CoScan Magazine

2021/2

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

CoScan
Confederation of Scandinavian Societies

Contents

Front cover:
Reindeer in Norway Photo: Lavrans Skuterud

Editor's note

Eva Robards

At last CoScan has had a 'real life' meeting: the Drinks Reception, which was again kindly set up by Alexander Malmaeus. Once again we are grateful for his willingness to make it possible for us to meet in a prominent place for a couple of convivial hours. Unfortunately London is too far away for many of our members who should also have such an opportunity – yes, we are aware of this but need somebody 'on the ground' to help out. Offers, please ...!

This time the society pages in the Magazine focus on the pandemic effect on whether events take place or not. It is interesting to note some different approaches taken to the challenges. Only five societies have sent reports (though we have the Grieg Society UK in the pipeline), so there is plenty of scope for other member societies to submit an account of their experiences. Societies be warned: I will keep reminding you!

Among articles of general interest this time we have an article on place-names of Scandinavian origin in Britain; we visit Denmark with the help of the excellent Anglo-Danish Newsletter; and are given information on Danish pensions for expatriates. (It would be good to have other Nordic countries covered, so if you can provide information, please do!)

We also have an update on the state of radioactivity in Norwegian reindeer caused by the Chernobyl accident. Further, as December is upon us, we look at where Christmas trees from Norway have been donated since the Second World War, and there is a recipe for how to complicate life by making your own mustard.

The bike ride *Sverigeloppet* through Sweden may not be for everyone, and 'our' team didn't win, but they bravely completed it. The ride was instigated in 1951 and continued annually until 1965. It was reinstated in 2017 and is again running annually: entries are open for 2022 …

As always we have some pages with books which have been published recently, but for once we don't have any new travel reports. Instead we dip into reports from the last decade and find how enthusiastically the young travellers share the Scandinavian love of nature.

Finally, we celebrate ten years with our printers Inc Dot. Their professional help and friendly approach is invaluable – as editor, my gratitude to them is huge.

CoScan AGM

by Michael Davis, CoScan Secretary

CoScan's Annual General Meeting was held on Friday 24 September 2021. Eleven societies were able to attend and all decisions that were taken were agreed to unanimously. Meeting virtually once more and not as we do normally – in some desirable location that can add to our interest–we were pleased that some of you were able to be present and contribute moreover to the Meeting's proceedings.

Covid still invites us to be cautious with our arrangements. But it is our hope that the next AGM to be held in the spring – if we can return to those months that we have had in the past – will be conducted in surroundings that are rather more convivial. London is being considered as the most probable location. As always members will be invited.

CoScan Memberships 2022

by Manja Rønne, CoScan Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Membership renewal reminders will be sent out to current members in early 2022, and we hope that existing members will wish to continue their membership in 2022.

The rates remain unchanged from last year and are as follows: Societies / organisations £33, single individual members £13 and joint individual members £20, and it would be much appreciated if members could renew their memberships by the end of January.

Societies / organisations receive two copies of the CoScan magazine for circulation within their society / organisation. Individual members receive their own copy of the magazine.

The magazine is published in June and December.

If you are not already a member and would like to join CoScan, membership forms are available on CoScan's website at www.coscan.org.uk/join.

CoScan's Drinks Reception 2021

by Eva Robards

Present member organisations and potential new ones were invited to our fourth Drinks Reception, which was held on 1 November at Buck's Club in London.

The purpose of the reception is networking: to meet face to face, enjoy each other's company, and exchange experiences.

The majority of the CoScan committee was present, in addition to 11 member societies and 6 non-members.

Attending delegates from the different committees/councils had the opportunity to speak for up to three minutes about their societies. Among presentations given by current members were those by the following organisations: Danish Church in London (Flemming Kloster Poulsen), Anglo-Danish Society (Wayne Harber), Danish Women in England (Alette Rye Scales), Anglo-Finnish Society (Clive Suckling), Grieg Society UK (Beryl Foster), SveaBritt (Lotta Sutton), Viking Society for Northern Research (Richard North), Northants Anglo-Scandinavian Society (Manja Rønne), and York Anglo-Scandinavian Society (Eva Robards).

Once again the event proved to be not only most enjoyable but also a constructive way of reaching out to new possible members – in additon to renewing old friendships.

Buck's Club was established in June 1919 – allegedly the only London club to have been founded since the First World War.

It is probably best known for the Buck's Fizz cocktail, created there in 1921 by its first bartender McGarry. The author P. G. Wodehouse modelled his Drones Club mostly on Buck's and mentioned it in some of his stories.

From the mingling and presentations at the Drinks Reception

Wayne Harber, (Chairman of Anglo-Danish Society)

Alexander Malmaeus (Moderator/ CoScan and Chairman of Anglo-Swedish Society) and Clive Suckling (Anglo-Finnish Society)

Richard North (Honorary Assistant Secretary to the Viking Society)

Lotta Sutton and Linda Sandberg (SveaBritt)

Manja Rønne (CoScan and Northants Anglo-Swedish Society) and Christine Bergstedt (Anglo-Danish Society)

Flemming Kloster Poulsen (Priest at the Danish Church in London)

Photos: Chris Howell, CoScan

Mark Elliott (CoScan and Anglo-Norse Society)

Wendy Howell (Grieg Society UK, CoScan committee), Beryl Foster (Chairman of Grieg Society UK) and Lise Hodgson (CoScan and Anglo-Danish Society)

Alette Rye Scales (Chairman of Danish Women's Association), Jaakko Nousiainen and Karolina Korpilahti (Finnish Institute in UK & Ireland)

We kept calm and carried on

by Bette Petersen Broyd, Honorary Secretary of the Anglo-Danish Society

The Covid-19 restrictions regarding social interaction sadly meant that some of our proposed events had to be cancelled. One of them, 'City Buildings, Past and Present', was in fact finally able to run the third time it was scheduled, in June 2021. It was a rare jewel, for the very next events, the Ambassador's Reception and a lunch at the Danish YWCA, had to be cancelled altogether. There is little prospect of the lunch being resurrected anytime soon. This is not just because of Covid, but due to another major event which has turned the world upside down for many: Brexit.

All the Scandinavian societies are, in different ways and to varying degrees, hugely affected by the fallout from Brexit. The number of students, casual workers and interns in the UK from Scandinavia are drastically reduced. Very few of them meet the minimum £25.000 salary needed for a visa to live and work in the UK. Young Brits are similarly affected in the tit-for-tat response. So, for their gap years, they now have to travel well beyond Europe for a cultural/educational immersion in a foreign country before starting their university education. Study exchanges, bar and ski work, and the simultaneous learning of foreign languages, now have to be beyond the European borders.

Many 'mature' Scandinavians were first introduced to life in the UK as au-pairs and interns. Alas, that wonderful tradition has ceased. Au-pairs from Europe can no longer work in the UK. At least not until a solution is found, but that seems years away. Meanwhile, applications for the Anglo-Danish Society Scholarships are down, though an impressive line-up of students for the coming academic year has been secured.

So, with 'partial paralysis' caused by Covid and lockdown, we were determined to stay in touch with our members. Zoom came to the rescue. Facebook became the medium where the plethora of online events were advertised and also shared with many other Scandinavian societies. Facebook and our website were buzzing with streaming offers of Scandi Noir series, talks on royalty, or war heroes. We even experienced a live walk through the Danish Embassy with links to the Arne Jacobsen exhibition at Trapholt Museum in Kolding, Denmark.

During the long periods of lockdown the Anglo-Danish Society created its own Zoom Talks on various topics such as authors, artists and travel. Each one drew a reasonably sized audience and engaged the membership while physical gatherings were out of the question.

Twice we have had well attended AGM's via Zoom. Our most popular event was a talk in November 2020 on Settled Status. The Danish Ambassador and an Immigration Lawyer spoke and took questions on the unfamiliar territory of registering online for administrative permission to remain in the UK.

