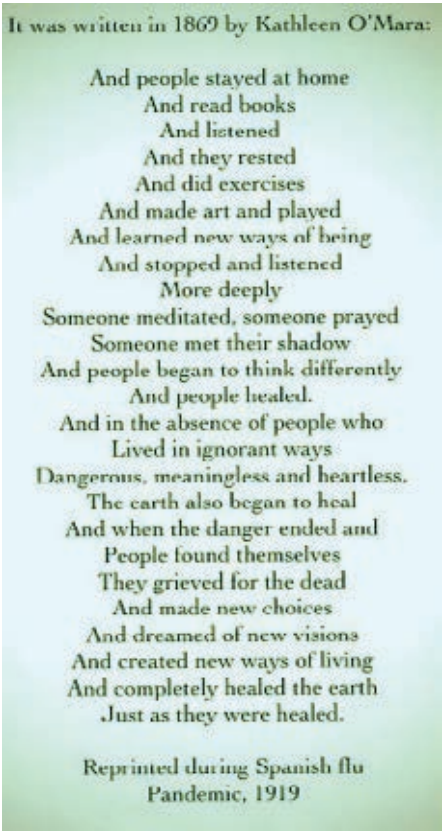

**Front cover:**
**Lake and forest in Finland**

# Editor's note

Eva Robards

*'Happy New Year everyone! Hope 2020 brings you lots of joy and happiness x'*❤

I have just read this message on one of our member societies' Facebook page. Well, little did we know: 2020 very soon made us accept unwanted fundamental changes to our lives—and here we are, still under the spell of Covid. However, humankind has been there before, as the poem below testifies.


It was written in 1869 by Kathleen O'Mara:

And people stayed at home
And read books
And listened
And they rested
And did exercises
And made art and played
And learned new ways of being
And stopped and listened
More deeply
Someone meditated, someone prayed
Someone met their shadow
And people began to think differently
And people healed.
And in the absence of people who
Lived in ignorant ways
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless.
The earth also began to heal
And when the danger ended and
People found themselves
They grieved for the dead
And made new choices
And dreamed of new visions
And created new ways of living
And completely healed the earth
Just as they were healed.

Reprinted during Spanish flu
Pandemic, 1919

It is likely to take some time before we can safely meet again. But it will happen.

In the meantime we've got the Magazine. This issue presents our latest Nordic Person of the Year Award (formerly the International Award), features our new member organisation SveaBritt, portrays activities of a consul (also a CoScan member), and looks at offers of Zoom communication.

The culture section focuses on people this time. First we have the authors Charles Dickens, H.C. Andersen, and Aksel Sandemose, and then the prominent women Queen Anne, the singer Jenny Lind, and authors Astrid Lindgren and Tove Jansson.

There are numerous new Nordic books to read, but unfortunately we do not have the space to include them all. A book series on the Swedish artist and mystic Hilma af Klint has been put on hold for a later edition as it will not be completed until next year. She is considered a pioneer in abstract and occult painting—another prominent woman who could deserve a full article.

Two of the Travel awardees went to Denmark, and for once we have a traveller reporting from Finland which is a welcome addition to the more frequently chosen destinations. Whether we will have any reports next year remains to be seen, as travel restrictions may remain.

But there are no restrictions when it comes to me wishing you

*A Happy New Year! ... and I do hope 2021 will turn out to be a good one for us all!*

# CoScan Nordic Person of the Year Award 2020

by Tony Bray

**Jo Nesbø** Photo: Thron Ullberg

The Nordic Person of 2020 is the Norwegian crime writer Jo Nesbø, elected at the AGM 2019 in Stirling. Due to the pandemic, the award ceremony was held via Zoom on 28 October 2020, just before our AGM.

After my brief introduction, Alexander Malmaeus asked everyone to introduce themselves and offered an opportunity for the participants to talk about Jo Nesbø and his books. His Excellency Wegger Chr. Strømmen, the Norwegian Ambassador to the UK, then made the award to Jo Nesbø. Unfortunately the engraved glass award, together with the signed and framed certificate, had not yet been delivered—the courier company was making it spend a couple of weeks touring Norway!

Jo Nesbø is one of the world's foremost crime writers, with many of his books topping the *The Sunday Times'* bestseller charts. Before becoming a writer, he played football for Norway's premier league team Molde. His dream of playing professionally for Spurs was dashed when he tore ligaments in his knee. After three years' military service he attended business school, and formed the band *Di Derre* (Them There). The band topped the charts in Norway, while Nesbø continued working as a financial analyst, crunching numbers during the day and gigging at night.

When commissioned by a publisher to write a memoir about life on the road with his band, he came up instead—in just a few weeks—with the plot for his first Harry Hole crime novel (*The Bat*) in 1997. Since then, Nesbø has garnered enthusiasm among readers and reviewers around the world with the novels about the investigator Harry Hole. The series currently numbers twelve, *The Knife* the latest to be published, in 2019.

Jo Nesbø's authorship is formidable. In addition to Harry Hole he has had international success with independent novels, such as *Head Hunters*, *The Son*, *Blood on Snow, Midnight Sun, Macbeth* (2018), and *The Kingdom* (2020). He has also written many children's books about

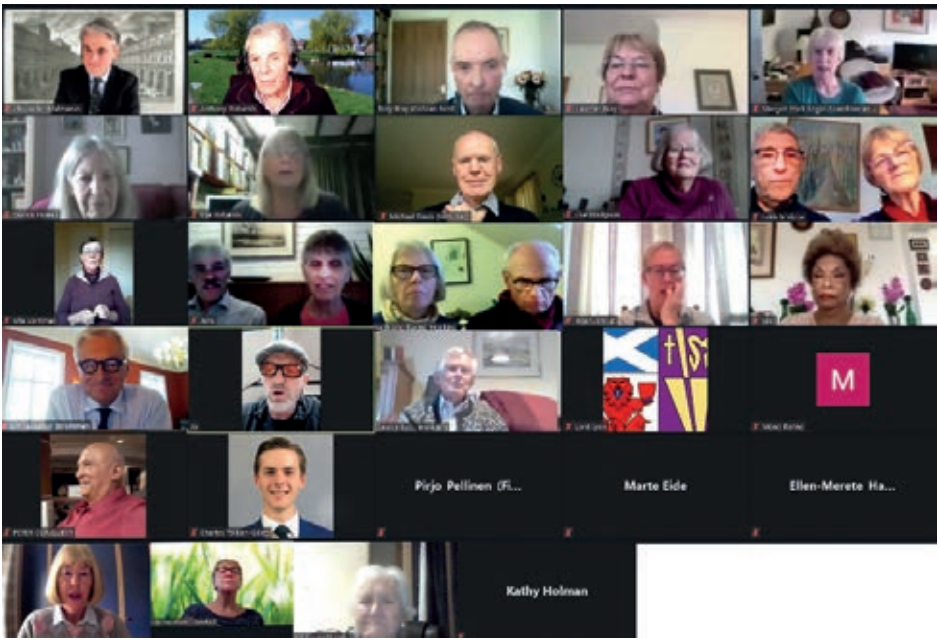
Doktor Proktor, to the great joy of many children.

Nesbø has an efficient narrative style. His books are loaded with storytelling joy, and depicts the ingenuity and energy, goodness and evil, morality and immorality, of life. He portrays the darkest sides of Oslo, entertains from the Finnmark plateau, he shines, touches and tricks. Writing in the third person, he alternates between investigator Hole and the other characters in the books, not least the criminals who are being hunted. The series is also characterised by the reader becoming well acquainted with the protagonist, who, like the author, has strong musical interests.

The ceremony was concluded with warm thanks to Ambassador Wegger Chr. Strømmen for presenting the award, and sincere congratulations to Jo Nesbø.

You can view a video of the presentation on CoScan's website www.coscan.org.uk/nordic-person-of-the-year or on CoScan's YouTube Channel.

The CoScan International Award is now called the CoScan Nordic Person of the Year Award, in order to emphasise that it is the Nordic region and not the world in general that we are addressing. For further information about the award and previous recipients, see www.coscan.org.uk/nordic-person-of-the-year.




**Participants at the award ceremony** Screenshot

# CoScan AGM and Drinks Party 2020

by Eva Robards

Our AGM was held on 28 October after the award ceremony, in the presence of the full executive committee and fourteen societies. The total number of people present, including individual members, was 28.

Among decisions from this AGM were to increase the membership fee slightly, and to elect the Icelandic singer Björk as the Nordic Person of the Year for 2021, provided that she will accept it. Much work remains for our award organiser Tony Bray before that deal is done!

The Virtual Drinks Party on 24 September was a do-it-yourself festivity with regard to drinks and canapés—unlike the generous hospitality in previous years.

The whole committee and representatives of ten societies were in attendance (presentations were given by those named inside brackets): the Anglo-Finnish Society (Paulus Thomson), the Anglo-Swedish Society of Gothenburg (John Chaplin), the Anglo-Swedish Society of London (Alexander Malmaeus), the Danish Scottish Society (Jesper Bach), the Grieg Society UK (Wendy Howell), the Manchester Swedish Language Meetup Group (Tony Bray), the Northants Anglo-Swedish Society (Kerstin Banham), the Scottish Norwegian Society, Glasgow (Margaret Thompson), and York Anglo-Scandinavian Society (Eva Robards)

The Anglo-Danish Society was holding its AGM on the same evening but a report by their Secretary Bette Petersen Broyd had been submitted and was read at the meeting.

**Participants at the drinks party** Screenshot

A key message to take away from the meeting was that most societies are currently on hold, at least where there is a reluctance to video meetings. A few organisations, such as the Anglo-Swedish Society of London, the Manchester Swedish Language Meetup Group and SveaBritt, keep active via Zoom—and apparently benefit from it.

Alexander Malmaeus emphasised the importance of finding venues or activities attractive enough to make members return to their societies when it is safe to meet again. He had hosted the meeting, as he did the CoScan Nordic Person of the Year Award and the CoScan Virtual Drinks Party. For this we are truly grateful.

