

Fyrirlestrar

Minningarsjóðs Ásu Guðmundsdóttur Wright

The Ása G. Wright Memorial Lectures

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VIII

Kaija Santaholma

CONSERVATION OF FINLAND'S  
ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

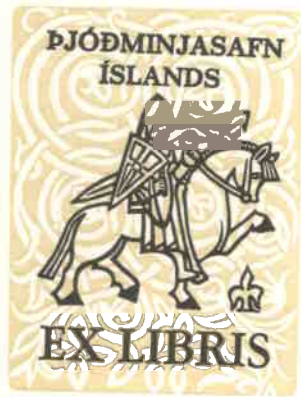


ÞJÓÐMINJASAFN ÍSLANDS

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Útgefandi

Minningarsjóður Ásu Guðmundsdóttur Wright

Þjóðminjasafn Íslands

Níundi fyrirlestur á vegum Minningarsjóðs Ásu Guðmundsdóttur Wright var fluttur í Odda, hugvísindahúsi Háskóla Íslands, 25. október 1989.

Fyrirlesturinn, sem hér birtist, flutti Kaija Santaholma arkitekt við umhverfismálaráðuneytið í Finnlandi og fjallaði hann um varðveislu byggingararfs Finna.

Kaija Santaholma hefur um langt árabil unnið að byggingaefirliti, varðveislu gamalla bygginga í Finnlandi og skipulagsmálum í því sambandi bæði í þéttbýli og á landsbyggðinni, fyrst á vegum menningarmálaráðuneytisins en síðan á vegum umhverfismálaráðuneytisins. Hún hefur einnig tekið virkan þátt í alþjóðlegu samstarfi um byggingavernd.

Tekið skal fram, að tölusetning hinna prentuðu fyrirlestra sjóðsins svara ekki til fyrirlestranna sjálfra, þar eð nokkrir fyrirlesarar hafa ekki skilað handritum af fyrirlestrum sínum til prentunar.

Á titilsíðu og bakhlið kápu bæklingins er stafurinn W, tekinn eftir upphafsstaf í ættarnafni frú Ásu og manns hennar Henry Newcome Wright, eins og stafurinn er á samovar, sem hún gaf Þjóðminjasafni Íslands.

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## BACKGROUND

### *Finland: some characteristics*

**F**INLAND, the country of 187,888 lakes, is situated between latitude 60 and 70 degrees North and has an area of 337,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The population of the country is just under 5 millions. The capital, Helsinki, has almost 500,000 inhabitants and thus 10% of the country's population lives in the capital – a very common feature in almost all western European countries. Finland has close links with the Scandinavian countries and in May 1989 became a full member of the Council of Europe.

Until 1808, when it became a Grand Duchy of Czarist Russia, Finland formed part of the kingdom of Sweden. Finland achieved its independence from Russia in 1917.

After the Second World War great changes occurred in the occupational, regional and community structure of the country. Finland faced hard times after the war when it was forced to pay war reparations to the Soviet Union. Until the war, Finland was an agricultural society. In order to pay the war reparations it was necessary to develop an efficient industrial base and to develop the forestry and metal industries. Long trains loaded with prefabricated wooden houses

and the products of the metal industry headed over the eastern border during the long years following the peace.

This changeover to industrial production helped us to resettle the about 400,000 people who had to leave their homes when the new border was drawn between Finland and the Soviet Union. The task was enormous – we had to rehouse and find work for about 12% of the population. In the process, our technical capacity increased and the country became highly industrialized. At present only about 6% of the population is employed in such primary professions as farming, forestry and fishing.

### *“The great migration”*

Between 1950 and 1970 there was a tremendous movement of people from rural areas to the towns and the larger rural centres. As farming was no longer so profitable and the towns seemed to offer more employment, the countryside lost population. The younger generation, especially young women, moved to the larger towns. Today there are many small rural villages where the age and sex structure is very problematic. The older generation would like to turn over the farm to the younger generation but there is nobody to take over; where there is a young farmer he has trouble finding a wife.

