

The cover of the magazine features a photograph of a landscape with several tall, weathered standing stones. One stone is prominently in the foreground on the left, while a group of five others stands in a line in the middle ground. The background shows rolling green hills, a body of water, and a clear blue sky with light clouds. The text is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

# CoScan Magazine

2023/1

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



# CoScan

Confederation of Scandinavian Societies

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# Editor's note

Eva Robards



## 'Editor at work'

Illustration by DALL·E (a category of AI that creates a new image when prompted by a text)

*'It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the latest edition of CoScan Magazine. As always we are delighted to share with you the latest news and stories from the Scandinavian and Nordic communities in the UK and beyond. Our aim is to provide a platform for members of these communities to connect, celebrate their heritage, and share their experiences and perspectives with others. We hope that this edition will inform, entertain and inspire you, and we look forward to hearing your feedback.'*

I've been playing with AI. The text above was generated by ChatGPT when asked to 'Write the first paragraph of the editor's note for CoScan Magazine' (I didn't even spell 'paragraph' correctly) and it is surprisingly good — perhaps it's time to pack up and let AI do the all the writing?! However, further testing proved this tool to be a fickle friend: though it can spit out brilliantly composed texts on anything in no time at all, it makes

things up if lacking facts. That can make entertaining reading but in this magazine We want facts to be accurate.

There has been an overwhelming amount of discussion in the media about AI since the launch of ChatGPT in the late autumn: is it a convenient tool that we will integrate into a range of daily activities or an evil that will take over our lives? The jury is out.

In this issue of the magazine we welcome two new members: the Swedish-English Literary Translators' Association and the Scottish Society for Northern Studies. On the subject of translation, it is encouraging that translators are more and more receiving recognition for their vital work in bringing cultures and languages together. There is also a specific day (30 September) marked as International Translation Day to honour the contributions of translators.

Having gained two societies, we have at the same time lost one: sadly the Anglo-Norse Society in Oslo was dissolved at their AGM in February 2023 after 102 years of rich history.

Topics in the Language & culture section this time include the oldest datable runes in the world, what Viking-Age combs can reveal, retracing the Heroes of Telemark, and celebrating 500 years of Sweden. (In addition, King Carl XVI Gustaf will celebrate his 50th year on the throne in September, making him the longest-reigning monarch in Swedish history.)

A thought, though: if the Kalmar Union had remained intact in Scandinavia, could the region have developed into a stronger and more unified entity?

# ‘A love letter to the UK’

## Víkingur Ólafsson receives CoScan’s Nordic Person of the Year Award 2023

by Bridget Morris



The award recognises Víkingur Ólafsson as ‘an extraordinary advocate for music across the generations’. Next to Víkingur: Alexander Malmaeus, Chairman of CoScan. Photo: London Philharmonic Orchestra

As readers will know, CoScan makes an annual ‘Nordic Person of the Year Award’ to mark the achievement of outstanding merit by an individual, body or group related to one of the five Nordic countries, and who have caused the British and others outside the region to view the Scandinavian countries with ever-increasing affection and respect.

Previous recipients of the Award, which was set up in 1994, have included the racing driver Mika Häkkinen, tennis

player Stefan Edberg, chess champion Magnus Carlsen, and astronaut Christer Fuglesang. In recent years the award was made to the Danish presenter Sandi Toksvig, the Swedish philanthropist Lisbet Rausing, and the Finnish Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Sakari Oramo. The last award (before the pandemic) was made to the Norwegian Scandi-noir writer, Jo Nesbø.

Víkingur Ólafsson is one of the most sought-after artists of today, and his

previous awards include the Swedish Rolf Schock Prize for music (2022), Gramophone magazine Artist of the Year, Opus Klassik Solo Recording Instrumental (twice) and Album of the Year at the BBC Music Magazine Awards.

He signed with the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon record label in 2016, and released an album devoted to the mesmeric piano works of the American former ‘minimalist’ (and film-soundtrack favourite) Philip Glass. His next collection, of pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach, won a clutch of awards. In 2019 he was named Artist of the Year by *Gramophone Magazine*, the audiophiles’ bible. His new solo album, *Debussy – Rameau*, finds an ‘unlikely affinity’ between works by two French composers seldom thought of as musical kindred. On its release in March the record topped the classical charts in Britain and Germany (where it even rose to number 11 in the pop-music charts). His recordings for Deutsche Grammophon — *Philip Glass Piano Works* (2017), *Johann Sebastian Bach* (2018), *Debussy – Rameau* (2020) and *Mozart & Contemporaries* (2021) — have captured the public and critical imagination and led to career streams of over 400 million. Víkingur’s latest album, *From Afar*, was released in October 2022.

In April 2020, as Covid deaths in Britain were rapidly rising, Víkingur began a remote eleven-week ‘residency’ of weekly broadcasts for BBC Radio 4’s arts programme *Front Row*. From the empty Harpa Concert Hall in his home city of Reykjavík, the Icelandic pianist

played a transcription of an *Ave Maria* by his compatriot, the physician-composer Sigvaldi Kaldalóns. He dedicated the performance to health workers everywhere, summoning up a magical moment during those days of fear and foreboding. He said that the solitude of his homeland in lockdown, ‘when you take away all the tourism and all the flux of people and ideas’, reminded him of that self-sufficient island of the past, ‘a very secluded place, very tranquil’. It was a creative laboratory where isolation bred collaboration across genre boundaries. In his broadcasts he paid tribute to Björk, Iceland’s avant-garde pop superstar, and her effect on the nation’s arts: ‘She led the way, and her influence can’t be overestimated on the way subsequent generations of composers and performers, myself included, have behaved.’

### **Making it all happen**

This was my first year co-ordinating the 2023 Award (helped enormously by Tony Bray, my predecessor in the role). It was a great pleasure to see that the award was to go to an Icelander, for as far as I could see, Iceland had not yet been represented.

First of all, I needed to find a suitable venue for the presentation. I contacted Víkingur’s agent and after she confirmed that he had been thrilled to accept the award, we then considered his upcoming concerts and venues to find a suitable occasion. We agreed that if he was playing in a programme that included a heart-rending piece, then it wouldn’t be easy to make the transition for all concerned into one of celebration. In the end we decided

upon London’s Royal Festival Hall on 28 January 2023, at which Ólafsson was due to perform Schumann’s *Piano Concerto* with London Philharmonic Orchestra and Edward Gardner.

I next approached the Ambassador of Iceland, His Excellency Sturla Sigurjónsson, to preside over the making of the award. He willingly agreed, saying he was especially delighted and proud that the award had been made to a fellow Icelander.

As Alexander Malmaeus, Chairman of CoScan, said on the night, ‘Iceland might be the country with the smallest population in the Nordic region, but it is bursting with musical talent from which we are all greatly enriched. We are thrilled that he has accepted the award.’

Addressing Vikingur, he said: ‘you are an embodiment of that quiet Scandinavian understatement that people in Britain so greatly admire.’ (This brought a spontaneous outburst of laughter from

the audience who had just heard a most impassioned and vibrant rendering of the *Piano Concerto*. But they still probably got the point.) Alexander continued: ‘You show an openness to new ideas and original interpretations: “Open mind, open ears” is a phrase I think you yourself have used. You are an advocate for music across the generations, and you reach new audiences with diverse musical tastes. You have an extraordinary ability to make us listen freshly and gain something new from your every performance.’

In reply, Vikingur said: ‘Thank you so much to CoScan for this award, which I consider my love letter to the UK. The north is a state of mind above everything else, and so if I have brought Nordic culture to the UK and Ireland, then something has been achieved.’

He further expressed his thanks with a touching encore, specifically choosing a native Icelandic balladic piece. The audience was suspended in stillness.

For more information about Vikingur Ólafsson:  
<https://www.vikingurolafsson.com>

Press photos: <https://www.harrisonparrott.com/artists/vikingur-olafsson>



Vikingur Ólafsson with his trophy  
Photo: Chris Howell, CoScan

# CoScan AGM 2023 in Orkney

by Bridget Morris

Question: at which UK airport are you greeted with the sound of curlew, smell of silage, and feel of hot sunshine on your face? And a bus driver who takes you all the way to your hotel's front door, beyond his final stop? Answer: Kirkwall, Orkney.

The CoScan AGM weekend, which took place on 21-23 April, was generously hosted and co-ordinated by the Orkney Norwegian Friendship Organisation (ONFA), and attended by many members not just from all over Scotland but well beyond. The formal meeting on the Saturday morning took place in St Magnus Centre, in the shadow of the magnificent medieval cathedral with its warming tones of red and yellow sandstone. At the meeting there were friendly and productive discussions about a variety of matters and future plans.

Then it was into warm clothes and hiking boots for a fascinating guided tour of the town, led by an experienced local guide and ONFA member, John Mowat, and incorporating a bus trip out to the so-called Italian chapel, which consists of two converted Nissen huts erected and decorated by Italian prisoners of World War II.

The conference dinner was held in the evening, in a private room at the Kirkwall Hotel. The room buzzed with conversation and new friendships were formed.