From our Treasurer:

***2021 CoScan memberships***

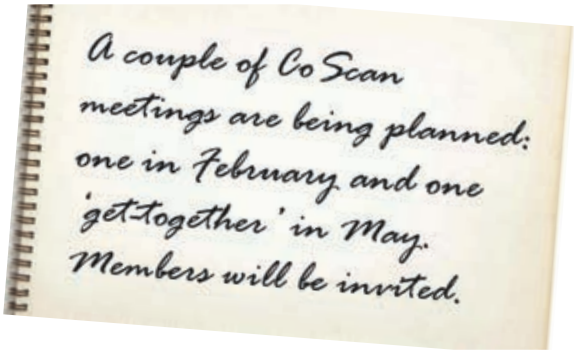
*Just a little reminder to all members, individual as well as societies, that CoScan's membership fees for 2021 are due early in the new year. The membership fees have remained unchanged for well over a decade, but with increasing costs the time has come for an adjustment to enable us to balance the books.*

*The rates for 2021 are therefore as follows: societies £33, single individual members £13, and joint individual members £20. This was agreed at the recent AGM.*

*Note: If paying by standing order, please instruct your bank to amend the amount.*

*Current members will soon receive a reminder together with a membership form,and it would be much appreciated if membership fees could be paid by* ***the end of January****.*

*We would also like to remind anybody who is a member through a society that it is possible for you to receive your own, personal copy of the CoScan Magazine if you join as an individual member. You will then receive your copy as soon as the magazine is published.*



# SveaBritt
## The network of Swedish professional women in the UK

by Ulla Gustafsson

SveaBritt was founded in 1981 by a handful of professional Swedish women who were working in Great Britain, hence the choice of name for the network. At the time they felt there was a considerable dearth of opportunities for professional women to meet and share experiences as most clubs were 'men only'. Women were also under-represented in the labour market so a network where you were able to exchange ideas and issues as professionals while also serving a social function seemed desirable. The aim was to keep the membership to a level at which it was possible to get to know each other to enable the mutual support envisaged as well as the active engagement of the members.

Today we have just over seventy members representing a broad range of professions including those located in finance, art and design, a wide range of businesses, medicine/dentistry and education/academia. Our meetings are located in London and take place on a monthly basis during the autumn and spring when we gather around invited speakers on a wide range of topics as well as getting to know each other and exchanging experiences, knowledge and contacts.

**Members at the AGM 2019**

Over the last year or so the programme of meetings has included an invitation to an exclusive event at the V&A where the Director of Collections, Antonia Boström, and three of her colleagues discussed their work at the museum. We also arranged an After Work Speed Network event at Børealis restaurant in Borough. Sophie Dow, author and journalist, was invited to a meeting where she movingly discussed her book *När livet inte följer manus* ('When life doesn't follow the script') based on life with her daughter Annie, who has learning difficulties. Our meetings are open to guests, except for our two annual meetings that are for members only.

The highlight of our calendar is the annual spring dinner that is located around the International Women's day during the first week of March. This is a well-attended event with diverse guest speakers. We managed to hold our 2020 spring dinner just before lockdown at the Mayfair Hotel. This year we had two guest speakers: the winner of the Swedish Bake Off, Linda Hansson, who shared her experiences from 'the tent',

and Ingrid Löfdahl Bentzer who was Sweden's top women's tennis player in 1973-75 and has since been working to improve the status of women in tennis.

We are a dynamic organisation and aim to respond to the needs and wishes of our current membership while also respecting and remembering the initial impetus for SveaBritt. Indeed, the engagement of our members lay at the heart of the network prompting plans for our 2020 spring meetings focusing on social media development and entrepreneurship. These were postponed due to lockdown and restrictions on meeting while we transferred our network to online meetings. The need to keep our sense of community led to five webinars (i.e. seminars online) held by and for our members across the spring and summer. These included a session in which three members from different professional backgrounds discussed the challenges posed by this new context. Their creative responses have resulted in several positive measures that now form a sustained part of our new ways of working. A series of lectures on maintaining well-being were held by Anna-Karin Aksberg who is a nutritional therapist. She gave us insights into ways of optimising our immune system, dealing with sleep, stress and anxiety, and how to establish healthy food practices. The final online session comprised three different perspectives on the theme 'living in the time of Covid-19' including the experience of suffering from the disease and its aftereffects, the impact of shielding on daily life and the effort involved in re-opening a dental practice.

**SveaBritt Committee at the AGM 2019**

We keep in touch with our members via a monthly newsletter which provides insight into the meetings we have held and keeps us informed about future activities and relevant events in and around London. The newsletter also includes a section 'member of the month' where new or existing members are able to present themselves and their current activities and interests. It serves as a useful mechanism with which to get to know each other and supplements our online register where we include contact details together with a brief biography.

As well as being a network for our members we are also an organisation that is outward-looking and seeking connections beyond our boundaries. We are members of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce and SVIV (Swedes Worldwide) as well as CoScan. We also have links with the Swedish Church and SWEA (Swedish Women's Educational Association). Our membership intersects with these organisations which offers opportunities for many further inspiring and supportive activities.

*Ulla Gustafsson is Chair of SveaBritt.*

# Consulate of Sweden in Newcastle

**Caroline Theobald** Screenshot

It was initially for the shipping industry and Swedish travellers that Swedish honorary consulates were established, and therefore many of them are still located in harbour cities—such as Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where Caroline Theobald has been Honorary Consul of Sweden since 2007.

As Honorary Consul, a voluntary role, Caroline works for further improvement of business and cultural relations between Sweden and the UK, and is looking after the interests of Swedish residents in North East England—from the Scottish borders in the north to York in the south and Cumbria in the west. She assists Swedish nationals with advice if they need their interests protected, and dealing with documents such as passports and driving licences.

The honorary consuls increasingly promote the image of Sweden abroad together with the Embassy, for instance through participation in cultural partnerships and promoting Swedish trade and industry. It is consequently not surprising that for a decade Caroline has been chair of the North East Chapter of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce. This chapter is based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and covers the counties of Northumberland, Durham and Tyne and Wear, an area facing the North Sea with a population of 2.6 million. She also chairs the Advisory Board at Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, and is an associate of Teesside University Business School.

As the co-founder of 'Creative Links', a collaboration between North East England and the Västra Götaland region in southwest Sweden, she has been instrumental in establishing the Lucia tradition in Hexham Abbey—inspired by the Lucia celebration in York Minster. Another project she has worked on in partnership with Region Västra Götaland and the UK's National Garden Scheme (NGS) is the Swedish garden at Saltwell Park in Gateshead. The Swedish-inspired Buzzing Garden contains more than 600 plants and was designed to bring the landscape of Västra Götaland to mind.

The venture was inspired by the creation of a 'Classic English Garden' in Jonsered near Gothenburg by Susie White, a Northumberland gardening journalist, speaker and designer. The huge success of this garden resulted in a request for a Swedish Garden in the North East of England. Region Västra Götaland regards this international garden exchange as a way of showing the close working relationship that has developed over the ten years of cultural partnership between the two countries.

Caroline co-founded the learning and skills development agency FIRST. This company connects young people, start-ups and professionals to their wider business community. She is also a founding director of The North East Initiative on Business Ethics (NIBE), a not-for-profit organisation on a mission to make the North East of England known as a place for transparent and quantifiable business practices.

Caroline Theobald has spent her career connecting North East business people and is passionate about creating commercial and life opportunities. She was awarded a CBE for services to business and entrepreneurship in 2016 and is a lifetime holder of the Queen's Award for Enterprise.

The text was compiled by Eva Robards from web based sources and adjusted by Caroline Theobald.

# Anglo-Swedish Society

by Alexander Malmaeus

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of our Patron Diana Margaret Maddock, Baroness Maddock, Lady Beith. Her tireless and enthusiastic work for the Anglo-Swedish Society will be honoured by the creation of a scholarship in her name. This is something she agreed to in the last weeks of her life.

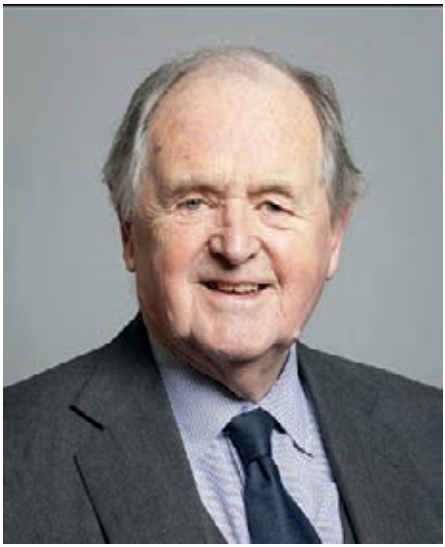
At the time of her death, she was co-chair of the British-Swedish All-Party Parliamentary Group and chair of the Lord Speaker's Advisory Panel on Works of Art. In December 2013, she

**Baroness Maddock (1945-2020)**
Photo: Jannnica Honey

arranged for a choir from Stockholms Musikgymnasium to perform in a traditional Lucia procession at the House of Lords.

We are delighted to announce that The Right Honourable the Lord Beith PC was elected as the new President of the Anglo-Swedish Society at the AGM on Friday 6 November. Lord Beith succeeds his late wife, Baroness Maddock, and has been a great supporter of the Anglo-Swedish Society since their marriage in 2001.

Lord Beith is a Liberal Democrat Life Peer who has sat under this title in the Lords since 2015. He was knighted in 2008. In August 2015 he was made a Life Peer in the 2015 Dissolution Honours list.



**Lord Beith**

**Meetings of the Anglo-Swedish Society**
During the pandemic we have been using Zoom for our meetings. Those that have already taken place are available on YouTube.

• Lecturer and historian Caroline Boggis-Rolfe talked on 'Sweden and the Nordic nations—a Baltic perspective'. (Her book *The Baltic Story* was listed among the new books in CoScan Magazine 2019/2.)

