

## NORWICH CITADEL BAND TOURS IN SWEDEN

*Report written and compiled by David Woodrow*

At the start of its seventh overseas tour, and second to Sweden, Norwich Citadel Band flew into Gothenburg City Airport on a warm summer's morning. We were met by Major Göran Larsson, the 'army's Advisor to the European Union in Brussels, and Peter Edqvist, Band Secretary of Örebro Band, at whose invitation we were making this tour.

Having left Norwich at 3:30am to catch the first flight out of Stansted, our arrival in Sweden, the country of a thousand lakes, was at 10:00am, so we still had a full day ahead of us.

We boarded our coach at the airport to be taken on a sightseeing tour of Gothenburg, to the highest point of the city, overlooking the harbour, opera house, and the lipstick building, an office block so named because its shape and colour resemble a lipstick. A civic reception followed when we were welcomed by the Deputy Mayor of Gothenburg and enjoyed a buffet lunch provided by the city council.

Our first playing engagement was as guests of Gothenburg Hisings Corps who had arranged for us to march through the city, dodging the tramlines as we marched to City Gate where we played an open-air concert to hundreds of shoppers and tourists gathered in the plaza and espresso bars. Our programme included solos by Richard Woodrow (A Happy Day), Mark Giles (Song of the Brother), and the trombones 'I will follow Him'

The day continued with a four-hour journey to Örebro, which was to be our base for the next three days, staying at the Ritz City Hotel adjacent to the SA hall. The hotel was once owned by the 'army until it was sold off a few years ago.

On arrival at Örebro we were welcomed and shared supper with a number of members of the corps – and finally to bed about 11:00pm and in need of some sleep catch-up after what had been something like a 19-hour first day.

### Day Two – Örebro

Örebro, the one-time capital city and political centre of Sweden, is still one of the main trading and cultural centres of the country and boasts facilities for the arts in the form of music colleges, opera house and concert hall.

We were taken to the Old Town of Örebro, Wadköping – The Wooden Village, which is part of Sweden's heritage: with traditional red-timber homesteads from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Airy houses, museums, narrow cobble-stoned alleys and squares lined with handicraft shops and exhibitions have been preserved to reflect the Swedish trading and cultural life. Though it is historic, Wadköping is full of life and activity, with markets, theatre and music. All this is in a park setting and the band played in one of the squares on another beautiful summer's morning.

Another march in the morning sun – and the heat! Followed by a concert in the market square, of music comprising mainly marches and song arrangements. We marched away to the applause of the listeners and crowds of shoppers along the mile-long thoroughfare (a bit like London's Oxford Street).

Then in the evening it was 'the big one' – our concert in the Örebro Concert Hall – an impressive auditorium where over 600 people greeted our entry on to the stage. The concert began with 'Montclair Citadel' and also included 'Renaissance', 'Jubilation', 'Gaelforce' and 'The Triumph of Peace'. All the band's soloists were in superb form with performances of 'Golden Slippers' (Richard Woodrow), 'Finale from Strauss' Horn

Concerto No 1 (David Winch), 'The Better World' (Daniel Beattie), and 'A Time for Peace' (Mark Giles), each receiving rapturous applause, as did the band items, to the extent that at the end of the programme conventional applause turned into a unison handclap, the Swedish way of saying 'we want more', and eventually into a standing ovation.

Major Ray Begley, Norwich Citadel's Corps Officer, used every opportunity to let people know that the paramount reason for our tour was to let people hear the Christian message, and that whilst there are things that are unique to Sweden, like Volvo, ABBA, IKEA, for instance, there are many more commonalities between our countries, none more so than the universal love of Jesus Christ, and suggested that, although we hear so much these days about war and devastation, particularly in Iraq, it would be wonderful if there could be an 'explosion of prayer' throughout the world-wide Christian church.

