

# English Introduction to the «Bygdebok for Lesja» Gards- og slektshistoria (farm and genealogical history of Lesja)

(written 1987 by *Arnfinn Kjelland* for Vol. 1, slightly updated 2023)

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## General

The «Gards- og slektshistoria for Lesja» consists of 3 volumes. Volume 1 covers the western part of the municipality, Lesjaskogen (published 1987, ISBN 82-991096-0-4). In relation to the church Lesjaskogen is a section of the parish, while the rest of the municipality, Volumes 2 and 3, constitutes the main parish.

In a historic perspective this is a relevant division. Lesjaskog (before 1855 named Lesjaverk) parish has been a separate administrative unit within the parish – at least from the time the ironworks started in the 1660s. Perhaps there was a part of the parish here during the Middle Ages. Volumes 2 and 3 covers Lesja main parish.

In the books you will find a brief overview of the «grender» – groups of farms – we believe the municipality has been divided into. After the introduction to each «grend» you will find the main contents of these books, the history of the farms in this «grend». This history contains both a physical and historical description of the farm itself and a survey of the people who lived there. This is generally referred to, somewhat imprecisely, as genealogical history. All farms, cottager's farms and recent residences in the municipality are described here. The time period from around 1600 up to 1986 is covered. The books are illustrated with maps, drawings and pictures. On the last pages of this booklet there is also a list of important words, idioms and expressions.

## **The term «grender»**

A «grend» is originally a larger community than a farm. In these books they are mainly the same as the school districts established early in the 20th century. Voting districts and national statistics were still split up into these districts when the first volume was published.

In earlier days, this term («grend») was equivalent to «beiarlag» - a group of farms from which people were invited to the important events in a farm family's life – baptisms, marriages and funerals. It is believed that these «beiarlag» reflect the oldest undivided farmland of an area – «urgarden» – the prehistoric farm. The system of «beiarlag» wore off more or less before World War II in Lesja. The available knowledge of the system is described in the books.

## **The contents of the introduction to the «grender»**

In these chapters you will find a physical description of the «grend» – its borders and surroundings. Features particular to this «grend» are described and explained. The development of the settlement is described: which is the oldest farm (1500 years or older at Lesjaskogen, in fact), how a number of «namnegardar» (named farms, see below) have appeared, and briefly how these named farms have been divided into «bruk» (holdings) and cottager's farms.

The number of homes in the «grend» is shown graphically. The curve is divided into the total number of holdings and cottager's farms up to around 1910–20. Then the cottager's farms vanished (a lot of them became ordinary holdings and today these might be among the largest in the area), and new residences grew up.

In Vol. 1 you will find the development for the whole of Lesjaskogen in the graph on page 11, and for Einbugrenda on page 166. In a table for each «grend» you will find the population of all named farms, holdings and cottager's farms. The figures are taken from the censuses from 1801 up to 1900. Numbers from the censuses after 1900 cannot be published for each farm separately, and are therefore aggregated up to «grend» level and shown in a small table.

The last part of these introductions contains a brief discussion of the development of economic life in each «grend». In the main introduction in Vol. 1, page 18, you will find a table concerning the agricultural self-supporting ability in all «grender». That table gives the total number of people in the «grend», and the number of people supported by the farm production, at different times (see also below).

You will also find a graph showing the distribution of the gainfully employed population in the «grend» among:

- «Primærnæringar» - primary industry: agriculture, forestry, hunting and inland fishing.
- «Sekundærnæringar» - secondary industry: manufacturing, electricity supply, construction etc.
- «Tertiærnæringar» - tertiary industry: trade, transportation, service etc.

The graph covering Lesjaskogen is shown on page 19. The last tables of the «grende»-introductions show agricultural statistics from 1939 until 1980. The first one shows holdings over 5 decares (1 decare is about a quarter of an acre), and holdings over 5 decares with cows (milk yield). The second shows the agricultural area in the «grend», according to use for grain, potatoes, meadows for mowing, «grønfor og silo» – green forage and ensilage – and uncultivated grassland. The third shows the production of ensilage by cubic meter (m<sup>3</sup>) – 1.31 cubic yards. The last one shows the number of livestock in the «grend»: horses, cows, other cattle, sheep/goats and pigs.

