

FINN-BRITS

MAGAZINE

Summer 2025



Cover photo by
© Vivian K, Unsplash
Brown wooden dock on lake
during daytime in Finland



GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

SUMMER 2025



Dear reader

We have a pleasure to introduce you our brand new "webhotel",

On the site you will find among other things FinnBrits Magazines from over last ten years. These are very valuable memories of the events.

Our main activities during the academic years have been The annual autumn seminar, the high schools debating competitions, the Finn-Brits Magazine, Theatre Productions of the Finn-Brits Players, and speakers from the UK.

Over the years, the Ministry of Education has substantially supported our projects. Unfortunately this year

the support was cut by 100 %. This is a catastrophe to all cultural societies.

For us the consequences will be unclear but we will develop new and different ways to carry on cooperation between our local societies.

Our webhotel will be in future the source of all kind of information. You will find our Magazines there.

Wish you all a fantastic summertime!

Marjut
Chair

Federation of Finnish-British Societies



SAVE THE DATE: AUTUMN SEMINAR
Friday 26.09.2025, 12:00-17:00



Narcissus 'Tete-a-Tete' on my balcony.
Photo: D. Stokes



Scilla siberica's electric blue flowers light up the spring garden. **Photo:** D. Stokes

A Gardener's Springtime Delights, near Turku

by David Stokes

As my Turku winter garden has changed to spring, the wealth of spring garden bulbs, corms and tubers brings a welcome burst of paintbox colours to excite the eye, nose and ears!

I say one's nose and ears too, as few people get down on their hands and knees to sniff the delightful warm honey scent of snowdrops on a cold and bright late March or early April day, or when a couple of weeks later the

purple flowers of crocuses are buzzing with bumblebees. Crocuses, which are corms, have a warm spicy scent, so there are plenty of reasons to get close and personal with all these hardy spring bulbous plants!



Closeup of a blue *Crocus vernus* and bumblebee. **Photo:** P. Räsänen



The wild white flowered wood anemone or *Anemone nemorosa* lights up any woodland garden. **Photo:** D. Stokes



Crocuses and bumblebee. **Photo:** P. Räsänen



An unusual *Galanthus nivalis* or snowdrop showing yellow patches on its petals rather than green **Photo:** D. Stokes

Getting up close to these spring flowers, particularly crocuses, also allows one to study their intricacies in detail. You can see the pollen bearing male stamens that consist of a filament or stalk, topped with their orange pollen holding anthers at their tips. It is this part that the bees go for,

then on their way to the next flower some pollen can find its way to the tall female stigma, right in the centre of the flower, which will grow down a tube it makes into the ovule or ovary to fertilise the growing seeds for the following year. Have a closer look next

time you see a crocus and work out which part is which.

It's not just the flower structure that has amazing detail. Often snowdrops (lumikello) which are bulbs, if you look carefully at the two different photos of snowdrops in this article, they are different too. One has green patches



Mixed colours of *Hepatica nobilis* in the Runeberg museum garden. **Photo:** S. Widjeskog

on the outer petals, while the other has yellow patches on the petals. There are dozens of different named varieties of our common European snowdrop, or using its scientific name, *Galanthus nivalis*. Its translates from the old Greek and Latin as “milk flower of the snows”. Like galaxy means “milkyway”

Once you realise how varied these Galathus are, you may want to start collecting them! Then you have become a “Galathophile” A lover of snowdrops! In the UK, hundreds of “galathophiles” will part with a great deal of money to increase their collections.

Of course our spring gardens need more than snowdrop collections and one type of crocus. There are many species of crocus and hundreds of named cultivated crocuses to collect.

Then there are the wild white wood anemones (valkovuokko) or *Anemone nemorosa*. These glorious spring plants, growing from little but long tuberous swollen black roots can be very variable too. With white single and double forms, a wonderful blue variety called ‘Robinsoniana’, named after the Victorian garden writer William Robinson who found it growing wild his local woods,

and lived in the same town of East Grinstead in Sussex where I grew up. Then there is a delicate pink form and then slightly later in the spring, the cross-bred form, producing the rare, bright sulphur-yellow-flowers of *A. nemorosa* x *ranunculoides*, which is slightly larger than its parent plants. This is a plant I grew well in Piikkiö, but lost when I moved house.

Then without doubt the star of our bulbous spring flowers, all the 3 main forms of our blue anemone or sinivuokko or *Hepatica nobilis*. The blue forms, from light to dark can be grouped together. They will cross pollinate and scatter their seeds, so each year slightly different colours will pop up and surprise you.

Then, to my mind is the standout form of this anemone, the glowing magenta variety that Fredrika Runeburg loved in the 1860’s, and that still grows in her museum garden in Porvoo. Then, to lift the colour palette, the rare white form can be mixed between these two other forms to produce a tapestry of colour under a small tree, such as an apple tree as Fredrika Runeberg did. (See the photo of the Runeberg Museum garden in Porvoo)

Next are the scilla’s. These siberian squills that can make extensive carpets of bright blue, are also variable, with not just the typical vivid electric blue flowers but, white and pink forms too of *Scilla siberica*.

To finish off my collection early spring garden bulbs, are the daffodills or Narcissus. Of course the are between 50 and 200 hundreded species, but perhaps a thousand named cultivars are grown too. Of course we tend to buy the cultivar (cultivated variety) ‘Tete-a-Tete’ as that is the most available, but I bought the form called ‘Minnow’ last week and it is now potted up and almost ready to flower on my front steps, with white outer petals and a pale yellow perianth or inner petals.

Later on in spring, mostly in May, are the myriad forms of species and cultivated forms of tulips, but that is a whole other gardeners delight!

David Stokes 8.4.2025

(Note all photos taken between 28.3. and 8.4.25)



A close up of a single blue *Hepatica nobilis* or sinivuokko flower displays its flowering male and female parts clearly. The stamens are tall, while the many very short female stigmas are in the middle. **Photo:** D. Stokes



A close-up of the typical green coloured *Galanthus nivalis* or snowdrop. **Photo:** D. Stokes

Poems



Easter eggs. **Photo:**
Yana Gorbunova

EASTER WITCHES

The witches are out
In town they're about
Looking for sweets and chocolates

They carry a pot
To put in a lot
Of wonderful sweets and chocolates

They wear coloured scarves
Around their heads
Their faces are dotted in scarlet

They have little cloaks
Around their shoulders, arms, hands
And strong little legs

They knock on the door
Once, twice, maybe more
To wish us a happy Easter

They then sing a song
A short one, not long
For neighbours, family and friends...

You know what they want
These small witches, not tall:

Perhaps a few coins
Or some eggs
But above all...

Delicious sweeties and chocolates!

