

**AGM 2019 Minutes and Reports**  
**Scottish Swedish Society**  
**27 April at 11 am**  
**Society of Musicians, 3 Belford Road, Edinburgh**

**1. Welcome by the Chairperson Gunilla Hampson**

**2. Present** Gun Collins, Arthur Lightfoot, Conny Pettersson, Ulla Hipkins, Kerstin Grant, Per Sveidqvist, Christina Coltart, Elisabet Stewart, David Stewart, Jeanette de Geer Nairn, John Phillips, Kerstin Phillips, Britta Sugden, David Sugden, Sarah Hampson, Monica Downey, Nicholas Hampson, Niclas Westerberg, Lina Weckner

**3. Apologies:** Berit Owen, John Gilmour and Linda Odén

**4. Minutes of AGM 2018** had been sent to members before the AGM and were accepted.

**5. Chair's address**

This has been the year of Brexit and several of the activities of our Society have reflected that. The Swedish community in Scotland has been, and still is, concerned about the implications of Brexit and we have tried to address the issues as far as we are able.

We began in the autumn of 2017 by inviting the Swedish Ambassador to talk to us, and we have subsequently used our website to publish updates and to provide links to relevant information, including from the Embassy and the Home Office, as it becomes available. During this year, 2018-19, we have held further events relevant to Brexit. Most notable and helpful was the seminar on "Settled Status" addressed by an immigration lawyer. Further information was offered at an event arranged by the Nordic Embassies to which we were invited. This took the form of a presentation by a Junior Minister and two of his civil servants from the Home Office. They did their best to explain the procedure for making an application for Settled Status.

The Society's links to, and co-operation with the Swedish Embassy continues in other ways too. In September the Society was asked to help out at the Swedish General Election. Some of our members served as clerks at the polling station in Edinburgh. We have now been asked to help at the European Elections in May when again it is planned to have a polling station in Edinburgh. We have also been asked to take part in the planning for the Embassy's event on 8 June to coincide with the National Day.

This year our committee nominated dedicated events managers who have done much of the work related to our programme, and who have worked together with other members, not necessarily on the committee. Lucia, our biggest and most labour intensive event, was this year organised by

Anna Reid Jones and her team. The plan now is for a working party to meet in October to start the preparations. Kerstin Phillips who has been organising Lucia for decades can now start to enjoy the day in a more relaxed fashion. She has however continued to make the contacts with the churches both in Edinburgh and London. We are all very grateful for all her work.

Last summer Lina Weckner circulated a questionnaire to find out what members would like to get from the Society. This questionnaire can be found on the Website together with the summary of the responses. We shall come back to this later on the Agenda.

Quite regularly we get requests to advertise events or activities with a Swedish connection. We do our best to pass on this information be it by email, Facebook or on the Website.

It has been an interesting and busy year. We shall see what next year brings to us all!

## **6. Treasurer's Report, 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019**

The year to 31 March 2019 saw the Society record another modest surplus of income over expenditure. Over the year our surplus was £655, just a little higher than the previous year's figure of £621. After an earlier run of years during which we recorded deficits, we have now seen four years with consistent surpluses at broadly the same figure each year. As a result, our reserves have increased to a little over £5,000 and at this level provide us with a reasonable buffer to cope with any financial setbacks we may encounter.

Our surplus for this year largely reflects a highly successful Lucia. We owe a lot to those who put such effort into making this success and to those, both individuals and companies, who made generous donations. To offset the surplus on Lucia, we recorded some net expenditure on the Brexit meeting and the Julpyssel. Both of these were undertaken as a service to members, and we are grateful to Lina for her hard work in organising them, and to the EC office in Edinburgh for their help with the Brexit meeting.

Overall, I believe the Society is in a strong financial position. The only area which gives me some concern is the steady decline in subscription income. We use subscriptions to cover various fixed costs such as the website and our insurance. We have greatly reduced these fixed costs in recent years and this has more than offset the decline in subscriptions. But this cannot go on for ever.

## **7. Secretary's report**

A regular trickle emails are received on the SSS email address. Individuals ask advice about moving here, accommodation, jobs, schooling and how to make contact with other Swedes here. A variety of

organisations ask us to advertise events or services. I respond to all, sometimes referring people on to more suitable websites for information.

