

CoScan Magazine

2020/1

The Magazine for the Confederation of Scandinavian Societies
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In Nordmarka-Oslo, Norway Photo: George Carew-Jones (see also page 30)

Message from the President

Mark Elliott

Ten years ago my message for this page of the CoScan Magazine was a brief history of our first 60 years, since foundation in 1950. Looking back, I am struck by the number of people mentioned then whose names still feature among those active today. The fundamentals of CoScan are still in place—the magazine, the Trust Fund, the International Award, the website. CoScan’s successes over the last ten years have been in developing a more professional approach in all the familiar areas: a full-colour magazine with a wide range of in-depth articles and society news, a website well up to modern standards, wide and high-level publicity for our annual International Award presentations. We have in many ways grown and prospered.

2020, though, has presented us with new challenges. Like all institutions, we are needing to adapt. The Executive Committee has moved into virtual meetings, and even your president is starting to grapple with Zoom. Electronic communication is more important than ever. Some of our member societies will certainly be finding things harder, as are all parts of national and international society. In 2010 we could look forward with some confidence to the next decade or so at least, but it would be less obvious to say that now.

Speculation about the future, national and global, is currently rife and inevitably inconclusive. The Covid-19 pandemic

should be controllable in the end, though the timescale is highly uncertain. The economic and social effects seem likely to be much longer-lasting, and fundamental change is probable. Some detect positive elements in what is hitting us all—an appreciation that actual human contact is good and necessary, not everything can be electronic; awareness of the dangers of inequality, and of the importance of the state in making appropriate provision, may be growing; more now speak of the physical benefits for city-dwellers of lower traffic levels and less pollution. Some institutions are finding creative ways of adapting and of spreading benefits more widely in society, such as the campaign by my own old school to expand its distance teaching facilities in particular (and some others) to a much wider spectrum of those with educational need. Whether any of this will be reflected in the actions of national governments remains to be seen.

For us in CoScan, the international dimension is especially important. International travel may never recover to its previous level, and difficulties will surely continue. Many will argue that cooperation between states, especially in our own region, is more clearly than ever of vital importance for the future of us all. The separate and specific challenges of climate change accentuate this need. Northern Europeans, more fortunate than most in their geographical location in terms of global warming, also generally enjoy a level of economic prosperity and physical health which improves their chances in coping with the current virus. Consequent on all this is the need

to maintain and strengthen those links which are central to CoScan’s purpose. We have a role to play in this common endeavour, working together with our

friends and patrons in the Nordic embassies in London.

So CoScan will adapt; and it will, and must, survive.

Editor’s note

Eva Robards

When Covid-19 struck, the production of CoScan Magazine 2020/1 was threatened. Not knowing how our collaboration with the printers would work, if at all, we discussed alternatives, both within the Executive Committee and the Editorial Board. The conclusion was that we should press on since it might be reassuring for you, our readers, to get the magazine through the letterbox—as if all were well with the world.

Well ... there has been a sense of tranquillity and timelessness for many of us during lockdown. At the same time there may be a frustration caused by the fact that countries which we have become accustomed to visit whenever it suits us are out of our reach at present. That prompts thoughts of how it was in bygone days for Scandinavians who had moved to the UK, leaving family and friends behind and with few means of close and continuous contact. Even in the 1980s, a telephone call meant that you had to find a phone that worked for international calls, and have the correct kind and number of coins. These were quickly gobbled up by the apparatus ... and you felt the distance between you and your loved ones. CoScan and its member organisations had an important role to play. They still do, though the

situation is somewhat different today, as we can keep in touch via a multitude of electronic means. But there have been severe restrictions. How these have affected you and how you have coped, make stories that we would welcome (send to magazine@coscan.org.uk).

This edition, however, will not dwell on what Covid has done to us. Instead we highlight the 70th anniversary of CoScan; commemorate two high profile CoScan officers who sadly have passed away; portray our International Awardee of 2019; and have a look at a Danish World Heritage site which bears evidence of the meteoritic impact that extinguished fifty per cent of all life on Earth. An even worse catastrophe may be imminent—if the new interpretation of the enigmatic inscription on the Swedish Rök runestone is to be believed. But we also have the heartening article describing a Help for Heroes project, aiming to build a replica Viking ship—a collaboration between York Archaeological Trust and Phoenix House Recovery Centre in Catterick, a centre that provides support and rehabilitation for ex-military personnel. Finally, as always, the magazine has a book section, a number of travel reports, and contact details. I hope you will find the reading interesting.

CoScan 1950-2020: A summary history

by Mark Elliott

The Conference of Scandinavian Societies had its origin in a meeting of representatives of seven societies in Liverpool on 8 October 1950. At first there was little administrative structure, and discussion was essentially general. But the number of member societies grew, to 22 by 1963, talks on Scandinavian matters and social events were held, and the central secretariat played an increasing role in facilitating contacts between member societies. The five London Nordic Embassies, involved from the start, were increasingly appreciative.

Between 1966 and 1970 the Conference was consolidated into the Confederation of Scandinavian Societies and became CoScan, and the newsletter/magazine, which first appeared in 1963, developed considerably. Members of the various royal families appear among the guests at major events of the relevant societies. CoScan group trips to each of the Nordic countries are organised. New societies join, although some drop out; by 1990 there are forty member clubs, although as early as the 1980s there were worries about lack of younger recruits to membership. Societies are consolidating their role as focal points for Scandinavians

in their area, providing support, social contact and advice.

The Bergen conference of 1998, the first to be held outside the UK, saw the first moves towards the present structure of CoScan. Since 1959 the Chairman of each conference had served also as CoScan President until the opening of the next. In 2000 the constitution was amended to provide for an honorary President, not elected and remaining in post, and (usually) a separate Chairman of the Executive Committee. Roughly once every two years a CoScan Conference including an annual general meeting is held in one of the five Nordic countries, with an AGM held in the UK in the intervening years. Among the duties of the AGM now is to select a prominent Scandinavian individual or institution as recipient of the CoScan International Award, first awarded in 1994 to the City of Lillehammer in Norway.

The decade since 2010 has seen further consolidation and modernisation. Eva Robards, Chairman for most of this period, carried out an extensive programme of visits to and meetings with member societies, and recruited a number of new society members. The CoScan presence on social



media became a feature of an active communications strategy. The website has been updated and made more user-friendly. Individual society programmes are published more widely, and society news figures among the regular items in the CoScan Magazine, now in full colour with a wide range of professionally presented articles. Potential new society

members are now invited to a centrally organised annual social event, and the presentation of the International Award has become a major cultural function attracting wide publicity. CoScan’s adaptation to modern communication methods will be an essential tool in meeting the challenges of what may be a difficult period ahead.

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Peter Wright, obituary

by Mark Elliott

The death on 14 February of Peter Wright, OBE JP (he was always scrupulous about recognising personal honours), merits recognition by CoScan in no common way. This personal appreciation of his great contribution over very many years should certainly take a prominent place in this magazine, whose importance to CoScan he so regularly praised. The broad outline of his CoScan career—Executive Committee member since the Isle of Man Conference in 1994, Chairman in succession to John Greve from 2000 to 2007, General Secretary then until 2011 and thereafter Vice-President—is widely known. I do not presume here to recount his achievements in detail, still less to offer any account of his distinguished career as a magistrate and as an ‘expert witness’ in the field of physical education. The following is a recollection of Peter as a person and a friend.

Our paths first crossed in the mid-1990s, when, scrupulous as ever, Peter made a point of informing the Embassy

in Oslo of his imminent visit to Norway on official business related to his position as a senior magistrate in the UK. Peter and Kari came to lunch with us, arriving impressively in their British car whose enviable registration number was something like 1 OSLO. Conversation flowed easily over lunch on the terrace looking across our garden towards the Oslo fjord, and we met occasionally on their subsequent visits, once at least by chance on the northwards road out of Oslo when they took us home to



Peter Wright in Copenhagen 2011



Mark Elliott thanking Peter Wright for his work for CoScan at the AGM in Copenhagen 2011

Photo: A. W. Robards

their *hytte* nearby for a delicious lunch. Somehow it seemed only right that practically our last function in Norway was a CoScan conference in Bergen in late August 1998, of course at Peter and Kari's invitation.

