



Welcome



***The Museum of Reconstruction for
Finnmark and North-Troms***



Welcome to The Museum of Reconstruction for Finnmark and North-Troms. Our exhibition aims to convey the poignancy of the dramatic events of WWII; the forced evacuation. The conflagration and the restoration. Never before has any war had such dire consequences for the people of our country.

You will be able to read about how people adjusted to forced evacuation and cave life during the arctic winter of 1944-45, how they rallied optimism and faith, and by dint of sheer willpower built their new homes. See what happened when multicultural communities were "Norwegianised", standardised and modernised.

The museum addresses our recent past and the memories of people who are still alive; our parents and grandparents. WWII has affected every one of us, and The Museum of Reconstruction aims to be a treasure house for all our stories.

This handbook is meant to help you find your way around the exhibition, though it does not pretend to be a complete guide. Usually, the auditorium will harbour temporary exhibitions of an artistic or historic nature. Please contact our staff for further information.

We hope all our visitors will feel stimulated and enlightened by their stay. Do not hesitate to let us know if we can improve our presentation and the service

The Arctic Stone Age



The section about the Arctic Stone Age displays archaeological Stone Age findings from Slettnes and Melkøy in Finnmark. Excavations from Melkøy and Slettnes are the largest ever in North Norway. We have found traces of the first humans that came to Finnmark some ten thousand years ago. Thus North Norway has been populated for as long as the southern part of the country. Findings on Melkøy attest to early trade networks amongst the Stone Age peoples of the north and south, indicating that they have migrated across vast areas. The rock carvings found at Slettnes on Sørøy suggest that these early men led spiritually full lives.

Multicultural Communities



Throughout the ten thousand years that have passed since then, an understanding about nature and the seasons has been pivotal for settlements in the region. Their communion with nature was still manifest in the mixed

farming holdings from the period preceding WWII. A large number of the commodities employed by households was home-made or harvested in the wilds. Fishery yielded ready cash, as it were, as did the lumber industry, the processing of dairy products and work on the roads. North Troms and Finnmark were settled by several peoples. The coastline and the fjords saw the partial blending of Sámis, Kvens and Norwegians.

During the second and third decades of the twentieth century, the Sámis were subjected to pressure from Norwegian and foreign scientists engaged in phrenology, for which purpose they removed skulls they wanted to measure from historic burial grounds. Heavy-handed "Norwegianisation" became the order of the day from 1880 on. The objective was to safeguard Norwegian interests on the frontier, and a number of measures were deployed, particularly versus the Sámis and Kvens. The governing policy with regard to minorities explains to some extent why people along the coast and in the fjords gradually discarded their cultural heritage.

Nomadic and sedentary Sámis and Eastern Sámis settled inland, making their living from hunting, trapping and fishing. The nomadic Sámis' main occupation was reindeer herding, whereas the sedentary Sámis relied on agriculture. Amongst nomads, woman held a prominent position. She partook in all activities involving reindeer: branding, tending herds or shepherding them to new pastures, and sale. She was responsible for the production and retail of clothes. East Sámi culture, influenced as it was by Russia, went through a crisis during the 20s and 30s due to the closing of borders between nations, industrialisation and colonisation of agricultural areas.

The fjords, in particular, were affected by the confluence of the three cultures in northern Fennoscandia, and the peoples tended to be tri-lingual. The Kvens, who

settled in the early eighteenth century, considered the fjords the best place to exploit soil intensively. Forestry and cultivation of hay for domestic animals was central in Kven economy.

On the coast, the traders' monopoly had been broken. Yet, the powerful trade companies were still major exporters of fish products. Most Norwegians lived on the coast. This area was, however, also populated by Sea Sámis, and of Kvens, and nomadic Sámis during the summer. Deep sea fishing brought ready currency to the coastal population, while produce from the farming of domestic animals served as a safety valve if the fishing failed.

The Dramatic Close of the War



After the Germans attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, the local population came face to face with war. Finnmark was seen to be of military significance for the Nazis. In no other county were there as many German soldiers. The entire region was used as a deployment area for the Lappish Front, and convoys of troops and supplies made their way along the coast.