Alasdair R.W. Pollock

NORTHERN LIGHTS

Standing by the window
Looking out at the night sky
Starry, fresh, clear

High above the woods
A strange yet natural radiance
Commands the attention

Mesmerising
Hypnotising
Enchanting
Dancing
Quivering
Shimmering

Against a deep, dark blue heaven
The beams captivate the onlooker
For a good half hour

As if to proclaim
A long-awaited farewell to winter
As if to bid spring
A long-anticipated welcome

In the silence of late evening
Early in April

Alasdair R.W. Pollock

GOOD DEEDS

I spent a couple of hours
clearing snow from the path
and thought how satisfying it is,
how good when the implement
eases the powdery material to the side
and how when a big heap builds on the blade
you can feel it testing your strength, the heave
and the heart beating faster. And how
happy it makes you, accomplishing
this kindness also for your neighbours.
And how good deeds come easy – if only
they all did. Now I'll brush
and grit the step for the sake
of the boy who'll deliver the paper
at two o'clock in the morning. He won't slip
and his round will be that much easier
and quicker. There.

Donald Adamson



A green and white aurora over a
frozen river at Muonio, Finland.
Photo: Stephan Deinhamer

LATE EVENING IN MAY

A month of increasing verdant beauty
Replacing the dullness of dusty April

Trees begin to display their true colours
Birches predominant
Gently rustling in the wind
At nightfall beneath a milky, blue sky

Not a soul out on the running track
In the wood by the Old Harbour
Across the garden of the Old Brewery

Always a sensation
Of great anticipation
As summer approaches
As spring progresses

Slowly
Surely
Tentatively
Revealing her true colours

Now sporadic high-pitched chirping from birds calling
Oblivious, it seems, to dusk or twilight
Now occasional low-profile rumbling of cars passing
Indifferent, it appears, to direction or destination

Nature continues her emerald exhibition

Unperturbed
Undisturbed

Regardless

Alasdair R.W. Pollock



Summer sun. **Photo:**
Tim Bernhard

FLOWER TO FLOWER

'No man is an island?' It's true,
but more I'd say we are joined,
man, woman, every one of us
as in the daisy chain I saw
crowning the head of a girl
on a beach by a lake once
on Saint John's Day.

So lovely was the sight
with light glinting on the waves
and always when midsummer comes
I remember her,
that face, that hair, that head
and the flowers turning upward
to the sun.

Donald Adamson

BEFORE VAPPU

The close of April
Light spells of rainfall
A feature recent, typical

Dust unwelcome
Vanishes almost unnoticed
Though mounds of snow remain

Through the window
The trees stand bare, dark
Beneath a sky overcast at dusk

The running track stands out
A bright carpet of sawdust
Abandoned for the day

A series of isolated tones
At controlled, regular intervals
Resonating through the damp air

A bird hops down
The clumpy yellow lawn
Revealing faint hues of green

Along the Old Harbour road
A distant passing engine runs
Ahead of the Pavilion's opening

Quite suddenly
A quiet inspired reply
Is heard to the original song

Two complementing melodies
A dialogue in perfect harmony

Light has been replaced
By lights for now

Yet nature's song continues
A little longer

Alasdair R.W. Pollock

OUR CHRISTMAS SKY

At Christmas we're like a tree
made beautiful, garlanded
with those we have loved.

We bear our dear ones easily.
They are weightless as breath,
lighter than baubles or tinsel.

They need no words. Nor do we.
We talk to them in the wind
hushing the pines.

They do not flash on-off, on-off
but shimmer in the darkness,
stars in our Christmas sky.

Donald Adamson

The Finnbrit Writing Competition 2025

14 March 2025

THE RESULTS OF THE FINNBRI WRITING COMPETITION 2025

The Federation of Finnish-British Societies annual English Writing Competition was held for the 42nd time on the 15th and 16th of January 2025. This year, the participants were students who started upper secondary school in 2024. The essay titles were posted on the Helsinki Finnish-British Society website for download on the first competition day. Teachers then sent in the best essays of their schools, and in all 37 shortlisted texts were received from a total of 19 schools throughout Finland.

The jury was composed of five judges, including representatives from the Finnish-British Society and the Association of Teachers of English in Finland. The judges gave first prize to Venni Kallikari from Tammerkosken lukio for a philosophical reflection on ways to nourish one's soul, a text that impressed the jury with its elaborate language and down-to-earth examples. A special mention from the judges goes to Elina Widmeyer from Lahden yhteiskoulun lukio for a touching story of seeing light at the end of the tunnel, a person's last visions before death.

The standard of essays was as usual extremely high and the many years of English studies showed in the essays. The judges would like to congratulate the winner and the runners-up and thank all those who took part in the competition, not forgetting the English teachers who organized the competition in so many schools this year.

Päivi Kuivalainen

Chair, Essay Writing Competition

THE WRITING COMPETITION ESSAY TOPICS WERE:

1. How do you nourish your soul?
2. I love lists
3. Light at the end of the tunnel
4. My favourite person
5. The culture shock of my life

First prize	500€ for a trip to the UK
Venni Kallikari	Tammerkosken lukio, Tampere
Runner-up prizes	Books
Elina Widmeyer	Lahden yhteiskoulun lukio
Iiris Olivia Harma	Sibelius lukio, Helsinki
Susanna Joensuu	Otaniemen lukio, Espoo
Nuutti Jussila	Vihdin lukio
Arobynn Kaski	Jyväskylän normaalikoulu
Kielo Kleemola	Kuusankosken lukio
Minea Koivula	Martinlaakson lukio, Vantaa
Ronja Mäkelä	Alppilan lukio, Helsinki
Saana Ripatti	Alppilan lukio, Helsinki
Inka Tanskanen	Tampereen klassillinen lukio



Kallikari, Venni

1.

Keeping my soul nourished is extremely important to me. I have gone through trial and error trying to figure out the best ways for me to take care of my mind. While I haven't yet mastered the art of soul nourishing, I have found ways to support my mental health. I have come up with an acronym that helps me get through life easier: GAS.

The G in GAS stands for good food. There is a strong connection with what we eat and how we feel. One can't expect to have a nourished soul if their own body feels malnourished. Everybody should have their own comfort food. Mine has to be the smoked salmon soup my grandmother makes. I keep a stash of her soup in my freezer for when I'm feeling blue. Just the thought of that flavour-packed broth hitting my tongue makes my mouth water.

Even though it is important to treat ourselves, we can't forget about the people around us. That is why the A stands for acts of service. Doing something good for others gives me purpose in life. It can be as simple as complimenting a stranger on their outfit. Because altruistic acts require so little energy, I can't think of an excuse not to do them daily. It warms my soul when something I've done has made someone else's day shine just a little brighter.

