Ovesholm

The present castle, dating from the last decade of the 1700s, is the third at Ovesholm. The earliest, a medieval manor farm, was sited south-west of the present building. It was replaced in the 1620s by a new building on the north shore of the lake where the present castle is situated. The first known owning family, Ugerup, were noted during the 1500s as owners of the then estate, Åkesholm. In the early 1600s, another branch of the family, Urup, had taken ownership and it was Ove Urup who, a couple of decades into the 1600s, replaced the previous main building with a new one, on a site close to the present castle. He changed the name of the estate to one that reflected his name, Ovesholm. The building was described as a "typical Scanian manor house" with two half-timbered storeys and a parallel quadrangular barn with a thatched roof. Through marriage, the Ulfeldt family took over Ovesholm when Ebbe Ulfeldt inherited it in 1653. He had had a brilliant career after his education, both in his native land, Denmark, and in other European countries, and was richly rewarded for it, both with high positions and being permitted to marry King Christian IV’s daughter, Countess Hedvig of Schleswig-Holstein. Furthermore, he was named as a Knight of the Elephant Order and also granted the island of Bornholm. He therefore became feudal lord of his own island and was soon notorious for the tough discharge of his official duties. Ebbe Ulfeldt was a controversial person in his time. He was honoured during Christian’s reign, but found himself hated after Frederick III’s succession in 1648. He was charged with brutality against his subjects and treachery to the crown. Consequently, he fled to Stockholm, where he was received with respect and quickly named as a major general in the Swedish army. He was consequently in the service of the Swedish army at the time of the Treaty of Roskilde and was therefore active in the organisation of the Swedish defence of its new possession, Scania. He died poverty-stricken in Stockholm in 1682, after his royal wife’s death in Kristianstad in 1678. Ebbe Ulfeldt’s death meant the end of the Scanian branch of the family. Sofia Maria Ulfeldt married into the Ridderschantz family and took ownership of Ovesholm. Her daughter, Ulrika Eleonora Ridderschantz, was the owner until 1774, when through marriage, Henning Reinhold Wrangel of Adinal took over. The son, Carl Adam Wrangel, later country governor of Kristianstad, took over ownership in the next generation and during his time built the present castle at Ovesholm. The last Wrangel generation owned the estate for four years until 1833, after which a cousin, Count Axel Hugo Raoul Hamilton took over, and since then Ovesholm has been in the Hamilton family. In 1857, Count Hamilton added a third storey to the castle and gave the building a more spacious interior, although the proportions of the original building from the 1700s were lost. Ovesholm Castle is 7 kilometres south-west of Kristianstad. The castle is beautifully situated on the shore of a small lake and surrounded by extensive parkland. The present owner is Count Raoul Hamilton.

In the count’s time

In 1833, the then owner of Ovesholm, Henning Gustav Wrangel, passed away. He had no children who could inherit the estate, so it was taken over by his cousin, Count Axel Hugo Raoul Hamilton. It was the start of both the Hamilton ownership of Ovesholm and a new chapter in the life of a fascinating and colourful character, Count Hamilton. He soon moved into the beautiful two-storey building at Ovesholm, but both his personality and multifarious business life compelled him out into the world at large in the late 1830s. This didn’t stop him from keeping ownership of Ovesholm and making several changes that improved the running of the estate and made the main building more in keeping with the times. He, like many other estate owners, wanted to mark the economic upswing of the mid-1800s. This was often done by considerable expansion of castles and farm buildings, and in many cases new construction. It was in this spirit that the third storey was added to Ovesholm’s beautiful Gustavian building, a change that some feel doubtful about even today, but in
the count’s time there were no such negative views. He did not even have a wife’s wise advice to listen to, as the Count had chosen to remain a bachelor for the time being. His extensive business activities and lack of a family meant that his life to that point had been rootless, but the circumstances would radically change in his later life. It has been recounted that during a stay at Ovesholm, when he was 66, he heard that some of his younger relations had commented on his age and that “it was time for the old man to pass away”, so that they could get rich on his assets. This got a response from the ”old man”, who quickly decided that he would make some changes in his life, so that he was no longer alone. He told the coachman to saddle the fastest horses in front of the most beautiful carriage and drive him to the nearest railway station, where he bought a ticket to Paris. Nobody knew his intentions or destination, but after a few weeks a telegram arrived revealing that he was staying in the French capital. Another few weeks passed and one day a horse-drawn carriage pulled up in the circular drive in front of Ovesholm. The count stepped out of the carriage to everyone’s jubilation, followed to everyone’s surprise by a young beauty with black curly hair. He immediately introduced her as his new wife, Ann Mary Russel-Cruise, age 23 from Ireland. The happy marriage left both material and family traces behind. The young woman from Ireland was catholic and the count therefore built a chapel for her that still stands at Ovesholm today. The family traces were two children, and one of them, the son Raoul Gustav, took over the estate in 1875 and became a highly respected member of parliament, who worked for voting rights, peace and disarmament, and the poor and weaker members of society. Count Hamilton died in 1875, probably contented with his life.