

## Icelandic and related studies at Nottingham

The University of Nottingham has a particular interest in the area of Old Norse-Icelandic literature and associated studies. The Centre for the Study of the Viking Age organises conferences and seminars. It has close links with other UK and Scandinavian institutions and offers facilities to visiting scholars. The School of English Studies teaches Old Norse, Viking Studies and Anglo-Saxon Studies at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and offers research supervision. Students also participate in the activities of the Institute for Medieval Studies.

Further information about the Centre for the Study of the Viking Age is available from its website:  
<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/research/csva/>

## Electronic Gateway to Icelandic Literature (EGIL)

In 2000 the University of Nottingham became the lead site in a collaborative project for Icelandic research materials, involving also the British Library and the universities of Leeds, Oxford and University College London. Funded for two years by the Research Support Libraries Programme, this project has enabled the creation of an electronic gateway to support the research and study of Icelandic literature in the United Kingdom. An immediate benefit to users of the Nottingham collections has been the completion of electronic records for the core Icelandic holdings, and the mounting of selected items from the holdings in digital form.

A separate leaflet describes the aims of EGIL and its principal features. Its website is accessible at:  
<http://www.egil.nottingham.ac.uk>

### Location

*Manuscripts and Special Collections have moved to:*

University of Nottingham  
King's Meadow Campus  
Lenton Lane  
Nottingham  
NG7 2NR  
Tel: +44 (0)115 9514565  
Fax: +44 (0)115 8468651

### Directions

**From M1 Motorway:**  
Leave motorway at Junction 25 to join the A52 to Nottingham. Turn right at the Queens Medical Centre roundabout (about 5 miles from M1) following signs to Grantham. After going over the flyover get into the left hand lane marked A453 City Centre then turn left after the footbridge, signposted Lenton Lane Industrial Estate. Turn left at the T-junction and King's Meadow Campus is about a quarter of a mile on the right.

**From Nottingham (approximately 3 miles):**  
There are regular Link 1 buses from the Victoria Centre, the Broadmarsh bus station or Nottingham train station. Alight at the Clifton Bridge North stop, then walk north along Lenton Lane via the subway. The Campus is about half a mile on the right. Nottingham City Transport's website provides timetables and information about other routes.

There are taxi ranks throughout the City Centre and immediately adjacent to the main railway and bus stations. The journey to the campus takes about 15 minutes.

**From the main University Campus:**  
The University runs free Hopper bus services between its main Campuses. Timetables are available on the University website:  
<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk>

## Access to Manuscripts and Special Collections

Reference use of reserved collections is allowed to all *bona fide* researchers at the discretion of the Keeper; readers must provide proof of identity and complete a registration form. The University reserves the right to refuse admission.

***It is strongly recommended that researchers make an appointment in advance of their proposed visit to ensure that the material they wish to consult is available.***

## Facilities

Light refreshments are available from the coffee bar and vending machines on Level 2.

## Facilities for the disabled

Wheelchair access to all parts of Hallward Library is possible, with assistance, via the Library lift. Special toilet facilities are available on Level 2. Advance notice of other special needs is advisable.

## Icelandic and Related Library Resources



## The Collections

Publications relevant to Icelandic studies can be identified within a number of distinct subject categories in different parts of the library. The most extensive resources concern language, literature and culture, both for Old Norse and post-medieval Icelandic, complemented by significant holdings in Anglo-Saxon studies. Many of these materials lie within the general subject stock available for students and researchers on Level Four of Hallward Library. Rare publications form part of the general Special Collections (Printed Books) series on Level One of Hallward Library. Items from the two major private libraries (Grudgings and Benedikz) which contribute so significantly to the strength of the holdings can be identified by their distinctive bookplates.

## Language, literature and culture

Myths about the old Northern gods, and sagas describing the history of the Scandinavian peoples, have left a rich legacy in stone, image, manuscript and print. Facsimile editions make available the ancient texts, while specialist studies interpret the material culture and the evidence of rune stones and other memorials.

Library resources in this field aim to meet the needs of both undergraduates and academics, offering materials that range from introductory works to detailed scholarly research.

At both popular and scholarly levels, digital presentation has a particular role in Icelandic studies, enabling the demonstration of stages and levels in the interpretation and transmission of texts. The library seeks to extend access to online subject resources where possible, through the EGIL gateway and other selected tools.



### The Benedíksz Collection

Eiríkur Benedíksz (1907-1988) was a scholar, diplomat and bibliophile, who made a major contribution to Anglo-Icelandic relations. After early studies in Cambridge and Leeds, he returned to Iceland and worked as a writer and translator. He became British pro-consul in Reykjavík in 1938 and was

appointed to the Icelandic Legation in London in 1942. He was a long-serving supporter of the Viking Society for Northern Research.