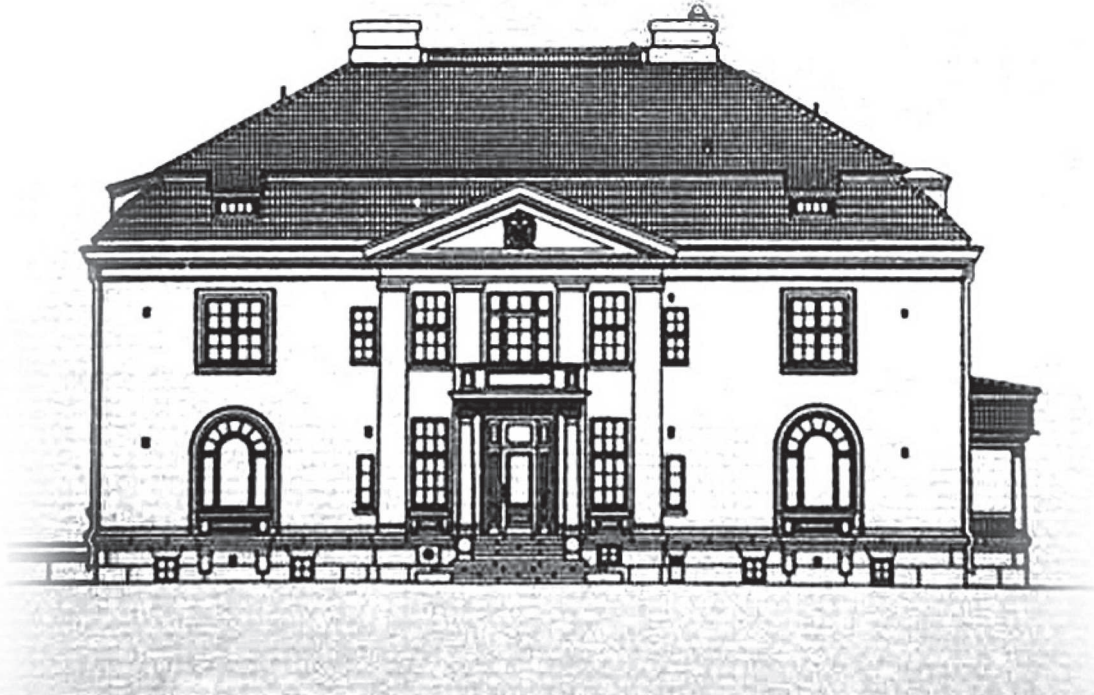
The S in GAS is actually silent. Being in total silence lets me really appreciate the simple things in life. There are so many beautiful things that we take for granted, such as the sound of our own beating heart. Sometimes it's important to just stop and appreciate the fact that we are alive.



THE FEDERATION SEMINAR

25 OCTOBER 2024

by Anthony Shaw



If it's autumn in Helsinki it must be time for the annual Federation Seminar, and even though this year it was held slightly later in the season, as the photos testify it was a cracking day, and needless to say a cracking event.

The theme this year was Spirit of Place, with a specific geographic focus on the north east of England as described below. On the Friday in question there was no doubt of the portents for the day - the early morning sparkled and shone over the Finnish capital, a single white swan glided among the ducks on the mirror surface of Töölönlahti, and despite the smell of hot asphalt and sounds of construction work all around the centre the scene was set for an inspiring gathering of Anglophiles.

The Federation has been fortunate to be able to host this event at the Residence of the Ambassador of the UK for over 10 years, and what more spectacular place can you find to consider the spirit of place than the brow of a hill looking out over the outer reaches of Helsinki harbour, the same view that Helsinki residents saw as in

1855 they watched the British Fleet under Admiral Napier's successor Richard Dundas bombard the Russian forces on Suomenlinna - Viapori in those days. Probably unaware of this superb view just down the road the participants first gathered around the entrance, a sort of porters' lodge in veteran parlance, but so began the process of mixing and networking that is at the heart of this gathering.

The speakers this year all related their own perspectives on the role and significance of certain places in their lives. The two guests from Britain, both based in Carlisle in the north-west, spoke of their gradual gravitation to the north of England. David Stokes, the Chairperson of Turku Finnbrits, gave the keynote address looking at the very special role that Northumbria has played in the ancient history of England, as well as in his own life.

Helen Weston and her Places in Life and Literature

The focus of Helen's talk was in fact the book recently published, titled *Silence Interrupted*, a novel set in a convent

located somewhere in the Midlands, the same area where Helen herself spent 5 years in a closed community soon after returning from her stint as teacher-secretary in Jakobstad/Pietarsaari in western Finland. Her reflections on the lengthy process of constructing the novel, which started before lockdown and getting to the printer earlier in 2024, revealed the role that certain places played in the creation of the plot and the characters. She herself had struggled to make the final commitment to her order, and on leaving this very sheltered life faced the unenviable task of creating a life for herself outside it.

Further academic studies and work as a therapist and counsellor still hadn't resolved certain issues that had troubled her since her time in the convent, a sense of justice and restitution. Contemplating these led her to contact some publishers - a novel was a possible vehicle and a convent was a suitable setting for a story. At this stage the plot was a vague idea, and though the location was clearly a convent the possibility of a murder was nowhere on the agenda.



Ambassador *Laura Davies* and *Helén Weston*



Tony Shaw and *Liisa Eskola*

Helen described the convoluted process of fiction writing, how the vague initial idea becomes more concrete as the characters start to take shape in the initial scenarios. To bring the unfamiliar environment of a closed all-female community closer to her audience, she selected to place her central character as a short term retreat visitor to the convent, during which time she becomes concerned about a friend who had entered the convent sometime earlier, and who seemed to have disappeared. And so the characters involved in this disappearance and those willing to help investigate it started to materialise, hence a traditional struggle between good and bad, right and wrong. A murder mystery was born!

The writing process took three years to complete, some of the time conveniently available as a result of the Covid pandemic. The process took Helen back to the time she herself spent in the convent, and forced her to dig deep into those memories to find the sources of her own dissatisfaction, which became a focus for the plot of the book. 'Things come up when you go deep down that you didn't know were there.' The confines of the convent meant that dialogues were only possible in certain places and

within the routine of the community, which itself presented her with a certain structure, as well as inspiring the final choice to title, now available through Troubadour Publishing.

David Stokes and the Kingdom of Northumbria, A Different Country

Ask most modern-day Brits what they know about Northumbria and you're likely to get an answer like 'Isn't that another name for Northumberland?' or 'Well, it's somewhere up north isn't it?' In fact it's been a historically hotly disputed and at the same time unclearly defined region between Scotland and England, which at its height included an area 5 or 6 times larger than the current 'ceremonial county' Northumberland, stretching down the east coast from Berwick on Tweed to Newcastle – Vera Stanhope country..

Some readers may remember the report of the evening that David hosted in his own home in Turku in spring 2023, at which he introduced prominent historical and tourist sites across the area. For the Seminar audience, he dived into a historical analysis of the this area that contemporary commentator Rory

Stewart sees as encapsulating most vividly the difference, and similarity, between Englishness and Scottishness.

David started with the feature of this area that most historians consider put Northumbria on the map, the building of the 120 kilometre wall across the country, from coast to coast, commissioned by and named after the Emperor Hadrian. Its purpose at the time, in the second century CE, was to mark the northern boundary of the Roman Empire, and was the location for the largest Roman military garrisons in the north of Britain. Despite the chaos that followed the withdrawal of foreign troops with the collapse of the Empire in the period after 400 CE, the concentration of troops and supporting infrastructure established this area of Britain as an important focus of culture and technology.

