



Birka Banner

BIRKA LODGE, VASA ORDER OF AMERICA

MARCH/APRIL, 2017

Message from the Chair

Greetings to all Birka members. Daylight savings time has arrived with an extra hour of sunlight each day. Spring is not far behind. Our January and February meetings were well attended and enjoyed by all. Thank you to the Refreshment Committees for January and February for the delicious food we enjoyed. Thank you to Ron Holmgren, who provided the Cultural Report and continued discussion on "An Open Letter." Treasurer, Mike Swanson, reported that Birka's Jul Fair was very successful with after Jul Fair sales still coming in! Great job, everyone! Thank you.

The **March 24 meeting** will be our annual **Påsk (Easter celebration)**. The Kitchen Committee, chaired by Ann-Marie Breuer, will provide the refreshments. Refreshments will be served at **7:00 p.m.** and with desserts served following the meeting, which begins at **7:30 p.m.** There will be a cultural program provided by Bob Purzyki, from the Ipswich Historical Society. His topic will be a presentation about Hawaii. You are encouraged to wear a hat/bonnet with any Hawaiian, Easter or Scandinavian theme. Prizes will be awarded. Please plan on attending to support your lodge and officers.

The **April 28 meeting** will be the Installation of Officers. District Deputy Dawn Briggs and her team from Nordic Lodge in Worcester will conduct the installation ceremonies. Other guests from the District Executive Board will also attend. Please plan on coming to welcome guests from the District and to enjoy Vasa fellowship and refreshments. We will have a raffle, provided by Gus and Roz Blomgren, and the new Birka program booklets will be available.

We are in need of refreshments following the Installation of Officers in April and also to help set up the hall. If you did not sign up in February for your contribution to this potluck dinner, please do so at the March meeting or give me a call. Donations of food – sandwiches, sweets, and so on – are needed. My phone number is **781-933-4949**. Thank you in advance. Your help is appreciated.

The Activities Committee, along with the auditors, met on **February 19** and finished planning the upcoming lodge events for 2017–2018. Plans for the August outing were discussed. More information will come later. Thank you to Marlys Mahajan for hosting the meeting. The next Activities Committee meeting will be held on **April 9 at 3:00 p.m.** at the home of Ann-Marie Breuer in Hamilton.

Annual dues of \$25 for 2016 are now due. Please mail your dues to: Financial Secretary, Linda Boylan, 12 Upton Lane, Boxford, MA 01921. You can make your check payable to: **Birka Lodge No. 732. Please consider this your dues notice for 2017.** It would be great if all dues were paid by April of this year.

I look forward to seeing you at the **March 24 Easter meeting and the April 28 meeting for the Installation of Officers.** Please mark the dates on your calendars! Your presence is requested to give encouragement to your officers and make more secure the future of our Order.

Happy Easter!

In truth and unity, *Linda Christianson*, PDM, Chairman

Note New Time for our March meeting

Come early to our March meeting, because all refreshments, except desert, will be served at 7 p.m. It's an experiment as we try to end our meetings a bit earlier.

Hearty Birka Birthday wishes to these members:

... in March

1 Ethel Johnson	19 Mathz Olsson
2 Robert Sandborn	22 Kristine DiPillo
7 Linda Flanagan	27 Marilyn Kelly
10 Carol Landoni	30 Diane Forsstrom
13 Karole Johns	31 Daniel Guidara
14 Ellen Sandberg	

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 COMMITTEES

Påsk (Easter Celebration) March 24

Ann-Marie Breuer, chair
Sue and Mike Bagnulo
Diane Forsstrom
Matilda Halloran
Carol and Bob Landoni
Chris Lovgren
Inga-Lill Olsson

Installation of Officers April 28

Everyone is on the committee this month!
Don't forget to sign up for your fair share.

Reminder: 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 March meeting?

... 'round the lodge

Calling all college-age and high school members who will be in college next year! Scholarship time is here. If you have been a member since September, 2016, you are eligible to apply for a scholarship for next school year. Ask Linda Boylan for an application and details. The deadline for the application is April 30th, and scholarships will be awarded in early May.

Summer is coming and the Activities Committee is looking for ideas for our summer outing.

If you know a place that the group might like to visit, bring your idea to the March meeting. The Activities Committee has come up with a few possibilities, but new ideas are welcome.



Website Remember to check [Birka Lodge's website](#). A big Birka thanks goes out to Richard Lilja for maintaining this site for us.



Cape Ann Symphony's Scandinavian Spectacular

Our Lodge has been invited to attend a rare concert dedicated to Scandinavian music. Works by Sibelius, Greig, and Nielson will be performed. The concert will be held on Saturday, May 20, at 8 p.m. in the Manchester-Essex High School Auditorium, 36 Lincoln Street, Manchester-by-the-Sea. Our Lodge members will have a 25% reduction in the ticket price, which will bring the cost to \$30 per ticket. If interested, please sign up with Ann-Marie Breuer.

Calendar of Events



March

24 Lodge meeting, Påsk celebration and speaker Judith Hallberg of the Ipswich Historical Society, **7:00 p.m.**

April

9 Activities committee meeting, Ann-Marie Breuer's home, **3:00 p.m.**
28 Lodge meeting, Installation of Officers, **7:30 p.m.**

Reminders . . .

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

Change of Address Please notify Recording Secretary, Judy Tanzer, of any address changes, either by writing her at 3 Anthony Road, Hamilton, MA 01982, or by phoning her at 978-468-7407. Thank you!