Our first event in September this year was the postponed annual Ambassador's Reception. It is always a popular event, but this time the 80+ attendees seemed particularly spirited and thoroughly enjoyed meeting friends and fellow members after months of virtual hibernation. Over drinks and canapés we mingled in the Ambassador's residence atop the Embassy. Many chose to interact on the balcony, in the fresh air, overlooking Chelsea.

A good handful of scholars attended the reception. It is always particularly stimulating to meet those youngsters who have secured a scholarship for excellence in their chosen topic of study.

In October we held the hugely popular Black-Tie Dinner at HM Tower of London. The venue was the Regimental Headquarters of The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment where the evening started with a lively pre-dinner drinks reception in the Fusilier Museum. Only 52 participants were allowed at the delicious dinner which followed in the Officers' Mess Dining Room, with hosts from the Regiment. There had been, from early on, a long waiting list for spaces at the dinner so many were disappointed. Rousing music was provided by the London Scottish Regiment Bagpipers and our Chairman, Wayne Harber, gave a humorous speech. It was indeed a very special occasion and many felt privileged to have been there and to have been so thoroughly entertained.

Entering the Tower Photo: Erik Castenskiold

The Georg Jensen event in November is always popular and this time no less so. The shop is now back in Bond Street, near where Georg Jensen used to have their flagship store. Shopping was brisk and members of the Anglo-Danish Society and guests could enjoy a discount on the evening – a great opportunity for some Christmas shopping. For some it is the perfect opportunity to reward their spouse or themselves with a long-wished-for item of jewellery. Others buy household design items and the gorgeous golden Christmas decorations, whether for their own tree or as presents for friends and family. The golden tree candleholders are always popular with Scandinavians, while others never cease to wonder how it is possible to have real candles on

the Christmas tree. When you buy from Georg Jensen it is often timeless pieces with benefits for generations to come.

The popular Christmas Carol Service at the Danish Church had been cancelled previous years, due either to the rebuilding project or to Covid-19 but was allowed to go ahead this December. Held in English, the service is a familiar reminder of why we celebrate Christmas and it affords us an opportunity to sing along to the familiar Christmas Carols. The church is then festively decorated as is also the adjoining Church Hall where we enjoy a delicious traditional Danish Christmas lunch, with beer – and *snaps*, if that is your tipple of choice.

Membership is up, our events are generally over-subscribed, the scholarships are still allocated to students of a very high calibre and we have new members on Council. So, it is fair to say that the Anglo-Danish Society has come through lockdown and the pandemic largely unscathed.

To top it all, we invited Dame Judi Dench to become an Honorary Member of our society, following the hugely popular episode of 'Who Do You Think You Are' in which Dame Judi discovered a rich ancestral link with Denmark, the royal household at Kronborg Castle at Helsingør, and the Bille family, as well as to Hamlet and Shakespeare.

We look forward to welcoming Dame Judi formally at an event in 2022, which promises to be an excellent year for the Anglo-Danish Society.

The Association of Danish Women

by Alette Rye Scales, Chairman

This past year has been challenging, but Zoom came to our rescue early on. Via this platform we have managed a number of virtual meetings with lectures on topics of interest and so-called 'tea parties' which were simply opportunities to meet and interact with fellow members, many of whom felt lonely in the isolation of lockdown. Finally, we started a blog on our website where members could write and perhaps be inspired by the writings of other members.

Eventually, in October this year, we were able to start again with our first event at the newly restored Church Hall. A large number of members turned up to listen to a fascinating lecture on Tranquebar, a Danish trading colony in India from the mid-17th to the mid-19th century, and to partake of a delicious lunch with much chat and laughter. Our December event is the greatly anticipated annual Christmas lunch, which we have had to do without for two years now.

The number of Danes living in London and the rest of the UK continues to grow and whilst we continue to recruit new members, we hope to attract membership from a younger demographic by increasing our presence on social media.

Anglo-Finnish Society events in 2021

by Paulus Thomson, Chairman and Honorary Secretary

Our first physical meeting in 20 months was in October when we had a private tour of the Museum of Freemasonry and the Grand Temple at the Freemasons' Hall in Covent Garden. Earlier meetings during 2021 were held via Zoom which had the advantage of enabling participation by members who would find it difficult to attend a meeting in London.

We started with a talk by the Ambassador, Markku Keinänen, who spoke about current topics of interest, particularly some of the practical consequences of Brexit.

Professor Patrick Salmon, Chief Historian at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and his colleague Dr Richard Smith spoke to us about the murals by Sigismund Goetze and other art works at the Foreign Office which had recently sparked controversy in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Princess Olga Romanoff, whose maternal grandmother belonged to the Finnish Borgström family, spoke about her Finnish and Russian family background, the challenges of living in and maintaining her historic house, and also about her family's connections with Mannerheim and his daughter, Anastasie, who is buried at the nearby church.

The AGM was successfully conducted online in April and concluded with a reading of a chapter from Tony Lurcock's latest book, *Finish Off with Finland: A Miscellany*, which was about to be published.

The Finnish Art Group had been due to hold its 30th anniversary exhibition in 2020 but had to postpone it for a year because of the pandemic. Several of the artists who were to exhibit their work gave presentations via Zoom in May by way of a foretaste of the exhibition at the Coningsby Gallery, which was opened on 7 November by the new Ambassador, Jukka Siukosaari, in the presence of an enthusiastic gathering. The exhibition was supported financially by the Society and also by Suomi-Seura.

In December it will be 110 years since the Society was founded. The number does not have the cachet of a centenary, but perhaps we will mark it in a modest way sometime next year. In any case we could not surpass the Centenary Dinner which we held at the Grocers' Hall in 2012 attended by the Society's Patrons, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh and President Tarja Halonen. Prince Philip had been our Patron since 1955. An account of his connections with Finland can be read on the Society's website.

Northants Anglo-Scandinavian Society 2020-2021

by Manja Rønne, Secretary

Like so many other societies, clubs and organisations, Northants Anglo-Scandinavian Society stopped meeting in person when Covid arrived on our shores in March 2020. That meant that we unfortunately had to cancel a visit to Brixworth Church, our planned annual dinner at a local restaurant, and our traditional summer walk whilst we followed developments.

Our AGM, which is normally held in late May, took place online in October 2020, initially by sending out the request for nominations, the Chairperson's Report and the Balance Sheet. This was followed by a vote by email.

As we could not see light at the end of the tunnel back then, we did not ask members to renew their memberships, but we did schedule a couple of group chats on Zoom in October and November. However, despite many members expressing an interest in trying this out, disappointingly few took part, but for those who did, it was an enjoyable experience.

2021 arrived and, with Covid still around, our AGM once again took place online. This year the committee put it to members that since there had been no Society activity during the past year, the 2020-2021 committee offered to carry on for another year to get us going again, and members were happy to accept this.

Our first 2021 get-together in person took place in August when we met in sunny weather for a walk around a local village with one of our members expertly guiding us, and we finished with tea, coffee and cakes in her and her husband's lovely garden.

In September and October our meetings started gently again with 'A *hyggelig* afternoon' to ease ourselves into 'normality' as we felt that after such a long gap it would be nice if our first meetings were purely social get-togethers to give everyone a chance to catch up with each other's news.

Since our meetings in early 2020 we have now also changed from having evening meetings to meeting in the afternoon as many members prefer not to drive in the dark.

The November entry on our programme was a guided tour of the well-known Jeyes in Earls Barton, Northants, including a visit to their little museum to learn about the long history of the company, followed by refreshments in their café.