However the importance of this area for David, the source of his topophilia (love for place) comes with the influx of people from Northern Europe, the Angles in particular who moved with their improved agricultural and metal technologies to the north of England. Combined with the introduction of Christianity to northern Britain by Celtic monks from Ireland such as Columba and later Aidan who



Helén and David Weston



Alasdair Pollock

established his influence in the area and started the construction of abbeys that still can be found there, Northumbria became an area renowned for his learning and civility. This led to the establishment of two kingdoms in the north-east, Bernicia and Deira based at the Iron Age fortress at Bamburg and York respectively, whose military and cultural rivalry can also still be seen in artifacts and texts preserved locally and in the British Museum in London. The most notable of these are the gloriously illuminated texts of the Lindisfarne Gospels. Created between 715 and 725, they are regarded as the greatest artwork of the Northumbrian Golden Age. After the two kingdoms united as the Kingdom of Northumbria in 634, it was just another 30 years before the Northumbrian Anglo-Saxons took up the expanding Roman Catholic faith found in southern England and left the Celtic Church behind, and the rest as they say is history!

As a former resident of the south of England, David's love of this area

is partly based upon his experience living near Berwick on Tweed, the town on the modern border of Scotland and England. He used geographer Tim Cresswell's concept of Place to explain this. This includes the physical location (the varying borders of Northumbria, the moors, the monasteries etc), the particular attributes or locale (the illustrated texts from those monasteries, the relics etc) and the Sense of Place, that is the emotional attachment that gives a place meaning to the viewer. Hence David's very personal presentation of this rather remote and often neglected part of Britain brought the area vividly to life for the audience, as we sat in the hallowed home of the British Ambassador to Finland, 1600 km away from Northumbria. Indeed he is using just this era for the setting of his upcoming historical novel *The Dawning of the Light*, exploring the development of an English identity amid the rise of Christianity and waning of pagan beliefs in this area.

More news of this publication to follow.

David Weston and his take on 'The Spirit of Place'

David Weston was born two years before Britain was plunged into the turmoil of the Second World War, having lost his clergyman father when he was only two weeks old. In his first memory of the 'spirit of place' he told us of how his love of gardening and exploring the natural world around his home filled his life and gave him a strong sense of the presence of God from a very early age.

He was sent away to a boarding school many miles from home at the age of nine, but the same love of the natural world - birds, butterflies and even a pet owl - sustained him when books and lessons didn't appeal. He also got used to attending two services a day in chapel, though he had no desire to train for the priesthood, despite his family's long history of association with the Church of England.

After leaving school, he did two years of National Service with the British Army in Cyprus during the independence struggles of the Greek population in the late 1950s. The Anglican padres were more or less non-existent in his camp, but he never lost his sense of the presence of God as he explored the shoreline and the forests and became acquainted with the butterflies and birds of Northern Cyprus. He never fired a shot in anger, so had a lot of time to think about his future, but, on his return to England, he found he had little idea of what to do next and just had a strong sense of waiting for something. It was a sermon by a Benedictine monk, the Abbot of Nashdom in a London church that suddenly provided him with the answer, when he felt an overwhelming call to become a Benedictine monk in the abbey in Buckinghamshire.

It was 1960 and for the first four years he followed the traditional Benedictine way, finding great peace in the structured life of silent prayer, manual work and seven services a day

sung in plainsong. Then the impact of the Second Vatican Council hit, with its insistence on the 'appropriate renewal' of religious life, and, although Nashdom was a Church of England community, they followed the Catholic Benedictines in a process of radical modernisation. Within a few years elected Abbot, he found himself torn between the opposing forces of the older, traditional monks and the new ones coming in.

It was in one of his progressive outreach programmes in a poor area of South London that as Abbot Wilfrid he met a young nun also keen to reconcile the archaic, near medieval world of her own monastic order with the social changes afoot in post-war Britain. They were both looking at a very similar dilemma. Five years and many hundreds of letters later, David married this same nun, now using her own name Helen, and they set about finding a way to earn a living, he as a lowly curate and she resuming her former role as an English teacher at a local college.

After four years in a Lancashire parish, David was asked to be the Bishop's Chaplain in Carlisle, near the Scottish border. Soon they moved to Carlisle Cathedral itself, where David was appointed a Residentiary Canon. They lived there for eleven years until David's retirement and for him it was the ultimate in 'spirit of place' as he lived a regular, liturgical life in the cathedral community, and at home alongside his wife and two sons!

The story of his life's journey was teased out of him in a Q and A session, where his interviewer was none other than his wife, the former Sister Helen Simon. Of course she knew the story as well as he did, and deftly probed and quizzed 'Mr Weston' on the details of his personal and pastoral life - an intriguing and entertaining end to the afternoon session of the Seminar.



Evening gathering at the Finnbrit office



Helén and David Weston



Ambassador Davies – a short introduction

by Anthony Shaw

In January, on the day before the launch of the Baltic Sentry programme in Helsinki using AI to monitor ships in the Baltic, a significant upgrade in NATO activity in the Baltic region, I met the British Ambassador to Finland. It's not everyday that one gets to meet a real live ambassador, let alone sit and attempt to get a feeling of what burns behind those lofty diplomatic phrases. So prior to my meeting I had drawn up a list of questions, checked her bio on the Embassy website, and even rung around some relatives with links to the foreign office.

I needn't have bothered. Having just shed my coat in the rather cramped Residency lobby, when down the stairs from the private section of Residency bounced the His Majesty's Representative to the Republic of Finland, Laura Davies, in her multicoloured, woollen winter socks! There was a degree of formality about our encounter but given those socks it was very minimal indeed!

Hence the encounter that followed also bounced from one topic to the next, with Ms Davies revealing a wealth of detail about her background, both as a young student in the UK and in forays abroad. If the stuffiness of the staff in the embassies of Le Carré's or Mick Herron's novels formed the basis of your expectations of a modern British ambassador, Ms Davies did a

great job in dispelling any fustiness, while also at the end of the report laying down the guidelines for the role of Britain's top diplomat in Finland.

Federation Magazine -

As you remember, we met briefly at the Federation Seminar back in October where there were some members from outside the capital. Have you got to see much of Finland yet?

Ambassador Laura Davies -

Obviously the bulk of my work is based here in Helsinki, but some weeks ago I was in Tampere where I met more of the local Society members. And well before that, before even I presented my credentials to the President (the process of becoming accepted as a full Ambassador) I spent a wonderful week with a family in Jyväskylä during my language induction here. I was introduced to the importance that so many Finns place upon their relationship with the natural world, with nature. My host was often up before dawn to enjoy the empty ski tracks and even watch the sun rise above a woody horizon.

FBM - so you will be joining the early morning skiers just outside the window here, doing circuits of Kaivopuisto Park?

ALD - I think that is unlikely this winter. I have been able to explore the area by bicycle, along some wonderful coastal routes near the centre. And then there was a rather special event that we hosted here for Finnish representatives and owners of Brompton bicycles (a famous British company which produces high quality folding bicycles). They are very well suited to Helsinki's terrain I think.

FBM - Let's go back to the start of your career Ambassador. I understand you graduated from Oxford University, and Merton College, with a degree in Classics and English. Did that take you straight into your career in the Foreign Office?

ALD - I didn't jump straight onto the diplomatic career ladder, not quite. Before university I'd spent a year studying at a French *École Supérieure*, one of those colleges for training French civil servants. It was genuinely tough but really enjoyable. Before deciding on a future career after university, I went to live in Munich for about a year and I ended up as tour guide, in English though. I also worked there in a PR company representing the video game avatar of Angelina Jolie. That was an insight into the commercial media world which I am very grateful for having.

