

CoScan Magazine

2023/2



The Magazine for the Confederation of Scandinavian Societies
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A farewell essay

Mark Elliott

The time has now genuinely come for me to sign off at least as President of CoScan, although I remain happy to help when needed and while still relatively *compos mentis*. At the meeting of the Executive Committee, held on 12 September, the Honorary Officers of the Confederation invited Nicholas Archer, among other things a former British Ambassador to Denmark, to act as President with immediate effect.

For me, there is a pleasing symmetry in this. Almost exactly 25 years earlier, in 1998, I had been invited to attend my first CoScan Conference in Bergen, by chance in the very last week of my time as ambassador to Norway and member of the Diplomatic Service. Nick Archer had been in charge of the commercial section of the Oslo embassy for a couple of years during my time there, and our paths had indeed crossed on many occasions during the first fifteen years of his diplomatic career and the last fifteen of mine; we worked together on the Far East (his first job, in the London office) and the Middle East (while I was in Israel), as well as in Norway. He hosted a splendid reception in his Ambassadorial residence for those attending the CoScan Conference in Copenhagen in 2011.

During my nearly quarter-century with CoScan — the first meeting I attended as President was I think in York in 2000 — I have attended so-called Conferences in all five Nordic capitals as well as in other cities abroad and in the UK, done

a little time as acting chairman after Peter Wright's retirement and before persuading Eva Robards to take over, and spent many hours on CoScan matters at my laptop keyboard. There are so many happy memories. Exploring new places, in small or large groups; informal meals with friends, formal ones which sometimes relaxed into song and noisier chat; meeting new people, through the hospitality of the London embassies of our Nordic patrons or of British embassies abroad. Above all, perhaps, the people. I have written often about the bonds that link the peoples of northern Europe, and the fund of good sense and social conscience which most of us share. CoScan does its bit in bringing us all together across national boundaries, at a time perhaps more than most in history when that is important.

It would be invidious to name individuals whose friendship and support I have particularly valued. But I do want to commend Nick Archer to you. Our initial exchanges have already shown both how genuine is his interest in matters Scandinavian, and how valuable the perspective of a President decades closer to the modern world is going to be. It was clearly time for me to go, for a whole variety of reasons. But I could not have hoped for a better successor.

As I said at the end of the September committee meeting — thank you for having me.



Editor's note

Eva Robards

With Mark Elliott stepping down from his position as President, an era has come to an end. I would like to express our sincere thanks for the unwavering support and dedication he has given to CoScan. With analytical and calm diplomacy he has dealt with every issue, leaving a positive outcome as a result. CoScan has indeed been in good hands under his guidance. Luckily, we can still look forward to his continued involvement as a member of the Executive Committee and of the Editorial Board. But this should be at an undemanding level as he deserves a rest after his long commitment of over two decades to CoScan.

Personally, I would also like to thank Mark for all his support, both in my previous roles on the committee and as editor of this magazine. Our discussions over the years have been inspiring, productive, fun, and always, always helpful. My gratitude is for ever huge.

In this edition of the magazine we return to some of our member societies, three of them well seated in history with their centenaries either long gone or imminent — a challenge to younger societies!

The 'Language & culture' section takes us even further back in history: to the first documentation of Odin, and to Old Norse. Thereafter we have a cultural shock: jumping to an assessment of how Swedes relate to technology. The listed facts about Finland might inspire somebody among our readers to submit an article ... and fill the gap we currently have of texts with a Finnish theme. We get acquainted with an interesting Danish author; the Norwegian recipient of the Nobel prize in literature is noted; and there is a sea of new books to wade through. Finally, and as usual, we have reports from our young travel awardees which as always bring a smile to your face with their enthusiasm.



Renewal of Memberships

Your support is much appreciated — and essential for CoScan to remain solvent. In the hope that you will continue your support, we would be grateful if you could renew your membership as soon as possible upon receiving the renewal form. This would make the process much easier for our Treasurer & Membership Secretary, Manja Rønne. It is an uncomfortable task to have to follow up on renewals over and over again.



CoScan's Networking Event 2023

by Eva Robards

We have previously called this event our Drinks Reception, but even though a cordial amount of wine is on offer, networking is actually the focal point of the occasion. This year, on 9 November, we met at the Buck's Club in London. And, as in earlier years, it was superbly organised and moderated by our Chairman Alexander Malmaeus.

There we had the pleasure of being introduced to our new President, Nick Archer. The event also had representation from the Icelandic Embassy (Ambassador Sturla Sigurjónsson), the Finnish Embassy (Press Counsellor Markus Hippi), the Norwegian Embassy (Counsellor, Head of Arts and Communication Lars-Erik Hauge), and the Lithuanian Embassy (Counsellor for Diaspora Affairs Virginia Umbrasieni).

As in previous years, three-minute presentations were given by present and potential member organisations. In attendance were the Anglo-Danish Society, Anglo-Finnish Society, Anglo-Norse Society, Anglo-Swedish Society, Danish Women's Association, Danish Church in London, Finnish Church in London, Grieg Society in the UK, Norwegian Church in London, Scottish Society for Northern Studies, SveaBritt, Viking Society for Northern Research, and York Anglo-Scandinavian Society (YASS) — 13 member organisations in total. The number of unaffiliated organisations was 8. Of these, Norske Klub (Norwegian Club), Bärsärkar & Vikingar (Swedish BV Society), Royal Swedish Golfing Society, and London Nordic Choir have taken steps to become CoScan members.



President Nick Archer, Sturla Sigurjónsson (Icelandic Ambassador), Chairman Alexander Malmaeus
Photo: Chris Howell, CoScan



Participants listening to a presentation at the Networking Event

Photo: Chris Howell, CoScan

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AGM 2024 in Hull

Next year’s AGM will take place in Hull during the weekend 26-28 April. Hull was chosen at the AGM in Orkney earlier this year and fits in with our ambition to alternate these meetings between north and south, east and west — when possible.



Preparations are currently being made and information will be sent out to members as soon as all is in place. Do join us! As well as the AGM meeting itself on the Sunday morning, the weekend will give the opportunity to meet other CoScan members, make new friends, and learn about Hull’s strong links with Scandinavia. These were the subject of the article ‘Scandinavia’s cultural ties with the UK City of Culture’ by Dr Nicholas Evans in CoScan Magazine 2017/1. (Hull was the City of Culture in 2017.)

Further, there are two CoScan member organisations active in the area: Nordic House (Danish Seamen’s Church) and the Scandinavian Klubb of Lincolnshire (SKOL).

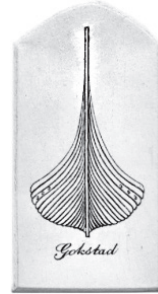
Devon and Somerset Anglo-Scandinavian Society

by Dawn Watts

The Devon and Somerset Anglo-Scandinavian Society was founded on 21 April 1981. So, we are now 42 years old and still going strong.

Our first Annual General Meeting was held on 10 May 1982, with twenty-four people attending and there were also some apologies. The minutes of that meeting record that there had been seven meetings in the intervening months plus Midsummer and Christmas parties. The programme for 1982 was to include a Quiz Evening, the Midsummer Party, a Smorgasbord Luncheon and an Arts and Crafts Exhibition.

As seen from our 2023 programme we are still carrying on with many of the same type of Anglo-Scandinavian events:



- *Fastelavn* celebration for children
- Film, *The Other Side of Hope*
- Cultural visit to Coleridge Cottage at Nether Stowey, Somerset
- Visit Burrow Farm Gardens near Axminster, Devon
- The ever popular and well attended Skt Hans Bonfire *Aften* and late summer garden BBQ
- Topical Discussion
- Genealogy/Family History
- Our Christmas Party with sumptuous Nordic food.



Fastelavn celebration, including children 'hitting the cat out of the barrel'

During Covid we kept in contact by holding Zoom meetings, which most of our members became more confident about as the months went by. We covered subjects such as ‘Music we love’, ‘Photos with a story’ (this included a photo from Copenhagen in the 70s of a naked young woman on a Vespa with a very interesting story to it!), ‘Favourite places to visit’ and ‘Treasured objects’.

When possible, we met up for outdoor meetings — a memorable one being a woodland visit on a cold November day with a bonfire, soup and cake and, when we were leaving at dusk, children running through the trees hooting like owls!

Unfortunately, over the last few years we have lost some of our well loved members; they have moved, died or are unable to drive to meetings any more. We have not found it easy to appeal to younger people, but we are keeping our total membership at about the same number of around 35 and we are often joined at events by friends and family members,

not just Scandinavians however but from the UK and elsewhere. In fact anybody with an interest, association or just plain curiosity about the Nordic countries is welcomed.

