



5-Snarsmon. Den store tufta utgravd og nedrast vegg restaurert_Foto-Svein NorheimDSC_1326.jpg

SNARSMON – HERE WAS A LITTEL TOWN

Snarsmon is one of few permanent sites for Roma Traveler in Scandinavia. It was probably first occupied in the 1870s and housed up to about 30 families in a number of simple huts or houses.

The settlement straddled the path for about 500 metres. Archeologists found four large foundations, two

with smaller ones adjoining them. The land near the foundations shows traces of cultivation. Round or oval pits may be where heaps of earth and stone were used to store root vegetables away from winter frosts.

It is only 400 metres to the Norwegian border. The people here felt relative safe. They could always take refuge across the border. They were mostly itinerant pedlars, selling their handwork here or in Norway: brooms and brushes, string bags and baskets. In addition they were in demand as tinkers or to sharpen tool.

The settlement would have been abandoned in the 1920s as people either moved away or were assimilated locally. The Roma Travelers themselves think their ancestors were chased away by the locals. Truth and legend have merged, leaving the real story of Snarsmon shrouded in mystery. Roma Travelers were not much talked about; they in turn held their tongues, living in fear of prejudice and persecution.

WHAT THE HOUSES HAD TO SHOW

In 2004 and 2005 archeologists began investigation; so far they have uncovered the foundations of seven or eight widely spaced houses. A closer examination of two sets of foundations shows they were built in the 1800s and used until the early 1900s.

The men who built them knew their craft. They are built of unworked stone, enclose an area some four metres square and have an opening facing south or south-west. In one corner was a heath an perhaps an iron stove and metal chimney sticking up through the roof. The roof may have been ridged or flat and sloping, probably wooden, and sealed with peat and moss. The house was insulated by mounds of earth along the walls and sealed inside by peat.

The earth within held the glass pane and hasp from a small window, shards of porcelain and pottery, woolen cloth, nails and a clay pipe, part of a comb and of a shoe.. Neither these fragments nor an analysis of the soil are proof of permanent occupation. Several tests remain to be carried out.

Settlements of Roma Travelers have never before been documented. This is a significant project both for archeological research and for the social history of Roma Travelers in Scandinavia.



12-Snarsmon_Minneplakett oppsatt med informasjon på resandefolkets språk - romani. Foto-Svein Norheim_DSC_0326.jpg

Snarsmon has attracted the attention of Roma Travelers' descendants in both Sweden and Norway. Several families have taken part in the excavations here, seeking their own history where their ancestors lived. An official policy of ethnic cleansing that persisted long after the 1930s has been replaced by a concern to make amends for the past.

A LIFE ON THE ROAD

The history of Roma Travelers in Sweden goes back to the 1500s when the first group reached Scandinavia. A second group arrived in the middle of the 1800s, called Gipsies. Some 25,000 people in Sweden have a Roma background.

Roma travelers mostly lived as pedlars, copers or from the sale of handwork. Local farmers seldom needed their services on more than a casual basis and they were forever being moved on. The road was their home.

Today travelers are integrated into society, but not assimilated. They cling firmly to their own cult. Theirs is an unwritten history, but they preserve their oral traditions, and many can trace families back five or six generations and have memorised their pedigree. The central factor in Roma culture is their language, Romany, which occur in numerous variations. The common denomination is Romany Chib.

The archeological work being done at