

# CoScan Magazine

## 2022/2



The Magazine for the Confederation of Scandinavian Societies  
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## Message from the President

Mark Elliott

Six months ago, in this excellent magazine, my message was in a sense a farewell. I am happy to say that the question of a new President for CoScan is now being actively pursued. Meanwhile, however, I think that this time at least there is a need for a presidential-type word or two.

The autumn of 2022 has been momentous. The war in Ukraine, and the multi-faceted developments in British politics, are not matters on which CoScan can legitimately comment. But the accession of King Charles III as our sovereign, after the death of Queen Elizabeth II on 8 September, is above politics and touches us all. The citizens of the five Nordic countries are among those most nearly affected. The royal families of Denmark, Norway and Sweden are linked with their British cousins through an intricate network, with a common ancestor in our own Queen Victoria. On the day of our late Queen's funeral they were very much part of the family, participating also in the more restricted

and intimate occasion at Windsor. When I handed my credentials as ambassador to King Harald in 1994, the first line of the formal letter to him from Queen Elizabeth read 'Sir my brother and dear cousin' — embodying a relationship not only of shared sovereignty but of family.

The values which we all share were brought to the forefront of our national consciousness during that period of national mourning. There was universal admiration for Queen Elizabeth's determination and devoted commitment into her very last days. The King's first message to the nation, full of warmth and personal dedication to service, moved us all. Each country in our region has its own differing traditions, and the role of monarchy varies accordingly, but all would I think respect the same ethical framework. At a time of political flux at the parliamentary level, we in this country are especially grateful for the sure hand of a monarch, and the experience which transcends and outlives the day-to-day struggle.

In our small way, we in CoScan can help to bring together those northern European countries in which we are active, and to develop the collective strength and wisdom which may be greater than the sum of its parts.



# Editor’s note

Eva Robards

The present winter edition of the magazine has been slightly delayed so as to make it possible to include a report on this year’s Drinks Reception, an event that over the years has proved valuable in establishing active contact between representatives of our different organisations, which is central to CoScan. However, we recognise that visiting London is not easy for those in the north of the country. Therefore it is wonderful that the AGM/Conference next year will be held in Orkney, which makes it possible also for societies in the north to get together, though we are sad that Jean Crichton won’t be among those looking after us (her obituary is on page 11).

Some of our cultural links with Ukraine, established over centuries, have been included in this issue to link

us even more closely to what is going on in that country at present. (You can download a pdf with more on the history, in Swedish and English, for free: [Olga-Ingegerd-vikingafurstinnor-i-oest.pdf](#).) But the majority of articles are cheerful, particularly that on ScandiKitchen, which focuses on Christmas. Like CoScan they turn to more than one country, while most other organisations and businesses in the UK aim at just the one. In SkandiKitchen’s weekly newsletter you can learn about idiosyncratic expressions and habits among all the Scandinavian/Nordic peoples; subscription is free and indeed recommended.

You may have views on the contents of this magazine. If so, please let us know so that we can improve further. You may even be able to contribute, in particular on something from your own organisation ... or an article of general interest ... please!

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## The Editorial Board



Our Editorial Board member Dr Peter Addyman CBE, and Commander of the Royal Norwegian Order of St Olav, has been celebrated at a gala dinner organised by York Archaeological Trust (YAT) commemorating its 50th anniversary on 30 September 2022. Peter Addyman was the founder and first chairman of YAT. On the same date, his book on the Trust’s half-century was launched (see page 24).

**Peter Addyman being applauded at the dinner**  
Printed with permission of YAT



Sadly, Professor Sid Bradley has found it necessary to limit his activities and is stepping down from the Editorial Board, of which he has been an active member since 2015. His support for this magazine has been most valuable: he has secured articles, either through his own writing or his contacts, has helped develop the magazine's style, and has spent considerable time and effort on proof-reading before the final printing — a task essential for keeping the quality of the magazine as high as possible. We are indeed grateful and will miss him, not least the pleasure of his company at our biannual board meetings.



Sid Bradley's expertise is wide: his own publications include major works on Anglo-Saxon poetry, N.F.S. Grundtvig, medieval Danish historiography, Danish ballads, English medieval literature, iconography and literature in the English post-Conquest period, archaeology, 17th-century Danish and English political tracts, and English 18th-century bawdy songs.

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## Renewal of Memberships

by Manja Rønne, CoScan Treasurer and Membership Secretary



Dear CoScan members

First of all, I would like to thank all members for their support in 2022. It is much appreciated. Without you there would not be a CoScan.

As you will know, a new membership year starts in January, and renewal forms will be emailed to existing members early in the new year. Membership forms can also be found on CoScan's website, at [www.coscan.org.uk/join](http://www.coscan.org.uk/join).

It would help my work as treasurer if members could kindly renew as early as possible in the New Year to avoid my having to chase you later.

### Accounts Scrutiniser

After many years as accounts scrutiniser Peter Ryder decided to step down this year, and CoScan would like to thank Peter very much for his friendly and knowledgeable assistance over the years. This, however, means that we are looking for somebody to take over this (unpaid) position. If you would like details of what what is involved in being a scrutiniser, or if you would like to be CoScan's new scrutiniser, please send a line to [treasurer@coscan.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@coscan.org.uk)

With best wishes to all for a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!

# CoScan AGM 2023

by Michael Davis, CoScan Secretary



**Scapa Flow**

Photo: Eva Robards

CoScan will hold its Annual General Meeting 2023 in Orkney at the invitation of ONFA (Orkney Norway Friendship Association). Guests of ONFA on two previous occasions, in 1990 and 2004, we will be relying again on their invaluable support. Lise Hodgson, then CoScan Secretary, reported in the autumn issue of the CoScan Magazine 2004 on when ‘CoScan went to Orkney’ earlier that year, and the wonderful memories the

participants had come away with. The weekend programme had been packed with a wide selection of activities: a generous drinks reception, meals (with the Norwegian Ambassador present at the Saturday dinner), music entertainment, and sightseeing to historic and other places of interest. The finishing touch had been a drink from the Bride’s Cog: a hot punch made from strong ale, whisky, brown sugar etc. — strong stuff.



**Skara Brae**

Photo: Eva Robards

This time as well, there will be sightseeing opportunities: a city walk ('a 1000 years of historic Kirkwall', including St Magnus Cathedral), and/or a coach tour to the UNESCO World Heritage Neolithic sites Skara Brae and the stone circles which are older than Stonehenge and the pyramids of Giza. Other interesting places are Scapa Flow with its vast natural harbour used in wartime as a naval base for the British Fleet, and the Orkneyinga Saga Centre in Orphir where Norse Earls used to live. Tours will not have guiding fees added, but coach hires would have to break even.

There are numerous travel options to Orkney. Inverness and Glasgow have a flight most days, while flights go from London, Aberdeen and Edinburgh several times a day. There are trains to Aberdeen or Thurso, and daily ferries from Aberdeen and Scrabster.

An application form with firm details will be sent out to members early next year. Do join us if you can (21-23 April 2023). After Covid, it will be a chance to meet up with old friends and to enjoy a place quite exceptional in all the things it can offer us.

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## CoScan Nordic Person of the Year Award 2023

by Bridget Morris

The Nordic Person of 2023 will be the young Icelandic pianist Víkingur Ólafsson.

With his remarkable combination of highest level musicianship and visionary programmes, he is one of the most sought-after artists of today; he performs as artist in residence at the world's top orchestras, concert halls and festivals, and collaborates with today's greatest composers.

Ólafsson's talent extends to broadcasting: he has presented several of his own series for television and radio. He was Artist in Residence weekly for eleven weeks during lockdown on BBC Radio 4's arts programme Front Row. There he was performing live on the grand piano from the empty Harpa Concert Hall in



Víkingur Ólafsson

Reykjavík, reaching millions of listeners around the world.

Arrangements are currently being made for the presentation of the award to Víkingur when he is next in Britain.



# CoScan's Drinks Reception 2022

by Eva Robards



**Dr Jenny Gimpel speaking with Professor David Goldsmith (Anglo-Swedish Society)**

Photo: Chris Howell, CoScan

Our fifth Drinks Reception, again kindly organised by Alexander Malmaeus, was held at the Savile Club on 29 November. As well as on CoScan itself, brief presentations were given on Anglo-Danish Society (Wayne Harber), Anglo-Finnish Society (Clive Suckling), Anglo-Norse Society, Grieg Society UK and the Norwegian Church (Paul Gobey), Anglo-Swedish Society (David Goldsmith), Danish Women in England and the Danish Church (Alette Rye Scales and Grethe Hauge), Finnish Church (Tina Falzon and Hikka Philips), Northants Anglo-Scandinavian Society (Jens Buus), SveaBritt and the Swedish Church (Karin Sjölin Frudd and Barbro McAusland), Viking Society for Northern Research (Alison Finlay), and York

Anglo-Scandinavian Society (YASS, Eva Robards). Guest organisations giving presentations were the Norwegian Club (Constance Bowes-Lyon and Maria Ellord-Nord) and LondonSwedes (Charlotte Ågren).