We use Facebook which gets more instant feedback than our previous website. It also reaches followers who do not yet come to meetings, but one day, hopefully, they might turn up at an event! Some of the most popular meetings are those when people can share memories of their ‘home’ countries by introducing traditions, foods and artifacts to the other members. It is really lovely to be at a meeting and hear bubbles of Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and even Icelandic conversation going on in different corners of the room and then we all come together to discuss things in English, our ‘common’ language.

Dawn Watts is Secretary of Devon and Somerset Anglo-Scandinavian Society. An earlier article by her can be read in CoScan Magazine 2016/1.



Sheltering from November winds in the dome in the woods

Viking Society for Northern Research

by Rory McTurk

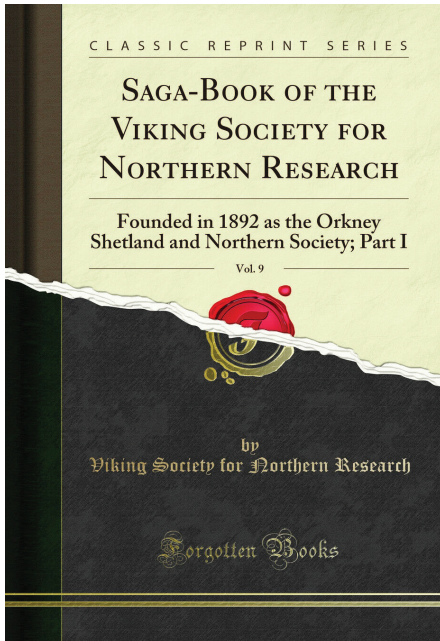


The Viking Society for Northern Research has been one of CoScan's Society Members for nearly seven years, having joined early in 2017. It was founded in 1892 as 'the social and literary branch' of the Orkney and Shetland Society of London with the aim of providing a club for Orcadians and Shetlanders exiled in London with a programme of regular meetings at which papers would be read and discussed, dealing as far as possible with topics relevant to the Northern Isles.



Sigurd kills the dragon Fafnir

Wood relief from stave-church in Setesdal, Norway



By the time of its first AGM in 1893, however, its founder Alfred Johnston of Orphir, Orkney, was concerned about the visibility of a club with so limited an objective and proposed to widen its scope to embrace Northern studies in general. This caused much controversy and for a time it looked as if the club might collapse before the end of its second year, but Johnston won out in the end, and the title of the club was changed to bring 'Viking Club' to the fore, with 'Orkney, Shetland and Northern Society' as sub-title. The link with the Orkney and Shetland Society had now officially come to an end. Its present title, 'Viking Society for Northern Research', was adopted in 1912. Johnston continued to guide the fortunes of the Society until it had passed its fiftieth year before dying in 1947 at the age of 87.

Now based at University College London (UCL), the Society is one of the world's leading publishers of medieval Scandinavian texts, whether in translation or the original, and publishes UCL's Dorothea Coke Memorial Lectures in its journal, *Saga-Book*. The Society holds three meetings a year, at each of which a lecture is given, at UCL in the autumn and spring terms of the academic year and in the summer term at a different British university. An annual dinner is held after the autumn meeting and the AGM takes place in the summer term.

The Society oversees the organisation of a student conference, held at a different British university each year, and has funds enabling the disbursement of prizes to students at British universities and the awarding of research grants to graduate students and independent scholars in Britain and Ireland seeking to undertake study or research abroad.

Society membership is open to all and no academic qualification is required. Subscription and application details can be found on the Society's website: www.vsnr.org.

It is sad to record that David Reid, who served the Society loyally as Treasurer for over ten years, from 2006 to 2018, died in 2019, and that Richard Perkins, Professor Emeritus of Norse Studies at UCL, who joined the Society before he left school, co-edited the *Saga-Book* for seventeen years, 1975 to 1992, and became President of the Society for the usual two-year period in 1992, died in September of this year. Both are much missed.

A brief account of the Society and its history by David Reid, its Treasurer at the time, can be found in CoScan Magazine 2017/1.

The Dorothea Coke Memorial Lecture

Dorothea Coke had become deeply fascinated by Vikings and their impact on England during a journey to Norway together with her husband Colonel Coke. After her death in 1952, he sought to establish a memorial that would promote the interests which his wife had pursued with such passion. This led to the establishment of a fund in her name: 'to promote the publication of original work on the early history of the Scandinavian countries'.

In 1958, the fund supported a publication for the Viking Society and later a memorial lecture series was established, the aim of which was to focus on early Anglo-Scandinavian relations. The first lecture in the series was delivered in 1963 by Professor Norman Garmonsway, who spoke on the topic of 'Canute, king of England, Denmark and Norway'.

From Prof. Peter Foote's Dorothea Coke Lecture in 2002

Anglo-Swedish Society of Gothenburg

by John Chaplin



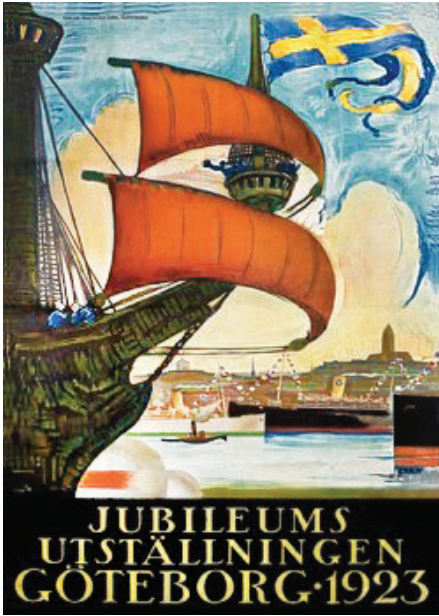
A pewter brandy cup in good condition

This account of Anglo-Swedish history started with a pewter cup. The Anglo-Swedish Society in London was contacted about a year ago by a man in Hamburg to ask if they had any interest in a pewter cup stamped with the words Anglo-Swedish Society Göteborg. The London Society got in touch with us in Gothenburg and we were of course interested and curious to know where it came from. We discovered that the cup dates from the 1923 World Exhibition, which was part of the 300th anniversary



**100 years
in 2023!**

of the city of Gothenburg. At that time, the Society in Gothenburg was still within the first years of its existence and the membership of the Society was considerably larger than it is today, with 1400 members during the 1920s. The owner of the pewter cup kindly donated it to the Gothenburg Anglo-Swedish Society. We were delighted to receive it, as we have only a handful of objects that relate to the Society, the others being a Swedish flag received from the King of Sweden on the occasion of the Society's centenary, and a (very loud) hand-bell used at official meetings to keep order. The owner of the cup was unable to tell us about its history, as it had been passed down from his father-in-law, who was a collector, and its origin was lost. This of course meant that some further research was needed and the newspaper archive of that time, available online from the University library, provided the information we looked for.



The Jubilee World Exhibition in 1923 was an eagerly awaited event, coming at a time of renewal after the end of the First World War and during an economic boom. The Exhibition was inaugurated on 8 May 1923, by King Gustaf V and was extended to 15 October. During these six months it was visited by 4.2 million people. It was such a major exhibition that it covered large parts of Gothenburg and coincided with the opening of many city landmarks, such as Gothenburg art museum, the botanical garden, the Liseberg funfair and Slottsskogsvallen sports stadium (said to be the most beautiful sports stadium in Sweden). All of these can still be visited today. From Liseberg there was a cable car to the top of Gothenburg's main boulevard (Kungsportsavenyn). On 15 June 1923 the 'Brothers Niagara', three young

men from England, tightrope-walked over the Exhibition. (This possibility is, however, no longer available.) The Royal Artillery band, with pipes and drums from the Scots Guards paraded down Kungsportsavenyn. *The Daily Telegraph* produced a special 'Swedish edition' and had its own booth at the exhibition..

British industry had shown a lively interest in the exhibition from the beginning, but the interest grew and grew, which was greatly spurred on by questions in Parliament about support for British companies to visit Gothenburg. Of particular interest was the International Aviation Exhibition, showcasing the latest advancements in the aviation world. The size of the exhibition area allocated to the UK became a point of discussion; obviously Britain needed a lot of space and, in any case, could not have a smaller space than that of Germany or France. The organisers were informed that at least 2000 square metres would be required. Shipping lines directed their schedules to accommodate the large numbers of visitors from Britain who wished to visit Gothenburg. The Anglo-Swedish Society in Gothenburg had to use all their resources: members' houses were offered as accommodation, guided tours and parties were arranged, the Society hosted a banquet after the gala concert at the Concert Hall, where Wilhelm Stenhammar's cantata for the Gothenburg exhibition was performed.

