
Fréttir

The Icelanders of Victoria Newsletter

Number 29

November 2005

From the editor

Wayne Erickson

Email: alloaks@sbam.ca; phone 744-3644.

Since the last issue, the club has had its AGM in September and a social night with a presentation by Hólmfríður Tómasdóttir in October.

Your news and items of interest are always welcome for the newsletter. Please feel free to contact me or another Board member.

Membership

New or renewing members please complete form (insert) or contact Kay or Brian Sessions (595- 0938).

New Board members and Thanks to the outgoing Board members

We would like to welcome Tom Benjamin (webmaster) and Rúna Pleshak as new Board members. Outgoing Board members deserving thanks for years of service include Bill Valgardson, Trish Baer, Deirdre Syms, and Phil Bartle.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Travels With Ernie
- 2 INL Convention
- 4 Iceland contributes to the World Conference on Ecological Restoration
- 5 The Jólasveinar or Yuletide Lads
- 5 Viking Siege Game
- 6 Board of Directors & INL Calendars

Almanak

Jólahátíð Christmas Party *Sunday December 4, 2:00 pm.*

Norway House, 1110 Hillside Ave. Please bring potluck finger food and remember that its on Sunday this year. Rumour has it that some of the Jólasveinar Yuletide Lads (see Fred's article) will be there to hand out treats.

Genealogy Night *Friday January 27th 7:00 pm* Norway House

Beck Lectures

Kristín Aðalsteinsdóttir will be coming in *late January* and giving two lectures. Olafur Pétursson will be coming in *early March*. Details will be available soon on the *Beck webpage*: <http://gateway.uvic.ca/beck/index.html>

If you are not on the Beck Mailing List and would like to be, please email pabaer@uvic.ca or phone me at 853-7656.

Trish Baer

Thorablót (Porrablót) *Saturday March 4 4:00 pm* Norway House

INL Convention *Thursday April 20 to Sunday April 23* Hotel Grand Pacific (See insert)

Our New Club Logo



Congratulations to Trish Baer for her winning entry
in the Logo Contest

Travels With Ernie

By Donna Einarsson

We had such great plans for our car trip to Winnipeg, including visits with relatives in Arborg, Riverton and Gimli. As you will see later, the visits didn't happen. We realized as we traveled the Yellowhead highway we would be going through Saskatchewan Icelandic Country. Of course, I wasn't organized enough or prepared and, on the road, we did not have the names and phone numbers of anyone at all. I remembered one name, Joan Cadham Eyjolfson, but wasn't even sure what community she lived in. We stopped for the night at Wynard SK and while having dinner at the Shanty Inn, engaged the couple at the next table in idle chat. They knew where Joan lived! The next morning we tried calling Joan, but there wasn't an answer. So much for visiting with Joan!

We stopped in Elfros to see the Vatnabyggd memorial. It's placed in a very lovely park across from the railway tracks with the municipal offices next door. Elfros is a very small prairie town, but the memorial park is wonderful, with a covered kiosk naming early settlers.

My Ukrainian genealogy research in 2001 led me to a small book, "A Century of History" which tells about early history in the Foam Lake area. This book has old township maps that show Icelandic settlers in at least six of townships, each of which has 36 sections of land. They were Township 30, Ranges 12 and 13, and Township 31, Ranges 8, 11, 12 and 13. Within this area were several schools with Icelandic founding trustees: Bertdale #504, Foam Lake #1885, Kelvin Grove #2221 (was almost named Skalholt but the Scots won the name over the Icelanders), Kristness #1267, Mount Hecla #1561, Osland #4394 and West Side #1244.

The day after arriving in Winnipeg, INL President, Walter Sopher arranged for us to meet the staff at Lögberg-Heimskringla. Walter is Ernie's second cousin. Steinþor Guðbjartsson has just returned to Iceland the previous day. We met the new Editor, David Jón Fuller and Business Manager Audrey Kwasnica. The office is very spacious with lots of room for the volunteers. We met Vi Bjarnason Hilton, Evelyn Thorvaldson and Gary Oddlieffson. David accepted a picture of Ernie's father, Stephan Einarsson, who was a former Editor of Heimskringla. They plan to have a gallery of photos of former editors. We returned later to pick up a box of booklets for the Victoria INL Conference. Walter Sopher called Atli Ásumundsson, Icelandic Consul General for Western Canada, and we were invited to lunch at

the Royal Crown revolving restaurant. Atli's lovely wife, Þurþur joined us. We found them to be a delightful couple; cultured and yet down to earth.