We keep our fingers crossed that our last social gathering in 2021, our traditional Christmas lunch, will go ahead as planned. All members contribute to our buffet, which consists of traditional Scandinavian dishes. Our songbooks will be put to good use, and exercise will be had with a rendering of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'.

What 2022 will bring? Well, time will tell.

YASS during the pandemic

by Brita Green and Eva Robards, committee members

2020 was the year York Anglo-Scandinavian Society (YASS) celebrated its 60th anniversary with a dinner in the medieval Bedern Hall, once used by the Vicars Choral of York Minster. That was in early February, and we just managed one more meeting, when Professor Rory McTurk talked about 'Tolkien and Icelandic literature', before Covid shut everything down. The March talk, the AGM, a planned walk and an outing to Durham were all initially postponed and then cancelled, as was our traditional Sankt Hans celebration in June. There were no Lucia or Christmas celebrations, but at the end of November we were given a Zoom talk on Christmas in Denmark by Arne Kristophersen (former Pastor of the Danish Church in Hull).

It was not until June 2021 that we made a tentative start on resuming our programme. Even then there was no hope of meeting other than virtually, and on 15 June we had an interesting Zoom talk by Professor Richard Ogden which dealt with the question 'Why is the Finnish language so different?' That was followed by a local walk in August. Finally, in October, we were able to invite members to a first live talk, attendees all wearing masks, when Brita Green reflected on emigration/immigration and told the story of her five great uncles who in the 1880s had set off from Sweden to seek their fortune in Australia. A talk on Iceland by our Chairman Philip Paul was our November event – sticking with 'inside' speakers in these uncertain times. Our Christmas celebrations began with 'Lucia in the Minster', with the London Nordic Choir providing the procession for the third time. Reservations for the limited number of tickets were snapped up within a day or two after being released. We are also planning a Christmas party on Lucia Day itself, 13 December. It will very much be governed by Covid restrictions and we will refrain from mingling too closely, so this year there will be no dancing round the Christmas tree, nor any communal carol singing or rubbing shoulders round a buffet – we will bring our own refreshments and, staying in our seats, will enjoy watching a Lucia presentation on a screen, listening to a story or two and some carols and other seasonal music, and perhaps taking part in a quiz. We might even manage to raise a little money for the CoScan Trust Fund through sales of candles and cards.

Understanding Scandinavian place-names in the British Isles

by Katherine Holman

One of the most distinctive features of the Scandinavian settlement in the British Isles during the Viking Age is the many and varied place-names that are still in use today. Readers in northern and eastern England in particular will no doubt be familiar with several place-names ending in -by such as Derby, Whitby, Grimsby, which are compounds containing the Old Norse word for farmstead or village: 'village of the deer or animals' (Derby); 'white village' (Whitby) and 'Grim's village' (Grimsby) respectively. But the linguistic legacy of Viking colonisation and conquest is much more varied and extensive than this: it has been estimated that something like just under a half of settlement names in East and North Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire are derived from a whole range of Scandinavian words; nearly all the place-names in the Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland are Scandinavian, and even in places that saw relatively little Scandinavian settlement, such as the Welsh coast, key elements of the coastline bear Scandinavian names, reflecting the impact of Vikings on navigation and shipping routes.

Understanding the significance of place-names which bear Scandinavian names is therefore an important element in establishing the nature of Viking influence in different parts of the British Isles. Distribution maps certainly help in indicating the broad areas where

Danelaw place names in England Flickr

settlement took place: the Danelaw (defined roughly on its southern and western border by Watling Street, a Roman road that ran from Dover to Wroxeter); Orkney and Shetland; along the northern and western Scottish seaboard; the Hebrides and the Isle of Man. However, a place that has a Scandinavian place-name does **not**, as may often be thought, mean that the settlement was established by a Viking or group of Vikings who named it in their own language. As such then, a map of Scandinavian place-names cannot be used simply to provide a map of Scandinavian colonisation. There are, for example, a number of places in England that we know were already in existence before the Vikings arrived, but which had their Anglo-Saxon names replaced by Viking names – Derby and Whitby are well-known examples of this, being previously known as *Northworthig* and *Streoneshalh* – so a Scandinavian place-name does not necessarily imply a brand

new settlement founded by Vikings. Also, a Scandinavian place-name does not necessarily even imply that the settlement was inhabited by Scandinavian settlers: place-names, such as Ingleby, which is a Scandinavian name meaning 'village of the English', demonstrates this very clearly: the distinctive feature of this particular village was that it was inhabited by English people, even though the name of the settlement was Old Norse. We need to remember therefore that the language of a place-name reflects the language in use in the geographical area or among a section of the population that needs to refer to that place, rather than the ethnicity of its inhabitants or its founders. This explains why, for example, there are Scandinavian place-names for features along the coastline in Wales such as Swansea ('Svein's island or lake') and Milford Haven ('Sandbank fiord') – during the Viking Age, Scandinavians were continually sailing along this coast for trading and raiding, from bases in Ireland and along the west Scottish coast.

One of the most common Scandinavian place-name elements, *thorp*, meaning outlying or dependent farmstead, is recorded on multiple occasions in *Domesday Book* but, confusingly, in many cases one *thorp* is not distinguished from others, because they were often relatively small offshoots of original 'mother' settlements. Some of these developed into larger, independent settlements that were then given more distinctive names, but others did not. In East Yorkshire, for example, within the village of Lockington (an Old English name possibly meaning 'settlement' associated with Loca), there is a smaller area that is still known as Thorpe, which is recorded in *Domesday Book*. However, in the immediate vicinity of Lockington and its Thorpe, there are several other thorps that are listed in *Domesday Book* and these have to be untangled from each other through their relationship with other larger settlements. This reveals a further detail that we need to bear in mind when trying to understand place-names: for people living in a settlement or in the immediate vicinity of it, there would often be no need to have a distinctive name for it: you would simply refer to the village or farm and all the other inhabitants would know where you meant. Many of the *thorps* were probably of such a small size that their importance outside the immediate vicinity was limited. A distinctive name would, however, be useful when communicating with people outside the settlement – for example, for lords of a manor or in local courts or when dealing with ownership or in tax records, to avoid potential confusion. In such cases, a personal name – reflecting ownership – might be used e.g. Raven-thorpe 'Ragnhild's *thorp*'. Alternatively, a distinguishing location within the landscape could be used e.g. Austhorpe 'the eastern *thorp*' (referring to its location from the original settlement). As such, place-names can often reflect usage by people who live outside of the actual settlement, as well as those within it.

The reason why one place-name 'sticks' and passes into common usage is linked to a whole host of factors, arising from the need to distinguish one place from another. *Domesday*

Book is, for many English settlements, the first time that they are recorded in writing. This act of recording places can often lead to the 'fossilising' of names: because, once they are written down, they are potentially less likely to change significantly because of the need for government and administrators to refer back to the records. Over time, especially as written records became increasingly important, both names and their spellings become fixed as one version becomes the accepted norm. Incidentally, this is also why William Shakespeare's surname could be spelt in a number of ways in contemporary records, but over time the spelling Shakespeare became established as the 'correct' one.

The list below contains a few of the most common Scandinavian words found in place-names in the British Isles, but it should be remembered that not all of the place-names containing these words necessarily date from the Viking Age. Some words remained current in local dialects long after contact with Scandinavia ended and were used to form new place-names in subsequent centuries. It is necessary to look at old records and early spellings in order to identify what is or is not likely to be a Scandinavian place-name. Indeed, in some cases, there are words that were very similar in both Old English and Old Norse, so it can be hard to say for certain which language was used when coining the place-name. There may also be instances when later migrants established new settlements in new places, but gave the settlement the name of the place from where they had come – in this way, an original Scandinavian name such as Dalby might be given to a new settlement established later on in the medieval period by people who were definitely not speakers of any Scandinavian languages!

beck – stream
bister – dwelling, house
by – farmstead, village
dale – valley
fell – mountain, hill
garth – farmyard, enclosed area
gill – narrow gully, ravine
holm(e) - islet
kirk – church
ness – promontory
rigg - ridge
scale – temporary hut
setter – dwelling, house
thorp – secondary, dependent settlement (note: Old English *throp* often appears as *thorp* in place-names outside the Danelaw)
thwaite – clearing, meadow

Resources

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Ordnance Survey, 'The Scandinavian origin of place-names in Britain' at https://getoutside.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/guides/the-scandinavian-origins-of-place-names-in-britain/ (focuses on Scottish place-names).

