



**Carl Theodor Dreyer and Ordet: My Summer with the Danish Filmmaker**  
— a book by club member **Jan Wahl**

Regarded by many filmmakers and critics as one of the greatest directors in cinema history, Carl Theodor Dreyer (1889–1968) achieved worldwide acclaim after the debut of his masterpiece, *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), which was named the most influential film of all time at the 2010 Toronto International Film Festival. In 1955, Dreyer granted twenty-three-year-old American student **Jan Wahl** the extraordinary opportunity to spend a unique and unforgettable summer with him during the filming of *Ordet* (*The Word* [1955]) in the Danish countryside.

*Carl Theodor Dreyer and Ordet: My Summer with the Danish Filmmaker* is a captivating account of Wahl's time with the director, based on Wahl's daily journal accounts and transcriptions of his conversations with Dreyer. Offering a glimpse into the filmmaker's world, Wahl fashions a portrait of Dreyer as a man, mentor, friend, and director. Wahl's unique and charming account is supplemented by exquisite photos of the filming and by selections from Dreyer's papers, including his notes on film style, his introduction for the actors before the filming of *Ordet*, and a visionary lecture he delivered at Edinburgh. *Carl Theodor Dreyer and Ordet* details one student's remarkable experiences with a legendary director and the unlikely bond formed over a summer.

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**Norwegian Butter Shortage**

Butter came to be a hot commodity in Norway, this Winter, with store shelves frequently being found empty. One reason for this shortage was a chain reaction that started last summer: rainy weather caused a poor harvest of winter feed; cows got less nutrition and produced less milk. Tine BA, the leading dairy producer in Norway, was only able to produce about 70% of the demand.

There is, however, another reason for the lack of butter that may seem somewhat odd: the low-carb diet(!). This diet fad has hit Norway with full force, and people desperate to lose weight are scoffing down that butter like it's going out of style. Apparently, the low-carb diet dictates that you can eat all the fat you want, so butter has become the new healthy(?) drug of choice.

The media was all over this national crisis, with daily front-page stories on how the production was going, how to adapt favorite Christmas recipes to use margarine instead, and even how to make your own butter. Small-scale producers and farm shops made good money off the shortage, with some of them experiencing triple the amount of orders and struggling to keep up.

—from [mylittlenorway.com](http://mylittlenorway.com) Dec., 2011

# VIKINGS: The North Atlantic Saga

A Special Exhibit from the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History

**Land of Legend:  
ARCHEOLOGY**

**Interest in the Viking past has been fueled in recent decades by fascinating new archeological finds.**

Archeological exhibits, such as the Smithsonian Institution's *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga* exhibition, and a previous Nordic Council of Ministers exhibition titled *From Vikings to Crusader*, and an exhibit found at the Jorvik Center in York, England, have helped in presenting new discoveries to the public. But one of the most enduring aspects of public interest has been the many controversies and debates these discoveries have engendered. Nothing assures popularity more than controversy and debate! Unfortunately, old archeological notions often remain in 'Legend Land' long after they have been debunked by professional archeologists.

The most egregious example of the persistence of out-dated ideas is the famous image of the 'Viking' horned helmet. **Vikings never wore horned helmets; not a single one has been found in any Viking grave**, although many other types of warrior's gear have been found. It appears Vikings rarely wore metal helmets at all. This idea may have been stimulated by confusion with Danish Bronze Age helmets, which had long, curved metal horns. When first discovered in the early 19th century, the 1,500 year time period between the Bronze and Viking Ages was not well understood, and so it was presumed that Vikings also wore horned helmets. Recent archeological investigations have proven this was not the case. Nevertheless the animalism which gave a warrior a fierce animal-warrior demeanor somehow continues to inspire popular imagination, ensuring that in spite of its historical incorrectness, horns will probably remain a Viking symbol for many years to come.