On Sunday there were further informal meetings to talk about CoScan matters while some members attended

the cathedral service. After lunch we resumed our Orcadian tour, now by mini-bus. We travelled along the northern shores of Scapa Flow, where we were reminded of Orkney's military involvement in the two world wars. We then turned towards ancient history, to the Neolithic monuments: the Ring of Brodgar, the Standing Stones of Stenness, and the settlement of Skara Brae (all part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site), and then the nearby Skail House, a fine seventeenth-century mansion.

The white sands of Skail beach were stunningly beautiful. It was touch and go whether we got around Skara Brae because of the fierceness of the biting



**Leaving the Italian chapel**

Photo: Garry Irvine, SNS President



**In the ruthless wind, between standing stones**

Photo: Chris Howell, CoScan

wind that was coming straight off the water right below but — like a little band of intrepid Vikings — we clung onto the handrails and edged our way around. We all made our windswept way back to the welcome sight of the minibus home.

In ways perhaps like nowhere else in the UK the old Scandinavian connections are omnipresent in Orkney — in the place names, the personal names, in the dialect and, of course, below ground in the archaeology.

The AGM meeting in London last year was balanced in a remarkable way by the AGM in the far north of Scotland this year. Next year, hopefully, we shall meet again in Hull, in north-eastern England ... so perhaps suggesting a site for a fourth location — in the west of Britain? — for the following year. Living up to its name, CoScan represents all the corners of the country and shows the huge breadth of influence and interest in things Scandinavian across the British Isles.



**Dinner on one of the evenings at Kirkwall Hotel**





# Swedish-English Literary Translators' Association

by Ian Giles and Kate Lambert

The Swedish-English Literary Translators' Association — most commonly known by its acronym SELTA — is an unincorporated association based in the UK that represents translators of Swedish-language literature working into English. The two aims of SELTA according to its constitution are to provide a public register of translators of Swedish literature and to promote Swedish-language literature to English-speaking readers.

SELTA has always had close links with and support from the Swedish Embassy in London. The first impetus for bringing translators of Swedish together came from cultural attaché Ove Svensson, who joined forces with the Swedish Institute and held a conference of translators and publishers at University College London in 1978. In April 1981, the next cultural attaché, Terry Carlbon, arranged a translators' conference at the University of Hull; in November the same year he ran a seminar in London which led to the first informal meeting of a steering group. The very next day, SELTA was born. Its constitution was drafted and it formally came into being on 1 January 1982.

The original SELTA founders were Patricia Crampton, Tom Geddes, Mary Sandbach, Joan Tate and Laurie Thompson — all names that may be familiar to aficionados of Swedish literature in translation. By the time of the first AGM in April 1982, SELTA had 9 full members and 3 associate members.



The membership continued to grow in the years that followed. Around this time, the editorial team behind *Swedish Books*, which had begun life in Gothenburg, offered that publication to SELTA, which took it on and rechristened it *Swedish Book Review* (SBR). In the first two decades of SELTA's life, alongside diligent efforts to write readers' reports on many Swedish books, members of SELTA also served as contributors to SBR, which was published twice annually (plus frequent special issues). This provided a way of spreading the word about the latest in Swedish literature to both publishers and readers.

SELTA and its members were also instrumental in the creation of the Bernard Shaw Prize for best translation from Swedish, which is overseen by the Society of Authors subgroup, the Translators Association. This was first awarded in 1991 and then subsequently on a triennial basis. With the prize money going solely to the winning translator, this was a way of highlighting the work of SELTA's members to a wider audience. Following considerable lobbying in the late 2010s, this prize was upgraded to biennial status, reflecting the significant increase in the number of Swedish books published in English translation since its inception in the early 1990s.

Although the well-known American translator Thomas Teal was also present at the first meetings in 1981 (indeed, he reportedly coined the name, SELTA), it was decided for practical reasons that the aim should be for US translators to form their own association and for the two organisations to work closely together. Swedish Translators in North America (STiNA) was eventually founded in 2004, although the pandemic drew translators around the world closer together and SELTA now admits North American members. SELTA's present-day member count has climbed to around 85.

The arrival of the internet brought a website and an email group, giving members a useful channel for translation-related discussions. The first SELTA website was designed in 2005 and its most recent iteration went live in 2020. SELTA also has a Twitter account and Facebook page, and in 2022 members took part in a year-long residency on the Translators Aloud YouTube channel, reading from their translations.

While many of the concerns that SELTA was focused on in the early days remain the same today — ensuring enough Swedish books are translated and published, ensuring good terms and rates of pay, providing translators with a personal and professional network — the organisation has evolved in other ways. A new generation of members has swelled the ranks of SELTA thanks to the increase in the volume of literary translation work that has come with the rise in Swedish books in the UK and America. Over the last decade or so, this has allowed SELTA to expand its horizons and explore new

activities. This has included a number of translation seminars, bringing together members and Swedish-language authors for one- or two-day programmes to hone translation skills and brush the surface of the very latest literature available. These have been warmly received by members, but their value is also recognised much further afield. Susanne Bergström Larsson, Head of the Swedish Literature Exchange at the Swedish Arts Council said: ‘SELTA and its highly qualified members are of incredible importance to us in our work to put Swedish literature on the map: the many programmes and workshops they organise are all splendid shop windows for the wide array of high quality literature that Sweden produces.’

In 2022, SELTA marked its fortieth anniversary with a number of events both in person and virtually. Most gratifying was a big birthday bash in late November which brought together many members and friends of SELTA and translated literature. This moment was immortalised with the announcement that SELTA had been awarded the Swedish Academy's Prize for the Introduction of Swedish Culture Abroad, in recognition of the achievements of this translator collective over the decades since its inception. Reflecting on the award of the prize, Pia Lundberg, Counsellor for Cultural Affairs at the Embassy of Sweden, said: ‘SELTA gives international wings to Swedish literature and the importance of its members' work cannot be emphasised enough.’

Over the years, SELTA has exhibited the ability to grow and evolve to meet the contemporary needs of its members.

It can confidently be expected that when SELTA celebrates its golden anniversary in nine years' time, even if the organisation has (once again) changed from what it is today, this will still be true — and that SELTA will still be giving wings to Swedish literature.

*Ian Giles, Chair of SELTA, is a professional translator of Swedish, Norwegian and Danish. His PhD dealt with the impact of translated Scandinavian literature on the British market in the 20th and 21st centuries.*

*Kate Lambert is a committee member and webmaster of SELTA. She translates from Swedish and Finnish and has a special interest in finlandssvenska.*

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## The Scottish Society for Northern Studies: exploring the northern world

by Rebekah Day

Originally set up as a Scottish offshoot of fellow CoScan member, the Viking Society for Northern Research, the Scottish Society for Northern Studies (SSNS) has continued to champion the historical interrelationships between the Scandinavian, Celtic, and Scottish worlds for more than half a century.

SSNS was formed in Edinburgh in 1968 and is a membership organisation and registered charity run by an elected committee of volunteers, serving members whose interests include both



SCOTTISH  
SOCIETY FOR  
NORTHERN  
STUDIES

academic and popular explorations of the northern world. Through the delivery of public events and support of scholarly research, SSNS aspires to provide a community for individuals fascinated by Scotland, Scandinavia, and beyond.

One highlight of the annual SSNS calendar is its day conference in November, usually held in central Scotland, which last year included a visit to the historic Dunfermline Abbey after presentations from leading scholars on the theme of 'North Sea Economic Networks'. SSNS also hosts regular online seminars on a wide variety of topics

The Scottish Society for Northern Studies has published two new volumes, *Islands of Place and Space* and *Scandinavia Refracted*, to honour Arne Kruse and Bjarne Thorup Thomsen. They were presented at a surprise event at the University of Edinburgh, as both had served a combined 16 years as editors of Northern Studies.



including history, archaeology, literature, music, and material culture. Recent popular talks have included ‘Pictish Writing and Pictish Symbols: Decoding the Newton Stone’ by Dr Kelly Kilpatrick and ‘Where Were the Orcades? Early Medieval Engagement with the Islands at the End of the Earth’ by Dr Oisín Plumb. These talks and many more are available to view on the Society’s YouTube channel (@SocietyforNorthernStudies).

SSNS is dedicated to examining regional aspects of Scotland’s culture and heritage through the publication of research that covers a wide range of disciplines. Since 1978, SSNS has published sixteen books, including most recently the titles *Scandinavia Refracted* and *Islands of Place and Space*, published in 2022 and available for purchase online. SSNS has also published the peer-reviewed journal *Northern Studies* since 1973, with volume 54 due for publication later this year. This interdisciplinary publication includes articles and relevant book reviews on subjects stretching from the medieval period to the present day. All but the latest edition of *Northern Studies*, and all the Society’s out-of-print books are digitally available on an open access basis. Contributions for possible inclusion in *Northern Studies* and books for review are welcome all year round.