## **The «namnegard»-concept – the key to the main part of these books**

After each «grende»-introduction, you will find the «namnegardar» in the «grend» reviewed. A «namnegard» is defined as a farm with one individual, distinct name which is used in the documents. Each such named farm is normally divided into several holdings. The land area of the «namnegard» is clearly defined. All holdings, cottager's farms and recent residences that exist, or have ever existed, within that area are described in the «namnegard» chapter.

All people who have lived within that area for a period are mentioned under the holding, cottager's farm or other residency where they lived. Each of the holdings etc. has been given a number, and these numbers are essential for using the cross-reference system to identify the people (e.g., if you want to trace your ancestors).

In the main index, which begins on page 630 I Volume 1, the «grender» are given in bold print and the «namnegarder» in italics. The number before each holding etc. is the number that is used in the cross-references.

## **Factors discussed in the named farm history section**

The named farm («namnegard») histories follow a rather strict pattern. Below the heading you can see some numbers, from old and new land registers. The «skyld» – land taxation – is also given.

At the beginning of the main text you will find (as in the «grender») a physical description of the named farm. Then the oldest history is explained, the landowners before the peasant farmers themselves bought the holdings during the eighteenth century, the linguistic meaning of the name of the farm, archeological findings, the use of summer-farms (setrar) etc.

In this part you will also find tables concerning the agricultural production on each holding and cottager's farm in the named farm («namnegard») area, and for some named farms a graph showing how the named farm has been divided into holdings throughout the centuries. This division is also discussed in the text.

Then you will find the existing holdings described. Here there is a brief introduction, repeating how the holding was established, older sites of the houses, present day cultivated land etc. The main part of the holding's history consists of a description of the production and the living conditions on the holding throughout its history. The description is based on the data given in the tables and an analysis of the estate registrations if existent.

## **The estate registrations**

The main use of the estate registrations is of course to establish genealogical relationships. In an estate registration all living heirs are listed, and the estate they could divide. The registration of the estate is usually very accurate.

We have used these registrations in one particular, unusual way. In the period from the 1660s until around 1840 the net estate a person left (e.g., 50 riksdaler) has been recalculated into the equivalent value of Norwegian kroner (NOK) in 1980. This has been done to give the reader a certain perspective of the living conditions on the farm at the time of the registration.

The index for recalculation has been the price of a heifer. In 1980 a heifer cost around NOK 10,000. In 1659 the average price was 2.2 riksdaler, in 1685 it was down to 1.79 riksdaler, in 1767 it was 3.26 riksdaler and in 1810 (during the Napoleonic wars) it was 11.48 (!) daler. The index is given as a graph on page 17 I Volume 1.

## The production tables

The detailed tables under each named farm come in two parts which both contain existing information for each holding and cottager's farm. They are listed in the table in the same order as in the books. The first two columns of both tables give information about the source and the year for the information.

The first table («INNMARKSPRODUKSJON, ...») gives specific information about the crop seed and yield of each holding, in the three first double columns (see below for translation of expressions). All figures in this part of the table are given in kilogram. Then you will find a column below the heading «MAT». This number states the net yield recalculated into kilocalories (by million kcal). The column under «ÅKERAREAL» gives the area in decares used for crop cultivation. Under «FORAVLING» you will find the actual hay yield given in the source, first in kilogram, then recalculated into feed units.

The second table («HUSDYRHALDET, ...») gives data regarding the use of livestock on the holdings, and aggregated data for the whole production. After source and year you will see the actual number of livestock on the holding. Under «KYRLAG» these numbers are recalculated into one number as follows: 1 kyrslag = 0.5 horse = 1 cow = 2 other cattle or pigs = 6 sheep or goats. Because of this you should be able to compare the livestock on each farm. The next column, «Forbehov», states the need for fodder this actual livestock has. Both growth, reproduction and production are taken into consideration. This figure can be compared with the given hay yield in some of the sources. The rest of the need was probably covered by straw from grain cultivation, and to a considerable extent by reindeer moss collected in the mountains. The column «Husdyrprod.» gives the production of milk and meat from the livestock, available for people to eat, recalculated into kilocalories. The next column then gives the total amount of kcal available. This number has been divided by 365 days a year and 2000 kcal a day (average minimum for a normal population). Thus we find how many people could live from the total production on the holding.