Victor Watts, *The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Entitlement to Danish pension

by Jens Buus

Danish citizens living abroad may not realise that they may be entitled to a Danish state pension even if they have not worked or paid tax in Denmark. The entitlement depends on the number of years a person has **lived** in Denmark. The basic rule is that you are entitled to 2.5% of the normal state pension for each full year you have lived in Denmark after your 15th birthday. This means that a person moving abroad aged 25 will get a 25% pension, and somebody living in Denmark until aged 55 and then moving abroad, will get a full pension. Non-Danish citizens who have **worked** in Denmark are also entitled to a pension. The Danish authorities are supposed to notify you about your entitlement, but of course they can't do that for a person with a foreign address unknown to the 'system', and in any case you will still have to apply. The pension is quite generous, but there is a tax threshold equivalent to about £5k, and income tax is deducted if the pension exceeds this threshold. You will also have to enter any foreign pension you may receive on your UK tax return, but you get credit for any tax deducted in Denmark.

Anybody who has **worked** in Denmark after about 1965 will also have paid into a supplementary pension (ATP), and the employer will have paid in as well. If the monthly pension payments from this scheme, based on the contributions made, are below a certain minimum level, a lump sum will be paid instead. Any lump sum payments are taxed at 40%.

More information is available from:

Udbetaling Danmark, International Pension
Kongens Vænge 8
DK 3400 Hillerød
Tel +44 70 12 80 55 (Monday to Friday 10.00 to 14.00, DK time)
Email intpension@atp.dk

Disclaimer: Kindly note that the above information is based on my own experience and my understanding of the current rules. I accept no responsibility, consequently, for possible errors or omissions.

The world's biggest sandcastle

by Bette Petersen Broyd

Wherever you are in Denmark you are never far from a beach. It means that many can easily nip to the sea or lakeside after school or pack a picnic after work for a swim and sunset dinner overlooking the water. As everywhere in the world, children play happily with buckets and spades.

A team of 30 of the world's best sand sculptors, led by Dutchman Wilfred Stigjer, recently descended on the Northwest coastal town of Blokhus in Jutland. Using nearly 5000 tonnes of sand mixed with 10 % clay to make the sand more cohesive, the team constructed the world's biggest sandcastle. Standing more than 21 metres tall, it is now a Guiness World Record holder.

Photos: Bill Scott

At the top of the sculpture is a model of the coronavirus, complete with crown (corona) representing the power this virus has had over the entire world since the start of the pandemic. Stigjer explains, 'It's ruling our lives everywhere. It tells you what to do ... It tells you to stay away from your family and not go to nice places. Don't do activities, just stay at home.'

The residents in Blokhus are pleased that the sandcastle also has depictions of local landmarks such as the colourful beach houses and lighthouses. It also showcases the popular activities such as windsurfing and kitesurfing.

A layer of glue was applied after completion so that the sculpture can stand up to the chilly and windy conditions of the autumn and winter. The castle is expected to stand until the heavy frost sets in, maybe in early 2022.

Reproduced, with permission, from the *Anglo-Danish Society Newsletter*, autumn 2021

Ærø–island of romance and renewable solutions

by Bette Petersen Broyd

In the Baltic Sea, in the South Fyn Archipelago, is the idyllic island of Ærø. With a population of just shy of 6000 and an area of about 90 km², road traffic is low and buses run free of charge. Unlike most sizeable Baltic islands, Ærø has no bridges but is served by no fewer than four different ferry routes from the surrounding islands of Fyn, Als and Langeland.

The novel *We, The Drowned* by Carsten Jensen is an epic tale spanning four generations, nearly a century and two world wars. Set in Marstal, the largest harbour town on the island, the maritime history of its seafarers is vividly portrayed. A challenging society where men venture off to sea while women end up managing all aspects of life on their own.

The little town of Ærøskøping is picture-perfect quaint, with cobbled streets, brightly coloured wonky houses and hollyhocks. A romantic setting for … weddings! Over the last decade or more, Ærø has become the Gretna Green of Denmark. Couples from all over the world travel to the island to get hitched in the little town hall or out in mother nature on the island. Paperwork and planning are dealt with by accommodating officials online – and the town businesses are geared up for the romance with bridal packages – mostly in English and German.

Added to this, Ærø is the winner of the 2021 Responsible Island Prize for its shift to sustainable energy. At a ceremony held during European Research & Innovation Days 2021, the citizens were able to demonstrate why they are the worthy winners ahead of the islands of El Hierro in Spain and Tilos in Greece. The island has made substantial achievements in the local renewable energy production of heating and electricity, and in engaging the local community. Collaborative ownership funds the wind turbines which generate all of the power used on the island – and plenty more besides. One of the ferries serving the island, Ellen, is fully electric and travels 40 km between recharges. Another micro-world-record all of its own. The collectively owned solar heating installations provide heating for the islanders.

The lives of the citizens of this little island reflect their understanding of living on a planet with finite resources, and they show how to integrate them into a circular economy.

Ærøskøping Photo: Bette Petersen Broyd

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Radioactive reindeer!

by Deborah Oughton and Lavrans Skuterud

The Skæhkere herd Photo: Lavrans Skuterud

On the morning of 28 April, 1986, staff of the Forsmark nuclear power station in Sweden were baffled when a worker set off the radiation alarm monitor. Since it clearly did not originate from the Swedish plant, the only explanation was that there had been an accident at another installation. Late that evening the Soviet Union admitted to the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power plant.

The most serious impacts of the accident were seen in the immediate area, with radiation sickness in firefighters and more than 120,000 people evacuated from the local town of Priyat. But the disaster had far-reaching consequences for the rest of Europe, with Scandinavian South Sámi reindeer herders bearing some of the hardest and longest impacts. To this day, Norwegian reindeer are monitored for radiation to ensure levels are safe for market.

Central areas of Norway and Sweden experienced high levels of contamination because of heavy rainfall in the mountain areas during the passing of the radioactive cloud. By July 1986, monitoring in Norway showed high levels of radioactive caesium in sheep, goats, and reindeer, with reindeer showing levels of up to 150,000 Bq/kg. Not sufficient to make any noses glow in the dark, but far above the 600 Bq/kg permissible level for basic foodstuffs. The vulnerability of reindeer herding to radioactive contamination was already known from the time of nuclear weapons testing: the lichen eaten by reindeer accumulates radiocaesium

and is easily transferred to the grazing animals. A monitoring programme of Sámi reindeer herders in northern Norway had been ongoing since 1965, but the Chernobyl fallout represented an unprecedented threat to the minority Sámi community. The nuclear disaster had considerable consequences also for other agricultural sectors in Norway. However, the consequences have been largest for the Sámi reindeer herders due to the high levels of radionuclides and the duration of the contamination problem, as well as their cultural dependence on reindeer.

The Sámi people are indigenous populations of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, represented by different groups with separate languages. There is no exact count of the population, but they are estimated to be some 80,000-100,000 persons. Reindeer herding is just one of the traditional occupations of the Sámi, engaging about 10-15 per cent of the total population. However, the majority of the 2000 Sámi living in the Scandinavian Chernobyl-affected areas are dependent in some way on reindeer husbandry. Their main source of income is reindeer meat production, and their culture is closely related to reindeer and the use of reindeer products. Traditionally the reindeer herders were nomads, moving with the herds between their seasonal pastures. Today, many herders are semi-nomadic, with two residences: one close to the winter grazing areas, the other, often a cabin, close to the summer ranges.