Peter's suggestion, when he became CoScan Chairman in 2000, that I should assume the newly separated position of President, seemed a natural consequence. So, over the next seven years, I was able to witness his skill and energy in the creative development of CoScan. He deployed me most effectively as one of his tools, in dealings with the Nordic embassies in London for example, and performing the odd representational task. He would always, most courteously, defer to me on formal occasions. But he was always the driving force. He was indefatigable in prosecuting causes in which he

believed, campaigning for the UK to adopt the sensible Scandinavian practice of driving with dipped headlights, or the new recycling machines used in certain supermarkets. The International Award was a brainchild of his, and generated a great deal of work for him personally. CoScan membership for individuals was another idea of his, and he personally recruited a number of people to CoScan. All of this raised the profile of the CoScan in which he believed so strongly.

Strength is one of the keynotes of his achievement. His commanding physical presence, and his powerful voice in calling for silence, were a notable feature of all our Conferences and other meetings. It was somehow in character that he should have celebrated his eightieth birthday, so he said, by doing eighty press-ups. (The corrective, perhaps, was his story

of appearing a few years later in a witness-box, looking a good deal shakier, and being addressed in a tone of some incredulity by the presiding judge—‘Mr Wright? Expert in physical fitness??’) He presided with total dominance and considerable financial success over auctions at CoScan dinners.

Human warmth underlay all of this. We were privileged to know Peter and Kari also as friends—and although this is Peter’s story, it is of course incomplete without mention of Kari’s own very

considerable role in the creation and maintenance of CoScan over many decades. I shall write no more of that here. But very many of us will remember them as a couple, and for their warmth and sociability at so many gatherings over the years. We shall miss Peter greatly, as a friend. CoScan members will miss him too, while recognising the enormous debt which we owe to his dedication and commitment on behalf of the cause which he loved.

Lise Newsome, obituary

by Alan Wheeler

Lise Newsome was born Marie-Louise Augusta Gumoes on 29th Oct 1922—I have never known why she was always called Lise during the time I knew her. In 1946, she married Dennis Davies, a soldier from Huddersfield who was posted to Denmark towards the end of the Second World War. Her father, civil engineer Carl Wilhelm Gumoes (known locally as an eccentric), disapproved of her marrying a non-Dane and displayed the Danish flag at half-mast on the day! She soon moved to Huddersfield, living alone at first (which must have required a considerable amount of courage) and was joined later by her husband when he was released from National Service (he had been stationed in the Haartz area of Germany). They soon had two children, Glynn (born 1948) and Ann (1949).



Her father built a wooden summer house in North Zealand in 1953. Marie-Louise often returned to the summer house and it was named Glynnannhill after her two children. The summer house was sold in the early 2000s and the new owner, Adrian Hughes (originally from Neath with a Danish mother) said: ‘In Denmark the name is considered most extraordinary, though it suits its location aptly, being next to a national park called

Heatherhill after its former English multi-millionaire owners.’

In the early 1960s, interest was growing in youth, sporting and cultural links between the Huddersfield area and Denmark. This eventually expanded to include the other Scandinavian countries and the Kirklees Anglo-Scandinavian Society (KASS) was formally launched on 12 November 1974. Both Marie-Louise (now known as Lise) and her husband Dennis were members of the original committee.

After Dennis’s death in 1976, Lise married his cousin Norman Newsome in 1980. They lived in Somerset for a few years where Norman was involved with a textile museum. While there, Lise was a founder member of the Devon & Somerset Anglo Scandinavian Society (see CoScan Magazine 2016/1). When they moved back to the Huddersfield area Norman also became an active member of KASS. After his death in 1998, Lise lived alone (apart from her cat Dexter) in a small house in the village of Scholes, near Holmfirth, though she did become firm friends with another KASS member, until he died in 2004.

Lise continued to be an active member of KASS up to the end of her life (I cannot recall her missing a single KASS event) and also maintained her interest in and involvement with CoScan. The last time she participated in a CoScan Conference was 2016 in Aarhus; she was then well into her 94th year.

The year 1985 was proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Youth Year, and CoScan decided to set up the Trust Fund for travel scholarships

for young people. Lise was a member of the subcommittee from the beginning. Initially, meetings used to be held in motorway cafés, but for a decade from the mid-90s, when the subcommittee consisted of Lise as treasurer, Dagmar Cockitt (Midland Scandinavians) and Brita Green (YASS), Lise used to host them in her bungalow in Scholes, and their meetings were always preceded by a delicious lunch. She decided to step down as Trust Fund Treasurer in 2006.

Despite her advanced age and gradually increasing loss of mobility, she kept as active as possible, swimming every week, attending church regularly and continuing to drive until well into her 90s. There was no deterioration in her mental abilities either. Any visitors were likely to be involved in an animated political discussion (she was a member of the Liberal—later Liberal Democrat—Party until she vehemently disagreed with some of their policies during the coalition with the Conservatives), and had no hesitation in speaking her mind. Surprisingly to me, she was a strong proponent of the Brexit ‘Leave’-campaign. She also used to recount vivid memories of life in Copenhagen during the German occupation in World War 2.

Lise passed away peacefully at home on 3 December 2019, aged 97.

Alan Wheeler is a member of Kirklees Anglo-Scandinavian Society, which used to be an active member of CoScan but is now reduced to a less formal gathering of a few friends.

Lisbet Rausing

CoScan International Award-winner 2019

by Tony Bray and Eva Robards

Dr Lisbet Rausing has a low profile but deserves to be much better known to the wider public for the substantial philanthropic work she carries out.

The four key areas where, together with her husband Professor Peter Baldwin, she has made and continues to make dramatic changes are: endangered culture, endangered environment, farming, and open access (especially ensuring that university research is freely available to everyone).

The charitable foundations, Arcadia Fund and Lund Trust, which they have co-founded, are the main vehicles for this work.

Arcadia was founded in 2001. Their website www.arcadiafund.org.uk states that ‘it serves humanity by preserving endangered cultural heritage and ecosystems. We protect complexity and work against the entropy of ravaged and thereby starkly simplified natural environments and globalised cultures. Innovation and change occur best in already complex systems. Once memories, knowledge, skills, variety, and intricacy disappear—once the old complexities are lost—they are hard to replicate or replace. Arcadia aims to return to people both their memories and their natural surroundings. What we want to preserve remains fragile, small and dispersed. But if we do not protect it—if it vanishes forever—then future

generations will have no base from which to build a vibrant, resilient, green future.’ The fund has made grant commitments of over \$500 m globally to charities and scholarly institutions that preserve cultural heritage and the environment and promote open access. Among projects receiving grants are Wetlands International, University College London (for digitising endangered archaeological heritage in Central Asia), the Center for Jewish History, Rewilding Europe, the Centre for Maritime Archaeology (University of Southampton), and this year (30 March) the Internet Archive for its National Emergency Library initiative that will make more than 1.4 million books freely available to a world under lockdown.

Lund Trust, named after Lisbet’s home city in south Sweden, has since 2002 given \$66.6 m to more than 350 organisations in the UK and internationally. Among supported categories were Environmental projects; Culture and heritage; Universities, research and societies; Young people and education; and Disadvantaged people.

In addition to this, Lisbet is a non-executive director of Ingleby Farms & Forest, a corporation which manages sustainable farming in nine countries across four continents. Furthermore, she works closely with the liquid food packaging company Ecolean; one of this company’s aims is resource-saving.

Lisbet has a PhD from Harvard University, where she also taught for eight years. As a historian of science she wrote a biography of Carl Linnaeus (published by Harvard University Press, 1999), and she received the Linnaeus gold medal from Uppsala university (in 2007, the Linnaeus jubilee year). Other publications include a range of articles in scholarly journals and major newspapers.

Among leading organisations of which she is member are the British Academy, the Linnaean Society, the Royal Historical Society, the Royal Society of Biology and the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry.

These are just a few examples of Lisbet's many involvements. In a short piece like this, it isn't possible to cover them all. It would have been great to write more about all the organisations she supports—as diverse as the Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team and the Refugee Council. With hard work and tremendous enthusiasm she has made a dramatic impact in a huge number of different areas. Meeting Lisbet and talking with



her about her activities was an experience both humbling and inspiring. Indeed, a truly worthy CoScan International Award winner.



Lisbet Rausing is the granddaughter of Ruben Rausing, co-founder of the packaging company Tetra Pak.

