

Poster for the 1940 Olympic Games featuring a statue by Waino Aaltonen of the middle- and long-distance runner Paavo Nurmi, who won nine Olympic gold medals and three silver medals between 1920 and 1928. The 1940 Games were suspended indefinitely following the outbreak of World War Two.

'A Life of Extremes'

THE BRITISH DISCOVER MODERN FINLAND
1917-1941

Tony Lurcock

'Everything progresses well. It's a life of extremes.'
Lady Diana Cooper,
Helsinki, 1938

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Paimio Sanatorium, designed by Alvar Aalto and completed in 1932.
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During the time that I have been working on this volume two good friends of the project have died. Bill Mead read an early draft many years ago, and encouraged me to keep writing. I regret not having gone back to him soon enough for information about several of the writers appearing here who were his personal acquaintances. I have sorely missed the company of Tim Griggs, in person, by phone, and by email; the book too has missed his bold editing. Writing is not as much fun without him.

The publisher and author are grateful to Karl Grotenfelt, whose generosity has made the publication of this book possible.

It has been a tedious business attempting to locate the copyright holders of many of the books cited; some of the publishers, departed, have left no addresses. Several, I discovered, lost their archives in the Blitz, and others have long since been absorbed in a bewildering chain of international takeovers. Every effort has been made to trace or contact copyright holders. The publisher will rectify at the earliest opportunity any omissions or errors brought to his notice.

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Place Names in Swedish and Finnish

In the previous volume, *No Particular Hurry*, British writers still used the Swedish place names but Finnish had started to creep in. The change is now quite decisive, as one would expect, but far from complete. In this volume travellers explore every part of the country, visiting many places which have never had a Swedish name. In the Åland Islands and the archipelagos there are very few Finnish versions of the Swedish names. Once again, many writers name places which I have not located. In a book of this size it has not proved possible to provide a map which shows every small village and settlement, but most places can be found on the website <http://kansalaisen.karttapaikka.fi/kartanhaku/osoitehaku.html?lang=en>. The site recognises only Finnish names.

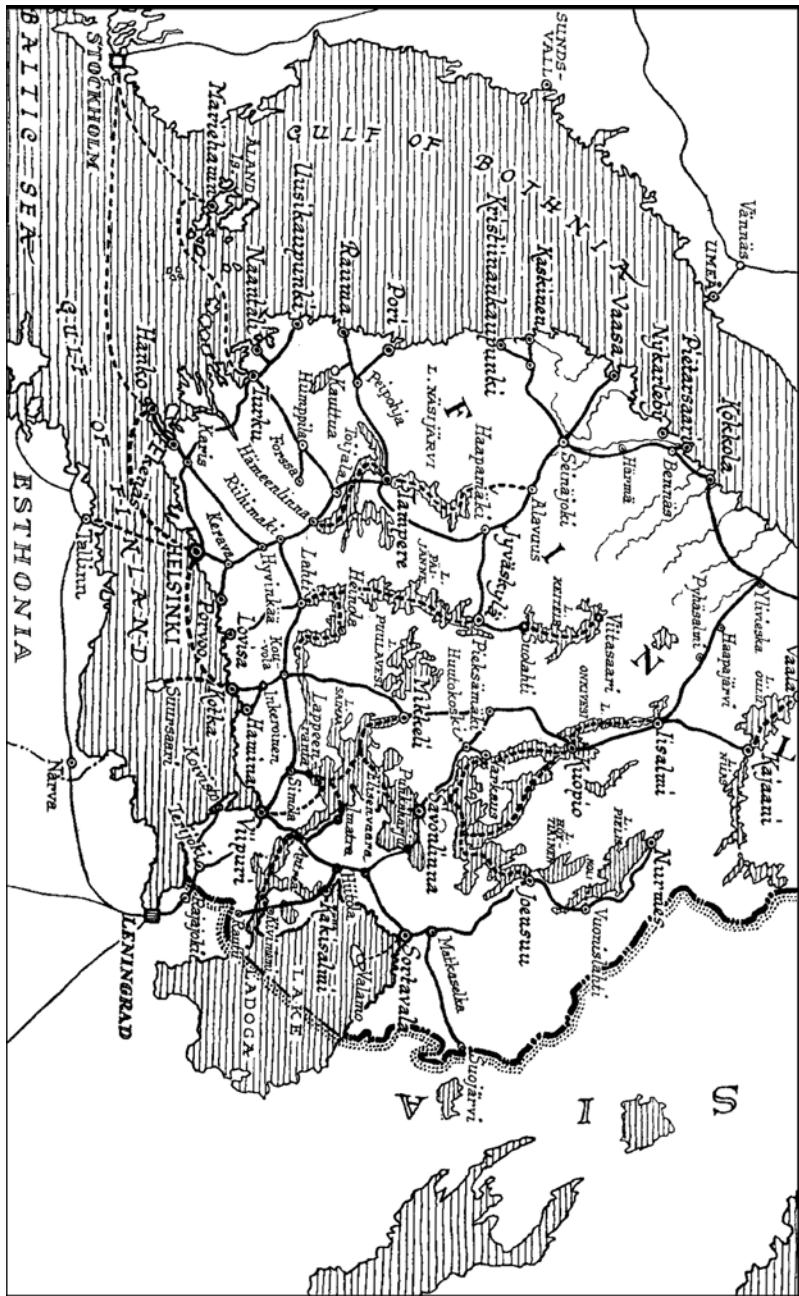
Borgå	Porvoo
Ekenäs	Tammisaari
Enare	Inari
Enontekis	Enontekiö
Fölisön	Seurasaari
Gamla Karleby	Kokkola
Hangö	Hanko
Helsingfors	Helsinki
Nykarleby	Uusikaarlepyy
Nyslott	Savonlinna
Nystad	Uusikaupunki
Raumo	Rauma
Sordavala	Sortavala
Sveaborg	Suomenlinna
Tammerfors	Tampere

Tavastehus	Hämeenlinna
Tourneå	Tornio
Uleåborg	Oulu
Vasa	Vaasa
Vyborg	Viipuri
Åbo	Turku