Widespread problems felt among the organisations are: attracting new membership, acquiring volunteers for the necessary committee/council tasks, and, after Covid, to get people to leave the comfort of their homes for events ('to get them out of the groove and rekindle the flame'). There were calls for collaboration and sharing ideas. An example of a successful collaboration was that of SveaBritt and YASS, which was initiated at last year's drinks party (see next page).

# SveaBritt and YASS joint event in York

by Karin Sjölin Frudd

The Swedish network of professional women in the UK, SveaBritt, meets monthly for various events in London. In addition it has become a tradition to have an outing about once a year to other places of interest outside the capital.

York had been on the list for some time and the CoScan Drinks Party last year provided a golden opportunity for representatives from SveaBritt and York Anglo-Scandinavian Society (YASS) to explore the possibility of a joint event. A number of emails followed to develop the idea, and also meetings in person, and eventually we were pleased to present a programme for the weekend of 29-30 October.

We started with a joint lunch provided by SveaBritt and Hovingham Bakery

during which we were honoured to have Professor Tony Robards, chairman of York Archeological Trust (YAT) as our guest speaker and learn about YAT and the approved plans for a 'Roman attraction' in York.

Following the lunch, our YASS guides (Steve Bielby, Eva Robards and Rome Sigsworth) showed us some fascinating historic sites in the city centre.

Our next stop was the beautifully restored medieval townhouse Barley Hall where we also had a *fika* served by our own Viking guide who then took us to the Jorvik Viking Centre. We all felt a special connection to the history of the Vikings staged so vividly by the Jorvik Centre.

After a short rest we met again in the evening for pre-dinner drinks, followed



Listening to our Viking outside Jorvik Viking Centre

Photo: Karin Sjölin Frudd



Members of SveaBritt and YASS

Photo: Ann-Katrin (Ankan) Berggren

by a delicious three-course dinner at the restaurant Chopping Block at Walmgate Ale House. The owner and chef Michael



Michael Hjorth

Hjorth told us about his Danish roots and background working with the famous Roux Restaurants as well as his current role as Festival Director at the annual York Food Festival.

During the dinner we had presentations from each organisation: Cecilia Rydström-Haszlkiewicz and me on SveaBritt, Brita Green on YASS and Eva Robards on CoScan. We also had the pleasure to have a sing-song, in good Scandinavian style. One song represented YASS (lyrics by YASS member Ruth

Corry for the society's 50th anniversary in 2010) and one represented SveaBritt (lyrics by SveaBritt member Eivor Martinus for a visit to York in 1990). Both songs were inspired by the Viking theme.

The programme for the Sunday had been left optional and some members of SveaBritt visited York Chocolate Story, York Minster and Art of Protest Gallery while fitting in some *fika* and shopping before travelling back to London.

The purpose for us, the visitors, was twofold: to see and learn more about York and —above all— to get to know each other in our respective organisations. It had been a fabulous weekend and our co-operation proved most successful.

*Karin Sjölin Frudd is Chair of SveaBritt (CoScan member since 2021).*



## The Anglo-Danish Society Students' Section reunited

The Anglo-Danish Society Students' Section was founded in 1951 in co-operation with its parent body, the Anglo-Danish Society; the aim was to help young Danish people feel at home in England. The club, later renamed Great Dane, met every Tuesday, and all Scandinavian visitors or those with an interest in Denmark were welcome. Many friendships and relationships were formed.

A newsletter was produced monthly giving details of activities at the club, and of other Scandinavian activities in London and events of importance in and around the city.

A wide range of activities was on the programme. Among these were country holidays, weekend trips to beauty spots, walking, horse riding,

pub crawls, theatre/museum/industry/visits, regular discotheque, *smørrebrød* evening, beer-drinking contest, pancake party, *fastelavn* party, car rally, meetings arranged for au-pairs, flamenco evening, skiing, water-skiing, football matches, orienteering, ice-skating, folk dancing, celebration of Sankt Hans, excursions in the UK (including an annual pilgrimage to Scotland), and mini trips to Denmark.

The text above was drawn from CoScan Newsletters  
 Summer 1973: Vice-chairman Mike Watson  
 Winter 1975: Publicity Secretary Alan Denney  
 Summer 1976: Secretary Bette Petersen  
 Spring 1978: Andi R. Ferguson

The club folded in the 80's but on 15 November 2022 (on a Tuesday of course!) a reunion of former members was held in a London pub.



Long weekend in Norfolk. 'Travelled by hired mini-bus and spent days sailing on the Broads, horse riding, walking and swimming.'

CoScan Newsletter Spring 1976

## Obituaries

### Alfhild Wellborne

by Mark Elliott



Alfhild Wellborne, who died in July, was for many years a constant and influential presence at the heart of CoScan activities. Already a member of the Executive Committee when I came on the scene at the turn of the century, she also served on the Magazine Editorial Board (2012-2015) and the Trust Fund committee (2007-2016). She was a lively attendee at all the overseas CoScan Conferences, representing the Anglo-Scandinavian Society of Newcastle, of which she was at one time President and eventually an honorary life member.

Alfhild was born in May 1944 near Bergen in Norway, and grew up surrounded by a large extended family on both sides. She met Harry Wellborne



ANGLO-SCANDINAVIAN SOCIETY  
Newcastle upon Tyne

on a trip to Newcastle in the early 1960s, moved to England in 1965, and they were married in July 1968. She was very active in the Newcastle Scandinavian community, was much involved with the arrangements for the annual Norwegian Christmas tree ceremony, and met both King Olav and King Harald. But she also worked more generally for cross-community relations in the city, and her activities within the local church included the establishment of a multi-faith prayer room in the Civic Centre. The family travelled widely within Europe, and Alfhild also travelled solo to Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

Encounters with Alfhild in the CoScan context were always a pleasure. She was energetic and full of ideas. On social occasions her powerful and warm personality blossomed; I recall particularly vividly one evening at a Shetland conference when she took charge and launched into song (she was a talented singer), inspiring us all. Her name recurs constantly in the records of discussion — though the spell-check on my laptop, rather charmingly, preferred the spelling ‘Elf-Child’, a lovely thought. She will be much missed.

For CoScan Magazine 2013/2 Alfhild wrote the article ‘Switching the lights on in Newcastle’, which included a translation by her: the ‘Greeting to the tree’.

## Jean Crichton 1934-2022 — a tribute

by Ishbel Borland



Jean Crichton was a long-term supporter of ONFA and in fact she and her husband Bill were on the very first ONFA committee in 1978. She had been a schoolteacher and had a great love of all things to do with young people, so that when a group of young musicians came over from Norway Jean was involved in looking after them ... a hospitality that lasted through her whole life. From these early exchanges and during the era of the charter flights from Kirkwall to Bergen Jean was involved with ONFA in making and fostering links with Norwegians who are still friends today! She served in a variety of roles on the committee but excelled in her many years as Chairman when she led ONFA with a strong hand and came up with many suggestions of ways in which to try and involve more young people in the organisation and keep the links alive.

Jean was not only involved with ONFA but was keen to promote the learning of Norwegian in Orkney and helped to set up many different classes over the years, and with her own superb grasp of the language she guided us through many trips to Norway.

It was through Jean and Bill that my husband Colin and I became involved with CoScan and we enjoyed many memorable AGMs in different locations in their sparkling company. She is sadly missed and our condolences go to Bill, her husband of over 60 years.

For CoScan Magazine 2012/1 Jean wrote the articles 'ONFA taking Norway to Flotta' and 'Three days of rain in Bergen'. For CoScan Magazine 2015/1 she wrote 'Orkney-Norway Friendship Association's *syttende mai*'.





## The Swedish village in Ukraine — an update

Four years ago (2018/2), we told the story of *Gammalsvenskby* by the Dnieper river, a village of Swedish-speakers from Estonia who had ended up in the Kherson district of Ukraine in the 1780s. This year, Ukraine has been dominating the news. We couldn't help wondering how the war was affecting the 'Old Swedish Village'. Even keener to learn about its fate — and to give practical help — are members of a Swedish society called *Svenskbyborna* (= Swedish village inhabitants), which consists mainly of descendants of a large group of people from the village who had come to live in Sweden at the end of the 1920s. The present chairman, whose grandparents were among the group, has been in almost daily contact with *Gammalsvenskby* since the war began. She has many friends there, having visited the village twenty times since 2010.