During the period of rapid urban growth the relationship of many city dwellers to their surroundings was a transient one – adjusting to the recent move or getting ready for the next one. In such a situation the absence of close ties to one’s environment is quite natural. Temporary surroundings do not arouse deep interest or feelings of attachment. These feelings of alienation inevitably diminished the qual-



Detailed land-use plan which protects the Mediaeval Old Center of Porvoo (founded 1346), a town of 30,000 inhabitants.

ity of life and resulted in loneliness and social and psychological disorders.

The continuous migration has also made it difficult for people living in residential areas to form long-lasting neighbourhood relationships. The creation of a social network is a slow process and requires at least some level of permanence from the inhabitants of an area.

There has also been considerable technical development in building methods in the last twenty years. The most significant change has been the breakthrough in industrialised building which occurred at the end of 1960s.

Towards the end of the 1970s there was a significant change in Finland’s internal migration. The changes in the occupa-



tional structure and urban growth slowed decisively and the flow into the towns came to a halt: at one point there was even a minor flow of population back to the countryside.

The slowing down of migration has also brought about changes in environmental questions. Interest in the environment and a critical attitude towards political/economic questions have grown. Decisions which would result in great changes in the built environment are now widely discussed in the press and people show greater interest in land-use planning and proposed building projects than ever before. Pressure groups are formed whenever it is felt that a project would harm the townscape.