• Professor David Goldsmith and Eric Orlowski gave a joint talk on 'Tea and coffee in Britain and Sweden'.

• Paul Binding, literary critic, novelist, and a renowned expert in Scandinavian literature talked on the work of the Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf (1858-1940)—the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature

• Dr Claire Thomson (UCL) gave a talk on the classic Swedish film 'The Phantom Carriage'(*Körkarlen* in Swedish, literally 'the coachman'). The film is adapted from a 1912 short story by Selma Lagerlöf and is considered to be one of the most important works of silent cinema.

Presentations which are still to come can be accessed by clicking RSVP for the Zoom link on the events page of our website www.angloswedishsociety.org.uk/events.

• 12 January 2021, Christina Cadogan, Director of Cadogan Fine Arts, will give a lecture on how artists in Sweden at the end of the 19th century forged a Nordic identity and celebrated their culture through painting by turning to history, folklore, literature and to the unique Scandinavian landscape and light. Artists discussed will include Carl Larsson, Anders Zorn and the fairytale painter and illustrator John Bauer.

• 3 February, Dr Isabelle Charmantier and Dr Will Beharrell will talk on Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), 'the father of modern taxonomy' and arguably one of the most famous Swedes in history. He was part of a Swedish intellectual renaissance, together with the astronomer and physicist Celsius, the theologian and mystic Swedenborg, the chemist Berzelius, and the musicians Bellman, Berwald, and Crusell.

## News in brief

SUOMEN MERIMIESKIRKKO LONTOO

The Finnish Seamen´s Mission in Great Britain has celebrated its 140th anniversary. The celebration took place in June on Zoom with a few guests, toasts and singing the emotional summer hymn *Suvivirsi*.

SJØMANNSKIRKEN
Norsk kirke i utlandet

Torbjørn Holt has retired after two decades at the Norwegian Seamen's Church in London. A great success of his was the completion of St. Olav's Square in 2017. He has now returned to Oslo in Norway.

DANSK KFUK
DANISH YWCA

Palle Baggesgaard Pedersen has stepped down after 29 years as Manager (*forstander*) at KFUK/YWCA.

In his farewell speech he said, 'There have been many highlights during my years as manager, but what I especially will take with me is meeting with around 18,000 young Danes. These young people have all been positive and helped to keep me young and have been a pleasure to get to know. Many have returned years later, many have introduced their children, and many have become good friends. There is no doubt that KFUK has made a difference!'

Palle is succeeded by Connie Yilmaz Jantzen.

# When Dickens met Andersen…

by Peter Roberts

In 1856, Charles Dickens urged Hans Christian Andersen to visit him in England. 'I love and esteem you more than I could tell you on as much paper as would pave the whole road from here to Copenhagen,' he wrote. 'You will find yourself in a house full of admiring and affectionate friends.' Andersen responded as warmly. 'I am quite full and overcome with joy at the thought of being with you for a short while, being in your house, being one of your circle…'

They had exchanged just a few brief words in London nine years before, and Dickens was now eager to spend more time with a writer he had long admired from a distance.

They had much in common. Despite their humble origins, both had become literary lions. Andersen's fame had been secured with the publication, in the 1840s, of some of his most famous stories, including 'The Little Mermaid', 'The Snow Queen', and 'The Ugly Duckling' (albeit in rather insipid English translations), while in 1856 Dickens was about to publish his twelfth novel, *Little Dorrit*. The writings of both dealt with poverty and injustice, satirised the powerful and the complacent, and embraced a new and sympathetic literary approach to the world of childhood.

On a lovely June day in 1857 Dickens brought Andersen to his new Kentish home, Gad's Hill, and the Dane was warmly welcomed into the family circle. He enjoyed the Dickens's evenings of

**Gad's Hill**

entertainment, entranced the younger children with stories, and amazed his hosts with his skill at creating intricate paper cut-outs. Dickens discussed Danish legends with him; they went together to see *The Messiah* performed at the Crystal Palace, and to see Dickens acting in a melodrama, *The Frozen Deep*, which was also attended by Queen Victoria. When Andersen was distraught over critical reviews of his newly-published novel for adults, *To Be or Not To Be*, Dickens was sympathetic and encouraging.

But the atmosphere at Gad's Hill seems to have soured surprisingly quickly. Andersen could be disconcerting. He seemed socially gauche, clumsy, and self-absorbed. An English acquaintance once noted: 'He was a child according to the ideal of childhood, keenly sensitive, entirely egotistical, innocently vain, the centre of life, interest, concern, and meaning to himself.' On his first morning, he complained that his room was too cold, that no-one had picked up his clothes, and he requested that one of Dickens's sons

shave him—a request that was politely declined. He was also prey to a range of anxieties: so fearful of being trapped in a burning building that he always carried a rope in his luggage for the purpose of escape, so obsessed with the thought of being buried alive that he always left a note by his bed, reading 'I am not dead yet.' (We can only guess at the enormous mental effort a man so beset with anxieties must have needed to engage fully with the world.) According to Dickens, he was so worried about being robbed in London that he tucked his keys and wallet into his shoes and thus crippled himself walking through the city. He frequently got lost ('whenever he got to London, he got himself into wild entanglements of Cabs and Sherry, and never seemed to get out of them', wrote Dickens). He could be impulsively demonstrative in public, and childlike, picking flowers and garlanding unwitting house guests, causing general embarrassment. And to the ebullient Dickens, who was always in a rage of activity, Andersen seemed hapless and chaotic.

A significant difficulty was Andersen's poor command of English. Dickens loved lively conversation and witty repartee, but of course with his limited vocabulary Andersen could manage neither. Dickens's children began to make fun of their visitor behind his back, and he was the butt of cutting remarks from the rest of the family. Dickens's youngest son, Edward, aged five, perhaps picking up on the hostile atmosphere, even threatened to throw him out of the window.

Andersen was sadly conscious of the growing *froideur*. He noted that Dickens's sister-in-law, Georgina, was cold to him, and that he was increasingly ignored by the others. Despite this he did not seem capable of cutting his visit short; indeed, his admiration for Dickens

**H.C. Andersen and Charles Dickens**

led to him extending his initial two-week stay to five.

It seems that Dickens concealed his resentment behind a façade of amiability, and criticised Andersen only in private. But it should be allowed that this was a particularly fraught summer for him, because his long marriage to Catherine was in crisis, and by the autumn he was pressing for a separation. Andersen was aware of the marital tensions at Gad's Hill, on several occasions noting that Catherine had emerged from her sister Georgina's room in tears. In fact, he strongly sympathised with Catherine, whose kindness, serenity, and wisdom reminded him of Agnes Wickfield, the wife of David Copperfield in Dickens's own favourite novel.

As the visit dragged on, Dickens's wealthy friend, Angela Burdett-Coutts, agreed to invite Andersen to stay at her London house for a few days, which allowed them all some respite.

When the day of departure finally came, and Dickens drove him to Maidstone en route to his ship, Andersen could barely withhold his tears. Dickens bade him a gracious farewell from the quayside, and later that autumn wrote him a friendly but emphatically final letter. To Andersen's bewilderment, he never heard from Dickens again. Dickens, as Catherine was to discover, could be as implacable as he was generous and sentimental. On the door of Andersen's room at Gad's Hill Dickens placed a notice: *Hans Andersen slept in this room for five weeks—which to the family seemed AGES.*

These men, two of the century's great writers, ostensibly with much in common, were so incompatible in personality and temperament that a visit which seemed to promise so much, concluded in a permanent estrangement. Characteristically, Dickens would portray it subsequently as a comedy; Andersen would consider it a tragedy of misapprehension.

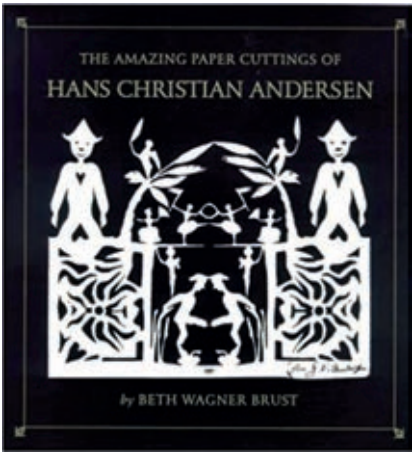
Sources:
Jackie Wullschlager, *Hans Christian Andersen: The Life of a Storyteller* (2000)

Jens Andersen, *Hans Christian Andersen*: *A New Life*, translated by Tina Nunnally (2003)

Jenny Hartley (ed.), *The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens* (2015)

Claire Tomalin: *Charles Dickens: A Life* (2012)

*Peter Roberts is a retired history teacher and writer. His latest play* When Dickens Met Andersen *is scheduled for production at Derby post-pandemic.*




The Amazing Paper Cuttings of Hans Christian Andersen (Reprint, 2003) tells the story of him as an artist, and of how he would make paper cuttings while he was telling a fairy tale, and then give them to the children listening to him.

# Aksel Sandemose – a Pan-Scandinavian writer?

by Steen Andersen

Joseph Conrad, Vladimir Nabokov, Milan Kundera, Joseph Brodsky, and Ágota Kristóf are very different writers, but they have one thing in common: they crossed language boundaries, a trait which is usually mentioned in discussions of their works.

Among exophonic writers in Scandinavia, Karen Blixen (aka Isak Dinesen) holds a special position, as she wrote in both English and Danish, and in fact her first book was published in Great Britain and the USA before she rewrote it in Danish. Aksel Sandemose (1899-1965), born at Nykøbing Mors, Northern Jutland, also adopted a second language in adult life; in many respects Danish and Norwegian are so closely related that switching from one language to the other might seem easy enough, but Sandemose, who was never one to mince words, claimed that his command of Norwegian was due to his having had to learn the language, in contrast to a number of Norwegian authors whose confidence in their writing skills was in his view all too evident.

