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## NORSK-BRITISK FORENING - OSLO

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Front cover: Hamnøy, Reine, Moskenes, Lofoten, Norway.

Photographer: Svein Magne Tunli.

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## Editorial

I hope everyone is still well, and that those eligible have had their jabs. With a bit of luck we are moving out of the third lockdown, and we might be on our way back to something like normal. The Council met in early March and made tentative plans for the autumn programme. Likewise, I hope this will be the last 'special' *Review*, issued to compensate slightly for the lack of live meetings and events. The next *Review* will be the regular summer one, issued in early July, and that will focus on material from our sister society, the Oslo Anglo-Norse Society. It should be celebrating its centenary this year, but sadly due to Covid its plans for a really festive celebration had to be abandoned.

This issue contains the usual broad range of items that the Editor hopes will provide something of interest for everyone, but she is always happy to receive suggestions for different material.

Enjoy the spring!

## The Pidgin Russenorsk of Northern Norway and what it can Teach us about Language and Social Class

*Ernst Håkon Jahr*, University of Agder

The linguistic situation of Northern Norway in the 19th century was multifaceted and complex, involving at least the following languages: Norwegian, Sami, Finnish, Russian, Danish, Swedish, and, in addition, the pidgin *Russenorsk*. In this setting, *Russenorsk* functioned as an important means of communication between Norwegians and Russians for conducting the substantial amount of trade between the two parties. The Russians had a flour and grain surplus but lacked fish – being orthodox Christians – for their long fast periods, the Norwegians had fish but lacked flour, grain and other supplies.

*Russenorsk* developed in Northern Norway as a dual-source pidgin during the second half of the 18th century (developed basically from Norwegian and Russian). The pidgin was used in direct barter trade mainly between Norwegian fishermen and Russian skippers and traders for around 150 years, up until the Russian Revolution in 1917. Its main period of use was the 19th century, when the so-called Pomor trade was substantial. The term 'Pomor trade' (Norwegian: *Pomorhandelen*) derived from the Russian name for the White Sea coast, *Pomor'e*. Most of the Russian traders came from the

White Sea area of northern Russia. The North Norwegian towns of Vardø, Hammerfest, Alta and Tromsø were the main ports where *Russenorsk* was spoken and used in Russo-Norwegian communication, in addition to when Norwegians and Russians bartered directly at sea. The two parties often believed they spoke each other's language. It certainly gave the common Norwegian fishermen pride thinking they were able to understand and speak a foreign language.

Starting with Olaf Broch's first basic description of the language (Broch 1927), *Russenorsk* has been celebrated as the best documented Arctic pidgin in the northern hemisphere, and as such has served as a northern test case for pidgin and creole theories developed further south.

*Russenorsk* being extinct, we have to rely on available written texts. They consist of isolated sentences, word lists and conversations in dialogue form. 400 words are documented, with a core of 150-200. *Russenorsk* grammar and lexicon stayed surprisingly stable during the 19th century. The characteristic linguistic features can be summarized as follows (cf. Broch & Jahr 1981):

- a) The sounds reflect those of Norwegian and Russian – however, sounds not found in both languages are avoided, e.g. *gav* ('sea') < Norw. *hav*, since Russian lacks [h]; *klæba* 'bread' < Russ. *chleb* [xleb], since Norw. lacks [x].
- b) 1st and 2nd personal/possessive pronouns are *moja* ('I/my') and *tvoja* ('you/your'). For 2nd person also *ju* (< Eng. 'you') is used frequently.
- c) *po* 'on' is the only preposition.
- d) *-om* is the general verbal marker (e.g. *kopom* 'buy', *fiskom* 'fish').
- e) *-a* tends to mark nouns (e.g. *fiska* 'fish').
- f) *kak* functions as the question marker (e.g. *kak fiska po tvoja båt?* 'what sort of fish do you have onboard?')
- g) The vocabulary derives mostly from Norwegian and Russian, but contains a number of lexical items from other languages.
- h) *Russenorsk* has Subject+Verb+Object syntax, although sentences with adverbial(s) have verb-final word order (e.g. *moja kopom fiska* 'I buy fish'; *moja po tvoja fiska kopom* 'I buy fish from you').

Pidgin and creole languages usually have a low social status in the speech communities in which they are used. It is widely believed – but not true – that these languages are 'corrupted', 'unstructured', 'babytalk' and the like.

It is well established in sociolinguistics that the status of any given

linguistic form or spoken variety is dependent not on the form itself, or the variety itself, but on who uses the actual form or variety. This goes for pidgins and creoles as well – the social evaluation and status of a given pidgin is dependent mainly on who uses it. The social history of *Russenorsk* gives a convincing example of how this social mechanism works.

In the years 1812 to 1814, the King's Governor of Finnmark wrote several reports about the county. After commenting on the use of Norwegian, Sami and Finnish in Finnmark, he wrote: 'A fourth language is also spoken in Finnmark, put together from Norwegian, Russian, Dutch, German, Sami and maybe Finnish. One could call it the Trade Language, because it is used by traders in order for them to understand each other. However, it is only used when dealing with Russians' (Jarlsberg 1887). Here, the Governor calls *Russenorsk* a 'language', with no denigrating comments.

In 1830, *Russenorsk* is described (Blom 1830) as 'a kind of Norwegian which is spoken and understood by those who are accustomed to dealing with the Russians'. From 1842 we have four independent reports which testify to the fact that both Norwegian fishermen and merchants alike used *Russenorsk* in their dealings with the Russian traders. At the time, merchants were definitely members of the local upper class in northern Norway, while fishermen and those who combined farming with fishing made up the lower class.

