

### 3 – FÅBORG AND ODENSE

Saturday, 10 July

I woke from a disturbed sleep at 6.30 this morning and rose before seven. It was a dark and cloudy morning. Before breakfast I looked at various brochures in an effort to decide what to do in the event of bad weather, for there was no point in going to the island of Ærø – one of the places that I had intended to visit – in the rain. I decided to go to the museum first and then, weather permitting, take the 12.30 journey by boat to the island. Just before eight o'clock I joined a queue for the dining room, which turned out to be very smart and to contain tables that were beautifully laid. On each table was a lit candle, and overhead hung a low light with a lampshade. Although the breakfast was good, there was no cereal; only the usual selection of tasty breads, one type of salami, and one of cheese. After I had finished, I followed the example of a German lady beside me and made sandwiches for lunch, which I wrapped in my blue serviette.

I was out of my room by nine o'clock and, because it was raining hard and the museum did not open until ten, I sat in the reception area and wrote my diary. Soon afterwards a man appeared and, assuming (correctly) that it was he to whom I had spoken on the phone the previous day, I went over to him and thanked him for his kindness. I also complimented him on the hostel. He was very pleased to hear this and later, when I was preparing to leave, he appeared again in order to shake hands with me and say goodbye. He asked me if I was Irish and, when I said yes, he told me that he had been hoping to go to Ireland for a holiday in October, but had had to cancel it. I encouraged him to go at some other time and then, after I had left my rucksack in the hostel for the time being, I left.



*The hostel in Fåborg*

I went into the Faaborg Museum next door just as it was opening and paid 20 kroner to enter. Other people from the hostel also arrived. Having read about the little-known Fyn (or Funen) school of artists, I was interested in seeing the exhibition of their works here. I was very impressed by what I saw. In the first room were paintings by Johannes Larsen and Poul S. Christiansen, and an impressive statue entitled 'The Marble Girl' by Kai Nielsen. Next, in the domed gallery, was a large, impressive statue of the very rotund Mads Rasmussen, the founder of the museum. Rasmussen featured again in a large painting of the inauguration of the museum in 1910, which was in the next room. In this room were works by Peter Hansen (who had painted the inauguration scene), Kristian Zahrtmann ('Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden'), and other artists. Many of these were excellent, such as Hansen's 'The Ploughman Turns'.

Next came a series of small rooms displaying many pictures, such as portraits, anatomical studies by Johannes Larsen, watercolours by Anna Syberg, and so on. I entered the sculpture room, containing 'God breathes life into Eve' by Kai Nielsen and works by the Younger Funenites. The windows of this room and the one following it looked out over a lovely garden. From here one entered a café, which at this hour of the day was closed. I walked back, stopping to admire some of the paintings again, then went upstairs to see a special exhibition of paintings by Peter Hansen. Most of these were excellent; their composition was unusual and the colours were bold. By now I had developed a great admiration for this painter.

Downstairs again I bought a few postcards of paintings in the gallery, then left at about 11.30 a.m. The one and a half hours had gone very quickly. By now the rain had eased off a little.

From here I made my way to the main street and went into a supermarket to buy a carton of juice. The shop was packed and was just as chaotic as any Irish supermarket; one of the checkout girls did not know the price of one of the items. I was fascinated by the electronic equipment used for scanning credit cards, and I watched a lady in front of me using it.

In a fruit shop nearby I bought an apple, then tried to telephone the tourist office in Odense (the main city on the island) in order to find accommodation there. However, I was told that I would have to go there in person for them to find a guesthouse for me; no doubt they wanted me to pay a booking fee. Afterwards I went into the local tourist office, where I got a timetable for the buses to Odense.

I then walked to the ferry in drizzling rain, wondering if I was doing the right thing, and boarded the vessel. I sat in the restaurant, where it was warm and dry; beside me were a young couple from the hostel. As they were eating a picnic lunch, I followed their example and had finished eating by the time the ferry started its journey and the waitress appeared, taking orders. I washed my teeth in the gents' room, paid for my return ticket (80 kroner), and was pleased to notice that the weather was improving and the sun was beginning to break through the clouds.

