

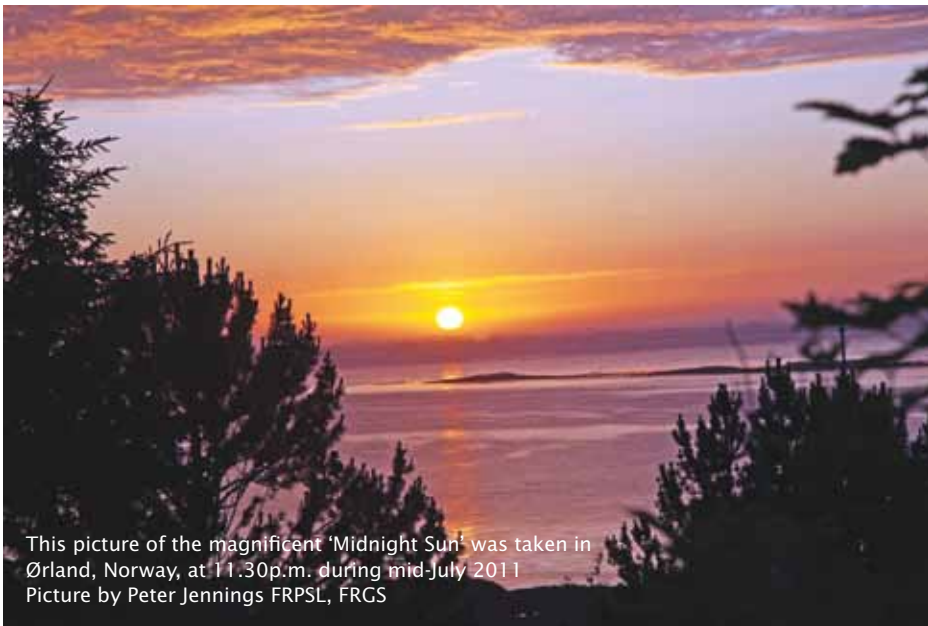
This special report by Peter Jennings FRPSL, FRGS, was begun in Norway only days before the terrible tragedy when 77 people were ruthlessly murdered in two separate attacks on Friday 22 July 2011. It is dedicated to the people of Norway

Norway's first stamp was issued on 1 January 1855



Norway, its Stamps and Postal Service

Hilsen til våre lesere av GSM fra Norge, 'Midnattsolens land'
(Greetings to the readers of GSM from Norway, 'Land of the Midnight Sun')



This picture of the magnificent 'Midnight Sun' was taken in Ørland, Norway, at 11.30p.m. during mid-July 2011
Picture by Peter Jennings FRPSL, FRGS

Sarah, and her Norwegian fiancée Børge in Ørland, near Trondheim, the third largest city in the country. They were 'extremely shocked and upset.'



King Harald (SG 1138) and with Queen Sonja (1282)



In 1814 Denmark ceded Norway to Sweden from 1814 to 1905. At the time the King of Sweden was also the King of Norway. The first stamp, the famous imperf 4sk. blue was issued on 1 January 1855 showing the Lion and Crown.

This classic stamp was depicted on a set of two issued during the Second World War on 12 October 1942 to commemorate the Inauguration of the European Postal Union in Vienna.

Unfortunately the stamp issue was marred by the inclusion of Vidkun Quisling, a Norwegian politician and traitor to his country, from the issue of 1 February that

Norway and northern Scandinavia is often described as 'The Land of the Midnight Sun'. The concept means that the uppermost arc of the sun stays above the horizon for 24 hours. This occurs north of latitude 66.5 degrees north during the summer. There is a corresponding period of darkness during winter when the sun never rises above the horizon during the day.



Eurovision Song Contest stamp of 18 May 2010. The final was held in Oslo two weeks later on 29 May

Many people's knowledge of Norway is probably limited to its successes in the Eurovision Song Contest, which it won in 1985, 1995 and again on 19 May 2009.

Deadly attacks

That was until Friday 22 July 2011 when Norway dominated television and radio with news-breaking stories that deadly twin attacks had shattered the calm of this beautiful country. The first attack, without any warning being given, was a massive car bomb which exploded near the Norwegian Parliament building in Oslo, the capital. Seven people were killed—and one died later of their injuries.

The second attack took place in Utoya, an island in a lake about 40km north of Oslo when a man (I have purposely not included his name) with an automatic weapon

ruthlessly murdered 69 young people and injured many more, before he was captured alive by Norwegian special forces.

Mass shootings

The mass shootings that lasted for 90 terrifying minutes, the worst violence to hit Norway since the Second World War, took place at the ruling Labour Party Youth Camp attended by more than 600 young people. These political leaders of tomorrow came from many parts of Norway, a country of only 4.5 million people.