As early as in 1942 the Russians and the other allies tried to halt this traffic by bombing strategic targets. Kirkenes, Vardø and Vadsø were all repeatedly hit by bombing raids from the allies. Finnmark was, on the whole, an important theatre of operations for the Russians. Living in primitively equipped bleak caves, partisans were stationed at observation

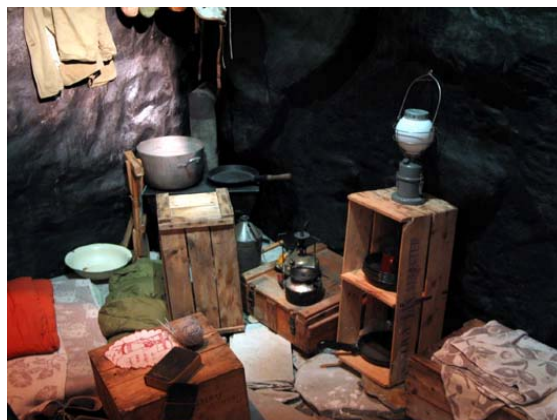
posts along the coast. Their reports to the Soviet authorities about German traffic was to play a part in the outcome of the war.

Everybody in the Same Boat, Refugee in your Own Country



In this section you will meet fugitives. You will get an impression of the living conditions endured by those who stayed and see objects left behind, buried in the ground or lugged along.

The Cave



Some 25 000 people turned into cave dwellers and refugees in their own communities. They hoped that the allies, particularly the Russians, would come to their rescue, a hope the king's proclamation may have contributed to. Some were able to plan their flight and to prepare a dwelling of sorts in a cave or turf hut, whereas others simply had to leave, taking whatever they could carry. The winter was marked by fear, solidarity,

disease and hunger. From written and oral accounts we know that even pregnant women fled to the mountains. Children and old people died of diseases. People had to move repeatedly because of the Nazis constant search raids, when they herded people together. Looking back, people who were children at the time recall the silence; those who were adult mainly remember fear of being found.

From a Diary

Saturday 18.11.1944:

..... such a deafening din, shouting and clamouring in the cave from morning to night, which is fine, of course. We need to keep our spirits, as well as our health, to get us through this in one piece. Hope we can soon get away.

Wednesday 16.5.1945:

So! Now the war is over in Europe. At last we can feel safe. What a relief not to have to take flight from every human we see in the distance. Today's the day: home! We have planned to build a small cottage.

*Peder Somby's diary entries,
edited and published in Øyfolk, 1994*

Barber Chairs on the Road



Barber chairs were essential for Barber *Marius Odin Hekkelstrand*, if he was to carry out his work. In 1939, he opened up a barbershop in *Hammerfest*, bought two barber chairs and had them sent all the way from Chicago in the USA. Before long, however, the chairs were off again;

they were packed and dispatched to *Ballangen* in Nordland. After the war, they returned to *Hammerfest* where barber *Hekkelstrand* carried out his trade in barracks until the mid-fifties. Then, at long last, he was able to move into permanent premises in *Fredrik Dahls* office building. Before the war, the chairs, which were made of buffalo hide had cost NOK 2000.

Their last owner was:

Astrid Edel Hekkelstrand.

Contributed by: Birger Andreas Hekkelstrand

Armchairs



When the evacuation order was issued on 28 October 1944, many people tried to salvage their most beloved belongings by burying them. Very few of these objects were found again when the war ended. The armchairs, upholstered with plush and silk, were buried in *Kårhamn*. Unfortunately, the rest of the furniture was lost, but the chairs were to become valuable mementos from a home where everything else was burnt to the ground. The chairs are from the 1920s or 1930s.

Their last owner:

Selma A. Korneliussen

Contributed by:

Gerd Bang Brevik

Film: "The destruction"



The film to be shown in the adjoining room describes the dramatic and absurd denouement of the war. The Russian offensive on the German Northern Front settlements started at dawn on 7 October 1944. The Red Army and the naval and air forces compelled the Germans to retreat, and liberated *Kirkenes* before going on to *Tana Bru*, where they halted. On 28 October 1944, the order was given, by Adolf Hitler himself, to deploy "the scorched earth scheme", evacuating all civilians; "Die Vernichtung". This was to be carried out "... ruthlessly. Compassion for the civilians will be considered unsuitable." During the winter 1944–1945, the death zone between Tana and Lyngenlinja unfolded. Nothing but ruins remained in a blackened landscape. When the war ended, 75 000 people were refugees in their own country. However, in spite of what they had in store for themselves, in spite of not being allowed to return, there was a stream of people bound for the North, determined to get started on the business of reconstruction.