He published six books in Danish before moving to Norway, his mother's native country, in 1930. His first book written in Norwegian came out in 1931 and today he is considered a Norwegian writer. His Danish books are usually analysed only with regard to themes and settings that later appear in his Norwegian books, and in histories of Danish literature he is seldom mentioned, except in relation to the Nobel Prize winner

**Aksel Sandemose** Wikimedia Commons

Johannes V. Jensen, whose influence on Sandemose's Danish short stories and novels is apparent.

Over the last fifty years Scandinavian scholars have published numerous monographs, anthologies, and articles on his works, with particular emphasis on the novels published between 1933 and 1958, in which psychoanalysis, innovative composition, foreshadowings of autofiction, and exploration of genres are prominent. Since the seventies there have been more than twenty Sandemose seminars in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and a dozen years ago the Aksel Sandemose Society was established

Sandemose's Danish background and his reputation as an important Norwegian writer are common knowledge, so instead I shall focus here on his links with Sweden, which are less obvious and sometimes ignored. However, several

of his novels written in the thirties and forties were translated into Swedish some years before Danish translations were available; some of the first items in his bibliography are contributions to Swedish magazines, translated into Swedish by the editors. Those texts would probably be considered of little interest if Sandemose had not later published the novels that made him famous, but it is worth noting that in one of them, a rather shaky sonnet, Sandemose for the first time introduces what thirty-six years later would become the title and unifying symbol of his novel *Varulven* (The Werewolf); and that in a short story, whose theme is developed a couple of years later in his novel *Ungdomssynd* (The Sin of Youth), the protagonist is called Espen—the name of Sandemose's alter ego in four novels, the best-known of which is *En flyktning krysser sitt spor* (A Fugitive Crosses his Tracks), where he formulated *Janteloven*, the Law of Jante ('Thou shalt not believe that thou art worth anything'). This law is known all over Scandinavia; however, these days very few people are aware that Sandemose formulated it.

In October 1941 Sandemose fled from Norway and spent almost four miserable years in Sweden. He contributed about eighty short stories and articles to Swedish magazines and newspapers, including thirty texts which had previously been published. Some were printed in Norwegian, others were translated into Swedish, most of them by Cilla Johnson, married to the novelist Eyvind Johnson.

In 1944 Sandemose completed what is generally regarded as his best novel, *Det svundne er en drøm* (The Past is a Dream), whose title is a quotation from the Swedish poet Dan Andersson: *Det gångna är en dröm*. Publication in Norway was out of the question, not least because of passages dealing with the German occupation and Nazism, but Cilla Johnson translated the manuscript into Swedish. Many years later she said that translating Sandemose's books was relatively easy, whereas his spoken language was a perplexing mixture of Danish and Norwegian.

The Swedish edition was for two years the only one available; a Danish translation was published in 1946, a few months before the Norwegian edition. A comparison reveals a few differences between the three versions; Sandemose claimed that he simply considered a published text a draft, and there are numerous examples of revisions and adjustments, sometimes quite radical. He also handled autobiographical details in a rather offhand manner, for example with regard to his escape from Norway in 1941, which over the years spawned versions that became increasingly dramatic, and it is no wonder that he was fond of Goethe's dictum *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.

During the last dozen years of Sandemose's life Swedish and Danish translations were published more or less at the same time as the Norwegian editions. In addition to his regular columns in Norwegian papers and weeklies he contributed fairly often to Swedish and Danish magazines.

Six books in Danish and two dozen in Norwegian, most of them translated into

Danish and Swedish, appeared in his lifetime, as did translations into English, French, German, Finnish, and Polish. This, in Sandemose's own opinion—he was never one to mince words—was a fitting acknowledgement that he was a ground-breaking author deserving of the Nobel Prize, awarded by the Swedish Academy. He was nominated several times and came close in 1963 when he was among the final six candidates, the others being W. H. Auden, Pablo Neruda, Samuel Beckett, Yukio Mishima, and Giorgios Seferis who was awarded the prize. Illness, alcoholism, depression, and personal problems put a stop to Sandemose's plans to write two more novels about the characters portrayed in *Varulven*, one of them set in Stockholm. Perhaps the Swedish Academy would have been more inclined to pay tribute to him if he had been able to fulfil his ambitions regarding the trilogy.


**The rules of *Janteloven*, on the house where Sandemose was born**

*Steen Andersen is a retired secondary school teacher of English and Danish. In addition to a monograph on Aksel Sandemose (*Nye forbindelser; *2015), he has published a dozen articles on Sandemose in anthologies and journals.*

# Anna of Denmark
## Queen of Scotland and England Part 1

by Margot Blanchard

Anna, Queen consort of James VI and I, has been trivialised by historians as an irrelevance. It was only in 2001 that a re-evaluation was undertaken by Leeds Barroll demonstrating her influence on the culture and politics in her time.

Anna came with considerable prestige, the daughter of the powerful and wealthy King Frederik II and Queen Sophie of Denmark, and sister of the future King Christian IV.

On 28 August 1589, at the age of fourteen, she was married by proxy to King James VI of Scotland at Kronborg Castle in Denmark, with the Scottish Earl Marischal standing in (or lying in—he

had to lie on her bed with her as part of the ritual) for James.

In preparation for her wedding in Scotland, five hundred tailors and embroiderers had been working on her trousseau for three months, while Anna herself embroidered shirts for James. A silver coach was built for her triumphal entry to Scotland, and a fleet of 12 ships was prepared for her and her entourage.

The fleet set sail from Kronborg on 5 September. A violent storm blew up and about half of the ships were lost. One ship sank in the Firth of Forth, killing all 40 people on board. Anna's ship was blown onto the coast of Norway, then part of Denmark. After an arduous overland journey Anna and her party arrived in Oslo. Lord Dingwall managed to land in Leith and informed James of these events and James, after fasting and prayers, writing love poetry and sending out a search party, decided to fetch her himself. He set off on 21 October with a three-hundred-strong retinue and arrived in Oslo on 19 November, travelling partly by land. The story goes that he presented himself 'boots and all' and gave her a hearty kiss on the mouth, scandalising the Danish Court.

They were formally married on 23 November at the Old Bishop's Palace in Oslo. A month of celebrations followed and they finally arrived at Kronborg on 22 December. In March 1590 they moved on to Copenhagen for the wedding of Anna's sister Elizabeth, then sailed for Leith, arriving on 1 May 1590.

From the outset Anna maintained links with Denmark. She had brought an entourage of Danish servants and courtiers, and she gave them matching outfits made by her Danish tailor Pål Rei.

In both Denmark and Scotland there was a genuine belief in the power of witches, and James was convinced that his enemies had caused the witches to raise storms for Anna's crossing, and witch hunts began in Denmark and Berwick. At least seventy people, mostly women, were tortured, strangled or burned. Alice Sampson, under torture, confessed to sailing to sea in a sieve to create a storm and Shakespeare later used her 'confession' in *MacBeth* (Act 1, Scene III).

A bonfire of another kind was lit on Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh when the royal couple landed at Leith, welcomed by crowds of people. They travelled in procession to Edinburgh on 6 May, Anna riding in her silver coach shipped from Denmark, decorated with cloth of gold and purple velvet.

Anna was crowned Queen of Scotland in a seven-hour ceremony on 17 May in Holyrood Abbey, and on 19 May the 'Entry' to Edinburgh took place. It was a magnificent procession. A globe was lowered onto the coach from the West Port, which opened up to reveal a boy dressed in red and white who gave her a bible, a key to the city, and a jewel. Fifty people walked before the coach, some with blackened faces and arms to represent Moors, all in honour of the queen. Their leader was an African man who was a member of Anna's household. Many performances were staged en route. On their return journey the 'Moors' tied bronze bells to their legs and began to dance.

Scotland was not an easy country to rule. There was feuding among the aristocracy, there were plots and counterplots. As Queen, Anna soon made her presence felt. She aligned herself with powerful nobles to assist her friends—and deal with her enemies—notably the chancellor, John Maitland, who had offended her. Interventions by Queen Elizabeth and James were of no avail, and they were not reconciled until 1593, when Maitland gave up some claims to lands which were part of her settlement. Anna had not yet turned nineteen.

In 1594 Anna gave birth to a son, Henry. This child was to become a bone of contention between the couple for the next ten years. It was the custom for royal children to be sent to (or guarded by) trusted nobles or family members. Anna, on the other hand, had been brought up by her own family. Queen Sophie had involved herself in the raising of her children, and it was what Anna expected to do. James, however, insisted that Henry be brought up by the Earl of Mar in the heavily fortified Stirling Castle. Years of arguments ensued—until Queen Elizabeth died and James was proclaimed King of England in 1603.

**Anna of Denmark**
Oil painting by John de Critz, the Elder

Anna saw her chance as the Earl of Mar was accompanying James to London. She travelled to Stirling with a small army of nobles and men-at-arms, but was allowed only two attendants in the castle. She flew into a rage which caused a miscarriage, and refused to travel to London without Henry. Finally James gave in and Anna travelled south with Henry, and seven-year-old Elizabeth.

James had sent a group of ladies to Scotland to act as her retinue, but another group overtook them and met Anna in Scotland. She chose for herself which ladies to surround herself with, and together with Anna they proved to be highly influential patrons of playwrights, poets, musicians, and artists.

Sources:
Barroll, Leeds, *Anna of Denmark, Queen of England, A Cultural Biography* (2001)

McManus, Clare, W*omen on the Renaissance Stage, Anna of Denmark and Female Masquing in the Stuart Court 1590-1619* (2002)

Griffith, Eva, *A Jacobean Company and its Playhouse* (2013)

*Margot Blanchard is a member of York Anglo-Scandinavian Society.*

# Jenny Lind, on the 200th anniversary of her birth

by Brita Green

Jenny Lind was born on 3 October 1820 to an unmarried mother. Her parents married when she was 14. Her grandmother once witnessed how the little three-year old, having heard a military band pass their house, toddled over to the piano and picked out the tune she had just heard: 'Mark my words,' said the grandmother, 'that child will bring you help.'