I then sat down again and spent the rest of the journey, which took an hour, writing my diary. By the time we arrived at Søby, the port on Ærø island, the sky was blue and the sun was shining brightly. I was delighted! I stood on the deck and watched as the ferry docked.

Although I managed to get off fairly quickly, I discovered that the 1.35 p.m. bus had left. I was disgusted to discover that the next bus to the main town, Ærøskøbing,

would not leave until 3.25. As there was no point in hanging about this place, which had nothing to offer, I found the main road and began walking. If I had taken the next bus and hoped to be back by 4.30 for the return journey in the ferry, I would have had no time at all to see the town. However, I went into a hotel to check some information and discovered that there would be another sailing at 7 o'clock this evening, which would give me some extra time.

Back on the road, I chanced sticking out my thumb and a car stopped. In it was a man with a dog, which was sitting on the front passenger's seat. Although the man spoke no English, he told me in German that he could take me some of the way to the main town. I thanked him, got into the back of the car and off we drove, passing some pleasant scenery and a few little villages. He then stopped to let me out and I continued on foot. As there were lovely houses in the village that I was in, which I think was Bregninge, I ignored the traffic and began to snap some photographs. The place was really charming and everything was so neat. The scenery after the village was also fine.



*Houses in a village on the island of Ærø*

I stopped to pull off my jumper as I was feeling too hot and was just putting it into my bag when another car stopped. This time the driver was a middle-aged lady who



spoke neither English nor German. However, she guessed where I was going and brought me all the way to Ærøskøbing. The approach to the little 'capital' was quite breathtaking: I was able to enjoy a fine view from an elevated point overlooking the bay and the rest of the island. From here I could also see the other islets and the main island of Fyn beyond.



*The streets and harbour in Ærøskøbing*

We then quickly descended to the town and all of a sudden we were driving through the narrow cobbled streets of Ærøskøbing. The lady stopped to let me out and I thanked her for her kindness. I spent a very pleasant hour or so ambling about the alleyways in the sunshine, enjoying the curious narrow streets and the charming little houses, all painted in bright colours. I also made my way to the harbour and walked along the pier, where I admired the boats and the surrounding seascape. Although the place was rather touristy, the town was by no means busy or crowded. However, although the little capital was very pretty, I felt that it and its charm was just a little contrived. As I had seen everything quite thoroughly in the space of an hour, I was quite ready to leave.

I found a very plush bus waiting at the terminus; I paid 18 kroner and it set off exactly at 3.52 p.m. The journey back to the port was more spectacular, for I was now able to see everything from a higher viewpoint. As the bus made a little detour to stop at another village, I was therefore able to see another little bit of the island. In a way I was sorry to leave the island so soon; perhaps I should have waited for the seven o'clock sailing. However, my general impression of the island was very favourable.

We reached the port of Søby at 4.17 p.m. As I was thirsty, I bought a can of soft drink, then boarded the ferry when it arrived. This time I sat out on deck, writing my diary and admiring the scenery. The sea and the islands now looked beautiful in the bright sunshine. The approach to Fåborg was something to be remembered: a wonderful combination of boats and old houses.



*Fåborg from the ferry*

Back in Fåborg, I set about discovering some of the beautiful corners of the town, including the church and its graveyard adorned with flowers. Never had I seen such a glorious riot of colour in a graveyard! The grounds of the church looked more like a garden.

Hungry by now, I began to look for somewhere to eat. As none of the restaurants seemed to be open, I returned to the fast food place in the main square, where I joined a long queue and watched a group of English tourists fussing about their fish and chips, and also the sauces that they wanted or did not want. Eventually it was

my turn; I ordered the *skinkeschnitzel* (pork schnitzel) with chips and peas, which I ate outside in order to escape the noise and heat inside.