Very early on she was told that one of the villagers' main worries was that the world would not be told the truth. Everything was chaotic, and there were all sorts of rumours, true and false, flying around. The Society set up a working group in order to vet and verify all information, and they have been reporting on the situation regularly on their website ([www.svenskbyborna.se](http://www.svenskbyborna.se)).

Here are a few extracts:

*24 February:* 'The unthinkable has happened. Russia invades Ukraine.'

*24 March:* 'A dark day in Gammalsvenskby. The village is now Russian-occupied.'

*26 September:* 'Internet and mobile communications in the village were shut down whilst a "referendum" was held. Officials went from house to house, armed with automatic weapons. The villagers had decided to lock themselves in their houses and not open their gates or doors to them. You could hear knocking on doors and dogs barking loudly. Some residents went out and declared that they refused to vote. A few did vote.'

*30 September:* 'Russia's annexation of the village was declared today. Grocery stores are closing. It will be a big problem to buy food, hygiene items and medicine.'

*2 October:* ‘There are many power cuts, which makes contact with the outside world difficult. More villagers left the village in the days before the annexation, but it is very dangerous as the Russian army continues its bombing of civilian targets and car convoys. Those who remain in the village are mostly the elderly, those who cannot leave, and those who stay to take care of their elders.’

*17 October:* ‘More Russian soldiers have arrived, they have set up a roadblock with armoured vehicles, and are checking documents. The occupiers have also introduced a curfew for the population of the village between 6 pm and 6 am.’

*22 October:* ‘Russia is threatening to blow up the dam at Nova Kakhovka. Gammalsvenskby is located 25 km upstream from the dam.’

*23 October:* ‘There has been no electricity or water for five days, which is a big problem, especially for the elderly.’

By this time more than half the population of the village had fled, most to western Ukraine and Poland. About sixty people had gone to Sweden. The website continued to report on the village being

without electricity, water and access to the internet, and on the lack of groceries, medicines and fuel.

Then — at last:

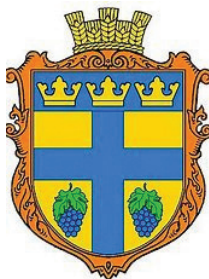
*11 November:* ‘The Russian occupiers left Gammalsvenskby yesterday!’ But ‘before they left, they knocked down all the electricity poles and mined everything around the village. As a parting gift, they blew up *Kungsvägen* and the road to Novo Berislav. *Kungsvägen* is the road that was built from the main road down to the village in connection with the Swedish royal visit in 2008.’

*12 November:* ‘Scenes of joy in Gammalsvenskby! Now the Ukrainian army has reached the village. The Ukrainian flag was raised last night, and the villagers sang the Ukrainian national anthem.’

*22 November:* The village has been subject to shelling for several days, and one person has been killed’.

The war is not over. *Svenskbyborna* Society continues to collect money and send aid.

Life in Gammalsvenskby before the war can be watched on YouTube videos.



The coat of arms of Gammalsvenskby/ Zmijivka  
featuring Sweden's three crowns

## Scandinavian-Ukrainian links, in addition to Gammalsvenskby

Swedish Vikings made their way from the Baltic Sea, via the rivers, down to 'Miklagård' (Constantinople/Istanbul), among other places. They were known in Eastern Europe as *rus* (or 'Varangians'). The origin of *rus* is presumably derived from an old Swedish word for rowing, but there are other suggestions. Extensive archaeological remains from the Vikings have been found along the river systems and indicate a close contact between Scandinavia and the state Kyiv Rus, which they had founded.

800s  
900s

1019

Princess Ingegerd was a daughter of Olof Skötkonung, the first Swedish king to be baptised. She was married in 1019 to Yaroslav the Wise, Grand Prince of Kyiv. Her name was then changed to Irina. When she became a nun, it was changed again, to Anna, and she is now Saint Anna in the Orthodox church. Among the reasons for her sainthood was that she initiated the building of cathedrals in Kyiv and Novgorod. Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, an architectural monument of Kyivan Rus, is inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The Battle of Poltava marks the end of Sweden's age of greatness. The army of King Charles XII of Sweden, outnumbered four to one, faced that of Tsar Peter the Great of Russia. Monday 26 June 1709 was one of the bloodiest in Swedish history and already at noon over 8,000 Swedish soldiers had been killed and 2,600 taken as prisoners. Charles XII and 1,500 followers escaped southwards into Turkish-occupied territory. Ivan Mazepa, the leader of Cossack-controlled Ukraine had joined forces with the Swedes. After the battle, he escaped with Charles XII into Bendery in the Turkish-controlled Moldavia, where he died and was succeeded as leader by Pylyp Orlik.

1709  
1710

In 1710, Pylyp Orlik drafted the first Ukrainian constitution, considered the earliest democratic constitution in Europe. Orlik had escaped with Charles XII and Mazepa to Bendery. The constitution was confirmed by Charles XII. The Latin original is kept in the National Archives of Sweden but was on temporary display in Saint Sophia Cathedral for the 30th anniversary of Ukraine's independence.

When Charles XII returned home, Orlik accompanied him and lived in Kristianstad 1716-19 with a group of Ukrainian refugees. In 2011 a monument dedicated to Pylyp Orlik was erected there to celebrate the tercentenary of his constitution.

2011





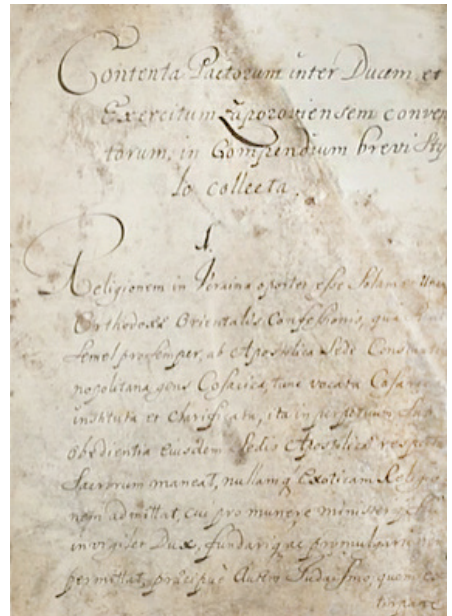
**Viking trade routes in Eastern Europe**



**Ingegerd and Yaroslav I of Kyiv**  
Painting by A. I. Transkovskij (19th century)



**Charles XII with Mazepa**  
From a painting by G. O. Cederström (1845-1933)



**The first page of Orlik's constitution**

## Travelling to the Wild North

by Brita Green

In the 18th century, travellers from this country did not often choose to visit Northern Europe, and those who did felt they were entering an exotic unknown. This is one traveller's experience of sailing from Hull to Gothenburg in the 1790s.

After finally setting off — the ship's departure having been delayed by several days because of adverse winds — and spending 'eleven days of weariness on board a vessel not intended for the accommodation of passengers', Mary was at last in Swedish waters. The captain, whose destination was Elsinore, had promised to put her ashore at Gothenburg.

They may have been in Swedish waters, but now the vessel was becalmed in the Gothenburg archipelago. However, Mary had spotted a lighthouse on an island, and she 'exerted all her rhetoric to prevail on the captain to let her have the ship's boat'. The moment she was given his permission, two sailors 'hoisted out the boat ... and promised to row her to the lighthouse'. The first people they encountered were two old men, 'scarcely human in appearance', whom they 'forced out of their wretched huts'. The men refused to leave their posts but were able to tell them that there was a pilot's dwelling on the other side of the island.

'Two guineas tempted the sailors to risk the captain's displeasure' and row on a little further. As they were 'turning into the most picturesque bay', they located

the pilot's cottage, but it turned out that the only person who might be able to help was the boss, a retired lieutenant who could speak English. So they all set off together, now in two boats, to find the lieutenant. And 'turning round a bold protuberance of the rocks, they saw a boat making towards them'. It was indeed the lieutenant, and he was approaching them 'with some earnestness' to investigate who they were.

Worrying about her two helpers, Mary immediately decided to have all her luggage moved over to the lieutenant's boat and sent the sailors back to their ship, hoping that their jokes — about the captain perhaps having taken advantage of a slight westerly breeze to sail on without them — would not turn out to be true. Arriving at the lieutenant's cottage, Mary admitted that she 'was not sorry to see a female figure' there, although she claimed definitely not to have been thinking of robberies, murders, or 'the other evil'.

The lieutenant and his wife turned out to be helpful and hospitable — and very respectful — and they had a clean home 'with some degree of rural elegance'. Mary insisted on climbing a hill to try to 'see whether the honest tars had regained their ship', and with the help of the lieutenant's telescope she could see the vessel underway and no sign of the rowing-boat, so she felt reassured. On their walk back down to the lieutenant's house, the 'picturesque beauty' of the unfamiliar rocky landscape delighted Mary: 'patches of earth of the most exquisite verdure, enamelled with the sweetest wild flowers'.