King Harald V

The deep shock and grief suffered by the people of Norway following these terrible atrocities was shared by King Harald V and Queen Sonja who also lost a relative. They are pictured together on a stamp included in a set issued on 16 April 1997 to commemorate the 60th Birthdays of King Harald and Queen Sonja. A number of definitive stamps also depict a striking portrait of King Harald.

My wife Stella and I returned from Norway only a few days before the twin attacks. We had stayed for two weeks with our daughter,

Peter and his daughter Sarah on a ferry in Norway. Picture by Stella Jennings



year. On 9 April 1940, with the German invasion of Norway in progress, Quisling seized power in a Nazi-backed *coup d'état*. From 1942 to 1945 he served as Minister-President, working with the occupying forces.



Norway's first stamp with one showing Vidkun Quisling (340)

The Post-horn

The famous Post-horn has been an iconic symbol on the stamps of Norway since it was first depicted on a stamp in 1871. The Post-horn is still shown on new definitive stamps on sale at post offices throughout Norway today.

The Post-horn was featured on the attractive set of three issued on 3 January 1955 to commemorate the Norwegian Stamp Centenary.



Norway's famous Posthorn design



Tarva

On Wednesday 13 July I had the opportunity to visit the little post office on Tarva, a small island situated about 30 minutes by car-ferry from Dypfest. The post office is actually in the garden of a nearly 3000-acre farm owned by Inge Mikkelhaug and his delightful partner Lill Monika Vågø. Inge is the brother of Børge, our daughter Sarah's fiancée.

It happened that Lill, the *Landpostbud*, rural postman, who runs the post office was on the ferry with us. When we docked Lill picked up the box of mail and put it into her car for the short journey to the farm.

Sorts the mail

Once the mail has arrived Lill opens the box and sorts it inside the wooden post office and puts the mail into the individual post boxes attached to the outside wall.

During a short interview for *GSM* Lill explained: 'At present there are 16 residents on Tarva including six of us. The other residents are elderly, mainly in their 80's and 90's.'

Lill continued: 'Inge bought the farm during November 2002. In January 2003 I became postmaster when we moved to Tarva. Unfortunately, in January 2008 the post office in Tarva was officially closed.' She added: 'It happened as part of a programme of rural post office closures throughout Norway.'

Asked what happened, Lill, who speaks remarkably good English, replied: 'The postal service continued with me as *Landpostbud*, with a reduced salary.'



Peter pictured with Lill Monika Vågø holding the box of mail outside Tarva post office. Picture by Stella Jennings
A Norwegian post office counter (SG 926)

The ferry

Asked about her role in receiving and sending the box of mail, Lill said: 'The box of mail is delivered to the ferry by a post van and is then the responsibility of the captain of the ferry, who hands them to me quayside. We both have to sign for any registered letters.'

'The ferry usually arrives with mail at 4p.m. each weekday, including Saturday, except for Wednesday (today) when it arrives at 12.10p.m. No mail is delivered on Sunday.'

'I send the box of mail back on the ferry approximately once a week or the next day if several pieces of mail have been posted.'

Peter with hand canceller and Tarva, Norway, handstamp. Picture by Lill Monika Vågø



'I provide postage stamps for outgoing mail but I do not cancel them; that is now done on the mainland. But when it was a post office I did cancel the stamps.'

'My job used to be interesting until the post office was closed down. Then I also ran the banking facilities, but sadly not any more!'

Norway issued a set of three 'Postal Work' stamps on 24 February 1983 showing a post office counter, postal sorting and postal delivery.

Recalling her previous role, Lill took the old hand-held canceller out of a drawer, changed the date, found the ink pad, and allowed me to use it so that an example might appear in this article.

Father's collections

Asked if she collected stamps, Lill paused for a moment and replied: 'I inherited my father's stamp collection and collected stamps for two or three years from the age of about 10 until 13 and then I gave up stamp collecting.'

Norway issued two stamps on 19 September 1997 depicting 'Thematic Subjects' to mark the Inauguration of the National

Junior Stamp Club.

After a most enjoyable lunch and conversation with Lill about the political situation in Norway it was time to say goodbye before our journey back to the mainland on the 2.30p.m. car-ferry in the company of a box of mail.

No post offices

Ørland, the community where Sarah lives, used to have six post offices but today there are none. The last one was closed during 2010—but that is another story for another day.

I greatly enjoyed my first visit to Norway during July 2011 and hope to contribute further articles about Norway, its stamps and postal service to *GSM*.