Booking venue and liaising with the Swedish Church in London for the Lucia event, maintaining check lists and writing letters can take quite a lot of time.

Events are added to the Event file on the website both those originating by the committee and members as well as other events initiated by other organisations such as the Swedish church in London and events which might be of interest to members.

## **8. Events survey**

Our Events Survey was sent out by Lina during the summer of 2018. The aim of the survey was to get a better understanding of what activities and events members want to see during the coming year. Participants wanted to see more family events and events with Swedish traditions but there was also an interest in evening events.

There is a wish to make sure that we arrange private venues to where it might be easy to hear conversations and with easy access by public transport. We have taken this into account when arranging the Pea soup event and the Brexit meeting.

There were suggestions for future events including business networking, a Christmas market, film nights, family events and opportunities to hear Swedish authors speak. We organised a meeting for businesses about Brexit but this had to be cancelled due to lack of interest.

Despite over 70% of respondents wanting to see events organised in Edinburgh there was an interest in seeing events organised in Glasgow and other places.

Get in touch if you are interested to initiate or help to organise an event.

## **9. Midsummer celebration.**

Like in so many previous years we were able to celebrate Midsummer 2019 at Niddrie Castle, home of Malin and Richard Nairn. The weather was lovely and the turn out good. We all dressed the Majstång.

Malin played and sang for the traditional dances. Having done the exercise we settled down for our picnics and after that it was time for Richard to show us the ongoing restoration of the castle which is labour of love.

## **10. Pea soup and pancakes**

On 22 October the Society held the customary Pea Soup and Pancakes evening which Linda Edstrand organised. This year we met at

Söderberg's cafe at the Quatermile in Edinburgh where Åsa Penman had arranged a lovely and traditional meal in the very pleasant surroundings of the Pavilion.

When we had enjoyed our food and a good chat, we listened to a talk by our longstanding member, Britta Sugden. Her talk was called "My Jämtland". She described how, around 20 years ago, she and David, bought an old farm deep in the hill country. They had done it up with great skill and taste, and visit it in both summer and winter. Britta showed beautiful pictures of the farm, the landscape and the life they lived there. And when we left, we were given 'goody bags'!

11. **A Pyssel event** with parents and children was held before Christmas at Wardie Church hall at the time when pupils of the Swedish school were there. This was much enjoyed by those who were there.

## 12. **Lucia event, December 2018.**

This year it was held on Sunday 2 December at Marchmont St Giles church. This year Anna Reid Jones had taken on the organisation of the all the work for the Fika, a huge task that she achieved excellently with the help of a group of Swedish friends.

The Lucia procession seemed to be larger than usual and the singing was very good. This was again organised by Malin Hesselors-Nairn. Kristina Andreasson, priest at the Swedish Church in London, led the Advent service and spoke with the children about the symbols Swedes use at this time of the year. A collection was taken for hosting church as well as for St Columbas Hospice.

In previous years the choice of Lucia has been somewhat random and often very last minute. To make the selection fairer, we asked for names of applicants which would then be drawn from a hat. Nominees should be aged between 15 and 18 on the day; their family must be a member of the society (they can apply to join at any time) and they should not have done it before. We should only invite a previous Lucia if there are no any nominations.

It was suggested suggested that we could to hire a photographer to take photos and/or film the Lucia procession in the future. That way all can relax and just enjoy the whole experience without stressing as to whether they have a good photo of their child.

This year we had a generous sponsorship from Ikea organised by Anna Christopherson. IKEA provided hotdogs and rolls for the children along with coffee, saffransbullar and pepparkakor for the adults. She also organised a team of volunteers for the work in the kitchen and cafe which helped enormously. We bought some new organic cotton tablecloths and used real crockery. This involved some extra work as Marchmont St Giles church doesn't have a lot of cups. Those in the kitchen needed to wash

cups throughout the afternoon. But it made for a more enjoyable fika and is of course far more sustainable than single use, disposable cups and cloths.

Åsa Norrie, once again, very generously donated filled bags for the fiskdamm.

There was mixed feedback about having the children stay in the church for the address to children by the minister as some felt the younger kids were too restless. But is perhaps not something that should be done every year. Kristina Andreasson's led her last service and Lucia in Edinburgh before leaving the Swedish Church in London and she received a Scottish present from us all.