FBM - Looking at your previous appointments I noticed that you had been the UK Permanent Delegate to UNESCO dealing with educational issues. Was that the path which led you to the Ambassador's job here, in a country renowned for its healthy education system?

ALD - I was the British delegate there, but to be honest it wasn't because of any specialisation in educational issues. I negotiated for the UK across the whole spectrum of UNESCO's mandate, and that included the commitment that Britain has made to improving global educational standards, particularly for women and minorities. My job there was related to educational governance, encouraging the implementation of effective legislation to tackle these issues.

Finland was an obvious partner on this at UNESCO, notwithstanding the concern I know there is here about the recent decline in PISA scores. The country needs no encouragement from Britain to promote educational standards! I think the flow of knowledge has been typically in the other direction in recent years, with British delegations visiting Finnish schools to glean insights into their efficiency and inclusivity.

FBM - What do you think Britain can still bring to the Nordic table which you can facilitate during your time here as Ambassador?

ALD - You probably know the old adage of diplomacy being all about building bridges, and I wholeheartedly endorse that. So I'm always happy to celebrate things which link the two countries, on a cultural level as well as commercial and military spheres. And this is why it's important for me to have contacts with the Finnish-British societies at a grass roots level, as well as more official diplomatic channels.

When it comes to the UK-Finland defence relationship my role here is somewhat different from that of my predecessor, Theresa Bubbear, who oversaw the transition of Finland as a partner in many Western European projects, to becoming a fully fledged member of NATO and a full participant in joint ventures in this area. In fact since my arrival, it's felt like the Embassy has hosted a General a week! One question which Finns have been asking us recently is how

good are you guys in the snow - and this has meant a number of training exercises here involving our forces working in tandem with the Finnish military.

And speaking of preparedness, we have to distinguish between hard security and hybrid security. The recent episodes of cable breakages have highlighted how the Baltic Sea is a critical arena for the West, and keeping the Baltic Sea safe is vital not just for the littoral countries here, but for Britain and the rest of Europe. We are certainly living in critical times here in Northern Europe.

FBM - Lastly, one question I have always asked the Ambassadors here, away from the pressures of frontline diplomacy, is what three books are to hand by your bedside to bring nocturnal relief?

ALD - First is *Musta kuin Ebeenpuu* (As Black as Ebony by Salla Simukka), part of my ongoing efforts to master the language - slow but steady going I think!* Then there's *Rough Justice*, 'a gripping insight into Britain's criminal courts', written by a friend and recent Old Bailey judge, Wendy Joseph KC, highly praised in the literary press and a very good insight into both critical social issues and the ways that they are tackled in British courts. And lastly a book intended originally for my daughter but which was left behind after the Christmas holidays; written by Rick Riordan it's one of the Percy Jackson series - pure fantasy escapism with the ancient Greek gods living in modern day USA!

FBM - Thank you Ambassador. One last thing I hadn't really expected to utilise in this interview, but which did occur in the early hours today, was a very vivid dream in which I was destined to meet a tall dark woman whom I had to ask whether she might pick up an oar while in Finland...

ALD - You mean a rower's oar?

FBM - Precisely. You know all about Finland being the land of an infinite number of lakes and islands..

ALD - It is strange that you ask. (Ed - he certainly didn't need reminding of that!) You surely didn't notice, but walking through the main lounge you were just a few inches away from an

oar, attached to a beam just above your head. It's the one piece of diplomatic baggage that I have carried with me in all my overseas postings, and which has sometimes caused some logistical challenges! It's a full length racing blade, with the names of the crew with which I won my 'blue'.** It was in 1997 when the women's race was still rowed at Henley on Thames, and when we were ingloriously beaten by a very strong Cambridge crew. So I am certainly the woman you were destined to meet from that dream! And if I can't ever impress any locals with my prowess on cross-country skis, I'm sure I wouldn't embarrass myself in a church boat.

FBM - Let's hope we get the chance to witness this in the not too distant future!

** See Ambassador Davies' own introduction to her work on Instagram at @ukinfinland, in Finnish!*

*** A 'blue' is a honour awarded to members of some British and Commonwealth university teams playing that year for their university. The standard of performance in sports blues is equivalent to that of a national team*

Laura Davies at Porvoo





SIMON DANNAPFEL

Full Health and Performance Coach

Your correspondent faces up to his expanding waistline and the encroaching lethargy of old age and tests the waters of serious fitness training after a brief encounter at his local gym with health and performance coach, or *Personal Trainer, Simon Dannapfel.*

Without meeting this man you might think he was just another of those itinerant Kiwis who, like his Aussie counterparts, wash up on Finnish shores as part of their investigation of their European roots. The reality, as it usually is, is more complicated. In fact he isn't a proper New Zealander at all, not holding a Kiwi passport, and his time spent in Europe hasn't all been spent in a VW camper or on the shores of any Greek islands. Of course he has been to those islands, but apart from his time in Finland his European roots are via his father's family near Hamburg, Germany.

First steps to fitness

Actually I first met Simon in early spring when I was down at my local gym, surprised to hear a native voice chatting with an Indian customer about weight-lifting machines. On the spur of the moment I asked him about the arrangements for some

personal training (PT work in the contemporary parlance), at which he looked at his smart phone, inevitably in his hand as he was talking. "You can go through the system somewhere on here, or you can try just talking to me!"

It's tempting to see here the contrast between the Finnish way of 'doing business' and the more informal, open-ended English style of working which is typically of less mechanised cultures. In fact Simon has spent most of his working life in Finland, using smart phones and all other technical aids available to his job as a PT or, as he seems to prefer to call himself, a fitness coach. We met for our more formal interview straight after I had skipped through the 60 minute workout session he had earlier advised for me in one of those rather expensive private sessions.

"I see myself more as a catalyst or advisor for change, rather than some sort of drill sergeant. I use my framework that I call Full Health to establish a broad picture of where people I work with are at, and then

look to start helping make changes in the most impactful way I can. This is not always with exercise at the gym; rather, it could be with sleep, nutrition, or even life changes." I had signed up for a 3-session course, hoping to find some tips for using some of the 40-odd torture devices, otherwise known as training machines, that fill the floor of my gym. Having traded some basic details and worked out the first scheduled meeting, at my first 'coaching session' I found myself sat across a table with Simon talking not so much about ergs and heartbeats but the best way to shed a couple of kilos, and how I had to pay him to help me make the decisions that would make it happen!

Relocation

Taking a few 'lessons' from a personal trainer is not so much about picking up a new hobby or class, but considering a reassessment of one's lifestyle. Simon has done this rather her a lot over the course of his 44 years, having relocated



Simon and the Finnish Mens Cricket Team 2024



Simon showing off some elite skills

34 or 35 times he calculates. He was in fact born just outside Hamburg and had moved to New Zealand as a two-year old. His father had emigrated there some year's prior and adopted citizenship. Due to his family's complicated history, his New Zealand mother having been born in Fiji, Simon couldn't get automatic citizenship and he still holds his original German passport, which made things much easier for him 25 years after that first move, when a new domicile suggested itself, in Finland.

