



Birka732.com

Birka Banner

Birka Lodge, Vasa Order of America

March - April 2020

Message from the Chair

Greetings, Birka members! Daylight saving time has arrived with an extra hour of daylight each day. Spring is here! But so is COVID-19, which means a lot of changes for everyone, including Birka Lodge, most importantly:

NO MEETING ON MARCH 27, SINCE THE COMMUNITY HOUSE WILL BE CLOSED UNTIL AT LEAST MARCH 29!

The January and February meetings were both well attended and enjoyed by all. At the January meeting we draped the charter for member Diane Forrstrom, who passed away in early January. Thank you to the Refreshment Committees for the delicious food we enjoyed at both meetings. Treasurer Mike Swanson reported at the January meeting the Birka's Jul Fair was successful! Great job, everyone! Thank you to Roz and Gus Blomgren for the themed raffle baskets that they provided for each meeting. The baskets are always appreciated and help pay for the evening's hall rental.

The Activities Committee met on February 16, along with the Auditors, and planned the Lodge events for **2020-2021 season**. Thank you to Marlys Mahajan for hosting the meeting. Plans for an August outing were discussed. More information will be available at future meetings. The next Activities Committee meeting will be held on **May 3 at 3:00 p.m.** at the home of Ann-Marie Breuer in Hamilton, until further notice. All are welcome to help finalize plans for a summer outing.

The **April 24 meeting** will be **the Installation of Officers**. District Deputy Dawn Briggs and her team from Nordic Lodge in Worcester will conduct the ceremonies. Other guests from the District Executive Board will also be attending. Please plan on welcoming our District guests. Please come and provide sandwiches or a salad for the potluck dinner. Let me know of your plans, please, so we can plan the meeting accordingly. My telephone number is 781-933-4949. Thank you in advance. Your help is always appreciated, especially for setup and cleanup.

If the April meeting needs to be cancelled, Lodge members will notify you by the telephone tree that has been instituted. The May/June Banner will have information regarding the May and June meetings. The virus may cause some changes to our schedule for the remainder of this year.

As a reminder, your **annual dues of \$25 for 2020** are now due. Please mail your dues to Financial Secretary Linda Boylan, 112 Upton Lane, Boxford, MA 01921. Your check should be made payable to **Birka Lodge #732**.

It would be great if all dues were paid by April 2020.

I look forward to seeing you at the **April 24 meeting and Installation of Officers**. The telephone committee will see that you are notified of all meeting changes, and we will soon get through this trying time and be able to rejoice in being together again. Until then, stay healthy, take care of each other, and keep in touch! We are all in this together.

Your presence is requested at the April meeting to give encouragement to your officers and make more secure the future of our Order. Happy Easter! Glad Påsk!

Yours in truth and unity,

Linda Christianson,

PDM, Chairman

Hearty Birka Birthday wishes to these members:

... in March

5 Marcia Sunman	19 Mathz Olsson
7 Linda Flanagan	22 Kristine DiPillo
10 Carol Landoni	27 Marilyn Kelly
13 Karole Johns	31 Daniel Guidera



... in April

1 Frank Ryan	14 Janet Lundstrom
2 Pathrick Olsson	15 Carin Liu
10 Danika Ashness	15 Helen Riddle
12 Sheila Sunman	17 Michael Bagnulo
13 Christine Lovgren	



REFRESHMENT COMMITTEE

Installation of Officers
April 24

EVERYONE IS ON THE COMMITTEE THIS MONTH!

Don't forget to sign up with Linda Christianson for your fair share—sandwiches or a salad.

Calendar of Events

March

27 Meeting cancelled due to Covid-19 situation

April

24 Lodge meeting, Installation of Officers, 7:30 p.m.

May

3 Activities Committee meeting,
p.m. at Ann-Marie Breuer's home. All are welcome.



3

. . . *'round the lodge*

Sign up for April's potluck dinner by calling Linda Christianson (781-933-4949). With no March meeting scheduled, you will need to call her to let her know what you are bringing. Thanks for your help on this one. Just another adjustment needed due to COVID-19.

Calling all college-age and high school members If you will be attending college next year, note that District scholarship time is here. If you have been a member since September 2019, you are eligible to apply for a scholarship for the next school year. Check with any of our District officers for details.

Dues are now due If you haven't paid your dues yet, why not write out your \$25 check now and bring it to the April meeting?

Change of Address Please notify Assistant Recording Secretary Marlys Mahajan of any address changes, either by writing her at 26 Appaloosa Lane, So. Hamilton, MA 01982, or by phoning her at 978-468-4423. Thanks!

Sick Benefit Fund If you have been a Vasa member for five years or more and have paid your dues, you can receive assistance with medical and/or dental expenses from the Grand Lodge. Each member is entitled to receive up to \$3,000. If you would like an application, please contact Chairperson Linda Christianson.

Website Remember to check Birka Lodge's website. The web address is found at the bottom of this column. Thank you, Richard Lilja, for maintaining this website for the Lodge.