Up until the middle of the 19th century, then, both the upper and lower classes had to resort to *Russenorsk* in their communications with the Russians. Around the middle of the century, however, there seems to have been a change. An anonymous writer in the journal *Skilling-Magazin* (1855) claims that *Russenorsk* 'until now has been the usual means of communication between the two nations, but in recent years, most of the Norwegian merchants in Finnmark have begun to use Russian. The result is that these people now mostly use the latter language in their communication with the Russians.'

From this we may deduce that there was an important turning point in the history of *Russenorsk* around 1850. Earlier, *Russenorsk* was commonly used by both fishermen and merchants in dealing with the Russians. After 1850, it was mostly the common fishermen who used *Russenorsk*, while the merchants learned Russian properly by spending one or two years with business colleagues in Russia, especially in the city of Archangel.

In 1870, Professor L.K. Daa describes *Russenorsk* as 'dette Krage-maal'

(literally 'this crow-language'), but he 'admits' that he 'has only heard a few words of this *Russenorsk*. All of them contained ridiculous misunderstandings; still they were understood by both nations' (Daa 1870). Another author characterizes *Russenorsk* as 'a hodgepodge' and a 'Sjakersprog' (derogatory, 'barter-language'). In 1891 a writer calls *Russenorsk* 'a curious crow-language' which is 'neither fish nor fowl', and in 1905, *Russenorsk* is dismissed as 'an idiotic mixture of certain Norwegian, Russian and English words' (Helland 1905)



Russian merchants. Image supplied by the author.  
Date of image and photographer not known

Available reports and evaluations of *Russenorsk* are thus quite different before and after the middle of the 19th century. As long as the class of merchants used – and had to use – *Russenorsk*, the pidgin was socially accepted by the local upper classes as a variety equal to other languages. But when the merchants started learning Russian proper, and the use of *Russenorsk* as a result was limited to the common fishermen, *Russenorsk* as a language variety was likewise devalued socially in northern Norway. The social status of *Russenorsk* then rapidly approached the low level that characterizes most pidgins in the world.

It may also be the case that when young merchants were in Archangel, they became acquainted with the English-Russian pidgin '*Solombala-English*'. This pidgin developed in Archangel due to the presence of many English sailors who came with trade ships to the harbour area of the city, called



Solombala. There was even an Anglican church in the town. *Solombala-English* probably did not enjoy a high social status in Archangel.

The young merchants from Finnmark and other parts of northern Norway were certainly capable of making the connection between *Russenorsk* and *Solombala-English*. One salient common linguistic trait between these pidgins was the general verbal suffix ending -om (*Solombala* pidgin: bajom 'buy'; cf. *Russenorsk*: slipom 'sleep'). The Norwegian merchants would also have been ready and willing to transfer the low social status of the *Solombala* pidgin to *Russenorsk*, after they had realised that the two pidgins were the same type of language, and after themselves having learnt proper Russian through their longer stay in Russia.

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## The Red King Crab in the Barents Sea – Blessing or Plague?

Jan E. Sundet Institute of Marine Research, Tromsø

The red king crab was introduced to the Barents Sea by Russian scientists on several occasions during the 1960s and 70s. This was a thoroughly planned operation with the aim of increasing the available food resources for people in north-west Russia. The red king crab was also one of almost 1000 fresh and saltwater species that were transported across this huge country, to find new aquatic habitats for species known to be valuable resources for harvest. About one in ten species succeeded in establishing viable populations in their new environment, and the red king crab was one of them.

Both adult mature crabs, juveniles and crab larvae were brought from both shores of the Kamchatka Peninsula and released in the Murmansk fjord, not far from the Norwegian border.

The transfer was not reported to neighbouring countries. However, in negotiations between Norway and the Soviet Union, held in 1976–1977, a ban on fishing red king crab was agreed. At that time, the crab was well established in Russian coastal waters of the Kola Peninsula.

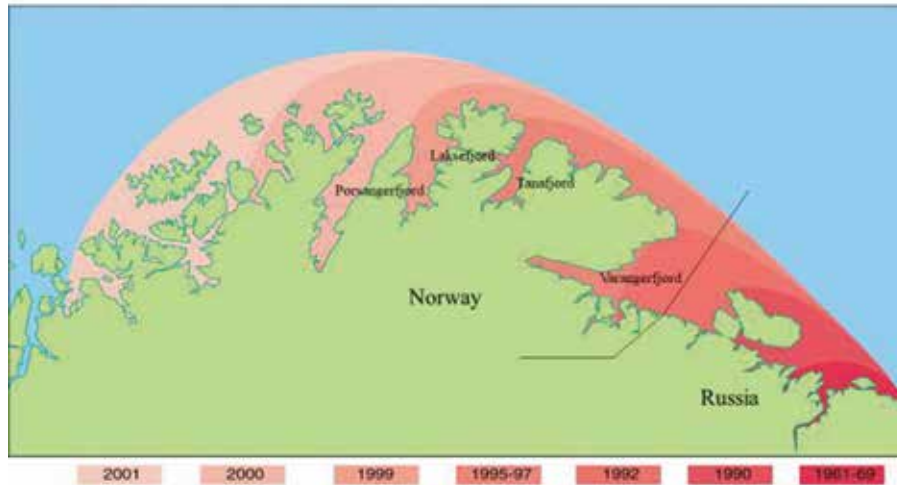
The first known record of the red king crab in Norwegian waters was made in 1977, but it was not until 1992 that Norwegian management institutions and researchers became aware of this species, and this was due to the problems it caused in local gillnet fisheries.

The crab population adapted rapidly to the Barents Sea ecosystem by establishing an abundant self-reproducing stock, but no management measures were applied prior to its entrance in Norwegian waters. Management of the red king crab was considered an issue for the Joint Norwegian–Russian Fisheries Commission. This Commission handled the crab until 2006 when the management was divided between the two countries.