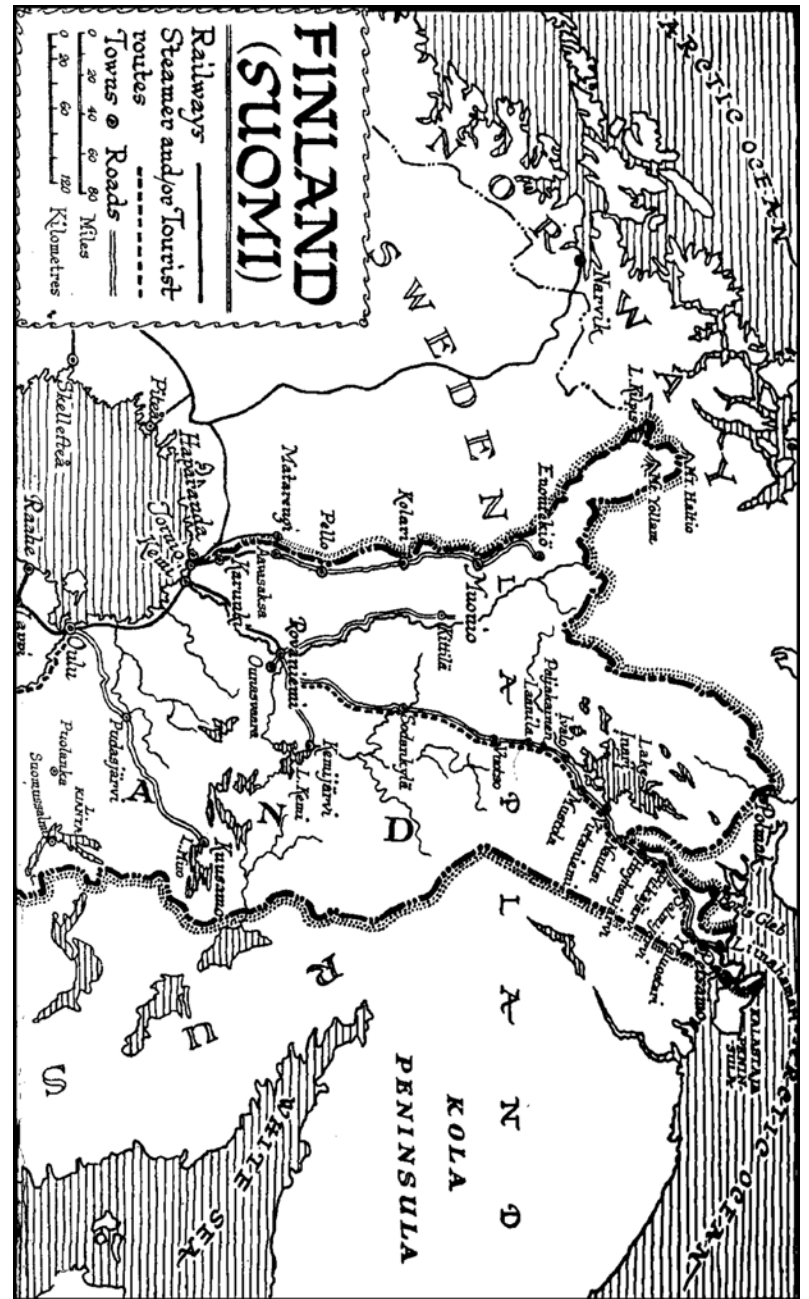
Beyond Finland

Nargö	Naissaar
Reval	Tallinn

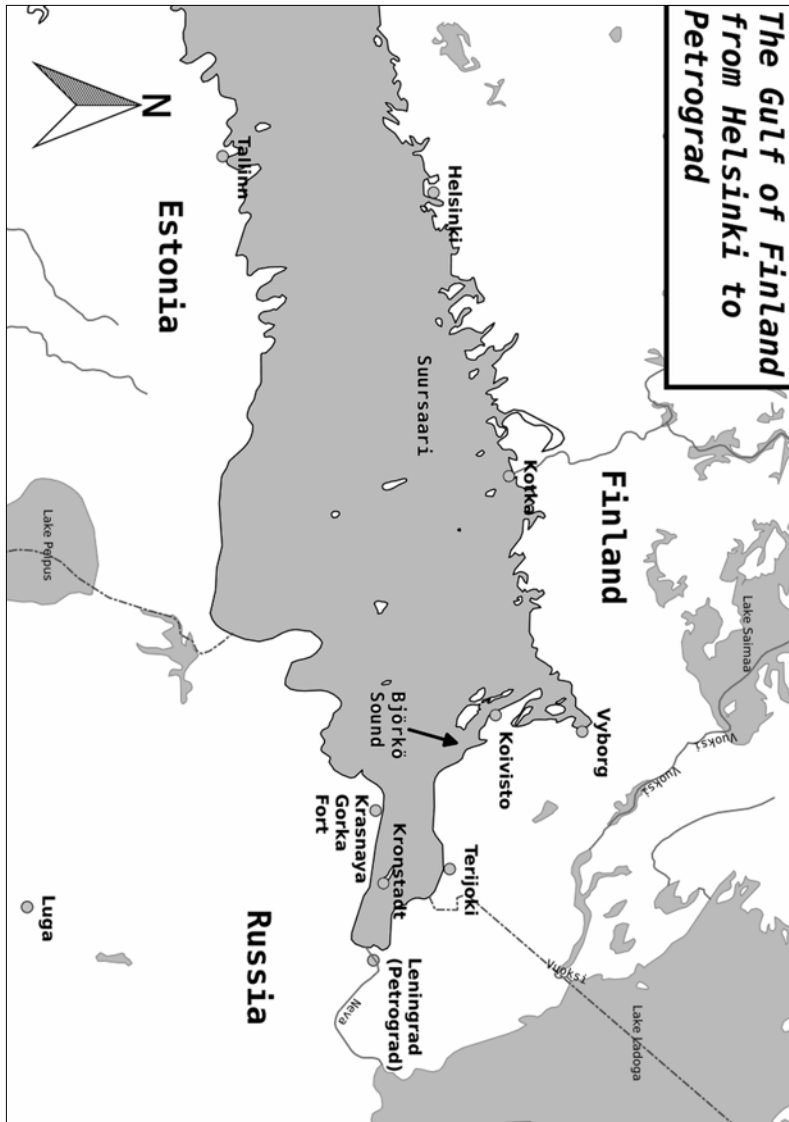
In 1914 Saint Petersburg became Petrograd, in 1924 Leningrad, and in 1991 Saint Petersburg again.



X



Map c.1930 with place names in Finnish



© OpenStreetMap contributors

Prologue

On 6 May 1919, the British Consul General in Finland, Henry McGrady Bell, received from the British Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, the following telegram:

PLEASE CONVEY FOLLOWING STOP HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGE THE INDEPENDENCE OF FINLAND AND ITS GOVERNMENT

'I got out my colourful consular uniform,' wrote Bell, 'and, replete with sword and medals, presented myself at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.' There he was received by the acting Foreign Minister, Leo Ehrnrooth, who conducted him to the Palace, where he delivered the news to General Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, the Regent of Finland. The same evening Bell attended the meeting of the Diet, where he heard the Premier announce the news: 'Recognition by the mighty British Empire is of the greatest importance, and meets with our deepest satisfaction.'

Helsingfors was beflagged. A banquet was given at General Mannerheim's residence at which I was the guest of honour, and, as such, privileged to escort his beautiful daughter Sophy to the dinner-table. During the evening the General decorated me with the White Rose of Finland; and so ended a very satisfying episode in my humble diplomatic career.

The end of one episode for Bell, quoted from his memoir *Land of Lakes* (1950), was the beginning of a new era for Finland, and for those who travelled there.

Preface

The Epilogue to *No Particular Hurry: British Travellers in Finland 1830–1917* (2013) concluded with a hint of anticipation:

De Windt wrote of his hotel in Tampere that ‘there was a quaint mixture of modernism and the primitive, peculiar to this country, and not without its charms’. In the next phase of the British discovery of Finland the quaint and the primitive more or less cease to be attractions. The independent Finland after 1917 was ‘the new nation’, and ushered in a new era for travel writing; foremost among the interests of British visitors would be the advanced social institutions, the architecture, the music, and the Winter War.

The present book is, unashamedly, a sequel, and completes a trilogy tracing the journeys and experiences of British folk in Finland, from the earliest recorded explorers to the volunteers and observers who found themselves there during the Second World War.

The format has seemed satisfactory enough for me not to want to change it. The first book, *Not So Barren or Uncultivated*, described Finland as an outpost of Sweden; the Swedish-speaking inhabitants of the coastal areas were, confusingly, often described as ‘Swedes’. The second, *No Particular Hurry*, presented British experiences in the Grand Duchy of Finland, part of the Russian empire. Finally, and very satisfyingly, in this third volume Finland is independent.

Several readers of *No Particular Hurry* have indicated to me that I was going beyond what they understood by ‘travellers’, citing particularly the naval officers who were with the British

Fleet in the Baltic 1854–5. The definition was stretched also by the inclusion of two travellers, Annie Margaret Clive-Bayley and Rosalind Travers, who each stayed the greater part of a year in Finland. This, I considered, made the accounts of their travels – some to quite distant parts of Finland – especially valuable, since their knowledge and experience of the country left their writings relative free of the facile generalisations and reflections which often form impressionistic accounts of short visits. As for the naval officers, I felt, and still feel, that their Finland experiences were well worth retelling; where else might they have appeared?

In this third volume I have continued to use the term ‘traveller’ flexibly, but have withdrawn it from the title. The authors who are my source material are, after all, chosen primarily to display their discovery of Finland, and many of their books are not ‘travel books’ as the term is generally understood. The first two volumes covered more than 150 years, yet the twenty-four years presented here contain more and more varied material than either of the earlier periods. The dates of this third volume are exact: from 6 December 1917, when Finnish independence was declared, to the same date in 1941, when the changing alliances of the war led to Britain declaring war on Finland. These bookend dates give a neat compactness to a book whose pattern is almost classical: a beginning, a middle and an end. It opens with the perilous activities of British spies, agents and mariners crossing the border with Bolshevik Russia, and closes with accounts of the heroism and the destruction of the Winter War and its aftermath. The intervening twenty years contain an amazing variety of experiences and reflections as visitors record their responses to a Finland which was rapidly establishing its place in the world. The variety of authors, and their very different forms of narrative, make this volume a literary kaleidoscope as well.

During this period much of the travel is away from the

coastal areas, and is therefore in Finnish-speaking Finland; one tourist who had hired a Swedish guide had a lot of trouble. The travellers in the earlier volumes rarely had any knowledge of Finnish; here quite a few of them seem to get by. In the tourist areas now summer guides – usually university students – spoke English, among several other languages.

Most towns in Finland were still known by their Swedish names, though; 'Helsingfors' was still the preferred form in England during the Second World War. The map in the sixteenth edition of Cook's *Traveller's Handbook to Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland* (1936) gives the place names in both languages, with Swedish first. In the next edition (1939) Finnish comes first. As in my earlier volumes, I have kept the Swedish names when they are used in the quoted texts, and the Finnish names in my own text. In the few places where this could be confusing I have made use of parentheses, and have again provided a list of place names in each language. Several of the writers describe places such as Vyborg and Sortavala, which were lost to Russia in the 1944 armistice, as were Terijoki and the island of Valamo with its monastery.

Introduction

For Lady Diana Cooper 'a life of extremes' comprised 'ghastly moments and enchanting ones'; for other British writers it reflects a much wider variety of experiences. Most obvious is the British discovery – or rediscovery, rather – that Finland is a land for all seasons. Before about 1820 the British travellers seemed indifferent to the weather, and took Finnish winters in their stride. Then, for the next century, Finland became a destination for summer holidays, even the few travellers who ventured as far north as Lapland preferring to brave the mosquitoes than to hazard the cold. Now, although summer holidays remain as attractive as ever – '[t]he geniality of the climate in these northern regions is surprising,' wrote F. J. North – they become overlaid with a variety of other interests and attractions. Only about a third of the summer visitors represented in the following pages could be described as vacationists.