When Jenny was nine, someone heard her sing at an open window, and that led to her being offered a place—at the Government's expense—to study acting, ballet and opera at the Royal Theatre. All through her years of study, she acted in plays, and when she was 17 the Theatre officially engaged her, with a salary of £60 a year. The following year she made her debut as an operatic soprano. She immediately won the audience over, and said, 'I got up that morning one creature and I went to bed another, for I had found my vocation'. Her success took her into Stockholm's cultural circles, and she was befriended by writers, musicians and members of the royal family.

During the summer of 1840 she undertook a tour of Sweden to raise money for a year's study in Paris. But—as she would continue to do throughout her career—she gave some of her takings to help a person in need, 'a poor, sick painter'. After a concert in Uppsala, a local paper wrote: 'In addition to Nature's beautiful singing birds, there came... a nobler nightingale, the famous Jenny Lind'.

During the decade 1842-52, Jenny conquered Europe and America with her appearances in opera and concerts, at first in Copenhagen and Finland, then in Berlin, Frankfurt, Dresden, Leipzig, Munich, Vienna, London and many other English cities. Here too she mingled with the great and the good (Chopin, the Duke of Wellington...), and was appointed court singer in Sweden, Prussia and Austria. Wherever she went critics, fellow musicians and royalty praised her: 'I have never before met so clear an understanding of music and text at first sight' (Robert Schumann), 'Jenny Lind was absolute perfection' (Queen Victoria).

Her tour of America (1850-52) was organised by the famous impresario P.T. Barnum, who made sure she had plenty


**A Barnum poster**

of publicity. In New York her audience numbered 7000, and in Washington she was invited to the White House. Barnum's terms were generous: £200 per scheduled appearance (with the option to give extra benefit concerts) plus an equal share of the profits. All expenses were to be paid, including those of a companion, a secretary, a maid and a man-servant. The tour left her financially secure for the rest of her life. She was greeted with enthusiasm by audiences for her singing and acting, and for her generosity to charity.

Jenny had inherited a quick temper, and could burst into fits of rage like other prima donnas, but she was inherently a shy person, often nervous before first appearances and embarrassed by the star treatment and the hype. Medals were struck, and there were Jenny Lind gloves and bonnets, chairs and pianos. A London theatre manager described a scene of virtual Beatlemania: 'the struggle for entrance was violent beyond precedent—so violent indeed that the phrase "a Jenny Lind crush" became a proverbial expression'. In Baltimore, she accidentally dropped a shawl from her balcony, and the crowd tore it to shreds for souvenirs. In Hamburg and elsewhere, her horses were unharnessed and the crowd pulled her carriage.


**Token issued c. 1850 for her US tour**
Wikimedia Commons

Jenny could be playful and fun, but she was also resourceful and determined. She freed herself from her father's guardianship, and from 1843 engaged a judge as her official guardian and financial adviser. A French tenor who worked with her wrote that 'her great strength... is that she believes in herself, she values herself, and behaves like a saint... Also she remains cool and sensible in private life, does not allow her heart to be inflamed by the burning passions she kindles in the theatre'.

She loved her art, but she also longed for human love and family life, and a home. She was engaged twice and broke off the engagements. She was attracted to two married men—most deeply Felix Mendelssohn—but she would never contemplate breaking up a marriage. Hans Christian Andersen was famously in love with her, but his feelings were not reciprocated. The man she eventually shared the last 35 years of her life with was a German pianist, Otto Goldschmidt, nine years her junior, who as a 16-year-old had fallen in love with her when he'd heard her sing in Leipzig. They had met again a few times, and Jenny sent for him when she needed a pianist on the American tour.

In a letter she wrote, '[Otto] is next to Mendelssohn the most outstanding

**Wedding protrait**

musician I have ever come across... He is a human being, the finest, noblest I have met.' The difference in age troubled her initially, but they were married in February 1852 in Boston. Back in Europe, they settled in Dresden, and had a son and a daughter. They remained practising musicians, going on tours in both Germany and Britain. After a concert in aid of a fund for training nurses, Florence Nightingale (who was also born in 1820) presented Jenny with a locket as a thank you.

In 1858, the couple decided to move to England and built a house in Wimbledon, where a second son was born. They visited Sweden a few times. Jenny's last public performance was in 1870, when she sang the soprano part in Otto's oratorio *Ruth*. She was appointed the first professor of singing at the new Royal College of Music.

In the early 1880s they also bought a house near Malvern as a summer residence. Jenny died there in November 1887 in the arms of her daughter, and it is in Great Malvern Cemetery that she is buried, under a monument of Swedish granite. Otto, a respected pianist, conductor and composer, survived her by twenty years.

Main source: Sarah Jenny Dunsmure (Jenny's great great granddaughter), *Jenny Lind: The story of the Swedish nightingale* (2015)

Examples of 'Lindmania' can be found on Youtube.


**Marble monument on the wall of the south transept of Westminster Abbey**

# Pippi and the Moomins

by Richard W. Orange

In February 1944, Russian bombs smashed the windows of Tove Jansson's art studio in Helsinki. She was so depressed that she had been unable to paint for a year, and despaired that war was 'making us smaller. People don't have the strength to be grand if a war goes on for a long time.'

Some 250 miles away across the Baltic, another woman was documenting the same bombardment from the safety of her flat in Stockholm. 'About 200 Russian planes had carried out a bombing raid on Helsinki,' wrote Astrid Lindgren in her war scrapbook. 'It's awful to contemplate the fate of Finland.'

Aside from a seven-year age difference, the two had much in common: both had cut their hair short in their late teens and early 20s, and had worn trousers and neckties—the style of radical women in the age of jazz. Both were committed anti-Fascists.

What matters most is that both began working on books for children. In November 1945, Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking—with her bright-orange horizontal pigtails, freckles, odd-coloured stockings, back-to-front logic and superhuman strength—burst upon the world. A month later, Jansson's gentle, enigmatic and adventurous Moomin family—with their small, kind eyes and strange hippo-like bodies—gingerly embarked on the first of their many quests.

Both authors were deeply marked by the experience of totalitarianism and violence in the Second World War. And both sought, in various subtle and not-so-subtle ways, to inoculate future generations against the conformity and power-worship that had made this human catastrophe possible.

As these books celebrate their 75th anniversary, they still dominate children's literature in their home countries of Sweden and Finland, and are about to be introduced to a new generation. Heyday Films, the makers of the Paddington and Harry Potter movies, plans to remake Pippi, while the Swedish animation company Cinematic is remaking *Comet in Moominland*. With the world riven by pandemic, a looming environmental crisis and populist politicians who stir up division and hatred, these messages of freedom, kindness and tolerance are as necessary as ever.

'It was the utterly hellish war years that made me, an artist, write fairy-tales,' Jansson told an interviewer. 'I was feeling sad and scared of bombs and wanted to get away from gloomy thoughts.'

But for someone trying to escape the war, she brought an awful lot of it with her. The first time we meet young Moomintroll and his Moominmamma they are refugees, crossing a strange and threatening landscape in search of shelter. Moominpappa, meanwhile, is absent, as fathers often were during the

war. In the space of just a few pages, the Moomins brave a dark wood at dusk, a strange mist, and a swamp filled with underwater creatures. As terrifying as all this is, we encounter it in a childlike world where, however bad things get, mother is able to make them right. There is also a strong sense that the horror of war will make way for a better world. When the waters recede, Moomintroll and Moominmamma discover that the deluge has created the lush Moominvalley.

If echoes of war are everywhere in the first two Moomin books, they are absent from the Pippi Longstocking books. It is Pippi herself, the antithesis of a totalitarian leader, who is Lindgren's response to the war. During the war years, Lindgren had been horrified by the power amassed by someone as unsuited to it as Hitler. Her satire is at its clearest when Pippi takes on the circus strongman Mighty Adolf, leaving him to slink away humiliated. She also takes on bullies and the drunken town thug who threatens a hotdog seller.

Surveying other children's books published in Sweden in 1945, Ulla Lundqvist concludes that 'the protagonist is pretty much universally a practical, well-groomed, obedient, and often God-fearing child.' The thrill of Pippi is how all this is turned around. She sleeps with her feet on the pillow, she rolls out cookie dough on the kitchen floor. She stays up late into the night tending her garden. She is a virtuoso liar, spinning tall and inventive tales about the peoples she has encountered in far-flung lands.

When she drops in on a school class for a day, and the teacher asks her what five plus seven is, Pippi retorts: 'If you don't know that yourself, you needn't think I'm going to tell you.' When Pippi's friend Annika wonders why she has to eat her porridge, Pippi responds: 'Of course you must eat your lovely porridge. If you don't, you won't grow big and strong. And if you don't grow big and strong, you won't be able to make your children eat their lovely porridge.'

The Pippi books constantly kick against the Social Democratic state ethos, and instead promote an anarchic individualism. But Lindgren also had a deeper purpose. 'I would like my story to spark in at least one child's soul a lifelong disdain for the worst species there is: people of power who mean ill,' she said.

On the face of it, the Moomins are as conventional as Pippi is subversive. Pippi lives alone, without parents, whereas the gentle Moomintrolls' adventures always end with a return to Moominmamma, in a world where love and mutual toleration reign.

The Moomins and their entourage are based in part on Jansson's own bohemian family. In the same way that love allows families to overlook their members' less appealing traits, the extended Moomin family tolerates everyone. Jansson's family was every bit as divided as many are today. Her father was an enthusiastic supporter of Nazi Germany. Meanwhile, Tove and her mother were earning money drawing illustrations for an anti-Nazi, left-wing magazine.

Both Jansson and Lindgren were ahead of their time—particularly in terms of gender. In today's world, where too many women and girls are made to feel bad about their appearance, Pippi loves the way she looks. Seeing an advert in the window of a pharmacy asking: 'Do you suffer from freckles?' she storms in and confronts the woman at the counter. 'I don't suffer from freckles,' says Pippi, 'I love them.'