Family Rausing at the CoScan International Award ceremony, at the Swedish Ambassador's Residence; Lisbet in the centre behind her sister, mother and husband
Photos: Chris Howell, CoScan

Manchester Swedish Meetup Group's response to Covid-19

by Tony Bray

The Manchester Swedish Meetup Group was formed almost 10 years ago. We used to meet at least twice a month at a bar in Manchester to practise our Swedish. Thanks to other people in the group who help, we also had other social events throughout the year—boat trips, meals out, crayfish parties, cycle rides, concerts, etc. It's a very informal group—people just have a chat about whatever they want, in whatever language they want.

Once the full enormity of Covid-19 was evident, we could not, obviously, continue with physical meetings. We investigated a number of video-conferencing systems and selected Zoom, as it was one of the easiest to use and was also available on a wide range of platforms. After a successful trial session, we posted details of an online meeting on our website. We weren't sure how the transition from physical to online meetings would be received by our members, but we have been really pleased—people are now happy to join us online. Given that the majority of people now have more time on their hands, we responded to requests from our members and we now hold our online meetings every week instead of once a fortnight.

One unexpected benefit from moving to online meetings is that we're now getting members from outside our catchment area. For example, at our last meeting we were joined by people from Scotland, the North East and

from Canada. We've also invited other Swedish groups in the UK to join us.

If your group is considering moving to online meetings, I can thoroughly recommend it. There are obvious differences, such as only one person at a time being able to speak. But it's a great way to continue to keep in touch—and also, possibly, to attract people who would have difficulty attending physical meetings.

To join us, please do RSVP via the website—you'll be most welcome!

You can read more about us here:
www.meetup.com/Manchester-Swedish-Language-Meetup-Group
and you can contact me here:
tony@thebrays.org.uk or on my mobile
07778 648082



Photo: Chris Montgomery
<https://unsplash.com/@cwmonty>

News in brief



1 November will be the 70th anniversary of the Anglo-Scandinavian Society of Newcastle.



The Anglo-Swedish Society of Gothenburg, a new member of CoScan, has a long history: the society is celebrating its 100th anniversary in October.



The Scandinavian Klubb of Lincolnshire reached 45 years in February.



The York Anglo-Scandinavian Society celebrated its 60th anniversary in early February (the 'date of birth' was 30 January). Brita Green spearheaded the event, which was a formal dinner held in Bedern Hall (one of the many medieval halls in York), with presentations of prominent past members and events in the past, rounded off by communal singing accompanied by Sid Bradley on the guitar.



After eleven successful years as Chairman of Orkney Norway Friendship Association (ONFA), Ishbel Borland has stepped down. New Chairman is John Mowat, who has been involved with ONFA for over forty years.



Nordic House/Danish Church

Charlotte Theill has been appointed as the Manager of Nordic House/Danish Church in Hull. There will no longer be a residing priest, but ca four services a year will be hosted with a visiting pastor from The Danish Church in London. Further, the building will be open to people with links to the Nordic countries and also available for activities organised by local people and associations, such as meetings, lectures, music activities and private parties (the building is available for hire).



There will be a Virtual Drinks Party on Zoom at 6pm, 24 September, to which members will be invited.

Stevns Klint—a Danish World Heritage Site

by Jens Buus



Stevns Klint

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=76196607>

The UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) ‘Convention Concerning the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural Heritage’ was adopted in 1972 and has since been ratified by nearly all countries in the world.

There are now ten sites in Denmark listed as a World Heritage Site, including three in Greenland. The first to be listed was the Jelling Stones in 1994 (see CoScan Magazine 2014/2). Later additions include Roskilde Cathedral in 1995, Kronborg Castle in 2000 and Ilulissat Icefjord in 2004.

Stevns Klint is a recent (2014) addition to the list. It is a sea cliff stretching for about 15 km along the coast of the western part of the Baltic, on a peninsula about 70 km (by road) south of Copenhagen. Although the height of the cliffs is more modest than Møns Klint (140 km

south of Copenhagen by road), and not quite as spectacular, they have a special geological significance as they include the boundary between the Cretaceous and the Paleogene geological periods, now known as the K-Pg boundary. The boundary layer, which is about 66 million years old, coincides with the extinction of the dinosaurs and a major change of the life conditions all over the Earth.

The cause of the extinction of the dinosaurs was a hotly debated topic for a long time, and in 1980 Luis Alvarez (a Nobel Prize winning physicist) and his son Walter (a geologist) suggested that it could have been caused by a meteorite impact. They estimated that the size of the impacting object would have had to be about 10 km, and that the amount of material thrown into the atmosphere would have been about 60 times the mass of the impactor. This amount of material

(corresponding to about 10 cm if evenly distributed over the Earth) would have blocked out sunlight for a considerable amount of time leading to significant cooling and hence the demise of the dinosaurs and many other lifeforms.

In support of the ‘Alvarez hypothesis’ it was shown that the K-Pg boundary layer contained a significant excess of the element iridium which is very rare in the crust of the Earth, but more abundant in meteorites. However, there was no evidence for an impact crater of the right size and age.

Mainstream geologists at the time generally did not like disaster theories, but if it really had to be a disaster then at least it should be a geological disaster, like the eruption of a super volcano. A possible candidate was the Deccan Traps in India (note that in geology the word ‘trap’ is derived from the Swedish word for ‘step’). There is evidence for major eruptions at about the right time, and it is of course possible that both events played a role in the mass extinction event at the end of the Cretaceous period.

Lately the Alvarez hypothesis has received significant support with the identification of the Chicxulub crater just off the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico as the possible meteor impact site. It was actually known for quite some time, from seismic data from oil exploration, that there was evidence of an impact crater at this place, but these results were not published at the time. Major investigations have now been carried out at this site, and all the evidence collected to date is consistent with the impact of a ~14 km size object about 66 million years ago. Consequently the Alvarez hypothesis is now largely accepted.

The K-Pg boundary layer is present in several other countries, but Stevns Klint offers an accessible and well preserved example, including an extensive fossil record from both before and after the extinction event.

You can find more information on the Stevns Klint web site www.stevnsklint.com/en/frontpage.

Jens Buus is a member of Northants Anglo-Scandinavian Society.



The K-Pg boundary layer—associated with the sudden mass extinction of plants and animals, including dinosaurs, approximately 66 million years ago <https://i.redd.it/swm3m6c73sr21.jpg>

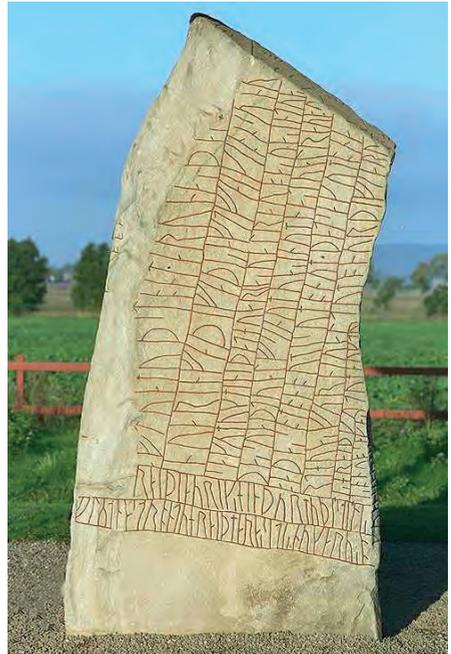
Discussion of ‘The Rök runestone and the End of the World’

by Mindy MacLeod

It is rare that the interpretation of a runic inscription makes headlines all around the world. Even rarer when the runestone in question is by no means newly discovered but has been a fixture of runic studies, beloved but baffling, for hundreds of years. But the interpretation released by a team of Swedish scholars in January this year of the Rök stone (‘The Rök runestone and the End of the World’, published in *Futhark: International Journal of Runic Studies*), which linked the inscription on Sweden’s most notable runestone to apprehension about an impending climatic disaster, coming as it did when Greta Thunberg had put climate change on everyone’s lips and all of Australia was ablaze, garnered global attention. Not just because of the zeitgeist, but because it offered a whole new way of approaching ‘Sweden’s first book’, the longest runic text ever discovered on a slab of Scandinavian stone.