As part of its charitable aims, SSNS also offers a variety of bursaries to eligible students and scholars at any stage in their career, regardless of country of residence or institutional affiliation. Opportunities include grants for fieldwork, publication, as well as funding for conference organisation and attendance. SSNS also

presents an annual Magnusson Prize of £450 (named in memory of Magnus Magnusson KBE, scholar and journalist of the northern world) for the best essay submitted by an early career scholar (including Masters and PhD candidates).

SSNS also eagerly collaborates with other societies and supports ongoing projects of interest to members. This recently included the restoration and unveiling ceremony in association with the Scottish Society of Antiquaries, who worked with the SSNS to re-locate and restore the 11th-century Edinburgh Runestone (U 1173, originally from Lilla Ramsjö in Sweden). This was recently moved from its previous location just below Edinburgh Castle and now stands outside the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Last year SSNS worked with the Pictish Arts Society (PAS) to host the Common Ground conference which gained national press coverage; the event celebrated Dr Anna Ritchie’s significant body of work contributing to the study of Scotland’s early medieval people. When the historically important Conan Stone was discovered in 2019, SSNS contributed to the North of Scotland Archaeological Society conservation project to prepare the stone for display in Dingwall Museum, and in collaboration with PAS, a two-day conference about the Conan Stone was held in 2021. The discovery of the Conan Stone is one of the SNS presentations available on our YouTube channel.

*Rebekah Day is the Events Officer of SSNS.*

## The Danish Church in London



**In the front row: Queen Margrethe, Bette Petersen Broyd (new Chair of the Danish Church Council), and the Danish Ambassador René Dinesen**

Photo: Michael Harrit

Queen Margrethe II marked her Golden Jubilee at the Danish Church in London. Her Majesty attended a service in honour of her 50 years as reigning monarch since her accession to the throne.

The service also gave thanks to Her Majesty for the chasuble she designed and embroidered for the church in 2020, when she had been prevented from being present because of Covid (as reported in CoScan Magazine 2021/1). The chasuble was worn by the resident Pastor Flemming Kloster Poulsen when leading the service.

The Danish community in London (Danish Church in London, Anglo-Danish Society, Danish Royal Guards Association, and Danish-UK Association) came together to erect a memorial stone in remembrance of the Danes who fell in service to their country.

A granite stone of well over a metre, originally from Cornwall, now stands in the garden of the Danish Church. It is engraved with the Dannebrog flag and the text *Til minde om dem der mistede livet i tjeneste for Danmark*. The memorial was inaugurated on 7 May (the Sunday closest to 5 May, Denmark's Liberation Day) with a church service. The remembrance is planned to be an annual event.



# The Anglo-Swedish Society of Gothenburg

Centenary Celebration:  
29 September 2023

We will celebrate our 100th anniversary in style and with as many friends as possible. If you wish to attend, please write to [centenary@angloswedish.se](mailto:centenary@angloswedish.se) for more details.



## Obituary

### Eivor Martinus 1943-2023

by Eva Robards

The author and translator Eivor Martinus has died after a long illness, a month before her 80th birthday. She is survived by her two daughters and three grandchildren.

Eivor's remarkable work, in spreading the understanding of Swedish culture in the UK and beyond, does indeed deserve recognition. She was a playwright, novelist, translator, theatre director — and a well-known name among Swedish organisations in the UK: she was one of the founding members of SELTA, its Chair for fifteen years, and a contributor to the *Swedish Book Review*. Further, she was one of the first members of SveaBritt (the name of which was proposed by her), and an active member of the Anglo-Swedish Society where she served on the Council and gave talks. Her last talk for the Anglo-Swedish Society, in November 2021, was based on her final book *I skuggan av ett helgon* (In the shadow of



a saint) about Saint Birgitta's daughter Katarina (can be viewed on YouTube).

She began life in Gothenburg, where her studies at the University were interrupted when she married the English director Derek Martinus (initially Derek Buitenhuis); he had come to Sweden to study Scandinavian theatre. They settled in London, but her summers naturally had to be spent in Sweden, by the sea in the province of Blekinge. She later took up her studies again and obtained a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature, and in Swedish Literature.

She translated some thirty plays from Swedish and Norwegian into English.

Several of her adaptations have been published and performed in theatres in England and the USA, and as radio theatre on the BBC. Over the years she and her husband collaborated in the staging of a large number of theatre performances in London, and also in Sweden.

Eivor became a specialist on the author August Strindberg: she translated fifteen of his plays into English, published two books on Strindberg and his women, and gave a number of talks about him in Sweden and in England. She also kept a Strindberg blog for two years: *Strindberg and others*.

In addition, she has written youth fiction novels, a biography of the medieval Queen Filippa, and another on Saint Birgitta. She also wrote a book

about her husband's Alzheimer's, and in the book *Hon sjöng på vinden* (2019) she portrayed her family history, perspectives on career and life, and facing death.

Eivor was awarded literary prizes from the Swedish Academy, the British Comparative Literature Association and the Swedish Writers' Union.

Alongside her writing, she taught Swedish at the prestigious Southbank International School in London for over 30 years and spread interest in Swedish literature to several generations of London Swedes.

For *CoScan Magazine* 2012/2 Eivor Martinus wrote the article 'Strindberg and women'.

Her book on Queen Filippa was reviewed in *CoScan Magazine* 2014/2.

## Exciting new runic find in Norway

by Katherine Holman



Earlier this year, details were published of a new runic inscription, discovered in 2021 at Svingerud (ca 85 km northwest of Oslo) in the historic province of Ringerike. There was great excitement

over the find, which is carved on a sandstone fragment that measures just 31cm by 32 cm. The rune-inscribed stone was discovered in a grave that is dated to between AD 1 and AD 250 CE. This

date makes it — for the moment at least — ‘the oldest datable runestone in the world’, as well as one of the ‘oldest runic inscriptions ever found’. At present, the oldest known runic inscription consists of just five runes, *harja* (probably a male name which refers to the word for army), carved onto a bone comb from a bog deposit at Vimose, Fyn, Denmark, which is dated to ca AD 160.

The runic alphabet is usually known as the *futhark*, after its first six characters.

ƒ f   ű u   þ þ   ǣ a   ʀ r   < k   ʁ g   ƿ w  
 ʰ h   † n   | i   ʂ j   ʁ i   ʟ p   ʝ z   ʂ s  
 † t   ʙ b   ʞ e   ʟ m   ʟ l   ʞ ð   ʞ ó

#### The older (24-rune) *futhark*

In its early forms, the complete *futhark* consists of around 24 characters and it appears to have been used across the Germanic world, with early finds concentrated in Scandinavia, especially Denmark, and northern Germany. Most of these early inscriptions are very short and are carved into small, portable objects, such as items of jewellery, tools, and weapons. Although runes are often associated with stone monuments from the Viking-Age in particular, it was assumed until the find from Svingerud that the majority of the earliest known runestones dated from the late fourth or fifth centuries. Dating these runestone inscriptions can of course be very difficult, as the stones on which they are carved cannot be easily dated, so it is possible that some of them are earlier.

What is especially remarkable about this inscription from Svingerud is that it was found within an undisturbed cremation pit under a burial mound, and radiocarbon dating of the burned bone and charcoal samples therefore provides an unusually secure, as well as a very early, date for the inscription.

The Svingerud runic inscription is distinctive in other ways too: in fact, there are several lightly-scratched inscriptions and markings on the stone. This includes a cross-hatched pattern, some symbols that are best described as rune-like, three runes that appear to be the beginning of the runic alphabet, *fup*, and, along one of the narrow edges of the stone, a line of 20 runes, mainly consonants. The overall impression of these various inscriptions is that the stone has been used for writing practice, graffiti or doodling, although given that the stone was found in a grave, a ritual function cannot be ruled out. And, at the bottom of the front face, there is a line of eight clear and deeper-cut runes that appear to read *idiberug* (the b-rune has an unusual form, with four rather than two ‘loops’ on the main vertical stave). This inscription has been provisionally interpreted by Professor Kristel Zilmer, chief runologist at the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, as a female personal name, with the inscription possibly meaning either ‘for Idibera’ or ‘Idiberu/Idiberga’.

The stone was put on temporary public display at the Historical Museum in Oslo in January and February, and it is planned that it will be on display again in July 2023.