In autumn 1986, the contamination in reindeer resulted in a ban on reindeer meat from central and southern Norway. Slaughtering was conducted as normal to avoid increases in sizes of herds and related ecological consequences, but the carcasses were condemned, and the herders received economic compensation. As the main reindeer slaughter season approached, it became apparent that the greater part of the reindeer meat in Norway would exceed the permissible level of 600 Bq/kg, also in the less contaminated areas of the north, where most of the reindeer meat production occurs. In November 1986, because of the very high radiocaesium levels and expected duration of the contamination, Norwegian authorities chose to raise the permissible level for radiocaesium in marketed reindeer meat to 6,000 Bq/kg. The press release from the Directorate of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture announcing the change explained: 'A maintained intervention level of 600 Bq/kg will [...] result in production for condemnation and uneasiness among reindeer herders in the coming years. A despondent atmosphere, apathy and defection of young people will come forward in reindeer husbandry and the Sámi community [...]. If the limit is not raised, these problems will last for many years and can thereby threaten the Sámi lifestyle and culture, irrespective of monetary compensation.'

If the permissible level had not been increased, about 85% of the total national reindeer meat production would have been condemned in 1986/1987. The increase was justified by the low consumption of reindeer meat by the average Norwegian consumer (about half a kilogram a year) and negligible radiation doses. Raising

the limit had no impact on sales of reindeer meat to consumers, reflecting a general acceptance of the measures by the public. In addition to raising the permissible level, other actions were introduced to reduce levels in the reindeer. These included early slaughter and giving animals clean feed for a period. The herders were compensated for the extra cost and work, but changes also impacted on traditional practices. Many found some of the products, such as skin, to be of inferior quality when the animals had been fed instead of grazing natural pastures.

The Sámi, of course, eat far more than 500 g reindeer meat a year, so the herders were offered reindeer meat from the less contaminated areas in Northern Norway as a substitute. In addition to reindeer, other staple foodstuffs such as lake fish, berries, and especially mushrooms, also showed high levels of contamination. The authorities embarked on a campaign of dietary advice, free measurement of gathered food, and voluntary whole-body monitoring of the Sámi themselves to ensure that their personal exposures were below levels of concern. (The herders themselves quipped that one might want to avoid eating the South Sámi!) The combination of monitoring and advice to limit, but not totally exclude, intakes of the most radioactive foodstuffs meant that exposures were kept to a minimum, with no discernible health effects observed. Nevertheless, in the course of a few days in spring 1986, the Chernobyl accident changed the herders' diet from being one of the healthiest and most sustainable to being (also) one of the most radioactive.

Whilst health and economic concerns dominated immediately after the Chernobyl accident, the impacts on culture and heritage due to changes in traditional practice are the main concern of the Sámi today. And these impacts have lasted for decades for the minority Sámi populations. Research carried out at our university showed that few people in Norway are aware that reindeer are still monitored, or that their traditional Christmas reindeer steak contains measurable levels of radiocaesium. It is to be hoped that the solidarity they are showing with the Sámi reindeer herders will outweigh any concerns about the low levels of radiation.

Deborah Oughton is Director of the Centre for Environmental Activity and Professor of Nuclear and Environmental Chemistry at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences at Ås, near Oslo.

Lavrans Skuterud is a senior scientist at the Norwegian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority, and has been working with the Norwegian Sámi reindeer herders for over thirty years.

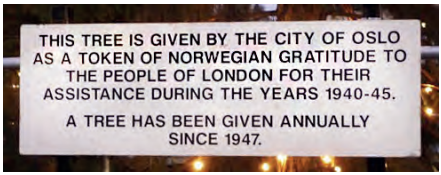
Norway – Christmas trees to UK

by Mark Elliott

A seasonal reflection, rather than a presidential message, from me this time.

Norway's generosity to Britain in this respect, by way of gratitude for the support we were able to give during the 1939-45 war, is various and long-standing. Although the Trafalgar Square Christmas Tree presented annually by the city of Oslo is perhaps best known, many other cities receive a similar concrete expression of their links with Norwegian counterparts, and have done so for many years. Reading from north to south, Kirkwall and Orkney generally have received a tree from Hordaland, Aberdeen from their twin city of Stavanger, Edinburgh from Hordaland, Newcastle from Bergen, Sunderland from Stavanger, Grimsby originally from Trondheim and later from Sortland, and at one time Cardiff also from Hordaland. The pattern has not been entirely continuous, and at the time of writing it is a little difficult to ascertain exactly what is happening in 2021, given the pandemic uncertainties from which we are all still suffering. But the continued warmth of our relations with Norway, and the genuineness of Norwegian enthusiasm for the British connection, are beyond question.

For Londoners, the Trafalgar Square tree is one of the essential highlights of Christmas. Its felling in the forests of Oslo is also quite an event for the British Embassy to Norway. One of the Ambassador's perks is the annual opportunity to wield a two-man cross-cut saw with the Mayor of Oslo at the other end, and the Lord Mayor of Westminster getting a look-in as well. The redoubtable lady who was Mayor of Oslo in my first year as Ambassador had a particularly expert touch, remarkably so as her hands had been disabled by thalidomide. I seem to recall that everything was made as



simple as possible for us amateurs, some of the initial sawing having been done in advance, and professionals taking over before too long to administer the *coup de grace*. The tree was not permitted to fall away from its vertical position, but held at its summit by an enormously tall crane which lifted it tenderly out of the forest. Its subsequent journey was not without hazard – on at least one occasion it was alleged that an excessively conscientious individual had pruned off the top few feet at some stage of the shipping so as to accommodate it to the space available, but it did prove possible to carpenter the tree back to its original dimensions.

The scene in the snowy November forests had a very good old-style Christmassy feel. There were suitable refreshments, and once I think a small choir from a local school to sing appropriate carols. That may have been the year when Terry Wogan and a BBC television team came along, to feature the tree-felling as part of the jollities for the annual Children in Need appeal. Most enjoyable for everybody there at the time too, and the visitors were charming, though they did lose their way initially when navigating through the forest (trees of suitable splendour tended to be growing in somewhat remote locations), and until they arrived there was, for the rest of us, quite a bit of standing around and getting rather chilly.

There is of course far more to British-Norwegian relations than memories of 1939-45, important though our association at that time was (and the fifty-years-on parades in Oslo in 1995 were an especially splendid occasion). But Christmas is one particular occasion when many in Britain are very conscious of our Scandinavian heritage, with our Christmas trees both public and private the most obvious symbol of that link.

Notes from ‘Sverigeloppet’

by Li Kronestedt Lundevall

The annual competitive bicycle ride *Sverigeloppet* took place from 6 to 12 August in 2021. It consists of seven stages, with an average of 267 km per stage; in total the ride is 1867 km.

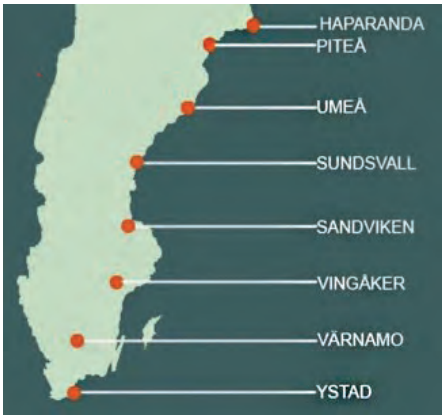
Rebecca Chudi and I, daughters of two of the ten members of Fredrikshof Team Renault, had driven the support car with their bikes from Stockholm, while the cyclists had taken a flight. We met them outside the city hotel in Haparanda and found a nervous atmosphere among them, as they were eagerly waiting to nurse their bikes before the start of the ride the following day.