Dating from around 800 CE and walled into a twelfth-century church outbuilding for several hundred years, the extent of the Rök stone’s inscription was first uncovered in the late nineteenth century when it was removed from the enclosure which had hidden three of its sides as well as its rune-inscribed top. Carved largely in the traditional Viking-age ‘short-twig’ runic alphabet, which makes its reading somewhat problematic in view of the sporadic punctuation, lack of word boundaries, and multiple phonemic

values for certain runes, the text also makes use of various ciphers, including numerical codes, a cryptographic substitution involving an older form of the runic alphabet, and large runic crosses on the uppermost surface. While there has been long-standing disagreement over the reading order of the lines as well as the interpretation of particular words, especially those comprised by the cryptic runes, and the cohesive context of the inscription as a whole, there has hitherto



The Rök stone Photo: Bengt A Lundberg, Riksantikvarieämbetet, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=59791078>

been fairly widespread consensus that after a standard memorial formulation ('After Vamoth stand these runes. And Varin, the father, made them, in memory of his death-doomed son'), the inscription contains references to a number of lost heroic legends and folktales, as well as to historical figures such as the early Ostrogothic king Theodoric the Great. This team of scholars turns these readings upside down, identifying instead an apocalyptic outcry in the form of nine riddles.

A weakness of previous interpretations has unquestionably been the fragmentary and elusive nature of the folktales alluded to. The new reading is informed by social semiotics theory with its textual, ideational and interpersonal principles for establishing linguistic meaning. An obvious advantage of the newer reading is that it not only offers answers to the questions formulated but also links these together to provide a unified response, contextualised as a reaction in the wake of the death of a beloved son to fear of an impending climate crisis. Hence most of the jarring 'jumpiness' of previous readings is lost: the scholars find a narrative and ritual function in the inscription, the text is localised, and the invitation to the reader to respond to the riddles and complete the memories is recognised.

Much of this is immediately convincing: it is hard to disagree that 'the sun' provides a likely answer to five of the questions posed in the riddles. The memorial itself is seen to be addressed not to Thor (as in some previous interpretations) but to Odin, who in

diverse ways is also linked to the four remaining riddles ('On the battlefield of Ragnarok/The warriors of Odin/Odin/Odin's son Vithar'). Parallels to the questions are found in later Old English and Old Norse poetry, again a massive advance on previous interpretations which remained largely disjointed and apparently incomplete.

Nonetheless, the posited fear of an impending climate crisis, supposedly born out of the devastatingly cold summers resulting from an extreme weather event in the sixth century, is for me the weakest point of the new reading. I find it just as simple to relate the riddles to a metaphorical Ragnarok symbolising the end of the world, hardly an unexpected emotional reaction to the death of a beloved child. I prefer to imagine Varin equating his bereavement with the end of life as he knows it, a theme dramatically depicted in Scandinavian mythology, without his grief being compounded by any real fear of imminent climatic apocalypse. The scholars make a comparison with the cataclysmic conclusion to the similarly commemorative Skarpåker stone: 'Earth shall be riven and High Heaven', which again can be regarded as an expression of earthly grief taking on mythological proportions. To me, the eschatological theme signifies colossal despair without necessarily being extrapolated into a comment on climatic apocalypse, purportedly based on contemporary solar storms and eclipses as well as an understanding of the events of the late antique Little Ice Age several centuries earlier. Nor is it necessary for me to

envision a new Scandinavian elite who emerged in the wake of the extreme weather events and claimed a special military and cosmological relationship with Odin to appreciate that the interpretation of *Ygg minni* as ‘a memory for Ygg, i.e. Odin’, which occurs repeatedly throughout, is an advance on the standard *mögminni* ‘folk memory’ or *ungmenni* ‘young men’.

I like the new interpretation. It makes sense, it links well with pictorial and poetic sources, it rules out a lot of irrelevancies and it's better than what we had. I think Varin probably did mourn his dead son by posing a series of enigmatic riddles, with answers relating to solar and sacred

events. I'm just not sure that he did it from fear of an impending climate catastrophe rather than from a private Armageddon, a place of utter desolation and despair.

The new translation of the Rök stone can be found in full, along with a discussion, at: <http://futhark-journal.com/rok>

See also the article ‘Reading the runes’ by Brita Green in CoScan Magazine 2017/1, p. 18.

Dr Mindy MacLeod, The University of Melbourne, is a specialist in Swedish and Old Norse language and literature. She is the co-author of Runic Amulets and Magic Objects (2006).

How to make a Dala horse

by Eva Robards

A symbol for Sweden is the *dalahäst* (Dala, or Dalecarlian, horse) originating in the Swedish province of Dalarna (Dalecarlia). It is a hand-crafted article, stoutly carved and usually bright red, but comes also in other colours. Details and a harness are hand-painted in the decorative *kurbits* style, in a pattern that is about 150 years old.

Horse-making may have started as something to do during the long dark winter months but soon grew into a cottage industry which rural families depended on to help keep food on the table. Today, Nusnäs (in Dalarna) is the centre of the Dala horse production.



1. Machine carved



2. Finished off by hand



3. Dipped into paint



4. Free-hand painted

The Phoenix House ship

by Sarah Maltby

At JORVIK Viking Centre it is not uncommon for the team to receive requests for help, whether that is assisting with a school project, donating tickets to a raffle or providing access to our artefact collection for a university student working on new research. However, in early 2019 when we received an email from the wood-shop manager at Phoenix House Recovery Centre at Catterick Garrison, asking us to assist Help for Heroes build a full-sized replica Viking Ship, that was something new, and an opportunity not to be missed.

Not only was this project a chance to get involved with Help for Heroes but it also enabled York Archaeological Trust (YAT), who owns and manages JORVIK, to develop its longer-term ambitions to create exciting and accessible experiences delivering health and wellbeing benefits for everyone involved. YAT has, for the past few years, developed an exciting range of projects under the umbrella of ‘Your DIG’, where we have worked creatively with various community groups across York to develop co-curated exhibitions, hosted at our attraction DIG, as well as arts projects, performances, and oral histories using our unique collection of artefacts unearthed over the past 50 years in the city as a starting point for creativity.

We know from this work with communities that being creative delivers positive effects for people with mental

health issues, and this is echoed by the team at Help for Heroes, where woodwork has proved a very popular activity for its wounded veterans. They were certainly extremely enthusiastic when we (Jen Jackson and I) from YAT met with the project leaders at Phoenix House—Bob Marshall and Mick Holtham (a.k.a. Loki)—to kick off the project in January 2019.

The ambitious aim of the project was to build a replica Viking ship, incorporating the poppy symbol of Help for Heroes to represent the co-created project, in a single year; launching the ship at the Jorvik Viking Festival in February 2020.

To assist with this project YAT put the team in contact with the Roskilde Ship Museum in Denmark and provided schematic drawings of the Skuldelev Ships in their collections to work from. This included Skuldelev 5, which was found during underwater investigations by divers in Peberrenden, Roskilde Fjord in 1959, and was excavated together with other Skuldelev ships in 1962. This small oar-powered warship known as a *snekka* was 17.3 m long, 2.47 m wide and 1.16 m deep midships, and with 13 pairs of oars.

In addition, the Help for Heroes team volunteered to work on plans to develop a new ‘Your DIG’ exhibition with YAT, to showcase their range of creative talents, celebrate the creation of the Phoenix House ship and involve the wider community at the Catterick Barracks. The team from JORVIK worked with ex-servicemen and women on a range of arts projects by exploring a collection of Viking artefacts that were taken to Phoenix House, producing some fantastic

pieces of art work including paintings, poetry and stories as well as panel text and object labels for the final exhibition.

The team at YAT were also pleased to help the ex-servicemen and women put together a Family Fun Day at Catterick Barracks and hosted a joint promotional event outside JORVIK Viking Centre in Coppergate in the summer of 2019. Families and friends then joined the team from YAT at DIG on the 7 November 2019 for the grand launch of the Help for Heroes Viking Ship Your DIG exhibition, celebrating all their achievements in the project to date and looking forwards to the completion of the ship building project. The exhibition not only explored how the boat was made, but also put it in the context of Viking travel and trade, which mirrored the participants' own journey finding meaning from exploring and creating new Viking interpretations.