The lieutenant took her to visit a neighbouring family and, despite language difficulties, Mary was warmly received. And everyone thought it hilarious when the children offered the lieutenant a box of snuff ‘out of which an artificial mouse, fastened to the bottom, sprung’. In the evening, Mary was reluctant to go to bed: ‘I could write at midnight very well without a candle. Nothing can equal the beauty of the northern summer’s evening and night.’

The lieutenant helped to arrange for her further travel, the twenty-odd miles to Gothenburg, and he insisted on accompanying her. That turned out to be very helpful when they reached the city and an officious customs officer began to search her trunks and ‘blustered for money’.

The trouble was that she was ‘unprovided with a passport, not having entered any great town’. In many countries in Europe at this time, passports were issued within the country for specific places or journeys, and were not mainly used for foreign travel. Presumably because she was in possession of ‘recommendatory letters’ to important people in the city, Mary was confident that she would be able to obtain a passport in Gothenburg, and she finally reached her destination about a fortnight after leaving Hull.

For a woman to travel ‘unaccompanied’ — i.e. without a male companion — was relatively unusual at the time. Even more remarkable was the fact that she brought her one-year-old daughter with her, as well as a maid. But the intrepid traveller whose first impressions of Scandinavia

we have just witnessed was Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (and mother of Mary Shelley of *Frankenstein* fame). Her trip was also to include visits to Norway and Denmark, and it lasted for over three months, from late June till early October 1795.

Mary certainly had a much more eventful journey to Gothenburg than I have ever had. Travel has been transformed since the 18th century: nowadays, thankfully, we do not often have to rely on our own resources to the same extent. But Mary’s description of her encounters with many different people in the ‘Wild North’ reminds us that human nature does not change much.

Quotations are from Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (first published in 1796), edited by Richard Holmes, Penguin Books 1987.

See also: Sid Bradley, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft on the state of Denmark’ in *CoScan Magazine* 2018/2.



**Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97)**  
Painted by John Opie



# The enigmatic Överhogdal tapestries

by Anita Sydbom



The history of these tapestries is as thrilling as they are puzzling. Many people have attempted to understand and solve their puzzle, but no-one can truly know who made them or where or even why. These tapestries seem to depict both the life and legends of a people lost to the annals of time, but through their work we can imagine who they were and how they lived. These are one of Europe's most remarkable textile treasures and who knows how many little secrets they yet hold.

The tapestries date from between 1040 and 1170, during the era of the Vikings and the beginning of Christianity, and are one of the oldest textiles to have been preserved. These tapestries contain motifs from both the old Nordic and the Christian faith.

The tapestries were found in 1910 by Paul Jonze, in a storehouse next to the church in Överhogdal, a small village situated in Härjedalen, Sweden. Jonze

was on an inventory tour of the county, on behalf of Jamtli Museum, the Jämtland County Museum, in Östersund. These are his own words of his discovery:

‘The tapestry was neither rolled up nor hanging, but like a large rag crumpled up on the floor to the right of the door. It lay among dusty mouldings and other bits of interior decoration, old birch logs, wingless angels and other sundry rubbish that accumulates over the years in such storage places.’

When the Överhogdal tapestry was originally found, it consisted of several long pieces, loosely stitched together, of 161 x 195 cm. However, by using the Carbon-14 dating method, it was established that the panels were joined together in the 14th century. The different pieces were then separated in 1928 and since then have been exhibited as individual panels at the Jamtli Museum where they are the crown jewels of the museum.



Ulla Oscarsson, *The enigmatic Överhogdal tapestries*, Jamtli Förlag, 2010.

Photos: Jamtli



The tapestries are astonishingly well preserved, with lovely deep colours of vibrant red and blue against a natural white background. They are woven with a special technique (*soumak*), which has not been used since the Middle Ages. The different pieces are filled with crowds of figures and animals, all moving from the right to the left. Many kinds of animals, trees, buildings, and ships are depicted. There have been many attempts over the years to try to understand the meaning of this special collection of woven figures and what they tell us about the times when they were made. In the middle of the piece at the top of page 18 you can spot a tree that has been said to be the world tree Yggdrasil of the Old Norse pagan faith. In another piece you can see Christian figures interpreted as Mary riding the donkey led by Joseph.

### The Överhogdal tapestry of our time

In 2010 there was a 100-year celebration of the discovery of the Överhogdal tapestry. Ulla Oscarsson, antiquarian at Jamtli, invited people from the county of Jämtland and Härjedalen to participate in the creation of an ‘Överhogdal tapestry of our time’.

About 90 people responded to this summons. The ambition of this project

was that our new tapestry would survive for 1000 years and convey its message to the people of the future, like the original. Motifs could be chosen freely, but should be about things close to us or our time.

Analysis of the original tapestries provided information about the plants used to dye the yarn, such as indigo blue (dyer’s woad, *Isatis tinctoria*), crimson red (dyer’s madder, *Rubia tinctoria*), yellow (dyer’s rocket, *Reseda luteola*) and green (by mixing yellow and blue). All participants got a package with a piece of unbleached worsted wool and bunches of woollen yarn in white, yellow, green and also two shades of red and blue.

It was an honour to be part of this exciting project. I chose dance as my main motif. For me, dance is life itself. It fills me with joy and happiness. Dancing is an important part of many cultures — you dance for joy as well as for sorrow. I believe dancing causes the release of ‘dance-endorphins’. In addition, I wanted to show the most beautiful time of the year: midsummer, with dancing around the maypole. Also, I added to the picture things that give me joy: in the corners are our *fäbod* (in bygone days a form of small-scale farm where animals were sent for summer grazing), the church in Tännäs (Sweden’s highest situated



‘The Överhogdal tapestry of our time’ out in the open

Photo: Johan Lindeberg, Östersunds-Posten

church, 648 metres above sea level) and the landscape flower of Härjedalen (lady of the snows, *Pulsatilla vernalis*). Finally, as a signature, I have put myself wearing my national dress from the region of Oxie (south Sweden). The different couples dancing represent costumes from different parts of the country.

When finished, all the different pieces of work were sewn together, to make one 40-m-long tapestry. In June 2010 it was completed and we were invited to Jamtli to see it. We all displayed our part of the tapestry outside the Jamtli Museum. It was then displayed inside Jamtli for many months as well as in Överhogdal. Now, the ‘Överhogdal tapestry of our time’ has been put to rest in a sealed time capsule, safe from fire, light and damp. It will probably not be opened for a thousand years, for coming generations to wonder about.

I spent nearly one year creating my piece for the tapestry. On an amusing note, I have long dark hair and noticed that I sometimes accidentally sewed a single strand of my hair into my work.

This means that whoever discovers this work in a thousand years time will, through my DNA, be able to work out all about the person who produced it!



Photo: Johan Lindeberg, Östersunds-Posten

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## Julehilsen from ScandiKitchen

by Bronte Aurell

Sometimes when I look back, it feels like the past fifteen years have flown by. When we opened the doors of our London café on a hot July day in 2007, never did we think that we would be here all these years later, still loving doing what we do and serving our communities.



Being a Scandinavian abroad is a funny thing because at home we are never actually Scandinavian; we are always either/or, and we love making fun of all the little things that make us unique and different. The Danes make fun of the Swedes, the Swedes make fun of the Norwegians, and the Norwegians make fun of the Danes. Never do we see ourselves as the rest of the world sees us: so alike in language and behaviour, and forever connected by a shared heritage. This is one of the reasons we created ScandiKitchen: to have a place to welcome all, celebrate all — and build on the notion of ‘being Scandinavian’.

Living abroad, being homesick from time to time is par for the course. We accept it happens and we get by. Some find solace in new traditions and new cultures. What we have found, running ScandiKitchen Café and an online shop for fifteen years, is that this is largely the case, right up until about the first Sunday in Advent when something magical happens — something all of us, whatever corner of Scandinavia we come from, feel in a collective instant: it’s *Jul*.

From one day to the next, we gather, we put candles everywhere and our homes are filled with *tomtar/nisser*. We mull the *gløgg*, we bake the cookies, and we seek out feelings of long lost memories. We remember how there was always snow, how the tree was always beautiful (and never fake), and how *Mormor*’s biscuits have not since been recreated in just the way she used to make them. We revel in our own nostalgia and mix appropriate dashes of old Scandinavian traditions and culture, especially in our kitchens.