## Viking-Age hair combs

by Steve Ashby



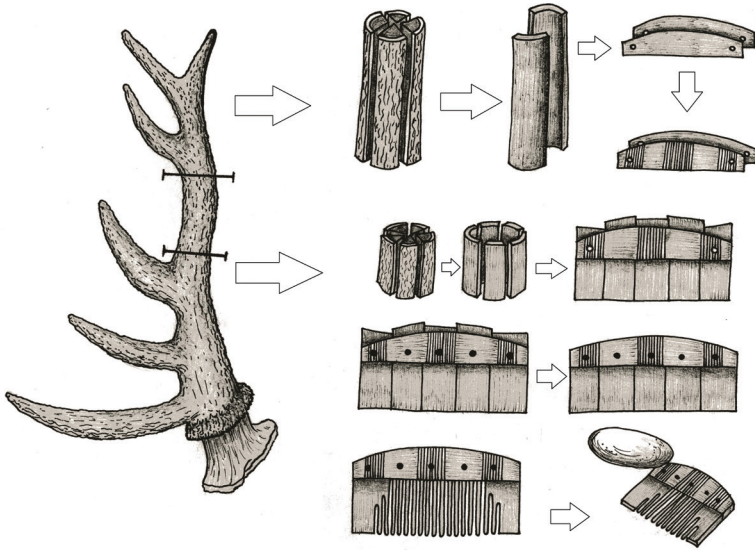
**Comb from York** Photo: York Museums Trust (Yorkshire Museum)

Hair combs are among the most easily recognised objects of the Viking Age, and are relatively common finds, particularly at urban sites. They were important personal possessions, made by skilled craftworkers using carefully selected materials and a specialised toolkit, often being valued enough to be taken to the grave. Why this might be is unclear, but it might owe something to associations between hair and identity, and, in particular, between cleanliness, grooming and status. I have been working on combs for 20 years, and have found them to be a surprisingly detailed source of information about economy, trade, technology and identity.

Combs are regularly encountered in excavations of Viking towns and cemeteries; there are large collections from Birka (Sweden) and Hedeby (Germany), as well as York, Lincoln and Dublin. I began my PhD with the intention of identifying any hidden variation in the corpus, as it had been believed that there

was a general uniformity in form across northern Europe. Through studying small variations in manufacturing process (illustrated on page 16), I identified distinctive regional ways of making combs. This allowed us to use combs to think about questions relating to human movement, culture contact, and identity — previously more commonly studied through decorative metalwork.

I was also particularly interested in the question of raw materials, as a window onto trade and long-distance interaction. Viking-Age combs were usually made of antler rather than bone (probably related to an awareness of the tensile strength of the former, as well as cosmological associations). This is useful for the archaeologist: if combs were made using materials drawn from a limited number of animal species, and if we can identify those species and know their biogeographic ranges, we can reconstruct patterns of movement. This gives the Viking-Age scholar a powerful tool.



How to make a comb

Illustration: Hayley Saul

The particular question I was drawn to in my initial work related to pre-Viking combs from Scotland. These combs were excavated in Orkney and Shetland, and were of distinctive ‘Pictish’/‘native’ form, without parallel in Scandinavia. It had been suggested — on the basis of close study by a skilled archaeozoologist — that some of these combs were made of antler from reindeer. This species was long extinct in Scotland, and if its antler was being used in the production of these combs, then it must have been imported from Scandinavia. Geographically speaking, this would not be unlikely in itself, but would be an important indication of pre-Viking contact between Scotland and Scandinavia: something that has otherwise been difficult to demonstrate. The combs thus had an important role to play in the question of how ‘Vikings’ first came to British shores:

were they really unknown strangers, or did initial, otherwise invisible trading relations suddenly turn violent?

In my PhD, I re-analysed these Scottish combs using simple microscopy, and attempted to refine the methodology for identification. I found it difficult to identify definitively the species of antler in many of the artefacts, but did offer a ‘probable’ identification in most cases. However, few of the combs were excavated from secure contexts, so it was not possible to state definitively that they were manufactured **before** the Viking Age; they could just as easily have been produced in native styles in the early years of the Viking settlement.

A way out of this impasse revealed itself soon after the conclusion of my PhD research, with the development of a new analytical technique known as Zooarchaeology by Mass Spectrometry

(ZooMS). ZooMS is a rapid, low-cost, minimally destructive technique which targets the proteins preserved in artefacts in order to identify their species of origin. Importantly, ZooMS's minimally destructive approach makes it appropriate for use on objects like combs, and together with Dr Isabella von Holstein (then a PhD student at York) and an international team of researchers, we set about testing the technique on this question. As the technique was new, we also undertook DNA analyses, and found the two techniques to be in agreement. None of the 'native' combs we tested were made of reindeer antler, with red deer being the most commonly used material until the appearance of distinctive 'Viking' forms. We could not support the idea that the combs indicated early contact with Scandinavia.

This was important in its own right, but successfully trialling the method also had implications: this was the first of a number of such studies we have since undertaken, and ZooMS is now well established as a way of studying raw materials in worked bone objects of all periods, right across the globe. An interesting project, with Dr Ashley Coutu (now of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford) and Prof Søren Sindbæk (Aarhus University) involved applying ZooMS to combs and comb-making waste from across southern Scandinavia (notably the towns of Ribe and Aarhus, and the fortress and rural settlement at Aggersborg). By focusing on well-dated contexts, we were able to identify the presence of reindeer antler in Viking-Age Denmark, reaching significant quantities

by the end of the period, but beginning with small amounts several decades before the traditionally-defined start of the period. As this material must have come from upland Norway or Sweden we can propose the existence of maritime traffic between southern Scandinavian towns and more northerly ports at an early date. Even if they were not yet going to Britain, Scandinavians were travelling around in ships, and visiting towns for trade, long before the period began.

This is just the beginning. We have undertaken work — with research student Mariana Muñoz-Rodríguez and researchers from York and Scandinavia — on combs from across Norway, Sweden, continental Europe, Estonia, Iceland, and Greenland, with more analyses planned in Britain, Ireland and Poland. The aim is ultimately to map the dynamics of trade and travel across the Viking world using its combs. Watch this space!



*Dr Steve Ashby is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Archaeology, University of York, where he has run projects on craft, trade, and domestic activity in Viking-Age Britain and Scandinavia. He is the author of numerous articles*

*and books and has been a speaker and historical consultant on TV and radio in the UK and internationally. From 30 June to 14 July he will lead a tour in Scandinavia and Germany to view Viking culture and remains, including six UNESCO World Heritage Sites.*

# The Kalmar Union

by Eva Robards

Once upon a time, from 1397 to 1523, the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were united under a single monarch. Named after the city of Kalmar in southern Sweden, where the treaty was signed, it was an important period in Nordic history. The union was not a merger of the three kingdoms into a single state, but rather a personal union under one ruler.

Margrete I, the youngest child of the Danish king Valdemar Atterdag, was the founder of the Kalmar Union. By her marriage to Haakon VI, she became Queen Consort of Norway 1363-80 and of Sweden 1363-64. (In 1380 Haakon died, and in 1364 Albert of Mecklenburg seized power in Sweden.)

Margrete and Haakon had one son, Olaf, who inherited the Danish crown after his grandfather when he was just five years old and the Norwegian crown after his father when he was ten. Olaf died when he was only 16 years old and Margrete, who had ruled both kingdoms in his name, remained as regent of Norway and Denmark.

Margrete was known as a wise, energetic and capable leader. She was derisively called 'King Breechless' by Albert of Mecklenburg who, however, lost a decisive battle between his and her troops and was dethroned. Margrete was now the regent of three kingdoms and remained their *de facto* ruler until her death in 1412.



**Queen Margrete and King Erik in 1396**  
Monument in bronze and granite in Viborg by  
Axel Poulsen (1965)

Margrete had no more children so she chose her great-nephew Bogislaw as her heir and successor. He was only seven years old when he was brought to Denmark from Pomerania in 1389 to be raised by Margrete, and his name was changed to the more Nordic-sounding Erik (he was the king who married the 12-year old Filippa of England, the subject of a biography by Eivor Martinus). Erik of Pomerania was ultimately removed by deposal from all three kingdoms of the union.

The Kalmar Union, geographically the largest realm in Europe at the time, faced

challenges from the very beginning. The personal union created tensions between the kingdoms, as each sought to assert its own interests and maintain its autonomy. Denmark, being the most powerful of the three kingdoms, often dominated and sought to impose its authority on Norway and Sweden.

The Kalmar Union finally collapsed when Sweden declared its independence and elected Gustav Vasa as its King on 6 June 1523. Norway followed suit and broke away from the union in 1537, although it was later integrated into Denmark.

.....

## Sweden will be 500 years old (or young) on 6 June — the national day of Sweden

by David Goldsmith

Only, can that really be true? What can we really say about the 500 Swedish years from 1523 to 2023?

I am sure I read about the Vikings once... but of course, what the Svear, Geats and Gutes tribes inhabited in the 700-1100 AD period was not one ‘country’, and, much of modern-day Sweden was not under their direct rule. And, in 1523, there’s the not-so-trivial matter of Skåne, Halland and Blekinge,

sometimes Danish, sometimes Swedish, but always hotly contested! The Sweden of ‘then’ would look very odd indeed to the modern Swede of today.

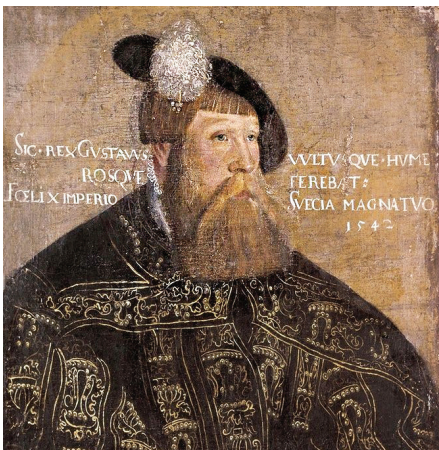
Starting on a pedantic note, there is the issue of the notorious conversion from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. This means that 6.6.23 is not the correct date at all. Many countries did this ‘in one go’ — excising 11 days in the conversion process, while others dawdled over it.



