



# A Record Gathering of Finnish Morgan Members in Southern Karelia

by *Kari Nettamo*

After a two-year hiatus, the Finnish Morgan members were yet again able to meet, this time in Lappeenranta – 40 kilometers from the Russian border - from July 30 through August 1, 2021.

A record number of 14 Morgan's were in attendance with or without co-pilots. Activities included a news update from the president, delicious food, a whiskey tasting, and waterfront views. Yet again, it was proven that quality is much more important than quantity. The number of Morgan members is the North's smallest, but participants' comradery makes up for quantity. Local Morgan member Jouni Okko had pulled together a wonderful agenda and had ordered almost rainless weather.

## LAKE SAIMAA CRUISE AND CANAL

On Friday, we convened at the Lappeenranta Scandic Patria hotel where we headed towards the famous marina. After snacking on fish and ice cream, we spent time on a cruise at Lake Saimaa where we enjoyed dinner and peaceful scenery. This is Finland's largest lake and third largest in Europe measuring at 13,700 km of coastline.

We also spent a few hours getting to know the Saimaa Canal, and its history. This canal is built by Finland for commercial use and is 42,9 kilometer long of which 19,6 kilometer is on the Russian side. This is today the only canal in the world where the land is rented from the foreign state (Russia). In the past Macao, Panama, and Hong Kong had similar rental

arrangement but now the rental agreements in these cases have expired. Saimaa Canal rental agreement with Russia will expire in 2062.

## VISITING THE PRESIDENT

The second day was our traditional group drive around the area. We all gathered at the Lappeenranta Rakuuna historical area where we took our official group photo. Our first stop was Kotkaniemi (Eagles Cape) mansion. This served as president Svinhuvud's home from 1908 until his death, after which his wife Ellen Svinhuvud kept it as her home. Svinhuvud was the third President of Finland from 1931 to 1937. He was also the first Head of State after Finland's independence from Russia in 1917. Four generations lived in Kotkaniemi but at this time it serves only as a museum. Not only as for the area's history, but as an interesting tourist attraction. The ground included a wonderful garden with much to see during the summer and is worth the visit.

After Kotkaniemi, we set our sights on Lemi and Finland's traditional food called Lemminkäinen. At the heart of Lemminkäinen is a slow-cooked leg of lamb, roasted in a wood-fired oven for up to 9 hours. It sits on a wooden roasting dish, which gives the whole fest its name: this is a trough ("särrä") made of a birch tree log which gives the meat its flavour. Towards the end, you add potatoes which get much of their flavor from the lamb's fat and also a gold colour from the temperature of the oven. For dessert, it's tradition to serve raisin

soup which helps your digestive system after a very heavy meal.

The journey continued through Karelia's beautiful scenery back to Lappeenranta. The yearly gathering, or should I say yearly bonding, was held at Jouni Okko's organized facilities. As a bonus, they organized a visit by a whisky expert. Balvenie's Finnish representative Michael Grönfors gave us a very interesting presentation of their products. The tastings were executed with plenty of sniffing and gargling. An interesting detail about the artisan quality, Grönfors said, was that they had purchased two Morgans. Morgans continue to have fine craftsmanship, as does their whisky production. Another Morgan was partially with us for this event. Based on the conversations, it was clear that Pekka Vitikaisen will be a wonderful chairman for our next season as well.

At the end of the day, the group returned to the Lappeenranta Marina area for dinner at the restaurant Old Makasiini. Because of the weather, it was decided Sunday that everyone would return home safely as soon as possible, due to the bad weather and expected rain throughout the region.

## Photo captions:

1. Saimaa Channel from Eastern Finland via Russia to Europe
2. Lunch at Lake Saimaa
3. Group of Finnish Morganeers
4. Morgans ready to go
5. Lemminkäinen – 1000 year old recipe