A few years ago I had the privilege of writing a book about the Scandinavian Christmas. Even today I feel I got the best of the deal: I had to test Christmas recipes for seven months and write about Christmas traditions even when it was sunny outside. I loved every moment of the research and being able to feel festive, even when nobody else was, and I secretly listened to Christmas songs. Two of my favourite recipes from the book are also the best known across Scandinavia: *pepparkakor*/ginger biscuits (the dough can also be used to make gingerbread houses) and the rice dessert we all eat on Christmas Eve — and where we hide an almond for someone to find (and the winner gets a marzipan pig).

Whichever way you celebrate this season, I wish you a *Glædelig/God Jul*!

### ***Pepparkakor*/ginger biscuits**

If you have ever been to Scandinavia at Christmas time, you will have been offered any variety of these ginger biscuits. Note: the dough requires at least 12 hours resting time before baking.

#### *Ingredients*

- 550 g plain flour
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground cloves
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground cardamom
- 1 pinch ground allspice
- 1 pinch salt
- 150 g butter (room temp)
- 200 g golden syrup
- 100 g caster sugar
- 100 g dark brown sugar
- 150 ml double cream

### *Instructions*

Mix the flour and bicarbonate of soda with the dry spices and salt.

Add the butter and all the other ingredients and mix until you have an even dough. It may still be sticky, but shape into a log and wrap in plastic film and leave to rest in the refrigerator overnight before using. Try to resist eating the dough every time you pass by the fridge!

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F, gas 6). Roll out the dough thinly on a lightly floured work surface and use cookie cutters to cut your desired shapes. You want the biscuits/cookies to be thin.

Place on the prepared baking sheets and bake in the preheated oven for 5–6 minutes or until the biscuits turn a darker shade of brown. This is a large quantity of dough so you may need to bake the biscuits in batches (or you can freeze part of the dough for next time you wish to whip up a few trays).

Remove from the oven and cool on a wire rack. Store in an airtight container.



### *Risengrød / Risgrynsgröt*

At Christmas, rice pudding (we actually call it ‘rice porridge’) is a big deal all over Scandinavia. We eat warm, unsweetened rice pudding with cinnamon, sugar and a knob of butter the night before Christmas, usually, and on Christmas Eve we serve the pudding cold with a few delicious additions.

Scandinavians always make rice pudding on the hob/stove top, never in the oven, and we don’t sweeten it because the toppings are sweet. This recipe makes enough rice pudding for 23rd December — as well as dessert on Christmas Eve. If you only want to serve it on one occasion, reduce the recipe by half.

It is said that Scandinavian Christmas elves love rice pudding, so we always leave out a bowl for them as a thank-you for taking care of the house, farm, and animals throughout the year. If you forget to do this, they will play tricks on you in the coming year. (Ever wondered why you can never find the remote control?)

Servings: 4 people + 4 next day

### *Ingredients*

- 400 g pudding rice
- 2 litres whole milk
- 1 vanilla pod
- salt
- sugar
- vanilla extract
- butter to serve
- cinnamon and sugar to serve

### *Instructions*

1. In a heavy-based saucepan, add the rice and 600 ml water and bring to the boil for a good few minutes, then add all the milk and the vanilla pod. Bring to the boil for around 5 minutes, stirring constantly to avoid the rice sticking to the bottom of the saucepan. Turn the heat down to low, cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the



rice is cooked through but not overcooked (around 25–35 minutes — do check). It's important to keep a close eye on the pan as it can burn or boil over.

2. Once cooked, add a little salt to taste (never add the salt until the rice has cooked through). You can add a little sugar if you prefer a sweeter pudding or a few drops of vanilla extract.

3. The pudding may still be a little liquid when the rice is cooked.

4. But don't worry: the rice will absorb the milk and the pudding thicken on cooling. If you are keeping half of the rice pudding for the dessert and eating the other half immediately, reserve half in the fridge for the dessert and simply boil the rest with no lid for a little while longer until the rice pudding is thicker. Remove the vanilla pod once cooked and discard.

5. Serve the hot rice pudding in bowls topped with a knob of butter in the middle and a generous amount of cinnamon sugar sprinkled over (mix one part ground cinnamon with three parts sugar).

### ***Risalamande/Ris à la Malta/Risikrem/*** **Christmas creamed rice pudding**

'A loved child has many names' is a Scandinavian saying that is apt for this dish — Danes adopted a French name meaning 'almond rice', while it seems Swedes misunderstood Danish pronunciation and called it 'Maltese rice'. Norwegians rightly call it simply 'rice cream'.

Servings: 4 people

#### ***Ingredients***

- 50g blanched almonds
- 250ml whipping cream or double cream
- 2 tbsp icing sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla sugar
- ½ quantity of chilled rice pudding (see p. 22)

### **For *Apelsinsås* /Swedish Orange Sauce**

- 2–3 tbsp orange juice
- 75 g sugar
- 2 oranges peeled, pith and pips removed

### **For *Rød saus* /Norwegian red sauce**

- 250 g frozen berries (raspberries or strawberries are good)
- 50–100 g sugar to taste
- freshly squeezed lemon juice (optional)

### **For *Kirsebærsovs* /Danish Cherry sauce**

- 1 tbsp corn flour or arrowroot
- 2 x 300 g cans of black or morello cherries in syrup
- 1 tsp orange juice
- 2 tbsp rum

#### ***Instructions***

1. Roughly chop the almonds, except for one which must be kept whole.

2. Whip the cream with the sugar and vanilla until thick, then gently fold it into the chilled rice pudding. If the rice pudding is too cold and hard to fold, leave it out at room temperature for a while. Add the almonds, including the reserved whole one, and pour into your serving dish. Pop it back in the fridge until ready to serve with one of the sauces below.

3. Some people prefer a very creamy version, and some less so — you can vary the quantity of cream accordingly. The rice is served cold, while the sauce is usually hot.

4. The person who finds the whole almond wins a prize, usually a marzipan piggy or a box of chocolate pralines.

#### **The different toppings:**

### ***Apelsinsås* /Swedish Orange Sauce**

1. When making the creamed rice pudding, add 2–3 tablespoons orange juice to the whipped cream before folding into the rice.

2. In a pan, bring the sugar and 100 ml/ 7 tablespoons water to the boil until the sugar is dissolved and slightly thickened, then take off the heat. Slice the oranges 5-mm thick, add to the warm sugar syrup. Add a few slices to top the *ris à la malta*.

**Rød saus/Norwegian red sauce**

Place the frozen berries in a pan with 100 ml/7 tablespoons water and sugar to taste. Bring to the boil, then simmer to let the berries break up. Whizz it with a stick blender until smooth. If it needs a little something, add a few drops of lemon juice before serving with the *riskrem*.

**Kirsebærsovs/Danish Cherry sauce**

Mix the cornflour with a small amount of syrup to make a paste. Bring the cherries and 250 ml/1 cup syrup to the boil in a pan, add the paste and stir. Boil for 1 minute to thicken, then take off the heat and add the orange juice and rum. Sweeten with sugar, if needed. Serve hot over cold *risalamande*.



Recipes are from *ScandiKitchen Christmas* by Bronte Aurell, published by Ryland Peters and Small. Photography: Pete Cassidy.  
[www.scandikitchen.co.uk](http://www.scandikitchen.co.uk)

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# Vikings at York — a fifty years quest

by Peter Addyman

On All Saints Day, 1 November 866, a Viking army captured the ancient city of York, initiating nearly 90 years in which York was mostly ruled by Scandinavian kings and became a vigorous capital for the Viking settlements of Yorkshire. On All Saints Day 1972, at a time when the now deeply-buried remains of Viking-Age York (and much else) were being churned up and destroyed by 20th century city re-development, a York Archaeological Trust was set up to rescue what it could ahead of city re-development. On All

Saints Eve 2022, the Trust celebrated the completion of fifty years of intense rescue excavation, research and public dissemination of what it had discovered, amongst many other things, about York in the Viking-Age.

One of the new Trust’s first and main objectives was to learn more about Viking-Age York. It was described by Byrhtferth, a monk of Ramsey Abbey, writing between 971 and 972, as ‘the capital of the whole people of the Northumbrians’. He mentions

the ‘multitude of York’s population ... numbered at not less than 30,000’ and describes the city as ‘crammed beyond expression, and enriched with the treasures of merchants, who come from all parts, but above all from the Danish people.’ The new Trust was not long in beginning to show the veracity of Byrhtferth’s account. By Christmas 1972 its excavation team was at work in cellars deep below the city centre branch of Lloyds Bank, where new bank vaults were to be created.

Just below the old cellar floors, nearly 20 feet below modern street level, lay thick layers of peaty soil containing the remains of the walls of buildings made of posts, wattle and daub. There was also pottery of the Viking-Age and — more amazingly — masses of organic material that had not rotted away in the evidently permanently water-logged conditions in this part of low-lying York. It soon became clear that the ancient buildings lay more or less directly under the modern ones, so that property boundaries and the position of the street front had not moved in a thousand years.

