

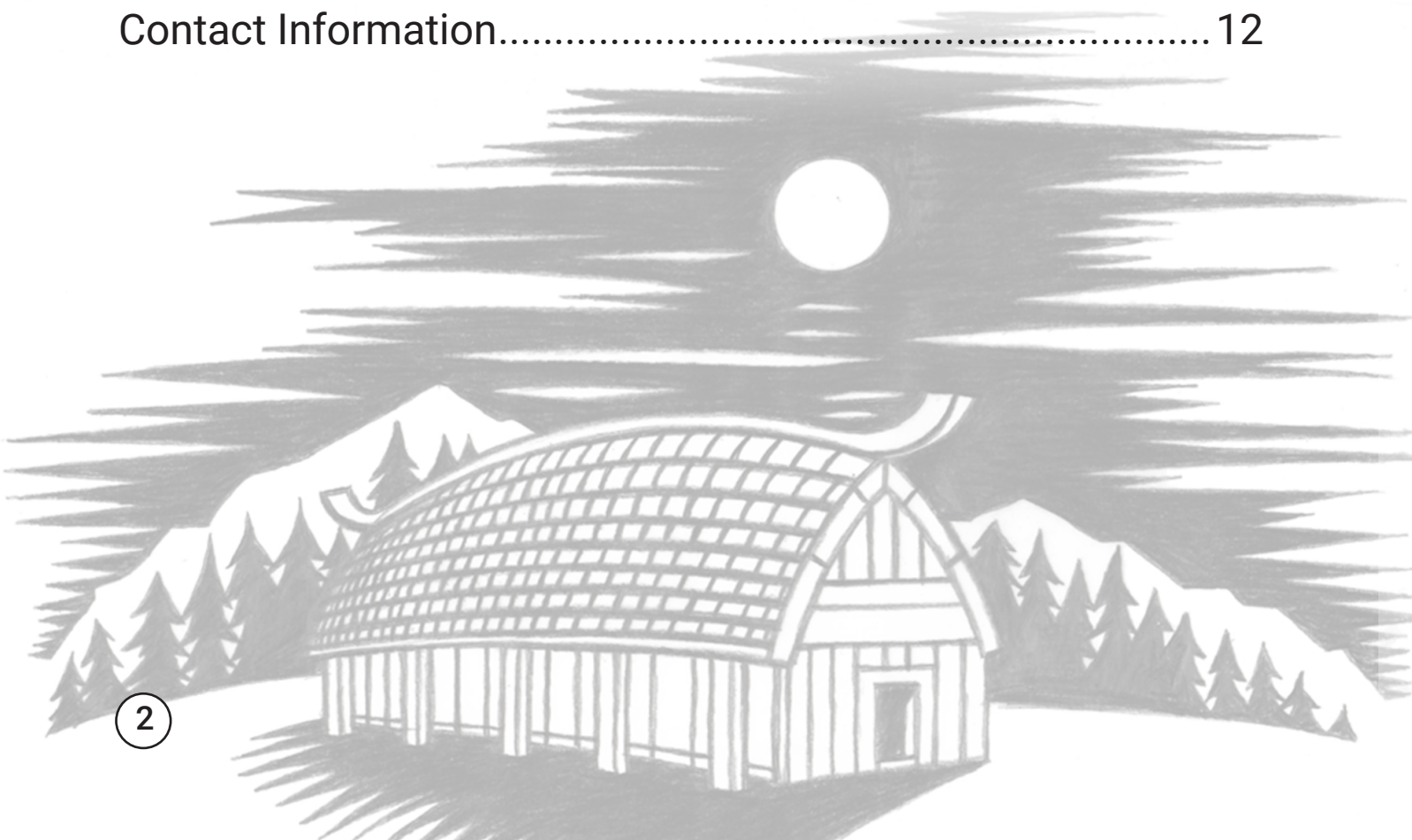
# BONES AND KEEPERS

DENA  
BAIN  
TAYLOR



# Table of Contents

About <i>Bones and Keeps</i> .....	3
Synopsis.....	3
Book Cover.....	4
“Finding Beowulf: A Scandinavian Adventure” .....	5
Author Biography .....	7
Author Photo .....	8
Press Release.....	9
Excerpt from <i>Bones and Keeps</i> .....	10
Important Information for Booksellers & Media .....	12
Contact Information.....	12