Later in the week we met Walter Sopher at the INL office in Gimli, where we also met Rosa Johnston. Rosa has all sorts of information at her fingertips and is looking forward to visiting Victoria. We also met Tammy Axelson at the museum and lunched at Amma's Kitchen, all in the same building.

We never did get to visit relatives. I had contacted relatives by email but didn't phone to let them know we were in Gimli and could come up to Arborg. Once in Gimli, we phoned, and didn't find anyone at home. We never did have time to drive back up to Arborg. There's always next year.

INL Convention

By Donna Einarsson

Our club is hosting the INL Convention April 20th to 23rd in Victoria. This is the time for the Icelanders of Victoria to shine! Everyone Ernie and I spoke with in Manitoba said they were coming, and they're excited about visiting Victoria. The Hotel Grand Pacific has given us a much a lower rate than posted. It is \$139.00 per night or \$169.00 with a view.

Our club president, Fred Bjarnason, will be hosting a Hospitality Room and information about the room number will come later.

Our Western Canada Consul General from Iceland, Atli Ásmundsson said he would supply the entertainment for Saturday night. This probably will be the jazz band, Cold Front. Guitarist, Bjorn Thoroddsen was named 2004 Icelandic Jazz Musician of the Year. The bassist is Steve Kirby from New York. The third musician is trumpeter Richard Gillis from Winnipeg. I'm looking forward to hearing and seeing them perform.

There is usually a minister from the Iceland government and we're hoping it will be the one associated with deCode genetics. It is too early to know what else we will happen at the convention. If you would like to be part of the planning group, call Fred Bjarnason at 387-2089.

Icelandic Heritage in the New World: Hólmfríður Tómasdóttir visits the club

By Fred Bjarnason

Hólmfríður Tómasdóttir, librarian at the National and University Library of Iceland, was recently in Victoria in an

continued on page 3

attempt to locate and copy unpublished material relating to Icelanders who settled in North America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The project that she is in charge of is a collaborative effort of the National and University Library of Iceland and the Icelandic Collection at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. The aim of the project is to locate and make digitized copies of the manuscripts, catalogue them, indicating contents, ownership and location of the original. The original owners will be requested to indicate the type of use that is permitted of the material when its digitized. None of the original manuscripts will be removed from North America in accordance with legislation in Canada and US. Owners of manuscripts are encouraged to deposit the originals documents in Museums, foundations, or libraries in Canada/USA for safekeeping, but the digitized copies would be located in the National and University Library of Iceland.

Although the attendance at Norway House on the evening of October 19th was just 18 persons Hólmfríður was pleased with the turn out as she was able to find some local manuscripts of interest, and leads on a few others. All in all, she has had a very productive tour of Canada, on one farm in particular, near Baldur, Manitoba she was presented with a steamer trunk of material that had not been seen since before the turn of the century. She spent three, 10 hour days scanning material until she ran out of memory and had to leave the remainder at the University of Manitoba for Sigríð Johnson to finish. On arrival in Vancouver she had more memory installed in her laptop with the help of Robert Ásgeirsson, so that she could continue on to us and then to Seattle. Hólmfríður and her daughter Erna Jónsdóttir who was traveling with her, fell in love with Victoria like so many other Icelanders that have visited our fair city. If anyone else has material that they think may be of interest please contact me at 387-2089.

The Snorri Program—The Adventure of a Lifetime—

Would you like to...travel and learn something new?...experience something completely different? ...meet new people and make friends? ...stay with Icelandic relatives? ...learn about Icelandic culture and language? ...travel around Iceland's most exotic spots?

If you answered yes to two or more of these questions, prepare yourself for the biggest adventure of your life – The Snorri Program!

Anyone of Icelandic descent between the ages of 18 and 25+ living in North America can apply for this exciting adventure. The Snorri Program is a unique opportunity for young people to discover the country, culture, nature and language of their ancestors, and to create or strengthen bonds with relatives living in Iceland. The program is six weeks long, running from mid-June to the end of July.

The Snorri program is a cooperative assignment between the Nordic Association and INL Iceland. It has been running since 1999 and all 75 participants highly recommend the program. The Government of Iceland, Icelandair and various municipalities and companies sponsor the program.