Concerns about the possible impact of the crab on the receiving ecosystems were expressed shortly after the first record in Norwegian waters, but no action was taken to eradicate or limit the spread. International agreements, to which Norway is a party, require that introduced alien species should be eradicated or population growth prevented.

However, controlling this fast growing introduced alien species turned out to be a distinctly difficult task.

During the traditional gillnet fishing for cod in Varangerfjord close to the Russian border, significant bycatches of red king crab were taken in the winter 1992, and was a signal to both Norwegian management and scientists to collect more information on the species. Therefore, in 1993 Norwegian scientists began research on the crab. These investigations were in collaborations with Russian colleagues and regular ship-based surveys have been conducted since.



The spread of the red king crab between 1961-69 and 2001

The crab expanded its distribution to cover most of Varangerfjord during the late 1990s and was found in Tanafjord for the first time in 1995. At the beginning of 2000, the crab had expanded westwards and entered Laksefjord, and was found in Porsangerfjord for the first time in 2002.

Commercial exploitation of the red king crab started in 1993 when the Fishery Commission launched bi-national experimental fishing in both countries with a quota of 12,000 crabs. This experimental fishing lasted until 2002 with yearly increase in fishing quota and number of vessels participating. In 2002, Norway introduced regular commercial fishery. Since then, both catch quotas and the number of vessels participating, has increased.

The red king crab is probably the most valuable fishing resource in Norwegian waters and pays more than NOK 200 per kg to the fishermen. Almost all catches are exported and the annual export value in recent

years has been more than NOK 300 million – a high figure compared to the relatively small quota (between 1500 and 2000 tons).

This high value of the crab resulted in great interest in licenses to fish for it, which has meant that more than 700 vessels are now participating in this fishing. In the early years this high value also governed the view of this new species, indicated by the low attention paid by managers to the potential ecosystem effects of the introduced crab. The fact that the crab was an introduced alien species was not a prominent issue in public discussion on the management of this new resource in the early years.

After the ‘splitting’ of the management of the crab between Norway and Russia, Norwegian authorities implemented a management regime through a Report to the Parliament in 2007. This included two main (contradictory) management objectives: a quota-regulated area (QRA) east of 26° E and south of 71° 30’ N, to maintain a long-term commercial fishery. Outside this area the crab was defined as ‘unwanted’ and an open access free fishery was executed to limit further spread and to keep the crab stock as low as possible.

Stomach content analyses have shown that the crab feeds on a variety of benthic species and comparative investigations on soft bottom fauna in Varangerfjorden clearly demonstrated a reduction in faunal composition and biomass due to the high abundance of king crabs over a period of about 20 years. This study also indicated that by removing large specimens of burrowing bivalves and worms, which contribute to a mixing and resuspension of the sediment, the crab led to a reduced habitat quality. Laboratory experiments highlight that hard-bottom fauna may also be vulnerable to king crab predation.

The observed effects of the crab on the benthos appear to be more severe in Norwegian waters than in coastal areas on the Russian side.

Fish eggs have been found in crab stomachs, and directed laboratory studies have shown that the king crab feed on capelin eggs during the main spawning season in spring. Investigations could, however, not reveal any impact of this predation on the Barents Sea capelin stock.

There are also observations of the king crab feeding on egg clutches from lumpfish in Varangerfjord. Although no negative effects of this predation on the lumpfish stock have been shown, scientists still think that such predation on eggs may hamper the lumpfish stock.

The current Norwegian management of the red king crab is mainly

the same as was implemented in 2008. The focus on the ecological impact of the crab is still an issue for Norwegian scientists. Research activities aiming to reveal effects are, however, low, which must be seen in the context of a lack of any obvious effects on commercial fish species in this area.

This high value crab has generated a significant growth in the economy of small coastal societies in eastern Finnmark (in the QRA), and thereby probably prevented depopulation and decline.

(The image of the red king crab on the back cover belongs to this article and gives a good indication of its size).

## Norwegian-British Relationships

**Paul Gobey** (UK member)

I have, perhaps, more reason than most to be grateful to the Anglo-



Norse Society as it was there (at Norway House in London, whose interior I regret never seeing) that my parents first met one another! My mother, Tulla, had joined the Society in 1958, having moved from SAS Oslo (Fornebu) to start work at the Norwegian-British Chamber of Commerce, and one of the first events she attended was the Christmas Dinner on board HQS Wellington, at which the indomitable actress Margaret Rutherford gave 'the Oration to the Christmas Pudding' from Dickens' *The Christmas Carol* (and bumped into my mother in the Ladies Cloakroom later that evening)!

My British father,

Peter, had travelled extensively with his mother to mountainous countries such as Austria and Switzerland, and fallen so much in love with Norway

and its people that he decided to become a member in 1959 to experience more of the Norwegian culture and its people. He and my mother met during a number of ANS events in 1959 (she on one occasion coming to his rescue with a safety pin!), married in Oslo Cathedral on 10 September 1960 (attached photo on their wedding day) and would have celebrated their Diamond Wedding this year.

**Ellen Godber** (UK member).

Like many people born since 1945, I can say that my parents would never have met had it not been for World War II. In September 1939 my Norwegian mother was in her second year as a student at Heidelberg University studying German (as her mother had in 1912). My father was a banker in the Bank of England's foreign section (he spoke fluent French and very good German).