# About Bones and Keeps

## Synopsis

The year is 542 and the great king Beowulf is midway in life between slaying the monster Grendel and his fatal battle with a dragon. He rules his kingdom on the west coast of Sweden wisely and gives rich gifts to his thanes, defends his keep and fills it with treasure. But then his sister Skuld, the most powerful witch-queen of the Gautar people, pronounces his doom, just as a foreign woman arrives from the far south, escaping an Alexandria gripped in the plague that is destroying the Byzantine Empire. Suddenly Beowulf is propelled into a battle for his life and kingdom, and into the wars of the gods where acts of love and betrayal shape the destiny of the worlds.

Meticulously researched, the historical fantasy of Bones and Keeps immerses the reader in a time when gods and monsters walk the living world, when survival depends on the strength of a king's arm, and the inscrutable forces of weird threaten the fall of gods and humanity alike.



# Book Cover



# Finding Beowulf: A Scandinavian Adventure



Here's my advice, and it's free: Never agree to a major writing project while drinking Seabreezes in a bar with a crowd of Australians. That's what I did and it consumed three years of my life.

It was Halloween 2007 and I was at the annual World Fantasy Convention. The day before, my UK literary agent had delivered the bad news that he was unable to find a publisher for a fantasy novel I'd written. Clearly unhappy at having to dash my hopes, he hunted me down at the bar to make a suggestion – because my novel takes place in a clearly Nordic setting, and I'd told him once how much I love the Beowulf story, why not rewrite the manuscript and make it into a historical fantasy novel about Beowulf?

Here's where the Seabreezes came in. Thinking through a haze of vodka and grapefruit juice, I not so wisely concluded that this was a matter of a few weeks of revision to an already brilliant manuscript. I was wrong on both counts. Three years later, the final product bore little resemblance to the novel the UK publishers had turned down and the research process had proved grueling.

But I have a PhD in English literature. Not only was I trained in rigorous research methodology, by nature I also love delving into arcane corners of history and language. So I jumped right into the deep end of Beowulf scholarship and Iron Age history.

My first and biggest breakthrough into understanding Beowulf and his 6th century world came when I discovered *Landscape of Desire: Partial Stories of the Medieval Scandinavian World* by Gillian R. Overing and Marijane Osborn. These two scholars of mediaeval literature recount the two "Beowulf" journeys they took. They undertook the first one by sea in 1985 to "reinvent" Beowulf's voyage to slay the monster Grendel at Heorot, in aid of the Scylding king Hrothgar. Most scholars place the hall of Heorot at Gammel Lejre, the ancient seat of the Scylding kings about six miles from the cathedral town of Roskilde in Denmark. Once they knew

where they were sailing to, Overing and Osborn had to calculate where Beowulf would have started from. Based on information from maps, research sources, and experienced local sailors, they became convinced that Beowulf's home had to be located in Sweden in what is now Bohuslän, the coastal area extending north of modern Göteborg to near Oslo Fjord. Specifically, they settled on the modern resort town of Fjällbacka near an important treasureburial site at Hög Edsten ("High Oathstone"). Using the navigational tips contained within the 10th century Beowulf poem and other period sources, they completed the journey in the same two-day timeframe specified within the poem.

The second journey, in 1988, saw Overing and her colleague Randolph Swearer explore the area around Gammel Lejre. They visited the nearby museum and open-air reconstruction of an Iron Age village at Herthadale, with its sacrificial bog. At Gammel Lejre they found physical evidence of a great hall like that of the Scylding king Hrothgar, though built some centuries later. They then drove to Sweden and up to the Bohuslän region. There they visited Hög Edsten and spent several days exploring and photographing the major Iron Age monuments of the area, including the nearest domarring marked on the map, a ring of twenty-two stones in which judgments or "dooms"[domar] were decreed.