Prior to 1983, 6 June (now the the national day) was celebrated as the ‘Swedish Flag Day’

Sweden started to make the calendar change in 1700, but it was decided to make the (then 11-day) adjustment gradually by excluding the leap days (29 February) from each of 11 successive leap years, 1700 to 1740. It proved a hopeless method, and was abandoned in 1712 by **adding** a day — a unique 30th February — to go **back** to the Julian system! It took until 1753 before common sense finally prevailed.

Of course, what is really being celebrated here is good old King Gustav Vasa. The Swedish ‘King Henry VIII’(!) Gustav Eriksson Vasa ruled as King of Sweden from 1523 until his death in 1560. Previously he was self-proclaimed Protector of the Realm from 1521, during the ongoing Swedish War of Liberation against King Christian II of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Sweden’s exit from the Kalmar Union certainly had its more fraught moments, including the infamous Stockholm bloodbath.



King Gustav Vasa

Portrait: Jakob Binck

Gustav proved to be a harsh master and an exigent lord, becoming known for being suspicious, mendacious, cruel, vengeful, demagogic, and capricious; to his enemies, he seemed to have most of the attributes of a tyrant. You should read Hilary Mantel’s, or Alison Weir’s, books on the period and main characters to see how these character descriptions also fit Henry VIII to a metal glove! Over time both rulers got both testier and more tyrannical; both railed and struggled against the Church (both making themselves the ‘head boy’); both had challenging relations with neighbouring countries (Denmark and France respectively); between them they had nine wives. This was Sweden’s peak *Game of Thrones* period.

After all this *Sturm und Drang* (no, not the Vaasa-based heavy metal band), we build to the point when Sweden was a global super-power, making a huge mark on history in the religious conflict that was the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), and making Gustavus Adolphus a feared and respected name in Europe. Thereafter, a slow, bumpy decline in fortunes ensued, with frequent skirmishes with Denmark, Russia (the nemesis of Karl XII and the catastrophe of the defeat by Russia at Poltava in 1709), and others. By 1720 or so, Sweden was bankrupt, its people starving, and only through luck was there a relative period of stability, morphing into an artistic and scientific Golden Age (of Gustavian Enlightenment) in the late 18th century. However, a later Gustav fumbled badly in 1808 in another skirmish with Russia; by 1809, a century after Poltava, Sweden was rapidly

vanquished and suffered the tragic loss of the Eastern part of the country, Finland, to Russia.

Sweden acquired a former Napoleonic *Maréchal* as a new King (in Sweden Karl XIV Johan) — starting as Regent in 1810 and Generalissimus from 1813, assuming full power in 1818 — whilst also helping itself to a royal union with Norway (very much not what Norway felt it wanted or needed in 1814). That unhappy union disintegrated rancorously in 1905. But crucially there have been no more wars under the watchful rule of the House of Bernadotte.

By the end of the 19th century, millions of Swedes were leaving the country as economic and religious migrants, fleeing poverty and persecution at home, with an economy which even by 1880 was predominantly running on peasants and ploughshares. The loss of the youngest and most vigorous of their stock enriched especially the USA with their pioneering spirit and hard work ethos. Sweden once again sank lower, and risked economic collapse, social disintegration and even civil war from around 1900-1925. Prudent and wise leadership by Hjalmar Branting, to my mind one of the most impressive figures in Swedish life in the 20th century, averted the crisis. His (and others') interventions were seminal, and Branting went on to play a major role in extending the democratic franchise, and in the formation of the League of Nations.

After this, we have the Social Democratic trifecta of Hansson-Erlander-Palme (1932-1976 — a 44-year period of being in power, alone or in coalition). These were really the 'record



**Hjalmar Branting** Portrait: Richard Bergh, Nationalmuseum - 39050 (Public Domain)

years' (*rekordåren*) as, once World War II was over, this was the period when the economy of Sweden grew prodigiously through massive, and perhaps long overdue, industrialisation. Sweden's internal successes — perhaps best symbolised by *folkhemmet* (the welfare state) — became visible to outsiders from the 1950s onwards, as the country assumed the mantle of an apparent Shangri-La with a progressive, tolerant, egalitarian and permissive agenda. In classic Swedish style, the country both joined the EU and kept hold of its currency. Today, it is the country of the northern lights, *fika*, herring, fashion, technology, of progressive democracy, Nobel Prizes,

and choral music. It is an environmental superpower, with the ambition to lead the world in the Green Revolution. Of course, as with all countries, there are increasingly troublesome headwinds to contend with, but Sweden is well-placed to find both an economic and a social niche to inhabit securely. With luck, Sweden will continue to celebrate many more anniversaries in the future!

Hip-Hip Hurray  
and *Skål Sverige!*



*Professor David Goldsmith has been a Member of the Council of the Anglo-Swedish Society (A-SS) and a Trustee of its Charity. He has given several talks to A-SS, available on YouTube.*

**Update on Gammalsvensky in Ukraine:** Winter and spring reports have told of constant drone attacks and bombing. Many people have left and, out of an original population of about 2300, only 300-400 remain. The school and the health centre have

been destroyed, and civilians killed. In May, people were still hopeful that the Ukrainian spring offensive would eventually mean that the village could be rebuilt, and people live once again in peace and freedom.

[www.svenskybyborna.se](http://www.svenskybyborna.se)

## World's first female team to retrace Heroes of Telemark mission

by Alix Mackay

In March 2022, our team of British military wives became the world's first all-female team to retrace one of the most important missions in Scandinavian and World War II history: the Heroes of Telemark. On skis and led by Forces Wives Challenge, it was a journey that took us 100 km across Norway's Hardanger plateau — one of the most inhospitable environments on earth.

The context of this legendary mission begins in 1940 when Hitler took occupation of Norway. In doing so, he acquired a rare supply of a critical ingredient for developing an atomic bomb. Deuterium oxide, also known as heavy water, was a by-product at the Vemork hydroelectric power plant. Crucially it had the potential to scale production and put Hitler months ahead



of the Allies in the race to create such a powerful weapon.

... until one courageous scientist took action. Leif Tronstad was the lead chemist at the hydroelectric power station, and by 1941 he began to understand the motivation behind Nazi commands to accelerate the production of deuterium oxide. In partnership with resistance fighter Einar Skinnarland, he provided Britain with critical intelligence regarding Hitler's efforts. That information triggered one of the most ambitious sabotage missions of World War II.

The major problem was the position of the power plant. Its rockface setting, 300 km inland and accessed only by a single-track suspension bridge over a deep ravine, meant that any approach would be highly visible and an open target to the Nazi stronghold. Plus, its proximity to the

town of Rjukan meant that bombing from the air would put hundreds of civilian lives at risk. The only way of getting near the plant was by foot. A plan to land silently a troop of British forces in the area by glider was formed, code-named Operation Freshman. A covert landing zone now needed to be identified as part of a reconnaissance operation ... and the British Army knew exactly where to find the men for the job.

The Special Operations Executive (SOE), a division of the British military, was created specifically for training brave nationals from occupied countries as informants and saboteurs. The Norwegian SOE company, Linge, was based in Aviemore in Scotland and from there four people were selected to form the glider mission's advance party: Jens-Anton Poulsson, Claus Helberg, Knut



Forces Wives Team en route for the Heroes of Telemark Challenge

Haugland and Arne Kjelstrup, code-named Operation Grouse.

In what would be the first parachute jump of their lives, the full moon of October 1942 provided the conditions for a secret approach into the area surrounding the power station. However, a navigational error resulted in Grouse landing deep into Norway's Hardanger plateau, a mountainous area, 100 km off the target drop zone.

Over the days that followed, Grouse headed across the frozen terrain of the Hardanger plateau, sheltering from atrocious weather conditions in several Norwegian *hytter* (huts) along the way. They finally reached the target area, identified a landing zone for the gliders, and radioed coordinates back to Britain. Little did they know that those gliders would never make it. Sadly all members of Operation Freshman would be killed in action and Grouse's ordeal had, in fact, only just begun.

Unaware of this tragic failure, Grouse headed back onto the Hardanger plateau away from Nazi troops. They received news that another attack operation would be initiated, this time on foot by a further group of Norwegian SOEs, code-named Gunnerside. Grouse were to meet and brief Gunnerside on their arrival by parachute during the next full moon.

... November 1942.

Appalling weather conditions put a stop to the November flight and the attack was delayed until the next full moon... and then the next one, and then the next one. It was not until 27 February 1943 that Gunnerside arrived. What was initially a three-week recce for Grouse

had become a four-month extreme exercise of resilience and survival. The four men remained on the Hardanger plateau throughout the depths of winter, without knowing why, when or how their mission would end.

Miraculously, just hours after Gunnerside was parachuted onto the mountain plateau, they found the now emaciated men of Grouse and began their ambitious plan of attack.