'All seasons' includes exuberant descriptions of spring: in Turku James Bramwell was assured by one of his students that 'in the North the spring does roar. You'll hear for yourself.' He did, and he describes it vividly. The Finnish autumn, too, was a new discovery for the British. 'Those early days of October,' wrote Constance Malleson, 'were the most brilliant I could ever remember living through.' In November, though, John Gibbons found the climate anything but genial:

I believe it's pleasant enough in the summer, but there under that wintry sky it's a dour country and a frightening one. The earth is so hard, and as it rings under your boots you feel that never again in all creation can a flower or a bud or so much as a blade of grass force its feeble way through that frozen hardness.

The 'life of extremes' can be seen in the many contrasting images of Finland. On one hand we can still read fascinated descriptions of a peasant culture with unchanging traditions, even remnants of *runo* singing, as well as hay-making and gold-panning. On the other hand travellers' accounts describe and extol the social advances of the 'new nation', with the word 'modern' applied to almost everything.

The variety of visitors had now become very wide. Two of the ladies were aristocrats, several of the more accomplished tourists stayed in the best hotels, others were professionals (journalist, geologist, tubercular specialist, politician), a few were on secret service missions, and some were simply young and adventurous. The writing is as varied as the writers: some is elegant and literary, some very practical and down-to-earth, some scholarly, some thrilling and some scenic. There are plenty of set pieces: epic lunches with Sibelius; getting a drink during prohibition; evading the armed sentries at the Russian border; a lake steamer picking up passengers; travelling in a troop train in the Winter War.

During the years described in this book the name of Nokia would have suggested to visitors nothing much more than rubber boots and toilet paper, yet, led by the Nokia revolution, Finland became in 2010 the first country in the world to make internet access a legal right. More than a century before this the telephone had, it seems, already become such a right; here already Finland was a pioneer country. Helsinki had a telephone exchange in 1882, and in the 1930s, North records, from Suurisaari, an island far out in the Baltic, 'there is a wireless telephone service, that costs only about threepence for an ordinary conversation'. Sydney A. Clark describes with awe how the 'Session Hall' in the new parliament building has 'the most modern of voting devices' with voting buttons on every desk: 'the vote on any bill or motion is recorded by this intelligent machine within ninety seconds.'

Many of the earliest travellers were well-to-do, and even titled, but it was the exclusivity of wealth rather than of rank that permitted them to travel, usually with servants, to such a distant country. The Victorian and Edwardian period saw middle-class travellers discovering Finland, the journey made easy with the advent of steamer and railway travel, but still requiring a substantial outlay of time and money. By the 1930s, though, Finland was open to anyone who had £10 in his pocket, or indeed in her pocket. Bill Mead would perhaps never have set foot in Finland at all had he not been allured by 'the £10 return journey to Helsinki'.

'A Life of Extremes' is, of course, an anthology as well as an account. The books which provide the material are no longer in print, so the collection is, if nothing else, a useful piece of dredging. The period from 1917 to 1941 was crowded with political and military incident. I have assumed that many British readers of this book will be largely unfamiliar with the Finnish aspects of these incidents, so have included background which will, inevitably, be superfluous for some and perhaps inadequate for others. It is a delicate balance, but, as I wrote in an earlier Preface, it is by no means necessary to read the Introduction.

The background of independence

This third volume opens in 1917, with Finland finally independent of both its Swedish and its Russian neighbours. By the Treaty of Hamina (1809) Finland had been ceded by Sweden to Russia; it was not incorporated, but became an autonomous Grand Duchy, keeping its former constitution and legal system, and retaining the Lutheran faith. Alexander I both confirmed and extended 'the framework of laws and institutions' inherited from Sweden. Well before the accession of Nicholas II in 1894 this benign arrangement had begun to unravel. The development and decay of the relationship with Russia are clearly reflected in the writings of British travellers from the end of the

century. Annie Margaret Clive-Bayley noticed immediately on landing in Turku in 1893 that 'the names of the streets were indicated in Russian, Swedish and Finnish, a precaution quite necessary, as there are Russians who scorn to know the languages of the conquered country'. By the 1890s Finland was being systematically reined in, with traditional rights, such as its own postal service, removed.

The appointment of General Bobrikov as Governor-General in 1898 and the 'February Manifesto' delivered by Nicholas II in 1899 were clear indications of 'a new policy towards Finland'. The nationalist movement was known outside Finland partly because of the popularity of Sibelius's music, which, wrote Rosa Newmarch, 'seemed more and more to sum up and express the spirit of an ancient race lately reborn among the natives'. A recent Finnish historian, Eino Lyytinen, has explored this subject:

The 1905 Revolution in Russia brought the first demands for Finnish independence, but it was only after the March Revolution of 1917 and the announcement of the Russian Provisional Government concerning the 'right of nations to decide their own destinies' that the idea of national independence was voiced with more affirmation.

The break could finally be effected when Russia was too preoccupied for Finland to be any sort of priority. So it was that the Finnish Diet proclaimed Finland an independent sovereign state on 6 December 1917; formal full recognition by the Russian government was conveyed by Trotsky a month later. Britain did not follow suit for another seventeen months.

There were complex reasons for this long delay. The proclamation of 6 December was very far from marking the magical transformation of a repressed province into a united nation enjoying blossoming independence. Finland was in the midst of a power struggle which in late January 1918 broke into a civil

war between the Social Democrats (the 'Reds') and the non-socialist Senate (the 'Whites'). The fighting was bitter and violent, and when it ended, after four months, there were 36,000 dead. Mannerheim, a Finnish aristocrat who had served thirty years as an officer in the Imperial Russian Army, led the 'Whites' to victory with the aid of the German Baltic Division.

The new Finnish government began forging strong military links with Germany, seeing this as the likeliest way of securing the new nation against future Russian influence or aggression. On 9 October the Finnish crown was officially offered to Prince Fredrick Charles of Hesse, brother-in-law of the Kaiser. Wishing to distance himself from all this, Mannerheim resigned as Commander-in-Chief, left the country, and 'embarked on a grand tour that established him in the eyes of many foreigners as a Finnish statesman and leader'. In December, with Germany defeated and the monarchy scheme hastily abandoned, the government elected him Regent.

The reality of Finland's independence had been given *de facto* acknowledgement by Britain and America in January 1918; the reluctance to recognize it *de jure* was a result of the obvious concern of both countries about the stability of a state which had marked its independence with a civil war, and which had moved decisively into the German sphere of influence: 'the political and commercial treaties concluded with Germany in March 1918 virtually reduced Finland to the status of a vassal,' writes D. G. Kirby; they 'offered scope for German economic penetration which would have turned Finland into a virtual German colony'. The choice of a German-born king had deepened these worries. It was only when 'all hopes of a reconstituted Russia had faded away' that the barrier could be overcome and *de jure* recognition of Finnish independence granted.

The reluctance of Britain to act against Russia's interests had been evident since the turn of the century. Pro-Finland pressure groups in Europe, and especially in Britain, had had no effect;

H. W. Nevinson, a campaigning journalist, had actually taken the Finnish cause to King Edward VII at Buckingham Palace, asking him 'to write a personal letter to the Tsar' to dissuade him from a military invasion of Finland, but was informed by the King's equerry of the royal response: 'it would be interfering with the affairs of a friendly Power, but he thanks you for your information.'

Bell's description of his 'humble diplomatic career' rather underplays his actual achievements during his year as Consul General; Augustus Agar (in Finland on a secret service assignment) had a high regard for him: 'his handling of British and allied interests in Finland,' he wrote, 'was a masterpiece of common sense and tact, which produced invaluable practical results'. Among Bell's many responsibilities was the large number of British refugees from Russia who had come over the border to Finland early in 1919, and were 'quarantined' by the Finns at border camps. He cleverly sidelined their complaints about poor treatment; he 'was already having trouble enough with the Finnish authorities about the Germans', and he considered that the refugees were very fortunate not to be in Russian prisons. He realistically describes himself as a 'war diplomat'; he was, briefly, succeeded by Sir Coleridge Kennard, a chargé d'affaires whose intimate knowledge of Russia and of its people was of great use when Finnish concerns had moved from Germany back to Russia.

An independent Finland required the appointment of a British minister. There was some agitation in the Finnish press for Bell to be appointed, but he took the realistic decision to resign from his consular post, just over a year after his appointment. The first Ambassador to Finland was Lord Acton, formerly British Consul General in Zurich; appointed on 2 September, he left after only eight months. Bell relates an incident when his Lordship had hired a car in Helsinki, not knowing it to have been stolen; the police spotted it and fired in the air to stop it,

not knowing who the occupant was. 'Acton promptly sent a dispatch to London proclaiming that the Finns had tried to assassinate him!' Bell wrote diplomatically that 'there were tears on neither side when [his] departure was announced'.

The British discover modern Finland

There is very little in the earliest British accounts of Finland which anticipates the Finland we know today, whereas the later Victorian and the Edwardian travellers, represented in *No Particular Hurry*, show modern Finland in the making. The present volume records British impressions of the Republic of Finland, a modern state, no longer ruled by either of her neighbours, and anxious in all sorts of ways to emphasise her political, cultural and linguistic independence. What might be regarded as the manifesto for the new republic was a work published in three volumes in 1923-5, and in an abridged 600-page English translation in 1926. The Preface, by Edward Hjelt, Rector of Helsinki University, sets a bright tone from the first page:

The Finnish poets had prophesied of a time when the spring flood should rise and burst the barriers which constrained the Finnish people, when the fetters should fall from its hands and liberty blossom forth, and the song of patriotism should ring out high and free.