It was actually his future wife Mirja who had suggested the move, the couple having met while Simon was working with an extra-mural programme at Victoria University in Wellington where she was studying. His own studies had been in human health and performance, and having been involved in school sports and athletics all his life, a career in the field was beckoning. What hadn't been planned was falling in love with a Finnish woman!

Moving to Helsinki from one's home country obviously places any immigrant in a potentially 'hostile environment', lacking any family or friendship structures. But Simon himself admits that he had a soft landing in Helsinki. After an exploratory visit, he moved to Helsinki in 'the noughties' and quickly found himself working in the Aussie bar in Kamppi. This was an ideal place to start making contacts in the local English-speaking community, which was to stand him in good stead for later applications.

When it came to those applications, it was a much harder task than finding the sort of casual work that foreigners

often do when first arriving in the country. It took Simon many months of filling in and sending off forms to which he received little or no response. A contact gained through a basketball coaching position at the club Sykki, led to a job as a 'sweat-face trainer' in a downtown gym. The other local selected trainers had all left after a matter of weeks, but now he doesn't regret being 'knocked back' in his career by about 10 years, starting basic training work again with customers straight off the streets.

Turn and face the change

Unlike some of his former study mates in Wellington who went on the careers in sports coaching and management in Australia, Simon in many respects is still on the lower rungs of any career ladder, working most days on punters like me, helping people work on improving general fitness. "But I don't regret having had in some ways to start my career over again. It gives you the chance to reassess your position, to consider alternatives and even better appreciate some moves." He sees his place in Finnish society as an entrepreneur as comparable to any career paths he might have had staying at home.

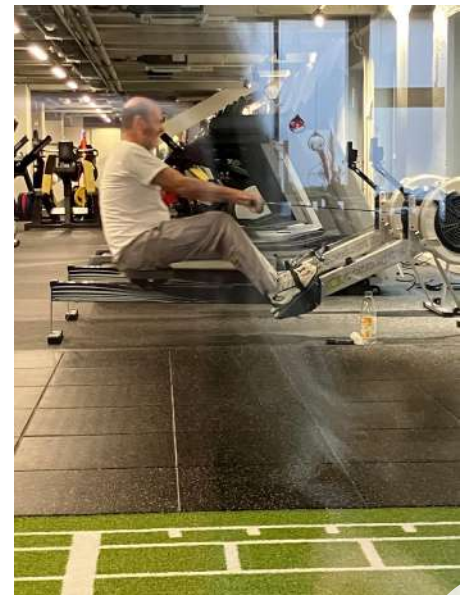
Having made the gestalt move of leaving his own homeland, he is happy to help others making moves to achieve new targets and options. In addition to the sessions 'at the sweat face' in the gym, he works as a coach at the International School of Helsinki and serves as the strength and conditioning coach for the Finnish Men's National Cricket team and previously with the championship

winning HIFK women's ice hockey team. "I hope to continue with this mix of working environments, which continuing as an entrepreneur. I'm also working on making more trips back to New Zealand—not only because at heart I am a Kiwi, but also to stay connected with family and friends and give my kids a chance to be in a different environment."

In the meantime, he is upgrading his skills, continuing his lifelong mindset for learning, and furthering his studies in physiotherapy, performance, and health. While many people perceive the gym as just a place for sporting performance, Simon believes it plays a critical role in every person's health and longevity. It may come as a surprise to some readers how strongly exercise links to reducing general risks of mortality and increasing life quality. If readers were to take away one insight from this article, it would be just how profound the impact of even a small amount of exercise can be on their ability to live a robust and long life. (see the Health Skills diagram)

While most of us don't entertain dreams of attaining such any sort of sporting prominence, it has been refreshing to dally in the company of someone involved in that world. It has been a lot cheaper than taking a 'life-changing holiday experience' in some distant exotic land. So far the regular trips to the gym haven't disrupted my own lifestyle (apart from a few aches and after four weeks of following Simon's professional advice, I've actually lost 400 grams. Roll on the summer!

Anthony Shaw



WHAT'S A "GRANITE JUBILEE"?

ECO  Since 1935
The English Club of Oulu

When your club enters the year of its 90th birthday, you start to wonder things like, “well, if a 50th anniversary is called a Golden Wedding, and the late Queen Elizabeth II had her Platinum Jubilee in 2022, at 70 years on the throne ... is there a word for a 90th?”

I don't feel too bad about not having known; after all, neither marriages nor reigns of monarchs tend to last 90 years. I bet any readers in Aberdeen consider this general knowledge, though! Aberdeen Airport turned 90 in 2024; thus the Granite City had a proud celebration of a grand Granite Jubilee.

Granite is a hard-wearing, long-lasting stone, in this context a symbol of strength and endurance, in fact. What a great name for a 90th anniversary! (Wikipedia also supplies two Latin-derived words for the same thing: *nonagintennial* or *nonagenary*, but I'm afraid neither of those is going to start rolling off of my tongue, at least - not when I have a new favourite expression, a “Granite Jubilee”.

We, the current board of the ECO, put on our thinking caps some time ago, actually, about how to celebrate our club in 2025. Our true birthday, or date of our first ever meeting, is November 28th (1935). But you wouldn't wait till November 2025 to start celebrating, would you? – when you can easily have a whole year's worth of commemorating the great 1935 initiative of the founder-members, “Mr Nylander, Mrs Jokela and Mrs Dahlberg, with the support of a British resident of that time, Mr [Trevor] Cash”. We have our predecessors the ECO board and membership of 1985, incidentally, to profoundly thank for supplying this fact and much, much more; they clearly put their hearts into celebrating the Golden Jubilee year, writing and publishing for 1985

a small book richly filled with club history, photos, congratulations and reminiscences.

The 1985 book also challenges us in a way, or gives us a standard to try to live up to. Our club had seen some serious shrinkage between the ages of 50 and nearly-ninety. 4 founder-members in 1935 ... 70 showed up at a club Christmas party at Mr and Mrs Trevor Cash's home in 1954 (I hope the house was large enough!) ... a reported membership of 140 in 1960 (Silver Jubilee) ... and 182 members actually listed by name in the Golden Jubilee book (1985). Our membership was

dwindling before the pandemic, and in 2022, after 2 years of not meeting (during which our best turnout was probably at our online Burns Supper 2021), we realized that it wasn't much of an exaggeration to say that our board was around half of our club!

So reaching 90 is also a timely reminder that the shrinking trend MUST be reversed! We really do want to reach 100, not least because we owe it to those who made it all happen in the preceding decades. And an upcoming centenary (before you ask: *obsidian anniversary* – obsidian being a naturally occurring volcanic

Left to right: Esa Kantola (guitar), Ida Pousi (vocals and fiddle), Jouko Hiltunen (bass) and Timo Sipilä (guitar)



glass – again, I needed the help of Wikipedia!) is clearly not something to let slip through our hands, when we’re already this close.

On March 29th 2025, 48 members, guests and honorary guests dined and “had a ball” at our Granite Jubilee Dinner at Restaurant Rauhala. “Had a ball” as in “had a wonderful evening”. Live music: yes. Ball-gowns and actual dancing: not this time – but can we make it happen for our 100th? I hope: yes. The venue might already be known; to quote Märta Hannelius-Kosunen’s 1985 reminiscence about the old days, “The English Club arranged Dinner and Dance Parties, and always in great gala, ladies in evening dresses and gentlemen in tails or dinner jackets. The parties were held at old Kauppaklubi in the building of Rauhala.”