The Moomins certainly appear to be more conventional. But in fact Jansson has delivered a feminist critique, reflecting anger at the position of her own mother in relation to her father. Moominmamma is always baking, cleaning, decorating and comforting, whilst Moominpappa indulges his every whim.

It is in their depiction of gender fluidity that the Moomin stories are most radical. Jansson herself had relationships with both men and women before finally settling with a female partner. In her third book in the series, published in 1948, the identical Thingumy and Bob are inseparable. They have a secret language and hide the King's Ruby, which symbolises their love, in a suitcase. This protest against the social censure and illegality of homosexuality went completely over the heads of Jansson's young readers, and was missed (or perhaps just politely passed over) by her adult reviewers. I can think of no other children's writer who, as early as the late 1940s, touched on such matters.

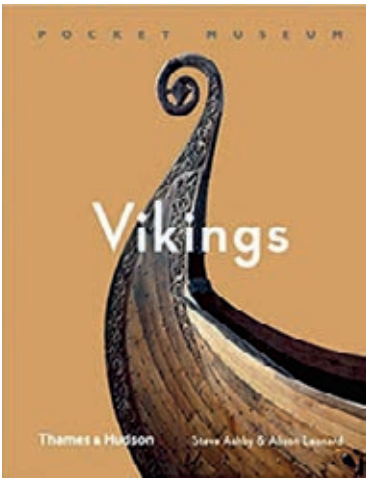
Pippi and the Moomins remind us that madcap humour and imaginative storytelling can convey humanistic ideas at least as powerfully as a more literal approach. But perhaps their most important message is that, however bad things get, it is always possible to imagine the world anew.

This is a shortened version of an article that first appeared in the digital magazine *Aeon*, Oct. 2020. (The illustrations here are not from that article but are free images from the web.)

*Richard W. Orange is a British freelance journalist based in Sweden, whose work has appeared in publications including* The Telegraph, The Observer and Prospect magazine. *He lives in Malmö.*

Aeon *is a registered charity committed to the spread of knowledge and a cosmopolitan world-view, with a mission to create an online sanctuary for serious thinking.*

# From the bookshelf




Review by Katherine Holman

Steve Ashby and Alison Leonard,
*Pocket Museum: Vikings*
Published by Thames & Hudson
London, 2018
ISBN-978-0-500-05206-8

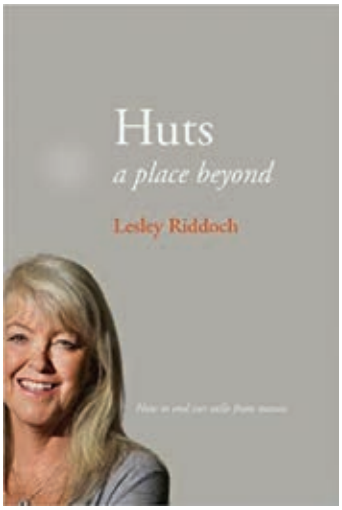
This small but lavishly illustrated volume is a collection of almost 200 artefacts from across the Viking world. The artefacts have been chosen carefully to demonstrate the vast extent of the Viking world, with objects from museums across Scandinavia, Europe, the North Atlantic and North America, but also to illustrate the lifestyles of those living in the Viking world. As the authors point out in the introduction, 'artefacts rarely inform us about the actions of powerful individuals or the currents of political change […] instead, they tell us about the rhythms of everyday life' (p. 7).

The sheer range of objects, as well as the good quality colour images, makes this a wonderful book to leaf through, and it seems that the reader comes across something new each time. Each object is clearly photographed and accompanied by a short explanatory text. The ordering of the artefacts is roughly chronological, with the finds grouped under three main periods: c.550-899 AD, 900-999 AD, and c.1000-1500 AD; each of these sections is preceded by a brief but helpful summary of some key developments to set the objects in a wider historical and archaeological context: 'Beginnings', 'Town and Trade', and 'Conquest and Conversion'. This longer time frame, rather than the conventional limits imposed on the Viking Age (c.800-1100), serves to illustrate how material culture may often show continuities with the past that are less clear in historical accounts. Nevertheless, the majority of objects do date to between the eighth and twelfth centuries, with some early exceptions such as the helmet and sword from Välsgärde, eastern Sweden (pp. 46-7), and household objects from the Norse settlements in Greenland which may date from as late as the fourteenth century (pp. 216-17).

While some of the most famous finds, such as the Oseberg and Gokstad ships (on pages 62 and 70 respectively), are necessarily included, there are other less well-known, but nonetheless fascinating, objects. For example, the copper flask, probably made somewhere near present-day Iran and Iraq, which was found in a grave in Östergötland, Sweden (pp. 176-77); the amber figurine, shaped like

a baby, found in the Viking-Age town of Hedeby on the Baltic (in present-day Germany) (p. 201); and the clay paw buried in a grave on Åland, Finland (p. 67). Certainly, there are plenty of high-value objects of exquisite craftsmanship here, including hoards of precious gold and silver objects, but these are accompanied by more mundane, everyday objects, such as the loaves of bread that were found in graves at Birka in eastern Sweden (p. 72); incised footprints on one of the timbers of the Gokstad ship, perhaps 'carved in a bored moment' by members of the crew, which were only discovered in 2009 (p.25); alongside a knitted sock and 'the world's best-known piece of human waste' from York (pp. 106, 29 respectively). This combination reminds us of the diverse nature of Viking-Age society across time and space.

With a helpful glossary, index, and list of the museums where the individual objects can be found, *Pocket Museum: Vikings* provides an unconventional but illuminating window on the Viking Age that is highly recommended. In view of current restrictions on travel and museum opening, the opportunity to browse this collection is especially appreciated.




Lesley Riddoch, *Huts— a place beyond*
Published by Luath Press Ltd,
Edinburgh, 17 Aug 2020
ISBN-978-1-913-02563-2

Why does most of Northern Europe have family-owned, wooden, weekend huts, while Scots generally don't? That question has bothered Lesley Riddoch, since she joined the eccentric few to rent a stone bothy 1200 feet up an Aberdeenshire hill in the 1990s. She has spent a decade exploring the *hytte*, *sommerhus*, *stuga* and traditions of the Nordic countries. After completing her PhD, Riddoch has just published a book that principally compares Norway's and Scotland's hutting traditions, taking a canter through the history of landownership, democracy, cultural identity and forest management along the way.

In some respects, Scotland and Norway are much alike. But nothing sets the two northern neighbours further apart than the way they use leisure time. Every weekend most Norwegians go to their hut or cabin. Most Scots do not. The book tries to explain why, what Scots are missing and why it matters.

The hut offers a place where folk really meet, relax and reconnect with nature, families and themselves—the natural, outdoorsy, adventure-focused location for leisure instead of the pub, competitive sportsgrounds and commercial shopping malls. The place that is there for you 24/7 without the need for deposits, booking conditions, sky-high weekly rentals, epic forward planning and stress. The place to collect berries, spot squirrels, chop and stack wood, go swimming and immerse yourself in the passing seasons. The place to do your own repairs and make your own mistakes. The chance to immerse yourself in the surroundings that offer real release from the working week and the constraints of city life. Huts—a place beyond your normal life.

Signed copies of *Huts, a place beyond* are available via https://lesleyriddoch.com/shop-mobile/huts-a-place-beyond. You can listen to Lesley Riddoch explaining about the book on https://lesleyriddoch.com/2-uncategorised/523-huts, and taster of the book can be found on https://issuu.com.

*Lesley Riddoch is a journalist and director of Nordic Horizons (until recently a member of CoScan) which aims to connect Scotland more closely with its nearest neighbours.*

## Scandinavian/Nordic

Annika Lindskog, Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen (editors), *Introduction to Nordic Cultures* Published by UCL Press, April 2020

An innovative, interdisciplinary introduction to Nordic history, cultures and societies from medieval times to today.

## Danish

Peter Munk Christiansen, Jørgen Elklit, Peter Nedergaard (editors), *The Oxford Handbook of Danish Politics,* Published by Oxford University Press, July 2020

A comprehensive and thorough book on Danish politics with contributions from 50 leading experts.

Tine Høeg, *New Passengers,* translated by Misha Hoekstra Published by Lolli Editions, Sept 2020

A young woman meets a married man at the railway station, and they begin a furtive affair. The book, a fiction debut in a minimalist style, has been given an English PEN award.


Amalie Smith, *Marble,* translated by Jennifer Russell Published by Lolli Editions, Nov 2020

The author intertwines the story and discoveries of the book's heroine Marble with those of the pioneering sculptor Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen, who lived and worked 110 years earlier.

Olga Ravn, *The Employees: A workplace novel of the 22nd century,* translated by Martin Aitken, Published by Lolli Editions, Oct 2020

A ship takes on a number of strange objects from the planet New Discovery, in the near-distant future, millions of kilometres from Earth.

## Finnish


Danny Dorling, Annika Koljonen, *Finntopia: What We Can Learn from the World's Happiest Country,* Published by Agenda Publishing Ltd (Newcastle), Sept 2020

The 2019 World Happiness Report ranked Finland, for the second year running, as the world's happiest country. The authors search for some reasons for this and explore what we might learn from the Finnish success.

## Icelandic


Einar Kárason, *Storm Birds,* translated by Quentin Bates Paperback published by Quercus Publishing, Sept 2020

In February 1959, several Icelandic trawlers were caught in a storm off Newfoundland's Grand Banks. What happened there is the inspiration for this novel.


Ragnar Jónasson, *The Mist: Hidden Iceland Series, Book Three,* translated by Victoria Cribb, Published by Penguin Books Ltd, 30 April 2020

The final volume in Jonasson's *Hidden Iceland* trilogy about the troubled female detective Hulda Hermannsdottir.