In November 1939, with war in Europe escalating, and well aware of the political situation in Germany from the newspaper, my mother returned to Oslo to be with her widowed mother and brother. That month, in England, my father signed up to the British Army and was enrolled in the Intelligence Corps, I imagine because of his language skills. He was posted to Scottish Command and trained with the Commandos before being shipped to Bodø in May 1940. When the Germans invaded Norway in April 1940 they had soon discovered my mother spoke their language and she was 'required' to work for them in Oslo.

I do not know exactly how my parents met as my father spent most of the war in Northern Norway or Northern Russia but I do know that, because neither of them spoke each other's first language, they communicated in German.

Because the war was instrumental in their meeting my parents chose to marry on the first anniversary of peace in Europe, 8th May 1946 in Oslo, and returned (via Sweden) to London where my father continued his job in the City. As a small child my parents spoke to me in a mixture of Norwegian, German and English until 1951 when my father was sent (with my mother but without me) on a year long business posting to America - after which mother spoke good English. During that time I was looked after by my English aunt and her husband who were English-speaking only so my English too improved. Also They had two daughters who were two and four years older than I was, and that helped.

## Paul Kerswill (Uk member)

Some time in the early 1950s, a certain Lieutenant Arthur Spratt, a young Londoner and naval reservist, was on a Royal Navy courtesy visit to the Norwegian capital. Finding himself at a loose end one afternoon, Lieutenant Spratt decided to go on a harbour tour. He made his way to the quay in front of City Hall, where he found the Båtservice jetty. He bought a ticket, and went aboard the low, rather insubstantial tourist boat, found a seat and sat down. As more people joined the boat, the young officer became aware of gathering storm clouds. Sure enough, the light shower turned into a downpour. With a sense of unease, the passengers looked towards the tour guide for an indication of what to do. The guide began to untie the rain cover,



Inger and Arthur in the 1950s

but found herself unequal to the task of shifting the heavy tarpaulin across the length of the boat. Seeing this, the young British officer quickly got up and helped the guide complete the job.

My parents were always a bit cagey about how they met, especially Inger Dahll, the young tour guide who became my mother. Maybe this was the sanitised version; I know for sure a few years elapsed before they finally decided to be an item, and for her to move

to West London. Looking through their early letters, it's easy for me to detect Inger's anxiety, and even ambivalence about the whole enterprise. Her father, too, seems to have been sceptical about having a foreign son-in-law. Inger and Arthur eventually got married in February 1955 in Haslum church, near Stabekk, where my grandparents lived; to judge by the wedding photos, it was very cold and very snowy. Their first home was a rented flat in Harrow. From there they moved first to Bushey and then to Hemel Hempstead, where my two siblings and I were brought up and where they lived the rest of their lives.

You may be wondering why my surname is Kerswill, given that my father's was Spratt. The answer, apparently, is that my mum objected strongly to being called Inger Spratt. 'Spratt' is the past tense of a Norwegian verb

meaning 'leap' or 'split open'. So Dad adopted his mother's maiden name. I'm told the Spratt family were not best pleased at the time!

Mum and Dad led a pretty settled life in Hemel Hempstead, centred on the deep friendships they established with people in the street and neighbourhood. Summers, however, were different. Mum took us three kids off to Norway for the entire six weeks of the holidays. I owe the fact that my Norwegian became, and has remained, fluent to our extended sojourns there. Dad, though, was no linguist: his proficiency never progressed beyond *himmelsk tyttebærsyltetøy* ('heavenly cranberry jam') – I have no idea where that phrase came from! Both Mum and Dad appreciated the double Christmases – Norwegian *julaften* followed by Christmas Day with our English cousins.

*Editor's note. Paul studied Modern and Medieval Languages at Cambridge where I taught him Norwegian Literature which he was not keen on. He was much more interested in linguistics and in the summer of 1977 went off to work on a farm in southwestern Norway, where he collected dialect data for his dissertation. That was the springboard for him becoming a linguistic researcher. He is now Professor of Linguistics at York University.*

## Thomas Baker (Uk member, now presumably a Norwegian member)

I've been in a relationship with my girlfriend, Synne, for two and a half years now, although our story begins back before then. After speaking on a dating app for several months, we met for the first time at Roskilde Music Festival in 2016, on the night of Saturday 2nd July. I was half-drunk on rum to stir up my courage, yet I still clearly remember how her eyes were illuminated by the concert lights and fireworks. Instantly there was a spark; it was one of the greatest and most pivotal nights of my life.

She left in the early morning, but we stayed in touch over the following months. During a combined shopping and football trip to Manchester in the autumn (her family are big Manchester Utd fans), we agreed that she should hop on a train and make the short journey over the Peak District to visit me in Nottingham (a very brave move, in my opinion). I showed her my home, my England. However, she was studying nursing in Oslo, and I was beginning studies in and in international relations/foreign policy in London, so for a while things were put on hold, although we still continued to travel out to see one another.

After a year, at the end of one of her visits to London, during the



roar of a concert, she told me she loved me. After that, things quickly fell into place. The downsides of a long-distance relationship were always outweighed by the joy of being in her company, and after two and a half years, many hundreds of pounds spent on flights to Bodø where she was now working as a nurse in Bodø Hospital, and some long-standing international travel restrictions, I've finally moved out to Norway, to spend my life with the woman I love in a land that I love, and am working for Nordland Fylkeskommune



## Norwegian Age-Friendly Tech is bringing Benefits to the World's Ageing Population

*By Solfrid Sagstad*

In 2012, the team behind Motitech was involved in a social good project with the municipality of Bergen, Norway. The aim of the project, led by the city's Agency for Nursing Homes, was to motivate the elderly and people with dementia to become more physically active. An extensive trial of what is now our central concept, Motiview, was undertaken in five of the city's nursing homes in 2012 and 2013. The technology created as a consequence of the trial allowed those participating to enjoy immersive, video-based travel, which came alive with the introduction of physical exercise. By encouraging participants in the trial to pedal in time with the video projections that were playing, they no longer felt like passive spectators. Instead, they felt as though they were actively taking part in the journey.

