

From the President and Board

Tom Benjamin

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As you can tell we have lost our wonderful editor! Bill Valgardson decided to take on the editorship of Lögberg-Heimskringla, the Icelandic Community newspaper based in Winnipeg. I know he will do a great job there.

Of course this means we need a new editor. If you are up to the task please let me know. And in the meantime send me your news and stories so that we can keep this newsletter interesting. Thanks to all the people who have contributed to this issue.

REPORTS

AGM *by Vorna Butler*

The Annual General Meeting of the Icelandic Club of Victoria was held on September 25, 2009 at the home of Ted and Vorna Butler. Board members contacted all Club members currently listed by telephone and/or email and this resulted in there being a total of 21 members in attendance – more than twice the number who attended last year. Following a short business meeting we all enjoyed a wonderful potluck supper. Icelanders are good cooks!

One of the reasons for holding the meeting in a private home was to save the considerable cost of hall rental. As most of you will know the provincial government is no longer providing funding to community groups from Lotto revenue. This is a considerable blow to many groups and certainly our funds are dwindling. Big events such as the Thorrablot and the Christmas Party will continue to be held at Norway House but we may look at holding smaller events at other venues or in private homes if possible. We hope to see you at the next get together!

ALMANAK

2009

Oct 25	Movie/Social	CANCELLED
Nov 21	Craft Fair	10 am – 4 pm Norway House
Dec 6	Christmas Party	1 pm Norway House

2010

March 6	Thorrablot	5:30 pm Norway House
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TRIP TO ICELAND AND TOUR AUGUST 2009

by S.C (Andy) Anderson



Some time back our club President Tom Benjamin circulated an email describing a tour of Iceland. We were interested and booked our tour through Uniglobe Travel, with a new direct flight from Seattle by Icelandair we prepared for our August 11 depart from Seattle on an overnight flight to Iceland arriving at Keflavík International airport about 8am August 12th. We were greeted at the airport by Jonas Thor, who would be the “guide” for this adventure. Jonas had studied history in Iceland and at the University of Manitoba. After a hearty breakfast in Reykjavík at the Smári hotel we were off.

First stop was a visit to Þingvellir this being the site of the oldest parliament in the world. Next stop was the geysers, which seemed to be all over the place. We waited patiently for what we thought was the largest one and when it didn't erupt we went on to some smaller geysers which did!! We then returned to the large geyser and sat on a bench for a

brief rest. Lo and behold the geyser erupted spectacularly – our guide then informed us how lucky we were as this Geyser had not erupted for 10 years!

At the end of our day we were lodged in a school dormitory, at Laugarvatn, which they call Hotel Edda. Quite a change to make that trip down the hall for those of us used to ensembles and absolute privacy!! It was however very adequate and spotlessly clean. At this location I had a visit from some distant cousins and an update on family history. Seems that I am related to the last Catholic Bishop of Iceland, Jón Arason who was beheaded with his two sons at Laugarvatn not more than 100 metres from where we were staying!

The little hot pool where his body was washed prior to transport to his home in the north still remains, along with some large rocks that are called corpse stones.

After a hearty breakfast (which always seemed to have pickled herring) we are off and have a stop at Gullfoss, a very spectacular waterfall. We are told of the heroic efforts of Sigríður Tómasdóttir to protect this scenic waterfall from those who were intent of developing its hydro-electric potential. It is very obvious that Icelanders are very conscientious environmentalists. There is no litter, public washrooms are immaculate and every toilet even in the middle of nowhere is dual flush. We overnight at Höfn.

Next day we will visit the glacier Vatnajökull. We are heading to the north of Iceland. We go past the Skaftá volcanic area and I am told I have another relative who was the Lutheran Rev. Jón Steingrímsson. He was credited with saving many folks who were in the lava path – he called them to his church to pray with them and the lava flow stopped and went on both sides of the group with no lives being lost.

Continuing on we will visit the largest forest in Iceland (not very big by BC standards but they are working on it.) There is significant reforestation going on in Iceland. We have a visit to the East Iceland Emigration Centre; it was neat to see my grandfather's name and many of his descendants' names at the Centre. We had a treat and stayed at an Icelandair Hotel in the northern region.