This was a hugely ambitious project, and with all ambition there comes a point where you admit success, failure or delay. Unfortunately, in this case, building a full-sized Viking Ship could not be achieved in a year despite a huge amount of determination and hard work, and, as a result, the anticipated launch of the Help for Heroes Viking Ship at the Jorvik Viking Festival in 2020 has been delayed. The team at Phoenix House and YAT have nevertheless together captured the legendary Viking spirit of fortitude, inspiration and creativity, which will be celebrated in the months to come when together we crack that bottle of mead over the stern of a new Viking Ship bedecked in poppies.

Sarah Maltby is Director of Attractions, York Archaeological Trust.



Participants from Phoenix House and Vikings from JORVIK

Printed with permission of YAT

From the bookshelf



Review by Rory McTurk

Steinunn Sigurðardóttir, *Gæðakonur: skáldsaga*

Published by Bjartur (Reykjavík), 2014
ISBN-978-9935-454-39-3

The novel begins in earnest with its heroine and narrator, María Hólm Magnadóttir, flying from Iceland to Paris on her way to a volcanologists' conference in Clermont-Ferrand. She is a middle-aged woman, deserted over twenty years previously by A, the love of her life (whose name, Anton, she does not disclose until the final chapter), married meanwhile to another man but now divorced, and self-conscious about the impression she makes, feeling that she now seems to attract the attention of women rather than men. Across the aisle in the plane she sees a woman of Italianate beauty who appears to be taking an interest in her. After landing in Paris she is approached the next day, in a café, by this same woman, who introduces herself as Gemma, claims to have seen María

on television, and congratulates her on having foreseen the Eyjafjallajökull eruption before anyone else. She admires María not only as a volcanologist but as a gifted Icelandic woman who might be of use to her in advancing her passionately espoused cause of World Domination by Women. With ambivalent feelings María accompanies Gemma to her house, where Gemma's enticements lead to the two of them making love, after which Gemma confesses to having undergone male-to-female transgender surgery at the age of nineteen. Overwhelmed and confused by this experience, 'that sweet nightmare', María is only too happy to meet that evening, by arrangement, her close friend and fellow volcanologist Bárður Stephensen, with whom she had earlier survived a perilous fall on the Vatnajökull glacier. He is a functioning alcoholic and a devoted husband in a problematic marriage. He and María break a rule of their hitherto chaste relationship by sleeping together that night and leave Paris by train next day for the Clermont-Ferrand conference.

Now back in Iceland, María lives for a time with a woman called Marta who it later emerges has been planted on her by Gemma. María brings an end to the relationship, not wishing to be known as lesbian and indeed seriously doubting her lesbian orientation. She throws herself into volcanology, investigating at first hand her favourite volcano, nicknamed Big Stubby (not modelled on any existing Icelandic volcano), and is overjoyed to receive a surprise visit from A, her best beloved of years past, with whom she makes love, only to be told by him,

after the event, that he is homosexual: believing María to be lesbian, he had felt safe to reveal this. Devastated by this news, María suffers the further shock of finding that she is pregnant as a result of his visit. In momentary desperation she considers the alternatives of suicide and having an abortion, and recoils from both. Driving into the country with the intention of visiting Bárður at his summer residence, she is intercepted at Þingvellir, where she stops for a picnic, by Gemma, who tells María she loves her and tries to convince her of Iceland's vital role in furthering the cause of universal domination by women, thus provoking from María a scathing account of recent Icelandic history. Gemma speaks of a dead brother of hers in ways which raise questions about her earlier claim to have had transgender surgery. María rejects her advances and proceeds to visit Bárður, not yet telling him of her pregnancy and planning with him a visit to Hekla, Bárður's favourite volcano.

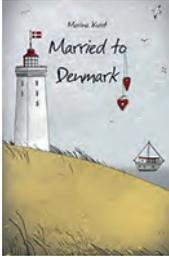
After hearing that the baby she is carrying is a healthy girl María is determined to keep the child, while recognizing that this will affect her work. She confides in Bárður, telling him of her plan to move from Reykjavík to join her mother and grandmother in the north of Iceland and to retire from working full-time. She advises him as a friend to seek treatment for his alcoholism and he promises to do so on condition that she will allow him to share with her the early upbringing of her child, and will not retire: 'The volcanoes need you!' he says. Overcome with gratitude for his offer, but without committing herself,

she tells the child's father, her beloved A, of his responsibility for her pregnancy. His reaction is hostile and negative: he wishes for the child's paternity never to become known, and María, still loving him in spite of everything, agrees to postpone registering the paternity for three to four years. She then books a seat on the evening flight to Akureyri in the north of Iceland and is startled to find Gemma sitting next to her on the plane. Gemma offers to adopt her daughter and discourages her, like Bárður, from retiring, but is altogether sceptical of her finding happiness with Bárður. As the novel ends with the plane falling in an air pocket we are left with the sense that it is the dream of happiness with Bárður that is uppermost in María's mind. But is this just wishful thinking on her part?

These are the bare bones of the novel, on which flesh is put by María's lyrical descriptions of her childhood at Brunasandur in the south of Iceland; her account of the horror of falling two hundred metres in an avalanche on Vatnajökull; her expressed conviction in the face of her colleagues' scepticism that the eruption of Big Stubby, her pet volcano, is imminent; her arguments with Bárður about the qualities, aesthetic and otherwise, of real (as opposed to fictional) Icelandic volcanoes; her description of the lake at Þingvellir, the seat of the old Icelandic parliament; her discussions with Gemma about Icelandic history and culture and with Bárður about the first ascent of Mount Hekla in the eighteenth century; and much else which it has not been possible to reproduce here. There is a sense in which the volcanoes are almost

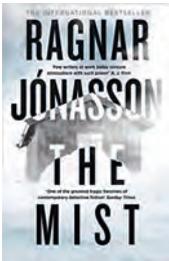
as much characters in the novel as the human beings, and that the intricacies of the human relationships described are shortly to be rendered irrelevant by

a massive volcanic eruption. The novel has been translated into English, and it is hoped that publication will soon make it accessible to English-speaking readers.



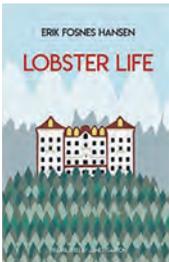
Marina Kvist, *Married to Denmark*,
illustrated by Julia Kosareva, translated by Yaroslav Morozov
Paperback published by Saxo, March 2020

What is it like to leave everything behind and follow the person you love to a different country? What does it mean to be Danish and how does one integrate into the Danish way of life? What makes the Danes different from other Scandinavians and why do they take first places in happiness ratings? What is worth seeing in Denmark and which events should one seek out?



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

This is the final volume in the *Hidden Iceland* trilogy about a troubled female detective, Hulda Hermannsdóttir. It has a fiendishly clever plot, introducing Hulda at a point in her history when the tragic course of her life is already established. Readers of the first novel will know how her story ends, but the trilogy gradually exposes the slights and setbacks that took her to such a dark place.



Erik Fosnes Hansen, *Lobster life*,
translated by Janet Garton
Paperback published by Norvik Press, 2019

Life in a grand Norwegian mountain hotel is not what it used to be: Norwegians have deserted the traditions of their native land, with its invigorating ski trips and lake-fresh trout, for charter tours to 'the infernal south'. Sedd's grandparents are fighting a losing battle to maintain standards at the hotel which has been in the family for generations, while the young Sedd observes developments with a keen eye for the absurd and a growing sense that all is not well.



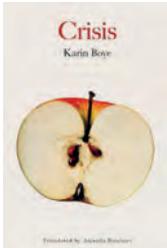
Jan Kjørstad, *Berge*,
translated by Janet Garton
Paperback published by Norvik Press 2019

One August day in 2008 the Norwegian Labour Party's most colourful MP, Arve Storefjeld, is discovered in a remote cabin in the country, together with four of his family and friends, all with their throats slit. This unprecedented crime in a peaceful backwater of Norway sends shudders through the national psyche, as the search for the perpetrators begins and people have to adjust to the terrifying thought: it can happen here too.



Kenneth Moe, *Restless*,
translated by Alison McCullough
Published by Nordisk Books, May 2020

A young man writes a letter to the woman who rejected him. Driven by doubt and unbridled desire, he tries to write himself to a new understanding of his loneliness. At the same time, he suspects literature is to blame for all of this. He therefore dreams of literature that cures the need for literature.
Kenneth Moe currently lives in Oslo.