After a very satisfying evening of music making and fellowship, we returned to Örebro SA hall for supper – Pitti Panna – a meal of diced pork, diced potato and onion, with a fried egg on top. One bandsman (at least) tried to sneak more than one egg, but was told quite firmly "only one egg!" but I think he managed to get another, no doubt by some devious means.

### **Day Three – Kristinehamn**

Day three began with breakfast at the Ritz City Hotel in the self-service dining room allowing us to get a substantial meal for the start of another hectic day. We travelled for about an hour from Örebro to Kristinehamn for yet another march through the town and open-air concert, where a local government official responsible for cultural activities welcomed us. Yet again, after a cloudy start to the day, the sun shone as we played a light programme to an appreciative crowd.

The corps at Kristinehamn has been working in the community since 1880 and, although small, has a café providing refreshment, but more importantly, fellowship and counselling for the citizens.

At mid-day we were taken to Lake Vänern, the largest inland lake in Europe, the length of which takes 24 hours to travel by boat. Beside the lake as we drove were handsome timber houses, each one with its own expression (most with an expensive expression!). Behind them hide leafy gardens, sloping down to the lake: a haven for artists, boating, swimming, or just relaxing by the water. Situated on the lakeside is the Kristinehamn Corps summer house, where often, after the morning meeting, the Corps will go for fellowship, retreats and barbeques. It was suggested to Major Begley that this idea would be quite feasible on the Norfolk Broads! Lunch was at the Café Pearl, the summer house of the Swedish Lutheran Church, overlooking the lake. We were served salmon, caught in the lake that very morning! The minister, whose church we would be playing in later, was for 18 years a Salvation Army officer, commanding such corps as Tranås, and a former private secretary to the Territorial Commander in Sweden. His wife's health forced him to resign from officership, but he is still 'Army through and through' and in fact, is still a soldier at Kristinehamn Corps, informing us that membership of three different churches is allowed in Sweden.

We spent some time in the tranquil surroundings of the lake – imagine somewhere like Lake Windermere or a Scottish loch, to give you some idea of the beauty of it all. Our afternoon concert was held at the site of Cape Picasso, Pablo Picasso's tallest statue. Built in 1965 at the lake side, and included 'Salvation's Song', 'A Happy Day' (Richard), 'The Song of the Brother' (Mark), 'Gaelforce', and 'Metropolis', with the now customary handclapping 'Radetzky style'. We were honoured to meet Norwegian Salvationist Eliv Herikstad who had travelled 200 kilometres from Finland to hear us. We later played his arrangement of 'All to Jesus', I hope to his liking, in the Kristinehamn Church, a cathedral-like building, in a 5:00pm concert featuring music mostly in quieter style: 'Swedish Folk Song', 'Procession to Covenant', 'I'd rather have Jesus' (David Woodrow), 'Spirit of Life' (Daniel), and the Band Chorus 'When I survey the Wondrous Cross'.

We had hoped that our last evening back in Örebro at the Ritz City would have given us a chance to look around the city. Some had hoped to find a bowling alley, but the weather turned to heavy rain. Yet it still didn't prevent some bandsmen finding the local McDonalds or Burger King!

#### **Day Four – Motala**

We booked out of our hotel and travelled to Motala where we were entertained to lunch at The People's House, the town's civic centre, which also housed a concert hall and a museum. The band were welcomed to the town by the vice-chair of the local government council when gifts were exchanged, and following lunch, were invited into the concert hall to sing to our hosts and assembled staff.

Our visit coincided with the Motala Water Festival; a week of live music events (mostly pop), fun fair rides and water sports. A march followed by an open-air concert in the town square and then a further march and second open-air concert, this time amid the candy floss and burger stalls, which attracted young and old to listen to our music and message.

Then on to Tranås. It was interesting to note as we journeyed out of Motala and into the countryside that in contrast to city and town centre housing in apartment style, homes out of town have plenty of space around them. In general Sweden is not an overcrowded country, in fact, for every citizen there is a square kilometre of space – slightly different to the UK! Our journey took us through pine forests, more lakes and open countryside, the terrain of which is relatively flat – that is, in the southern part of Sweden.