In the evening, the officials held an introductory meeting for the four participating teams: Fredrikshof Team Renault, Team Assa Abloy, Team Wilier SWE and Team Scapa.

After the meeting and dinner, each team had their own meeting on tactics for the following day. Our team discussed how to ride in the cluster, how to take the demanding front position in turn (the last one in the line of bikes experiences least air resistance), and they settled on trying to keep an average of 31 km/h throughout the ride.

Each stage had two mandatory stops, one for lunch (20 min.) and one for coffee (10 min.). These were positioned so that they marked thirds of the stage so that, for example, after the lunch stop you knew you had two-thirds left. Our team added two short stops per stage because they drank so much liquid that they needed ‘to powder their noses’ and exchange their empty water bottles for new ones; these they had prepared the evening before – with lots of energy powder added. To avoid losing too much time, the intention was to limit these stops to about two minutes.

After the start in Haparanda we spent the nights in the towns of Piteå, Umeå, Sundsvall, Sandviken, Vingåker and Värnamo, before finishing in Ystad.



The first stage was 249 km, with 1781 altitude metres. The forests were fabulous and the weather magnificent. At the finish line in Piteå, at Pite Havsbad (‘the Riviera of the North’), there were many smiles among all the teams and officials. The ride, for which they all had been waiting for so long, was underway!

Fredrikshof Team Renault on their way through the forests of Sweden

On day 2 (stage 2) it was off towards Umeå, and the weather from the previous day with radiant sunshine continued. Most of the cyclists had sore buttocks, but all were still in a good mood. Pizza for lunch was a highly appreciated addition to the day.

Day 3 towards Sundsvall was rainy, and it was clear that the road surface was far from optimal for a long bike ride. We had three punctures before lunch, and the weather was really cold for those delayed by the need for repairs. In total, Fredrikshof Team had seven punctures that day.

Stage 4 towards Sandviken was felt in the cyclists' legs and bottoms, as shown by the end of the day, when they were limping around. However, the plaice for dinner was superb, and that was the evening people started having massages, which probably was a clever idea. A member of Team Scapa was a trained masseur, for whose attentions the cyclists became regulars. Another preparation was the purchase of an additional stock of tubes, since the many punctures during the day made the cyclists worry there might be more to come.

Stage 5 was a sunny but tiring day. Nonetheless, the finish in Vingåker was inspiring for the cyclists: we stayed at Båsenberga Hotell which was absolutely magical with its golf course and lake, and the forest surrounding us. What many appreciated even more than the venue, however, was having dinner with Bernt Johansson, a living bicycle legend (gold medal at the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal, for example).

Rebecca helps mending a puncture
Photos: Li Kronestedt Lundevall

The day from Vingåker to Värnamo (stage 6) was also a good one. Here many of the cyclists recognised part of the stage because they had done it earlier on another major bike ride (*Vätternrundan*, 315 km). Moreover, Bernt Johansson joined them by bike for a while, which was greatly appreciated. There were more punctures, but only two or three, and now people were prepared with extra tubes – and they had developed their technique!

The tactics when someone got a flat tyre was that we stopped the support car, so the cyclist with a flat tyre could get the tools he needed. The rest of the team continued riding in order to keep their average time. After repairing the puncture, he came with us in the car, and thanks to live GPS pucks on the cyclists, we were able to identify their position and drop the cyclist a few kilometres ahead, so that he could join the others when they caught up.

The last stage (the 7th) was filled with excitement and joy. There was spectacular scenery in Skåne (the southernmost county in Sweden). For the finish the support vehicle went in front, the cyclists racing behind us. Team Wilier SWE were the winners, but everyone was overjoyed when they passed the goal flag. There, in the town square in Ystad, the cyclists received their medals – and in the evening they celebrated!

Bicycle legend Bernt Johansson and the Fredrikshof service team (the author of the article to the right)

'If you've got a bike and strong legs you can get anywhere.' He did, almost until he died aged 101.

Another bicycle legend was *Stålfarfar* ('Steel Grandpa'). He wanted to compete in the first *Sverigeloppet* in 1951, but at 66 was regarded as too old and was not allowed to enter. The fact that he had arrived by bike from south Sweden didn't count. He started anyhow, one minute after the competitors, and kept going at a steady pace, also when the others slept. Having had only about 10 hours' sleep, Stålfarfar arrived in Ystad 6 days, 14 hours and 20 minutes after he had started. When the pack of young competitors reached the finishing line the following day, Stålfarfar was having an audience with King Gustaf VI Adolf of Sweden.

A cannon ball in the kitchen

by Eva Robards

The traditional Swedish main course for dinner on Christmas Eve is *lutfisk* (which **can** be replaced by cod). The fish is usually served with a white sauce, which makes the dish pretty bland, but in southern Sweden the sauce is considerably spiced up with mustard. For this purpose you can buy *Skånsk senap* in any Swedish supermarket, but you can also make your own.

Modern recipes use a food blender, but that has not worked for me. Nor have mortar and pestle. I wanted to go back to what was used in my childhood: a cannon ball, with which the mustard seeds are crushed by rolling the ball in a bowl held between the knees. The bowl has to be shaped so that the ball can roll around, and with your body you keep the movement going. Liquid needs to be added after some dry grinding – at this point tears start running from your eyes, because of the release of a most pungent volatile oil emerging from the bowl. What happens is that a glucosinate in the seeds is degraded to mustard oil when they are being crushed – a plant defence mechanism against pests and diseases.

Defying these challenges, I bought a supply of black mustard seeds and started my search for a cannon ball. There was one for sale on Ebay, so I made a bid for it. This was accepted, and some days later I could tell my husband that 'by the way, I bought a cannon ball ...' Exploring its origin, we learnt that it was found in York, when piling work was being done to a boat dock near Clifford's Tower. An auger (a tool resembling a large corkscrew) had brought it up from 4-6 feet below river level, where the surrounding blue clay appears to have protected it against corrosion. It is a 6-pounder and might have been in transport or used as ballast on a barge rather than in a fight, to judge from its undamaged surface.

Next step was the bowl. There were some sold in recent auctions in Sweden, see below:

Ceramic bowl made by Höganäs (manufacturer in Skåne), 20th century

Farmstead wooden bowl, 19th century

There were also brand new ones for sale by a Swedish company specialising in cast iron:

Cast iron bowl made by Skultuna

We decided to go for a wooden bowl, approached the local wood turner Neil Lawton RPT, and were in luck: he became interested in our story and happened to have a silver birch wood (food safe) blank that he could try.

The first shaping of the blank

The bowl being turned on the lathe

The result was a bowl rather similar to the old farmstead bowl on the previous page – but beautifully even and smooth to hold. And it worked: I got my first home-made mustard as a tester and am now set up for Christmas Eve my way.

The final product. The cannon ball is seated on an additional bowl (made by the same wood turner) where it can stay in position when not used. Photos: Neil Lawton

Recipe for making mustard – without a cannon ball:

100g of mustard seeds (black strongest, brown less punchy, and yellow mildest)

300 ml of water, vinegar, white wine, whisky, or beer

salt; sugar, or honey; herbs and/or spices

1. Soak the mustard seeds in your liquid of choice for 12-24 hours.
2. Strain the seeds and keep the liquid. Using a small food processor or mortar and pestle, grind the seeds to a paste. Add the liquid back in to achieve desired consistency.
3. Add flavourings – the sky is the limit.

From the bookshelf

Scandinavian/Nordic

Anja Tröger, *Affective Spaces: Migration in Scandinavian and German Transnational Narratives*
Published by Legenda, July 2021

Comparing three novels each from the literatures of Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden, this book follows the migratory journey chronologically to explore its impact on the characters' lives, bodies, and self-understanding.