No less frustrating for archeologists have been misunderstandings about reputed Viking archeological finds in North America. The Newport Tower in Newport, Rhode Island, was one of the earliest archeological pitfalls in the search for proof of Leif Eriksson voyages. In 1838, Carl Christian Rafn, an eminent Danish scholar, suggested that this round, stone building resembled a medieval Norse church. At first the tower was thought to have an unknown origin, but archeological excavations and chemical tests of the mortar have clearly demonstrated a 17th century origin. Historic documents suggest it might have been built by the first governor of Rhode Island, Benedict Arnold (not the famous turn-coat, but his namesake) as a copy of a well-known windmill near his early home in England. Nevertheless, one can still

**Spending Spree**

**Norwegians** spent more than 13 billion kroner (\$1.9 billion) during one-day shopping trips to **Sweden** last year, meaning almost 6% of Norway's consumer food and beverage trade has migrated to Sweden; and Norway's cross-border commerce increased by 9% in 2011, with nearly all of the trade consisting of one-day shopping trips to Sweden, according to figures from Norwegian statistics agency SSB.

Alcohol is cheaper in Sweden, but another contributing factor may have been the Norwegian butter shortage which took place before Christmas.

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go to Rhode Island and read pamphlets about the Viking Tower. A similar story surrounds so-called Barnstable (Cape Cod) 'mooring holes' and stones with carved runic and other inscriptions found on Martha's Vinyard and in Brooklin Maine. The idea that Viking evidence is scattered about the northeastern coast of North America has certainly contributed to the notion of Viking presence, even though that evidence has no scientific basis.

Archeologists acknowledge that Vikings may have traveled further south along the Atlantic seaboard than northern Newfoundland, but the same cannot be said for the speculation about Vikings in the interior of the United States. These controversial "artifacts" include such finds as the Beardmore relics, the Kensington Stone, and the Heavener Runestone. Most tenacious of all is the Kensington Stone, which has convinced some mid-westerners — a large proportion of whom are Scandinavian-Americans — that Vikings did indeed visit the heartland of the North America. These views are reinforced by public monuments in Minnesota celebrating the Viking explorers and by an exhibit of the Kensington Stone at the Runestone Museum in Alesandria, Minnesota. If it were legitimate, the Kensington Stone would be an amazing find, telling of 22 Goths and 8 Norwegians who traveled west from Vinland and were attacked by Indians in the year 1362. No doubt the specificity of this story captures the imagination. But historians doubt the historical basis for the 1354 Knutson mission that proponents link with the stone; **archeologists have found no evidence of any Viking or nordic explorations to the midwest or south of Newfoundland**; and runologists believe the carving to be 19th century in style. Despite a wall of scholarly opposition, amateurs and other enthusiasts continue to research the stone and trumpet its validity.

Finds such as these have created the idea that Vikings traveled far and wide in North America and fueled speculation that Viking artifacts might be found almost anywhere. A copper Thor's hammer found on the Connecticut coast led to a flurry of speculation on the web in 1998 about Viking voyages to central New England. Testing by the Danish National Museum revealed it to have an abnormally high nickel content, a non-Viking ring clasp, and a size three times larger than most Thor's hammers found in Scandinavia. Better known is the long-standing controversy over Yale University's Vinland Map, which purports to show Greenland and a large stretch of northeastern North America 50 years before the voyage of Christopher Columbus. The authenticity of this map has been proven and disproven several times since the 1960s, leaving the public understandably confused, though most scholars now agree it is a mid-20th century fake. But as long as these tantalizing finds continue to appear, raising hopes that are almost as quickly dashed, people will continue to be fascinated by the allure of Viking finds south of the area where many true Viking finds have been found, in the Canadian arctic and northern Greenland.

The archeology of Viking 'Legend Land' embraced by amateurs and professionals alike, is fitting tribute to the fascination inspired by Viking explorers who set out for lands beyond the horizon, just to see what was there. May the search continue!

<http://www.mnh.si.edu/vikings/start.html>

**NOTE: This special exhibit is no longer on display and only exists on their website.**