For more information, an application form and information on grants, please write to us at info@snorri.is or visit our website at www.snorri.is

Deadline: January 16, 2006: 15 applicants will be selected

If you are over 30 years old please visit our website at www.snorri.is and read about The Snorri Plus Program.



New editor of Lögberg Heimskringla to visit

David Jon Fuller, the new editor of the Lögberg Heimskringla newspaper will be here in Victoria and would like to meet as many of our local Icelanders as are willing to come out. He is planning to conduct interviews of a few of the locals as well. In the beginning of January Lögberg Heimskringla will feature Victoria, which will be timely for our Thorrablot and to encourage many Icelanders to book for the INL convention.

from Fred Bjarnason

How to find Hnausa Reflections

Last issue I reported on the book *Hnausa Reflections*, which highlights the history of the Icelandic settlers and their

continued on page 4

descendants in the Hnausa, Breiðavík (Riverton) area of Manitoba. This 720 page book comes with over 1000 photographs. It can be ordered for \$60 plus S&H---\$10 from Hnausa History Book Committee, Box 164, Riverton, MB, R0C 2R0. Inquiries to: Carol @ 204-378-2367 or e-mail: cgudmundson3@hotmail.com

Iceland contributes to the World Conference on Ecological Restoration

By Wayne Erickson

In September I attended a talk by Kristín Svavarsdóttir, plant ecologist (Plöntuvistfræðingur) from Iceland at the World Conference on Ecological Restoration in Zaragoza, Spain. Her work on ecological restoration in Iceland may be of interest to club members, considering that our ancestors created the problems the Soil Conservation Service is now trying to correct.

Deforestation during the Viking Era was the initial trigger in a downward cycle. Iceland is estimated to have supported woodlands over a quarter of its land surface. According to the "Vikings' Silent Saga" on the North Atlantic Saga website, much of the natural woodland in Iceland had already been removed within 2-300 years of settlement. Remnants total only about 1/2 a percent of the original area. Vegetation was also consumed by the settler's livestock, turf was cut for housing, and farming extended higher and further inland than at present. Rapid erosion ensued, made worse by unstable volcanic soils and the cooling trend of the North Atlantic climate which marked the millenium. A striking example comes from archaeological evidence dating to around the year 1000 from Sveigakot near Lake Myvatnin the north. Today there is a vast plain of black sand desert, attributed to anthropogenic erosion, where once there were woodland farms with diverse (pigs, cattle, sheep, goats) and productive livestock herds.

Thus Iceland experienced "serious degradation and desertification" during the settlement era, but current restoration has emphasized halting soil erosion, revegetation, and restoring a well-functioning ecosystem. An experimental study is underway at Geitarsandur in South Iceland, described as a barren desertified area near the Soil Conservation Service headquarters at Gunnarsholt, Rangarvöllum, which lies near Hella in the south. It consists of large experimental plots (1 ha each) with various restoration treatments. Results show

substantial increases in vegetation cover plus other benefits with restoration treatments.

Since the mid-1980's, Nootka lupine, a legume from Alaska, has been important in the restoration programs, but today there are concerns about it competing with the native flora. Also planned, for the south, are woodland restorations at Árskógar and Hólar near the Mount Hekla volcano. The restorationists hope to extend remaining small birch woodlands and create new "islands", plus add native willows in order to prepare for future eruptions.

There is also a site at Fljótshlíð near Hella, and other sites from the southern lowlands: Gunnarsholt, Mýrdalssandur, Atley, and Skógasandur near the Mýrdalsjökull glacier.

Another project which Kristín showed was a successful reclamation from Skógey in Hornafjörður in south east Iceland. This site has been converted from its formerly barren condition into a wetland. In the northeast there are lowland restorations at Mælivellir, and at Kelduverfi in Oxarfjord (Öxarfjarðar). There are four project area in the highlands of the north: Hólasandur and another area near Lake Myvatn, Sauðafell, and Kvensöðull.

Carbon in soil and vegetation is a major further component of a "restored earth" future, one which is relevant to concerns about global warming and national/ European Union responsibilities. Icelandic researchers have begun to investigate the sequestration of carbon as a function in the restoration projects. A copy of their report can be found on the internet at:

[http://www.landbunadur.is/landbunadur/wgsamvef.nsf/5cd2a07393fec5fa002569b300397c5a/661b2f86237984d300256de2003d16af/\\$FILE/bu13-0a.pdf](http://www.landbunadur.is/landbunadur/wgsamvef.nsf/5cd2a07393fec5fa002569b300397c5a/661b2f86237984d300256de2003d16af/$FILE/bu13-0a.pdf).

