Christinehof

Christinehof Castle is, without exaggeration, a monument to the enterprising owner, Countess Christina Piper. She was the widow of Count Carl Piper, a field marshal on Charles XII’s command staff. He was captured during the Battle of Poltava and never returned to Sweden. Many of the high-ranking officers were ransomed from imprisonment and allowed to return home, but no ransom was ever paid for Carl Piper, and he died in 1716 as a prisoner in the Nöteborg fortress situated at the Neva’s inflow to St. Petersburg.

The Countess Christina lived at Krageholm Castle. During Charles XII’s earlier campaigns she had acted in her husband’s place as the person responsible for the Piper estates in Scania, Uppland, Sörmland and Östergötland. Thus, she was an excellent heiress for the whole estate complex the day she received notification of her husband’s death.

She soon showed herself highly capable, not only of running the existing estates, but also of considerably developing the estate empire. Christina Piper became famous as a very enterprising businesswoman and acquired more than 20,000 hectares of land in Scania. The biggest and most daring deal was the purchase of the alum works at Andrarum in 1725, which she later ran and developed with great skill and an iron hand.

Some years before her death in 1752, she established the Christinehof entailed estate, with the intention of linking together Christinehof and Andrarum alum works, Högestad, Baldringe and Östra Torup for future generations. Today, the entailed estate is still intact and is run by Högestad och Christinehofs Fideikommiss AB.

Christinehof Castle, or Andrarum Manor, was built in the 1730s close to the alum works. The building was designed by George Mochelten, who took inspiration from the German baroque style. Carl Hårleman was engaged later in the building of the castle’s magnificent stairwell. Originally, the castle exterior was pink in colour, but on Carl Hårleman’s advice it was painted yellow. The castle has been extensively restored in recent times.

The Christinehof estate has rich natural assets, which the owner nurtures with great care. The game-rich woods are a protected area for deer and wild boar. Around the castle are deciduous woods covering rolling terrain. The former alum works is situated close to the castle.

Christinehof is a part of Högestad och Christinehofs Fideikommiss AB, with Count Carl Piper as holder of the entailed estate.

Success and failure

When Christina Piper took over ownership of the Andrarum works in 1725, she certainly knew that the works’ founder and owner during the 1600s, the Danish nobleman, Jochum Beck, had lost his entire fortune due to the loss-making operation. This was despite the fact that the works in Andrarum were the biggest of their type in the Nordic countries.

In his time, Beck was one of Denmark’s largest landowners with estates in Scania and Zealand. During the 1630s, he discovered deposits of alum shale at Andrarum. Production started in 1637 and resulted in such big losses that he was forced to sell all his estates and finally the alum works. He never recovered from the failure of the works, died in poverty in 1682, and was buried at Andrarum Church.

Christina Piper, on the other hand, soon made the alum works one of Scania’s largest industries. As at similar works in Sweden, not many people were involved in production itself. The figure at Andrarum was about 200. However, many more, around 1,000, gained an income from businesses that served the works, such as supplying wood for the kilns.

Alum was a commodity even in ancient times. It had many applications, but the first known and most renown was its capability to stop bleeding and disinfect wounds. Alum was also used in
dyeing, paper manufacturing and tanning.

The process consumed large amounts of wood, which laid waste to the forest within a 20 km radius of the works stipulated in a licence charter from 1686. At a distance of 20 km from the works, there were special mileposts that defined the borders of the authorised tree-felling area. The line, known locally as the "work line", was the outer limit of the area in which local farmers were obliged to cut down and deliver wood to the works for a "fair remuneration". The line was abolished in 1824 and only one of the hated mileposts still stands.

During the heyday of the works, various community functions developed such as a school, hospital, pharmacy, prison, old people’s home, fire service and courthouse. There was even an internal "currency" that could only be used in the works.

Production ceased in 1912, when the only production consisted of red paint. Several buildings are preserved on the former alum works site including workers’ cottages (see photo) and warehouses. Around the site, one can still see visible slag heaps and pits.