The project that would eventually become Motiview was led by our founder, photographer and director Jon Ingar Kjenes, whose inspiration for

the concept came from Norwegian slow TV - the genre that of television that allows people to watch slow, long train journeys or the steady burning of logs - which was already a big hit amongst seniors in Norway.

The results of the project were fantastic. In fact, the impact that the Motiview trials had on the activity of elderly people was so positive that it was decided our team should start a company. This was how Motitech was first established, in October 2013, with the hopes of bringing Motiview to the rest of the world.

Motiview allows seniors to travel the world, revisit familiar places from their childhoods, or travel to destinations from important points in their lives, by providing a video projection that plays while they pedal: allowing them to virtually cycle through thousands of destinations. This cycle route is displayed via a computer, then paired to a television, monitor, or projection device. These video routes essentially allow users to 'cycle' through various locations on a specially adapted, stationary bike - creating a stimulating exercise option which isn't too strenuous and can bring the excitement of outdoor cycling indoors. Motiview offers the opportunity to engage in gentle exercise, whilst making the world accessible again for those who are unable to explore it physically.

By utilising Jon Ingar's passion for visuals and photography, paired with our own innovative approach, we have been able to create a video-based solution that supports elderly and less-abled people to remain active. Since launch, we as a company have been able to change the lives of people all over the world. We have a presence in 500 locations across seven countries including the Nordics, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Switzerland.

The impact of our technology is tangible. One care home, based in the Midlands in the UK, has seen the number of resident falls reduced by 80% within 3 months of the technology's integration into residents' routines. Documented health benefits like this one are being seen in all care homes where Motiview is being used; and come in addition to an improved quality of life, increased mobility, better sleep, faster rehabilitation and improved mental wellbeing.

A large part of the success we have seen is down to the videos we produced, and they are created with our users in mind. By filming popular and well-known locations, as well as areas that are local to the care-facilities where Motiview is used, we are able to tap into something unique and

beautiful. The videos produced for Motiview encourage those with and without dementia to recall and revisit their favourite locations and past memories.



We are also working hard to build a global community that benefits those people who use our technology, and one way we achieve that is through friendly competition. The Road Worlds for Seniors is our annual championship, where residents from across the world compete against each other by accumulating kilometres on their stationary bikes over the time span of approximately four weeks. The championship was first established in 2017, when the UCI professional cycling world championships took place in Bergen, Norway - close to our HQ. We strongly believe that older people should not be excluded from taking part in athletic competition - you are never too old to be a champion and you are never too old to be a strong and fierce competitor. We are so proud of all of our seniors, and Road Worlds for Seniors is an opportunity to really raise them up and show the world what they can do.

Now entering its 5th year, Road Worlds for Seniors is growing and growing. Each year, we crown a world champion for men, for women and for teams, as well as an awarded title of being the best support team (staff

and volunteers). All cyclists who take part receive a medal. Road Worlds for Seniors gives us an annual opportunity to remind everyone, both old and young, that you are never too old to be an athlete - this is something we are very passionate about. In fact, our annual competition was one of the few sporting events in the world to go ahead in 2020, and this is a fine example of Motitech's commitment to make Road World for Seniors the biggest sporting event in the world in terms of participation. Despite the global pandemic, over 3000 cyclists from 7 different countries proudly pedalled on, cycling throughout the month of September. The ability of our competition to bring elderly people from all over the world together, to get them excited about being active each day, and to get people all over the world to work towards a common goal, is truly a wonderful thing.

The past year has been extraordinarily difficult for so many people around the world. We have all had our eyes opened to the emotional and mental issues which can arise from feeling 'trapped' at home, with little to do. This is a daily reality for many less-able elderly people who are unable to exercise outside, move with ease, or travel great distances, and it is one that Motitech is working very hard to change. Through the continued global roll out of our technology, the hard work of our film team, and the continued work of everyone involved in Road Worlds for Seniors, we hope that we can make sure as many elderly people as possible can experience the benefits of this technology. Each year we get closer to making this a reality, and we intend to put all of our efforts into having even more of a global impact in 2021 and beyond.

## The Lofoten Islands

*By Jeremy Dales*

*Editor's Note. This article is based on a blog that Jeremy wrote some 20 years ago, when he went backpacking around Norway. The following extract gives us a glimpse of a beautiful part of the country we can only dream of in these travel-restricted times due to Covid.*

My first glimpse of Lofoten was from the perspective of a giant. I found myself looking down upon improbably sheer mountains that toppled into glass-green water, with miniature fishing boats moored in a small bay beneath them. Beneath the vast column of my leg little red cabins dotted the shoreline, and in a tiny strip of field a woman in bunad folk costume herded

a beige cow along a green sward towards a matchbox-sized barn. Behind her lay an immaculately neat wooden farmhouse, on the lawn of which flew a Norwegian flag. A plaque announced "Lofoten, Norway". This idyllic miniature toytown was all constructed from Lego, part of an exhibition of scenes from around the world at Legoland in Denmark, and my nine-year-old self gazed at it for a while, vow-ing to one day go there, before I galloped off along a Dutch canal lined with windmills, heading for the Valley of the Kings.