It was because of Overing and Osborn that Beowulf and his people started to come to life for me. When I read their description of a gold and garnet-adorned Frankish sword found at Hög Edsten that dated to between 500 and 550 A.D., I realized this could have been a treasure brought home by Beowulf from a documented raid in which Beowulf slew the Frankish warrior Dayraven.

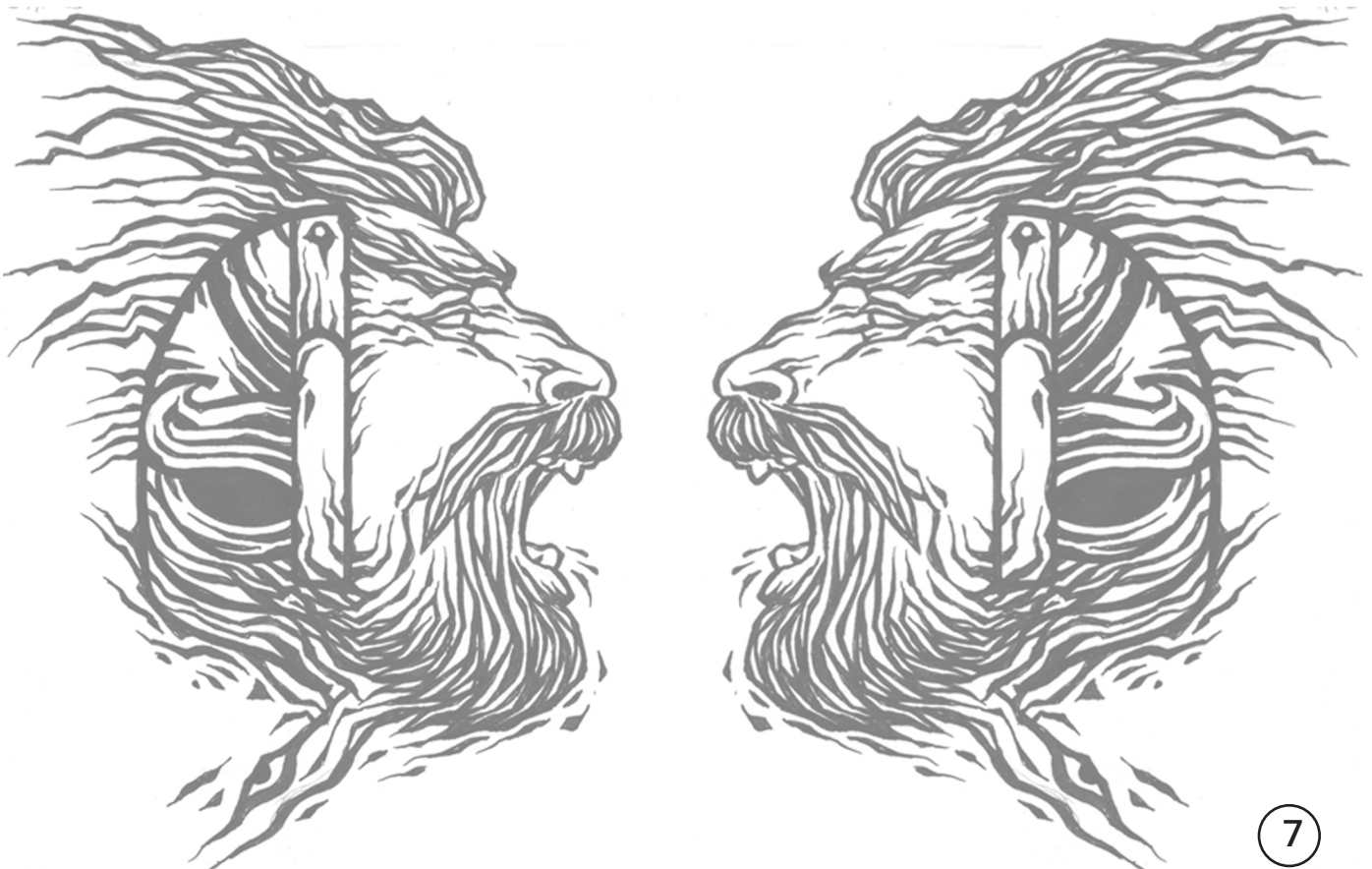
I realized I was going to have to take one for the team and go visit these sites myself to track the important events in Beowulf's life that I was writing about. I'm joking about taking one for the team, of course. Sweden and Denmark are beautiful countries and I had long wanted to visit the area. As I continued researching and building my itinerary, I thought about who I would like to share this adventure with. I approached my friend and University of Toronto colleague Dr. Margaret Procter who enthusiastically agreed to join me. On July 21, 2009, we boarded a Finnair flight to Göteborg and set off on a two-week trip to track Beowulf down the west coast of Sweden to Denmark and then back across Sweden, stopping to find the Battle on the Ice at Lake Vanern, and ending with Vendel, Uppsala and Stockholm. It was a journey that took us 1500 years back in time to an age of heroes, monsters and treasures galore, and it transformed us both.