Another change was that all the lights were switched off during the procession, this created a more magical feeling to the whole event but this made up for the slight inconvenience of having to wait for the lights to warm up afterwards.

We need a healthy numbers of volunteers to help with all aspects of the Lucia and someone to coordinate the fika.

Thanks to all the willing parents who came early to set up and decorate the hall and who later stayed on to wash up, restore the furniture to their places and sweep, the place was left clean and tidy.

### **13. Brexit briefing**

In early January, the EU Commission supported us in arranging for Jennifer Ang, Solicitor and Partner/Director of *JustRight Scotland* to come and speak to us about how Brexit may affect our rights and how we can prepare for it. This was held at the pleasant and private Society of Musicians. Per Johansson, Head of Edinburgh Office European Parliament gave an update of how we as EU citizens in UK can continue to vote in the EU Elections. Jennifer gave a very engaging speech and gave food for thought. Lina had spent a lot of effort in organising this event which was well received by the 23 participants. A similar opportunity for business leaders had been organised but due to limited interest, it had to be cancelled.

### **14. Visits by the Swedish Church in London**

The Swedish church in London organises several visits to Edinburgh when Swedes in Scotland are invited to join in a short church service which is followed by lunch at Joseph Pearce pub in Edinburgh. There is also a meeting for parents and children with films for young children at Hemma the following afternoon. Some Swedes come travelling quite some distances for these events. For five years Kristina Andreasson and one of the deacons have come. They take the opportunity to visit those housebound Swedes who requests this.

Anna Christopherson plays an important part in the success of the lunches.

## **15. Information**

Conny Pettersson co-chairing the committee as well as our website manager. He created the current one together with Lina Weckner. As we have no Newsletter editor, Journalen is a replacement on the website. Contributions are welcome so send them to Conny. There is a request for reviews of Swedish books or any activity that has been of interest.

Harris Keillar sends out information about our own events as well as of events organised by others as well as various information which we think may be of interest to some members are regularly added onto Facebook.

## **16. The handicraft group**

We are a few Swedish ladies in all ages enjoying each other's company since 2013. While we craft in mixed media such as embroidery, knitting, crocheting and quilting, we are chatting in Swedish and having a fika. We meet up on a Tuesday evening once a month, at each other houses. Lately Maja has also started reading out loud a chapter from anthology books like 'Min mormors historia' and Astrid Lindgren. New members are welcome, please contact Linda Winskel.

## **17. Coffee mornings**

A varied group of Swedish women meet monthly in the home of one of us. Everybody is invited but you have to inform the hostess that you would like to come. It is a rather loose group depending on who is able to come the morning chosen by the hostess. We meet between 10.30 and 12 noon, drink coffee and talk. This is an opportunity speak Swedish. We may talk about living in the Edinburgh area, what is going on in our lives, the issues that concern us here at the moment, about health and maybe concerns about friends who are currently living with more challenges. If you want to come, contact Kerstin Phillips.

## **18. Bokklubben**

We read books by Swedish authors and published in Swedish. We meet monthly during term time in a home. We have agreed that for most of us, Monday afternoons suit us best. There are twelve of us. We usually order batches of three or four books from Bokus.se. The books have to be paperbacks and must not cost much more than £6 each. The books we have read so far have been really interesting. Some books have been enjoyed by all of us, other books will not be re-read by anyone. Some books have been of interest to at least someone. There is a problem to find new Swedish books that might interest us so we seek advice from others. You can look at the website of Bokus.se to see what is available. We often ask for advice from friends both here and in Sweden. Co-ordinator Christina Coltart.

## **19. Bokcirkeln**

We meet once a month in the evenings but often with a gap during the summer, often in Kerstin's home. Like the other group, Bokklubben, we read paperbacks by Swedish authors written in Swedish and we get a supply from Sweden once a year from Adlibris.se.

We read a mixture of fiction and non-fiction and have sometimes been surprised by what we learn, especially by reading books set in historic times. We have read books by authors born abroad and who have moved to a culture so very foreign to them. A book we all really enjoyed was about hover flies and another was about a murder in 1793! We hope to discover a bit more about what friends in Sweden read and talk about. We also notice how the Swedish language is changed over time. We read books published some time ago as well as books that have won awards. Almost any book leads to interesting discussions and can often bring up memories. Some books none of us have liked but the discussions have been just as stimulating. Kerstin Phillips is the Co-ordinator

## **20. Swedish books in translation.**

Our book group reads Swedish books in English translation. We are presently six persons in the group meeting at each other's home about every 6 weeks; depending on our book of choice.