Expectations of a large British contingent visiting Gothenburg were high, even 12 months before the opening. The local newspaper *Göteborgs-Posten* speculated that Prime Minister Lloyd

George might arrive by airship and bring with him his daughter Megan and US President Wilson.



‘Lloyd George arriving in Gothenburg by airship’

Back in England, after the exhibition, in the autumn of 1923, Sir Henry Penson (founder and chairman of the Anglo-Swedish Society) noted in his reflections on the exhibition that there had been a change in the atmosphere between England and Sweden. ‘An unusually large number of business leaders in various fields have, during the summer, visited Gothenburg and other parts of Sweden and as far as can be seen, have all returned with a deep impression of admiration for Swedish enterprise, Swedish economic stability and Swedish cultural development in general’.

During the exhibition, pewter brandy cups with the Memorial Hall depicted on one side and a portrait of King Gustaf II Adolf (the founder of Gothenburg) on the other were presented as commemorative gifts to the guests.

Our Society had its own cups stamped with ‘Anglo Swedish Society Göteborg’ on the bottom. The one we now own is a little the worse for wear, but has survived as a valued object, perhaps reflecting an appreciation for the contribution made by the Society to the World Exhibition.



Pewter brandy cup Gothenburg world fair 1923

Associate Professor John Chaplin is Chair of the Anglo-Swedish Society of Gothenburg. A previous article on the Society by him was published in CoScan Magazine 2021/1.

Anglo-Danish Society — 100 years in 2024

What could a new centenary logo for the Anglo-Danish Society look like? If you wish to take part in the competition, please send your entry to Lone Mohr Curtis via hon.secretary@anglo-danishsociety.org.uk by 31 December 2023.

The prize for submitting the winning entry will be two tickets for the Centenary Gala on Friday 6 December 2024.

For further information: www.anglo-danishsociety.org.uk/uploads/images/file/News-Aug-2023.pdf

Odin and the hunt for Denmark's past

by Katherine Holman



Figure on an eight-legged horse, holding a drinking horn, as depicted on a picture stone from Gotland

In medieval Norse mythology, Odin is the ‘all-father’: warrior king of the gods, flanked by his all-seeing ravens Hugin and Munin, armed with a spear, and owner of the swiftest horse in the North, the eight-legged Sleipnir. He was the ruler of Valhalla and is also reputed to have sacrificed one of his eyes in exchange for the knowledge (and power) of runes. But how do we know this? Much of the information about the Norse gods comes from Icelandic sources, written down many years after the Vikings had abandoned their old beliefs in favour of Christianity, and it is not always clear how much we can trust the information that they provide. Many questions still therefore remain about the

religious beliefs of Scandinavians in the years before they were converted.

Until this year, the oldest written reference to Odin came from a runic inscription carved into a brooch, found in Nordendorf, near Augsburg in southern Germany. The so-called Nordendorf fibula is actually one of a pair of silver brooches bearing inscriptions in the Older Futhark (see *CoScan Magazine* 2023/1), both of which were found in a woman’s grave in the mid-nineteenth century. The brooches and inscriptions are believed to date to the second half of the sixth century and, while one inscription is largely illegible, the other has a sequence of runes that clearly refers to both Woden and Thunor, that is Odin and Thor, as well as a third

figure identified as Lodur. Unfortunately, the exact meaning of the inscription is obscure, and while MacLeod and Mees suggest it may be a love charm, some scholars have argued that the inscription was a Christian protective charm against the old Germanic gods; this part of Germany was converted to Christianity around AD 600.

A rune-inscribed skull fragment from Ribe, south-west Jutland, provided – until this year – the oldest written reference to Odin from Scandinavia, as well as the oldest evidence for someone who clearly believed in the supernatural powers of this Norse god.



The Ribe skull fragment Photo: Lennart Larsen, The National Museum of Denmark

This skull fragment had a hole bored into it, suggesting it was used as an amulet. It was found in 1973, during archaeological excavations in the town, one of the earliest commercial centres in Denmark. The inscription is believed to date to the early eighth century, perhaps around AD 725, and is written in runes that appear to be a transitional form of the runic alphabet, a mixture of runes from both the Older and the Younger Futharks.

The inscription is again not entirely fully understood, but both Odin and ‘High-Tyr’, as well as an unknown Ulf, are invoked as part of a protective formula against dwarfs who were believed to cause illness.

But earlier this year, it was announced that new and even earlier evidence for the veneration of Odin had been found in Denmark. This evidence was found during the examination of one of six rune-inscribed golden discs, known as bracteates, that were uncovered by metal detectorist Ole Ginnerup Schytz at Vindelev. Vindelev lies just 8 km from the historic Viking-Age royal centre at Jelling, and in total, some 800g of golden objects were discovered there in 2020. It was a find that has been described as ‘one of the greatest gold treasures in Danish history’ (Velje Museums). As well as the bracteates, the hoard contained huge saucer-sized discs, and Roman imperial coins that had been repurposed as medallions.

The Vindelev hoard is believed to have been buried in the early fifth century, and so this reference to Odin on one of the bracteates is potentially at least 100 years older than that on the Nordendorf fibula. The inscription consists of 34 runes that are ‘well-formed’, unlike most bracteate inscriptions which generally consist of a few, frequently hard to identify, runes. But the runes are worn and the absence of punctuation, as well as the presence of many previously unknown words, has made interpretation – particularly of the first part of the inscription – tricky. Lisbeth Imer of the National Museum of Denmark and linguist Krister Vasshus

have suggested six possible readings of the inscription, but the sequence that they are most confident about is the statement: ‘He is Odin’s man’. This possibly refers to the portrait on the bracteate of an unknown king or overlord, whose name (or nickname) may have been Jaga or Jagaz. Although we have no other evidence for a local king or chieftain of this name in this part of Denmark in the early fifth century, it is clear that he was a wealthy and important figure, with access to gold from the south as well as connections to other parts of Denmark. And this man clearly believed that his authority was connected with Odin.

The bracteate and other treasures from the Vindelev hoard are currently on display as part of the National Museum of Denmark’s exhibition, *The Hunt for Denmark’s Past*.

Sources and further reading

The Guardian (2023) ‘Oldest known reference to Norse god Odin found in Danish treasure trove’, online at <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2023/mar/08/oldest-known-reference-to-norse-god-odin-found-in-danish-treasure-trove>

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Vindelev bracteate showing runes and a head, possibly that of ‘Odin’s man’ referred to in the inscription Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen, The National Museum of Denmark

Old Norse in the English landscape

by Peter Addyman



Historians have long since recognised that English place names which contain Scandinavian elements are a powerful way of defining areas of settlement in England by Danish and Norwegian invaders in the 9th and 10th centuries. Kevin Lancaster, Chairman of the Sedbergh and District History Society, who lives in an area on the borders of Yorkshire and Cumbria rich in such names, has recently made a detailed study of those in his home area, relating them to his local knowledge of the landscape and the characteristics of the areas involved. (*Sedbergh Historian*, Vol 8, No.1, 2023, 3-11).

Thwaite is one of the most common Norse place name elements in his area,

being derived from the Old Norse *þveit*, meaning a clearing, usually. Lancaster argues it is a clearing capable of being ploughed, and thus being for agriculture. Other Norse names common in his area are beck, gill, scale and many others, but his special study has been of the thwaite settlements. Noting caveats, such as settlements being named after a family calling itself after the thwaite settlement from which it originated, he concludes that in the area of Sedbergh parish there were some twenty places with a secure thwaite place name.

