Hjularöd

Hjularöd Castle is situated in a beautiful area on a beech wood-covered ridge in the parish of Harlösa, a few kilometres north of Vombsjön’s northern lakeshore. The building creates a powerful, almost medieval impression with its turrets and towers, even though it was not built until the late 1800s. The explanation is that architecture in the latter half of the 1800s was marked by Romanticism generally, and in Sweden often by National Romanticism. One simply looked back in history to be inspired by Gothic, Renaissance, baroque, rococo and neoclassicism style ideals.

It was in this spirit that the architects Isac Gustav Clason and Lars Israel Wahlman worked when they carried out the commission at Hjularöd. As models, they used the French medieval strongholds at Coucy-le-Chateau in Champagne and Pierrefonds near Compiegne from the 1200s and 1300s. The French strongholds had been restored in the 1800s and had consequently inspired the Swedish architects. The commissioner of the building was the chamberlain, Hans Gustav Toll, who did not dare to go for a full-scale copy of the French models, but was satisfied with a half-scale building in relation to the original. The castle was extended in 1917 by the then owner, the chamberlain Hjalmar Constantin Linder, who was from the Finnish nobility. He built a cavaliers’ wing, because the Russian Tsar had announced a visit to the castle in connection with his planned trip to the Baltic Exhibition in Malmö the same year. The trip was cancelled, for well-known reasons.

Hjularöd is mentioned in documents from the nunnery at Bosön (Bosjökloster) dated 1391, when the nunnery gained two farms belonging to Hjularöd’s then owner from the Kyrning family. This means that Bosjökloster was owner of the farms from the late 1300s until 1537, when the evangelical Lutheran teachings replaced Roman-Catholicism as the state religion of Denmark. With this, the nunnery’s land was taken by the Crown, but Hjularöd was not granted until 1579, when it went to two brothers from the Dresselberg family. In 1590, Wilhelm Nielsen Dresselberg organised Hjularöd as a coherent manor farm. After another two owners from the Dresselberg family there were no heirs and ownership went to the district judge in Halland, Knud Gabrielsen Akeleye. He was the last Danish owner, and after the peace settlement the property went to Admiral Henry Gerritsen, later ennobled as Siöhielm.

Since then, Hjularöd has had a shifting line of ownership from the families; von Buchwaldt, von Liewen, von Dellwig, von Schwerin, Toll, and, from 1926, Bergengren.

The oldest stone house was almost certainly built during the Dresselberg period in the late 1500s. This building was replaced by a new one during Knud Gabrielsen Akeleye’s time from the 1620s. It was built during the long period of conflict and therefore combined living quarters and defence functions. At some point in the Danish-Swedish wars the building was destroyed, but there is still a system of moats from the castle of the 1600s. The next building went up in the 1700s, when the von Dellwig family owned the estate for more than 40 years. Finally, the present castle was built in the 1890s.

Hjularöd is built on an east-west ridge north of the lake, Vombsjön. The area has the Scanian countryside’s beautiful blend of farmland interspersed with deciduous forest.

Romanticism becomes National Romanticism

During the first decades of the 1800s, there was an international movement in literature, sculpture, painting and architecture based on using imagination to go back to the rich periods of ancient history and mythology. The movement came to be called Romanticism, as people of the time strove to idealise the past and establish an almost dreamlike relationship with the people and cultural expressions of former times, as well as untouched, wild nature. Romanticism also stood for freedom to cross boundaries, where the self-indulgent, creative genius was admired. Those who dared to break away from the worship of reason in the 1700s were praised as excellent romantics. Italy was the promised land of Romanticism, all types of artists were drawn there to be inspired by
the beautiful relics of history and to find a fragment of antiquity for their own or other’s use. Romanticism’s paintings became a way of awakening feelings by communicating heroic sentiments from history. England became a trendsetting country during Romanticism, particularly in architecture, interior decoration and landscape gardening. This is shown most clearly in English parks, which had a planned wildness that was in stark contrast to the disciplined baroque and later rococo parks.

The last phase of Romanticism, 1890 to around 1915, is usually called National Romanticism. It wanted to emphasise the national singularities of a people, mainly in art, literature, music and architecture. Many artists, writers, composers and architects contributed to make Nordic National Romanticism a period that still commands a lot of attention today. A number of Sweden’s most well-known artists were active during this period.

Romanticism established a strong foothold among the Scanian castles in the early 1800s. Here, as in other parts of the country and Europe, people loved to look back in history and be impressed by relics of the past, not least from the Danish era. This resulted in Danish architects being commissioned to plan restorations and new building in Scanian castles during the second half of the 1800s.

Scanian agriculture’s economic upswing in the 1800s meant dramatically increased income from the estates. This created the economic conditions for both restoration and new building at many castles. Several well-known architects spent most of their working lives on the restoration of monumental buildings such as castles and churches. One of the most sought after, Professor Carl George Brunius, had no training as an architect, but carried out his work based on a deep knowledge of the medieval idiom. Helgo Zettervall continued during the second half of the 1800s to work in the same spirit as Brunius. Both have been criticised for their insensitive interference with historically important buildings.

In Scania, the Romanticism of the 1800s meant a reawakened interest in the aristocracy era, 1540-1660, especially the period 1596-1648, which was characterised by Christian IV. The result was that Danish architects such as Christian Zwingman and Ferdinand Meldahl were much used, not only for restorations, but also for new building at Scanian estates.

The architects Isaac Gustav Clason and Lars Israel Wahlman did not lack romantic models among the Scanian castles when they took on the commission to design the new castle at Hjularöd.