Spotlight on. . . .

Påsk

Yellow is the color of Easter or Påsk in Sweden, because most Easter symbols, such as daffodils and baby chicks are yellow. A daffodil in Sweden is a påsklilja.



A favorite decoration for homes is a Påskris, which is an arrangement of birch twigs decorated with yellow feathers,



miniature chicks, and colorful eggs.



Another important tradition is that of the Påsk karringar, or Easter witch. It is a Maundy Thursday tradition, originating in the story of Judas Iscariot betraying Jesus, and thus letting loose all the evil spirits of the day. But in Sweden these evil spirits or “witches” are children dressed in

grandma smocks and aprons, with kerchiefs on their heads. The children then paint their cheeks rosy red and add a few freckles to their face. Each child carries a basket, and may also sport a broom and an old-fashioned coffee pot. In this fine regalia, they go house-to-house collecting Easter candy. Thus, the children of Sweden get their trove of Easter candy without having a tradition of an Easter bunny.



For more information on [Easter /Påsk traditions](#), or check out the Archives on the Lodges web page at www.birka732.com. Click the following link or Look for it on the [March/April 2018 Birka Banner](#).

Reminders . . .

Installation of Officers Since the April meeting has no committee, all hands are needed for set up and clean up. Your help would be greatly appreciated.



Birka Banner is a bi-monthly newsletter, published by Birka Lodge 732, Vasa Order of America, and on the web at www.birka732.com

Linda Christianson, Chairperson
Marlys Mahajan, Editor
Richard Lilja, Webmaster

Sign up for ASI's email newsletter Klipp to receive regular updates on ASI programs and exhibitions.



Klipp! - ASI's Email Newsletter Sign-Up

Welcome to our community! Thanks for joining our email list. The American Swedish Institute (ASI) is a gathering place for all people to share experiences around themes of culture, migration, the environment and the arts, informed by enduring links to Sweden. We hope you enjoy hearing from us. Each month, you'll receive our "Klipp" e-newsletter about all things related to activity here at ASI. You'll also get periodic dispatches about our Nordic Craft and Nordic Table workshops as well as our language classes, special events, and more.

New sleeper train from Sweden will get passengers to London by morning

Rail passengers could soon be leaving [Sweden](#) after dinner and arriving in London the next morning, under plans unveiled by the Swedish authorities.

Trafikverket, Sweden's rail infrastructure manager, says overnight sleeper trains should run from Malmö in the country's south to the German city of Cologne – with onward connections to other European countries.

Under a proposed timetable unveiled by the Trafikverket, the train would leave Malmö at 7.40pm, pick up passengers in Copenhagen at 8.40pm, and then arrive in Cologne for 6am after a night's sleep.

Already-existing connections would allow passengers to arrive in London at 11.57am, in time for a lunch meeting in the British capital. Other connections include Amsterdam by 9.28 am, Munich by 11.08am and Paris by 10.05am.

The planned service, which is set to start in 2022 or 2023, is part of an expansion of night trains proposed by the Swedish government to provide a practical alternative to short-haul flights – which contribute to climate change.

- [End of the line: Paris-Berlin night train makes its final journey](#)



“As a first step, we propose to proceed with a connection between Malmö and Germany, preferably Cologne,” said Anna Fällbom, a senior official at Trafikverket.

“Travel time on the route is reasonable and there is good opportunity for continued connections from Cologne.”

The authority says it also wants to start a service to Hamburg, and that “in the longer term” cities such as Frankfurt, Brussels, Berlin and Basel are also possible direct destinations for sleepers.

A service to Brussels in particular would cut journey times between Scandinavia and the UK even further because it would provide a direct connections to Eurostar services, which call at Brussels Midi. Under the Cologne plan, passengers bound for London would take a German high-speed train to connect with the Eurostar.



Passengers would change trains in Cologne for onward destinations such as London (Getty Images)

It currently takes two full days of travel for a typical rail journey from London to Sweden, with an overnight stop half way, usually in Hamburg. The last direct ferry from the UK to Sweden, the DFDS Seaways route from Newcastle-Gothenburg, was withdrawn in 2006.

Trafikverket is currently deciding on the next steps for the sleepers, such as how new carriages could be procured and whether the service should be put out to competitive tender or directly awarded to a preferred operator.

Just a few years ago sleeper trains were being cut by operators across Europe because of competition from low-cost airlines, but there has been renewed interest in the services with the rise of the "flygskam" or flight-shaming movement.

Austria's state railway company ÖBB is the undisputed guardian of sleeper services on the continent, running a network of night trains to destinations including Rome, Wrocław and Hamburg. The operator is next week formally extending its Vienna to Cologne service as far as Brussels, which will allow easier connections to the UK.

Advance ticket prices on ÖBB services such as Vienna–Rome typically start at €29.90 for a seat, €49.90 for a basic "couchette" bed in a shared cabin, or €69.90 for a full bed.