In the darkness of midnight, they silently skied down from the lookout at high speed and deep into the ravine, crossed the frozen river, and scaled the 500ft cliff to the power station itself, literally under the noses of the Nazi guards. They crept towards the enormous building, and thanks to valuable intelligence provided by Leif Tronstad, located a back entrance. They silently broke through a window and navigated their way to the heavy water storage room. There they fixed explosives to the tanks and set these to detonate, leaving themselves just one minute to escape. The tanks exploded and, in the chaos that followed, Grouse and Gunnerside escaped unharmed to their separate destinations.

... Hitler lost his supply of deuterium and never completed his atomic bomb.

Following six months of endurance training, we retraced Grouse's journey across Norway's Hardanger plateau, from their unintended drop zone 100 km off target, to their lookout over the Vemork power station from the other side of the ravine, and across the suspension bridge that took us to what is left of the building. In temperatures as low as -10°C, and

carrying over 300 kg of kit between us over five days, we even had the privilege of sheltering in the very same *hytte* that Grouse did 80 years previously. We laid poppies of Remembrance for the men of Operation Freshman and Leif Tronstad, who himself was killed just weeks before the war ended.

Forces Wives Challenge (FWC) is a social enterprise for women with partners in the Armed Forces, uniting them through adventure and challenge, and building resilience for life in the military — one that is notoriously unpredictable. What better challenge than to pay tribute to one of the most extreme stories of resilience in World War II history — the true Heroes of Telemark.



*Alix Mackay is based in Glasgow, and a member of the FWC Heroes of Telemark Team. She runs her own consultancy business in the field of Life Sciences.*

*This article was based on a talk that she presented to the Scottish Norwegian Society (Glasgow) in November last year. The text has been read by the President of the society, Garry Irvine.*



**Forces Wives Team having arrived at Vemork (Alix Mackay third from left)**

# Hovingham Bakery and cinnamon buns

by Victoria Lundborg

My husband Simon and I run Hovingham Bakery, north of York, together with a small team of friendly staff.

I was born in the North of Sweden in the small village of Gunnarsbyn, just north of Boden. After moving to Gothenburg I ended up working in the well-known seafood restaurant Sjömagasinet under chef Leif Mannerström. This is where Simon and I met, in 2000. Three years later we moved to England, first to Buckinghamshire and then to North Yorkshire.

Simon worked as head chef at the Feversham Arms in Helmsley for seven years, but we started looking for our own business. Having fallen in love with Ryedale we discovered, after much searching, that Hovingham Bakery was for sale. We felt this was a sign, as we had driven through the village regularly over the years, often commenting that we would love to buy the bakery! We took over in November 2016 and have never looked back.

Our shop is filled with a mix of English and Swedish baked goods and patisserie, both modern and classical. We are open from Wednesday to Sunday each week. Many people stop for breakfast or lunch and sit on the green outside, enjoying the beautiful village.

Our Swedish classics include cinnamon buns, rye bread and seasonal favourites like *semla* (lent bun) and *lussekatt* (Lucia bun). We also make cakes to order, such as *prinsesstårta*, *kladdkaka* and *jordgubbstårta*.



## Dough for cinnamon buns

25 g yeast  
50 g butter  
270 ml milk  
45 g sugar  
480 g strong flour  
3 g salt  
5 g ground cardamom

## Filling

100 g butter  
90 g sugar  
8 g ground cinnamon  
Mix to combine.

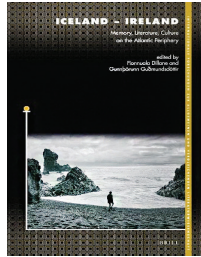
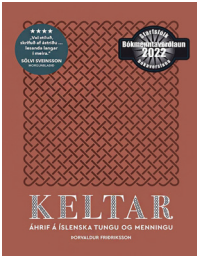
## Glaze

100 g sugar  
100 g boiling water  
Mix together with a whisk until clear.

Combine all dough ingredients and mix with a dough hook on low speed for 8 minutes. Allow to rest in a bowl covered with a towel for 90 minutes.

On a floured bench roll out the dough into a rectangle approximately 1 cm thick. Spread the dough with the room-temperature flavoured butter and fold in half from top to bottom. Cut the dough in 90 g strips and tie in a loose knot. Place on a baking tray and cover with a towel. Allow to prove for 20-40 minutes until doubled in size.

Bake at 210°C for 12 minutes. Take out of the oven, immediately brush with the glaze, and sprinkle with pearl sugar nibs.



## Review by Rory McTurk

Þorvaldur Friðriksson, *Keltar: áhrif á íslenska tungu og menningu* ('Celts: influences on Icelandic language and culture'). Published by Sögur útgáfa, fourth printing, 2023 (first published Jan 2022), ISBN: 978-9935-31-187-0

Fionnuala Dillane and Gunnþórunn Guðmundsdóttir, eds, *Iceland – Ireland: memory, literature, culture on the Atlantic periphery*, Internationale Forschungen zur allgemeinen und vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft, vol. 209. Published by Brill, Feb 2022, ISBN: 978-90-04-50286-4

These two books deserve to be reviewed together even though the first of them deals with Iceland in relation not exclusively to Ireland but also to the parts of Scotland and the Hebrides that shared with Ireland the same language, Gaelic, before its development into Irish and Scottish Gaelic in the thirteenth century. Þorvaldur Friðriksson quotes from the earliest preserved (thirteenth-century) version of the Icelandic *Landnámabók* 'Book of Settlements' the statement that when Iceland was settled from Norway in the ninth century 'Irish books, bells and croziers' were found there. Making

relatively little of the corresponding passage in Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók* 'Book of Icelanders', dating from the twelfth century, which says that the Irishmen who left these objects behind had left Iceland 'because they did not wish to live among heathens', Þorvaldur seeks evidence in Icelandic archaeology and place names that a Celtic Christian community was present in Iceland at the time of the Norwegian settlement and remained so to the extent that Iceland's conversion in 999/1000 by decree of the *alþingi* was not so much a conversion from Scandinavian paganism as a triumph of Roman over Celtic Christianity.

His book is divided into two parts, the first consisting of seven chapters, the first three dealing with Celts in general and Norwegian and Irish settlers; the fourth, the longest, with Celtic cultural influence on Iceland; the fifth with Iceland's links with the Faroes and Greenland; the sixth with the functions of the Icelandic *goði*, or chieftain, in relation to Irish kingship and with Celtic in relation to Norse mythology; and the seventh with gaps in the historical record alleged to have obscured, for example, the fact that the name of the volcano Hekla derives not from Old Norse *hekla* 'hooded cape' but from Gaelic *eagla* 'fear'. The second half of the book consists of a dictionary, under various headings, of Icelandic words proposed as being of Celtic and mainly Gaelic origin. The longest sections are those listing personal and place names, but many words other than proper nouns are listed.

A great many of these are open to question. According to Þorvaldur, the

first syllables in the Icelandic words for Iceland and Greenland, *Ísland* and *Grænland*, derive not from the Old Norse words meaning ‘ice’ and ‘green’, as commonly supposed, but from the Gaelic words *iasc* and *grian*, meaning respectively ‘fish’ and ‘sun’. Rather surprisingly, Þorvaldur does not quote from *Laxdæla saga* a remark about Iceland by one of its characters which might give some slight support to his argument: ‘Not for me that land of fish in my old age.’ The speaker here is Ketill *flatnefr*, one of whose daughters marries Helgi *inn magri*, one of Iceland’s original settlers. The nicknames *flatnefr* and *inn magri* have generally been assumed to mean ‘Flatnose’ and ‘the Lean’ (or ‘Meagre’) respectively, but according to Þorvaldur they derive from the Gaelic words *flaith* ‘lord, ruler’ (plus Old Norse *nef* ‘nose’) and *mór* ‘large, great’ (compare Welsh *mawr*), so that Ketill’s nickname endows him with a princely nose and Helgi acquires a commanding stature. The Icelandic word for a prose narrative, *saga*, well established, it would seem, as meaning originally ‘something said’ and related to Old Norse *segja* ‘to say’, comes to derive in Þorvaldur’s view from Gaelic *saoghal*, meaning ‘life, time, world’.