This was the Finland visited and described by the new wave of British travellers. As Anssi Halmesvirta has written:

The British were delighted to see how the 'Whites' had stopped the spread of the 'Bolshevik menace' westward, but, in the 1920s-30s, they preferred to see a democratic Finland that also provided milk for the workers' children and stood aloof from German influence.

It is surprising to notice how much the interests and impressions of the British had developed in only a few years. In the

decades before independence they had written with surprise, and usually with admiration, about female emancipation. Now it was no longer a novelty – after all, it was even reaching Britain; Kay Gilmour remarks on 'the number of women engrossed on work that in most countries is reserved exclusively for men', but adds 'all this is only to be expected in the pioneer land which ceded universal and equal votes to men and women as far back as October 1st 1906'. The remarkable educational system is still admired, but is now seen and understood in a wider context, as part of a developing social democratic society. It is more or less assumed that visitors will take a sauna, and the 'tar-boat experience', described in such terrifying detail in several earlier accounts, is now mentioned, if at all, matter-of-factly – just another way of getting around. 'The boats,' writes Gilmour, 'redundant with the advent of the railway have been preserved for travellers.' North explains that the pressure of tourism had 'resulted in a change of procedure', so that the 'calm waters' areas are bypassed by rail, and the busy tourist can experience just the thrills, without a lot of tedious scenery.

At the end of *No Particular Hurry* I wrote:

By about 1912 published accounts of summer tours in Finland were becoming repetitive; the format of the books is easily recognisable: embossed covers, thick paper, and many photographs, often supplied by the Finnish Tourist Association. The growing list of popular destinations had become predictable; there were half-a-dozen accounts of Kangasala, Imatra, and the tar-boats, for example, to choose from for this selection.

By the 1920s this pattern had changed. To some extent there is a reversion to the eighteenth-century pattern of travel books which provided principally an account of a country, rather than details of the author's journey. In some of the volumes

cited below the writers do not readily concede that they have actually travelled in Finland themselves, even when they evidently have. They produce not so much travel books as processed accounts of their experiences. Readers who are interested in travel writing find books like these frustrating. Most of these authors, do, though, allow occasional personal experiences to survive, and many of these I have managed to extract. Almost every book included in the present volume contains a great deal of detailed historical and geographical information about Finland, sometimes skilfully incorporated, sometimes not.

The difference which a generation can make is striking. Sylvia MacDougall had written in *A Summer Tour in Finland* (1908): 'socialism is bad enough anywhere, but in this land where every lake and forest is impregnated with old traditions, it is a sin.' She would hardly have recognised, or have wished to recognise, the Finland admiringly described by Frank Fox less than twenty years later: 'it is,' he wrote,

a country where, on the whole, a good balance has been struck between freedom and licence; where the respective interests of Capital and of Labour in the production of national wealth are being considered in a fair spirit; where there are no very rich and few very poor; where the standards of education are high and education is not interpreted in the narrow sense of solely 'book-learning', where there is an excellent system of co-operation and a careful study is made of the preservation of the national physique.

This, from *Finland Today* (1926), gives what might be regarded as a résumé of the new British interest.

Halliday Sutherland records an anecdote told him by Yrjö Hirn, Professor of Aesthetics at Helsinki University, concerning Edward Westermarck, Professor of Sociology at London University:

During his first years of study in England he was invited to dinner by a family who had not met him personally, and knew nothing about him except that he came from Finland. When in his full height he made his entry among them he saw that his hostess gave some order to the servant; he thought he heard some furniture being moved in the dining-room, and through an indiscretion he afterwards learnt that in pure tactfulness a child's high chair had been provided so that the guest from Finland should not feel uncomfortable by not reaching up to the table.

Westermarck had evidently been assumed to be Sami. '[T]he very common confusion amongst English people between the Finns and the Lapps,' wrote L. Dudley Stamp, 'is responsible for the prevalence of extraordinarily erroneous ideas about the country.' Hirn mentioned that as late as the 1930s the *Encyclopædia Britannica* pictured 'A Finn with his native conveyance of reindeer and sledge'. Ignorance about Finland abounded: visiting England in 1899, Professor Werner Söderhjelm had been asked, 'Has Finland many *colonies*?' In the 1960s, on a trip back to England, I was asked by a friend – a graduate – 'if they had houses in Finland.'

British visitors often wrote as if to correct such misapprehensions. Cecil Gray, especially, was indignant at the assumption that Finland was primitive or backward is especially striking:

One's first impression, indeed, on arriving at Helsingfors – or Helsinki as it is called in the vernacular – is that one has been magically transported not so much to a new country as to a new age . . . So far from being a mere collection of log-cabins and ice-huts, as most people probably suppose, Helsingfors is, on the contrary, one of the most modern and up-to-date cities in Europe, in comparison with which London and Paris seem – and are – in many respects backward and old-fashioned.

There was no shortage of information available for anyone who was genuinely interested in learning about Finland: the bibliography of this present volume is evidence of this.

A new breed of traveller

The books written during this period reveal the new class of traveller. After the high-octane adventures of spies, agents and speedboat crews over the newly created border with Bolshevik Russia we meet men and women on summer holidays, adventurers, sailors, cyclists, writers, journalists, and, as the storm clouds break in 1939, politicians and war correspondents. There is a very different flavour now: little suggestion of the Grand Tour, even on a reduced scale, fewer accounts of cities and beauty spots, and much more a discovery of Finnish people in their ordinary occupations, often in unspectacular parts of the country. The writers rely less on the Finnish Tourist Association for their photographs: 'I have endeavoured to illustrate the commonplace rather than the spectacular,' wrote North. By taking their own pictures they can further distance themselves from the most popular tourist sights, though few can resist including a shot of Helsinki Railway Station.

While Finland continued to appeal to travellers who wanted to get off the beaten track, especially in Lapland, it was quickly dubbed 'the new nation', and started to attract also a new sort of visitor, drawn by ideological interest and cultural curiosity. 'Between the two world wars,' wrote Sir Paul Dukes in his Foreword to Bell's *Land of Lakes*, 'it was recognised almost as a truism that Finland was "a model democracy".' Finland had, as early as 1906, extended parliamentary suffrage to all adult men and women; now it became recognised as a pioneer in social policy as well. 'One could write a useful book,' wrote Fox, 'on any one of the chief social questions as they are answered in Finland: on the position of women in society; on the co-operative movement; on the education, mental and physical, of

the race.' British travellers in earlier periods had often recorded their surprise at discovering civilised institutions and enlightened attitudes in such a remote and unknown country; now books were written by travellers who had gone to Finland with the express intention of learning about those very institutions, and seeing them at close quarters. Even a little pocket book for tourists, Kay Gilmour's *Finland* (1931), has a long chapter on 'Finland, the Pioneer Republic', which describes aspects as diverse as Agricultural Co-operation and the Ebenezer Kindergarten. 'For only in a young country,' she writes, 'unhampered by traditional prejudices are such experiments possible.' Another pocket book, Sydney A. Clark's *Finland on £10* (1938), goes much further:

The world is aware of Finland as a sturdy, self-reliant nation which has shown extraordinary capacity in several lines. It looks to Finland as a proving ground for experiments in living which are of immense importance to the whole future course of our hard-pressed civilisation.

Mrs Tweedie had written in 1897 of her astonishment 'that so remote a country, one so little known and so unappreciated, should thus suddenly burst forth and hold the most advanced ideas for both men and women'. Between the wars there was considerable British curiosity about this distant socialist democracy, bordering the much grander socialist experiment in the Soviet Union. 'Crossing the bridge,' wrote Arthur Ransome as he entered Bolshevik Russia, 'we passed from one philosophy to another.' Some of the visitors of this period were on their way to or from Russia, going to admire the Socialist Utopia. The admirers of Finnish social democracy were, by contrast, more curious than idealistic, and were convinced rather than credulous.

The dust jacket of Clark's little handbook assumes that the interests of even low-budget travellers included social policy:

A great curiosity has been awakened concerning the post-war republic of Finland. How does Finland do it? What is her formula for success? With a population half that of London in an area three times that of England, with a language of mysterious origin and great difficulty, she has quickly set her mark on civilisation. Her co-operative movement has aroused the keen interest of economists. Her athletes have startled the world. Led by Sibelius and Saarinen she has blazed her own great path in music and architecture.

Clark displays so much enthusiasm for Finland that he feels obliged to conclude, 'I hope sincerely that my praise of Finland has not exalted her to a pedestal of tedious perfection.' Finland was getting known, as always, not only by books but also by book reviews: the *Spectator*, reviewing Gibbons's *Keepers of the Baltic Gates*, quotes: 'I was surprised at the youth and development of these countries . . . In all Helsinki they don't seem to have a slum or a shabbily-dressed man or woman.' The reviewer adds: 'It is a mixed pleasure for us who live further south to read this book.'