In the «grende» introductions (see above) these numbers are aggregated. There is one table per named farm («namnegard»). Under each holding you will find cross-references to the page number for the table.

## Maps and other illustrations

You will find detailed maps covering almost all cultivated land in Lesja municipality. The maps might cover more than one named farm («namnegard»). If we know the location of cottager's farm which vanished long ago, it will be on a map.

In the text you will find cross-references to the maps. You will also, under some of the named farms, find old maps covering parts of the farm area. The oldest ones are from the 1860s.

In former days, most of the cultivated farmland in Norway was divided into parcels. Each holding, when it was separated from the original named farm or holding, received a part of each piece of cropland and meadow. Throughout the centuries the parcel system could be very complex, especially in Western Norway.

In Lesja we also find these features on most farms. From the 1860's the need for rearrangement became urgent, as new machinery became available. Then these old «land rearrangement maps» were drawn up.

As mentioned above you will find graphs showing the division of some of the large named farms into holdings. In these graphs the names of the holdings are given, with the corresponding percentage of the total land rent of the named farm. Under almost all farms and

holdings you will find some (usually rather old) pictures, of the farm and/or the people. You might also find pictures of archeological finds, if there have been any on the named farm area concerned.

All named farms («namnegardar») have a drawing in connection with the major heading. The drawing shows the farm and its nearby surroundings in the mid 1980s.

### **The «genealogical» part of the farm history – the cross-reference system**

If your primary interest is tracing your ancestors, this is the key part. It contains basic information about all the people we have been able to trace as inhabitants of each holding, through many years of intensive research.

You will see that this part of the holdings' history is divided into small sections, with a heading printed in boldface type. The named farm we are looking at might be Kvam (Volume 1 pp 206–240). The heading might appear as follows: **4-5. Ca. 1850 - 1869.** (this is from Oppistugu Kvam, page 220).

The first two figures are essential for the crossreference system. The first one (4) refers to the holding number, and the second one (5) refers to the family number under the holding. If you are in doubt about which named farm («namnegard») you are working with, look at the top of the page.

This «family heading» – Kvam (4-5) – refers exclusively to the family of Eli and Henrik. The next figures refer to the period of time when Eli and Henrik used the holding.

Then let us have a look at the family information. First, the name of the woman or man who took over the farm from her/his parents, or bought it, is given in italics. Here, Henrik's name appears without any. This means that he comes from the preceding family in the list. His years of birth and death (1817 and 1903) are then given.

Henrik married Eli in 1846. Her patronymic was Olsd. (abbr., Ola's daughter = daughter of Ola). She came from the holding Bjorlivollen, under the named farm Bjorlie, family no. 9-2. You might then turn to page 84, where you will find Eli's parents and further ancestors, under family 9-2, and. There you find Eli as the 4th child of Guri and Ola, her year of birth, and a reference to Oppistugu Kvam (4-5).

In addition, you can see that Eli's father also came from Oppistugu – Eli and Henrik were cousins.

Then you will usually find some information as to when Henrik and Eli took over the farm, and in some few cases extra information – e.g., whether they had children before they married etc.

#### **4-5. Ca. 1850 – 1869.**

*Henrik*, 1817-1903, g. 1846 m. *Eli Olsd.* frå Bjorlivollen (9-2), 1824-?. Dei tok nok etter kvart over garden, med skøyte i 1860. Barn:

1. Eli, 1847-?.
2. Guro, 1850-1919, g. 1872 m. Ola Larss. frå Ner-Enstad (4-11). Farmar i Granite Falls, Minn..
3. Syver, 1853-1929, visstnok g.m. Brit Larsd. frå Ner-Enstad (4-11).
4. Anne, 1855-?.
5. Ola, 1858-58.
6. Oline, 1860-1939. g. 1889 m. Johannes Johanness. frå Skreddarstugu, Bjølverud (31-1). Farmarar i Peerpont, S.Dakota.
7. Hanna, 1863-1947, g. 1884 m. Ole Johanness. frå Skreddarstugu, Bjølverud (31-1). Farmar i Peerpont, S.Dakota.
8. Eline, 1866-1942, g. 1889 m. Andreas Johanness. frå Skreddarstugu, Bjølverud (31-1). Farmarar i Peerpont, S.Dakota.

