Bellinga

The oldest known building is mentioned in documents dating from the mid-1300s. During the 1500s, the then Bellingaröd manor farm was part of Sövdeborg. This situation continued until 1860, when Bellinga became a separate estate. The owner at that time was Elisabeth Piper, who was married to the secretary of legation at the Swedish embassy in London, Carl Hochschild. They decided to build a castle on a beautiful site by the lake, Ellestadssjön, with the intention of spending the summers there. During the winters, they lived in Stockholm. The well-known English architect, Edward M. Barry, was commissioned, but his proposal failed to impress the owners, as it was not considered to fit in with the scenery or to be in tune with the architectural ideals of the time. This led to the Danish architect, Henrik S. Sibbern, reworking Barry’s plans. He gave the castle the character of an English Renaissance building and Roman villa, which satisfied the couple. The castle was built 1860-1868. The result was an exquisite, well-proportioned small castle, ideally suited to the beautiful surroundings of agricultural land interspersed with deciduous woods around the Ellestadssjön’s shady shoreline.

In 1878, a one-storey wing was built on to the castle’s north gable, one reason being to house the kitchen in the cellar. The wing was later demolished, as it spoiled the architectural totality and was regarded as being an impractical workplace.

An extensive English park was created in the late 1800s. Bellinga has remained in the Piper family since the 1860s.

The current owner is Count Claes Piper and family.

The surroundings
Bellinga Castle is the southernmost of the “lake castles” situated in an area of natural beauty between Ystad and Sjöbo. Bellinga, Krageholm, Snogeholm and Sövdeborg; each castle represents a different period of provincial history. The scenery around the castles is very diverse with a pleasant blend of cultivated farmland, deciduous woods and conifer forest. Each of the four castles has a lake with wooded shores. The country road between Skårby and Ilstorp, west of the lakes, is one of the most beautiful in Scania.

A working day at Bellinga
The expression ”a society within a society” is a very appropriate description of the position the estate, and thereby the castle, had in 19th century society. Self-sufficiency was well advanced and only minor purchases were made, principally to add a taste of the outside world to the diet.

In preparation for a paper at the Institute of Art History in Lund (1986), Kristina Pastor interviewed a woman who worked at Bellinga Castle in the early 1900s. The interview gives a clear picture of what work was like in the castle kitchen on a normal day during the summer months. At that time, the owner was the widow, Baroness Hochschild, whose husband, Baron Hochschild, had died in 1898. She continued, as before, to spend the summers at Bellinga.

The day started at 7 a.m. with the kitchen staff making breakfast for the gentry, first and second-class servants and themselves. Of course, one or more of the staff had got up an hour earlier to light the stoves and prepare the work. At 7.30 a.m. the baroness’s warm gruel was ready to be collected by the manservant or lady’s maid. Lunch was served at 1 p.m. and the baroness’s tea at an agreed time in the afternoon. Dinner would be served at 6 p.m. The day in the kitchen finished with the gentry’s evening tea and sandwiches at 9.30 p.m. The watchman’s food for the night would also be made ready at this point. The staff could finish the working day in the kitchen at 10 p.m.

Social status among the servants was reflected both in the manner, place and context in which meals were taken. Highest in rank was the lady’s companion. Her room was close to the baroness’s, and
she usually had meals in her company. The housekeeper was responsible not only for cooking, but also for supervision of the china, pantry and other facilities associated with the kitchen. Under the housekeeper worked the cook’s assistant, who cooked food, baked fine bread, made jam and juice in the summer, and prepared preserves and cured meats in connection with slaughtering. The kitchen maid did the basic jobs such as gutting fish, peeling potatoes and vegetables, and washing up.

The lady’s maid was highest up in the hierarchy, as she supervised the baroness’s bedroom and wardrobe, and carried out personal services such as dressing and hairstyling. In his time, the baron had received the same personal attention from a valet. Menservants laid the table, served food, polished silver and glass, lit the tiled stoves, lights and paraffin lamps, supervised the wine cellar and received guests. They were usually dressed in livery, sometimes a tailcoat with waistcoat. Housemaids, or cleaners, were divided into first and second-class housemaids. They cleaned all areas of the castle and served at large events.

Among the rest of the staff, the coachman and gardener had a mid-ranking social position, whereas stable boys, garden trainees, day workers and almsmen were on the lowest rungs of the staff ladder. The night watchman had a special position. He worked at night, and his job was to call out the hour from the castle’s four corners and keep an eye on the building. His working hours were between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m., followed by a few hours of rest in a room for that purpose.

All these people needed their daily meals. The highest in rank ate at a set table with fine china, crystal glass and linen napkins, whereas the rest ate in the kitchen or in the first or second-class dining hall.

Such were the days at Bellinga, a summer castle of its time.

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