My second encounter with Lofoten came some 20 years later, from the deck of the *M/S Midnatsol* - the Midnight Sun - as we steamed towards a wall of dark mountains that loomed out of the Norwegian Sea. The *Midnatsol* was one of the ships of the *Hurtigrute* ferry which puts in at ports all the way up the coast of Norway, from Bergen up to Kirkenes. I was bound for Stamsund, a four hour voyage from Bodø, but some passengers were going the whole way, taking 7 days. From the comforts of the cafeteria with its perpetual scent of stewed coffee I peered out at distant peaks, through the smeared glass of a window which periodically gave a faint rattle as the en-gines rumbled away beneath us. Off the port bow a small trawler was making heavier weather of it, pitching and yawing wildly through clouds of spray.

The guidebook had made much of Lofoten's mild climate, given the latitude. It was positively balmy in Stamsund on a June evening, the air temperature 17 degrees C and the sun still high in the sky at 8pm. This was to become one of the most disorienting aspects of my trip, as it never seemed to get dark; the *Midnatsol* was well named. We were above the Arctic Circle now, further north even than Iceland, and the sun wouldn't set fully again for several weeks - not just the White Nights of St. Petersburg or Shetland's "simmer dim", but daylight even at three in the morning. I was glad of the heavy wooden shutters outside my room at the hostel; less so of the seagulls who had set up a nest beneath them and who kept up a chorus of cackles and wild shrieks all night.

At 7.30 the next morning, squinting in the endless glare and wondering if my budget would stretch to a pair of Norwegian sunglasses, I stood at the bus stop on the main road out of town. I wasn't sure what to expect from a bus this far north, so when a large, modern coach with tinted windows drew up I initially thought that it was some sort of luxury package tour. But no - this was the bus south. The driver was a young blonde woman in mirrored aviator Raybans, and she pi-loted the enormous coach around hairpins and through tunnels with an air of insouciance. I en-vied her the

Raybans.

At Leknes we turned onto the E10, which runs all the way from Luleå in northern Sweden to the southern tip of Lofoten. We hopped over a bridge and I realised we had crossed onto Flak-stadøya, the next island. Suddenly the sea was on our right, a deep ultramarine blue, and we looked down upon a series of beautiful horseshoe bays fringed with white sand. It looked like the Caribbean. The next minute we were climbing over moorland again, the wind shivering the grass. Fjords cut deep between the serrated peaks, and then the sea had swung about and was on our left again. Hamnøy, Reine, Sørvågen... I made out the names of the villages as we passed through them, often just a tiny scattering of wooden houses that clung to the flat land of the shore. Then one more tunnel and we were reversing into a car park. The end of the road. Å.



An aerial view of Å. Photo credit: Petr Šmerkl. Wikipedia

The youth hostel was an old *rorbu* - the traditional red fishermen's cabin - built out on stilts along the shoreline, and a man called Roar, with a suitably leonine mane of beard, led me across a swaying gangplank over the water to my room. He wore Helly Hansen overalls and the expression



of someone who spent a lot of time facing down the north wind from the wheelhouse. He ran through the list of attractions in Å, which didn't take long, as it mostly seemed to be the fish mu-seum and the fish museum. One was given over to stockfish - wind-dried cod which were visible hanging on racks above the village - and the other was the Norwegian Fishing Village Museum, which had a slightly broader remit, and was in fact a group of well-preserved buildings from the Ellingsen estate. Otherwise I could go for a walk up a mountain, rent a bicycle for the rare flat bits between them, or go fishing. It seemed a very pleasant spot for doing nothing very much for a few days.

I decided to try to Stockfish museum first, as it was a short walk away. My arrival coincided with what seemed to be a guided tour - there was a middle-aged couple in hiking gear, and a couple of Japanese girls from the hostel. Cured in the same way since Viking times, stockfish is exported across the world, being particularly popular in Italy, where 95% of the catch goes. A woman in traditional bunad offered round a bowl in which lay what looked like splinters of kindling. This was a sample of the stockfish. The Japanese girls declined with frantic gestures and horrified laughter, but the man took a pinch, so I felt I ought to follow suit. I had in mind an account I'd read of a traveller on the Trans-Siberian, who described the dried fish from Lake Baikal as having a deli-cious smoky and buttery flavour. This was not like that. The hardened lump instantly absorbed all the moisture in my mouth like some powerful desiccant, then began to slowly soften, becoming rather slimy, and gradually there emerged a powerful fishy whiff with a slight tinge of ammonia. The tour was moving on, inspecting assorted barrels, winches and pulleys. There was nowhere to discretely dispose of it, so I swallowed hard and wondered what the Italians did to make it palata-ble.

That evening I sat out on the decking of a restaurant called the Bryyga for a more familiar dinner of cod and chips, and a beer - suitably named Gull Pils - which added considerably to the bill. The temperature had reached 22 degrees C that day, which was something of an event this far north, and Å was in holiday mood. Many of the other tables were occupied by sightseers, and fur-ther along the shoreline small groups of people sat about on rocks looking out at the view. Small boats were moored alongside and twisted this way and that on their painters, and the red wooden rorbuer were reflected perfectly in water that was indeed as green and clear as glass.

Tearing myself away from the charms of the Bryyga and nine pound beers, I followed a trail from the car park south to the end of the island.

Beyond the fish racks, the hillside opened up to reveal a long valley with a lake in the middle, the far shore culminating in a sheer cliff down which a wa-terfall tumbled, tendrils of spray arching away from the rock face. Small shrubs and grasses clung to the sides, trembling as the water plucked at them, and the sun caught the spray as it smoked and roared. Away from the valley I crossed some rocky ground, heading towards the water's edge, and looked out upon a series of knife-sharp headlands plummeting into the sea. A thrum of fast wingbeats caused me to look up, and a puffin came over, then another, and another. Soon there were dozens of them streaming overhead. Above the seething of the waves I could hear the cries of the birds, and fragments of conversation were carried up to me as two fishing boats passed each other in the strait, their wakes smoothing a dapple of gold on the water as the sun endlessly circled the sky.