The venue for our evening concert at Hättebaden, Tranås was again by a lakeside. Lake Sommen is 90 miles around its perimeter. It may seem a bit repetitious when reading about lakeside venues, but this one was, again, truly magnificent.

Set among pine and silver birch trees, the amphitheatre in which we played was set in a bowl, providing unusually good acoustics for an outdoor venue. The band had enjoyed tea provided by Ove (The Fox) Fundin, former five-times world speedway champion, when he rode for Norwich Stars Speedway Team back in the 1950s and 60s.

Ove was a speedway hero and had the reputation for being a great sportsman and gentleman. Now living in the south of France, his return to his home town of Tranås for his daughter's wedding had coincided with our visit, and in welcoming the band said that Tranås and Norwich were still close to his heart, and that he returns to Norwich every year to visit his old speedway buddies. He is still very much a gentle-man and it was a privilege to meet him, particularly for those of us who, in those days, would go to Carrow Road for football on Saturday afternoons, then to the Firs Stadium for speedway in the evening – ah, those halcyon days!

Ove stayed for our evening concert, and as we played the opening march, 'Montclair Citadel', roared into the arena on a friend's 'old banger'. Our concert was played to about 300 people including many Tranås bandsmen, sitting in the evening sun, and continued with 'Swingtime Religion', 'Gaelforce' and 'Celebration Overture'. Daniel excelled yet again with 'The Better World', as did David with the 'Strauss Horn Concerto No 1'. The customary unison hand clapping confirmed that the crowd wanted more, and an encore of 'Metropolis' concluded the evening.

And so to bed. Most of the band was accommodated on the adjacent holiday and leisure complex (campsite) in log cabins measuring just 14' x 8' and slept four per cabin in bunk beds. To say the least, it was cosy! Nevertheless it's all part of the fun, if fun is the right word to describe four men sleeping in such close proximity. For me, sleep was impossible no matter how hard I tried, due to two of my colleagues' night noises. At 4:00am I gave up trying to sleep and made my way to the shower-block for a shower and shave. At least I was able to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the

early morning and glorious sunshine as I strolled beside the lake at 5:00am, totally alone with only the sound of the birds to break the silence. It was then that I thanked God for the privilege of being an Ambassador for Christ, and a part of the very special worldwide fellowship of Army banding. Losing a night's sleep had its advantages.

### **Day Five – Tranås and Stockholm**

It's Saturday, and we have crammed so much into the previous four days, and our last two days, according to our itinerary would be just the same. We were taken to Tranås SA hall for breakfast, one of the servers being our own Jean Whybrow who was on holiday in the town. We spent some time soaking up the atmosphere of bygone days, amid the photographs and memorabilia displayed in the Tranås bandroom. I recalled when, during our visit in 1971, we had marched the kilometre-long main thoroughfare, and played a pre-concert programme outside the hall, with the Tranås Band (who were a band to be feared in those days) looking over our shoulders, and then having to play a full concert inside. Fortunately, it was the end of the tour, and we had built up enough stamina to see us through.

Saturday morning in Tranås means 'the parade', when various bands are organised to march that same thoroughfare, and because it's a regular occurrence, the whole town, it seems, turns out to see it. That was certainly the case for us, when hundreds of people lined the pavements to greet us with clapping and cheering as we marched along the straight tree lined street.

Ove Fundin Was there, with his motor bike, to ride ahead of us, though comically, because his bike was so old and he was riding so slowly, the bike would cut-out, causing him to pull over, re-start and then roar past the band again, to take his position ahead of us! This happened several times along the route, and I suppose it reflects his never-say-die determination, for which he was famous in his speedway days: although now in his 70s, he didn't give up.

