

Besök till Sverige*

At the end of August, returning from my trip to Finland to look after my grandson, I travelled to Stockholm for a few days. Responding to a longstanding invitation, I took a commuter train from Stockholm and visited Mia Meisters and Andrew Jelly at their country property on an island close to the picturesque coastal town of Nynäshamn. I was met at the local railway station by Andrew who drove me by car the remaining 15 km or so, to the steps of their house where I was met by Mia - coffee and cake at the ready.

Mia and Andrew live in a modern, spacious Swedish designed house with triple glazing and panoramic views over sparkling sea. The main building is accompanied by outbuildings, a sauna with wood burning stove and - to

my amazement- a desalination plant to provide them with fresh drinking water derived from the sea. The surrounding countryside is ideal for holiday cottages which are scattered sparingly on the island and the nearby mainland. Andrew and Mia took me for a two hour tour of the area in a rowing boat, but powered during the trip by a small electric motor attached to a conventional car battery, simple, quiet and efficient. Andrew is well acclimatised to Sweden and rapidly improving his skills in Swedish language. He is also very busy doing improvements to the property, including the construction of an extensive open veranda to the front and side of the house. Most of the demanding work he does on his own while Mia is busy in the kitchen and the house. In the evening we

listened to music on CD; organ recitals by the Bedfordshire organist and composer Paul Edwards. I stayed overnight in the guest room, revelling in the blissful silence of the island - no barking dogs, noisy neighbours or revving cars.

I was also treated to a relaxing sauna session, with swimming in the sea, only a few yards away from the steps. The water temperature was a comfortable +18C/65F.

The following (Sunday) morning we drove together to church in Nynäshamn. The Church building is located in an outstanding position overlooking the harbour. First built in 1930 it has been successively worked on over the years and is today light and airy with a modern interior layout completed in 2010.

Mia and Andrew often sing in the choir, but not this Sun-

day; the service was largely taken up with the confirmation of six teenagers who had written and performed in a confirmation play, based on Bible readings. The performance was enthusiastic but somewhat confusing, before ending with prayers and the laying of hands. Music during the service consisted variedly of organ, piano, two electric guitars and drum, as well as the guitarists singing in close harmony. After the service we went for a walk in the bright sunshine, before ending my visit with a drink and sandwich by the harbour. I caught the commuter train back to Stockholm. And consider this: The trip back, consisting of a 60km/40mile train journey plus Underground and bus travel, cost me SEK 20 - less than £2!

Chris Hjelt

* A Visit to Sweden