We read everything from biographies to modern Swedish crime novels. Over the years we have developed a keen interest in the author as well as the book. We last read Dag Hammarsjöld's intimate "diary" called Markings (Vägmärken) where even the title spurred a discussion! It's a very enjoyable to meet and discuss books with the people of this happy little friendly group! Carina Dahlström Mair is the Co-ordinator

## **21. The Swedish School Association**

Heléne Nordberg has been the head teacher since the beginning. Anna Jones is the Chairperson.

The Svenska skolföreningen i Skottland has been going for 10 years now. There are currently around 35 pupils aged from 5 to 16, with 2 qualified teachers, with all funding coming from Skolverket, so the classes are free for all the children.

Classes used to be held at Wardie Parish Church but since January have been at the Youth Cafe on the Vennel in the city centre. We currently alternate use of the cafe with the Danish School.

The majority of the lessons are in a classroom setting, but occasionally we use other activities as part of the lesson plan. For example, on 28 March, when the cafe is not available, the pupils are meeting in Portobello to learn a little about celebrating Valborg, and hopefully having a small bonfire too. The older children help at Lucia.

Last autumn the children were invited for a behind the scenes visit at Ikea. This was a very enjoyable and interesting trip.

In November last year, Helene applied for a grant from SUF, the Association for Swedish Education Abroad for two of the pupils who have shown a strong dedication to attending Swedish school. The application was successful and in December Ryan and Freya Doherty were awarded 5000 Swedish kronor each to help with their studies.

Teacher Albin, will be moving back to Sweden later this year, so the school is actively looking for someone to take his place.

Further details are available from their website, to which there is a link on our website.

## **22. Election of Council.**

### Current council members:

Gunilla Hampson, co-chair

Conny Petterson, co-chair and website master

Stephen Hampson, Treasurer

Kerstin Phillips, secretary

Lina Weckner, event manager

Harris Keillar

Linda Odén

## **23. Future events**

**Midsummer event** will take place on June 23 at Niddrie Castle, the venue of the home of Malin and Richard Nairn. More information closer to the date.

**Lucia and Advent Service** will take place on Sunday 1 December. The venue of several years has been Marchmont St Giles church. It will be undergoing rebuilding but the starting date of the work is not yet set. The building work may affect the availability of the church or the hall on 1 December. We could manage with a bit of good will by using the hall for both the Lucia and Advent service as well as for fika. Or we will use the church as usual and have the fika in the café and the adjoining space with the children changing in the small rooms at the back of the corridor. The church welcome us each year and want to do all they can to help us.

There was a suggestion of having a professional photographer film the Lucia so that parents need not take photos themselves. This is complicated as children must not appear on films or photos available to the public without written permission from their parents. This could possibly prevent some children from taking part.

There was a suggestion that those who help create an enjoyable event for us all should not pay the fee for the fika. However, there is a valuable

tradition of doing voluntary work in Britain. The organisers give their time throughout the year including travelling to planning meetings. Those who volunteer to prepare the church and hall for the fika, work in the kitchen, clear up afterwards or provide the welcome home baking are giving their time because they want to and can contribute. Some cannot do the physical work involved but are just as much part of the shared event. If someone feels that the cost of the fika is high, they can give what they can afford. It is, of course, cheaper for those who book and pay beforehand. We are very grateful for all the efforts made by so many to make the event possible.

The priest uses both English and Swedish during the service. Maybe half the congregation do not speak Swedish and that includes the children. The traditional Lucia songs and hymns are sung in Swedish. The priest gave a brief summary of the sermon in English. This year Kristina spoke with the children in Swedish explaining some of the Swedish Advent traditions but many of them could not follow her because of their limited Swedish. We want the Advent service to introduce the Advent period of leading up to Christmas.

**After the AGM** we had a very enjoyable musical interlude with Madeleine Sjöstrand playing the grand piano accompanying her partner Mark, who sang a range of songs for us.

This was followed by a tasty lunch with wine and soft drinks, coffee and home made cakes.

Our website address is [www.scottishswedish.org](http://www.scottishswedish.org).