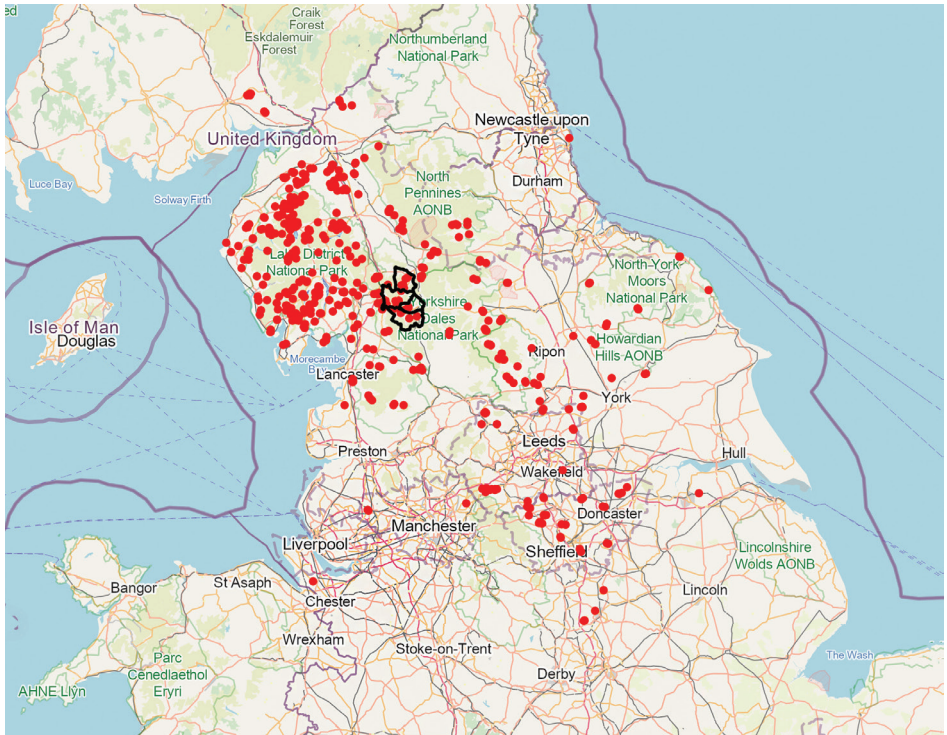
Some of these names are simply Thwaite. Others have added directional elements such as Sarthwaite, Northwaite,

Sowerthwaite. Others have a locational element as in Cautleythwaite or Thwaitehead. Yet others relate to physical features: Scarthwaite, for example, referencing the nearby limestone scar. Thistlethwaite, Ellerthwaite (alder) and Thackthwaite (thatching materials) refer to vegetation cover. Then there are more problematical thwaite names for which the meaning is less clear.

Lancaster concludes that the places their Norwegian creators (or later re-creators) designated ‘thwaites’ were clearly important in the parish of

Sedbergh. The same applies, perhaps even more so, in areas to the west and indeed throughout the whole of the nearby Lake District. If other forms of evidence were not enough, the overwhelming impact of Norse settlement in the 10th century — throughout the Lake District and on this part of England — is abundantly clear from Lancaster’s map of the distribution of Thwaite place-names.

See also Katherine Holman’s article ‘Understanding Scandinavian place-names in the British Isles’ (CoScan Magazine 2021/2), which actually finishes with the word thwaite.



Locations of places with ‘thwaite’ in the name; the parishes outlined in black — for Kevin Lancaster’s article — are Sedbergh (middle left), Dent (bottom), Garsdale (middle right) and Ravenstonedale (top). The map was produced by Elliot Hartley of GD3D. Reprinted with permission.

The Norn language

by Thomas Mackay

Norn is an extinct North Germanic language that was a variant of Old Norse. Its name is thought to derive from an earlier *Norræna*, ‘the Norse Tongue’. Norn was mostly spoken in the Northern Isles of Scotland, in Orkney and the Shetland islands, but was also found in the Scottish mainland in Caithness.

Vikings who came from West Norway first started building settlements on Scotland’s archipelagos around AD 850 and this is seen as the starting point of the Norn language evolving from Old Norse.

We have little knowledge of the structure of Norn given the scarcity of historical documents. The best-known examples are transcriptions by visitors from the mainland, who were neither Norn speakers, nor trained linguists. Norn was seen as the language of ‘common people’, and so rarely or never used in writing, unlike Old Norse, Norwegian or Scots.

The closest living Scandinavian relatives of Norn are Icelandic and Faroese. Norn is also associated with Scots Leid (Scots English) which, being a development of the Anglo-Danish dialects of Northern England, would have shared features with Norn. This can be seen in the poetry of Robert Burns, for example.

In Scalloway on the Shetland Islands you can find a restaurant named Da Haaf. This is said to be a Norn remnant which means ‘the deep sea’. The colloquial expression he is *at da haaf* then translates to ‘he is away deep sea fishing’.

Orcadians who spoke their own variant of Norn for almost 1,000 years can boast a version of the Lord’s Prayer in this language, as transcribed and published in 1700:

*Favor i ir i chimrie,
Helleur ir i nam thite,
gilla cosdum thite cumma,
veya thine mota vara gort
o yurn sinna gort i chimrie,
ga vus da on da dalight brow vora.
Firgive vus sinna vora
sin vee firgive sindara mutha vus,
lyv vus ye i tumtation,
min delivera vus fro olt ilt.*

Norn is thought to have officially become extinct after the death of its last-known native speaker Walter Sutherland of Skaw in Shetland c. 1850. How did Norn become extinct? Shetland and Orkney, the heartlands of Norn, were part of the Danish-Norwegian kingdom. However, this changed in 1469 when the Danish king pawned them off to the Scottish

crown due to a marriage settlement. This led to Scots gradually moving into the islands and bringing their legal system, religion, influential figures and language with them. The transition to Scottish culture was fastest in Orkney due to its proximity to the mainland. Given that Scots Leid was the *lingua franca* of Scotland at this time, it started to replace the northern isles' Scandinavian tongue.

Nowadays, some Norn words and phrases have been adapted into a kind of 'ceremonial language' in the Northern Isles and are sometimes used to name marine vessels like ferries. Its influence can also be felt in the locally spoken Scots language but its use as its own language is long over.

However, other languages (most famously Hebrew) have been 'brought back from the dead' following revitalisation campaigns, and such an effort was applied to Norn with the Nynorn Project. Literally meaning 'New Norn' this reconstruction of the Norn language entered the digital space in 2006 and sought to bring the sound of Norn back to everyday conversations. While it is unlikely that the language

will be revived, especially as Scotland is already occupied with preserving the endangered Scottish Gaelic, the team still successfully created resources that can connect enthusiasts to Norn. To explore their wealth of insightful materials you can visit the Nynorn website to learn more about this fascinating heritage.

The text above is a shortened version of Thomas Mackay's article 'The Norn Language: Scotland's mysterious Viking tongue that can be found in modern Scots', published in The Scotsman 26 June 2023. Reprinted with permission.



Thomas Mackay is a journalist covering Scottish heritage, including minority languages.

Further reading

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/sll/documents/Barnes-The-Study-of-Norn.pdf>

Michael P. Barnes (1998) *The Norn Language of Orkney and Shetland*, Lerwick

<https://www.nornlanguage.x10.mx/index.php?nynorn>

Behold the Swede — a technocreature

by Eric J. W. Orłowski

We Swedes are often accused of being the most Americanised people in the world. I shan't here be the arbiter of the accuracy of this claim. However, I think anyone might be excused for thinking so, what with our English-language proficiency, Taco-Friday (TexMex is American!), and *raggare* (US greaser). There are also the sociological Middletown reviews of the 1930s measuring the average American life: leisure, house, income, work, community, consumption habits, and so on. This was copied in Sweden, of course, in 1943: *Medelby: en sociologisk studie*. As technology scholar Ralph Schroeder notes, it is striking how similar Swedes and Americans are in how they relate to technology, despite the otherwise very different socio-political and economic systems and histories.

This connection exists, still, it seems. After all, where else is the 'Silicon Valley of Europe' but in our very own Mälardalen, second only to the 'real' Valley an ocean and continent away. Little Sweden; who'd-a thunk it? The Stockholm Business Region have certainly found their own explanation: national culture — technophilia is just part and parcel of being Swedish. After all, this is the country of Linnaeus and Nobel. It's silly of anyone to expect anything different.

But where did this alleged 'national techno-culture' even come from?

A friend of mine once called Sweden a young old country. This year, Sweden celebrated its 500th anniversary (cf 'Sweden will be 500 years old (or young)', CoScan 2023/1). Sweden is often said to have emerged as a modern state in 1523. Still, as with all history, the dates are usually more complex than that. Indeed, just as Sweden is 500 years old, it can also be said to be less than 100 years old. While Gustav Vasa laid down the roots in 1523, it was only in 1932 that a truly modern(ist) Sweden came about. And with it, our unquenchable love for technology.

Det Svenska Folkhemmet (Swedish welfare state) and Silicon Valley-esque technotopia might appear worlds apart. However, in many ways *Folkhemmet* was fundamentally technopist. As anthropologist Keith Murphy writes, 'politicians, artists and social activists [were] all influenced by some of the conceptual currents of social reforms circulating in Sweden' throughout the 1930s, resulting in their own 'thematically similar movements for progress'. It was here that *världens modernaste land* (the most modern country in the world) was born. New scientific disciplines took hold and flourished, and principles of

rationality and scientific enquiry for the betterment of society emerged. Together, they were to build a proper home for the Swedish people. This is the era of public works, new architectural movements, and the rationalisation of state bureaucracy. It was also the golden age of standardisation.