The first chapter of *Iceland – Ireland*, by the editors, emphasises the book’s concern with Iceland and Ireland in relation to one another rather than in relation to mainland Scandinavia and Britain respectively. Chapter 2, by Sharae Deckard, investigates the preoccupation with the marketization of memory and with the waning capacity for critical

recollection in *Lovestar* (2002) by Andri Snær Magnason and *Protection* (2005) by Molly McCloskey, both described as ‘boom novels’ (p. 18). Chapter 3, by Gunnþórunn Guðmundsdóttir, identifies the novels *Siglingin um síkin* ‘The cruise on the canals’ (2012) by Álfur Gunnlaugsdóttir and *Nothing on Earth* (2017) by Conor O’Callaghan as examples of ‘crisis narrative’ (p. 44), reflecting in different ways the 2008 banking crisis. Chapter 4, by Fionnuala Dillane, finds it significant that in the novels *Furðustrandir* ‘Strange shores’ (2010) by Arnaldur Indriðason and *Broken Harbour* (2012) by Tana French the authors ‘finish off’ their detective protagonists, the implication no doubt being that contemporary society no longer has room for detectives or detective stories of traditional type. Chapter 5, by Anne Fogarty, analyses aspects of ‘eco-memory’ (defined on p. 77 as ‘diverging sharply from anthropocentric memories of place’) in *Skugga-Baldur* (2003), the novel by Sjón (Sigurjón Birgir Sigurðsson) translated as *The Blue Fox* (2004), and in the novels *A Girl is a Half-formed Thing* (2013) by Eimear McBride and *A Line Made by Walking* (2017) by Sara Baume. Chapter 6, by John Brannigan, considers responses by various writers, including Louis MacNeice and Halldór Laxness, to Ireland’s neutrality and Iceland’s occupation by British and American troops during the Second World War, while chapter 7, by Daisy Neijmann, explains the paucity in Iceland of museums commemorating the occupation in terms of Iceland’s view of itself as a

country now independent of foreign rule and with no armed forces. In chapter 8, by Ásta Kristín Benediktsdóttir, it is shown how the problematic interrelationship of homosexuality and nationalist ideology at the times of Iceland's Act of Union with Denmark in 1918 and the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland is examined in the novels *Mánasteinn* 'Moonstone' (2013) by Sjón and *At Swim, Two Boys* (2002) by Jamie O'Neill. Chapter 9, by Gísli Sigurðsson, calls for increased confidence in acknowledging Gaelic influence on Old Icelandic language, literature, and culture, while chapter 10,

by Paul Rouse, shows that, of the stick-and-ball games hurling and *knattleikr*, mentioned in the Irish and Icelandic sagas respectively, the former has had a richer subsequent history than the latter. Chapter 11, by Lucy Collins, finally, illustrates responses to archaeologically revealed traces of Viking Dublin in poems by modern Irish poets writing in English, including Seamus Heaney

It will be clear that Gísli's chapter (9) is the one most relevant to Þorvaldur's book, reviewed above. How far he would accept Þorvaldur's conclusions, however, is a question.

## More new books

- *Bogs, bones and bodies: the deposition of human remains in northern European mires (9000 BC–AD 1900)*. Online (<https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2022.163>) by Cambridge University Press, Jan 2023
- Carolyne Larrington, *The Norse Myths that Shape the Way We Think*. Thames and Hudson Ltd, March 2023



- Duncan Wiese, *Tityrus. A Pastoral*. Lolli Editions May 2023
- Tine Høeg, *Memorial* (transl. Misha Hoekstra). Lolli, Feb 2023



- Matteo Tarsi, *Loanwords and Native Words in Old and Middle Icelandic. A Study in the History and Dynamics of the Icelandic Medieval Lexicon, from the Twelfth Century to 1550*. Brepols, Aug 2022
- Nancy Marie Brown, *Looking for the Hidden Folk: How Iceland's Elves Can Save the Earth*. Pegasus Books, Oct 2022



- John Carr, *The Viking Saint: Olaf II of Norway*. Pen & Sword Military, May 2022



- Anders Hallengren (member of the Anglo-Swedish Society), *Ocean Bound Women: Sisters Sailing around the World in the 1880s*. WSPC (Europe), Oct 2022
- Elin Cullhed, *Euphoria*. (trans. Jennifer Hayashida). Canongate Books, Oct 2022
- Lydia Sandgren, *Collected Works: A Novel*. Pushkin Press, April 2023
- Ann-Helén Laestadius, *Stolen*. [About a young Sámi girl] Bloomsbury Circus, Feb 2023



- Tim Clarkson, *The Mighty Fleet and the King's Power. The Isle of Man AD 400 to 1265*. John Donald, April 2023
- Beatrice Searle, *Stone Will Answer: A Journey Guided by Craft, Myth and Geology*. Harvill Secker, Feb 2023

## CoScan Trust Fund

2023 report by Brita Green

On 16 April, the Trust Fund group (Tony Bray, Hugh Williamson and myself) enjoyed being able to meet normally again — after three years of Zoom meetings — to consider this year’s applications and to suggest prize-winners for last year’s reports and photographs to the Magazine Editor.

We had applications this year from five individuals and four groups (representing a total of 33 participants). For various reasons, we decided to reject one of the groups, and ended up awarding eight grants, totalling a sum of £2290, and leaving us with a starting capital of just over £1200 for next year.

The successful applicants will be going to Denmark, the Faroes, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Two groups of university students will be carrying out glacial

data collection in Svalbard and running wildlife research projects in Iceland. The third group, from Scotland, is taking part in an exchange with a school in Nordland county in Norway.

We are very grateful to all our donors, both individual and societies: the Anglo-Scandinavian Society of Newcastle, the Danish Scottish Society, SKOL, the Scottish Norwegian Society and YASS. We hope you will continue to be generous, and that others will join you. As usual, the biggest contribution this year came from YASS and its share of the collection from the Lucia in the Minster, which has now become a popular part of York Minster’s Christmas programme.

You can read some of last year’s reports, including the 2022 prize-winning one, in the following pages.

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**CoScan Trust Fund  
PRIZE-WINNING REPORT 2022**

## Seven mountains in Bergen

by Rachel Mooney

I have never considered myself a ‘home-bird’, but sitting in Dublin airport on my way to Norway I suddenly realised that I had decided to do something new. Having grown up in a town 30 minutes from Belfast and deciding to study for a further six years in Queen’s Medical school in Belfast, I have never spent any significant time outside my small country. Little did I know while boarding my SAS flight that I was embarking on one of the most exciting experiences of my medical career to date.

I was travelling as part of the Erasmus programme to Bergen, Norway. I undertook my Paediatric, Obstetrics and Gynaecology placements in the university hospital in Bergen, alongside a colleague from Belfast and many other Norwegian and Erasmus students. I spent three months in the city and enjoyed many aspects of Bergen life.

My motivation to complete a placement outside Northern Ireland was, in part, my wish to experience a different healthcare system. There were naturally practical differences — the white scrubs perfectly dispensed every morning, calling your professors by their first name (a cardinal sin in UK hospitals), and cycling through the underground tunnels to travel between different departments in the Haukeland hospital.

However, I do think the differences extended beyond the day-to-day working of the hospital. I grew to appreciate the teamwork in the Obstetric and Paediatric departments, where there genuinely is no hierarchy. I saw the advantages of feeling confident to put questions to a more experienced doctor, and in practice how this leads to effective communication. This was a great learning experience which I will carry into my future medical practice. I enjoyed learning about the different topics and conditions by talking to patients — whose language skills never ceased to amaze me. I particularly enjoyed the Paediatric placement, and this is something I am now considering as a possible future career choice.

Another difference was the emphasis on a healthy lifestyle in Norway. I found many patients were very active, enjoying skiing, swimming, and hiking. I saw at first hand the health benefits of spending time outdoors, and I also got to sample the Norwegian outdoor lifestyle myself. Whilst on a cabin trip organised by the university, I tried skiing for the first time! I was very nervous, as I felt I would be the only ‘first timer’ — however those fears were quickly allayed as I hit the slopes. There were many other Erasmus students (and even some Norwegians) who had never skied before, and we

were all hopeless together. This was a wonderful experience and I hope to have the chance to go skiing again.

I have always been interested in hiking, which was also part of the appeal of spending three months in Bergen, the home of the seven mountains. In fact, on our first morning in Bergen we attended a group hike organised by Sammen, the university's student union, to Ulriken, the highest of the seven. Hiking became part of life in Bergen, and at least once a week a group of students would pick one of the seven to tackle. I particularly enjoyed the fact that all the mountains were so close to the city — Ulriken being practically on my doorstep. This is in contrast to home where I have to drive over an hour to go hiking.

The more time I spent hiking I found I was able to climb mountains more quickly and more comfortably. As a

result, I nervously signed up for the Bergen Seven Mountain Challenge. It happened to fall on my last day in Bergen, and I felt this was the best way to round off a memorable trip. And what an experience it was! Over 14 hours, I climbed the seven mountains with Sarah, my colleague from Belfast (stopping at the Ulriken café for over an hour, I must admit). Some friends we had made over the course of our stay were there to welcome us over the finishing line. I feel so fortunate to have completed this challenge, and I still proudly wear my seven mountains T-shirt when I go hiking in Northern Ireland.

Fortunately, I was in Norway over 17 May and had the pleasure of experiencing their National Day. I attended a breakfast with friends from church, and was amazed by the beautiful national costumes. We then went to the Bergen parade and



Finish of the seven-mountains challenge

watched many different organisations and bands walk through the city. I particularly enjoyed it when Ukrainian refugees who had recently arrived walked through, waving flags: the Ukrainian flag on one side and the Norwegian on the other. The day also included a picnic, a concert, and fireworks. Overall, it was one of my favourite days, and I enjoyed celebrating with my new Norwegian and Erasmus friends.

On completing our Erasmus experiences, the programme required participants to fill out a closing survey.