When I had finished, I wandered back to the youth hostel. I collected my luggage and, after a few words with the half-Nigerian girl, left for my new lodgings. The guesthouse was not too far away: just out of the town and almost in the countryside. Once again, it was a fine house. A stout, middle-aged lady opened the door and indicated that I use the downstairs door. She admitted me to the basement, where I found a plain but pleasant room containing a double bed and a large bathroom. Her husband now joined her and welcomed me. After arrangements for the following morning's breakfast were made, I was left to my own devices. I went outdoors to photograph the house, had a shower and then sat down to write my diary. As I began to feel sleepy, I stopped and went out for a short walk, passing nearby fields and trees. In such pleasant surroundings, I felt that could easily stay here and linger for a few days, but there were more places that I wanted to see.

I finally returned to the house and climbed into bed shortly after eleven o'clock.



*The guesthouse in Fåborg*

Sunday, 11 July

A fine and clear sunny morning. Although I slept well thanks to the quietness of my surroundings, I felt rather groggy when called to breakfast at eight o'clock. The man of the house, Leif, brought me upstairs to his smart but homely house, and I followed him through the front living room to the dining room, where the table was beautifully set. Outside the big window was a simple garden, which was bright with flowers. Thea, Leif's wife, greeted me and invited me to be seated. We had a most enjoyable breakfast and a very interesting conversation. As I did not feel alert enough to speak in my poor and rusty German, I spoke to Leif in English and he translated what I said into Danish for his wife when necessary, though she seemed to understand me. I sensed that they were treating me as a special guest when Thea nudged her husband, who produced a bottle of liqueur and two glasses. I only sipped a little of it – it was quite powerful!

Conversation soon became quite informal and, after breakfast, Leif urged Thea to produce her dolls, which were dressed in costumes made from pearls. They then



invited me to look at their aviary, which I did; they had quite a number of exotic birds. After I had admired their garden, I fetched my camera and photographed the couple in their living room. We had taken greatly to each other by this stage. As it was such a lovely morning and as I was in such a relaxed mood, I felt that I did not want to do anything or go anywhere. I would have been quite happy to spend the rest of my time in this delightful place.



*Leif and Thea in the guesthouse, Fåborg*

However, I eventually asked for the bill; it was presented to me with a note of appreciation written on a card. Printed on it were the names of the couple and the address of the house. My overnight stay and the breakfast amounted to just 150 kroner, which seemed very reasonable.

Reluctantly I left and ambled down to the bus station. I had planned to go to a nearby castle but as a bus to Odense was about to leave, I hailed it and jumped on board. I paid 40 kroner for a ticket and joined the two other passengers; no more appeared during the journey. The bus drove unhurriedly through more of the delightful Funen countryside, which was now bathed in sunlight. Although the scenery was not dramatic, it was very pleasant.



About thirty minutes later the bus began to approach the outskirts of Odense, which were far from ugly. Indeed, my initial impression was quite favourable. The

lack of traffic clearly indicated that the city was asleep during this hot, sunny Sunday morning. The bus finally stopped at the railway station, where I asked for a map of the town and bought a two-day *Odense Eventyrpas* (Adventure Pass) for 100 kroner, which would give me unlimited travel on the buses and free admission to museums and other places.

I now put my rucksack in a locker and set off, map in hand, for the tourist information centre. As I still felt very tired, I felt that a solid sleep in some quiet house would be in order. After a little confusion I found the information centre at the side of the Rådhus and there, for a fee of 25 kroner, a girl put me in touch with a lady who had a room for me this evening for 100 kroner. I took down the details, thanked the girl and left.

I now began sightseeing in earnest, now that I had my Adventure Pass. Although I would have preferred to have been out in the countryside somewhere and felt that I was now forcing myself to do this, I had the advantage of seeing the city during a quiet Sunday morning, when few people were about. The town centre was not as old and as charming as some of the other places that I had visited so far, but it was quite pleasant.



*The birthplace of Hans Christian Andersen, Odense*

First of all I made my way to the tiny house where Hans Christian Andersen had been born; it was situated in a little alley. Inside, I examined some of the exhibits and discovered that the house had been converted into a couple of shops at one time; more recently it had been restored to its original condition. I was told that seventeen people had lived in the tiny building at one time!

I left after a while and walked along some of the modern pedestrianized streets to the Brandts Klædefabrik, a disused textile factory now used to house the Danish Museum of Printing, the Art Gallery, and the Museum of Photographic Art. My pass granted me access to all three. I wandered through the different sections, giving most of the exhibits little more than a cursory glance. Some of the photographs were interesting, though many were a little too weird for my taste. The printing section was far too cluttered and I found the art too modern for my liking.