On 23 September 1830 Captain Charles Colville Frankland had woken up early in Helsinki and, he wrote, 'sallied out to look at the city. It indeed surpasses any expectation I had previously formed; it is the most beautiful and the most interesting new city I ever beheld.' In 1856 Selina Bunbury, returning to the Baltic after the war, had remarked on the contrast between 'antique Reval [Tallinn] and active modern Helsingfors'. Well before 1917 it had become clear that Helsinki was announcing itself as a modern city, distinctly different from all other capitals on the Baltic. Now its buildings came to be seen by visitors as an embodiment of the nation's independence.

The excitement which belongs to new and hard-won independence can be seen especially in responses to the architecture. From the 1890s Finnish architects had made 'an

uncompromising break with tradition; 'there were to be no more of Engel's classical columns,' wrote T. W. Atchley. Saarinen's railway station and Sonck's Kallio church were especially admired, as was Sirén's Parliament House, completed in 1931. 'Modern Finnish architecture,' wrote L. Dudley Stamp, 'like Finnish art, has the vigour of a youthful nation.' For Gilmour

The modern buildings in Helsinki are its most exhilarating feature. One feels that in architecture for the first time the force and vitality of the nation, untrammelled by old tradition, unfettered by considerations of environment, unlimited by space or time, have found full expression.

Fox energetically endorses this; for him Finland is the exciting exception to 'the astonishing sterility of modern art in architecture'. 'Their architects,' he writes, 'have studied old traditions to learn, and not merely to imitate.' Alexander MacCallum Scott's response is even more enthusiastic:

The streets are like galleries in a museum of architectural exhibits. The citizens talk about these buildings as they talk about pictures, plays and politics. Here the architectural styles of the future are being tried out.

Helsinki promotes itself in brochures today as 'one of the finest Art Nouveau cities in Europe', where tourists are invited to 'take a stroll to view the pearls of Jugend style', often described as the Finnish National Romantic Style. Recording his arrival from Estonia in the early 1920s, Scott was surprised to find in Helsinki 'a universal disparagement of Reval [Tallinn]. It was old-fashioned, I was told, dirty, insanitary . . . it was a dismal place.' The contrast was unmissable: Helsinki, he wrote, was 'intensely modern, spacious, well built, [and] clean'. Independence had, it seemed, quite literally involved a clean break.

'Never have I been struck by the quality of cleanliness so forcibly as in Finland,' wrote S. Jones in *Blackies Girls' Annual*

in 1928. 'Houses, streets, hotels, even railway stations, trains, and steamers appear to be cleaner there than it is the nature of such places to be anywhere else.' Adeline Hill Tickell agreed: 'For its surpassing cleanliness,' she wrote (1930), 'Finland is comparable to Holland.' On the evidence of their descriptions of Finland one might believe that for the British cleanliness is a curious phenomenon, to be found only in strange foreign locations. Tickell continues, 'I heard a man say as he was bidding farewell to a friend on the quay, "I shall be really glad to get home to see a little honest English dirt."' To this day British visitors to Finland note its cleanliness, in rather the same way that Finns arriving in England remark how dirty it looks. 'It is no exaggeration,' wrote Sutherland, 'that by comparison with the streets of London you could eat food off the pavements of Helsinki.'

The 'clean break' had, of course, been from Russia. Since the eighteenth century British travellers had been describing the sudden change they perceived when crossing the Russian border. One of the most vivid expressions, perhaps, was by Edward Daniel Clarke in 1800: 'A few miles, nay, even a few yards conduct you from a land of hospitality and virtue, to a den of thieves.' Noël Coward made the same distinction, and breathed an almost audible breath of relief crossing the border from Russia in 1939 into a Finland which was 'most beautiful and gay and clean'.

The National Romantic Style was, and still is, widely admired, but visitors commended also more ordinary housing, in the country as well as in town. Sir Walter Citrine, an eminent trade unionist, made a point of choosing for himself the workers' houses which he inspected, and compared them very favourably to British equivalents. 'Even the dock quarters,' wrote Gibbons, 'might have been the park promenade of some London upper-middle-class suburbia.'

During the 1930s British writers were beginning to notice

Alvar Aalto; 'almost single-handed,' wrote the *Times* obituary in 1976, 'he made his country a place of pilgrimage for all who sought enlightenment as to the aesthetic possibilities of the new architecture.' His Paimio Sanatorium (1932) was the Mecca of these pilgrimages; John Langdon-Davies explained why:

In other countries hospitals have been built to resemble Gothic cathedrals, Empire saloons, Victorian drawing-rooms, or even just warehouses, in the mistaken belief that a building like a warehouse will prove the cheapest kind of hospital. But at Paimio we have something which at first does not appeal to the ordinary man, who has never seen a building constructed solely for the purpose it is to serve, who because monasteries in the Middle Ages were seats of learning, imagines that Gothic arches are essential to culture even in the steel and concrete age.

The British architects and journalists who began to visit Finland to view the work of Saarinen, Sonck, and Sirén as well as the young Aalto were part of another development in the inter-war years: the arrival of British travellers with specialised interests, which extended far beyond social institutions. Fishermen and yachtsmen came to find the space, silence and solitude which they needed for their pursuits; writers on athletics came to see what had produced world champions like Kolehmainen and Nurmi; and musicians and others came to meet Sibelius.

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In 1924–5 there was an important British Military Mission to Finland, led by General Walter Kirke. He was accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel P. L. W. Powell, whose son Anthony, then at Oxford, spent two vacations in Helsinki, where he experienced what he called 'a new entirely unfamiliar mode of life'. In his autobiography he writes that *Venusberg* (1932), the second

of his many novels, 'recalls some of these Finnish interludes, though much of the novel's background, especially the political circumstances, are altogether imaginary'. The town he describes in the novel as 'an obscurely northern capital' was, he writes, 'a mixture' of Helsinki and Tallinn. Even a diligent reading of the novel gives few suggestions of Helsinki: it mentions the civil war; a German military presence; the House of Knights; a nightclub 'with a telephone on every table'; a lady called Frau Koski; cross-country skiing; and refers to a meteorite which 'fell near this town in the middle years of the last century'. Powell's autobiography describes 'a social world, familiar in Russian novels':

Dinner-parties took place at the mid-Victorian hour of five-thirty in the afternoon – sometimes advanced to six-thirty as a concession to foreigners' taste for dinner at a late hour – and, if the occasion did not merit a white tie, the older generation of men would wear (rather than the modern dinner-jacket) a black tie and a black waistcoat with a tail coat. The considerable colony of White Russian refugees augmented the sense of living in a 19th century Russian novel or Scandinavian play.

The world of dinner parties did not feature on most travellers' itineraries in this period. Cook's *Handbook* advises that 'evening dress is seldom worn in summer even in leading hotels of the capital'; in this volume only Lady Diana Cooper writes of dressing formally for dinner, and that was with Mannerheim.

It takes both time and unaccustomed humility for the English to recognise, let alone to admit, that things may be ordered better in another country. Nonetheless, during these inter-war years Finland made strong impressions on a long succession of visitors from Britain. Even Noël Coward, a noted epicurean, 'found nothing to criticise in Finland and much to admire'. Atchley, an English lecturer at Helsinki University, explained:

the Englishman in Finland cannot help being struck by the widespread respect for the things of the mind. He notices the love for education among all classes and the general concern about 'culture.' There is no large monied middle class which is indifferent to such things.

This homogeneity of society was widely noted and admired. North remarks on the 'comparatively slight differences to be seen between the standards of living attained by various sections of the community'. Sutherland agrees, adding that 'Class distinctions are further reduced by the children of all classes meeting in secondary schools and at the universities'. Malleson, travelling in 1941 in a train crowded with officers, remarked:

No observant traveller can fail to remark how rarely, in Finland, you see officers with 'silly ass' faces or with haughty, overbearing, bullying faces. You might be inclined to think that it is because Finland has no class institutions of the Eton and Harrow kind; and because a large number of officers must be drawn direct from the people.

Two generations later Finnish society is still regarded in Britain as a pattern for social mobility: a speech in 2012 by a Labour politician, Ed Miliband, then Leader of the Opposition, included the claim that 'If you want the American dream – go to Finland. This isn't surprising. It's harder to climb the ladder when the rungs are further apart.'

The Finns' fervent belief in education, which had already been singled out for admiration by Mrs Tweedie, among others, in the 1890s, continued to be noted by one English visitor after another, and becomes a recurrent theme in this volume. Sir Walter Citrine, in Finland during the Winter War, visited the Alexis Kivi School in Helsinki, where he found everything 'as good in quality as ever I have seen in the schools of any country'. Langdon-Davies agreed: 'the school buildings are palaces compared to the school buildings almost anywhere in Europe'.

Atchley described how 'an Oxford graduate in Helsingfors was amazed to see students going to lectures at eight o'clock in the morning and nine o'clock at night'. 'This belief in education,' he continues, 'is general in Finland, but the Finnish-speaking section of the population has a blind passion for it'. Agnes Rothery was overawed:

School buildings are conspicuous in every hamlet, town, and city: public schools, private schools, co-educational schools, normal schools, domestic and agricultural schools, schools for adults, vacation schools, Finnish-speaking, Swedish-speaking.