## Norwegian


Jo Nesbø, *The Kingdom,*
translated by Robert Ferguson
Published by Penguin Books Ltd,
Sept 2020

A tense and atmospheric thriller about two brothers bound together by dark secrets. (More about Nesbø on p. 2 )


Anne Holt,
*A Necessary Death,*
translated by Anne Bruce
Published by Atlantic Books,
Nov 2020

The second book in the new Selma Falck series, from (in Jo Nesbø's words) 'the godmother of modern Norwegian crime fiction'.

## Swedish


Mikael Niemi, *To Cook a Bear,*
translated by Deborah Bragan-Turner
Published by Maclehose Press,
London, Sept 2020

A murder mystery from 1852, and a compelling study of a dangerously inward-looking community in Sweden's far north.


Jacob Sundberg, *We'll Call You,*
translated by Duncan J. Lewis
Published by Nordisk Books,
Nov 2020

In nine short tales of job interviews, this book reveals many different aspects of modern society, often with pitiless humour and with an eye for the absurd in human relations.


Linda Boström Knausgaard,
*Helios Disaster,* translated by
Rachel Willson-Broyles
Paperback published by World
Editions Ltd, April 2020

A contemporary mythical tale in which a father gives birth to a twelve-year-old girl, splitting his head open in the process.

For further reading of recent Swedish literature, go to https://swedishbookreview.org.
SELTA promotes the publication of Swedish and Finland-Swedish literature in English and represents the interests of those involved in its translation: www.selta.org.uk

# Summer school for manuscript studies

by Nikolaus Frenzel

This has not been my first trip to Denmark. My love for the country began in 2014 when I undertook a Scout Association award which involved hiking around a foreign country. Since then, I have developed a keen interest in the Viking world, born from Bernard Cornwell's *Last Kingdom* book series. I just loved reading about the Danes and Vikings of this semi-historical fantasy, and I was constantly reflecting with pleasure on the fact that I had seen where they had come from. So, when I found out I could return to this amazing country for the sole purpose of studying old manuscripts I became incredibly excited.

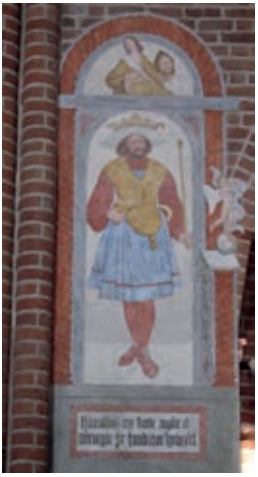
I embarked on the summer course in preparation for an MA in Viking Studies which I would go on to study at the University of Nottingham just a few months later. It was a great motivator to dig deep into a study of Old Norse, which I am currently studying as part of my degree, a language with which I had no familiarity whatsoever before. The Arnamagnæan Institute at the University of Copenhagen is home to a number of manuscripts which were originally collected by the 18th century scholar Árni Magnússon. The summer school, which is offered every year by the Institute (and which alternates between Reykjavik and Copenhagen), has presented a fantastic opportunity for me and other students of the medieval period to receive hands-on experience with manuscripts. It is an amazing feeling to walk into the many

lectures and workshops given every day and to be with so many different students and academics who share the same enthusiasm for the past as myself. Moreover, it is not every day that one is able to come into physical contact with manuscripts and be allowed to flick (very carefully) through them as one would flick through a book. It is a very exciting experience, and it has given me a perception of the medieval world which now seems far more real to me than before—so different from just learning from a book.

When my flight landed in Copenhagen, I went straight to the YMCA hostel where I would be staying for the next seventeen nights and where I was to meet a multitude of new friends (who I still months later talk to on a regular basis). I figured that I ought to stay for longer than the duration of my course in order to explore the city, and what an amazing city it is. It is rich in history and character, from palaces to canals.

As part of the summer course, I got the opportunity to go on a field trip which involved taking a coach across the Øresund Bridge to see the Swedish city of Lund. There we were given a tour of the cathedral by our lecturers, during which we were pointed towards a set of intricately and carefully carved runes on one of the pillars close to the entrance:

In addition to the trip to Lund, I felt that I ought to visit Roskilde since it was only a short train ride away from Copenhagen. I wanted to see the historic graves of the Danish kings, and had the pleasure of seeing the graves of Harald Bluetooth and Sweyn Forkbeard.



**King Harald Bluetooth is inside the wall**

It dawned on me that I had now been to the two Cathedrals which house the graves of the kings of the Second Viking Age in England: Sweyn Forkbeard in Roskilde and his son Cnut whose remains are in the Cathedral at Winchester, the city where I completed my undergraduate degree. It felt amazing to have come across these two kings, father and son, as a result of the progress of my studies. After the Cathedral in Roskilde, I made my way over to the Viking Ship Museum, which contains the Skuldelev ships which were discovered and excavated in the bay at Roskilde. To be able to see some genuine Viking ships was a real pleasure, and one which I hope I will be able to repeat in the future.

My time in Denmark was a fantastic experience. I did not want to come home (my parents joked that they were surprised I did not stay). It was an experience filled with cathedrals, palaces and manuscripts. After more than two whole weeks of being immersed in Scandinavian history and heritage, I have come out of it well prepared for my master's degree and with plenty of new friends. My thanks go to CoScan for helping to fund the venture and to Dr Karl Christian Alvestad for suggesting the course to me.

**With one of the Skuldelev ships at the Viking Ship Museum, Roskilde**

# A more relaxed approach to healthcare

by Rhodri Thomas

In May 2019 I was fortunate to be given the chance to undertake a four-week placement at The Hans Christian Andersen Paediatric Department at Odense University Hospital (OUH). As part of our penultimate year of medical school at the University of Birmingham we undertake an elective, a month-long period anywhere in the world in a medical speciality of our choosing.

Having previously visited Copenhagen and knowing the international regard in which the Danish health system is held, I was keen to observe clinical practice within Denmark. After sending numerous enquiries I was lucky enough to be put in touch with a clinician at OUH who had previously worked at Birmingham Children's Hospital and who was happy to supervise me. For me this opportunity was invaluable. Not only did it allay my fears that there would be a significant language barrier during the placement but, more significantly, it would allow me to work alongside somebody who had worked within both the NHS and the Danish Healthcare systems. For me this was one of the main draws to working abroad: the opportunity to compare how things are done differently, and what we can learn from others.

Arriving at my AirBnB I was nervous, but I was immediately struck by the hospitality of my host. Despite being a political correspondent in the midst of a General Election he took the time to recommend places to eat or visit, and took a genuine interest in what I was doing. We shared many a conversation about Brexit (typically over a beer) and its implications for students who might wish to follow in my footsteps. It was clear to me that most Danes politely disagreed with our decision to leave the EU.


On my first day of placement I was immediately struck by the laid-back approach taken by staff. Keen to make a good first impression, I had arrived in a smart shirt and polished shoes, only for someone to quip that I must be the smartest dressed clinician in the hospital, and that hospital issue scrubs were far comfier! This was replicated throughout the day, with doctors and nurses alike seeming far less stressed than their counterparts in the NHS. One reason for this might be the fact that breaks (with coffee!) for relaxation and informal discussion of cases were scheduled into clinic lists and ward work. This is not something I have ever seen formally

incorporated in the NHS. In my opinion it appeared to translate into a more cohesive and relaxed working environment, with staff morale appearing to benefit directly as a result.

Junior doctors and medical students appeared to have more responsibility than their counterparts back in the UK, with students especially having more hands-on roles in patient care, whilst our role in the UK is by tradition more observational. Whilst this is something that I initially found very daunting it appears to be something that Danish students have ingrained in them from very early on, and it makes for a more natural transition upon graduation. Perhaps this is a result of the 'defensive medicine' that is sometimes practised in the UK, with fear of litigation limiting the number of decisions that are not consultant-led.

I was fortunate to have been given a timetable that would allow me to see multiple areas of paediatrics, from general paediatric wards to complex paediatric neurology clinics. Whilst consultations would typically be carried out in Danish and subsequently translated for me, I was surprised at how much I could pick up, maybe as a result of the hours of Duolingo I had put in before my trip. The language barrier, while it was something I expected, was my one frustration throughout the placement as it limited my ability to work independently. Despite this, all the clinicians I shadowed were enthusiastic in their teaching. They gave me a brilliant introduction to paediatrics and have inspired me to continue to follow my interest in the speciality. As a result of my placement, I have also been invited to write up a case

**Odense old town**

report for publication in an international research journal describing a patient who had a combination of conditions not previously described.

Outside of hospital I spent a great deal of time exploring Odense by bike, and was blown away by the cycling infrastructure, which made me feel completely safe despite cycling on the other side of the road! Being a very active person, I enjoyed the vast amount of green space that could be accessed easily by bike, as well as the number of outdoor or open-water swimming pools. I also had the chance to regularly wander through Odense's old town, a charming network of cobbled streets, and the birthplace of Hans Christian Andersen.

Reflecting on my time in Denmark I feel I was able to learn a great deal, not only about paediatrics but also about how healthcare systems can operate very differently, even in two developed western nations. I enjoyed the more relaxed attitudes to healthcare, and the more active lifestyle. I certainly plan on returning, whether in a working capacity or not remains to be seen. I have made friends who I plan to stay in contact with, and am proud to be continuing to work with clinicians at OUH with the hope of publishing our research paper in the summer.

# Land of forests and lakes

by Lidia Shafik

Following a long, and unfortunately indirect, flight from Dublin to Helsinki and a two-and-a-half-hour bus ride from Helsinki airport to Tampere bus station, I was finally greeted by my first Finn. Having gone on my exchange as part of the Medical Students' Association in Ireland (AMSI), I was linked with medical student members of the equivalent society in Finland (FIMSIC), who made every effort to make me feel welcome and at home. Despite the unfortunate hour of my arrival (3 am) in Tampere, this lovely student greeted me with warmth and hospitality and showed me to my beautiful apartment pre-arranged by the FIMSIC society.