# Author Biography

Dena Bain Taylor has spent most of her life in Toronto, Canada, pursuing her joint passions: music and books. She is a classically-trained singer. She is also a writer, critic, tv script advisor, literary award juror, and erstwhile owner of Ben Abraham Books (specializing in the occult). Along the way, she has had a long career at the University of Toronto – first as a Professor of English Literature, then as the Director of the prestigious Health Sciences Writing Centre.

She has published extensively, and eclectically: an English dictionary for Chinese students; a couple of textbooks on writing in the Health Sciences; numerous articles and talks on William Blake, sf/f and the occult; and sf/f short stories. And, due out in 2020: *100 Years at the Beach: A History of the Beach Hebrew Institute, 1919-2019* (ECW Press).

Dena holds an ARCT in Voice Performance, as well as an MA and PhD in English Literature from the University of Toronto. And somehow, through all of this, she has managed to raise two amazing children. She now lives with her husband in a small palace in the sky overlooking Lake Ontario.



# Author Photo





# Press Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Summary: University of Toronto Professor & Literary Awardist Breathes New Life into the Classic Beowulf Epic

(TORONTO, ON) August 2020: On October 31st – the pagan holiday known, in Sweden, as “Alla Helgons Dag” – Dena Bain Taylor will release her new novel on the great iron age king, Beowulf. With its insuperable blend of carnality and spirituality, Dr. Taylor’s poetic reimagining asks us to endure a vision of the world full of dark magic, prophesies, and mindless violence – a true viking tale!

Dr. Taylor has been one of Canada’s leading cultural and literary historians since receiving her PhD from the University of Toronto in 1983. She has published extensively on speculative and historical fiction, and weaves this knowledge into the world she builds. Any page of her work reveals her originality, a passionate voice given equally to ugliness and lyricism.

“*Bones and Keeps* is an important contribution to the Canadian literary canon,” says Prism Publisher’s executive director, Michael Braund. “Its Faulknerian language invents a world hinged between the real and surreal, jolting us out of complacency. We need that now more than ever.”

*Bones and Keeps* will be available for purchase in paperback on October 31st, 2020 via Prism Publishers.

For more information on this title, please visit <http://www.denabaintaylor.com>

Contact Information:  
Michael Braund  
Executive Director, Prism Publishers

[michael@prismpublishers.com](mailto:michael@prismpublishers.com) (647-207-2242)



# Excerpt from Bones and Keeps



Beowulf was lost in the beauty of the new day. He was remembering a description of a morning just like this one in the Tale of Bright Jarl the Wanderer. The world was very young and Bright Jarl met his brother Lohga for the very first time. Lohga who was not yet the One-Eyed, bound at the Gates of Time.

Bright Jarl was out hunting with his friend Arr, the great king who fought the Old Alfar. This Arr was later betrayed by a woman, but his hounds could hunt in the otherworld as easily as in the world of men. Bright Jarl's hounds chased a stag into a grove of oak trees and the god followed them, separated from Arr. When he emerged into a clearing, Lohga was there, a hooded man sitting a fire-breathing white stallion, and they soon discovered that they were brothers.