Nursery schools became peepshows for British visitors, while particular praise was reserved for the People's High Schools (*högskolan; kansanfolkopisto*). Their object, wrote Gilmour,

is to awaken a new spiritual life in the young people, sons and daughters of peasants, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five who have had an elementary education. To do this, quite as much stress is laid on on the intellectual as on the practical courses.

'In Finland,' adds Atchley, 'there has for a long time been a belief that education is as desirable for women as for men.'

Universal literacy had been noted in Finland way back in the nineteenth century; a century and a half later it is still not taken for granted in England. Perhaps because of this, wherever they go in Finland travellers are amazed by the proliferation and size of the bookshops. 'The Finns,' writes Rothery, 'are passionate, omnivorous, and incessant readers.' Like many others, she marvels at Stockmann's Academic Book Shop; Sutherland claims that 'with its twelve miles of shelves [it] is the largest in Europe'. No writer is more impressed than Gilmour:

One of the most surprising things in Finland is the prevalence of good bookshops and libraries in places where

any bookshop at all is a matter of surprise to the stranger. You may find them in the smallest villages far into the Arctic zone and apparently beyond the reach of all ordinary intellectual life. They are not the sort of bookshop one expects in a rural area. Here are no light, cheap novels to while away a dull hour, but good, solid, philosophical, historical, literary and religious works necessitating serious study for their digestion.

This was, she wrote, 'a direct result of the Folk High School and kindred organisations'.

Finland on £10

While the institutions of the new republic brought wave after wave of curious visitors, Finland's more established and traditional attractions had not disappeared. It had never been easier or more comfortable to take a holiday in Finland, and never again would it cost so little. 'In no other country covered by the £10 Series,' wrote Clark, 'will money stretch quite so far.' Above all it was the low cost of travel which made Finland so cheap. 'It is a fact,' continues Clark, 'that when I first examined these tariffs I exclaimed to my family, "I'll have to call the book *Finland Twice on £10*."' The travellers' repeated exclamations become almost tedious: Carleton Smith, who contributed the chapter on Finland to Clara E. Laughlin's *So You're Going to Scandinavia* (1938), found living in Finland so cheap that, he wrote, 'whenever my travel budget is depleted I hasten up to Finland and stay there until I've caught up'. To the modern visitor this is both incredible and dispiriting.

Finland no longer provided the type of experience which the more famous travellers of these years were seeking – summed up in the title of Graham Greene's *Journey Without Maps* (1936) – and now we catch only occasional glimpses of the sort of 'time warp' journey which was still possible in southern Europe. Such glimpses are given even in the late 1930s by

Bernard Newman, who heard *runo* singers, and who saw the congregation leaving a Sunday service in the traditional village church boats.

The Finnish Tourist Association, founded in 1887, had made travelling within the country increasingly comfortable. It was one of the attractions of Finland that travellers could enjoy the illusion of exploring uncharted territory and yet always be within easy reach of a telephone and a reassuring voice instructing them in English how to find the nearest hotel. Sutherland, for example, wanting to get to Utsjoki and knowing no Finnish, was stranded in a forest cottage in Lapland when the telephone rang: it was the manageress of the Inari hotel, who 'told me that I was at the inn and post office of Onnela, where I must stay until Friday morning, when the post boat left at 10 a.m.' Real exploration did linger on here and there. In the pages which follow Jim Ingram is the last of the genuine adventurers to have published a record; the Karelia he discovered was genuinely primitive. 'Imagine any country in Europe as it must have looked a thousand years ago,' he wrote, 'and you will have a fair idea of what present-day Finland looks like.' Most of the British travellers now neither sought nor found anything primitive. After 'a quarter-century of roaming in out-of-the-way places near the equator,' wrote Harry A. Franck in *A Scandinavian Summer* (1930), travelling in Scandinavia seemed tame and disappointing:

To say that I was tired of roughing it for the benefit of my friends of between-the-covers would imply that one can rough it in Scandinavia, which is only in the mildest sense true. There are no slums in the Scandinavian lands, no easily approachable poor, almost no roadsters, none of those picaresque types whose name is legion in, for instance, Spain or Greece.

'Roughing it' certainly had no place in the vocabulary of the

Tourist Association. The holidays described in their brochures promoted comfort above all. Gilmour offered safe advice:

When travelling off the beaten track it is wisest to frequent *only* the hotels of the Finnish Tourist Association, or those recommended by them. Once only was it my experience to deviate from this rule, and I learned my lesson. The food provided at this hostelry was excellent, the linen spotless; but the rooms, hermetically sealed for the winter, rose to a temperature of 28 Centigrade, and with this intense heat came an invasion of red bugs. Such a thing would not be met with in one of the Finnish Tourist Association's buildings.

The Tourist Association's booklet *Tourist Inns and Communications 1939* lists magnificent hotels in Aulanko, Punkaharju, as well as Savonlinna and Koli; there is a surprisingly large number in Lapland. Even there all the hotels are advertised as being open twelve months a year.

Such holidays are for those who wish to observe rather than to explore; Finland encouraged what might be termed spectatorial attitudes, from hotels, trains and steamers, as Mrs MacDougall had written in 1908: 'Delightful lake steamers are found all over Finland, furnished usually with comfortable wicker deck-chairs in which one can laze and revel in the scenery.' In various little ways some of the realities of Finland were being softened for tourists; V. C. Buckley was disappointed that he did not find the real Finland in at out-of-the-way café at Lapua:

The parlour was clean, but a hideous wall-paper, artificial flowers, and antimacassars were poor substitutes for the log walls and wooden utensils of the old Finnish cottages I had seen at the folk-museum in Helsinki.

The implication here, that the place to see an authentic Finnish cottage is a museum, is another sign of the times.

Hardly anyone now regarded Finland as a place for adventure, either imagined or actual: you could simply have a tour leader take the strain. A brochure lists forty-two tours, of which twenty-two were available in 1939. They vary in length from five to fifteen days; most of them are in eastern and central Finland, but Lapland tours go as far as Liinahamari, Finland's only ocean port, at the far end of the Arctic Highway (now part of Russia). The prospectus for these tours, which all begin from Helsinki, reads very like the preamble of a modern package tour:

Payment in Finnish currency according to the following tariff.

The prices quoted in sterling are approximate and are only intended to facilitate the work of our clients abroad.

The prices include: all fares (II class train, I class steamer with berth, if the journey is by night, motor bus, motor-boat, rapids boat), sleeping berths and reserved seats on trains; hotel rooms (single or double), breakfast, lunch, dinner and service; services of guides and forwarding of passengers and hand luggage by car according to plan of journey; sightseeing by car with guide in the principal places visited by tourists according to plan of journey; entrance fees to museums and sights.

Something should be said about guides. Since the tourist months coincided with the school and university vacations, visitors often found themselves being guided by students. 'On no account,' writes North, 'should they be confused with the "guides" of many southern tourist centres - . . . mere mercenary touts.' You are likely to find 'a University student chosen for the job during the tourist season because he can speak four or five languages in addition to his own, and speak them in such a way that he can discuss matters intelligently with you'.

The concern for the comfort of tourists went beyond hotels:

parks had been laid out in the popular towns, and places such as Punkaharju offered, writes North, 'an ideal retreat for those who find pleasure in unspoilt nature'. Punkaharju was both a national park and a nature reserve; Finland was well ahead of Britain in establishing Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Despite the evident attractiveness of these guided tours no British holidaymaker seems to have recorded taking one.

When you compare the writing of this era to that of the earliest British travellers there are many striking differences. Then the literary models had been the formal letter, the essay, classic travel books such as Samuel Johnson's *Journey to the Western Isles*, the scientific treatise and, perhaps, the military report; individual experiences stand out as rarities. This changed with the Victorian and Edwardian writers; the women travellers, especially, included more accounts of their own experiences, making the genre less documentary and more direct. The inter-war travellers extend these developments, sometimes expropriating the techniques of the novelist. Some of the accounts contain a great deal of naturalistic dialogue which, combined with a general lack of pretension, gives a distinctive voice to the writing of this era. Although travellers now rarely seemed to find themselves out of reach of an English speaker, they were not frustrated when they did, but saw it even as welcome confirmation that they were really off the tourist trail, and having 'an adventure'. If all else failed there was always what North calls 'the comprehensive smile that serves when speech is not possible'. The mystifying tradition of travellers recording conversations with Finnish people without having a word in common with them goes back to the eighteenth century. Since none of the writers in the current volume knew much Finnish, one must suppose that the conversations they record are usually imaginative reconstructions rather than literal transcripts. This creative dimension makes writers like Ingram and Newman vivid and readable, while others, such as Malleon and

Bramwell, offer descriptive writing which is both literary and elegant.

On the pages that follow there is often more emphasis on character than on scenery. The Finnish people who are described are usually credible characters, unlike the caricatures or national stereotypes sometimes presented in earlier times. Some of the works covered in this section are by professional writers, who are simply turning their hand to Finland for one book; their skills are evident in the use of episode and anecdote as well as of dialogue. As a result the Finnish scenes described in the following pages come alive as they had rarely done in earlier writing.

