Kulla Gunnarstorp

Kulla Gunnarstorp consists of an old castle building from the second half of the 1500s as well as a newer castle built between 1865-1868 designed by Christian Zwingmann (see Marsvinsholm and Karsholm).

An estate is known to have existed here since the late 1300s, but there is a lack of certainty surrounding the assumed owner of that time, the knight, Lunge. Towards the end of the 1400s, it is known that ownership was in the Parsberg family, and this continued until 1580, when, through marriage, the Brahe family took over. It was Jörgen Ottesen Brahe of Tosterup who built the first castle, probably in the late 1500s. The last Brahe at Gunnarstorp died in 1638 and the children who inherited the estate sold it to Axel Eriksen Rosenkrantz, who was already a wealthy landowner. He lived on the estate until his death in 1680, after which the Hildebrand family were owners for a short period.

In the mid-1700s, Kulla Gunnarstorp was owned by the German-born Diedric Christian von Conowen. He sold the estate in 1775 to Count Gustav Adolf Sparre, who divested the castle of its Renaissance style, giving it the plastered exterior of an 18th century house, which he then filled with a significant art collection. Count Sparre died in 1794 and after his widow’s death, the property went in 1830 to the only daughter and her husband, Count Jacob Gustav De la Gardie. In 1837, the estate was sold to his Excellency, Count Carl de Geer of Leufsta. He restored the castle in the years 1853-1854, when the old walls were revealed to give the building back its original character. When he died in 1861, ownership went to his daughter and her husband, Count Baltzar von Platen, son of the canal-builder of the same name.

The new owners decided to replace the old castle with a building of the 1800s in which styles and elements from several centuries could be mixed in a National Romantic spirit. The new castle was completed in 1868.

Count von Platen died in 1875 and his widow, Sofia Eleonora Charlotta de Geer, in 1888. The estate was inherited by the daughter, Baroness Elisabeth von Platen, who was married to Count Axel Wachtmeister of Wanås.

After a further three generations of Wachtmeisters, ownership was taken over by Gustav Trolle in 1970.

The surroundings

Kulla Gunnarstorp is located 11 km north of Helsingborg in a lovely setting that has hardly an equal among the Scanian castles. The beauty is intensified by the extensive beech woods along the coast.

Hittarp Mill

South of Kulla Gunnarstorp, in the village of Hittarp, is a monument to a bygone culture that from an architectural and historical perspective is one of the best preserved in the country. Kulla Gunnarstorp’s mill is still standing after more than 150 years as a working windmill and just over 50 years idle. It was built in the 1790s based on the Dutch model and was ready for milling trials to begin in 1798.

The Dutch windmills were at the time most common in Germany and Denmark, which is why it was a natural choice to engage a German mill-builder to lead the construction work. The commission went to the young George Soffel, and his German identity is revealed even today as Hittarp Mill has the traditional German “boat hull-shaped” roof, whereas those built in the old Dutch tradition have an onion-shaped dome.

At the time the mill was built, the Kulla Gunnarstorp estate was owned and run by Countess Elisabeth Sparre, widow of the gifted and much-travelled Count Gustav Adolf Sparre, who died in 1794. She then lived in the older building at Kulla Gunnarstorp, among all the valuable artworks.
and articles that Count Sparre had collected during his lifetime.
In the 1780s, the issue of a new mill at Kulla Gunnarstorps was raised, as the old water mill’s capacity had gradually decreased due to a shortage of water.
While Count Sparre was still alive, the couple had decided to replace the old water mill with a new windmill on a suitable site where it would always get its power from the Öresund. However, it was the Countess who had the mill built and carried out many other projects on the estate, as she survived her husband by 36 years and died in 1830.
The young mill-builder, George Soffel, went on to other assignments when the mill at Hittarp was finished. He had, however, fallen for the area’s beauty, and one in particular, Gunilla Dahl, a maid at the Kulla Gunnarstorps estate. They married and he stayed in the area of his mill for the rest of his life. Documents from the 1830s suggest that he was successful in his career and titled himself as county master builder.
In the first few years, milling was moderate due to poor crop-growing conditions. Dry summers and unusually cold winters led to frequent years of famine at the start of the 1800s, and this was so serious for poor people that it led to riots here and there.
That time was soon just a bad memory and the flow of grain to the mill dramatically increased. The mill became a centre for the district’s farmers for 150 years, until the time that other technology took over from the windmill’s silent milling. The last miller, Nils Persson, stopped working in 1950 and the old mill in Hittarp became a cultural-historical monument.
It is one of many lovingly preserved monuments from Swedish rustic culture.