Heile familien reiste til Amerika i 1869. Dei slo seg ned nær Granite Falls, Minnesota. Da Henrik døydde, levde Eli og dei budde i Stony Run, Minnesota.

Then you will find all Eli and Henrik's children. In this case the whole family emigrated to the USA. All available information about each of them is listed here. If any of them had married in Lesja, you would have found a reference, and further information under the new family.

For the next family under this holding, Anne and Syver, family 4-6, you will find only brief information. The reason is that they had another holding most of their lives (MidtiSlettom), and all relevant information will be found there.

You might also find references with a letter added to the last figure, e.g., on Sy Kvam, page 224, «family» 5-8b. (The first figure, 5, indicates that Sy Kvam is holding no. 5 under Kvam.) Under reference 5-8b and similar entries you will find information about a type of family that does not fit into what we might call a «normal» peasant family pattern. They may not have owned a holding or rented a cottager's farm. They may have been carpenters, teachers, shoemakers etc.. They have probably lived on that particular holding for a while (the period given in the boldface heading).

Families separated by letters might also indicate that two or more families actually used the holding together. You will find an example on pages 196–197, the holding Øy garden under Einbu. The families 8-6a and 8-6b used half of the holding each during for the periods given in the boldface headings. This cross-reference system, and the basic information, is the same throughout all volumes of the Bygdebok.

## **Important words, idioms and expressions translated**

Listed in approx. the same order as they appear in the text.

### **From the introductions to «grender», named farms and holdings:**

*gard* – farm

*namnegard* – named farm, farm with an individual name (Bjorlie, Kvam, Tynnøl, Bottem)

*gardsbruk*, bruk – holding (part of a named farm) (Oppistugu, Sygard, haugen, brekka)

*hovudbruket* – the main holding of a named farm (if any)

*husmann* – cottager

*husmannsplass* - cottager's farm

*nyare heimar*, *nyare bustadhus* - new residences

*folketeljing* – census

*jordbruksteljing* - agricultural census

*dødsbuskifte*, *skifte* - estate registration, settlement of a deceased person's estate

*kyrkjebøker* - church records

*sjølvberging*, *-sgrad* - selfsupport, degree of ~ (in percent)

*menneske garden fødde* - number of people supported by the farm production

*korn til trusking* - grain cut for threshing (not green for fodder)

*poteter* – potatoes

*eng* – meadows

*grønfor og silo* - fodder cut green for feed and ensilage

*utslåttar* - outfields, outlying meadows, uncultivated grassland

*hest* – horse

*ku, kyr, mjølkekyr* - cow, -s

*anna storfe* - other cattle (oxen/bulls, beef cattle, calves etc.)

*sau, geit* - sheep, goat

### **From the introduction to named farms and holdings:**

*matrikkel* - land register, comprehensive field description, tax rolls

*skyld, landskyld, skyldsett* - main rent, property lease, put under rent, assessment of land

*huder, skinn, daler, ort, skilling, mark, øre* (under the main heading of each named farm and holding) - different rent units; the oldest ones (*huder, skinn*) refer to livestock products

*grenser* – borders

*naturlilhøve* - natural conditions

*eigedomstilhøve* - ownership (of the named farm or holding), law of property

*drift og levkår* - agricultural use and living conditions

*driftsopplysningar* - information about agricultural use

*omrekna til 1980-verde* - old sums of money recalculated showing actual value in 1980 (see above, and Vol. 1, page 17)

*overskot av drifta* - surplus from agricultural production, available to feed the people on the holding (after next year's seed grain had been stored)

### **From the genealogical section («FOLKET»)**

*var frå* - was from, came from

*sjå* - see, look up (refers to another named farm, holding number and family number)

*sjå framafor* - see above

*fekk med* - had with (used in connection with birth without marriage: «He had with (mother's name and reference) the son:»)

*g. (1800) m.* - married (e.g., 1800) to

*g. 2 g. m.* - married 2nd time to, second marriage

*bygsel, fyrstebygsel, holding/3. årstake* - forms of earnest money, property lease

*skøyte* - deed (of conveyance)

*flytte til* - moved to (outside Lesja)

*bur i* - lives in (outside Lesja)

*driv/dreiv med, arb. med/i, er* (about a person) - present or past occupation