Despite the constant daylight, I surprisingly fell into a deep sleep upon my arrival at the apartment, as a result of utter exhaustion. And it is lucky I did, because little did I know that I would need all the energy I could muster that Friday morning, to last me an eventful weekend. Before I could even open my suitcase, I received a text from the other medical students of the FIMSIC society, inviting me to join them on a sailing trip around the islands of lake Saimaa to celebrate the famous Midsummer Festival. Before I knew it, I was learning to sail and looking out into the blue and endless horizons of the largest lake in Finland, passing numerous islands until

we arrived at our chosen Ristisaari. This was the authentic Finnish experience to me—sailing, saunas, lake swimming, barbecuing and bonfires—everything encompassing the essence of relaxation, and in the beautiful outdoors of Finland's exquisite landscapes. Moreover, I could not have been happier, having the company of the kind-hearted, amiable and entertaining group I was with, who had invited a complete stranger from Ireland to commemorate this annual occasion with them ... the right way!

Throughout my elective experience at the hospital, the kindness of the Finns was displayed to me again and again. Doctors, nurses and medical students alike took the time to translate for me the cases I was seeing and the conversations going on around me. Patients, too, took an interest in asking me where I was from and conversing with me to the best of their abilities. Best of all, I found comfort in knowing that there was a whole nation of people who were far more addicted to coffee than even I was! Their intake of 6-8 cups a day surely eased my feeling of guilt, or perhaps it fuelled my own coffee addiction.

During the rest of my month's stay, my expectations continued to be surpassed. My newly-made Finnish friends did not fail to teach me about Finnish culture and traditions, even taking me on a food tour of Tampere—where I encountered the (in)famous *mustamakkara* (blood sausage, served with lingonberry jam … interesting to say the least!)

Overall, what I had heard about Finns prior to my visit—that they were the stereotype of a cold nation, with little interest in being friendly or socializing—was not my experience at all. Instead, what I received was hospitality, generosity and warmth from loving, kind and considerate people. It truly was a dismal and heart-breaking task for me to have to say goodbye.

I should like to thank CoScan for their kind contribution to my incredible trip. I met some wonderful people, and it also gave me the opportunity to rekindle my love of nature in this vast land. Harmony and contentment filled my soul, as I discovered the beauty of their parks, the tranquillity of their forests and the peace of their lakes. I am sure that this will not be my last visit to Finland.

**If you would like to make a donation to the Trust Fund**

— you can download a form from our website www.coscan.org.uk

— 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.)

**If you would like to apply for a travel grant for 2021**

— contact Tony Bray (tony.bray@coscan.org.uk)

— or download an application form from www.coscan.org.uk and send it to Tony, along with a personal letter/email, to arrive no later than 31 March 2021.

# Member Societies 2020

**Anglo-Danish Society** – info@anglo-danishsociety.org.uk – www.anglo-danishsociety.org.uk
**Anglo-Finnish Society** – paulus.thomson@btinternet.com – www.anglofinnishsociety.org.uk
**Anglo-Norse Society** – secretariat@anglo-norse.org.uk – www.anglo-norse.org.uk
**Anglo-Norse Society in Norway** – mail.anglonorse@gmail.com – www.anglonorseoslo.com
**Anglo-Scandinavian Society of Newcastle** – ingelise42uk@ntlworld.com – www.newcastleangloscan.org
**Anglo-Swedish Society** – info@angloswedishsociety.org.uk – www.angloswedishsociety.org.uk
**Creative Links/Consulate of Sweden in Newcastle**
c.theobald@bridgeclubnorth.com – www.swedishconsulatenewcastle.wordpress.com
**Danish Church in London** – kirke@danskekirke.org – www.danskekirke.org
**Danish-Scottish Society** – dss.enquiries@gmail.com – www.danishscottishsociety.com
**Danish Women in England** – ulla@ullagraymanagement.com – www.danskekvinder.co.uk
**Danish YWCA, London** – k@kfuk.co.uk – www.kfuk.co.uk
**Devon & Somerset Anglo Scandinavian Society** – dawnwattsdk@yahoo.co.uk – www.angloscan.org.uk
**Finnish Church in London** – lontoo@merimieskirkko.fi – www.lontoo.merimieskirkko.fi/the-finnish-church-in-london
**Grieg Society UK** – griegsocietygb@gmail.com – www.facebook.com/griegsocietygb
**Hertfordshire Anglo-Scandinavian Society** – info@hertsscandinavian.co.uk – www.hertsscandinavian.co.uk
**Manchester Swedish Language Meetup Group** – tony@thebrays.org.uk – www.meetup.com/Manchester-Swedish-Language-Meetup-Group
**Nordic House/Danish Church in Hull** – hull@dsuk.dk – www.danchurchhull.co.uk
**Northants Anglo-Scandinavian Society** – manjaronne@btinternet.com – www.facebook.com/Northants-Anglo-Scandinavian-Society-945471712181263
**Norwegian Church in London** – london@sjomannskirken.no – www.sjomannskirken.no/london
**Norwegian Scottish Association** – www.norwegian-scottish.org.uk
**Orkney Norway Friendship Association** – james@balaycot.plus.com – www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/onfa
**Scandinavian Klubb of Lincolnshire (SKOL)** – derekmisse@mypostoffice.co.uk – www.facebook.com/groups/1821206444856739/?ref=bookmarks
**Scottish Norwegian Society (Glasgow)** – anny.carchrie@ntlworld.com – www.scottishnorwegiansociety.org

**SveaBritt** – sekretarare@sveabritt.com – www.sveabritt.com
**Swedish Church in London** – london@svenskakyrkan.se – www.svenskakyrkan.se/london
**Viking Society for Northern Research** – vsnr@ucl.ac.uk – www.vsnr.org
**Welsh-Norwegian Society** – alanbh@btinternet.com – www.welshnorwegian.org
**York Anglo-Scandinavian Society (YASS)** – pjpaul3@outlook.com – www.yorkangloscan.org.uk

# CoScan Executive Committee

**President:** Mark Elliott, CMG, Wheelwright Cottage, High Lorton, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 9UQ, president@coscan.org.uk
**Treasurer** and **Membership Secretary:** Manja Rønne, 6 Baker Street, Gayton, Northants. NN7 3EZ, treasurer@coscan.org.uk, membership@coscan.org.uk
**Secretary:** Michael Davis, 24 Lucombe Way, New Earswick, York, YO32 4DS secretary@coscan.org.uk
**Committee members:**

- Tony Bray, 14 Ridge Avenue, Marple, Cheshire SK6 7HJ tony.bray@coscan.org.uk
- Lise Hodgson, 11a Herbert Grove, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2AT, lise.hodgson@coscan.org.uk
- Katherine Holman, 12 Princess Gardens, Goddard Avenue, Hull HU5 2AS kathy.holman@coscan.org.uk
- Wendy Howell, 10 Exeter Way, London, SE14 6LL, wendy.howell@coscan.org.uk
- Alexander Malmaeus, 15 Lebanon Gardens, London SW18 1RQ, alexander.malmaeus@coscan.org.uk
- Eva Robards, Shrubbery Cottage, Nun Monkton, York YO26 8EW eva.robards@coscan.org.ukalex@amvisualisation.com

**Webmaster**
webmaster@coscan.org.uk

# CoScan Trust Fund

**Chairman:** Brita Green, 103 Long Ridge Lane, Nether Poppleton, York YO26 6LW, brita.green@coscan.org.uk
**Admin:** Tony Bray, 14 Ridge Avenue, Marple, Cheshire SK6 7HJ, travelaward@coscan.org.uk
**Treasurer:** Hugh Williamson, 20 Appleton Ct, Bishopthorpe, York YO23 2RY, hugh.williamson@coscan.org.uk

# Magazine Editorial Board

Dr Peter Addyman
Prof. Sid Bradley
Mark Elliott CMG
Dr Brita Green (chairing meetings)
Dr Katherine Holman
Prof. Rory McTurk
Dr Bridget Morris
Dr Eva Robards (editor)
Dr Colin Roth

**Deadline for contributions to the next Magazine**
**1 April 2021**

Send to:
magazine@coscan.org.uk

**CoScan Magazine**
Printed by: Inc Dot Design and Print, York
ISSN 1478-2081
© All rights reserved

# CoScan Patrons

## The Ambassadors of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden

### Scandinavian Embassies in the UK – press, culture and information

**Denmark:** Lone Britt Christensen, Cultural Attaché, 55 Sloane Street, London SW1X 9SR, Tel: +44(0)20 7333 0200, lonamb@um.dk, www.denmark.org.uk

**Finland:** Pirjo Pellinen, Special Adviser, Culture and Public Diplomacy, 38 Chesham Place, London SW1X 8HW, Tel: +44(0)20 7838 6200, sanomat.lon@formin.fi, www.finemb.org.uk

**Iceland:** Eyrún Hafsteinsdottir, Cultural and Trade Officer, 2A Hans Street, London SW1X 0JE, Tel: +44(0)20 7259 3999, eyrun.hafsteinsdottir@utn.stjr.is (or eyrun@mfa.is), www.iceland.is/uk

**Norway:** Kristin Marøy Stockman, Counsellor, Head of Arts and Communication, 25 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QD, Tel: +44(0)20 7591 5500 emb.london@mfa.no, www.norway.no/en/uk

**Sweden**: Pia Lundberg, Counsellor, Cultural Affairs, 11 Montagu Place, London W1H 2AL, Tel: +44(0)20 7917 6400, ambassaden.london@gov.se, www.swedenabroad.com/london

CoScan
Confederation of Scandinavian Societies

# If you are not already a member, join CoScan!

**All organisations and individuals interested in Scandinavia and Nordic matters are most welcome to become CoScan members.**

We do not receive funding from any government source so membership fees constitute our main income.

For information about individual and society membership see our website

## www.coscan.org.uk

**Find us also on**

**Facebook.com/CoScanUK**

**Twitter.com/CoScan_UK**