Knut Erik Jensen

The Christening Robe



A young woman bore a child fathered by a German soldier. The soldier bought lace and material for a christening robe. The child died during the war. When the evacuation order was received, the christening robe was buried in a fishing hamlet on *Sørøya*.

*Contributed by:
Gunn Zachariassen*

The Rescue Operation On *Sørøya*

Assuming that the war was almost over, nearly a thousand people on *Sørøya* and *Seiland* dodged the forced evacuation. On 15 February, 502 people were rescued by four allied destroyers. The allies carried out this reckless operation behind enemy lines. The refugees from *Sørøya* were transported to Murmansk and, from there, on to Scotland on freighters.

Peace



All over the country, people were elated to have peace restored. In the North, however, their celebrations were

somewhat dampened by the devastation and the heavy burdens awaiting them.

The Reconstruction 1945–1960



Reconstruction was carried out in stages. In this room you will learn about how the provisional arrangements and bloated bureaucracy affected people. The second part of the room is devoted to permanent reconstruction. You will get an impression of the ideals informing the modernization of Finnmark and North Troms.

People Disregarded the Ban and Went Home

The Norwegian authorities preferred an ordered return of the evacuees. They wanted time to plan the reconstruction. The overriding goals for reconstruction were: full employment, raised living standards, increased production and economic growth. Such plans demand centralized settlement, planning and implementation. The plans did not take into account the population's own wishes and in the course of the summer 1945 some 50,000 people went home. This was probably the most massive single act of civilian disobedience ever to occur in Norway.

Shortages of Housing and Building Materials



The war left about 22 000 Norwegian homes in ruins. Since the population had grown by 125 000 during the war, we were short of some 80–90 000 dwellings in 1945.

In the South: People despaired over the crowded housing situation and demonstrated in the streets.

In the North: Appalling living conditions caused problems way into the 50s; the situation demanded a very patient population.

The Period of Barrack Life

The first provisional living quarters attested to people's resourcefulness. Ancient building traditions had not entirely been forgotten. Even before the war you could come across overturned boats serving as construction modules in boat houses, while turf huts had been used for dwellings until well into the 30s.

Barracks



"Everything was such a hassle! We spent our time trying to get hold of ration cards,

standing in line, using and re-using every scrap of material. Washing clothes was another matter altogether. Just as well we lived by the river. It was OK in summer, but during winter we had to rinse the washing with blue fingers."

The Bureaucracy

The sheer numbers of people moving back meant that initial plans had to be trimmed. Nevertheless, the authorities were determined to go on centralising administration. A reconstruction minister was appointed in Oslo, while the "Finnmark Office" in Harstad was to become the projection of centralised authority in the North. There is quite a distance between Harstad and East Finnmark, so a "Department of Supplies" was opened in Tromsø. North Troms and Finnmark were partitioned into seven reconstruction districts, each with its own district office. Such a bureaucratic approach contrasted sharply with familiar pre-war municipal administration which by and large had consisted of no more than a treasurer and a mayor. The locals were meet by a bureaucracy they did not understand.

There was a great shortage of building materials, and the authorities were very clear about their priorities for the work to be carried out. The population voiced sharp criticism directed mainly at the "Finnmark Office". The atmosphere of distrust was not allayed until in 1948, when the "Finnmark Office" was closed down and administration was again left to the counties and municipalities.

District Architects



District architects were squeezed into provisional living quarters, sometimes more than one to each room. Most of them were young, barely out of university, and they came from far and near to take part in the reconstruction work.

Plan and Ideology – the State

A National Effort



The Labour Party government wished to incorporate the northernmost region into the greater national, cultural and economic fold. People would lead better lives, everybody's rights should be safeguarded. Principles about equal rights for all and an accentuated sense of national identity were coupled with new faith in government planning. The reconstruction led to increased employment, more household spending power and centralization of the settlement. The changes affected day-to-day life in such a way that old structures disintegrated while ethnic divides became indistinct. Considerably altered material habits and greater identification with the nation, as such, eroded faith in a distinct background.

Industry focused on the future, when new technology would bring foreign currency to the country. The number of workers in industry rose, while employment in primary industry fell sharply. This tendency within primary industry clearly bespeaks a transition to modern industrial society. Today we believe that modernisation would not have been as swift had Finnmark and North Troms not been burnt and bombed.