Prohibition

One of the first acts of the Finnish government was the prohibition of alcohol in 1919; earlier attempts had been vetoed by the Tsar, but he was now history, and there were now women in parliament. The first reaction of British visitors was usually consternation: Agar and his companions, embarking at Hull on his secret service mission to Finland in 1919,

heard to their horror that the Fennia was a dry ship . . . Hampsheir was sent hastily into town to secure as much alcohol as he could find. He returned with a rather odd collection: four dozen bottles of stout and a dozen bottles of port.

Finland was anxious to encourage tourists, and partly for this reason enforcement of prohibition was not very rigorous; visitors could nearly always find a drink, as Fox explained:

the government allows the supply of wine and spirits on doctors' certificates through the chemists' shops. A doctor's certificate is not difficult to obtain, and it permits the holder to purchase wine or whisky in reasonable quantities and at a reasonable price.

It was possible – at a price – to get liquor at almost any restaurant or hotel; there are several amusing accounts of the ingenious ways in which travellers were able to circumvent the laws. On the islands smuggling was rife; Fox records his own experience:

As a visitor to the country, though ignorant of the language, I was able, within a half-hour's visit to a particular island, to learn the whereabouts of a 'shop.' This was a neat little villa, surrounded by a good garden. Having learnt the procedure, I did not go to the front door, but passed through the back garden, where there was a fairly extensive poultry run. All the fowls, I noted, wore the white feathers of a blameless life. Knocking at the door of a shed in the poultry yard, admission was at once granted. No questions were asked; the kerosene can of spirit was produced, the litre can was filled, carefully corked, and handed over for 35 marks (the equivalent of about four shillings). For this sum I obtained enough white spirit to poison half a dozen ordinary men.

Prohibition was ended in early 1932; although it affected few of the travellers featured here, it provides several entertaining accounts of the puzzled British responses to an unfamiliar restriction.

Transport

From the middle of the nineteenth century there had been a regular steamer service from Stockholm to St Petersburg (Kronstadt) by way of Turku, Helsinki and Tallinn. By the twentieth century the service from Stockholm was much as it is today, though not as rapid: the journey time to Turku was ten and a half hours, and this was by far the most popular way of arriving in Finland. There were weekly steamer services from Hull to Helsinki, taking four and a half days on the luxurious *Aallotar*,

and to Turku on the less-than-luxurious *Arcturus*. In the 1930s air travel became possible, and some more adventurous British travellers flew out from London (Croydon Airport). Franck has a whole chapter 'Flying to Finland'. Writing in 1930, he describes flying by seaplane from Stockholm to Helsinki in a well-appointed saloon, seating nine, and featuring an opening window for every seat, and a flushing toilet. The regular flight to Helsinki, though, was from Stockholm via Turku. Clark, who wrote that air travel was 'a subject dear to my heart', described this journey, though he certainly could not have accommodated it within his £10 budget.

Particularly do I love the flight from Stockholm above the inner and outer skerries, above the blue Baltic, which becomes a mere ribbon crossed in fifteen minutes, above Mariehamn, chief port of the Ålands, and so above endless Finnish isles and crinkled channels to the landing at Turku, whence a further hop of three-quarters of an hour carries one to Helsinki. A gorgeous flight this is and gorgeously varied in aspect, the last lap over forest, waterway and country town, giving one a fair cross-section of all Finland. From Helsinki's airport, with its brand-new buildings, the company takes passengers by bus in a half-hour's beautiful ride to its central office on the Esplanade, a pebble's toss from the capital's chief hotels.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries this journey often took many weeks: from Stockholm it could take three days to get to Grisslehamn, where ice in winter or lack of wind in summer could cause long delays. On the Finnish mainland, near Kustavi, it was another two days' journey to Turku.

Within Finland travel was still nearly always by land and water. During these years the railway network was expanding, and rail travel became ever more popular with tourists. Almost all those who used the trains remarked how unbelievably

cheap they were: Ingram wrote that 'for the sum of one English pound I was able to travel nine hundred miles third-class'. Travellers were impressed also by their cleanliness: 'It is possible to travel several days continuously in Finnish trains with no sign of grime or travel stain,' wrote Gilmour. 'Should anything be upset, the conductor will send a boy along with a dustpan and brush to sweep the carriage.' The ease of rail travel even for those who understood no Finnish is described by North:

The guard comes through the train announcing the name of each successive stop, and tells you if it will be a restaurant station and how long you will stay. Since, naturally, he tells you in Finnish, it is most unlikely that you will understand him, although you will probably admire the musical rhythm of his words, but that is by no means a cause for alarm, for, if you are as fortunate as we often were, your guard will keep you well informed by the simple expedient of making a dumb show of eating and drinking, and indicating with his fingers how many minutes you will have for the repast.

Every account of rail travel remarks how slow the trains were; there were stops for loading fuel for the wood-burning locomotives, and country trains seemed to stop almost everywhere. North writes that 'the journey from Vuonismaa to Vaala – a matter of 164 miles – takes about eight and a half hours, and involves at least twenty-eight stops, with a possibility of twenty-one at intermediate halts'. Travellers would take an overnight sleeper for journeys which today take only a few hours. I have found little evidence of trains provided especially for tourists, but Wilmot Russell describes a train to Punkaharju which had 'an observation car attached'. When the trains were so slow, steamers were a genuine and practical alternative; the railway had replaced the post routes by this time, but had not displaced the steamers.

All of the Tourist Association's organised tours included travel by steamer, and it remained a favoured way of seeing Finland. These tours were nothing like the cruises which are so popular with modern holidaymakers; steamers, unlike those on the Rhine or on Lake Windermere, for example, were part of the public transport system, so that foreign travellers shared their journeys with local people as they were taken through the lake systems into deepest Finland. 'Humble folk and great folk,' writes Rothery, 'pass in juxtaposition':

In the drizzle of an evening shower we pause at a landing whose rough logs indicate that this is no fancy summer pier but the primitive necessity of a primitive hamlet.

Atchley describes a journey by steamer through 'the wildest part of Savo' in the late 1920s:

The whistle breaks the silence, and the stocks of the small pier creak and crack as the bows press into them. There may be twenty or thirty people there, for the arrival of the steamer makes an occasion for the people from the scattered farms to meet. They come down to the landing-stage to talk to each other and to see some life, not because they have any business with the steamer . . . A rope is thrown from the boat, someone makes it fast, and the gangway of two planks is pushed over the side. A little girl returning from school walks down it, and seriously shakes a hand with those who have come to meet her and drops a curtsy. There are no smiles or kisses. A sack of flour or some farm implement is thrown ashore from the bows, and an old woman pushes a cow up the gangway. Trivial happenings, yet every movement and every face is interesting. During the passage through the forest you have been longing to see some human life, then this small play is acted before you on an ideal stage, and you see all these people at a moment when they are living more intensely than normally.

The child with two fair plaits hanging across her shoulders lifts the mooring rope off the bollard without fear or excitement, and turns towards the path leading inland. The steamer pushes out into the silence of the lake again.

Some years later Robert Colville, taking the 'passenger boat' from Savonlinna to Kuopio, was more conscious of the touring possibilities of the route:

the boat is tied up for a few hours during the night at Leppävirta village, but if it is summer the light evenings induce many people to go ashore and see the wonderful old church and the quaint village itself.

'Leppävirta' was actually the name of the lake-steamer photographed by North, built in a famous boatyard in Varkaus. Many of the travellers, from the 1890s onwards, describe memorable cruises on these steamers; North gives the details:

a curiously top-heavy looking craft, rather like a two-storied house-boat, with a verandah to the upper story, and a chimney surrounded by life-boats on the roof . . . [S]mall as it is the vessel [has] its first class and its third, its lounge and its dining room, and, most surprising of all, a complement of cabins like those of ocean-going liners in all but size. The cabins open out onto the upper deck and serve as semi-private lounges during the long hours of daylight – a very useful feature since the deck is only a yard wide.

Dinner on board astonishes him: 'that a meal so varied and so good can be conjured up from the diminutive kitchen, and so daintily served in the narrow saloon has to be seen in order to be believed'.

Several of these steamers are still to be seen coming and going in Savonlinna during the tourist season.

By the 1920s most of those areas of the country still not served by railway or steamer had become accessible by mo-

tor bus, and public transport by horse was finally disappearing. Droshkies were now of retro-interest: Gilmour writes that '[a]musing old-fashioned horse cabs are found in several cities'; in Helsinki it cost a mark extra to hire one with a hood. Buses enabled any traveller who could read a timetable to visit easily even remote parts of the country. The railways, like the post routes of earlier times, were both limited and fixed, whereas buses covered nearly the whole country, and at the same time enabled travellers to sit side-by-side with the local people, and on occasion with their livestock. Ingram describes boarding in Sortavala: 'After they had packed the bus full of women with babies, and lean brown men who looked as though they had been left out in the sun for a long time, we started off.'

This was something that could never have happened in the age of posting, before the mid-nineteenth century, when British travellers typically moved and even slept in their private carriages. Railway trains, with their small compartments and different classes of accommodation, did not make it easy for travellers to mix with the local people, even if that was what they wanted. Several of the bus journeys described below take the travellers into the very heart of Finland. North admires the 'well-timed series of cross-country services', linked with an efficiency which some countries have not achieved more than seventy years later. His account of travelling to Koli gives the flavour:

from time to time people got out, as often as not where there seemed to be no obvious reason for their doing so, until you noticed some inconspicuous track along which they disappeared into the woods.