The Lloyds Bank excavation showed that Byrhtferth was not wrong about treasures of merchants either. The properties had once been occupied by leather workers, and shoes, a shoe last, and enormous numbers of leather offcuts were found. Objects from Scandinavia included micaceous schist whetstones imported from southern Norway. Many fragments of woollen textiles could have come from Britain but some have their closest parallels in Sweden. A fragment of silk textile, perhaps from a head

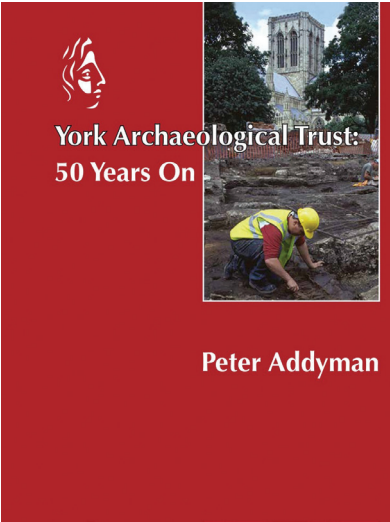
covering, must have come from much further afield.

As years went by, and excavation after excavation produced new insights into York’s past — but at ever-increasing expense — the Trust was asked by the government agency responsible for archaeology to prioritise. What sites amongst the many under threat of development would most add to knowledge of England’s urban history? Mutual agreement fixed on a development site in Coppergate, near the Lloyds Bank site, but covering a much larger area, and available for long enough before development for a major excavation. It had the potential to demonstrate the Viking contribution to the emergence and growth of towns in later Anglo-Saxon England. Fortuitously the Trust had meantime appointed a brilliant young archaeologist, Dr Richard Hall, fresh from his doctoral thesis on Viking-Age towns — and, under his leadership, the massive excavation began in Coppergate that was to transform knowledge both of Viking York and of urban development in pre-Norman England. It also resulted in the final presentation of what the excavations had told us in the Jorvik Viking Centre, an immensely successful on-site permanent display which this year celebrated its 20 millionth visitor. The Coppergate excavations, one of the largest excavation projects ever undertaken in Britain, extended over four and a half years, from 1976 to 1981. In that time it involved the participation on site of many hundreds of people, produced some 40,000 special artefact finds, and required the examination of thousands of

samples and vast quantities of recorded data that kept Hall and his team occupied for three decades. It resulted in a dozen or more scholarly publications presenting accounts of the results. Quite simply, it transformed understanding of the Viking contribution to Britain’s urban history.

All this, of course, cost a very large amount of money and required resources well beyond what was available from UK government and other agencies. The project was fortunate to attract the attention of Magnus Magnusson, then the widely-known and much-loved question master of Britain’s Mastermind TV programme, himself of Icelandic extraction, and a learned scholar of Viking-Age literature. With the Trust he worked first to publicise the project through his own television items, and then to work with Ian Skipper, an entrepreneur who had heard Magnussons’s late night TV appeal for the Coppergate project. The project had the most distinguished of stewards, each representing one of the Viking fatherlands. Chaired by HRH The Prince of Wales (now King Charles

III), it included Queen Margrethe of Denmark, Prince Harald of Norway (now King Harald), King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden and Kristján Eldjárn, President of Iceland, and his successor Vigdís Finnbogadóttir.



Peter Addyman, *York Archaeological Trust: 50 years on*  
York Archaeological Trust, Sep 2022  
ISBN-978-1-874454-76-2

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## Tove Ditlevsen

by Steen Andersen

In 1975 Tove Ditlevsen published her last novel in which the protagonist is a writer who commits suicide: the following year Ditlevsen took her own life. At her funeral the church was packed and outside it there was a crowd of a thousand people who followed her coffin to the graveside.

Tove Ditlevsen was born in 1917; she grew up in a working-class environment in Copenhagen and started writing poems at an early age. She was a bright pupil but left school when she was fifteen as her parents could not envisage her going to grammar school; the next step would



have been a university education which they could not afford.

She published her first book when she was twenty-two, the first of forty volumes: poetry, novels, short stories, children's books, essays, and autobiographical works. She had a loyal and steadily growing circle of readers, mostly women, and her books were in general positively reviewed in the newspapers. However, she did not receive much attention from academic critics in her lifetime, probably because male — or male chauvinistic — lecturers and professors constituted a vast majority among them, and they did not find her views on children's emotional life or women's roles in relationships very interesting. In fact, she never got the recognition she deserved. She was never awarded the prestigious Grand Prize of the Danish Academy, for example, and the Academy never invited her to become a member (which she dealt with in her own laconic and ironical way in an essay entitled 'My Obituary', two years before her death). And although she wrote about female experiences in a world dominated by men, she cared little for the women's liberation movement of the sixties and seventies; she considered herself an outsider and probably thought that it was up to every individual woman to fend for herself.

So in some literary circles she was considered old-fashioned, especially when modernism took wing in the early sixties — her novels and short stories about marriage, divorce, infidelity, loneliness, and jealousy are deceptively simple in structure and style, and in her poetry she did not abandon regular metre

and rhyme until a few years before her death. Later generations, however, both scholars and younger writers, have pointed out that her approach to the limitations and possibilities imposed by society is well ahead of its time, and that she has her own unmistakable voice. What is more, in her autobiographical works and late novels she developed a technique which is reminiscent of the concept of autofiction made famous decades later by, for example, Karl Ove Knausgaard. There is a thin line between reality and fiction — who exactly was the 'real' Tove Ditlevsen? And when was she wearing a mask? The answer is that it is impossible to find out; already as a young writer she was conscious of her image in interviews and later there were frequent television appearances. In her last interview, a couple of months before she committed suicide, she stated that she never cared much for the real world — she found it scary and did her best to keep it at a distance. This is obviously not the whole truth about her authorship, but her remark can be seen as a clue to much of her work.

In many respects Ditlevsen lived a troubled life. She was married four times, and about her first husband she wrote two years before her death: 'He was editor of a literary magazine and thirty-one years older than me. Maybe I wouldn't have had to marry him to get on in the world, but nobody had ever told me that it was possible for a girl to achieve something without a man to lean on.' She was several times admitted to psychiatric wards, battled with a drug addiction, and at times took refuge in alcohol. However,

as can be seen in letters published after her death, she never resorted to self-pity, no matter how much depression had hold of her. What is more, she managed to turn her troubles into literature, exploring her own weaknesses and failings, and it was with a sardonic touch that she portrayed husbands and lovers, one of whom was Piet Hein, well-known for his *Grooks*: she was not amused when she found out that the passionate letters and poems he had sent her were also addressed to his other girlfriends! Dealing with quite a few problems in her private life, she found it ironical that she was a much-respected agony aunt in *Familie Journalen*, a weekly magazine best known for everyday cooking recipes, human interest stories, romance fiction, and needlework. However, she provided the readers with matter-of-fact advice under the heading of ‘Everyday Problems’, often telling women to pull themselves together and take control of their lives. It was a job she took very seriously, never missing a single week.

A few of her short stories and novels were translated into Norwegian and Swedish in her lifetime, but 2021 was the year of her international breakthrough — forty-five years after her death! The publication of *The Copenhagen Trilogy*, consisting of her three volumes of autobiography, was hailed as a sensation in the *New York Times* and *Guardian* and paved the way for translations in Germany and elsewhere.

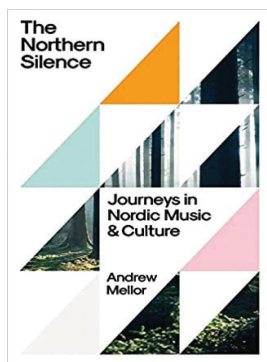
‘How come poets aren’t appreciated in Denmark?’ she once asked one of her fellow writers, momentarily forgetting how loyal her readers were but giving

vent to a feeling of insecurity which probably never left her. She had left her working-class environment, but could she feel safe among intellectuals?

There is now a Tove Ditlevsen school in the neighbourhood where she grew up; there is also a Tove Ditlevsen Pub and a Tove Ditlevsen Square. She would have been puzzled as well as flattered by these tributes, and maybe she would have considered them almost as important as the Grand Prize of the Danish Academy that she was never awarded.