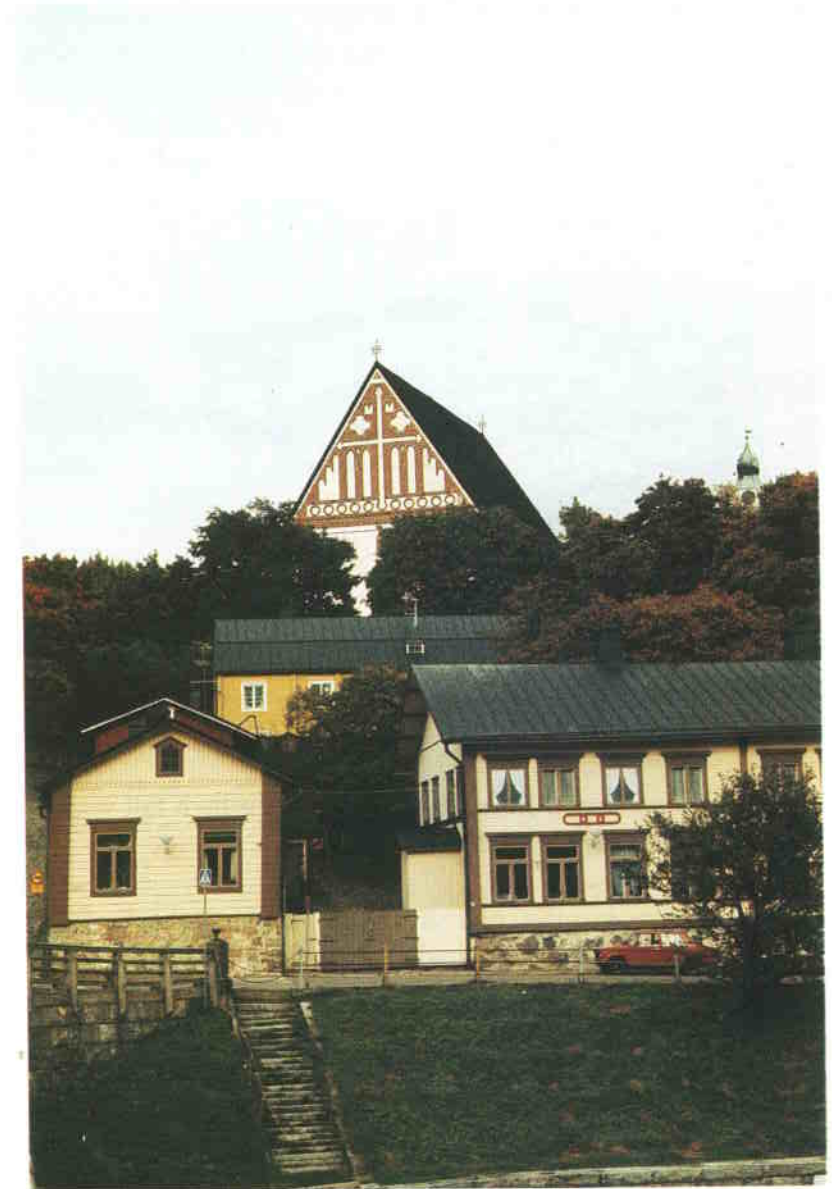
#### *Changes in urban structure*

The structure of Finnish towns began to disintegrate in the 1950s when urban growth was very rapid. The "borders" of the towns lost their distinctive character. New "satellite towns" – which in many cases were actually dormitory areas – were built just outside the old town area. Since they were solely for residential use they lacked most services, were small in size and were very much dependent on the infrastructure and services of the nearby towns.

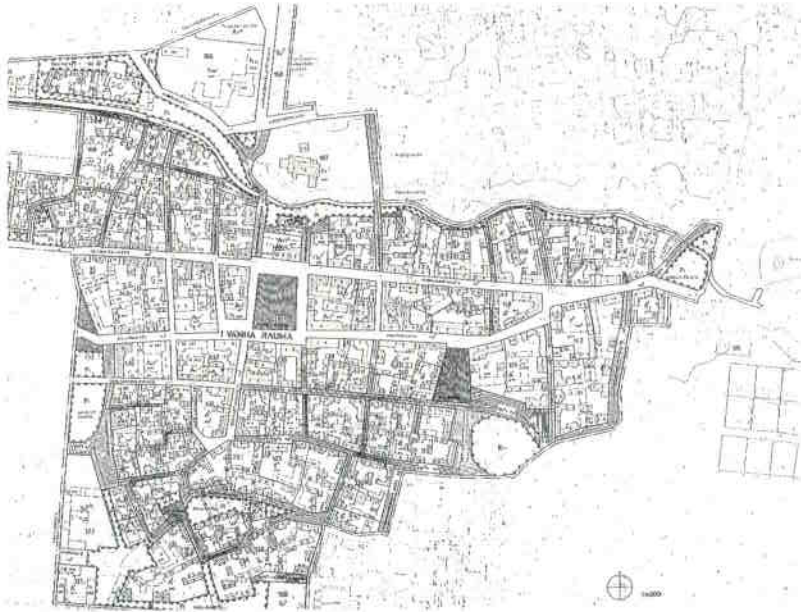
#### *Administrative structure*

The administrative structure is divided into two parts: state administration (central and provincial governments) and municipal self-government.

Finland is divided into 12 provinces and the general administrative body in each province is called the Pro-



The church and the spire of its bell tower rise above the trees and houses in Porvoo – a distinctive landmark.



The detailed land-use plan protects the Old Center of Rauma (founded in 1442). The area will be proposed by Finland to be included in the Unesco World Heritage list.

vincial Government. It deals with matters which fall within the sphere of competence of the state.

The local administrative unit is a "municipality". Currently there are 460 municipalities: 94 urban and 366 rural. Some of the smaller municipalities have less than 200 inhabitants. According to official statistics it is estimated that some 70% of the population lives in towns or cities. This is, however, a statistical illusion since many "towns" are of a distinctly rural character. The real level of urbanization is somewhere between 30 and 40% if one bases this figure on criteria other than the fact that a locality has officially been declared a "town" or city.

Municipal self-government has a central role in public administration and financing. The highest decision-making body is the Municipal Council chosen every four years in direct elections. The Council appoints the Municipal Board and the statutory committees and boards which are responsible for special fields of administration in the municipality.