In remote parts a bus stop, he wrote, like a landing stage, provided 'the day's diversion' for the locals.

Buses lacked many of the attractions and all of the comforts of trains and steamers. They were often overloaded – 'no vessel

or vehicle proved to be full in Finland when there was anyone desirous of getting in,' wrote North. The roads were rough, the suspension of the buses primitive, and the ventilation non-existent. In Lapland, especially, with long distances between stops, bus travel was distinctly challenging. Despite all this, for many travellers this was the age of the bus. Not until 1939 do we read the account of our first modern tourist, Buckley, arriving by air and travelling by motor car.

'Motoring in Finland' was being promoted vigorously by Finland-Travel (*Suomen-Matkat*) during the 1930s in a thirty-two page booklet. 'To some motorists,' it reads, 'Finland may seem a very faraway country and one difficult to reach. This is not the case.' We learn that 'the steamers are specially equipped for carrying automobiles and used to handling them'. The motorist who dislikes sea travel might 'consider travelling to Finland by air 10 hours from London or Paris and sending his car by sea in advance'.

Finland is a motoring country, even if the volume of motor traffic may seem small to those coming from thickly-populated countries. Even in the remotest villages, behind tracks the town-driver would never think of using, there are cars, the reason being that in a sparsely-populated country, with relatively few railways, the advantages offered by the automobile are more patent than ever. Hence Finland is not motor-shy, and there are filling-stations and service stations all over the country. The motorist need not fear that some breakdown will find him stranded and left to his own resources; on the contrary he is more likely to be struck by the prevalence of skilled knowledge of cars. Adequate signpost arrangements are another result of the prevalence of motoring.

Buckley provides the only published account of a motoring tour during this period, but there are indications that suggest

that they were not rare – J. M. Richards drove from Turku to Vyborg with Alvar Aalto 'along dusty gravel roads, almost traffic-free', and Harriet Cohen and Arnold Bax made several excursions by car into remote parts of eastern Finland in 1932, before their visit to Sibelius. Scott remarked that 'the roads are not yet first class, but the drivers are'. This is perhaps the first accolade to Finnish drivers, now so successful in the motor-racing and rallying worlds, although their ancestors may be identified among the many descriptions from the nineteenth century of unsprung Finnish carts being driven at high speed on dangerous roads by very small boys.

Many British visitors did not share Scott's opinion, and commonly saw the motor car from the pedestrian's point of view. Fox gives the picture:

Helsingfors, as indeed all Finland, has nowadays motor fever in an acute form: in an even more acute form than the countries of Western Europe. The Finnish motorist has directed his first care to getting a motor, and intends to learn how to use it prudently in the future. So the general recklessness of the driving constitutes a real danger to unwary pedestrians. Finland seems to recognize this as a nuisance, and the other day a special police detachment was sent to London to study methods of traffic regulation there.

Fox feared that viewing Finnish architecture in Helsinki was putting his life in danger: 'we [are not] all as athletic as the Finns: personally it disturbs my taste for a building if, in stopping to glance at it, I have to make a wild leap to escape a motorist in a hurry'. Gilmour shared his fears:

We leave our hotel in Station Square, crossing the square itself with the utmost care; for, though everyone in Finland drives to perfection, the speed of the traffic can only be compared with those early American cinemas in which

cars, by a quick-motion process, were made to cover incredible distances in the twinkling of an eye.

Even in Lapland safety could not be guaranteed, as Ingram discovered: 'some of my narrowest escapes were due, not to bears or wolves, but to motorists who nearly ran me down!' However, there were a few safe havens: Malleeson records that she had been more than three months in Vehmersalmi before she saw a motor vehicle – and that was an army lorry.

This section should perhaps have begun with walking and cycling, neither of which was promoted by the Tourist Association. Walking seems to have been the last resort for nearly all travellers, except in Lapland, where there were few roads and where, as 'the last wilderness in Europe', it was already attracting hikers. Back at the turn of the century Harry de Windt had remarked that in Helsinki 'almost every fourth inhabitant cycles', and that the proportion was even greater in Tampere. During this period only two travellers described actually riding a bicycle in Finland: Newman, whose *Baltic Roundabout* describes a tour taken entirely on two wheels, avoided large towns, and the Finland he discovered was, he recorded, 'surprisingly deficient in cyclists'. Cycling was an urban activity, perhaps for reasons suggested by Barbara Cotton: 'the roads in Finland are rather bad for cycling,' she writes; the Great Arctic Highway 'turned out to be a very grand name for a glorified cart-track'.

Lapland

Lapland is a 'cultural region' in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia, as well as the northernmost 'region' of Finland. As early as the eighteenth century travel books about Lapland had included Finland as only part of a northern journey, sometimes starting from Norway. In the nineteenth century only four British travellers had described venturing north of Tornio, and these were all genuine explorers, not sightseers. Now the

extension of the railway to Rovaniemi in 1909, the completion of the Arctic Highway in 1931, and the arrival of the motor coach put Lapland firmly on the tourist map. Hirn complained to Sutherland that writers 'ignore Finland except as a means of getting to Lapland as quickly as possible.' You no longer needed to be either especially adventurous or intellectually curious to venture there: Joan and Peggy Webster in the late 1930s provide evidence of this.

The bus journey from Rovaniemi to the Arctic Ocean took two days; first class passengers sat in the front, second class at the back, and luggage and freight in the middle. Tourism was not the purpose of the new road, although it became a consequence. Ingram realised this when he wrote that 'Lapland was a colony in the making, and everywhere men were hard at work, constructing bridges, roads, settlements, building houses, barns, garages and shops'. It manifested, as a Finnish friend remarked to him, 'civilisation marching north'.

Travelling from Britain to Lapland in order to see the midnight sun was a fairly short-lived eighteenth-century fad. Although in the twentieth century it could have been done in comfort, I have read no description later than 1799. Gilmour nonetheless describes it as a popular attraction, and gives exact travelling instructions:

From Kemi the traveller in search of the midnight sun continues to Tornio, the small town on the Swedish frontier. From here, forty-five miles by rail, to the hill of Aavasaksa, the most southerly point from which (from June 21st to 25th) the midnight sun is visible.

At Ounasvaara Hill, outside Rovaniemi, she writes, 'many sightseers flock to view that magnificent spectacle'. It is a pity that none of them seems to have published a description. Although 'Land of the Midnight Sun' is today the title of the Official Travel Site of Finland, it is the Northern Lights which

are promoted for modern travellers: 'In Finland, nature's most spectacular light show, the Aurora Borealis, can be viewed in a range of purpose-built spaces from glass igloos to luxury suites.' After ticking Lapland off their lists, modern tourists can now, perhaps, set off to defile Antarctica.

By no means all of the travellers to Lapland were sightseeing tourists; there was plenty of scope for genuine exploration and adventure. It was easier to discover more primitive patterns of life in Lapland than it was further south – Ingram found his lost Karelian village only with great diligence. Lapland attracted the adventurous, the intrepid, and the foolhardy; for some the existence of the long border with the Soviet Union added further excitement to the adventure. The Public Schools Exploring Society promoted hikes through Lapland in 1933, with the avowed purpose of 'testing the boys'; the boys' own accounts of their different responses make unusual reading.

The Arctic Highway, hailed internationally as a marvel, opened up Lapland to summer and winter visitors. Tourism has, of course, continued to develop: Lapland, as well as northern Finland, is today promoted for winter sports. Rovaniemi airport, opened in 1940, is now 'Santa Claus Official Airport'; it is possible to fly there from England, visit 'Santa Park', and return the same day. Your children might prefer to meet 'Santa's Elves', in which case you will need to fly to Ivalo. You might prefer to stay at home.

Henry McGrady Bell

Finland has had few better British friends than Harry (as he was usually known) Bell; of all those featured in the following pages he alone spans the whole period, and indeed overlaps it. His *Land of Lakes* was published in 1950, exactly fifty years after he first set foot in Finland. Born in Dundee in 1880, he left school at seventeen to enter his family business, the timber firm of Bell and Sime. When at the turn of the century the company decided to develop its trade with Finland he was sent out to Helsinki. He quickly learned Swedish, and soon immersed himself in the cultural life of the capital, as well as travelling extensively in Finland on business. The Fennia Timber Company was wound up in 1903, on the death of Bell's father, and the next six years saw him in South Africa, Sweden and finally Russia where, in 1915, he was enrolled – seconded, effectively – by the British Embassy, and given the title 'Representative of His Britannic Majesty's Embassy in Petrograd', 'dealing with requisitioned goods and claims against the Russian government'. His German wife and their children found what he called 'sanctuary' in Vyborg, where he visited them whenever he could. After the second Russian revolution the British Ambassador 'decided to evacuate all British nationals', and the Bells found themselves back in Scotland.

In 1918 he was, at the suggestion of Rudolph Holsti, 'delegate of the Finnish Government then resident in London', unexpectedly appointed British Consul-General in Finland; 'I was certainly delighted at the prospect of returning to my beloved Finland,' he writes. His activities as Consul and his strenuous promotion of the Finnish cause are an important part of his book. Diplomats usually have elaborate training, and are