So there we have it, a celebration of the past, present and future. Great speeches, great music (from a very newly formed band who graciously allowed us to suggest names for the band!) a great turnout (including former chairs of the club as honorary guests, and representatives of the City of Oulu, and a FinnBrit Federation



Anna-Liisa Hirvenoja, our lovely former chair of the club (and behind her, Henrik with his happy smile)

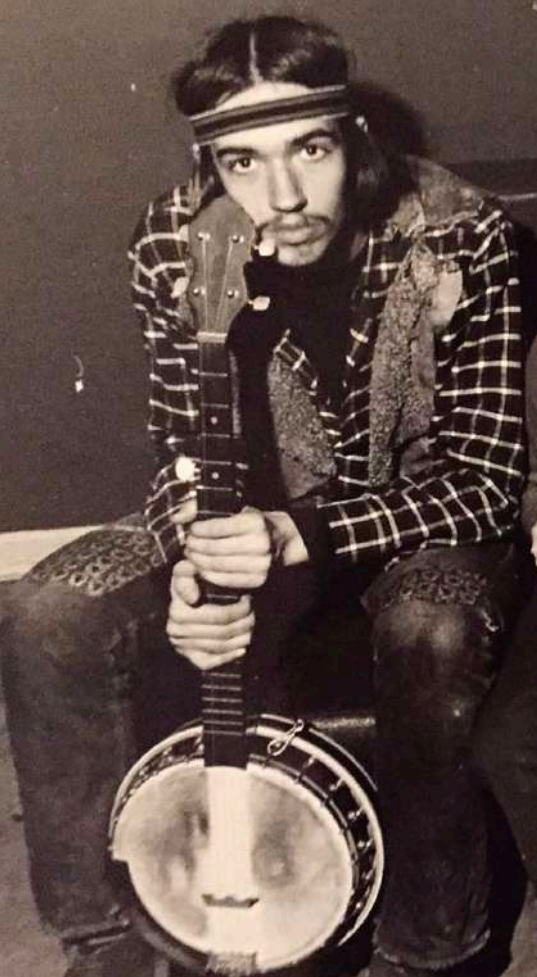
representative too), great food, great company. A great club.

Our evening included a presentation about Oulu-26, European Capital of Culture, immediately after which the idea was raised (and warmly supported) of hosting a Burns Supper

in January 2026 – our first since the pandemic. So anyone considering visiting Capital of Culture Oulu in 2026, that might be an event to aim to be at?

Heather Kannasmaa, Oulu





Stäni Steinbock 1978

Some readers may already know that 2026 sees the Finnish-British Society of Helsinki reaching its centenary year, and a few may even have heard that there are concerted efforts to celebrate it in a variety of ways. This is a short report on progress so far, as well as an attempt to jog readers' memories to unearth some small nuggets that you may recall from earlier visits to Puistokatu, or more recent ones to Fredrikinkatu, that could be added to our archives or published online. In addition to this project, there are in the pipeline reports of Finnbrit teachers, ancient and modern, a serious attempt to catalogue the boxes of archived documents held in Fredrikinkatu, a report of the continuing activity at the Folkclub (which next year will be 54 years old), as well as plans for special events during the year, including a Grand Gala Dinner.

The dedicated banjoist featured in the pictures was a regular attender at the Folkclub back in the 1970s, when names such as Tom Kuchka, Heikki Harma and Dave Lindholm were among the participants. His name is Stäni Steinbock, known to Helsinki Christmas Party 2024 participants as - the teller of the story of Väinämöinen

100 YEARS OF 'THE FINNBRITE' IN HELSINKI

by Anthony Shaw

and player of the 5-string kantele, the act which he returned to Fredrikinkatu to perform. Back in the 1970s he was an admirer of beat poets (Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac et al) and a fan of American folk music (Bob Dylan of course, Tom Ochs, Michael Hurley) and attended the grand old premises in Puistokatu 1 to hear such music and meet like-minded souls.

In investigating the history of the Society during recent months we have unearthed multiple stories that resonate from the past, and cast some light on the evolution of the Society from a social offshoot for the employees of the newly established British Embassy to the multi-headed, multicultural beast that it now is. Stäni and many others have spent a lot of time away from the premises, but have returned in recent years to find certain features have remained the same. In addition to the monthly music meetings, the connection with the Finnbrit Players has continued with rehearsals on the premises. Group visits to their new space behind the Kamppi shopping centre, the No-Name Theatre, have been organised from Finnbrit members, and through Zach Chaberlaine they are still represented on the Council.

Language students are still a mainstay of the Finnbrit's visitors, though the exams they are tackling have changed since the days of the three University of Cambridge EFL 'main bundle'. The students are as often as not from outside Finland, looking for a qualification to gain entry to courses held English here in Finland and elsewhere. But as in days of old in Puistokatu they are greeted onsite by

a member of the administrative team, Tuukka Asplund and Gary Jones, and as likely as not offered a cup of tea in 'the Clubroom'. In the same room the Social Committee meets to organise local events (mah-jong evenings, the Sunday toddlers' Nursery Rhyme group, a film night, a book club and a members' drop-in evening) and to discuss plans for 2026, including the partially completed collection of '100 Years' Things' to be published online over the course of the celebration year. So if you have any memories, photos, poems or just comments on your time with the Helsinki Finnbrits, drop a line to finnbrit@finnbrit.fi

Stäni Steinbock 2025





CAFÉ SCIENTIFIQUE: Shakespeare's life and times

by Iuliia Gurskaia

On the 16th of January Café Scientifique invited Mikael Davies, an English teacher at Tampereen lyseon lukio, to give a lecture on the mysteries and facts of Shakespeare's life. William Shakespeare was a famous playwright, poet and actor. Nowadays his works are widely known, and millions of people are familiar with his name. Mikael Davies, who has taught Shakespeare in the UK and in Finland and has also directed and acted in the plays, shared a few interesting details about the life of this perennially popular playwright.

How It All Began

After the presentation we had the chance to interview Mikael Davies who told us about his life as a teacher. He chose to become a teacher because as a child he enjoyed studying at school and thought it would be fun to stay in that environment. Besides teaching, Mikael Davies has another passion – reading. Books, he says, offer the chance to be transported into other cultures, countries and other ages. Something he especially appreciates about his work as a teacher is that much of it revolves around literature. He has been interested in Shakespeare since his school years where he was lucky enough to have enthusiastic teachers who sparked an interest in the plays.

Shakespeare's Origin

While we know Shakespeare was born in 1564, the exact day is shrouded in

mystery. However, the day of his death is not a secret since it is there in black and white on his death certificate: 23 April 1616. Therefore, it is customary to celebrate his birthday on the day he passed which might seem like an odd thing for his fans to do.

Shakespeare's father, John Shakespeare, was a respected glove maker. John Shakespeare's trade was lucrative, and his success allowed his son to receive an education at the local Grammar School. Even though glove making paid for his education, Shakespeare did not go into the family business.