## PROTECTION OF OUR ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

### *Legislation*

**S**INCE they came into force in 1985, The Town and Country Planning and Building Act (TCPBA) and the Protection of Buildings Act (PBA) are the laws which provide for the conservation and protection of our built heritage.

In principle the roles and the use of these laws are very distinct. TCPBA gives the guidelines for physical land-use plans. Conservation and protection of buildings in areas which have or will have land-use plans should, in the main, be taken care of by the land-use plan and in the regulations given in the detailed land-use plan. The PBA is used for the protection of buildings and environments which are not or will not be regulated by detailed land-use plans.

### *The use of TCPBA for conservation*

To understand the use of land-use plans for conservation one has to understand how these plans are prepared and how they become binding.

It is the duty of the municipalities to draft the land-use plan. An overall plan for the whole area of the municipality



The old Town Hall of Rauma.





The early iron industry region Fagervik. The church was built for the workers' needs.

or for a certain part of it is called a *master plan*. A *detailed land-use plan* specifies how much and in which way a site may be built on. It also gives the necessary regulations concerning the building as well as on its volume and location, its form and appearance, etc. A master plan concerns land use in a single municipality and contains the general features regarding the use of the area for different purposes. The detailed plan gives – sometimes in a very pedantic way – the regulations for building.

After the Municipal Council has accepted the plans they are sent either to the Ministry of the Environment (larger towns) or to the Provincial Government (rural municipalities and smaller towns) for ratification. The Ministry/Provincial Government can either ratify the plan or turn it down; it cannot change the plan. The acceptance of the plan



Fagervik, the owner's home.

is sometimes a major issue in the Council – especially when protection of buildings is designated in the plan. It is usual that the owners of the sites oppose protection and try to persuade their town councillors to vote against it.

The owner of the land within the plan, any person living in the municipality, registered associations, etc., have the right to appeal against the accepted plan. If the decision of the Ministry/Provincial Government is not acceptable, the matter can be taken to the High Court.

Before the actual building process can take place the builder needs to obtain a building permit from the Municipal Building Board.

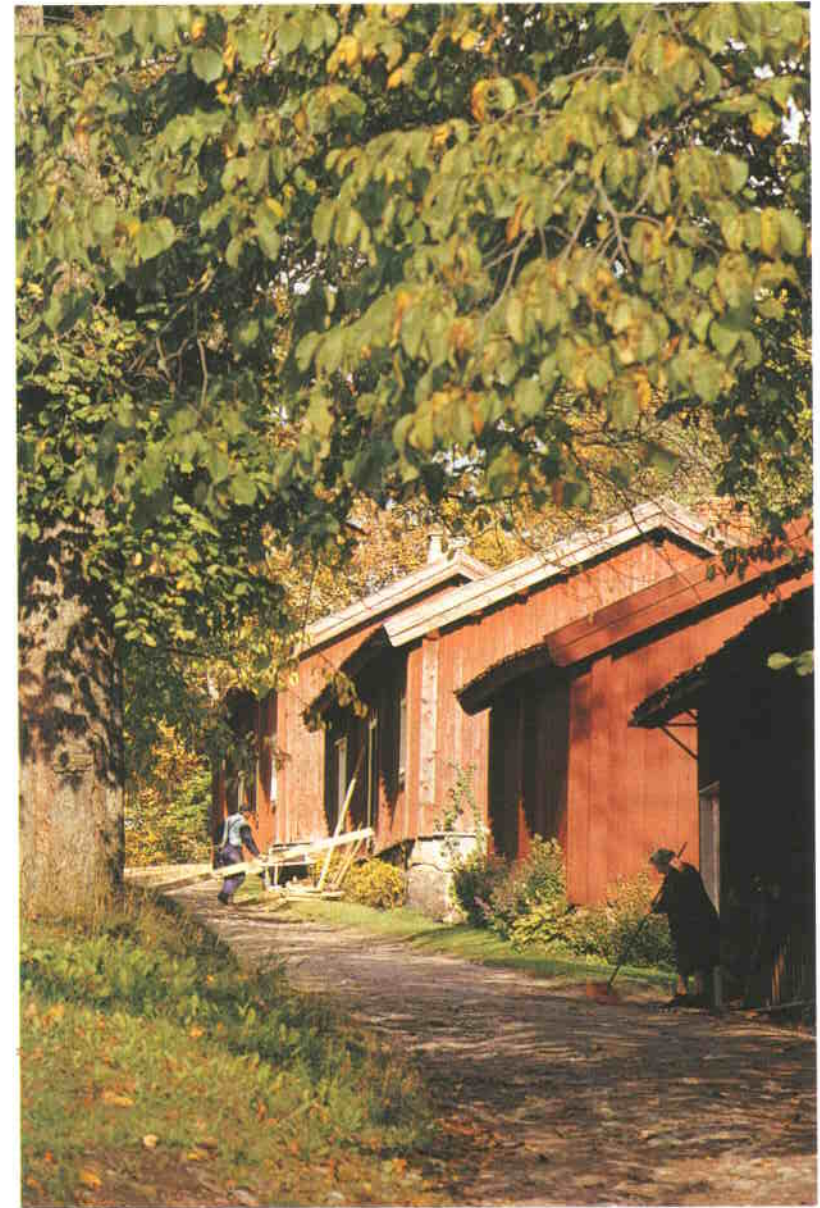
In the land-use plan regulations can be set concerning protection. The building may be protected as a whole, or