Our next stop was Akureyri a lovely town at the end of a beautiful long fjord, some fish farming was noted in the fjord and the town was a natural harbour well sheltered. Cruise ships were visiting as well as our tour group. We were back to Hotel Edda and on the third floor – with no bell hop to carry our bags up the stairs!! Food so far has been very good and with pickled herring for breakfast most days I am really getting to like this country.

We then head west and visit the Emigration Centre at Hofsós. During the visit I looked up Grandfather Ólafur

Árnason and made conversation at the desk with a lovely lady – who of all things was from Salt Spring Island, a short distance from my Sidney BC Home. She has since sent me a complete family tree. We overnight at Hólar which is also the burial place of my relative Jón Arason who as we will recall, was beheaded at Laugarvatn. We visited his tomb and lit a candle to his memory.

Next day we visit in the Borgarfjörður region visiting farms and other places of interests such as the home of Snorri Sturluson. We also see Deildartunguhver the largest hot spring in Europe. Our day ends in Kópavogur, which we would consider a suburb of Reykjavík. We stay at the Hotel Smári, and have a few days off to visit and relax before heading home.

Relax or not next day we are off to the Blue Lagoon, a must see while in Iceland. This is a lake of geothermal brine very rich in silicon dioxide which is the runoff from a nearby geothermal power station. It is somewhat disconcerting to see the folks in the pool, covered in silicon dioxide – which is very white cream. It looks at first glance to be a bunch of ghosts cavorting about in the warm waters. The healing properties of the pool are said to relieve skin ailments and psoriasis.

Our last full day in Iceland was spent with distant cousins who took us to many locations that were frequented by my Grandfather Ólafur before he emigrated to North America. One location was where he had a hay station for travellers from Selfoss to Reykjavík. This is now the site of a brand new high tech geothermal power generating station. Then we stopped by the farm that Grandfather had been on. Then our cousin took us to a beautiful little church – when we commented on its beauty he said that was not what he had brought us to see and directed our attention to the wall where there was a plaque dedicated to my grandfather's mother. We saw the actual spot where granddad had rowed out to catch the ship and followed up our relatives' day with a home supper in Selfoss before being driven back to our hotel.

Homeward bound the next day but many pleasant memories of our visit. The tour company in Iceland “Thor” tours was excellent. Price was good value and it was interesting to note that the best prices for things were actually at the airport!! Icelandair is a good airline and with the direct flight from Seattle this trip is very do able.

Editor's note: Jonas Thor is running the next heritage tour in June 2010. Bookings can be made through Uniglobe by contacting Lisa Glead at 1-800-661-2454 ext. 869 or emailing lgleed@geo.ca

TOUR DE ROCK *by Trish Baer*

Ninety-five year old Runa Cuffling helped the Cops for Cancer Tour de Rock raise funds for the Canadian Cancer Society on October 1st. Runa and nine other residents of Dawson Heights Housing collected over three thousand dollars in pledges by volunteering to have their heads shaved. This was Runa's second consecutive year participating in the event.