They swore loyalty to each other and exchanged gold, and then they hunted together. Lohga was the most eager hunter Bright Jarl had ever ridden with. For three days they hunted, but Bright Jarl made Lohga stop each day at sunset because, he said, if they kept on they would kill every living thing in the world of men. Lohga had quickly come to love his new-found brother and so — though it pained him — he reined in his magnificent horse each day at sunset and the two brothers rode back to the camp of Arr to feast the night away.

At the third sunset, when Bright Jarl called an end to the hunt, Lohga could stand it no longer. He said:

"I'll stop the hunt, brother, but before I do, wager with me. There's a vixen coming out of her den on the other side of the forest. There — do you see the gleam of her eye? Shoot an arrow into her eye and our hunt ends here and now. Miss, and I return to the hunt tomorrow at dawn and hunt as long as I wish."

Bright Jarl raised his bow and laughed, for to hit the eye of a fox on the other side of the forest was easy for the greatest hunter among the gods. But before he could shoot, he realized with a heavy heart that his new-found brother, whom he loved and trusted, was trying to trick him. He saw that this was no ordinary vixen — she was the first fox, mother of every fox in all the forests of the living world. Killing her meant killing the spirit of the race, and soon there would be no foxes anywhere. Yet not killing her meant giving Lohga a free hand to kill everything else. Sadly, Bright Jarl understood something: his brother's love for him was genuine and he truly wanted to keep faith with him, but it just wasn't in his nature.

So Bright Jarl thought quickly and turned to Lohga: "That's a good wager for me, though not for you. No, let's stand down from our horses and you send your stallion ahead to flush out the fox. Then she'll run, and it will be harder for me to shoot her."

Lohga readily agreed, thinking Bright Jarl couldn't make the shot. He dismounted and spoke to his horse, who set out after the vixen. She flashed away through the forest with the white stallion in hot pursuit. Bright Jarl raised his yew bow and fired his arrow right through the eye of the stallion. Regretfully, he turned to his brother.

"Ah! How sadly our wager has turned out. You've won – I couldn't hit the vixen. But how will you hunt without your magnificent horse?"

When Lohga realized Bright Jarl had outsmarted him, he turned himself into a raven and flew away, and the gold armband Bright Jarl had given him dropped heavily to the ground. From that day forward, there was little love between the two brothers – on Lohga's side because he'd been tricked out of the blood he thirsted for, and on Bright Jarl's because Lohga had sworn loyalty with him and then used him deceitfully.

Love and betrayal. It was the first such story in the Tale of Bright Jarl the Wanderer, and it was far from the last.



Winter slammed down like Thor's hammer.

So too did the realities of raising a fighting force and supplies in a season when keep and steding alike were hunkering down, arms wrapped round their food and fuel, praying what they had would last till spring. A king well-known to be pursued by weird would have some tough bargaining to do as he journeyed up the river-road to the shores of the Vanern Sea.

And so it had proved. Olaric was the third hillfort chieftain who put off Beowulf's call to arms by calling a Thing. He was a timid man for a chieftain, this Olaric. His thanes made the usual show of brandishing their spears but he himself stood like a lump of salt. He was a farming king, not a warrior, and his orderly lands showed it, looking prosperous even in these hard times since the summer of no sun. So how did he keep his lands? Everyone knows the weasel prefers taking over the fat rabbit's burrow to building his own. One glance at Olaric's queen, Hrothudag, answered the question. Her name – wrathful day – showed perfect prescience on her parents' part. While she didn't exactly arm herself like a man, everything on her person – jewellery, brooches, keys, purses, belts – seemed designed to stab or bludgeon. The only round things about her were the neck muscles bulging over the top of her robe.

"I'll have to call a Thing," Olaric said.

"We'll have to see the blood lots," Hrothudag added with relish.



# Important Information for Booksellers & Media

Primary Genre: Fantasy

Secondary Genre: Historical Fiction

Publication Date: October 31, 2020

Publisher: Prism Publishers

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-77317-014-5

Edition(s): Paperback, E-Book

Price: \$29.95 CAD

## Contact Information

Dena Bain Taylor, PhD may be reached via [denabaintaylor.com](http://denabaintaylor.com)

Please contact Michael Braund at [michael@prismpublishers.com](mailto:michael@prismpublishers.com) to inquire about interviews, appearances, signings, and other events.