Icelandic Horse Show

Runa Pleshak sent an article on an Icelandic Horse Show held this August in Vanderhoof. It was printed in Showscene, in the October issue of Pacific and Prairie Horse Journal. The event was sponsored by Vindsdalur, a nearby Icelandic Horse farm. This show drew participants and judges from Iceland. Her husband Vince attended the three day show, and actually had an opportunity to tolt on one of the horses. They have a picture if anyone is interested. Another special gait is known as the flying pace. Runa notes that the Icelandic horse is an important part of Icelandic culture.

The Jólasveinar or Yuletide Lads

from Fred Bjarnason

The Jólasveinar first appear in the 17th century as the sons of Grýla and Leppilúði who had appeared in the 13th century, and had a reputation for stealing and eating naughty children. The Jólasveinar were counted as numbering either nine or thirteen, but their names are at least 70. Thirteen of the most commonly accepted names of the Jólasveinar are:

Stekkjastaur - Enclosure Post; *Giljagaur* - Crevice Imp; *Stúfur* - Shorty, Half Pint; *Dvörusleikir* - Pot Scraper Licker; *Pottasleikir* - Pot Licker; *Askasleikir* - Bowl Licker; *Hurðaskellir* - Door Slammer; *Skyrgámur* - Skyr Gobbler; *Bjúgnakrækir* - Sausage Snatcher; *Gluggagægir* - Window Peeper; *Gáttapefur* - Doorway Sniffer; *Ketkrókur* - Meat Hooker; *Kertasníkir* - Candle Beggar

A few of the other names used for the Jólasveinar follow, as they are descriptive of their natures, with an English translation:

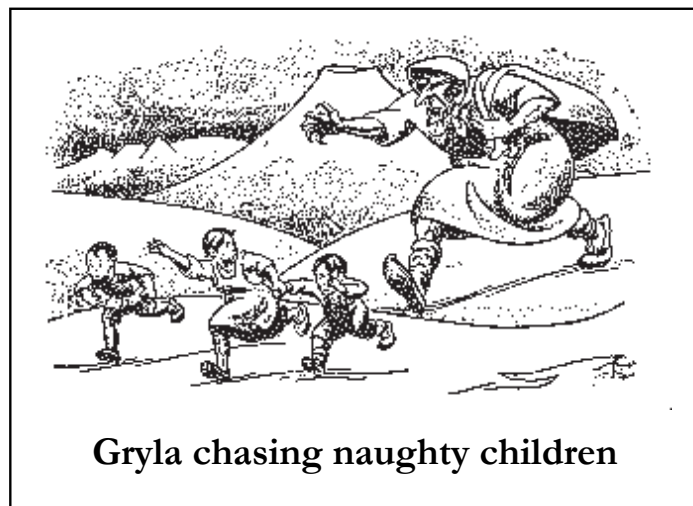
Baggi – Bundle; *Bandaleysir* - Strap Loosener; *Bjálfansbarnið* - Idiot Child; *Flotgleypir* - Fat Gobbler; *Hlöðustrangi* - Barn Roll; *Kleinusníkir* - Donut Beggar; *Lampaskuggi* - Lamp Shadow; *Móamangi* - Moor Charlie; *Reykjasvelgur* - Smoke Gulper; *Smjörbákur* - Butter Greedy; *Svartiljótur* – Blackugly; *Svellabrájótur* - Icebreaker

As can be seen from the names, the Jólasveinar are thought of as playful imps, whose main interest seems to be to get their hands on some of the seasonal food and other goodies. Or they are lurking about trying to do some minor mischief? When they first appeared the Jólasveinar had many of the attributes of their parents, but soon started to seem milder, and in the last century gained some of the attributes of their Nordic counterparts, and in this century they have become homegrown versions of St. Nick or Santa Claus. The Jólasveinar live in the mountains, and start to arrive in town, one a day, thirteen days before Christmas Eve, the last one arriving that morning. They leave little presents for the children in shoes that the children have put on the window sill the night before. Or, if the children have been naughty, they leave a potato, or some reminder that good behaviour is better. Then they start departing for home again on Christmas Day, and the last one departs on Þrettándinn. At first the clothing of the Jólasveinar was just the ordinary every-day wear of the common Icelander, but in this century they have taken to wearing the traditional

red suits of St. Nick or Santa Claus. In the last few years there has been a revival of the old style clothing.