I emerged from the building feeling hungry and walked back to a restaurant that I had passed. Here I had a decent lunch of beef in a tasty sauce, potatoes and salad. I sat outside to eat my meal and drink a glass of water.

Fed and feeling better, I set off for the Funen Art Gallery, housed in a large building. The modern paintings displayed on the ground floor did not attract me. The Russian icons were more interesting, but soon became tedious. I was glad to discover a collection of older paintings on the first floor; they were of the same calibre as what I had seen in Fåborg. There were excellent examples of work produced by the Funen artists, and I was delighted to see them. I stayed in the gallery until it closed at 4 p.m.

By this time the weather had turned cool and cloudy, and so I was glad to continue to my next destination, which was open until six o'clock: the Hans Christian Andersen Museum. This was situated in a very touristy corner of the city: a warren of narrow streets containing brightly-painted old houses, and gift shops in the street where the museum was located. Despite the crowds of tourists, the museum was quite interesting, though it required a lot of time to see it properly. I enjoyed the collection of old photographs and memorabilia dedicated to the man, whose life story was both interesting and tragic. An irritating feature of the museum was a noisy slide show in one room; although short, the music and dialogue kept repeating itself over and over again. I had just enough time to see the historical exhibits and read their descriptions briefly before leaving at six. Unfortunately I had no time to examine the book illustrations in detail.

Feeling exhausted by now, I left and made my way to the train station, where I went straight to the restaurant, sat down and ordered a meal. I had fish, chips and a salad – no doubt the waitress thought that I was a typical English tourist! (I noticed that my meal and a couple of other simple dishes had been translated into English on the menu.) I ordered a cup of tea afterwards; this was really an excuse for me to relax and read for a while. The restaurant was a very pleasant place; the décor was excellent and there were few people in it.

After the meal I bought an orange in a small shop next door, then caught a bus that brought me to my accommodation. The driver kindly let me off near the house, which meant that I only had to walk a short distance. I was pleased to note that I was in a very quiet part of the suburbs, and that all the houses and gardens were very neat. I found the guesthouse and a pleasant middle-aged lady, Fru (Mrs) Mikkelsen, opened the door. She brought me to a small but pleasant bedroom in which five modern paintings had been hung on the walls. The furniture was simple and the bed was a couch that had been converted for sleeping in. Mrs Mikkelsen invited me to have a cup of tea and watch television, but I declined her kind offer for the moment. While cleaning my teeth before taking a shower, the phone rang; it was my girlfriend. We had a long chat.

I then had my shower and afterwards joined Mrs Mikkelsen in her large living-cum-dining room, where we watched television, drank tea, ate bread and cheese, then finished with some cake. We had a long and pleasant conversation, despite the fact that she claimed to speak no English. She made herself understood with words spoken in English, German and Danish; I spoke slowly. At one point she described a man as being 'thick'; I knew what she meant, for she was thinking of the German word *dick*, which means 'fat'. I was interested to learn that she was afraid to go out

after dark and that several houses in the neighbourhood had been broken into recently. It seemed that Denmark had problems like many other countries.



*Mrs Mikkelsen in her living-cum-dining room, Odense*

By the end of the evening we were fast friends. I retired to bed, feeling very tired, and was asleep by eleven o'clock.

Monday, 12 July

Although I had slept soundly, I still felt tired when I woke at eight this morning. I joined Mrs Mikkelsen for breakfast at nine: it was a pleasant and unhurried meal of bread with mackerel, another type of fish, and cheese. We chatted quite a lot.



*The Funen Village, Odense*

At about ten o'clock I set off on foot and, following my map, made my way to the Funen Village, which was nearby. It took me about twenty-five minutes to reach it. Happily, my Adventure Pass granted me free entrance. I quite enjoyed the place; it was very well laid out and contained the different types of country cottages and

farm buildings that one would find in the countryside. Included were ducks in a pond, animals, rough paths, weeds, cobblestones, and colourful gardens; it was just like an abandoned village. In addition there was a windmill and a better-class house, in which the furniture was more refined.