Karin Boye, *Crisis*,
translated by Amanda Doxtater
Paperback published by Norvik Press, Jan. 2020

A twenty-year-old woman plunges into a depression and paralysis of will.
Karin Boye (1900-1941) was a Swedish poet and novelist. In Sweden she is acclaimed as a poet, but internationally she is best known for the dystopian science fiction novel *Kallocain*.



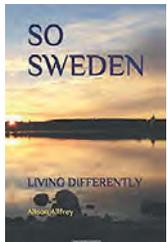
August Strindberg, *The Red Room*,
translated by Peter Graves
Paperback published by Norvik Press paperback, 2019

The Red Room was Strindberg's first novel and marked his literary breakthrough. It is often called Sweden's first modern novel, and remains modern almost a century and a half later. August Strindberg (1849-1912) is best known outside Sweden as a dramatist, but he was also a prolific writer of novels, short stories, essays, journalism and poetry—as well as a notable artist and photographer.



P C Jersild, *A Living Soul*,
translated by Rika Lesser
Paperback published by Norvik Press, 2019

Ypsilon is a naked one-eyed brain floating in an aquarium of nutritious liquid. It slowly dawns on him that he is a part of a wide-ranging scientific experiment. The book paints no rosy picture of the future of mankind, yet it celebrates the defiance which cannot be eradicated as long as the mind itself remains intact.
P. C. Jersild is a Swedish author and physician.



Alison Allfrey, *So Sweden: Living Differently*
Paperback self-published Oct. 2019

This book is the intrepid, wry and enlightening story of the life-changing posting to Stockholm of a family from a 'non-skiing nation'. It describes a journey from apprehension to almost unconditional adoration of a cool, distinct country, admired from afar, yet little known: Sweden.

CoScan Trust Fund

2020 report by Brita Green

In these extraordinary Corona times, the Trust Fund group—Tony Bray, Hugh Williamson and myself—could only meet virtually, and on 6 April we managed our business successfully from our own homes in a one-and-a-half-hour-long Skype chat. (All went well until the last twenty minutes or so, when one of my interlocutors retreated to a little roundel at the top of the screen, and the other froze in close-up with his nose resting on the bottom edge of my screen. The sound was alright, so we carried on regardless.)

With all the uncertainty about the future, we decided that the only thing we could do was to act as if all was normal and assume that the applicants would be able to travel—even if their trips would probably be postponed. No cheque is ever sent out, in any case, without the recipient confirming that the trip is going ahead. We had 11 valid applications, but one person had already had to cancel a medical elective (April-July) because of the travel restrictions. We decided against giving a grant to one applicant who was planning a very brief visit to a philatelist exhibition and whose actual interest in Scandinavia seemed to be minimal. We agreed to support the remaining nine applicants and offered grants of £50 (1),

£100 (2), £150 (1), £200 (4) and £285 (1) to the nine people, five of whom are hoping to go to Sweden, three to Norway and one to Iceland later this year.

We could afford to be quite generous, as we had had generous donations during the year, particularly from the York Anglo-Scandinavian Society who not only, as usual, donated their share of the ‘Lucia in the Minster’ collection, but also a substantial amount from their funds. As we cannot hope for such bounty in the coming year, we have kept back a sum of £1781 for the future (instead of the usual £1000).

In fact, during 2019, YASS was the only CoScan society that contributed to the Trust Fund. We have since had a donation from the Scottish Norwegian Society, for which we are very grateful, and we have continued to benefit from the generosity of private donors, including Mr Michael Smith who has been sending us monthly contributions for a quarter of a century!

After sending out some reminders, we had received eight reports from the ten 2019 grant recipients, and discussed who we would suggest for the Magazine prizes (best report and best photo). As usual, you will be able to read some of the reports in this issue, and you can also enjoy some of the excellent photos our young people send us.

If you would like to be a regular contributor to the Trust Fund—or just make a one-off donation, you can download a form from our website www.coscan.org.uk/travel-award, or just drop Tony Bray a line (tony.bray@coscan.org.uk) and he will send you a form to fill in; or send a cheque made out to ‘CoScan Trust Fund’, directly to the Trust Fund treasurer: Hugh Williamson, 20 Appleton Ct, Bishopthorpe, York YO23 2RY. (Please do NOT send donations to the CoScan treasurer.)

CoScan Trust Fund
PRIZE-WINNING REPORT 2019

Helping to save lives

by Imogen Allen

In the depths of the English winter 2018, whilst going to placement in the dark and coming home in the dark, there was nothing less appealing to me than emailing over 30 hospitals (yes—I counted) around the world to secure a

place for my Medical School elective. All I knew was that I wanted to go to a country where good English was spoken, there was first rate healthcare (especially as regards trauma and emergency) and pride in the country's way of life. With these criteria, it soon occurred to me that a Scandinavian country provided me with the solution.

After two weeks and no replies, I was delighted to receive a response from the Professor of Emergency Medicine at the Odense University Hospital in Denmark. Two helicopter pads, the most modern emergency department in the whole of Denmark, and the kindest email written in perfect English—I did not wait a second before replying to accept the offer of four weeks' placement!

Fast forward seven months: after finishing my medical school final exams, I found myself sitting on the plane itching to get going!

I arrived at my Airbnb on what can only be described as a typical Danish street. I hired a bike (the true Danish way to get around) and cycled to the hospital on my first day, not knowing what to expect. When I arrived, I was welcomed with open arms by the whole team of consultants and junior doctors and was taken straight away to get my



uniform: a blue top and white coat. I was immediately made to feel part of the emergency medicine family, as all staff wore the same uniform—whether you were a secretary or a consultant. This was only the start of many stark differences between the NHS and the Danish healthcare system that I experienced over the next four weeks.

The professor supervising my experience notified me of a student-run exchange group who organises trips for all the students across the world who come to Denmark for their electives. To help people get to know each other, we were all invited to a Danish student's house and each of us brought a dish from our country of domicile. There were no two people from the same country, so the array of different foods was vast.

I was soon experiencing the best of both worlds – sightseeing with some great people in one of the cleanest and most beautiful countries I have ever visited, and also encountering some of the most intense medical traumas I have ever seen so far. I combined exploring on my own and exploring with the group evenly, in order to experience as much as I possibly could whilst in Denmark. Odense is the home of the famous children's story writer Hans Christian Andersen, and I found myself wandering through the parks and picturesque streets round his birthplace. One of the highlights of my trip was visiting Egeskov Castle; a fully functioning home belonging to part of the royal family with only a few rooms open to the public. The castle looked as if it was floating on water!

I could not fairly write this report without mentioning some of the emergency trauma calls I was involved with. Throughout the four weeks of my time in the department I was rotating around the different levels of care that it provides. No other students were allowed to work in the Emergency Department so I had a unique experience. They had a 'Minor Injuries' department where people would come in from their GPs to be assessed, first by the nurses and then a doctor. Eighty percent of these patients were sent home as their symptoms proved not to be serious.

The places which provided the most adrenaline-fuelled work were the four trauma rooms dedicated to receiving the most seriously affected patients, who frequently arrived in a helicopter or ambulance containing the 'pre-hospital emergency doctor'. Odense Hospital covers a huge area in Southern and Central Denmark. Although sometimes these patients could not be saved, which I found to be emotionally taxing, I felt my learning experience was deep, valuable and memorable. I helped treat drug overdoses, major brain haemorrhages, strokes, severe infections and cases of people who had collapsed in their homes without apparent cause.

I could not believe my luck when I was granted the opportunity to shadow the pre-hospital emergency doctor who was involved with all the major incidents out of hospital. Pre-hospital doctors are only called to the most serious incidents whilst paramedics go out to the majority of calls, so that when a call came in for

a 45-year-old patient who had gone into a cardiac arrest (where the heart stops beating), the alarm was raised and we jumped into the doctor's car and raced to the scene. I was under the impression that I would be observing, but as we arrived, the patient was requiring three male paramedics to rotate doing CPR. The doctor went straight to the patient and managed to insert a tube into his lungs to enable him to breathe. I was then called upon to take over the breathing bag while she administered drugs through the shin bone (yes, I said that correctly, the shin bone). Four members of the patient's

family were watching. Fifteen minutes of tireless resuscitation went by—and the patient's heart started beating again. We had brought him back to life. As a team.