Having marched from one end to the other, we stopped for cold drinks, then marched halfway back where we played yet another concert in the Town Square. By this time, the crowds had converged to hear us, and where yet again, Major Begley took the opportunity to emphasise the message contained in our music. Bandmaster Douglas Beattie invited Bandmaster Stig Unér of Tranås to conduct one of the marches.

After lunch, a three-hour journey took us to Stockholm for the expected climax and conclusion of our tour, the Swedish Congress, where we were greeted by the Chief of the Staff, Commissioner Israel Gaither, with "it's good to see someone from home". Our entry into the auditorium of the Filadelfia Church was greeted with a standing ovation from the 1400 Salvationists as we marched in to the sound of 'Norwich Citadel' played by Stockholm South Band (formerly Stockholm VII).

What a privilege it was to represent our country, our city, Norwich Citadel, but most importantly, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Stockholm South Band under its bandmaster, Torgny Hanson played Eric Ball's 'Journey into Freedom' and Jönköping Choir sang groups of gospel and contemporary songs. A humorous, yet professionally presented item, was by baritone singer Magnus Ahlström who sang in dramatic style 'Largo al Factotum' from Rossini's comic opera The Barber of Seville, with the impromptu inclusion of Major Göran Larsson, who was enticed into the barber's chair, shaving cream and all.

Norwich Citadel Band's items were Peter Graham's 'Renaissance' and 'Gaelforce', and as we were the guest band, provided soloists Richard (Golden Slippers), and Daniel (The Better World), both of whom received prolonged applause for exciting performances of their respective solos.

But the night was not over yet. At the conclusion of the concert we had to pack and load all our gear onto our coach and van and were taken to Stockholm Temple for

what was described as 'Musikcafé', an informal music event. It was well under way when we arrived after 10:00pm and was planned to run through to midnight. We entered the hall to a cacophony of music and conversation from a crowd of about 300 people who had moved – faster than we had – from the Congress concert to Stockholm Temple.

We set up whilst brass and singing groups continued with their various items, then as part of our contribution, provided accompaniment to the euphonium solo 'The Song of the Brother', with eight euphonium soloists in unison. The idea was that a 'referee', complete with yellow and red cards, plus whistle would adjudicate the soloists, then firstly warn and ultimately dismiss them one by one as they played wrong notes. It was all very tongue-in-cheek, with numerous stops for arguments and refusals to leave, and whether it was pre-arranged, I'm not sure, but the last player to be left for the final 32 bars was Mark Giles of NCB who finished with a grand flourish, to the delight, and the protest of others.

We had been pre-warned that one item was to be a speed challenge between Gothenburg Hisings and Norwich Citadel sextets playing 'Star Lake', and being the gentlemen that we are, allowed the home team to go first. They raced through it with a completion time of 1 minute 26 seconds, but somehow we managed to keep our composure and beat them by 6 seconds. It was fun, and I think that Eric Ball might have enjoyed it too!

Major Begley 'brought the house down' as he took the stage recalling his years in the dance profession, compiling a sing-along from the shows, interspersed with dance, including a demonstration of the top hat and cane routine, then to the delight of the crowd enticed a young lady on stage to dance with him. It all created much laughter and needed no translation; such were his charisma and communicating skills.

Well, the Musikcafé experience did end at midnight after the final set by Vasa Bone Unit (a trombone jazz ensemble from Stockholm Vasa Corps), but of course we had to repack and reload coach and van yet again in readiness for the following morning's congress meeting – and we still had a journey of about half-an-hour to our overnight accommodation – Ågesta Hotel, adjacent to the Army's training college, and eventually bed at about 1:15am.

### **Day Six – Stockholm**

Our final day, Sunday, began with breakfast at 7:30am. We didn't seem to notice the early hour, but had to be back at the congress venue in readiness to play pre-meeting music at 9:15am, and amazingly made it with time to spare. Throughout the week the schedules for each day had been so meticulously planned that everything had gone like clockwork, and today was no exception.

