

An Englishman in Strömstad

THE HIDING HYPHEN!

The Swedish language can be very beautiful. But there is one aspect of it that I find confounding and frustrating. Compound words!

In English a 'compound word' is a word composed of 2 or more words. An example is 'half-blood', composed of the words 'half' and 'blood'. The individual words are easily identifiable due to the hyphen (-) that rests between them. Sometimes compound words come in a different form: Without hyphens. But even then, they are always short words.

Then I came to Sweden, and the hyphen went into hiding! Swedes compound words all the time in everyday speech, yet these words are hardly ever hyphenated in



written form! And some of them are particularly long! Where does one word end and another begin? Everything is stuck together! For instance:

Fönsterkarmsskruvar

Immigrants must attempt to interpret this sticky morass of meaning. It is not an easy task! It's

perhaps worst when reading the news. Especially stories concerning scientific, economic or technical subjects.

So if you're in a café and you see someone reading a newspaper who has an expression on their face as if they're poeing in their pants, do not be alarmed! They are not actually poeing in their pants! They are an immigrant trying to read difficult Swedish compound words! If you wish to help them, approach them with a pen and offer to mark out the separate words. Like so:

Fönster|karms|skruvar

The immigrant will then calm down and be most grateful! Perhaps they will even buy you coffee...

Publik från såväl Tanum som Strömstad följde med spänning och entusiasm den spännande kampen om vem som kunde svara rätt på flest frågor.

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CHURCH SAYS "NO!"

Drinking outside in Sweden is unacceptable. Drinking outside in sight of the church is even more unacceptable.

Let me explain.

It was summer and it was Allsång. I got myself a good seat in Stadsparken. It was a beautiful day. It was so hot that I yearned for a cold Carlsberg to drink whilst watching the performance. I asked an older gentleman sitting next to me if it was socially acceptable to drink alcohol in Stadsparken. He looked at me as if I was mad and said:

"No, no! If you want to drink you should go to a bar. The church sees everything!"

He then turned round and pointed fearfully at the church behind us.

I looked at the church. It was just a church. How could it 'see' us? Was a holy man with a sniper rifle sitting on the church roof, ready to shoot anybody who drank alcohol outside? I know Swedes are against alcohol-abuse, but this sounded a little extreme...

Slightly worried, I left Stadsparken to catch a bus. After that the mystery remained unsolved. Until now...

I was reading the introduction



to Vilhelm Moberg's *Utvandrarna* when I hit upon a possible solution to the conundrum:

"At a parish meeting in 1845 it was further decided than no brännvin should be sold during church services at a distance of less than 600 yards from God's house"

Could Strömstad have had a similar rule? An old religious law forbidding drinking near the church? A law that is still honoured by some of Strömstad's older residents? It sounds possible to me.

Mystery solved! Thank goodness there are no snipers on the church roof! Um, well, I hope there aren't...

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