My time in Denmark was priceless. I had visited all the best places and even managed to squeeze in a family weekend in Copenhagen. I had made some wonderful friends from all over the world, spoken to many patients—in English(!)—and observed outstanding healthcare, which I feel the NHS should learn from. And I had managed to assist in saving multiple lives, including bringing someone back to life.



Egeskov Castle

Strong women meet our ocean's top predator

by Jenny Bortoluzzi

I am a 25-year-old PhD student in Marine Ecology at Trinity College in Dublin. From 17 November to 2 December 2019, I spent time in the Troms og Finnmark region of northern Norway to take part in an all-women expedition into the fjords of the region. This was a unique opportunity for me to develop skills essential to my career, and so not to be missed!

For my first five days in Tromsø, I arranged to meet with researchers at the Institute of Marine Research and the University of Tromsø. I of course also took the opportunity to explore the city and island, and experience life in the Arctic Circle in the middle of winter. It took some time to get used to the short days of permanent dusk. It felt gloomy at first, but the Christmas decorations that lit up the town made everything more cheerful and exciting. The views never grew tiresome, and the anticipation for my expedition grew exponentially over the course of those few days.

SEDNA empowers women to excel in science, the arts and exploration, with a particular interest in the Arctic region.

According to Inuit legend, Sedna is the goddess of the sea, the mother of all marine mammals.

STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine) is a UK provider of education and careers support.



Discovering the city of Tromsø —the Cathedral in the background

Come 23 November, my fellow Sedna Epic Seawomen started to arrive in town. For three days, we participated in the ‘Sedna Epic Expedition Inaugural Women in Leadership’ programme, during which the women on the team from different backgrounds and cultures, including indigenous women from the circumpolar region, took part in discussions and exchanges on topics such as women’s position in indigenous cultures; women’s roles in fields of exploration and STEMM; how we may deal with gender discrimination in all its forms, and more. It was a highly valuable experience for me as an early career female researcher. We were honoured

to be able to share this experience in the incredible setting of the University of Tromsø's Árdna Sámi Cultural House, the name of which signifies 'treasure' or 'something valuable'. Not only did I return with new tools for leadership and collaboration but also with a new support network of incredible women industry leaders.



Learning about Sámi culture

Photo: Jo-Ann Wilkins for Sedna Epic

Then it was time for the big event. From 26 November, the team sailed onboard the M/Y Freya in search of orcas and humpback whales in the icy fjords of Skjervøy and surroundings. On our first day, we headed out onboard the vessel's zodiacs (inflatable boats) and silently slid into the water in an attempt to come face to face with some of the largest and most charismatic animals in our oceans. After a few unsuccessful attempts my group, led by our skipper Jens Wikström, experienced a truly humbling encounter with a large male orca. Curious about these floating creatures looking down at him from the surface, he slowly swam by our group, adjusting himself to watch us as he passed by.



Orcas are fast and difficult to photograph

Photo: Jenny Bortoluzzi (see also back cover)

Once the light faded, and we returned to the mothership, it was time to take off my explorer hat and put my scientist cap back on. I worked to collect seawater and, helped by my teammates, filtered it through syringes in order to collect 'eDNA' samples for researchers at the University of Tromsø. eDNA is the name given to particles of DNA shed by organisms and left behind in the environment. By taking these samples, one can find out what species, and even which individuals, have been present even if they haven't been observed.

After day one, a storm foiled our plans to continue snorkelling with the



Collecting scientific data

Photo: Jo-Ann Wilkins

orcas, keeping us onboard the ship. This did not deter us, and we continued our scientific studies the best we could in these conditions. We also ran workshops and presentations to learn new skills and knowledge from each other's fields of expertise. For example, we discussed the policies and different strategies relating to the regulation of whale-watching industries around the world. The onboard medical practitioner presented the work she carries out using hyperbaric chambers. A marine veterinarian discussed the work of some of her colleagues and their unsuccessful efforts to save a species on the brink of extinction, and the possible reasons and solutions for this failure. I had the opportunity to present my PhD work and receive feedback on it. We filled our days with these productive efforts, leading to some of the most fascinating and informative discussions I have had

the pleasure to be part of. Occasional evenings lent themselves to some exploration on land, and even once or twice to the observation of the evasive aurora borealis.

Overall, the expedition was an incredible opportunity to learn new skills, make connections with academics and professionals of various backgrounds in the marine world, develop my confidence as a researcher and discover my capacity for resilience and adaptability to challenging environments. From the connections I made there multiple collaborative projects have arisen. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to CoScan for helping me attend this once-in-a-lifetime expedition and contributing to my professional and personal development with their grant. Huge thanks!



One of many presentations and discussions on stormy days

Photo: Jo-Ann Wilkins for Sedna Epic

No city quite like Oslo

by George Carew-Jones

Usually when you tell friends or family that you are going to spend the summer in Norway, they assume you mean spending time in remote forests or sailing from fjord to fjord. And whilst these are certainly activities that I would love to undertake in the future, it was not what brought me to Norway in the summer of 2019. Instead I spent the best part of a month in Oslo. As a student researcher I had been interested in urban Norway for a while, mostly in terms of trying to work out what the Norwegian capital was doing about climate change. But on a more personal level, this interest was also sparked by the uniqueness of Norwegian cities. For me, there is no city in the world quite like Oslo, and a major reason for this is the particular Norwegian flavour of urbanism.

Before I explain why, first a little bit about what brought me to Oslo in the first place. As the need for immediate climate mitigation grows, increasingly people are looking beyond national governments for positive action. New actors are getting involved—businesses are starting to move beyond green-washing towards making genuinely impactful decisions relating to climate change, and cities are growing ever more progressive in their attempts to fill the climate action gap. In the case of Oslo, the city has pledged to reduce carbon emissions by 95% on 1990 levels by 2030, a trend that has been replicated by other cities worldwide. City networks are, too, becoming more

prevalent. The C40 Cities climate action group launched by Mike Bloomberg (when he was Mayor of New York) has become a powerful political force in the climate change discussion, and publishes regular best practice actions that are being picked up by decision makers across political levels.

What made Oslo particularly interesting for me in this context was not only the city's ambition, but also the innovative nature of the actions that the city government is taking to combat climate change. Measures such as a zero-emissions transport policy, the city's 'climate budget' accounting framework, the 'car free city centre' policy, and experimentation with carbon capture and storage (CCS) at the city's waste incineration plant are extremely novel. Such policies are either being implemented in Oslo at an advanced rate relative to other big cities worldwide



The iconic City Hall (*Rådhuset*)

(such as the zero emissions transport and car-free city centre policies), or are completely new (the climate budget and CCS policies). Consequently, there was ample material for me to investigate and analyse during the weeks that I spent in the city, with this eventually being developed into a thesis that I could submit to complete my MSc degree at the University of Oxford.

The process of this investigation was what taught me in a more meaningful way what is truly special about Oslo—the particular flavour of Norwegian urban life, if you will. My ‘data collection’ method for the research project involved conducting generally hour-long interviews with various stakeholders in Oslo’s climate policy, from city government politicians to local businessmen and leaders of non-governmental organisations. In the roughly 30 conversations that this allowed, I was able to talk to Oslo locals about what they felt life was like in Oslo, and how this related to the ease or difficulty that came with

implementing the city’s climate policies. A feeling that I experienced early on in this process was an appreciation of the warmth and generosity with which people gave me their time. Everyone I spoke to seemed genuinely interested in sharing their opinions with a relative outsider, and they were keen to ensure that the sentiments they were providing were relevant for what I needed. Having grown up in London, I knew all too well that not all cities are associated with strong interpersonal relationships. In Oslo, however, the Norwegian tradition of hospitality and generosity was in my experience certainly kept alive by people in the city. In my opinion, this constitutes part of the ‘Norwegian flavour’ of urbanism that I talk of in this report.

A second, perhaps more obvious, part of this flavour, however, is the deep connection with nature that is clear in Oslo. In almost all of my discussions with stakeholders about Oslo’s climate policy, interviewees argued that a sense of ‘responsibility’ to protect and preserve nature was what motivated their climate



View of Oslo from Frognerseteren

action—a responsibility that was claimed to be something that all Norwegians hold dear. Not only did this explain why the Oslo city government’s climate actions are so progressive (and hence were relevant to my research), but it also is a philosophy that seemed to inform much of the urban design of Oslo. Wherever I went, both in buildings and outside, a connection with nature and natural form was found. This meant that many of my evenings were enjoyed watching the sunset and swimming in the fjord from Bygdøy, and many days were spent walking or cycling in the ‘Nordmarka’;

but more significantly it also left me with a lasting impression that Norway has succeeded in something that many other countries have failed to do—namely to integrate nature into their cities in a way that allows an enhanced high quality of life.