It is difficult to provide a complete list of how many standards there are in Sweden. The Swedish Institute for Standards [*Svenska Institutet för Standarder*, SIS] claim they have 'over 30,000' active standards. This is alongside those adopted from the International Standards Organisation, ISO. The SIS was founded in 1922, and the first standard they set was the format in which all other standards should be printed: the humble A4. As early as 1942, building standards were introduced — for kitchens, amount of natural light, materials, fixtures, and so on. Today, Sweden's Housing Authority, *Boverket*, has 450 standards for construction materials alone. The standardisation in housing development and design allowed IKEA's flatpack furniture revolution to take hold. It has been said that Per Albin built *Folkhemmet*, but that Kamprad was the one who furnished it. (Per Albin Hansson was prime minister in four governments 1932-1946, and Ingvar Kamprad the founder of IKEA.) But this kind of rationalisation and standardisation goes far beyond housing and architecture. Sweden set the standard for pallets within transport (the Euro-pallet; called the SJ-pallet initially), and we built our highways with stretches to double up as runways for fighter jets, should the need



Measurement study of a kitchen carried out by *Hemmens forskningsinstitut* (the Homes Research Institute), 1940s.

arise. On a darker note, this extended to the attempts at standardising the human being through the State Institute for Race Biology.

The application of scientific and technological rationality barely knew any bounds when Swedish society had to be rebuilt and remodelled; dragging the country kicking and screaming out of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. For what is standardisation but an articulation of the belief in rationalisation, the prime yardstick of societal engineering? Throughout these odd 40-45 years of active social engineering, the values of modernity were deeply instilled into the culture of Sweden. Whilst *Folkhemmet* has long since faded away as an active political project, its modernist values cannot be decoupled from Swedish society and culture. The idea that science, technology, and innovation invariably lead to progress is one of the core ideas

left behind by Per Albin's sociopolitical vision of a fairer and more just Sweden.

This is not just apparent in how organisations like the Stockholm Business Region try to attract international investment by claiming technology and innovation as inherently Swedish traits. It is equally evident in how we tell and make sense of our own history. Even before we were modern, we were proto-modern. We remember not the warmongering, socially conservative, and often empathy-lacking country of yore. Instead, we foreground the Nobel Prize as not just a celebration of science and progress, but also a celebration of Sweden. After all, who can love this stuff more than us, when our King is the one handing out the prizes? Less visibly, Swedish popular history also foregrounds past successes

as proto-modernist or proto-scientific: the building of Göta Kanal in 1832; the rationalised bureaucracy of the allotment system in the latter half of the seventeenth century, or Sweden's intervention in the Thirty Years' War; when it is said that Gustav II Adolf (Gustavus Adolphus) 'invented' modern warfare. Even when we're bloodthirsty, we're modern!

Sweden's success in today's world is based on command of technical skills, knowledge, and innovation. We're a small country; we always have been, so we must make up for it somehow. It hasn't always been the case that rationalisation and innovation have been the key to our successes — but it is today, and it's an excellent selling point to claim that it always has been. So great, in fact, that we've sold it to ourselves.

Eric J W Orlowski is a doctoral candidate in social anthropology at University College London (UCL) and an affiliated researcher at Uppsala University. His research focuses on contemporary techno-utopianism in Sweden.

He is a previous council member of the Anglo-Swedish Society (2019-2023) and over the years he has given several talks, some of which are available on YouTube.



Update on Gammalsvenskby in Ukraine: All the Kherson Oblast villages along the river Dnieper continue to be bombed and shelled. Between April and October, Gammalsvenskby was hit by 66 bombs, and many more houses have been destroyed. Drones target cars. The population is now down to about 200. The last children were

evacuated at the end of October, and those who remain are mostly elderly. They are dependent on help for food, seek shelter in their root cellars, have no electricity, and the water supply is unreliable.

www.svenskbyborna.se

Briefly on Finland



Official flag days in Finland

By law, the flag must be flown from public buildings on the official flag days.

28 Feb ... Kalevala/ Finnish Culture Day

1 May ... Labour Day/ May Day/ Vappu

2nd Sunday in May ... Mother's Day

**4 June ... C G E Mannerheim born/
Day of Finnish Defence Forces**

Saturday between 20th and 26th June
Midsummer Day/ Day of Finnish Flag

2nd Sunday in Nov ... Father's Day

6 Dec ... Independence Day

Other occasions when the Finnish flag is flown officially is when Finland holds parliamentary and local elections, elections to the European Parliament, or a referendum, and the day the Finnish President is inaugurated. Dates for these occasions obviously vary.

Finland becomes the first country to allow digital passports on the smartphone instead of a physical passport. While the trial is happening in Finland, the European Union wants at least 80% of citizens in the 27-country bloc to be using a digital ID by 2030.
www.forbes.com

Customary days to fly the flag

5 Feb ... Poet J L Runeberg born

19 March ... Writer Minna Canth born/
Day of Equality

9 April ... Day of the Finnish Language/
Founder of written Finnish language
Mikael Agricola died/
Folklore collector Elias Lönnrot born

27 April ... National War Veterans' Day

9 May ... Europe Day

12 May ... Statesman J V Snellman born

3rd Sunday in May Remembrance Day

6 July ... Poet Eino Leino born

Last Saturday in Aug ... Nature Day

1 Oct ... Miina Sillanpää Day/
Day of Civic Participation

10 Oct ... Writer AleksisKivi born/
Day of Finnish Literature

24 Oct ... United Nations Day

6 Nov ... Svenska dagen,
Finnish Swedish Heritage Day

20 Nov ... Day of Children's Rights

8 Dec ... Day of Finnish Music/
Composer Jean Sibelius born

The Åland Islands have their own dates for flying their flag.



Finnish flag days - Ministry of the Interior (intermin.fi)

Ever heard of Pesäpallo?

This is the national sport of Finland. It is a fast-paced bat and ball sport. Literally it means 'nest ball', and the sport is also referred to as a 'Finnish baseball'. It has been played in Finland since the 1920's, and is inspired by American baseball.

Pesäpallo the Sport (topendsports.com)

Where would you like to land a hot air balloon?

by Valerie Gilbert

I recently got involved in a two-year project run by Kirkbymoorside Woolcrafters in North Yorkshire. Participants were asked to imagine which country they would like to land in, and what they would see there, in the style of ‘Around the world in 80 days’.

As an English school child, I moved to and lived in Sweden for five years. I saw the magical Northern Lights and experienced winter sports, *sommarstugor* (summer cottages), forests and lakes.

I decided to create a woolcraft landscape to reflect my memories. On a handloom, I wove a sky of Northern Lights for a background. I designed a cottage from a photo of a *stuga* belonging to Brita Green (member of the Editorial Board of this magazine). My friend Janet made several of these and also knitted a polar bear, a puffin and several large hot air balloons. My crochet and knitting depicted a snowy mountain and



a *dalahäst* (Darlecarlian horse). We had landed in Scandinavia.

The whole display showed countries around the world and filled the church in Kirkbymoorside for two weeks in September. Where would you like to land your hot air balloon?

Valerie Gilbert is a member of York Anglo-Scandinavian Society.

The Danish author Knud Sørensen

by Steen Andersen

‘Deep within
in every picture
words are hidden
deep within all words
a picture is hidden
this is how
new insights
arise’

‘Deep within’ was first published in Danish in 2015 in *Mere endnu* (*Even more*) — a title which indicates that at the age of eighty-seven Knud Sørensen was still exploring poetic diction. In fact he published two more books of poetry prior to his death in 2022.



Knud Sørensen (1928-2022)

Before becoming a full-time writer, Knud Sørensen worked for twenty-five years as a chartered surveyor on the island of Mors in Northern Jutland. The 1950s-1970s were decades in which rural Denmark underwent unprecedented changes: mechanisation and large-scale farming put a stop to most family-owned smallholdings, making almost 300,000 people redundant. Because of his profession Knud Sørensen witnessed these upheavals at close range; he once said that he had had coffee with about fifty percent of all the farmers on Mors and he realised that what people said was of course important, but very often it was even more important what they did *not* say ('I learnt to be a good listener.') In fact, what was unsaid became manifest.