only partially (the outer appearance, the paintings or decorations on the walls inside the building, fixed interior furniture or fittings, windows, doors, etc.). In many older parts of our towns the houses have been built in a way which does not correspond to today's building code or guidelines for new construction. As we want to preserve these old, often very charming areas, the plan should make provision for possible repairs of the old buildings without the need to seek exemption from the plan. In the detailed land-use plan this is shown in the regulations, which state to what extent modern regulations need not be followed. Usually the regulations are written in the following form: "When the buildings in this area are being repaired, regulations defining the height of the building, playground areas, number of parking places, location of the building, free space in front of the main window in a room... need not be followed".

When a plan is drafted in the way described above, the owner of the site is not tempted to demolish the old building and build a new one since following the modern regulations and building codes would make new construction less profitable than preservation of the old building.

The regulations may also prohibit the owner from demolishing the building. There are different views on this but, fortunately, one case has already gone to the High Court and the regulation prohibiting demolition "without good reason" was found to be legal. In this particular case it was also accepted that the owner's poor economic situation could not be considered a "good reason".

The TCPBA was revised in 1985 when changes were made in the PBA. According to the TCPBA it is now poss-



The workers' houses. The Fagervik area is protected and the workers' houses receive grants from the Ministry of the Environment.



ible to accept “unreasonable” regulations for the purpose of protecting a building. In such cases the municipality is liable to pay full compensation to the owner. The municipality is allowed state aid for paying the compensation. This paragraph was adopted after a long debate in the Parliament. Strangely enough, no town has yet had the courage to use an “unreasonable” regulation in its land-use plan.

#### *The use of Protection of Buildings Act for conservation*

According to the roles of the TCPBA and PBA the latter is supposed to be used primarily in the areas outside the detailed land-use plan. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to use the PBA even in areas which fall within the detailed land-use plan. This happens, for example, when the Municipal Board does not want to draft a detailed plan which would include the protection of a certain building. In such a case the motion may have been proposed by a registered association, the Regional Planning Association, or the National Board of Antiquities. The motion is sent to the Provincial Government which must take a decision on the matter within two years. To avoid possible “Saturday night demolitions” the Provincial Government may grant a temporary restraining order against demolition. If it looks probable that the building might be threatened with demolition, then the Provincial Government *is obliged* to grant a temporary restraining order.