I am very thankful to CoScan for their generous support in allowing me to undertake this adventure, and I hope this sharing of some of my musings from my time in Oslo may be interesting and helps to highlight the fact that Norway is special for more than just its beautiful countryside.



Every day is magical

by Jennifer Hollis

In the summer of 2019, I took part in a Norwegian language and culture course, offered at the University of Bergen in Southern Norway. I chose to take part in this programme as I thought it would be good preparation for my upcoming year abroad, studying in Norway as part of my Scandinavian Studies degree at the University of Edinburgh. Little did I know how much more the course would offer me.

This was my first trip to Norway and I was greeted in Bergen by a cold, grey, rainy day, despite the heat-wave making its way through Europe at the time. The staff were extremely welcoming and helped all the students to settle in and get to know each other, while bonding over one of Norway’s specialities—*Grandiosa Pizza*.

The course itself was very informative and allowed all the participants to improve their Norwegian language skills through a variety of media, while also allowing us to learn more about Norwegian culture. When we were honing our linguistic skills, we were split up according to ability, but we also had other informative lectures, which everyone could attend. The topics of these lectures ranged from climate change in Norway to Norwegian tonal sounds and Norwegian workplace etiquette.

What really made the course so enjoyable, however, were the extra-curricular activities. Not only exploring the city around us, but also the ‘once in a lifetime’ expeditions. Every weekend, there was a new mountain peak to conquer and a new adventure. During the



Bergen, Lysøya

final weekend, in the space of about 24 hours, we managed to cover 40 km and we were all exhausted but very happy by the end of it. My favourite leisure activity was heading down to the King's Official Residence in Bergen, where we could grill food and also go swimming in the lake—a truly magical experience.

During our stay, we managed to see the incredible beauty of this country and its people and it was difficult not to be overwhelmed by everything.

I managed to make lifelong friends with other course participants, even though we were around fifty students from ten different countries. We also met up with some locals, whom we met when exploring the city, and they were able to help us navigate and also talked to us about growing up and living in Norway. It was so fascinating to hear how young people, growing up in a country with a culture and society so close to that of Britain, could have had such a different

experience from ours in their younger years.

This course acted as a stepping-stone between studying Norwegian at an English-speaking university and studying it at a Norwegian-speaking university. It also gave all of us students time to assimilate to the culture and society of Norway. As many of us were going on to study at Norwegian universities, it gave us a chance to integrate before our placements. I found the skills which I gained from this course, both academically and socially, really helped me when I reached the destination of my year-abroad study placement.

I want to say thank you to all the staff at the University of Bergen, who helped us feel at home in a foreign city and who helped us explore many different aspects of that stunning city, whether it was in wet, rainy conditions or in the blazing sun and heat-wave.

I am now living and working in Norway and loving every minute of it. Despite some bureaucratic difficulties that I have as a foreign citizen, every day is simply magical, and I hope I can have many more days like this in Norway for as long as possible. Obviously living and studying abroad, away from my home country and my family, has had its challenges, but I would say wholeheartedly that the benefits far outweigh the downsides. I was able to mature mentally and become a better person than before, thanks to living and studying abroad.

As a student from a disadvantaged background, I found the CoScan grant to be a huge help in enabling me to complete this summer course. I felt very privileged and grateful to be chosen to receive this grant and be able to represent British Students abroad. Experiencing a new culture and language is a life-changing experience and I would recommend it to everyone. I would encourage many more people to try to learn a new language and learn more about different cultures and countries.



University of Bergen

Following in the artists' footsteps

by Isabelle Gapp

Walking up the side of a steep hill, following a trail of signboards that inform you about the artist Otto Hesselbom (1848-1913)—this is one of the reasons I am here. It is a hot summer's day at the end of July 2019, and I have set off early in the morning to beat the 'crowds' and so as to have the Sörknatten *naturreservat* (nature reserve) all to myself.

Navigating winding paths, in between pine trees, ferns, and speckled granite, I worked my way to the top of the hill, where the views initially appeared only as momentary glimpses before opening out onto the panorama of lakes. This view had inspired the Swedish artist Otto Hesselbom, whose work can be found in a number of private collections and in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. Hesselbom's most recognised work, *Vårt Land* (1902), has, since its conception, been considered as the image of a nation. While the painting is in part fictionalised, it introduces—like the landscape—a glimpse of Lake Bergtjärn, as seen from Vignäsbergen, before receding into Lake Ånimmen which itself merges with Vänern. Vänern is not obvious from atop the hill, and you are left looking out toward the horizon in the hope of catching a glimpse of the artist's imagined reality.

This visit and the photographic research carried out played a significant part in my PhD research in History of Art at the University of York, on 'A Circumpolar Landscape: Art and Environment in Scandinavia and

North America, 1896-1933'. Working around latitudinal lines, my research explored the historiographical and ecological synergies that exist across the northern Circumpolar region, focused on Scandinavian and North American landscape painting between 1896 and 1933. The support I received from CoScan contributed towards a week-long research trip spent in Värmland and Dalsland, along the Swedish-Norwegian border. The museum visit and on-location research allowed me to view in person those landscapes and environments that had inspired the artists Hesselbom and Gustaf Fjæstad (1868-1948), in person. As a self-funded PhD student this experience was invaluable in shaping my understanding of their approach to the landscape, while also identifying the similarities that exist between the natural environment of western Sweden and that of Ontario—a key component of my PhD research.

In addition to the extensive walks undertaken throughout the landscape that inspired Hesselbom I made a visit to Lake Racken and Arvika, the home and inspiration for the Swedish painter Gustaf Fjæstad. Here, I was able to walk around the grounds of the Rackstad Museum and Oppstuhage, once home to the artist Christian Eriksson and his family. This was also the first home Fjæstad and his wife Maja had in Värmland, where due to economic necessity they at first had to rent from Eriksson instead of acquiring



Otto Hesselbom, *Vårt Land (Our Country)*, 1903

<https://digitaltmuseum.se/021046508433/vart-land-motiv-fran-dalsland>

their own home. The house and museum are now home to an incredible collection of paintings from the Rackstad Group to which Eriksson and Fjæstad belonged, along with their wives, as well as the landscape painters Bror Lindh and Björn Ahlgrensson, among others. Included within the collection were a number of Fjæstad's tapestries displayed alongside

his oil paintings and Art Nouveau furniture. The vast, open space of the whitewashed gallery with a large window at one end, filled the room with light and made for a beautiful setting for these works. This visit to the museum allowed me to see a number of key works at first-hand, something which isn't always possible in art-historical research. It was



The view from Vignäsbergen in the Sörknatten nature reserve



Gustaf Fjæstad, *Hoar-Frost on Ice*, 1904

Image: Tord Lund/Thielska Galleriet

a superb collection, and I felt fortunate to have been able to see the works in the flesh.

The town of Arvika, along with the lakeside properties encircling Lake Racken, was home to many of the members of the Rackstad Group, who were either from the area or had relocated there from Stockholm. While many of the properties around the lake are now private residences, I was able to drive around the lake and at certain points was offered a glimpse through the trees over to the other side. To fully understand the intimacy of the lake—small in size, and

only a short boat journey from one end to the other—I was able to comprehend how close-knit this artist colony was. I am a firm believer in experiencing and visiting those locations that artists worked and lived in, as it often provides a much clearer image of the artists' careers and lives than formalised written scholarship. I am once again forever grateful for the opportunities the CoScan travel award offered, allowing me to visit a part of Sweden I had never been to before, and to spend a glorious, and scorching hot, week following in the footsteps of those artists that came to shape my research.

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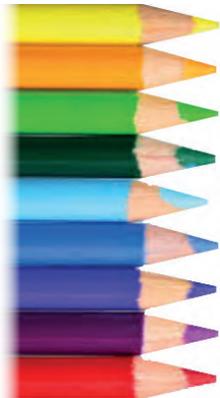
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