As the Filadelfia Church filled with hundreds of Salvationists we anticipated a memorable holiness meeting – we were not to be disappointed. The meeting began with about a hundred young people, from primary to teenagers, entering the auditorium with paper aeroplanes on which were written a prayer and a bible text, and at a given point were released into the congregation, at which point they left for their own congress meeting. We were informed that on the previous evening eight young people had made decisions for Christ in their own Congress meeting.

In a meeting full of challenge the band played 'Reflections in Nature', Procession to Covenant' and William Gordon's 'When He Cometh'. The Chief of the Staff began his message by asking "Do we love each other?" and with a great deal of humour between himself, his translator and congregation demonstrated the Maori greeting of firstly touching forehead, the nose and saying "I love you", and we were invited to try it. Some did, but he went on to suggest that Sweden needs the breath of God, the Holy Spirit to fall upon the nation, and that by the grace of God we can be free people – free from sin and the trappings of sin. He used the chorus 'Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me', and in response to his challenge at least a hundred

delegates moved forward in an act of rededication and commitment, as the band played an arrangement of the chorus as a benediction.

Lunch was at TGI Friday (for those who don't frequent such places, that means 'Thank Goodness It's Friday', but this was Sunday – shock, horror – and we were served club sandwiches, fries and Coke, paid for by THQ. Well, it is Sweden.

Free time followed, our first to speak of all week, and for a couple of hours were able to sample a little of the beautiful and spacious City of Stockholm – The City on Water – with a population of 500,000. A stroll from Kungsträdgården (The King's Garden) where we would be playing our final concert later in the afternoon, we viewed The Royal Palace, Opera House and Parliament House, and Gamla Stan (the Old Town), where narrow streets and alleys are still today much as they were back in the Middle Ages, with buildings rising to four and five floors, but at street level are now turned into restaurants, craft and gift shops, a haven for souvenir hunters.

The events taking place in The King's Garden were part of the Congress Celebrations, as hundreds of Salvationists merged with the public to visit the information areas and listen to various music groups around the park. Young People's Bands, singing groups, and finally Norwich Citadel Band took the stage for our last concert. We began with Bert Langworthy's 6/8 march 'Regeneration', number 52 in the SA Festival Series, and which we used on our previous tour in '71, It's a cracking march, yet I have not heard it played by any other band in my 50 years of banding. The cornet solo 'A Happy Day' (Richard), tenor horn solo 'Strauss Horn Concerto No 1' (David), and euphonium solo 'The Song of the Brother' (Mark) were again received enthusiastically, with Mark in particular using his last opportunity to 'milk' his cadenzas, super and pedal notes to good effect with an appreciative crowd. 'Celebration Overture', 'Salvation's Song', and 'Gaelforce' were among our final items.

Territorial Headquarters in Sweden once again paid for our meal, and this time it was at the very exclusive Godthem Restaurant on Skansen Island, where we enjoyed a three-course farewell dinner. After speeches of appreciation and presentations, we departed for Västerås Airport and the flight home.

This has been a most fulfilling tour, and a privilege to represent the UK Territory and our home corps. Our thanks go to Peter Edqvist, Major Göran Larsson, mentioned at the beginning of this report for their flawless planning, and not forgetting Territorial Music Director Lars-Otto Ljungholm who invited the band to participate in the Congress. Thanks also to our band secretary Michael Whybrow who instigated our invitation to Sweden and whose tireless attention to detail ensured a hassle-free tour.

Two men who deserve special mention are our van drivers, Phil Green and Derek Mapes, whose tour lasted eleven days (five days longer than the band's), having driven our instruments, uniforms and equipment by sea via Denmark. The quiet and efficient work throughout the week, as well as a first class checking system operated by Nigel at every venue, relieved the band of an enormous amount of lifting and carrying. Not one lost piece or damaged instrument – thanks guys.