Shakespeare was one of eight children born to John and Mary Shakespeare, but many of his siblings did not survive childhood. Only three of them lived to adulthood, which was not uncommon in the 16th century. The death of his son Hamnet at the age of eleven may have influenced the gloomy atmosphere of his most famous play Hamlet.

A Latin Grammar School

Shakespeare likely attended the King's New School in Stratford where he would have received a classical education. The school focused on teaching Latin and classical literature, which was standard for the time as Latin was the language of the church. However, this did not limit his creativity when it came to his mother tongue. An amazing fact about Shakespeare is that he invented a huge variety of English words that are still in use today.

The Mysterious "Lost Years"

Between 1585 and 1592, there is a gap in Shakespeare's biography, often referred to as the "lost years." Little is known about what he was doing during this time. Some scholars speculate he may have been a sailor, a soldier, a teacher, or even worked in the law. The lack of evidence leaves room for speculation and intrigue about his life during this period. All these theories are based solely on references from his plays.

The Globe Theatre

Shakespeare was a playwright whose works were performed at the Globe Theater. In fact, his plays attracted huge audiences and made him and his fellow actors rich. The open-air venue attracted everyone from nobility to commoners, and was the site where many of Shakespeare's greatest works were performed. Despite burning down, the Globe Theatre has been rebuilt and plays are still performed there every year from March to August. It is also open to visitors all the year round

We thoroughly enjoyed Mikael Davies's presentation. His speech allowed us to look at Shakespeare from a fresh angle and was full of curious details about his life and works. It was a great opportunity to learn more about this legendary playwright.



Final scene. **Photo:** Julia Leino



Teerenpeli pub. **Photo:** Tripadvisor



Frontside of Turku Cathedral in summer 2008. **Photo:** Wikipedia

TO TURKU FOR SOME ENGLISH LANGUAGE THEATRE

A short experience of time travel

Text and photos by Anthony Shaw (unless otherwise credited)

A trip to the theatre is not a very typical feature of my schedule, despite having excess pensioner time available, and even access to midweek discounted tickets. Even with the generous availability of English language theatre in Helsinki, most primarily of course the on-going excellent productions of the No Name Theatre just behind Kamppi in the centre, it's just not something that generally turns me on.

On reflection, I think it's a typical act of laziness, not wishing to put myself through the necessary suspension of disbelief that the stage requires of its audience in order to fully enjoy the show. But in this case laziness was not an issue, since it was a 340km round trip. Likewise it was the personal investment in the project that made it so worthwhile for this old Finnophile.

My first proper trip to Finland involved a journey up thru Denmark and Sweden, and arrival in Turku harbour on a standard drab winter morning in the early 1980s. Haute cuisine was not on my agenda, the principle purpose this time being to test my winter camping skills recently honed on a mountain leadership course in South Wales' Brecon

Beacons (actually a far deadlier winter environment than Finland's, due to the unpredictability of the winter weather there). Before heading for the hills, I had to find my way from the ferry harbour into town, and some food - which is how I ended up in Turku's bustling market square, eating cold Baltic Herring straight from the stall. My first taste of commercial Finnish cuisine would not have impressed Mr Belusconni!

A little bit of history

This trip, by train from Helsinki, was also steeped in history, but of an older vintage. Turku was the capital of the Swedish Duchy of Finland, up until the land was taken over (not invaded) by Russia. The grand castle, dating from the late 13th century is evidence of the wealth and importance of the town in medieval times. After nearly a century of intermittent warfare between the two powers, Sweden ceded Finland to Russia victory at Suomenlinna in 1808 the capital moved east, to the little fishing village of Helsinki. But links with Scandinavian continued to be important and many of those went through Sweden via Åbo, as Turku was

and still is also known. The current route from Helsinki is in fact the same very indirect connection that was opened in the late 1800s joining the old towns of Karis and Salo!!!! to Turku, with a branch line down to the old port of Hanko.

My journey out from Helsinki to the west was very different to the unilinear routes that fan out nowadays from the centre to the north and east, but was quite a magical mystery tour first winding slowly through the new suburbs of Espoo, and on through the open fields of western Uusimaa. The journey itself is picturesque, stopping at the old Swedish towns of Karis and Salo, set amid countryside that rolls with open fields, like much of agricultural Western Europe, but very little of the rest of Finland.

Turku old and new

Arriving in Turku from the east is very different from the Helsinki scenario. If you don't get out at the wrong station (Kupittaa was the main station for a time during the recent rebuilding and renovations) the final 5 minutes of the journey is very revealing, as the train bends around a severely tight curve,

first across the Aura River and then through the old wooden town adjacent to the historical centre. In fact not only are these rambling old buildings not so dissimilar to its medieval layout, but the most significant building in the centre of Turku is still the cathedral, towering over all others. Originating in the late 1200s, its stone and brick tower looks out across the town and is still the seat of the leader of the Lutheran church in Finland. Arrival at the main station can be bewildering to those looking for the station building, since Turku Logomo is simply a very expensive bridge across the old cargo marshalling yards which lead down to the harbour. Opened in August 2024 it is said to be the most luxurious bridge in Europe, featuring lifts, a waiting area and modernist toilets, all very twenty-first century.

Theatre in a pub

But the bar where I was heading was much more redolent of medieval times: a large general, and well stocked main room with a warren of passages and side rooms leading upstairs to the location of the temporary theatre. David Stokes, Chair of Turku Finnbrits,

is definitely a modern man in most respects, but in this production was bound to jump, like me in my own reminiscing, between times past and future. The play had been written by Arpan Dutta and was to be acted in the rather gaunt upstairs room of the pub, one of Finland's Teerinpeli chain. Theatrical facilities were at a premium, comprising a long open wall with one spotlight covering the whole of the 'stage', but when encountering modern theatre minimalism is maybe to be expected.

Certainly audience members had no problem picking up and following the story, a cross between a romantic farce and a fantasy, with a time travelling couple escaping a personal dilemma by being projected from a distant, maybe even mediaeval past, forward to a rather dystopian future, where the dilemma became more of a moral issue. The story gave the audience the choice of deciding between two alternative outcomes for the two protagonists, prompting the title What Happens Next? In any case after the intermission the alternative outcome was played out, with a rather more optimistic outcome.

With only five cast members, all had to play multiple roles, with David starting as the ancient King Oppression, before becoming a modern slippery tongued lawyer, and finally a Cockney con-man/confidence trickster - some may see a similarity in these last two roles! The audience were a good mixture of ancient and modern, including one spring migrant from Mikkeli and a good number of local Finnbrit members**! Just as this region of Finland sees a rich combination of old and new, Finnbrit Societies need to foster contacts with younger generations and encourage youthful explorations of our interlocking cultures. Maybe, despite the withdrawal of government aid to the Federation we can influence, a little, what happens next in Finland.

**Turku Finnbrit members featured in the photo are Mike King, Barbara Pulkkinen, Marita Hegelström and Alan Drake.*

***The cast members, in addition to the writer Arpan Dutta and David Stokes, were Nooa Rantanen, Leo Beschastnov and Sean Hynes.*



King Opressor



Finnbrit members*



Kauniaisten Station 2014. Photo: Otto Karikoski



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