Grýla and Leppalúði

This couple of child-eating, bloodthirsty ogres are the supposed parents of the Jólasveinar. The dominant member in the relationship is Grýla, who according to some sources had another husband before Leppalúði. His name was Boli. Boli, and later Leppalúði, were bedridden and Grýla went around the countryside, begging to support her husbands, and at Christmas time, she stole children that had been naughty during the year. Through the centuries Grýla has been a very popular means of making children behave. There are numerous lays and stories about Grýla and her exploits, but she really never gets her hands on any children, either they have been very well behaved through the year, or they manage to escape.



Viking Siege Game

from Wayne Erickson

My neighbour, Rod Edwards, researched and developed this computerized game from a Viking Age board game. The following text is from the game website. The game can be found at: <http://www.user.dccnet.com/cedwards/>

Viking Siege brings back a board game that was immensely popular across northern Europe in the dark ages, but was lost for many centuries. Long before chess came to Europe, this game was played in Scandinavia, Iceland, England, Wales and Ireland. Wherever Scandinavian explorers and settlers went, they took the game with them - to the Scottish Islands, to newly settled Greenland and to Kiev. It was eventually supplanted by chess

continued on page 6

Icelanders of Victoria Board of Directors

Fred Bjarnason, President	387-2089, 888- 2832
Donna Einarsson, Vice President	250 715 1924
Ruth Cartwright, Secretary	642 2243
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Yrsa Bergsson, phone, coffee	478 4230
Emily Campbell, memories album	384 0154
Rúna Cuffling, phone and coffee	477 3535
Wayne Erickson, newsletter	744 3644
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Rúna Pleshak	478-4778
Brian and Kay Sessions, membership	595 0938
Lois Turner, social convenor	382 3241
Joan Young	380 4680
Thorrobot: Norm Jonasson	727 9214

Website: Tom Benjamin, Margo Matwychuk
www.victoria.tc.ca/community/Icelanders

Viking Siege game continued

at a time when anything associated with Christian Europe was considered superior, and it disappears from the historical record, though it persisted in isolated places, such as Wales and Lapland, for several more centuries. It was rediscovered by H.J.R. Murray, the great historian of board games, who put together an account of the rules of a game played by Lapps in 1732 with references to the game in the ancient Icelandic sagas. It is often mentioned in ancient texts, especially the Icelandic and Irish sagas and was known as 'tafl' or 'hnefatafl' in Scandinavia, 'taefl' in England, 'tawlbwrdd' in Wales and 'brandubh' in Ireland.

It is a great game of strategy - one of the classics in the history of board games - and as such it was an important part of a good education in its time. Like chess, planning and tactical considerations are required, though the rules are simpler. However, the objectives of the two sides are unequal and this gives the game a certain dynamic tension and intensity. The premise is dramatic: a Viking band with their leader are besieged by a larger opposing force. Their object is to help their 'king' escape to the periphery of the field, while the besiegers try to surround him and bring him down.

Viking Siege has unique built in software which allows you to



communicate directly with Asgard, the other world where the heroes of Icelandic literature went after death to await the final great battle of the gods. One of their amusements while they wait is to play at 'hnefatafl' and we put you into direct contact with them through the moves on the board. A host of characters are there to play against you, including many who played the game in the Icelandic sagas, and some from the Irish sagas who passed to the Celtic other world. You can also choose to watch as two Asgard-players play each other, or you can play against a friend from this world (Midgard in the sagas).

Requirements:

Operating system: Viking Siege is a DOS-based program and should run under any DOS or Windows computer. It has been tested under DOS (5.0 and 6.2), Windows 3.1, 95, 98, NT and 2000.

Processor speed: While there is no real minimum required processor speed, you will get a better game on faster processors. It can be enjoyably played on anything from a 50 MHz 486 up.

Other: Memory requirements are minimal -- we suggest 600 KB of free RAM. Mouse recommended but the program is fully functional by keyboard.

INL Calendars (information from Fred Bjarnason)

This year's INL calendar is very attractive and features the Snorri program participants in different parts of Iceland. Dates and events of interest are also found within. The calendars would make a great XMAS present. They can be purchased from Freyja Grace Martinot (383-1476) for \$12 each.