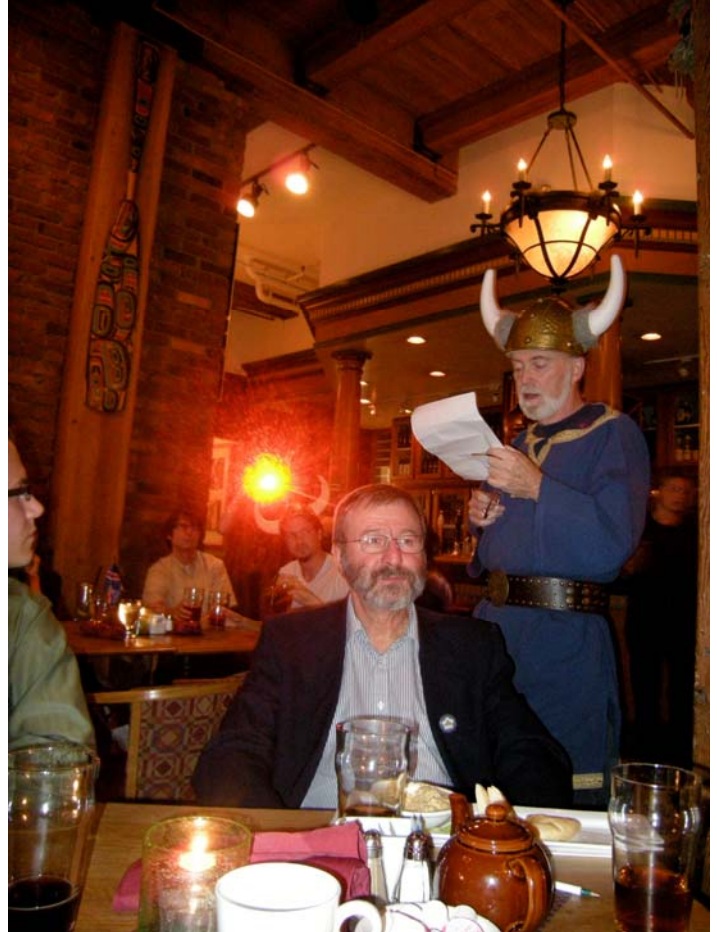


Runa patiently waits for her turn

LEIF ERICSON DAY – OCTOBER 9

photos by Trish Baer and Nicole Johnson

Members of the Icelanders of Victoria, Icelanders Anonymous, Sons of Norway and the Swedish Club of Victoria celebrated the first European to set foot in North America.



Richard Baer pauses while dining at Swan's Brew Pub to listen to Jim Hall, the Vice President of the Sons of Norway, proclaiming October 9th as Leif Ericson Day.



Shawn Bryant, Glenna Johnson, Jodi Johl and Tom Benjamin

AMBASSADOR'S VISIT *photos by Trish Baer*

Iceland's Ambassador to Canada Sigríður Anna Þórðardóttir visited Victoria on October 5th with her husband the Reverend Jón Þorsteinsson and Heather Alda Ireland the Consul General for Iceland in BC. Members of the club laid on refreshments for them at the home of John Tucker and Dr. Christine St. Peter.



Sigríður Anna Þórðardóttir and Heather Alda Ireland



Guests mingle at the reception

ANNOUNCEMENT

Kristjan Butler, our Master of Ceremonies for the Thorrablot celebrations of 2008 and '09 will be married to Charissa Heagy on November 21st, 2009 at 1:30 at the Church of St. John the Divine, 1611 Quadra St. Kristjan and Charissa will be honeymooning "somewhere hot" and that undisclosed location may well be hotter after their arrival! Congratulations Kristjan and Charissa.

ARTIST TRUMPETS LOCAL CULTURE

Kirsten Wright, a member of the Icelanders Anonymous group, was featured in the November 4 issue of the Times Colonist. Visit the TC website at

[http://www.timescolonist.com/entertainment/
Artist+trumpets+local+culture/2182177/story.html](http://www.timescolonist.com/entertainment/Artist+trumpets+local+culture/2182177/story.html)

RELATIVES BY DOUGLAS HENDERSON

Twice, when hitchhiking on the Prairies in the 60s
I've been picked up by Icelanders
Taking one look at me they said
And whose boy are you?
Of course we found out we were related.

Pounding nails on a construction site
on Salt Spring Island, B.C.
The other carpenter, noticed my silver ring, asking
Is that an Icelandic ring?
Of course we were related.

I told these stories later
At a dinner party in Victoria.
A grey-eyed daughter of Freya across the table
Dropped her fork, laughing –
You guessed it.

One day in my antiques shop
An Inuit – eyes of obsidian and coppery skin
A maker of shamans' drums
Down from the High Western Arctic
Came and asked if I had any books
On arctic explorers.

Not at the moment I said –
And, in passing, mentioned my connection
To the great traveler Vilhjalmur Stefansson.
He smiled and said
My mother's aunty was his northern wife
I rushed around the corner and hugging him said,
Cousin! Cousin!

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<http://www.victoria.tc.ca/Community/Icelanders>
(case sensitive)