Bollerup, along with nearby Glimmingehus, is Scania’s best-preserved medieval stronghold, mentioned as a manor farm as early as 1130. At that time, it was a quadrangular building enclosing a central courtyard and surrounded by a moat. The present building is from the last decade of the 1400s, on the site of the northern section of the manor farm. The then owner, Oluf Stiesen Krognos, started building in the period after 1483, when Queen Margareta’s prohibition against the building of private castles was lifted. Numerous medieval elements remain, such as the gable niches and blind windows, the Gothic frames of certain windows, wall-mounted stone benches in the castle cottage, and the cross-vaulting in the cellar and on the second floor.

Several of the most famous Danish noble families from medieval times have owned Bollerup such as Bulle (the original builders of the manor farm), Due, Thott, Krognos, Lykke and Skeel. Close to the stronghold is the medieval church that was built during the manor farm’s time, and therefore belonged to the owner of the manor and later, the castle.

Bollerup suffered extensive damage during several uprisings in the province. In 1525, during Sören Norby’s Scania rising, Bollerup was plundered and burned, but was rebuilt in its original form during the 1530s by the then owner Mourids Olufsen Krognos. The stronghold was again restored and partly changed in the early 1600s, during the time when Falk Lykke of Skovgaard owned the estate. He lived an adventurous life, filled with exploits, as an officer both in the Spanish fleet and the English army over a period of more than 20 years. When Falk Lykke died, Bollerup was inherited by Ida Skeel, who owned the estate when Scania became Swedish in 1658. She and her two sons soon got into trouble with the Swedish commander of the province, when it was revealed that they had actively participated in the Malmö conspiracy, which aimed to free Malmö from the new Swedish rulers. Consequently, Ida Skeel and her sons were arrested and appeared in court. Because of the family’s noble ancestry they were freed from prosecution, but numerous others were sentenced to death and executed.

In the late 1600s, 1700s and 1800s, Bollerup had several owners, families such as Rantzau, Sahlgren (East-India Company) and von Platen. From 1818, Bollerup was owned by King Charles XIV John, and from 1844 by district court judge, Tage Sylvan. Through a will from 1876, Sylvan was to gradually transform the estate into the Bollerup Agricultural Institute, which since 1912, has run the facilities as an agricultural college/natural resources high school.

Bollerup is located in the fertile agricultural landscape of Österlen, south of Tomelilla.

Lady Brahe, the Renaissance’s messenger

The Renaissance is the overall term for the ideas and trends that emerged in medieval Italy from the mid-1200s to the late 1400s. The Renaissance means rebirth, and what was reborn was a feeling for the languages, literature and art of antiquity. Later researchers consider that the Italian Renaissance contributed to overcome the limitations and cultural "darkness” of medieval times. The Renaissance celebrated the free man and life’s possibilities. Another feature of the time was the development of nation states, whose creation and survival depended on strong leaders. Curiosity about the world beyond Europe led to the great voyages of discovery and to the reform of the dictatorial Catholic Church.

The Renaissance reached Northern Europe and thereby Denmark, mainly via the Netherlands and Germany, from the mid-1500s. In Scania, the Renaissance was made tangible in buildings such as the trinity church, Trefaldighetskyrkan, in Kristianstad and a number of castles, as well as through the introduction of the Evangelical Lutheran teachings.

For the Catholic Church, 1475 was a year of celebration and large groups of pilgrims travelled to Rome for a special ritual that would expunge their sins. This attracted the Danish queen, Dorothea, wife of Christian I, and a group that included Lady Barbara Brahe of Bollerup and Krapperup. The queen, who was born in Ansbach and was Princess of Brandenburg, had a good contact network in Europe, and because this was used on the journey, quite a clear record of the whole adventure survives.
The journey began on 7 January 1475. After an almost two-month stay in Lübeck, the group continued over the Alps via the Brenner Pass on to Bologna, Florence and Rome, where they arrived on 2 May. This meant a trip of about 2,000 km, or 40 km per day, with the exception of a six-day stay at relatives of the queen.

When in Rome, the group was received by the queen’s nephew, Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga. With him as their host, they were introduced to Pope Sixtus IV, who twice granted them an audience during their visit.

On 5 May, the day after Ascension Day, the group visited the seven Roman pilgrim churches, which was the condition for being forgiven their sins.

The trip home started on 16 May, progressing at the same speed as the outward journey. By 1 July, the queen had returned to Copenhagen. Barbara Brahe’s arrival back at Bollerup is not documented, but it was probably before 5 July 1475.

It is almost certain that the group brought back numerous gifts and souvenirs from their long trip, but none of these have survived. However, one can with some certainty assume that the colourful costumes that the church artists put into the medieval paintings in Bollerup, Brunnby and Krapperup churches are based on the costumes that were in Barbara Brahe’s baggage from her long journey.

Even though the material signs have disappeared, Barbara Brahe became one of the first in Scania to make direct contact with the Renaissance in the centre of activity, Rome.