Benedíksz, who had a close association with University College London, taught Christine Fell (1938-1998) as a postgraduate student. Fell became a lecturer at Nottingham in 1971 and was promoted in 1981 to the Chair of Early English Studies. Throughout her career she maintained an interest in the early cultural and linguistic contacts of the English and Scandinavian worlds. In 1998 the Benedíksz family gave the Eiríkur Benedíksz library to Nottingham, in recognition of her friendship and her support for Icelandic and Norse studies. Key elements of the collection, with additional strengths from the library of his son Dr Benedíkt S. Benedíksz, now comprise the Benedíksz Special Collection.

The Benedíksz Collection has transformed the range and wealth of the library resources. It doubles the holdings of Old Icelandic manuscript facsimiles, a core research tool. Early printed books include fine examples of rare saga editions. A particular strength is the representation of *rímur*, the post-medieval genre of Icelandic poetry. The study of Icelandic culture is present in both foreign travel literature and native imprints. Works in translation include not only Latin and English versions of Icelandic originals but also titles in modern Icelandic by major European authors.



### Iceland through the eyes of visitors

Iceland has always attracted visitors. Its topography and natural history, together with its geysers, volcanoes and other distinctive geological features, have drawn scientists and tourists alike. Travel literature provides an important source of observation and comment about the country and its people.

EXPENSES OF MY TOUR IN ICELAND.		£	s.	d.
	Tent, pack-saddle, pitch, hammock, &c.	14	0	0
	Presents for Iceland	2	10	0
	Waterproof coat, boots, &c.	6	0	0
June 7, Saturday.	Train from London to Edinburgh	1	13	0
	Bill at inn in Edinburgh	0	18	0
" 9, Monday.	Train to Grimsnesmúli	0	2	7
	Luggage, per parcels delivery, sent on before	0	4	8
	Arcterus, booking	5	0	0
	Boys	0	4	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>
" 16, Monday.	Reykjavík:—			
	Sou'-wester cap	1	1	0

These library resources are relevant to a range of research interests. Some show the persistence of romantic notions about Northern myths and the Viking sagas; others demonstrate wider European cultural developments, in particular the study of languages and the origins of Europe's oral traditions; while many constitute in themselves historical documents, providing detailed surveys of Iceland's economy and society at particular moments in its development.

Travellers inevitably brought their own backgrounds and expectations with them, and the collections offer considerable potential for comparative cultural studies. The link with Denmark prompted curiosity and surveys, illustrated by Olafsen and Povelsen, *Travels in Iceland* (English edition, London, 1805).

The nineteenth century saw a series of influential accounts by British visitors, particularly from Scotland. Examples in the collections include Steuart Mackenzie, *Travels in the Island of Iceland* (Edinburgh, 1812), Henderson, *Iceland; or the Journal of a Residence in that Island* (Edinburgh, 1818) and Baring-Gould, *Iceland: its Scenes and Sagas* (London, 1863).

### Cultural links and transformations

Nottingham's long tradition in the teaching of Anglo-Saxon has strengthened its holdings in resources relevant to Icelandic language studies. The collections include the publications of scholars like George Hickes, who in the seventeenth century undertook seminal work in the scholarly rediscovery of Europe's older languages and their remains in epigraphy, oral tradition and writing.

The collections provide wide coverage for research into the contribution made by Iceland to European culture. Translations and the commentaries of many scholars, in Latin and vernacular languages, made Icelandic literature accessible, and were drawn on by successive generations, frustrated by the linguistic difficulties of the original sources.

Elements from the myths and sagas became over the centuries commonplace in the popular imagination. Historical associations between Scandinavia and North Britain provided an additional powerful incentive for both serious studies and the imaginative interpretation of traditional stories.

The relevant library resources are found particularly within English and History subject areas, but are often interdisciplinary in their significance - archaeological, art-historical, geological and other perspectives are also pursued, and enrich the understanding of Icelandic culture and its influence.



### The Grudgings Collection

Many volumes in the area of Icelandic studies, and particularly of Old Norse, came from the library of Noël Upton Grudgings. A student in Pharmacy at University College Nottingham, Grudgings graduated in 1931. He had already developed a passionate interest in the study of Old Norse, which he and other enthusiasts at Nottingham were taught by Miss Alice Selby. During his professional career as a pharmacist, he built up an extensive library of Icelandic literature. On his death in 1967, and at the suggestion of another former student, Arthur Sale, who was his executor, the collection was given to Nottingham University Library. It includes many rare titles and has provided a significant support for both Old Norse and English studies.

### Myths and sagas in children's literature

For those who study the development of stereotyped images of Viking warriors and their seafaring adventures, a useful series is devoted to the representation of myths and sagas in English-language literature for children. Tales of the Northmen have constantly been retold for different audiences, often moving far from the key elements of the narrative. Some stories are entirely new creations, merely borrowing Scandinavian names and assuming a familiarity with images of seafaring fighters wearing horned or winged helmets. In other cases the re-telling also draws on traditional stories of other north European cultures, a reminder of the cross-cultural links and influences.