*The Funen Village, Odense*

After wandering around the Village for an hour, I left and caught a bus to its terminus. I then walked a short distance to Møntegården, a museum dedicated to the history of Odense that was housed in a group of old buildings. Although it was quite interesting, I skipped some of the sections. The best one contained a suite of rooms containing furniture made in the 1600s or thereabouts. There were really too many things to be seen, and most of them were of no great importance. Nonetheless, I was glad that I had come here.

By about 1.30 p.m. I was in a restaurant by the Rådhus, waiting for a simple enough meal of pasta with ham and vegetables. However, I had to wait a long time for it. In the end, I had to tell the waitress that I was hoping to join the 2 o'clock guided tour of the Rådhus, which Mrs Mikkelsen had recommended. The meal finally appeared and I demolished it in about five minutes. Despite this, I was late arriving in the tourist centre next door. I explained to the girl what had happened and she kindly brought me into the building, which I discovered was modern. Based on what I had seen of the façade outside, I had expected to be admitted into a fine interior, and now was quite disappointed. I immediately regretted not having used my own initiative, for I really was not very interested in visiting the place. I joined a group of middle-aged people, mostly ladies, and a couple of young girls. My heart sank when we were told that the tour would last one and a half hours! A man now delivered a monologue on various minute details of the uninteresting building, which he then translated into English. I soon lost interest and became agitated, for I wanted to visit the Carl Nielsen museum, which closed at 4 p.m. However, when we moved near the staircase that led to the entrance, I let the rest of the people go ahead and then, when I was asked to close a door and the coast was clear, I escaped. I had already wasted half an hour in the place.



I shot out and, wondering what consternation I had caused, made straight for the Carl Nielsen museum, which was not far from the Hans Christian Andersen museum. I stayed here until four o'clock happily reading a booklet about the composer's life, looking at all the memorabilia, and listening to extracts of his music on headphones. As it was a fine museum and was quite large, I could have done with more time in it.

Afterwards I wandered around the streets in the town centre, looking at the various shops, many of which sold shoes. I bought some postcards and made my way to the nearby park of Odense Slot. Choosing a sheltered spot, I threw myself down on a bench, for I was tired, and wrote messages on the postcards. I then walked to the train station, where I went to the restaurant and chose the *dages ret* (meal of the day) for 35 kroner: beef with roast potatoes and green beans. I wrote some of my diary and afterwards went into a shop nearby to buy an apple, which I ate in the station. I then went out to catch a bus back to the guesthouse but, because I had consulted a wrong timetable, no bus appeared. I killed some more time by writing my diary, then caught my bus.

Back at the house, I joined Mrs Mikkelsen for another pleasant evening of chat and laughter. This time I played a few Irish tunes on her piano; she applauded me, bestowed great praise on me, and I was duly awarded with more tea, bread and cheese, then slices of buttered cake. Mrs Mikkelsen was a very likeable lady and had a great sense of humour. She told me that she had not spoken so much English in one go as she had done on the previous evening, and had lain awake in bed afterwards, thinking in English. This evening she told me a little more about herself and showed me some old photographs of herself and her late husband.

I finally had a shower and went to bed at about midnight. I had greatly enjoyed relaxing with Mrs Mikkelsen – it had done me good.

Tuesday, 13 July

A dull, wet morning. I rose at about eight and had breakfast with Mrs Mikkelsen at nine. This morning she had added an extra delicacy to the menu: pork pâté. We took our time over our meal and chatted. I slipped out of the room when the telephone rang and got myself ready. Fortunately it had cleared up by the time I left. I caught a bus to the city centre at 10.20 and got off at the train station. I posted my cards in a nearby post office, then boarded a bus bound for the small seaside town of Kerteminde on the north-east coast of Funen, which meant a slight diversion from my route westwards. The bus set off at 11.10; as it was warm inside, I dozed for most of the journey and woke when we arrived at the town.