Göteborg: Sweden's Second Largest City

[Göteborg](#), or [Gothenburg](#) as the U.S. travel industry calls it, is located on the southwest coast of Sweden, where the [Götaälv](#) meets the Baltic Sea. (See map at the below.) The city is the largest port in the Nordic countries, but still retains much of its old world charm, primarily in the areas around the canals.

First on your list of places to visit in Göteborg is the fish market, [Feskekorka](#), which translates literally as "fish church." It was built in 1874 in a style that resembles a church, hence the name. It has remained a fish market, but now includes many wonderful seafood restaurants and cafes.

[Haga](#) is a charming old world neighborhood of Göteborg, brimming with shops such as boutiques, bakeries, cafes, and even a chocolatier. A lovely place for strolling!

For the nature lover, the chain of islands off the coast, [Skärgården](#), make a pleasant getaway. The islands remain car-free to the delight of hikers and bikers. History buffs would enjoy the [Älvsborg Fortress](#) and the [Skansen Kronan](#). They were built to defend the city against possible Danish incursions in earlier centuries.

So there is much to see and do in the city by the sea!



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

The following is from ingebretsens.com

Springtime & Easter in Scandinavia!

After the long nights of winter, Easter and the arrival of spring are truly celebrated in Scandinavia. Whether they spend their Easter holidays in the city welcoming the return of the spring flowers or they escape to the mountains taking advantage of the longer spring days to get in the last of the season's skiing, Easter is a time of renewal for Scandinavians, celebrated with good food and good company.



No matter what the setting, Scandinavians are known for their hospitality and charming table settings. Their colorful and coordinated tables make the time spent with family and friends more memorable. Fresh flowers, festive napkins and, of course, candles add to the spirit of these gatherings.



Sit down and enjoy a traditional Scandinavian breakfast. Try the Finnish Pulla Braid topped with Gjetost or Cloudberry Preserves.

Olof Swedish crisp rolls are the perfect accompaniment to soft-boiled eggs.

Top it all off with a good strong cup of Swedish coffee - perhaps Egg Coffee.

Beautiful table settings serve as a wonderful complement to holiday meals. Easter of course means eggs. Whether simply prepared as in the ever popular hard and soft-boiled eggs or something more elaborate as in a Nøkkelost Quiche, eggs always play a prominent role in a Scandinavian breakfast buffet.

A Påskris (Easter Tree) is adorned with brightly colored feathers and miniature Easter ornaments.



A variety of hand-crafted, brightly colored ornaments are available at Ingebretsen's. The Easter witch or påskkäringar is a Swedish tradition. It was once believed that witches were about at Easter, so all doors were kept shut to keep them out. The witch survives as an Easter motif today.





Children dress up as *påskkäringar* with bright kerchiefs on their heads and sporting a broomstick. They go from door to door wishing all Glad Påsk - Happy Easter. And so from our store to your home, Glad Påsk!

The following is from the [Nordstjernen](#)

Palm Sunday, the start of Holy Week

A Swedish Easter: The symbols, the food, the traditions

Easter in Swedish is called “påsk” and comes from the Hebrew word “pesah” meaning passing. Easter and its preceding holy days [have a unique history in Sweden](#). It is a decidedly yellow season. The yellow color has nothing to do with the liturgical colors for Easter, which are black, white and violet. No, Easter's yellow comes from the fact that many of the symbols we have for Easter seem to be yellow (as opposed to Christmas for instance, which is red): the feathers, the daffodils and the chickens on the Easter cards. Still checking all of the numbers but 1,500 tons herring, 2,000 tons of eggs and SEK 1.5 billion on flowers ... Easter, is in Sweden a serious holiday for sure. Keep track of things Swedish, in Sweden and in the U.S. by subscribing to [The Swedish Newspaper in America](#)

Påskägget

The Easter egg (påskägget) is a paper or plastic egg with pictures of chickens on it, which gets filled with candy and is given to children. Since Swedes don't have an Easter Bunny in their celebration, these eggs are very important to children. But the egg is also the main Easter symbol in that it embodies the message of death and resurrection. The egg's shell is a symbol of the grave, and what it contains is a symbol of new life, the chicken growing inside eventually opens its own grave and walks out. ([How to create beautiful Easter eggs](#))

ADVERTISEMENT

Påskris

The colorful twigs with feathers (påskris) that you see everywhere in Sweden at this time of year, has less jolly implications. Bound by birch twigs, the påskris was in the 17th century used for Long Friday's flagellation. Today you buy it at the local market and tie colorful feathers to it. You can also decorate your påskris with blown out eggs that you dye yourself, or you can buy plastic eggs. Roosters, hens, chickens and witches are also used to decorate not only the påskris but your house as well.

Påskkäringar

The “påskkärring” or “påskakärring,” is an old tradition that has its roots in the activities of Maundy Thursday. According to folklore, all the world's bad spirits were let lose the instant Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus. During the 17th century the belief in the devil created witch hunts, and women (mostly) were executed for having participated in the banquet of the devil on Maundy Thursday. Where did it all take place? On the island of Blåkulla (also known as Blå Jungfrun) situated in the Kalmar Strait of the Baltic Sea. The witches flew there on brooms. Swedish children dress up like påskkäringar complete with grandma's dress, apron and a kerchief tied under the chin, they paint rosy cheeks and freckles on their faces and therefore don't much resemble the American picture of a witch. A påskkärring also carries a broom, an old-fashioned coffee pot and a basket, and walks around the neighborhood, Halloween-style, giving out drawings in exchange for candy. When this tradition began is hard to tell, it seems it started in western Sweden some time in the beginning of the 1800's.