The upheavals feature prominently in most of his writings. He was probably the first Danish poet to write about compulsory purchase and depopulation, and in one of his early books, *Revolutionen i Tøving* (*The Revolution at Tøving*), he focuses on the dramatic changes; villages are more or less abandoned,

shops and schools close. He shuns nostalgia and sentimentalism, but he lends a voice to people living in sparsely populated regions where an ancient way of life is vanishing. As for the remaining smallholdings, he advocates organic farming and sustainability.

Knud Sørensen was almost fifty when he published his first collection of short stories. *Slutsedlen* (*Subject to Contract*) and *Marginaljord* (*Marginal Land*) are titles which also reflect his delineation of change. Conflicts and everyday dramas are played out against a backcloth of compulsory sales; the narrative technique is intriguing and sometimes hard to come to grips with, as there is often an observer who is not quite a member of the community whose story s/he unfolds — or is discreetly present without any real wish to get involved or take a stand; there is a delicate balance between the *we* used in several stories and general gossip in the village, but without raising his voice Knud Sørensen has his say.

Discretion is also an important element in the two novels *En tid* (*A Time*) and *En befrielse* (*A Liberation*) which are set during the Second World War. Jakob's parents are brother and sister — which everybody, including the vicar, knows, but people keep themselves to themselves; they also know who is in the resistance movement or who is making a profit doing business with the German forces, but mum's the word.

Knud Sørensen published about fifty books and took an active part in many fields related to literature and the arts. He was a book reviewer for a few years; in the 1970s he worked as an

unpaid editor at a small press (giving useful advice to many budding writers); he was a committee member of several cultural institutions on Mors; he was vice chairman of the Danish Authors' Society — and gave almost 2,500 talks at folk high schools and community centres. In a dozen TV programmes in the 90s he focused on writers who like himself tackled the issue of marginalised sections of the population.

In 2014 Knud Sørensen was awarded the Grand Prize of the Danish Academy. This came as no surprise to his many admirers, but why did he have to wait for so long? Well, in some respects he was a late starter and it took some time before the literary establishment in Copenhagen became aware of his unique voice. What is more, the provinces were to a large extent ignored in literature until Knud Sørensen turned up, but a few years later Anne Marie Løn, Jens Smærup Sørensen, and other writers followed in his footsteps.

Knud Sørensen took a special interest in Steen Steensen Blicher, known as the pioneer of the Danish short story in the nineteenth century, about whom he wrote a celebrated biography, and C.P. Snow was one of his favourite novelists. Cambridge, Whitehall, and the corridors of power in the series of novels *Strangers and Brothers* may seem a far cry from Northern Jutland, but Knud Sørensen admired Snow's depiction of British society; perhaps the unobtrusive narrator Lewis Eliot also caught his interest? In the same interview Knud Sørensen mentions the American poet William Carlos Williams,

who maintained that 'by listening to the language of his locality the poet begins to learn his craft. It is his function to lift, by use of imagination and the language he hears, the material conditions and appearances of his environment to the sphere of the intelligence where they will have new currency' — which is in keeping with Knud Sørensen's awareness of the provinces. Using his surveying instruments (and his eyes and ears!) Knud Sørensen acquired an intimate knowledge of Mors, where he lived for more than sixty years. In empathising with the local community and chronicling their lives he has left us unparalleled pictures of traditions and changes.

In two much-acclaimed volumes of autobiography Knud Sørensen wrote about surveying, his happy family life, friends, and the arts. In his last books he perfected his understated minimalist style of writing when describing nature and reflecting on ageing:

'My reality is starting to get thinner
layer by layer memories peel
away
I am
on the way towards the day
which is only a now'

(New and selected poems, translated by Michael Favala Goldman, Spuyten Duyvil, New York City 2020).

Steen Andersen has previously written for CoScan Magazine on Danish authors Aksel Sandemose (2020/2), Henrik Pontoppidan (2021/1), and Tove Ditlevsen (2022/2).

Nobel prize won by Norwegian author Jon Fosse

The Nobel Prize in Literature 2023 was awarded to Jon Fosse, ‘for his innovative plays and prose which give voice to the unsayable’.

His immense oeuvre written in Norwegian *Nynorsk* and spanning a variety of genres consists of a wealth of plays, novels, poetry collections, essays, children’s books and translations.

Fosse is one of the most widely performed playwrights in the world today and has also become recognised for his prose.

In his radical reduction of language (a style that has come to be known as ‘Fosse minimalism’) and dramatic action, he expresses the most powerful human emotions of anxiety and powerlessness in the simplest everyday terms. It is through this ability to evoke man’s loss of orientation, and how this paradoxically can provide access to a deeper experience close to divinity, that he has come to be regarded as a major innovator in contemporary theatre.



Jon Fosse reading from *A New Name: Septology VI-VII* on Youtube

Among his many novels *Septology I-VII* (completed in 2021) stands out as his magnum opus. Extending to 1250 pages it is written in the form of a monologue in which the elderly artist Asle speaks to himself as another person.

Text shortened from www.nobelprize.org



New books

Scandinavia



Kirsi Salonen and Kurt Villads Jensen, *Scandinavia in the Middle Ages 900-1550. Between Oceans*. Published by Routledge, Feb 2023

Medieval Scandinavia underwent significant changes. Regional power centres merged into the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. In the late Middle Ages, these kingdoms formed the Kalmar Union, which included almost all land by the North Atlantic and the Baltic Sea.



Margrethe C. Stang and Laura Tillery (eds), *The Medieval Scandinavian Art Reader*. Published by Scandinavian Academic Press, Jan 2023.

This anthology of Scandinavian medieval art and architecture looks beyond national divisions to present an integrated art history from the Iron Age to after the Reformation. The book is thorough, yet accessible and is written by leading specialists in the field.

Denmark



P. T. Kristensen and A. Buck, *Arne Jacobsen in London. Art and Architecture at the Embassy of Denmark*. Arkitektens Forlag, Jan 2023

The Danish Embassy in London, designed by the internationally renowned Danish architect Arne Jacobsen, opened in 1977. This book presents the history and ideas behind the architecture and gives an insight into the historic and contemporary art collection at the embassy.



Sara Ayres, *Danish-British Consort Portraiture, c.1600-1900*. Published by Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd, June 2023.

The book explores an intersection of three themes trending in early modern studies: portraiture, gender and the court as a centre of cultural exchange. Each chapter presents new research and introduces the reader to little-known, yet astonishing works of art.



Svend-Erik Engh, *Danish Folk Tales*, illustrated by Tea Bendix. Published by The History Press Ltd, Oct 2023

A collection of tales, including how a Viking ship carried a future king into Roskilde Fjord, how a mermaid's laughter brought fortunes to her fisherman host, how the people of Lolland survived a flood with waves three metres high, and how a princess found her freedom in becoming a prince.



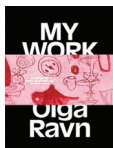
Trine Hahnemann, *Simply Scandinavian: Cook and Eat the Easy Way, with Delicious Scandi Recipes*. Publ. by Quadrille Publishing Ltd, June 2023

The book offers over 80 unpretentious and straightforward dishes with a focus on ease of cooking and seasonality solutions for easy breakfasts, mid-week meals and simple but impressive ways to entertain family and friends.



Helen Dyrbye and Lita Lundquist, *Danish Humour: Sink or Swim*. Published by □Books on Demand, Aug 2023.

What makes *hygge*-happy Danes, their humour, society and language so 'special'? Explore useful insights with professor emeritus Lita Lundquist, language and humour researcher at Copenhagen Business School, and British-born, Danish-based Helen Dyrbye, freelance proofreader/translator and principal author of *The Xenophobe's Guide to the Danes*.



Olga Ravn, *My Work*, translated by Sophia Hersi Smith and Jennifer Russell. Published by Lolli Editions, Sep 2023.

My Work is a novel about the unique and fundamental experience of giving birth, mixing different literary forms – fiction, essay, poetry, memoir, and letters – to explore the relationship between motherhood, work, individuality, and literature.



Jenny Lund Madsen, *Thirty Days of Darkness*, translated by Megan E. Turney. Published by Orenda Books, May 2023

Frustrated by writer's block at home in Copenhagen, Hannah is challenged to write a crime novel in thirty days. Scared that she will lose face, she accepts, and her editor sends her to Húsafjörður — a quiet, tight-knit village in Iceland — for inspiration but what begins as a search for plot material quickly turns into a messy and dangerous investigation.



Jógvan Isaksen, *Dead Men Dancing*, translated by Marita Thomsen. Published by Norvik Press, Nov 2023

Another novel in the Hannis Martinsson detective series by best-selling Faroese crime writer Jógvan Isaksen. A corpse is discovered on the beach, the body of a man who has been shackled to rocks and left to drown. As the journalist Hannis Martinsson investigates, his enquiries soon put his own life in danger.