*Steen Andersen, retired secondary school teacher of English and Danish, is the author of a number of collections of poems and of articles on Aksel Sandemose, one of which was published in CoScan Magazine 2020/2. Another article by him in CoScan Magazine (2021/1) was on Henrik Pontoppidan.*



### Review by Colin Roth

Andrew Mellor, *The Northern Silence, Journeys in Nordic Music and Culture*  
Published by Yale University Press,  
Jun 2022, ISBN-978-0-30-025440-2

This is a splendidly ambitious book, aiming to elucidate the mysteries of Finland's best known composer, Sibelius, by placing his work in the context of contemporary Scandinavian cultural production and ideas. In particular, Andrew Mellor uses vivid accounts of Scandinavian architecture to illuminate Sibelius's formal aspirations, as well as lively narrative accounts of meetings and conversations he has had with composers and other creative personalities. Mellor aims high, and succeeds: the book deals firmly with the nonsense that Scandinavians are happier than other people, and the author vies with Michael Booth for the funniest anecdotes of the habitual ill-temper that actually characterises our friends in the north.

Andrew Mellor has produced an excellent example of effective interdisciplinary writing, not just making simple comparisons between the

formal strategies employed in various disciplines, but finding meaningful points of contact and contrast that illuminate their creators' creative intentions.

There are a couple of slips that might have been picked up at the copy editing stage: August Bournonville (p. 39) did not found the Royal Danish Ballet, though he was, by far, its most significant Director and leader. Bournonville succeeded his father, Antoine, as director, around 1848 (depending on which set of contractual arrangements you read as confirming that title). Antoine, who had arrived from Sweden in 1816, followed a clutch of barely remembered French and Italian choreographers who worked in Copenhagen from 1768. The best known and longest surviving of these was Vincenzo Galleotti, who was ballet master from 1774-1816. And Vigdís Finnbogadóttir (p. 141) was the longest serving *elected* female head of state, not surpassing our own Queen Elizabeth II's length of service.

This is one of the best books about music to have been published in recent times, and offers an insight into the emotional and intellectual content of Sibelius's music that is unparalleled elsewhere. It does require a degree of musical experience to be fully understood, but someone who has learned to play an orchestral instrument will manage its occasional forays into technical description without too much difficulty, and the rewards for taking its analyses at a gentle pace, playing the music being discussed and coming to your own view of their 'meaning', are considerable. And if you are not a musician but want

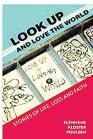
to read a highly enjoyable dissection of the Scandinavian psyche or a very well informed discussion of the region’s architecture, then this will repay your effort. *The Northern Silence* is a landmark

in interdisciplinary and musicological literature, a model for other authors which proves that it is possible to write with thoughtful depth and intensity while remaining accessible and enjoyable.



More new books

Danish



Flemming Kloster Poulsen, *Look Up and Love the World: Stories of Life, Loss and Faith*. Paperback published by Dot Dot Dot, Sep 2022

**You are invited to connect with your own real-life experience and use it as the starting point to explore meaning, life, death, faith and tragedy.**  
The author is a storyteller and pastor of the Danish Church in London.



Frances Dimond, *Queen Alexandra: Loyalty and Love*. Paperback published by History and Heritage, Feb 2022

**On the Danish Princess who became Queen Consort of King Edward VII.**  
The author is a member of the Anglo-Danish Society.



Claus Dalby, *Containers in the Garden*. Published by Cool Springs Press, Mar 2022

**Celebrity gardener and floral designer Claus Dalby shares his container gardening style.**



Signe Gjessing, *Tractatus Philosophico-Poeticus*, translated by Denise Newman. Published by Lolli Editions, Apr 2022

**Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, often noted as the most important philosophical work of the 20th century, had a broad goal: to identify the relationship between language and reality, and to define the limits of science.**

Icelandic



Sarah Thomas, *The Raven’s Nest*. Published by Atlantic Books, July 2022

**Visiting Iceland as an anthropologist and film-maker in 2008, Sarah Thomas is spellbound by its otherworldly landscape. An immediate love for this country and for Bjarni, a man she meets there, turns a week-long stay into a transformative half-decade, one which radically alters Sarah’s understanding of herself and of the living world.**





Harriet Jean Evans Tang, *Animal-Human Relationships in Medieval Iceland from Farm-Settlement to Sagas*. Published by Boydell & Brewer, Aug 2022

This book examines the domestic animals of early Iceland in their physical and textual contexts, through detailed analysis of the spaces and places of the Icelandic farm and farming landscape, and textual sources.



Margaret Clunies Ross, *Poetry in Sagas of Icelanders*. Published by Boydell & Brewer, Aug 2022

The first full analysis of the skaldic verse appearing in the family sagas of Icelanders, considering why and how it is deployed.



Toni Carr and Kyle Cassidy, *Lopapeysa: A Knitter's Guide to Iceland with Patterns, Techniques and Travel Tips*. Published by Herbert Press, Nov 2022

In Iceland there is a piece of knitwear that everybody has but no one has bought: the *lopapeysa* (*lopi* for short). The authors take you on an 800-mile adventure to explore the rich knitting tradition and to show you how to make your very own *lopi*-style knits.

## Norwegian



Kjersti Annesdatter Skomsvold, *Bedtime for Bo*, illustrated by Mari Kanstad Johnsen and translated by Kari Dickson.

Published by Enchanted Lion Books, Sep 2022

It's time for bed, but little Bo isn't ready to stop playing quite yet.

## Swedish



SVANTE PÄÄBO: *Swedish Geneticist who won the 2022 noble prize [sic] in medicine. The inside story of the intelligent man.*

Kindle edition by Paraclete Publishers, Nov 2022

The Swedish geneticist who received the Nobel Prize in medicine in 2022 for his groundbreaking research on the Neanderthal and other extinct human ancestors' genomes.



Neil Kent and Clement Chevalier, *Bulwark of the Old Regime: France's Royal Swedish Regiment in the French and American Revolutions*. Published by Academica Press, Nov 2022

This book traces the history of the French King Louis XV's Swedish-led forces throughout the regiment's service, including during the American War of Independence and up to the time of the French Revolution of 1789.



Greta Thunberg *et al.*, *The Climate Book*. Published by Penguin Books Ltd, Oct 2022

The wisdom of over one hundred experts (geophysicists, oceanographers, meteorologists, engineers, economists, mathematicians, historians, philosophers and indigenous leaders) gathered to equip us all with the knowledge we need to combat climate disaster.

## Learning Icelandic in the Westfjords

by Heather Storgaard

I am currently studying for an Undergraduate degree in Culture, Heritage and Politics, which comes under the Institute for Northern Studies at the University of the Highlands and Islands. Part of the general aim of the Institute is to place Scotland in the context of the rest of the North, which is a theme that runs through both my courses and my own personal interests.

Coming from Northern Scotland and married to a Dane, I experience the linguistic and cultural connections between Scotland and Nordic countries every day. I already speak fluent Danish, but have a particular interest in the now dead Norn language of Shetland and Orkney. Norn was very close to modern-day Icelandic and Faroese, which led me to look into culture and language summer courses in both countries. Unfortunately, most summer courses running this year and focusing on Nordic cultures and languages are funded by the Nordic Council, and therefore closed to non-Nordic citizens. However, I did find a language course open to all at Háskólaþing Vestfirðinga, Ísafjörður. As two thirds of Iceland's ca 350,000 people live in Reykjavík, I was intrigued to try a summer school in the Icelandic countryside, just outside the Arctic Circle.

One of the main advantages of learning Icelandic in the Westfjords turned out to be the small size of the town. On my way here, I couldn't get through

to the bus company that runs a shuttle from the airport. A master's student originally from Texas very generously lent me his van, leaving the keys in the glovebox and allowing me to get to class on time. Our teacher, Ólafur Guðsteinn Kristjánsson, or Óli, had also arranged that local businesses would support our language learning. Signs were placed in nearly every shop window in the town, promising that the staff would stick to Icelandic, even when they themselves were non-natives. Back when I was learning Danish, it often felt like a battle to be allowed to speak it in shops or restaurants, as everyone would so readily switch to English, so this scheme really helped me feel comfortable practising Icelandic. This would of course be hard to pull off in a city, but in Ísafjörður it felt like almost everyone supported our language journeys. After a week, we knew the barman at the local pub (originally from Buckinghamshire) and were greeting the locals we saw every day.

During any free time I could find (the course was intense!) I was exploring the beautiful Westfjords. I ran from my Saturday afternoon grammar class to the docks to take a boat trip to a nearby island, hiked up a mountain and kayaked in the fjord. Experiencing Iceland was vastly different from my previous times spent in the Nordic countries, in famously-flat Denmark, and I could at times forget that I wasn't in Scotland. Other than

landscape similarities, this was helped by the abundance of Irn Bru, Tunnocks wafers and fish and chips!