In Kerteminde I found the tourist information centre, acquired a map, and walked to the Johannes Larsen Museum in spitting rain. The museum was located in the painter's house and some adjoining buildings, and across the street was the impressive Swan windmill. I was quite enchanted by the museum; as the weather was bad, it was an ideal day to see it. The house was quite charming and contained pictures not only by Larsen but by other artists; they were hung all over the walls and often in dark corners, where they were not easy to see. A few of them, however, were of little interest. The garden was very pleasant; despite the poor weather, I went outdoors to have a look at it.

In an adjacent building was Larsen's workshop, which I found very interesting; here I was able to see his easel and a number of unfinished paintings. Beside the

building was a greenhouse full of plants, which I wandered through, then found myself once again in the garden. From here I wandered over to a modern white building, which I thought was closed. However, it was not; it turned out to be a proper gallery filled with many more paintings – not just by Larsen but by other local artists as well. I now realized that the best of Larsen's paintings were displayed in the main hall here. I looked at them for a while in admiration, but soon became tired and lost concentration. I stopped, ambled back to the garden and then over to the little café, where I ordered a snack of dark rye bread, meat balls and red cabbage, which were served with a cup of tea. The waitress told me that I could have more if I wished. A middle-aged couple sitting at my table told me that they had been on holidays in Ireland some years previously. They spoke to me for a while, then abruptly terminated the conversation and left.

Back in the gallery I met the husband again briefly. I went around all the paintings downstairs (some of them were a little too abstract for my taste), then went upstairs. Here I found what I considered to be Larsen's best works: his tiny drawings and prints of birds, which I assumed had been used as book illustrations. There were also some excellent *ex libris* plates that he had designed. Other fine drawings and sketches caught my eye.

Pleased that I had seen everything in the gallery, I left, crossed the street and made for the windmill, which was open to the public. I was able to climb to the top, where I looked out of the small windows at the view. I also examined the windmill's mechanism, which I found fascinating.

Afterwards I went wandering around the streets in the spitting rain. There was little to see in the town. I soon arrived at the water's edge, near a bridge that spanned an inlet. As the girl in the tourist office had marked the position of the Landby boat (an old Viking ship) on my map, and as it seemed to be a short distance away, I decided to take a chance with the weather and walk to it. I found the spot, but all I could see was a house. It seemed that the girl had meant that I take a bus from here to the little museum; I now vaguely remembered reading that it was about four kilometres away. I checked the time table at a bus stop on my way back, which confirmed my recollection.

Back in the town centre I went into the main church, the fifteenth-century Skt Laurentius Kirke which, I discovered, was very fine inside. The altar was quite elaborate and so was the organ, which was being tuned or regulated. I noticed that several Dutch-looking chandeliers and model ships were hanging from the ceiling.

I finally wandered back to the bus station and, before I left, bought a few postcards. Once again I dozed in the bus on the way back to Odense. By now the weather was improving a little.

When I arrived in Odense, I wrote messages on two of the postcards in the waiting room of the bus station, then went to the restaurant, where I ordered the *dagens ret*, which today was fish and chips. Apart from a decorative leaf of lettuce, no vegetables were served. After my meal I bought an orange, which I ate in the station, then set off for 'home' on the bus.

Once again I joined my delightful host, Mrs Mikkelsen, who pressed me to eat a couple of pieces of fried sausage meat, along with some cold potato and cabbage in a sauce. Although I was not at all hungry, I somehow managed to eat this. A wonderful aroma of baking wafted from the kitchen. We watched the news on

television, then a programme about balloonists in Denmark. On this programme I was able to see a new bridge being constructed between Funen and Zealand.

Afterwards we relaxed and chatted. When I mentioned that I intended to travel to Billund in Jutland tomorrow in order to see Legoland, Fru Mikkelsen told me that a bus went directly from Odense to Billund – something that I did not know. She rang her daughter, who confirmed this and asked her mother to phone her again in the morning at the tourist office where she worked, so that she could give her information about the time table. Afterwards I was treated to tea and cake.

In case I would have to set off early on the following morning, I asked if I could have breakfast at 8.30. I then said goodnight to Mrs Mikkelsen, had a shower, prepared things for the journey, wrote another postcard and finally went to bed.