Finland



Kristina Carlson, *Eunuch*, translated from Finnish by Mikko Alapuro. Published by Lolli Editions, June 2023.

An ageing eunuch, named Wang Wei after the great poet, looks back on his life at the court of the Song dynasty in 12th-century China. Nominated for the Nordic Council Literature Prize.

Iceland

Ásta Sigurðardóttir, *Nothing to be Rescued. Short Stories*, translated by Meg Match. Published by Nordisk Books, Nov 2023.

Ásta Sigurðardóttir's (1930-1971) poetic and hallucinogenically-beautiful stories, often written from the perspective of a naïve girl or young woman, grapple with violence in mid-twentieth century Iceland from the vantage points of marginalised voices.

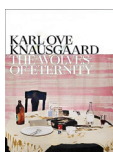


Norway



Jo Nesbo, *Killing Moon*, translated by Seán Kinsella. Published by Harvill Secker, May 2023.

Two young women are missing, their only connection being that they attended the same party, hosted by a notorious businessman. When one of the women is found murdered, the police discover an unusual signature left by the killer, giving them reason to suspect he will strike again.



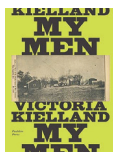
Karl Ove Knausgaard, *The Wolves of Eternity*, translated by Martin Aitken. Published by Harvill Secker, Oct 2023.

It is 1986 and Syvert Løyning has returned from military service to his mother's home in southern Norway. One night, he dreams of his late father. Searching through his father's belongings, Syvert finds a cache of letters that leads to the Soviet Union, and to a half-sister he didn't know he had.



Anya Bergman, *The Witches of Vardø*. Published by Manilla Press, Jan 2023.

Norway, 1662. A dangerous time to be a woman, when even dancing can lead to accusations of witchcraft and the risk of being burnt. After recently widowed Zigri's affair with the local merchant is discovered, she is sent to the fortress at Vardø to be tried as a witch. Zigri's daughter Ingeborg sets off to try to bring her mother back home.



Victoria Kielland, *My Men*, translated by Damion Searls. Published by Pushkin Press, July 2023.

In this novel, Victoria Kielland imagines her way into the tumultuous inner life of the Norwegian woman who became Belle Gunness — America's first known female serial killer, a woman capable of ecstatic love and gruesome cruelty.

Sweden



Henrik Berggren and Eva Krutmeijer, *Innovation the Swedish Way*. Published by Metro Publishing, Jan. 2023.

Every year, Sweden ranks near the top of the list of the world's most innovative countries in terms of the number of historically epoch-making innovations, patents granted per capita and innovation start-up companies. Among the most common reason cited for Sweden's strength in innovation has been its strong tradition of engineering.



Karin Smirnov, *The Girl in the Eagle's Talons. The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo Returns ...*, translated by Sarah Death. Published by MacLehose Press, Aug 2023.

In the 7th part of the Millennium thriller series, begun by Stieg Larsson, the action shifts north and the male gaze is replaced by a female one. The Norrbotten region of Sweden is a magnet to sinister incomers as its rich natural resources start to generate vast flows of money. Environmental forces pull politicians and locals in different directions and the traditional Sámi way of life is under threat.

Clara Törnvall, *The Autists: Women on the Spectrum*, translated by Alice E. Olsson. Published by Scribe UK, June 2023.

Clara Törnvall explores the autistic experience in arts and culture throughout history. From popular culture, films, and photography to literature, opera, and ballet, she dares to ask what it might mean to re-read these works through an autistic lens.

Anders Hansen, *The Happiness Cure*, translated by Alex Fleming. Published by Ebury Publishing, Feb 2023.

Leading psychiatrist Dr Anders Hansen offers a radical new way to think about fulfilment. We're living longer and healthier lives than ever before. So why are we in the midst of a mental health crisis?

Ingmar Bergman, *Sixty-Four Minutes with Rebecka*, translated by Deborah Bragan-Turner. Published by Éditions Belloni (Paris), March 2023.

A bilingual English/French translation of a script written in 1969 as part of an omnibus film collaboration with Kurosawa and Fellini that was never completed.

Liv Strömquist, *The Reddest Rose. Romantic Love from the Ancient Greeks to Reality TV*, translated by Melissa Bowers. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Dec 2022.

A collection of well-researched, humorous essays where the author tracks how philosophers and artists, from the Ancient Greeks to Beyoncé, have conceptualised romantic love.

My life In Denmark

by Benjamin Haagensen

I'm excited to share my experience of living in Denmark and settling into my new life. Denmark is a country known for its high standard of living, progressive policies, and strong welfare system, and I must say my experience so far has been amazing.

Moving to a new country can be challenging, but Denmark is a welcoming and inclusive society. I had already lived in Denmark for 12 years before I moved to the UK, so I was lucky to know a lot of people before I came here. I was a bit nervous at first, but I have settled well into my new life. At the start it was a bit tough getting into the new routines, getting up earlier for school, and living on my own.

In Denmark, there is a type of school called EUD, which stands for *Erhvervsuddannelse*. These schools pro-

vide vocational education and training for students who want to learn a trade and become, for example, plumbers, carpenters or electricians. The EUD schools are very hands-on, and students get a lot of practical experience working in their chosen field. This makes the education very practical and job-oriented, and many EUD graduates are able to find work immediately after finishing their training. The EUD schools are a great option for students who want to learn a trade and get a good job without going to university.

This has always been the type of school I wanted to go to. Most of my work is always practical, it could be anything from learning how to isolate cables to learning how to put an engine together. This type of learning really suits me, as I like to use my hands and problem-solve.



When I broke the school record for 1000 meter rowing

In the UK, I didn't really get on well with the school system; I wasn't very good at sitting still and sitting in a classroom all day learning from textbooks.

Fitness is an essential aspect of my life, and Denmark has a thriving fitness industry. I joined a local gym, and it has been an excellent way to meet new people and to maintain a healthy lifestyle. I currently train six times a week, either lifting weights or going out for a run. This is a big part of my day, and I've met so many new people and made new friends in the gym.

I have had an amazing experience settling into my new life with friends. We often meet up after class or during weekends to socialize, play sports, train in the gym together or go out and experience different things. Denmark is known for its cycling culture, and I have been able to explore the city on my bike. I cycle practically everywhere, to school, work, gym and to meet up with friends.

Last summer, when I first arrived in Denmark, some of my friends and I went to a five-day music festival. This festival is called Langeland Festival and is a popular festival that most young people go to. We spent our time listening to music, partying and just having a great time. When we were there the weather was extremely hot, so my friends and I and a group of other people made a huge slip-and-slide and spent the whole day on it. This is one of my best memories from the summer, as it was the first time in a few years that I was together with my best friends.

In conclusion, my experience of my new life in Denmark has been amazing. The EUD program provides a practical education that prepares individuals for work in various industries. Denmark is a welcoming country, and I highly recommend it to anyone considering studying or living abroad. I feel lucky to have been able to move back here.

Gaining my master's degree in Iceland

by Susie Corfield

The funding I received from the CoScan Travel Award paid for my one-way flight to Iceland in August of last year. I have now almost finished my first year of the 2-year MA programme of Viking and Medieval Norse Studies at Háskóli Íslands.

This master's programme is definitely an intensive course, but incredibly gratifying. Having started the course with a background in modern history — specifically looking at the application of folklore in twentieth century Vietnam — I now have an entirely new area of

academic research that I can access. For example, having had only a limited knowledge of Old Icelandic from a single semester of study during my undergraduate degree, I am now able to read and translate texts in Old Icelandic, in both normalised orthography and even directly from manuscript facsimiles.

One of the many wonderful things about being at the University of Iceland is the proximity to the manuscripts of the Árni Magnússon collection. I have been very fortunate to see a number of important Icelandic manuscripts in person. So far in my first year of study in this programme I have been able to study a range of subjects within the Medieval Scandinavian world and with experts in the field, which has been truly amazing.

I have studied Old Nordic religion and belief, how to read medieval Icelandic manuscripts, the Old Icelandic literary corpus, from Eddic poetry to the late secular poetry at the end of the Nordic medieval period, and of course the language itself. I am excited to continue to learn more in my second year of study, which will be partly undertaken in Norway as an exchange student of the Viking and Medieval Norse Studies programme.

