Häckeberga Castle, situated 3 km south of Genarp, has a very beautiful setting on one of the islets of the lake, Häckebergasjön. The islets, lakeshore and surrounding area are dominated by beech woods, which visitors experience as they near the castle on the twisting country road. What we see at Häckeberga today is only the “tip of an historical iceberg”, as the ownership line goes back to the late 1400s, when a fighting man from the powerful Hak family, Niels Hak, was the owner. He had been granted Häckeberga as a gift from an archbishop, but when a new archbishop was appointed, Hak was forced to give the estate back. He died in dramatic circumstances in a duel in 1507. The next owner of Häckeberga was the soldier and diplomat, Holger Ulfstand, who in 1530 built a grand Renaissance castle for both accommodation and defensive purposes. The son, Hak Holgersen Ulfstand, became one of the period’s most trusted men as privy councillor, lord high constable, knight of the Elephant Order, lord high steward and guardian of the future king, Christian IV. He was also a patron of the arts and science, and funded the building of Genarp Church, which today is the only three-aisle brick basilica from the 1500s in Scania. In 1652, Häckeberga left the hands of the Ulfstand family to be owned by the then Lady Karin Grubbe, who in turn sold the estate to the well-known Lady Mette Rosenkrantz in the mid-1560s. She had a daughter, a renowned beauty, Mette Sophie Krabbe, who was to create a lot of problems for both her mother and all her noble and common suitors. After the death of Mette Sophie in 1707, and her husband Monrad in 1708, there were legal disputes about ownership, as Monrad had left the property to a relative, Karen Krabbe. Finally, ownership of Häckeberga was awarded to her daughter, who was married to the lawyer, Peter Silfverskiöld. They took over in the 1720s and the Silfver skiöld family held the estate for more than 100 years. The first generation got the old castle and farm into good shape. According to Linné in 1749, it was “the most concealed of the manors we have seen so far on the Scanian journey, and has solid stone buildings on three sides and a large round tower on the south-east side.” The medieval tower he mentioned was demolished in 1780. The Silfverskiöld family owned Häckeberga until 1824. Since then, various families such as Wollmar and Wrangel von Brehmer have owned the estate before the present owners, the Tham family, took over. The present castle at Häckeberga was built between 1873-1875, as the then owner, cavalry captain Tönnes Wrangel von Bremer, had blown up the old stronghold with the intention of building a more modern castle. He fulfilled his plans with the help of architect Helgon Zettervall, guided by inspiration from the French Renaissance. The castle was badly damaged by fire in 1960, but was restored and is now a popular hotel, restaurant and conference complex.

Love, business and politics
When Scania became Swedish, Häckeberga was owned by one of the province’s richest ladies, Mette Rosencrantz. She had three dissolved marriages with Scanian estate-owners behind her as well as considerable inherited wealth. She also had innate good sense in business and financial management, which made her the owner of eight large manors in Scania. The finest of these was Häckeberga, where she lived with her beautiful daughter, Mette Sophie Krabbe. During the time the ladies lived at Häckeberga, the Swedicisation process was going on in Scania and many people were subjected to persecution and reprisals when they proved unwilling to follow their new masters’ orders. In the early 1670s, a war of revenge against Sweden became a pressing matter of Danish policy. This led to a declaration of war in 1675 and the Scanian War broke out. This turned out to be one of the bloodiest in the country’s history and went on until 1679, without changing the existing borders.
During the Scanian War, Swedish soldiers were billeted at Häckeberga Castle, which made Lady Mette and her beautiful daughter flee to Stockholm. Häckeberga was ravaged and burned by the Danes and local militia, and when the two noble ladies returned, they had no other choice but to live in the temporarily vacant bishop’s palace in Lund.

Even as a child, Mette Sophie had been engaged to Tage Thott of Ericsholm, but the engagement was broken as they chose different sides in the Swedicisation process. In the autumn of 1681, Lady Mette and her daughter were visited by the Dane, Johan Monrad. He was the son of the Bishop of Ribe and had worked as a tutor on Danish noble estates and had also accompanied his young students as a teacher on their foreign travels. One of the students was Anders Bille, son of Mette Rosenkrantz and thus half-brother of Mette Sophie. It was Bille who invited Monrad to Scania. He quickly fell in love with Mette Sophie and they got engaged in the summer of 1682. Monrad had by then succeeded in getting the Danish government to ennoble him in order to be on the same level as his fiancée and therefore ease the way for the marriage. This would mean that her Scanian estates came into Danish hands and that the Swedish land policy in Scania would be contravened. The engagement had been kept secret from the old Lady Mette, and Monrad saw that a marriage was the only way to capture the beautiful heiress. The marriage took place on Fyen in the autumn of 1682. Lady Mette gave them her blessing afterwards, but when she died the year after, in 1683, problems began for the landowner, Monrad.

The Swedish land policy in the conquered province was to prevent marriages between Danes and Scanians. At the time of Mette Rosenkrantz’s death, Wilhelm Julius Coyet was the Swedish minister in Copenhagen. He was one of Mette Sophie’s rejected suitors and could now have his revenge by reporting the newlyweds to the Swedish Crown, which rapidly confiscated all the property in Scania left by Lady Mette Rosenkrantz.

However, after a long legal process, Monrad and his beautiful wife were awarded Häckeberga and the other Swedish estates.