Using the PBA we can protect even non-fixed furnishings, and give regulations regarding future repairs of the rooms of the house. Lutheran ecclesiastical buildings cannot be protected by the PBA although it can be used to protect the ecclesiastical buildings of other denominations. This illegality can (partly) be explained by the fact that the



A typical village in the western plains area in central Finland.

Lutheran church is the State Church. If Lutheran ecclesiastical buildings are in need of protection then we have to use the TCPBA.

The buildings owned by the state are protected by a special Act and at the moment the number of entries on this list is about 150. It grows as the inventories are compiled for provinces outside the southernmost part of the country.

Currently (September 1989) there are 79 buildings or groups of buildings protected by the PBA. The number of buildings protected by land-use planning is not known but it is thought to be around 10,000. Every year approximately 1,000 buildings will be protected by land-use plans.

The heritage protection inventories are prepared by the Ministry of the Environment, the National Board of Antiquities, regional planning authorities and at the local level.

## FUNDING CONSERVATION

THE listed buildings or those which could/should be listed and protected and which are of special architectural or historic importance can be granted state aid. These grants are available from various sources. The total sum used for this purpose is not easy to give as the governmental bodies giving financial assistance have different criteria for granting the aid.

The National Board of Housing is the most important funding authority as it gives grants and loans for normal repairs and improvements of the housing stock. For houses deemed worthy of protection in the detailed land-use plan, the low-cost loans may add up to as much as 80% of the cost of the repairs. The total sum disbursed during the past few years has been approximately FIM 40m and some 4000–6000 dwellings have been repaired annually – all of these not being of special architectural or historical interest, of course.

The Ministry of Education and the National Board of Antiquities give aid for the repair and conservation of monuments and listed buildings. Among buildings to which even political opinion is ready to give great sums are the workers' and youth associations' meeting halls. (The political centre and left-wing youth organisations have

been active in building meeting halls since the end of the 19th century.) For 1990 a total of FIM 16m has been proposed for this purpose. The National Board of Antiquities has FIM 5.1m for repair, restoration and conservation work and FIM 4.9m for repairs of castles and fortresses. In addition, the National Board of Antiquities has proposed that the sum of FIM 9.6m should be specially earmarked for Finland's most important fortress island, Suomenlinna, and the small sum of FIM 0.3m for compensation when an owner may not – because of the protected status of his building – use it in a reasonably profitable way.

The Ministry of the Environment was established six years ago. Within our annual budget we have a small appropriation for the conservation and protection of and necessary repairs of both listed and non-listed buildings which are of importance either locally, regionally or nationally. The sum has been growing steadily and the amount proposed for 1990 is FIM 11.7m. The sum of FIM 0.8m is to be allocated for research and development in conservation, protection and repair.

New ways for funding the conservation of our built heritage are constantly being developed. Unfortunately conservation does not seem to be of great interest to politicians or arouse their enthusiasm. On the contrary, one could say that local politicians are more interested in new construction in order "to entice international enterprises and persuade them that Finland is a good country to locate in". These ideas lead to the shortsighted acceptance of new, glittering steel and glass shopping malls and high-rise office buildings.

## FUTURE CHANGES IN ADMINISTRATION AND TCPBA

**N**EXT spring will bring about a marked change in the planning and ratification of planning. The Government has a bill before Parliament on a new system which would loosen the present powers of the central and provincial governments over the municipalities.

According to the proposed changes in the TCPBA, the municipalities would no longer be required to send their detailed land-use plans to the state authorities for ratification, *provided* they have in a ratified master plan designated these as areas to be accepted and ratified by the Municipal Council only.