The Ideology of Equality

In this section you will learn about the ideals that informed reconstruction policies at the time. You might also want to have a look at a "coastal home" or an "inland Sámi home" from the 50s.

During the reconstruction, the state intervened in people's lives in unprecedented ways. The Labour Party government supervised settlement patterns and culture and invested in communications and industry. Improving health services and building new educational institutions was part and parcel of the programme. The party was involved in everything from personal cleanliness, drinking habits, and how to furnish homes.

The Norwegian Telecom Museum, Hammerfest



In many places, destruction was near total. Even telephone poles had been blown up. The Norwegian Tele-Communication Museum has a section in the Finnmark and North Troms Reconstruction Museum that recounts the story of tele-communications these past 135 years. The exhibition traces technological developments from the crank phone and telegraph to the mobile phone of our times.

A Home from the Fifties – Attempt to Refine Popular Taste



The Norwegian cultural elite formed an alliance with architects and craftsmen in their attempt to resuscitate cultivation as an ideal. All over the country *Statens Husbonadsnemnd* [the state handicraft foundation] held exhibitions. Meanwhile, women's weeklies eagerly advocated "good taste". Exhibitions and pictures illustrating interior design promoted a style that gave a vivid, clean and consistent impression. The period favoured large, bright areas, wood-white furniture, an absence of ornaments and no dark or heavy dusty furniture.

The Norwegian Coastal Home

"We thought we were having a grand time, you know, but everything was rather narrow, steep stairways, you know, and tiny rooms ..."

The Instructive State

To promote health, health care workers stressed three main issues: diet, working conditions and living conditions. In the fifties, an itinerant puppet theatre spread the word throughout the country, urging the population to improve its diet and dental care.

An Inland Sámi Home



Areas further inland had not been burnt as systematically as the coast. Thus a number of artefacts were salvaged, such as those in this Sámi home.

Missed Education



Many school buildings were closed down, as far as normal education was concerned, during the Finnish–Russian "Winter War" of 1939, and from 1940 on, they were used by German troops. In the autumn of 1944, most of them were burnt, and classes were not resumed until long after the war. Some people lost 6–7 years of schooling as a result of the war. Students whose mother tongue was Sámi or Kven had great difficulties following Norwegian instruction. They were the ones to suffer most from interrupted schooling.

War Leads to Reconstruction



History offers numerous examples of great cultural losses due to war. In the aftermath, the authorities have sometimes systematically strived to revive traditional architecture and living environments. Elsewhere, they have taken the opportunity to modernise and introduce new environments that are more in tune with the times.

A Multi-Cultured People in a Modern Society



As a result of the cultural revival of the 1970s, people started looking for their roots. With some degree of pride, they were now able to stand up for their Sámi, Kven and North Norwegian background. Not everything was retained, but a multi-cultural heritage has surfaced both in commercial and recreational terms. More than ever, it is fitting now that we are engaged in a debate about the right to land and water, about our economic basis and the future of our districts.

The Great Change ?



from the end of the war till about 1960. The houses need refurbishing after 40 years. Opinions vary as to how this should be done. Why have the housing complexes not been kept in better condition?

All pictures are from the exhibition.

Photo: O. Kvivesen/The Museum of Reconstruction

Reconstruction Architecture — Our Cultural heritage

The picture exhibition in the tower consists of a wealth of documentation about our reconstruction architecture after the war in Finnmark, as well as about the pre-war settlements. Reconstruction architecture reflects the "ideology of equality" in the sense that its aim was to veil ethnic and social differences.

To what extent does reconstruction architecture depart from building traditions of the past? Can we find any common denominators between it and pre-war architecture? Some researchers maintain that the craftsmen and the people living in the houses saw to it that the past was preserved indoors, in the details. Others hold that the "reconstruction house" is something altogether new and, moreover, the most uniform architecture that has ever been built in this country.

Are Fifty Year Old Houses Worth Preserving?

Finnmark and North-Troms are dominated by architecture of the "reconstruction" period. In the better part of the region, this architecture is, moreover, the oldest to be found. Do we want to preserve architecture just because it is "oldest"? Do these building complexes in Finnmark and North Troms form part of our landscape, our childhood, our memories? Today, this architecture is on the verge of disappearing. Will we allow that? These buildings were built