It was one of those moments that stays with you.

## **Campaign to Save the Norwegian Church Cultural Centre, Cardiff Bay**

*By Karen Allen, on behalf on the Welsh-Norwegian Society*

Many people across the UK are familiar with the Norwegian Church in Cardiff Bay; a former Norwegian Seamen's Church in Cardiff Docks that was rescued from demolition and rebuilt as a visitor attraction and cultural centre in the heart of the Cardiff Bay development. It was officially reopened by Princess Märtha Louise of Norway in 1992, and has since become an iconic landmark on the waterfront, much loved by locals and tourists alike.

Our Welsh Norwegian Society was formed a few years later in 1995, with several members of the old Norwegian Church congregation among the founding members. The society welcomed anyone with an interest in Norway and our activities became an important part of the Norwegian Church's cultural programme, as well as the associated twinning links between Cardiff and Hordaland (latterly Vestland) in western Norway.

In 2006, the trustees of the Norwegian Church Preservation Trust wanted to retire for various reasons and invited Cardiff Council to take over as sole trustee of the charity.

You could say that the Welsh Norwegian Society has effectively acted as a kind of 'Friends of the Norwegian Church' over the years, and many members feel a sense of guardianship towards the building and its fascinating



history; a story of bonds between nations especially during times of war.



The Norwegian Church in Cardiff

So, in November 2018 when Cardiff Council passed a resolution to seek a commercial tenant for the Norwegian Church, it was only natural that our society would collectively prick up our ears and begin to voice our concerns that the council's plans were not appropriate for the Norwegian Church's charitable status.

We began a campaign of letter writing and media work, and ran an online petition which collected 7000 signatures. We had good support from Vaughan Gething MS (Member of the Senedd), and Stephen Doughty MP, both of whom represent the Cardiff Bay area.

To cut a long story short, in December 2019 Cardiff Council finally gave us the go ahead for a feasibility study to explore the transfer of the Norwegian Church Preservation Trust back to independent status. We firmly believed the Norwegian Church could flourish again as a vibrant and sustainable cultural centre, if only it were better managed.

We made a successful application to The Architectural Heritage Fund and raised the necessary match funding within a matter of weeks, which is testament to the support among the community.

In June we appointed a consultant, Gareth Kiddie, and the feasibility study was thankfully able to go ahead, although it has taken longer than expected due to Covid-19 restrictions. The final report is due to be delivered in early 2021, and then we hope to start moving forward with an action plan. We will need to convince Cardiff Council that our proposal is financially sustainable into the future.

I'm grateful to have the opportunity to write about this in the Anglo Norse Society magazine, having joined ANS in 2019. We are still at the beginning of what will be a long process to get the Norwegian Church fully functioning as an independent charity once again, and the Norwegian Church Cultural Centre will benefit from the help of friends and supporters far and wide. We are going to need help from people with expertise in charity governance, fundraising, arts and heritage development, to name a few areas.

Safe to say, there is so much potential for the future. Personally speaking, I would love to see a revival of the Scandinavian music programme. In the years up to 2006, the Norwegian Church promoted some truly special Norwegian contemporary jazz and folk concerts with generous support from the Royal Norwegian Embassy. It was a privilege to hear the likes of Nils Økland and Arve Henriksen performing in such an intimate setting, with the exceptional acoustics of the main hall.

Many people have expressed a desire to see more Scandinavian food served in the café too, with the associated smells of good coffee and cinnamon wafting through the building. There is scope for combining this with local Welsh food to create a unique menu.

If anyone is interested in supporting or following our ongoing campaign in any way, we would be delighted to hear from you. You can get in touch via: [contact@welshnorwegian.org](mailto:contact@welshnorwegian.org)

## **Karjol og fjording' - Two Icons of Travelling in 19th Century Norway**

*By Bjarne Rogan, University of Oslo*

'These carriages ... are the most extraordinary specimens of vehicular construction ever put together by man'. No less - according to the British editor Fredric Tolfrey, who published a guide for British anglers in Norway (1848).

Travel handbooks and travelogues from Norway published during the 19th century abound with descriptions of the vehicle named «karjol» (cariole/ carriole). Among the most hilarious appraisals is that of Sir Henry Pottinger, who visited Norway regularly from the 1850s onwards. His description goes over several pages:

In my young days you could not think of Norway without having a carriole in the background of your thought; the idea of it suggested itself as naturally as that of meals or a bed. [...] It has been described by, say, a hundred writers, which shall not deter me from being, say, the hundred and first to do so. [...] Toy carriage though it be, for compactness and selfcontainedness it is unique; never has the ingenuity of man evolved anything more admirably adapted for its purpose in life, more efficient and convenient, more flawless in arrangement. (Pottinger 1905).

### Norway's 'national' vehicle, well adapted to mountain roads

It is a curious-looking machine, this national carriage, but there is no



An early nineteenth century cariote

vehicle better adapted to the difficulties of mountain roads, nor is there any more enjoyable mode of travelling than in a carriole, when

you are accustomed to its peculiar motion. (Frank Usher, 1872-73)

The cariote was in use in Norway throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, for a long time however as a private vehicle and in urban districts only. But from the 1830s it became common in the posting system, to be had at the permanent stations. In the latter half of the 19th century this type of carriage was extremely widespread, particularly in eastern and central Norway and in Trøndelag.

Similar types of carriages are also known from other European countries, but only from the older period. Nowhere else did it become so widespread and popular as in Norway, where it gradually evolved its own distinctive form. Foreign visitors used to refer to it as Norway's «national» vehicle. The explanation for its popularity must be sought in its adaptation to travelling conditions in Norway.