One of the questions stood out for me: ‘Has the Erasmus experience made you feel more European?’ As I reflect on this question, I find myself feeling very different from how I felt prior to coming. Spending time with both Norwegian and Erasmus students had made me realise we are all more similar than we are different. I think growing up on a small island can lead to feeling isolated and removed from the rest of Europe. However, I realise now that Norway is only a short flight away — catch me on Duolingo, I would love to move back!

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## Training for a flagship Arctic expedition

by Ella Fenton

I am a 21-year-old Physical Geography student at the University of Edinburgh, a keen climber and outdoor enthusiast and, for the past year and a bit, a member of the Ice Warrior Last Pole Expedition Team. We are a team of ordinary people undergoing training with the aim of reaching the Northern Pole of Inaccessibility, located in the Arctic Ocean at a distance farthest from land, on an 80-day expedition across the sea ice. The goal of the expedition, apart from being the first people to ever reach that pole, is to collect a transect of ‘on-ice’ data to allow us to broaden our knowledge of the effects of climate change on the Arctic, and how this is affecting us at home. This data will be used by the NASA-funded National Snow and Ice Data Centre, as well as other scientific bodies, to further scientific research in this area.

Since 2001, Ice Warrior has trained over 450 people from all walks of life to become competent, safe, modern-day explorers.

The Northern Pole of Inaccessibility is 270 miles from the Geographic North Pole.  
[www.ice-warrior.com](http://www.ice-warrior.com)

In order for me to be part of this expedition team I had to undertake extensive training, both in and out of the UK, to make sure I was competent enough to survive in harsh Arctic conditions: living and moving on sea ice for long periods of time at  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  is not something that comes naturally to most! This is where CoScan came in: with their generous grant I was able to book travel to Svalbard, Norway, in May 2022, where I was to complete my Basic and Advanced Polar Training with the Ice Warrior Squad, led by Jim McNeill.

The training courses were a week each and focused on building on skills we had learnt in the UK. Staying in Guesthouse 102 and eating amazing Norwegian *dagens* every evening, we learnt how to survive in the Arctic. Rope work, first-aid situations, snowholes and emergency shelter options were some of the topics covered in our basic week, as well as how to deter polar bears and what to do in an encounter with one. This was the most important and probably most daunting topic covered. On the actual expedition, we would be expected to survive on sea ice at much colder temperatures than in training, so Svalbard was a nice introduction to most of the topics, with much of the training being scenario-based for on-ice situations. And when it came to polar bears the scenario in training was a very real one. Bears actively live on Svalbard, with a safe zone being in place around the town of Longyearbyen,

and a law making it compulsory to carry a rifle outside of this safe zone, where most of our training took place. When, later on in the training, we went out in the field for multiple days at a time in the tent, we would always have somebody standing on ‘bear watch’ outside the tent — this included all through the night on a rotation. That being said, we didn’t run into a bear on our training weeks, and although I was scared at the thought of seeing one, I was also sad I didn’t get the experience. Hopefully, we’ll see them on the main expedition, where we will be counting and monitoring them as part of our data set.

In total we spent five nights in the field practising the skills and drills learnt in training — my personal least favourite of these was being woken up at 4 am to pick up and move the tent because the sea ice below us was melting. One of these nights was spent in a snowhole which

took us almost six hours to dig, due to layers of ice crust within the snowpack.

I was also extremely lucky in that my last day on Svalbard was Norway Day. This was a marvellous cultural experience, and really allowed me to immerse myself in and learn a lot about the history of Norway and of Svalbard, and attend the Norway



Putting up the tent

Day ceremony in Longyearbyen town centre. The dresses and music were beautiful, and the appreciation of the mining history of the town was lovely to see. I also got to listen to the school choir and local band playing traditional Norwegian music.

The whole experience was an amazing one, and I came away feeling entirely prepared (and with some pretty funky tan lines!) for the next stage of my training. I was lucky enough to go back to Svalbard in January 2023 to complete a week-long training expedition, where I was in the field with my team for eight days and seven nights to prove our training

had paid off. I have now been able to see Svalbard in both polar day and polar night, and finally got to tick seeing the northern lights off my bucket list!

I would like to extend huge gratitude and thanks to the team at CoScan who facilitated my travel to Svalbard in May and without whom I would not have been a part of my expedition team. The training allowing me to participate in the Last Pole Expedition will help us greatly in surviving and collecting data which could help further scientific knowledge of climate change on the Arctic sea ice and beyond.



The team in the tent

## Collecting samples of the melting Greenland ice sheet

by Anna Gilchrist and Thomas Barrett

For three weeks this summer we visited Greenland as part of a Deep Purple expedition to sample proglacial runoff from the Greenland ice sheet. Our visit to Greenland was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and we both feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to experience scientific research in one of the world's most beautiful and untouched environments.

We flew via Copenhagen, which gave us the opportunity to spend an evening exploring the city. The next morning we flew to Greenland. We were completely blown away. Our faces were glued to the window as we flew over the ice, taking in the unfamiliar landscape. We arrived in Kangerlussuaq, a small but beautiful town built around Greenland's only current international airport. We

were here only for one night but we still managed to explore the area and meet many of the locals. That evening Thomas managed to join in with a football match played by many of the town's teenagers. Despite the strong language barrier between us the game went on for over an hour, illuminated by the ever present Arctic sunshine.

The following morning we checked our bags onto the connection flight and went on a walk to see the local geology. Kangerlussuaq is known by geologists for spectacular boudinage structures, evidence of the extreme deformation experienced during Greenland's billions of years of tectonic history. During our walk we were fortunate in seeing these amazing structures, and it was also a nice leg stretch before the 45-minute flight to Ilulissat. The flight was stunning, and we had views over the Greenland ice

sheet and its many ice fjords throughout, culminating with the Jakobshavn Icefjord. We landed in Ilulissat, greeted by views of icebergs floating in the bay, as well as the ever-present buzz of mosquitoes seemingly ready to follow us wherever we went in the coming weeks.

Ilulissat represented a more classic Greenlandic town, with bright coloured houses on sloping hillsides overlooking floating icebergs in Disko Bay. The bay itself had only a few chunks of ice floating in it when we arrived, but as this was the first time we had ever seen icebergs, we were mesmerised nonetheless.

Our latitude meant we experienced 24 hours of sunlight. We often did our best exploring late at night, as the light lit up the town in a seemingly never-ending sunset. On our first evening in the town we wandered over the hill to the icefjord, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The



**Disko Bay. The houses have different colours as this traditionally indicated their function.**

Photo: Anna Gilchrist

fjord is the most beautiful thing we have ever seen, and seeing it for the first time is a memory that we will never forget. The fjord is full of icebergs as far as you can see, some hundreds of metres tall. They flow through at an astounding rate of over 10 metres per day, and as you stand on the hill overlooking the fjord you can hear the sound of the bergs crashing into each other and breaking apart. We even saw one completely flip over as it became imbalanced. The icefjord is, not surprisingly, one of Greenland's main tourist attractions.

We still had not reached our final destination, the margin of the Greenland ice sheet. During our four days in Ilulissat we helped the Deep Purple team to prepare for the deployment to the field site by unloading and repacking multiple shipping containers full of equipment that had arrived from Copenhagen. We eventually were ready, and headed back to Ilulissat airport, where we met our charismatic helicopter pilot, Jens. He flew us for just under an hour to the fringe of the ice sheet about 50 miles North of Ilulissat. We were dropped off in a simply breathtaking setting overlooking a huge wall of ice, and began to set up our camp. Completely mesmerised by the view, we set up our tent to face the ice sheet from our beds!

Over the next 10 days we collected water samples of the river produced from the melting of the glacier, with the aim of understanding the temporal changes of the ion content on a daily scale. The constant light enabled us to perform a diurnal sampling cycle, where we collected water every six hours across

a 30-hour period. In between collecting samples we would walk up the steep lateral moraine of the glacier back to our camp, filter and sort our samples, eat a hot meal and then have two hours of sleep before repeating the cycle again. This was the highlight of our time in the field, as we were able to see the area in all different lights: despite the sun not setting, it still produced incredibly atmospheric light during the late hours of the day into the early morning.

On the tenth day Jens flew in and collected us from our field site, and treated us to a breathtaking low-altitude flight over the main ice sheet, so the team could assess snow cover before a future deployment onto the ice.

As we arrived back in Ilulissat we saw that it had changed dramatically, and the bay was now completely full of massive icebergs that had calved from the Jakobshavn glacier. We spent the next four days sightseeing around the area, including going on an amazing whale-watching trip where we were lucky enough to see a humpback whale among the huge icebergs.

It was a crazy experience being so far from civilisation that we had no contact with the outside world. It is the most remote place either of us is likely ever to visit, and we both feel incredibly fortunate in having had the experience, and grateful for the generosity of the CoScan Trust Fund for helping us to visit this magical, unique place. This was an opportunity that we never thought we would get, and it has inspired us to do more extreme fieldwork in the future.

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A view over our camp by the Greenland Ice Sheet

**CoScan Travel Award—Prize Winning Photo 2022:**

**Thomas Barrett**

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