The trip was, however, not untouched by the pandemic. My flights from the UK (and at one point Ireland!) were changed four times, and then, while here, I found out that a man with whom I shared a kitchen in my accommodation had tested positive for the virus. I was in the coffee room at the university centre when I was informed, and Óli took me straight out of the university centre and to an empty apartment on the docks belonging to another member of staff, to figure out what to do. By the late afternoon, after three phone calls and two different website live chats, it was decided that my contact with the person who had tested positive was not significant enough to warrant testing and isolation, as I was fully vaccinated and displayed no

symptoms. I spoke with Óli and Gunna Sigga, the lovely receptionist who I had chats with in Danish, about the situation and decided not to attend the final class the next morning. I could have attended, but it didn't feel right to me to put others at risk unnecessarily. Óli solved this by teaching the class both in person and on zoom, with me watching from a couple of streets away.

Despite knowing my teacher, the staff at the university and my classmates for only a week I really felt I got to know them and Iceland. I also felt incredibly supported and in safe hands even in a very stressful situation, so I really want to say the biggest thank-you to them. The grant from CoScan also helped with the ever-changing flights, accommodation bookings and managing extra costs, so thank you to CoScan too. *Takk og verið þið blessuð og sæl!*



Vigur windmill

Photo: Heather Storgaard

## Being a working cyclist in Oslo

by Jarvis Suslowicz

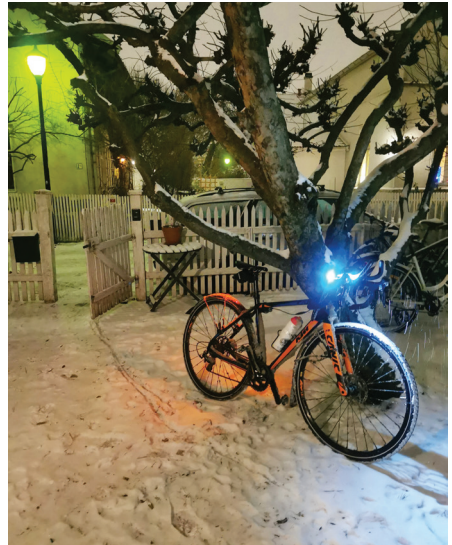
During my years of higher education, I have been lucky to be granted multiple opportunities to broaden my horizons abroad. The University of Leicester allowed me to study Norwegian formally for the first time, with a grant, after I had taken it up to A2 level on my own. Spending six weeks in Oslo with the International Summer School made me wish it would never end.

In a way, it gave me the confidence to go abroad for my postgraduate degree. In 2020 I entered the Research Master's in Urban Studies at the University of Amsterdam, which gave me the opportunity to go to Norway in the second year. Prior to everything being moved online, I contacted CoScan for a travel award, and they followed me through all the ups and downs of planning travel in the Covid era. Eventually, CoScan graciously offered me the award towards travel and moving costs for my semester abroad.

My research interests have evolved towards sustainable urban mobility in recent years, and I view the bicycle as central to this paradigm. While Amsterdam is seemingly the perfect environment for using bicycles for urban logistics, Oslo seems limited by physical factors such as topography and climate. And yet, with the recent availability of e-bikes, new possibilities have entered the market.

I moved to Oslo in August of 2021 to conduct research into the mobility

patterns of working cyclists. I quickly found work with the online delivery service Foodora, aided by a friend who also works there. As an employee, I was able to join the Oslo chapter of the *Norsk Transportarbeiderforbund*, part of the larger *Fellesforbundet*, the federation of trade unions. In this union, I found camaraderie with my colleagues in what is typically a very independent and sometimes lonely job. I also found advice for survival gained through experience. In the Netherlands, unions are weaker and more impersonal, but in Norway they allow a valuable dialogue with employers, and security in the case of dispute.



As winter approached, I found myself having to be more creative with solutions to problems while working on a bike. On several nights all the water in my bottle





St. Hanshaugen, one of Oslo's largest parks, at sunset

Photos: Jarvis Suslowicz

froze! You are forced to think more about your equipment, including the layers of clothes you wear, and adapting your bike. From November, it's essential to have studded tyres (*piggdekk*) installed. My first shift in the snow was a steep learning curve. You learn to anticipate how your bicycle will react to different kinds of snow: fresh snow is slow but consistent, while several-days-old snow melts and refreezes into ice, kicking your wheels in unexpected directions.

One of the goals I had with my research was to understand variations in the mobile geography across cities and over time since, with the explosion of app-based meal deliveries in the past decade, much of the sector has become professionalised and orchestrated entirely through purpose-built apps. Much of the process is now automated — tap a button to accept, tap a button to load the directions — so I was curious to know how the spatial skills (wayfinding, navigation, spatial awareness) have evolved with it.

In qualitative research, there are many implicit elements which are difficult to question participants about in interviews where the context is removed. Some

mobility researchers bypass this by conducting 'moving interviews', where questioning is done during travel itself. I realised this would not be possible for me, as following a participant in a physical, time-intensive day at work would put too much pressure on. I had to be realistic about the type of interview people would be receptive to. Working in these jobs gave me insight through experience.

While many cities look to Amsterdam for inspiration on improving the case for urban cycling locally, I realised during my time working up and down Oslo's streets that we can't simply replicate Amsterdam's infrastructure. Instead we have to come up with new solutions, centred in the local context. For example, Oslo can build as many bike lanes as Amsterdam but, if they are not effectively maintained, winter cycling will remain the domain of the adventurer.

Looking forward, I am hoping to settle permanently in Oslo. I loved the city before, but having the opportunity to live there for six months made me fall even more in love with it. It's an exciting, diverse and ever-changing place to live, and I hope to be able to help make cycling safe, fun and accessible to all.

# Exploring saga landscapes in Sweden

by Mary O'Connor

After two years of no international travel and a global pandemic, my hopes of seeing the traces of the Viking world had almost faded from sight. Thanks to the CoScan Travel Award and changing international travel regulations I finally made it to Stockholm in September 2021 to begin my research trip to some of the key Viking archaeological sites in Sweden.

I am a second year MPhil in Medieval English at the University of Oxford where I research Old Norse literature. Since I was a child, it has been my dream to come to Sweden where much of the early Viking activity began, and where huge archaeological sites have been uncovered. My current Master's research focuses on literary landscapes in the Old Norse sagas, both fictional and historical. Coming to see the actual landscapes and the towns, burial mounds and cities which were founded during the Viking period has been inspirational for my own research and has led me to further questions in my analysis of the Old Norse-Icelandic sagas in exploring the representations of landscapes in Scandinavia.

My first visit was to Gamla Uppsala, the old royal capital of Sweden and the home of the Yngling dynasty in the early medieval period. From Stockholm, I took a train to Uppsala and hiked from the new city out to the old medieval site. Crossing through the fields, I viewed the ancient plains where horse races and fairs are believed to have taken place. Underneath glorious sunshine, I spent a day walking around the ancient burial mounds which are referred to in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* and which are later remembered as the burial places of the Norse gods. The site had a comprehensive guide to the archaeological excavations which had taken place there in the early twentieth century alongside contemporary theories on the settlement and its functions. This visit to Gamla Uppsala was immensely useful as I could track how the actual landscape is represented in the literary texts and how the landscape is commemorated in historiographical narratives.

Following on from Gamla Uppsala, I headed to Sigtuna, one of the oldest and most important settlement sites along Lake Mälaren. Here I visited St Olof's



The Royal Mounds at Gamla Uppsala

Photos: Mary O'Connor

church, a 12th-century stone church built on top of an earlier wooden church which is believed to be one of the earliest Christian sites in Sweden. I also visited the Sigtuna Museum which explained the various excavations and farmsteads which had been uncovered in the area. I walked through the old streets of the town which mirror the medieval house and street layout and reviewed the surviving ruins of the different medieval churches around the town.



**St Olof's Church, Sigtuna**

One of the highlights of this trip was my visit to the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm. Here, the largest collection in the world of Viking-Age finds is on display. It was incredible to walk through the museum viewing jewellery, weapons and tools which had been recovered from the Viking-Age and which give further insight into life in early medieval Sweden. While my research is literary

and landscape focused, my visit here gave me a much clearer picture of how people living in the Viking Age navigated the landscape and how their relationship to their environment is reflected in later writings and texts.



**Picture stone at the Swedish History Museum**

Alongside my visits to different archaeological and research sites, I had the chance to visit Stockholm and experience Swedish culture. Thankfully, by September life had mostly returned to normal, at least for tourists, and I could throw myself into experiencing some of the highlights of life in Stockholm. On the culinary side, I got the chance to indulge in *fika* and taste reindeer, while on the more historical and cultural side, I spent time in the Royal Palace and at Skansen where I saw wild animals found in Sweden, including moose, brown bear and lynx.

On a final note, I wish sincerely to thank the CoScan Travel Award for funding my research trip to these major Viking archaeological sites in Sweden. This travel award has reminded me of my love for travel and searching for adventure as well as my appreciation for international learning opportunities and my continued expansion of educational and intellectual endeavours.

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