The experience I have had at Háskóli Íslands has certainly encouraged me to continue my education further into PhD studies and become part of the active academic circles in Medieval Norse studies. After my studies here, I am particularly interested in continuing to



Þingvellir, the National Park where the Althing (an open-air assembly representing the whole of Iceland) was established in 930 and continued to meet until 1798. Þingvellir was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2004.

research the interplay between Medieval Norse and Celtic societies, all through the lens of medieval folklore and folk belief, which I believe can help us to reconstruct areas of the past that have remained under-acknowledged for far too long. I am very glad that my interests in folkloristics have been well nurtured while I have been studying here in Iceland.

Living in Iceland has certainly been a core part of my experience doing this MA programme, and one that I am very grateful for — however long and dark the winters may be! There is something amazing about being able to see the northern lights just by looking out of your window. I have been very fortunate to be able to go on a number of excursions as part of my course, many of which follow *Íslendingasögur saga* trails, including sites mentioned in *Egils saga*, *Laxdæla saga* and others. These

have been amazing, it is wonderful to see the landscapes that informed many of the sagas and to be able to place yourself there, almost as if you can see the plot unfold around you. This was particularly poignant with some of the locations on the *Njáls saga* trail.

During our first week of classes, we took a trip to Þingvellir National Park, only a short journey away from the University. This was a brilliant experience and truly made me comprehend the amazing history that I have spent this year learning about. Iceland is a wonderful place to study; the unique environment that informed much of the medieval literary corpus and the concentration of brilliant academic minds and resources at Háskolí Íslands has made this master's programme more special than I could have imagined. I am truly thankful to the CoScan travel fund for their part in helping me to fund my move here.

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If you would like to apply for an award for 2024

- go to www.coscan.org.uk/travelaward, where you will find more information and can download an application form; deadline for applications: 31 March 2024
- or just contact Tony Bray (contact details on page 40).

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- or contact Tony Bray, or the Travel Award treasurer Hugh Williamson (contact details on page 40).

Please do not send donations to the CoScan treasurer.

Geological mapping of Stjernøya, Norway

by Lauren Meager



The team upon arrival to the island, with the mountain Nabarren behind us

In summer 2022, we travelled to the remote island of Stjernøya, Norway, which sits at 70° North, within the Arctic Circle — we being five MGeol students from the University of St Andrews. As part of our degree, we must complete a month-long geological mapping expedition, so decided to go somewhere new and explore rare alkaline igneous rocks in Northern Norway.

The expedition was seven months in the planning, with changes to the original timing due to heavy snowfall when we originally planned to go, and difficulties with shipping out our equipment due to Brexit. However, the expedition was an opportunity none of us were willing to give up on, so we persevered. Finally, in July 2022, the five of us met up in Northern Norway, excited and ready to investigate the local rocks.

These rocks don't occur in many places across the world. In fact, they are only found in about 49 locations — but not many of these places are as stunning as Stjernøya. The island is home to about 80 people mostly living in the north of the island, a Sibelco mine in the south, and a couple of dozen Arctic terns that liked to dive bomb us as we travelled from our campsite to our mapping location every day.



Exploring an outcrop of carbonatite

We spent our first few days on the island exploring the stunning valleys and mountains in the south, trying to work out if there were enough visible rocks to map. It turned out there wasn't, at least not in accessible locations that didn't require us skirting around glacial lakes or clambering over near-vertical ice patches.

Luckily, the local mine offered an alternative solution. We split into two groups, three people working within the open pit mine and around the 727m mountain Nabbaren, which gave them access to plenty of rocks as well as incredible views of the surrounding fjords, encounters with the local reindeer

and time to invent games such as rock golf (which is exactly as it sounds).

The other two members of the group delved into the cold and dark depths of the underground tunnel system within Nabbaren, exploring the world by head torch and feeling very much as if they were in an episode of Scooby Doo ... or, on the rare occasion the head torches ran out of battery, a horror movie.



Geological mapping of underground tunnel
(there is no light besides torches)

The rocks we found were likely emplaced during the Caledonian Orogeny, about 505 million years ago when regions of Scotland and west Norway collided to form the huge mountain ranges of today.

During our days of geological mapping — putting together maps and descriptions of the main rock units within the area and how they interact — we also got the chance to experience Norway. We spent our evenings talking with locals, attempting to learn some Norwegian and Sámi.

On one occasion, a pair of the mine workers took us across to the mainland on a rib boat, and we enjoyed an hour's hike to a lake for a fishing trip. Unfortunately, we forgot the rod and everything else we needed for fishing. Fortunately, we got to enjoy the scenery and the midnight sun that lit up our days and nights.

We visited the nearest city, Alta (and by near, we mean an hour-long ferry-trip away), where we went to the local museum which has displays on 7000-year-old rock art, the history of the local area and the indigenous Sámi people.

We also went to a Sámi restaurant where we all tried reindeer, and then went outside and fed the live reindeer — the cycle of life and all that.

We returned home to Scotland, victorious, with five geological maps, five full notebooks of detailed rock descriptions, and over 200 rock samples, which will be used in future dissertations or for education in university labs.

The expedition taught us many things. Resilience in the face of a challenge, teamwork, and problem solving under pressure. Every challenge that came up — such as changing our original mapping location, or two of our bags turning up a week late — we overcame as a team, and despite everything we accomplished our goals and had a great time while we did so.

We would like to say a big thank you to CoScan for their generous support for our expedition. The trip is not one we are ever going to forget, and it has given us vital skills both for our future careers and for life.

Aggressive ants and insect-eating plants in Sweden

by Alexander Powell

In the summer of 2022 I was fortunate enough to be able to visit the beautiful village of Abisko in Northern Sweden. As an Ecology and Conservation Biology student, this incredible location north of the Arctic Circle provided the perfect opportunity to conduct research into the wide variety of ecosystems it is home to.

My trip began with an overnight train journey from Stockholm to Abisko with breathtaking views of Sweden in the 24-hour daylight throughout the 17-hour journey. I stayed at the Abisko Mountain Lodge with a small group from my university, just a short walk from the Scientific Research Station at which our projects were based. We immediately got to work upon our arrival — on our very first full day, we hiked up Mount Njulla and studied the effect of elevational

gradients on biodiversity as we ascended the mountain. The incredible scenery at the top was an added bonus, made even more astounding by the snow still remaining despite the 30°C heat!

The staggeringly large and diverse range of species found in Abisko provided many opportunities for research over the week: from studies into the aggressive fighting behaviour of wood ants to investigating the insectivorous Butterwort plants and the locations in which they were abundant, I undertook many projects to enhance my knowledge of the biological concepts I am most interested in. Although the area is well known for its elk and reindeer populations, the elusive nature of these animals meant that unfortunately I didn't get to see any up close. I did however get to study their tracks to learn a little more about how they move during the summer, and actually found an elk skull at the top of Mount Njulla.

For my main research project whilst in Sweden, I investigated levels of biodiversity within ecotones. These are regions that act as transitions between two distinct biological communities: for example, between a forested area and a neighbouring wetland there may be an ecotone containing some features of both habitats, acting almost as a stepping stone between the two regions. There has been much debate as to whether levels of diversity within the ecotone should be higher or lower than in the



Morning walk through Abisko



View from the top of Mount Njulla

adjacent communities, so this was an exciting topic to look into. Due to the vast range of habitat types in Abisko, I was able to identify and study a large ecotone, examining the number and type of species present within it. The skills in experimental design and species identification I have acquired as a result of my trip will be invaluable throughout the rest of my degree, and I will get the opportunity to analyse and report my results at the beginning of the next academic year.

The constant daylight seemed to me a strange concept before arriving in Abisko, but it was fairly easy to adapt to, and it enabled us to go on many fantastic hikes in the evening. One of my favourites was the trip we took up to a cliff edge that was used traditionally by the native Sámi people — the view of the mountains and Lappporten (Tjuonavagge) from the cliff top in the midnight sun will undoubtedly stay with me for years to come. With

some traditional structures preserved in Abisko, we got to learn about the fascinating history of the Sámi people and their way of life. Staying at Abisko Mountain Lodge also gave me the chance to try some traditional Swedish food. Despite not encountering any elks or reindeer whilst exploring, I got to sample both in some incredible meals at the restaurant. The beautiful log cabins we stayed in and the pack of huskies nearby really brought it home that we were in the Arctic circle, despite the hot weather!

My time in Abisko was without a doubt one of the most incredible experiences I have ever had. From making new friends to enhancing my skills as a biologist, I am certain that I would not have been able to experience such amazing things anywhere else in the world, and I would love to return to Scandinavia in the future. I want to thank CoScan for helping to make such fantastic opportunities possible for myself and many others!

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