

A Visit To Mills In Denmark And Sweden



On 30 August myself (and 4 members of HMG) I joined a group of fellow enthusiasts to visit mills in Scandinavia, Denmark and Sweden. We were all members of “The International Molinological Society”, TIMS. It was truly an international gathering with participants travelling from as far away as, Japan, the USA and Australia. The man from Australia lives more than 150 miles from his nearest Mill! After meeting up at Copenhagen airport we travelled for whirlwind “pre-tour” to the island of Bornholm. (About the same size as the Isle of Wight). It is referred to as a “Mills paradise” During our stay we visited 12 mills. They all seemed to me to be very different to our British mills. The Egeby post mill at Åker has the very old form of “split sail” (Picture 1)

On day 3 we travelled through Scania (South Sweden) on the start of our journey to our conference centre at Aalborg. To welcome us on our first evening we were greeted by a man in full Viking costume who serenaded us with an ancient

metal curly horn about 4 feet long. A truly amazing sight and sound! Thereafter we were treated to a banquet accompanied by warm Danish hospitality.

After this relaxing start to the Symposium we started on the more serious aspect, listening to more than 38 presentations on many facets of Molinology. In all we spent more than 40 hours being lectured to. Most papers were fascinating but sad to say I found that a few were very boring!

During the week we were able to visit 14 mills. It was apparent that a group of 50 people trying to view a mill results in a tight squeeze. Most of our group were dedicated to obtaining a detailed photographic record of each mill. I found myself constantly aware that I was standing in the wrong place, the back of my head obscuring what would otherwise been a “perfect shot” for someone. One of our members had a novel solution to this problem. He sat patiently making beautiful sketches of the mills. (Picture 2 above)

For me the best visit of all was a large metal forging factory powered by a “Francis” water turbine. This factory worked up until 1970 making a wide range of tools. Forks, spades, Mill Bills, hoes, hammers (all sorts of) axes, the list seemed endless. The machinery was driven by overhead shafting. (Picture 3 below) Our guide set it all in motion for us. I found it most satisfying to tread on the foot pedals controlling a variety of forging hammers, and then see and hear burst into an animated clatter. As with windmills there was a complete lack of guards a modern safety officer’s nightmare.

Another interesting visit was to a millwright. Here we saw a wood yard storing timber of all shapes and sizes to build a score of mills. Inside we saw several large mill components such as a large complex post mill trestle under construction. A most impressive facility.

Our final visit for the tour was planned to be a Watermill on the small island of Tåsinge. Unfortunately we were unable to make this visit because recent heavy rains had made the access road impassable. We were told that frequently this mill was flooded with seawater.

Throughout our stay we found the cost of living in Denmark was uncomfortably high. I well remember the indignant outburst of our HMG Chairman when he was informed by our dinner waiter that the charge for a jug of table water would be 16 Krone (about £2!).

It was necessary to travel extensively to visit all 14 mills and by my reckoning we travelled 826 miles by road and 172 miles by sea on 4 ferries.

Sadly the time passed all too quickly. I felt the Symposium was both enjoyable and greatly broadened my knowledge of mill technologies. It was a wonderful experience to be able to share knowledge at such a truly international gathering.

You can access some wonderful images of Mills in Bornholm and Sweden in the following youtube sites:

<http://youtu.be/l9QZCRux6lY> <http://youtu.be/qiTdrl1l3gA>

<http://youtu.be/FX6uDgfRNCY> <http://youtu.be/oK3ofUaHGEw>

and for information and an electronic newsletter with news of forthcoming events and mills worldwide see the TIMS website ...www.molinology.org.

All images with this report have been supplied by Peter Mobbs . The Editor hopes you have enjoyed reading about this trip from two different perspectives as Ros and Peter have written the same trip from their own points of view.