The author is a Teaching Fellow in Scandinavian Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Jonathan Dee, *The Nordic Book of Runes: Learn to use this ancient code for insight, direction, and divination*
Published by Cico Books, Feb 2021

Find out about the history of runes and gain insight into the past, present, and future with the ancient art of rune-reading.

Jonathan Dee was an author and broadcaster. He was the resident astrologer for BBC Radio Wales.

A Scandinavian Christmas: Festive Tales for a Nordic Noël
Published by Vintage Publishing, Oct 2021

Classic tales from Hans Christian Andersen and Nobel Prize winner Selma Lagerlöf blend with modern-day stories from Karl Ove Knausgaard (Norway) and Vigdis Hjorth (Norway). There are also stories by Zacharias Topelius (Finland), Hjalmar Söderberg (Sweden), Ingvar Ambjørnsen (Norway), Peter Christen Ambjørnsen (Norway), Johan Krohn (Denmark), and Hans Aanrud (Norway).

Carina Rech, *Becoming Artists: Self-Portraits, Friendship Images and Studio Scenes by Nordic Women Painters in the 1880s*
Published by Makadam Förlag, May 2021

This book (the author's dissertation) explores how Nordic women painters represented themselves and one another in their professional roles, how they promoted their work, and how they overcame obstacles and inscribed themselves into the visual history of their profession.

A PDF can be downloaded for non-commercial use on bit.ly/3Ddp8e7.

Danish

Ursula Scavenius, *The Dolls*, translated by Jennifer Russell
Published by Lolli Editions, Oct 2021

The Dolls is a collection of four stories, all populated with estranged or exiled characters navigating surreal situations.

Michael Strunge, *Speed of Life*, translated by Paul Russell Garrett
Published by Nordisk Books, Nov 2021

The 1978 debut collection in a bilingual edition, expressing unflinching ethics and explosive poems about love and the city. Strunge took his own life in 1986, aged only 27, but with the ouvre of eleven collections, his legacy lives on.

Ida Marie Hede, *Adorable*, translated by Sherilyn Nicolette Hellberg
Published by Lolli Editions, May 2021

***Adorable* is a haunting portrait of a young family told in four parts, in Copenhagen and London. The author powerfully insists that it is impossible to tell where death and life begin or end.**

Finnish

Tony Lurcock, '*Finish Off with Finland': A Miscellany*
Published by CB Editions, July 2021

An array of Finnish–British encounters and adventures in both countries – including Sibelius's and Mannerheim's repeated visits to England.

Tony Lurcock is a member of the Anglo-Finnish Society.

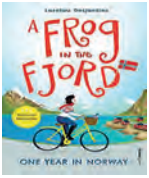
Icelandic

Oren Falk, *Violence and Risk in Medieval Iceland: This Spattered Isle*
Published by Oxford University Press, April 2021

An analaysis of violence in medieval Iceland in instrumental, symbolic, and cognitive terms, focusing on power, signification, and risk respectively.

Oren Falk is Associate Professor of History and Medieval Studies at Cornell University, working primarily with Icelandic sagas.

Norwegian

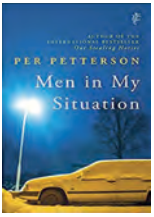


Lorelou Desjardins, *A Frog in the Fjord: One Year in Norway*
Paperback published by North Press, May 2021

'Moving to Norway and travelling all around the country, I discovered a country with much more diversity than I had expected. I hope that you will laugh at all my mistakes, as well as learn from them.'

Jan Grue, *I Live a Life Like Yours: A Memoir*, translated by B.L. Crook
Published by Pushkin Press, Nov 2021

Grue folds insights from art, film and literature into an expansive account of who he was expected to be, and who he became. The diagnosis of spinal muscular atrophy at the age of three had defined his body as defective, with a bleak and limited future.



Per Petterson, *Men in My Situation*, translated by Ingvild Burkey
Published by Harvill Secker, Aug 2021

Arvid Jansen is thirty-eight and divorced. Turid has left with their three girls, slipping into her young, exuberant crowd of friends and a new house, with no trace of their previous life together. More than a year has passed since the tragic accident that took his parents and two of his brothers. Existence has become a question of holding on to a few firm things.

Siri Pettersen, *The Rot*, translated by Siân Mackie and Paul Russell Garrett
Published by Arctis, Oct 2021

***The Rot* is Part Two of *The Raven Rings*, a thrilling fantasy epic. To protect her homeland of Ym, Hirka left it behind. She travelled through the raven rings, a stone circle that can be used as a portal, to an unfamiliar world, a world that seems rotten at its very core.**

Swedish

Simon Ekström and Leos Müller, *Facing the Sea: Essays in Swedish Maritime Studies*
Published by Nordic Academic Press, Oct 2021

For centuries of human history, the sea has seen peaceful trade and war, life and death, and failure. In *Facing the Sea* we meet Swedish experiences of the sea. We can read about smugglers from the Åland Islands, British privateers seizing Swedish ships, Swedish naval officers defending the honour of the flag, disasters and shipwrecks, and much more.

Katrine Marçal, *Mother of Invention: How Good Ideas Get Ignored in an Economy Built for Men*
Published by HarperCollins Publishers, June 2021

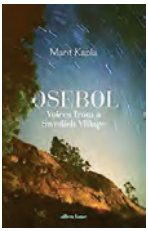
Every day extraordinary inventions and innovative ideas are ignored by investors.
Katrine Marçal is a Swedish economic journalist and writer based in London.

Kerstin Ekman, *Women and the City* tetralogy (*The Witches' Rings*, *The Spring, The Angel House*, *City of Light*), translated by Linda Schenck
Published by Norvik Press, May 2021

The topography of each novel's setting is presented as a character in its own right, changing alongside the women whose lives the series charts, from the advent of the railways to the late twentieth century. Re-issued in new livery, the set has stood the test of time and continues to inspire reflection on the everyday lot of women.

Sara Stridsberg, *The Antarctica of Love*,
translated by Deborah Bragan-Turner
Published by MacLehose Press, Sept. 2021

Inni lives her life on the margins, but it is a life that is full and complex, filled with different shades of dark and light ... until she is brutally murdered on a lake shore.



Marit Kopla, Osebol: *Voices from a Swedish Village*,
translated by Peter Graves
Published by Allen Lane, Nov 2021

The author interviewed nearly every inhabitant (aged 18-92) in the small village of Osebol, and the book consists of their answers, pared down and set out as poems. Gradually the people are brought to life through their own words.

‘So many opportunities...’

Brita Green dips into past Travel Award reports

Summer 2020 was not a good time for foreign travel. This did not become immediately obvious, and the applications for travel awards came in as normal during the early spring. In April we made offers of grants, but in the end most of the trips had to be cancelled or postponed, because of the pandemic. The experiences of the few who actually managed to travel were reported in the 2021/1 issue. In the summer of 2021, things became a little easier, and, following our usual pattern, the reports of this year‘s trips will appear in next year’s issues.

For more than thirty years CoScan has been helping young people (over five hundred by now) to realise their plans to spend time in Scandinavia. One of them, Rosie Hoggmascall, a 2013 recipient, began her report: ‘Life as a seventeen-year-old is brilliant. There are so many opportunities out there.’ That enthusiastic approach is typical of the young people we help. Their activities are very varied: medical students doing electives in major hospitals, science students involved in Arctic research projects, crew members in the Tall Ships’ Race, musicians, scouts, artists ...