Swedish king removes grandchildren from royal house, meaning they will no longer receive funds from taxpayer

Republican group calls for British monarchy to cut down costs

- [Samuel Osborne @SamuelOsborne93](#)
- Tuesday 8 October 2019 12:55

[Sweden](#)'s king has removed five of his grandchildren from the country's royal house, meaning they will no longer receive taxpayer funds.

King [Carl XVI Gustaf](#) [announced](#) his grandchildren will no longer perform official duties, but will retain their titles of duke and duchess.

The move includes the two children of the king's son, Prince Carl Philip, and the three children of his daughter Princess Madeleine.

Crown Princess Victoria, the king's oldest child and heir to the throne, her husband Prince Daniel and their two children are not affected by the changes.

The news prompted [Republic](#), a grassroots movement advocating for an elected head of state in the UK, to call for the British monarchy to cut down costs.

"At least they have done something to cut the cost," Graham Smith, chief executive of the organization, told *The Independent*.

"We have long made the point that we only need one head of state and the cost ought to be cut back to one annual salary for the Queen and no one else."

He said the move "may well be followed at some point" in the UK but added: "I suspect that the Queen won't do it but possibly King Charles might."

Support free-thinking journalism and attend Independent events

A YouGov poll conducted in 2015 found a majority of people did not think minor royals should receive state subsidy.

In 2016, Denmark [announced plans to cut funding to minor royals](#).

In Sweden the royal family is hugely popular, despite the egalitarianism that otherwise characterizes its society.

Ikea staff turn up to find man sleeping in bed department

Police arrest man for trespassing but discover he is already sought after for unrelated crime

- [Chiara Giordano](#)
- Wednesday 20 November 2019 14:30



File image of the IKEA logo outside one of its stores. (*Michel Porro/Getty Images*)

[Ikea](#) staff in [Sweden](#) turned up at work to find a [fugitive](#) sleeping in the store's bed department.

Workers at one of the furniture retailer's shops in the city of [Uppsala](#), north of [Stockholm](#), contacted the police after finding the 25-year-old man fast asleep on Wednesday morning.

They were not aware he was wanted by police when they reported the incident.

However when officers arrived shortly after 5am they discovered a warrant was out for his arrest over an unrelated matter.

Police spokesperson Tobias Ahlen said the man had stayed in the warehouse after closing.

He was arrested for trespassing and taken to Stockholm where the other crime he was suspected of is believed to have happened, the press officer added.

No details of the crime he was originally wanted for have been released.

In December 2016, Ikea warned people not to try sleeping in its stores after closing time, advising that anyone who did so would be considered a trespasser.

The warning came after a string of incidents in 2016, which saw about 10 illegal "sleepovers" at branches across the world including in the UK, the US, Canada, Belgium, the Netherlands, Japan, Australia and Poland.

A viral trend sometimes referred to as "The Ikea Challenge" or the "24-hour Fort Challenge" appeared to have been borne out of two Belgian YouTubers hiding inside an Ikea in August 2016.

Swedish peak downgraded to second highest as climate change shrinks it to ‘lowest height ever measured’

Glacial peak of Kebnekaise rapidly losing height in warming Arctic

- [Harry Cockburn](#)
- Thursday 5 September 2019 12:24

Sinking: climate change has melted snow and ice on Kebnekaise’s glaciated southern peak and made the mountain’s tallest point shrink (*Grapetonix (CC BY-SA 3.0)*)

Almost a hundred miles north of the [Arctic](#) Circle the slow struggle between two vast crags vying for the title of [Sweden](#)’s highest peak has been settled by [global warming](#).

The snow-capped southern peak of Sweden’s tallest mountain, Kebnekaise, has long been losing a battle with the same mountain’s rocky northern peak.

A rapidly warming climate has melted the southern glaciated peak and first brought it lower than its rival last year following the record heat during the summer of 2018.

But its second place has now been firmly established after new measurements show it has lost more height than ever, after another hot Arctic summer.

“This is the lowest height ever measured,” said Gunhild Rosqvist, a geography professor at [Stockholm University](#). “Over the past 50 years, the height of Kebnekaise’s southern peak has decreased by 24 meters.”

The annual survey was carried out earlier this week. It revealed the northern peak now stands at 2,096.8 meters – making it 1.2 meters taller than the southern peak, which has melted away to 2,095.6 meters.

It is unwelcome news for amateur hikers wishing to reach the highest point in Sweden, as the old record holder was a much easier climb – possible for anyone with the right clothing and reasonable fitness.

The new tallest peak is a difficult rocky precipice which only capable climbers can scale.

Warming has been exacerbated in polar regions due to Arctic amplification – the disproportionate warming of the planet at its northern extreme as a result of increasing levels of greenhouse gases.

This week the rising global temperatures were said to constitute a “death sentence” for [Greenland](#) as [record quantities of ice are being lost](#) from glaciers.

“We’re losing Greenland, it’s really a question of how fast,” Dr Jason Box from the Geological Survey of [Denmark](#) told *The Independent*.

One glacier he measured had shrunk 9m in depth over the summer, he added.