The cariote is an open, one-horse vehicle, designed for conveying one single passenger. In addition, it could take a small boy on the luggage rack. Its peculiarity resided in the suspension system and a very low centre of gravity; when in motion it swayed gently and comfortably, and with its huge wheels it was extremely unlikely to tip over. Some compared it to a spider, due to its ability to get back on track.

Originally, the cariote had neither wooden nor steel springs. Suspension was secured by the long, elastic shafts, called 'arms'. The body, or seat, was not placed directly over the wheel-axle, but rested slightly further forward on the shafts. The centre of gravity of seat and driver thus lay between the axle and the horse. Some foreigners thought that this went against the principles of how a vehicle ought to be constructed. The usual construction placed the centre of gravity immediately over the axle. On the other hand, luggage and a boy sitting on a small rack behind the driver shifted the balance point further back. As the cariote rested on the long elastic shafts, jolts from uneven sections of the road were not directly transmitted to the passenger.

Whereas the 18th century cariote had an upright chair-like seat, the early 19th century ones were equipped with a narrow, elongated and reclining seat. The driver was half seated, half lying with his legs stretched out. Light but somewhat heavy at the front, yet stable because of the low seat and the large wheels fairly wide apart, the cariote had a striking appearance.

Slender and elastic wooden shafts could break in the event of sudden braking, so the cariote did not have any kind of braking system. If one had a

horse that was sure-footed, it was best to chance it on downhill stretches,



An Illustration from John Barrow, *Excursions in the North of Europe through Parts of Russia, Finland, Denmark and Norway in the Years 1830 & 1833*, which shows the cariole correctly, but has a very 'un-Norwegian' horse pulling it, one that certainly could not cope with steep downhill roads.

a driving technique that scared many foreigners. The cariole was considered the racing car of its age.

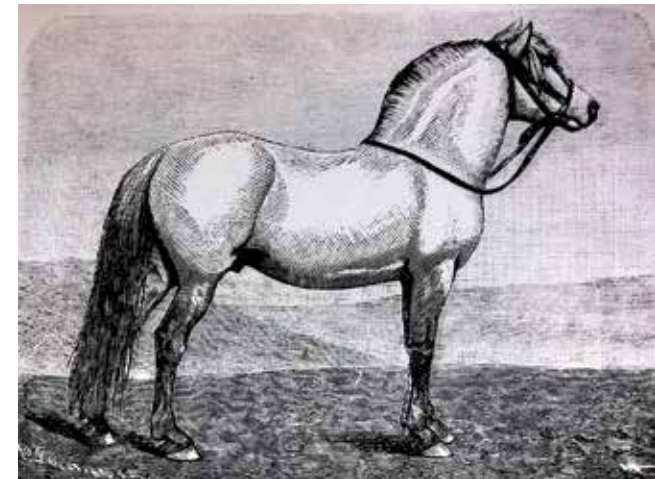
Towards the end of the 19th century production of modern carioles with steel springs and brakes started. Until then, every peasant along the road could easily repair almost everything if an accident happened, even a broken shaft. But not a broken steel spring! British cariole enthusiasts talked warmly about «ordinary country carioles» – but spoke contemptuously of 'town-made fancy carioles'.

### The Norwegian 'pony'

The horses were generally good; they were sure-footed, and trotted remarkably well, and without making any false steps; yet some of the hills we had to drive down were exceedingly steep. The traveller is soon taught to place confidence in them, and to let them go down, as we used to do, th steep side of a mountain at a quick trot or a canter – to suffer which, in England, except, perhaps, in Devonshire, a man would be considered half-crazy. (John Barrow, 1834)

It was in the hilly landscape that the 'fjording' a Norwegian small-breed farm horse, came into its own. Small in size but strong, agile and good-tempered, this dun-coloured national breed was often referred to by foreigners as a «pony». But these «ponies» commanded great respect, swift as they were and not liable to stumble. Because the cariole driver was seated in a low position, visibility was not good. When your hat brim is level with the ears of the horse, much had to be left to the control and 'judgment' of the horse – a traveller wrote with a delight mixed with fear.

Among the many ovations to this racing car and Norwegian horses, let us listen to the Englishman Alfred Charles Smith, who travelled on 'the old roads' in Norway around 1850:



As the total weight of the equipage does not much exceed that of a wheelbarrow, [the driver] is able to travel at a brisk pace, and when through practice his nerves are strong enough to bear it, he can even rush down the steepest hills he has ever seen in his life, and crawl up the opposite no less precipitous mountains, without undue exertion on the part of his steady horse. Perhaps the roads [...] are the very worst in Europe; they have the merit of going straight from point to point, up and down the hills, however precipitous, which lie in their path [...] The sure-footed horses trotted merrily over all.

If even so an accident occurred, and the nimble 'fjording' stumbled, the cariole was still preferable to other vehicles. Or as William Mattieu Williams wrote in 1877:

The advantage [of the low, narrow seat and the necessity of stretching the legs forward till the feet touch the foot-board] is that if the horse should fall in going down the hill, the driver is not pitched out head first and skull-cracked, as he would from an English two-wheeled trap, but simply brought up on his feet – standing on the foot-board.

It is these horses that have given the English their taste for the cariole sport in Norway, a sport that they are now trying to transfer to their own country, wrote a contemporary observer, the Norwegian author Jonas Lie (1872). And he added: «However, their own long-legged, thoroughbred horses will not avail at full speed downhill.»

To conclude: The cariole and the fjording, two genuinely Norwegian products, were made for each other. I cannot resist the temptation to paraphrase an old crooner: 'Horse and carriage – go together like love and marriage – you can't have the one without the other'.

#### Literature

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