So, what have their impressions been of Scandinavia? Beth Dixon, writing in 2017, is one of several who think that ‘the pace of life is much more relaxed here, and I enjoyed the lack of a strict hierarchical society’. Anezka Macey-Dare (2016) says of Copenhagen: ‘What struck me initially was the picturesque nature of the city with all its beautiful lakes and canals. I was also quite surprised by how empty the city was, having been used to the huge crowds of students and tourists filling the streets back in Oxford.’ George Carew-Jones (2019) was left with ‘a lasting impression that Norway has succeeded in something that many other countries have failed to do – namely to integrate nature into their cities in a way that allows an enhanced high quality of life’. Joseph Malone (2013) says, ‘Nature is of great importance to the Swedish population. The close proximity of nature to the city of Stockholm really surprised me. At weekends you often see a mad exodus for the wilderness, as people race to their cabins for solace.’

This Scandinavian love of nature is a common observation, and a theme that runs through almost all the reports is the young people’s own enjoyment of the unspoiled nature, the wilderness – the sheer beauty of it.

Alistair Walker (2014) enthusiastically describes a sunrise in Greenland: ‘I had heard about the midnight sun and the beautiful sunrises and sunsets, but nothing had prepared me for how spectacular they were. It was well worth staying up through the early hours to experience these stunning light effects. When the night was at its darkest the

icebergs were silhouetted against a coffee-coloured sky. With more light the sky became a kaleidoscope of different shades of yellow, orange, pink, purple and blue. In the foreground there was sea ice floating on the water.'

Kazim Ghafoor (2016) said that he had 'witnessed more waterfalls and rainbows' during his five-week Icelandic stay than in his 'previous 23 years on this planet'. Beth Smith (2017) summarised her three months in Iceland: 'We experienced 24 hours of daylight, freezing temperatures, snow, brilliant sunshine, eerie fog, countless beautiful sunsets, and the Northern lights.'

Hannah Ward, climbing an Icelandic mountain in 2016, was struck by the silence: 'The views were breathtaking. I was the only person up there, surrounded by snow and just the wind for noise. I have climbed a few mountains in the UK where there is always some sound, other people, birds, animals, but here there was nothing, and it was incredible.'

The arctic regions have been particularly popular destinations for our recipients, and they have provided some exciting new experiences. Rosie Pritchett, a medical student spending three winter months in Stockholm in 2014, decided to visit Abisko north of the Arctic Circle, where a morning's dog-sledding was a highlight: 'Flying through the blank wilderness at high speed was exhilarating. The next day we put on cross-country skis and went onto the large frozen lake which had an island in the middle. Behind the island, a man had bored a hole in the ice, using what looked like a cross between a large screwdriver and a chainsaw. The hole showed the depth of the ice to be about 40 cm. He had passed a fishing line through the hole,

Photo: Beth Dixon (Norway 2017)

but had not caught anything yet. He had travelled to the lake on his snowmobile, and on hearing that we had never driven one, he put the keys in the ignition and let us each take a turn.'

Richard Bailey, on the 2012 British Schools Exploring Society expedition to a Norwegian glacier, wrote: 'It was a three-and-a-half-hour hike, and the majority of this time was spent in a white-out. As we were roped up for safety and had no one to talk to for the entirety, this was an eerie experience.'

In 2016 Beth Smith volunteered as a research intern on a carnivore project in Finnish Karelia. Her main task was tracking wolves, lynxes and wolverines: 'A few weeks into my internship it was my birthday, and I couldn't think of a better way to enter my 23rd year than in a hide in the middle of the wilderness. The hide had a bunk bed, a frozen barrel of water, a camping stove, a heater, a dry toilet, and a fantastic view over a marsh where big carcasses had been placed as bait. When I woke in the morning I was greeted by the sight of several golden and white-tailed eagles, and shortly afterwards three wolves materialised out of the dawn haze and began to feed on a carcass only fifty metres from the hide.'

In 2011, Katherine Pears had signed up to go on a two-month expedition to Svalbard with BSES (British Schools Exploring Society): 'The first phase of our trip was one giant lesson in arctic survival: learning how to set up camp (complete with bear wires and a dug out loo), ski whilst pulling a heavy *pulka*, and melt enough snow to stay hydrated. We also learnt to shoot a rifle in case of polar bears, how to walk with crampons, how to rope up for glacier travel, and basic first aid. After our induction to arctic life, we had an expedition phase. My team managed to summit two mountains, cross three glaciers and travel 27 km in one day. We also built a giant snow hole and spent a night sleeping under the snow. It was certainly challenging, but when you are living in a place of such wild beauty it is impossible to have a bad day. My group also discovered a completely new ice cave which extended 89 metres back into the mountain. All over the ceiling the light from our head torches reflected off millions of ice crystals, beautifully formed and incredibly fragile.'

Long before Glasgow COP26 Alistair Walker worried about global warming. On his 2014 visit to Greenland he spotted whales and polar bears, and 'it was fantastic to get the chance to explore the glaciers on foot. The scale of them made me feel very small and insignificant. I loved hearing the thunderous sound of the glacier calving into the fjord. It is interesting to think of the long journey the ice makes from the glacier as an iceberg, until it melts into water far away from where it was formed. The pack ice was stunning too, but it made me sad to see it and think how its extent has declined due to climate change over recent decades. It is a real worry to me that it might disappear altogether in my lifetime.'

Freya Muir went to Iceland in 2015 where she helped create 'a model for introducing into inner-city districts outdoor gym equipment (like a playground for adults!) fitted with electricity-generating technology'. She

spent her leisure time in very active pursuits: 'We hiked in the outwash valley between three enormous glaciers, we rode in six-wheeled "super jeeps" across volcanic sand beaches, we snorkelled in glacial melt-water (which is 4ºC year round!) and we ate bread cooked with geothermally heated rocks.'

Freya's report, like most, is rounded off with an expression of her gratitude for the experience – and of how it has given her a taste for more: 'I am so grateful to everyone who makes the award scheme possible for young travellers like me. I'm sure my parents and peers hoped it would quench my thirst for travel for a little while, but it has done the complete opposite:

Next stop, once refuelled and refunded: the rest of Scandinavia!'

'My favourite waterfall, Aldeyjarfoss [in Iceland], with its striking basalt columns'
Photo: Beth Smith (2017)

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– or just drop Tony Bray a line (tony.bray@coscan.org.uk) and he will send you a form to fill in

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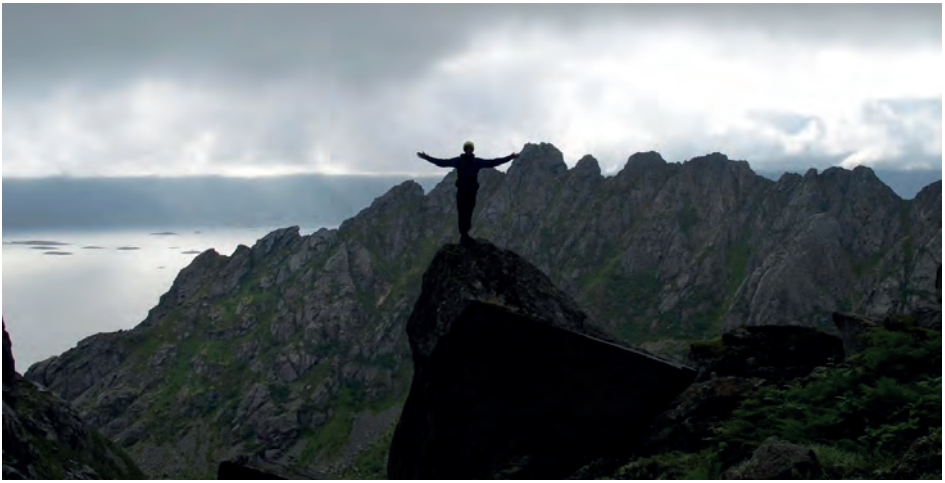

'What the Vikings call Valhalla' Photo: Sam Black (2015)

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