Pressure groups and many architects and planners are rather worried about this proposal. The main reason for their objections is the suspicion that, when the plan is being drafted, protection of buildings will not be taken into consideration to the same extent as previously. There are a number of examples to support their fears. We are presently in a situation where old, centrally located industrial buildings have fallen into disuse. The companies which own them want to make as big a profit as possible from their ground and negotiate with the town authorities on the future use of their sites. The proposals that have come to light show the desired building density to be very high indeed. The com-



Farmers' houses more than 100 years old receive grants from the Ministry of the Environment.

pany has usually had meetings with banks, building contractors, insurance companies, etc., before the plans are made public.

Unfortunately, the protection of buildings does not seem to rate very high with real estate speculators. Usually plot density is sky-high in the beginning and quite unrealistic and they certainly get more than a fair profit even by lowering plot density nearer to realistic figures.

The situation in many industrial towns in Finland is now exactly as described above. Not only our industrial heritage is in danger at present – even if it seems to be in the forefront of the battle. The problems caused by the proposed changes in the TCPBA are growing, due to the fact that in most of our rural municipalities and smaller towns there are





Casino of a small southcoast town Hanko (founded 1874). The repairs of the building were financed by grants from the Ministry of the Environment.

not enough qualified people to take care of land-use planning. The proposed legislative changes make no mention of the number and competence of planning personnel as a prerequisite for delegation of planning ratification. It remains to be seen if the fears are justified.

## CONSERVATION IN FINLAND IN THE FUTURE

IF OUR built heritage is not demolished and the battle against "modernization" of buildings and built-up areas is not lost, and if our heritage can hold the line over the next ten years, then I believe our heritage will win. As the second economic boom slows down, values which cannot be calculated in monetary terms will be respected. The value of history built in three dimensions around us, the harmony of a townscape which grew slowly, the sense of place and pride in the achievements of earlier generations cannot be shown on a balance sheet, but it can be shown in people's appreciation of beautiful places.

The ordinary people and their children are the ones I put my faith in. The local politicians who want to feel successful and up-to-date, and who do this by openly showing their contempt for our humble wooden towns or the low-rise profiles of our towns, are not civilized enough to understand the values of our heritage.

The pressure groups which fight for a cleaner environment have also shown a strong interest in protection of our heritage. These groups have been able to state their case on many occasions in the mass media. The schools are now



The Hanko harbour storage buildings will be repaired with a grant from the Ministry of the Environment.

bringing the built and natural environment into the classroom and schoolchildren are showing a growing interest in environmental questions.

I strongly believe that with the help of the younger generation and pressure groups our heritage will survive.

*Minningarsjóður Ásu Guðmundsdóttur Wright var stofnaður árið 1968. Hann er í vörzlu Þjóðminjasafns Íslands og skal standa straum af heimsóknum erlendra fræðimanna, er boðnir eru samkvæmt settum reglum til að flytja fræðilega fyrirlestra á vegum Þjóðminjasafnsins. Sjóðinn gaf frú Ása til minningar um eftirtalda ættingja og vandamenn sína:*

*Foreldra hennar Arndísi Jónsdóttur háyfirdómara Péturssonar (1857–1936) og Guðmund Guðmundsson lækni (1853–1946).*

*Mann hennar Henry Newcome Wright, LL.D., F.R.G.S., F.L.S., F.R.A.S. (1884–1955).*

*Systkini hennar Sturlu Guðmundsson (1883–1910), Sigprúði Guðmundsdóttur (1884–1905), og Þóru Guðmundsdóttur Hermannsson (1888–1918).*

*Móðursystur hennar Þóru Jónsdóttur (1858–1947) og Jón Magnússon forsætisráðherra (1859–1926).*

*Móðurbræður hennar Friðrik Jónsson, cand theol. (1860–1938) og Sturlu Jónsson kaupmann (1861–1947).*

*Stjórn sjóðsins skipa: Þór Magnússon þjóðminjavörður, dr. Sturla Friðriksson og dr. Jónas Kristjánsson.*

Þjóðminjasafn Íslands



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