Rössjöholm

The present building at Rössjöholm gives a modern impression, but the estate as such is very old. From the 1300s to the 1560s, the then stronghold was owned by the Geed family. There were possibly three early strongholds in different places on the site. The last of these, from the 1550s, was on a point of land in the lake, Rössjön, not far from the present main building. It was built by the then owner Karen Geed as a quadrangular building surrounded by a wall and linked to the mainland via a drawbridge. She was married to Mogens Krabbe of Vegeholm and due to this, Rössjöholm passed into the Krabbe’s ownership until 1672. Mogens Krabbe was from a wealthy Danish noble family and it is almost certain that he contributed to the financing of his wife Karen’s castle building in the 1550s.

During the Scanian War of 1676-1679, the castle was destroyed by local militia. At the time, ownership had passed to Baron Augustin Leijonsköld, who was governor of Malmöhus county. Rössjöholm’s location at the foot of the ridge, Hallandsåsen, contributed to the destruction. The local militia used the rugged terrain as a base for their operations and did not want to be disturbed by the nearby castle. Baron Leijonsköld died in 1680, and his widow, Barbara Moser von Fileck, built a new manor farm in 1696 on the site of the present castle.

The widow Fileck’s heirs sold the estate in 1702 to Nils Silverskiöld, also a county governor and active as such in Kristianstad county. Rössjöholm manor farm burned down in 1730 and he was therefore compelled to build another, which was finished in 1731. When the new house was to be inaugurated with a ceremony and a salute, one of the cannons was so badly aimed that the house was hit and burned to the ground. The determined county governor soon rebuilt the house, which, without a salute, could be inaugurated in the same year as the blaze. It is this building that can be seen today.

The estate stayed in the possession of the Silverskiöld family until 1819 and then changed hands several times until 1857, when it was bought by the Danish barons Christian and Erik Rosenørn-Lehn and has since remained in the family. The present owner is Fritz Rosenørn-Lehn.

The surroundings

Rössjöholm is located 10 km north-east of Munka-Ljungby in a beautiful area of countryside with many lakes on the southern side of the ridge, Hallandsåsen. In the account of his Scanian journey in 1749, Linné wrote: “In the spring, this ridge in Halland reflects its green beech leaves in Rössjön, giving the lake a beauty that no painter could recreate.”

Frans G. Bengtsson

The writer, Frans Gunnar Bengtsson, was born on 4 October 1894 in the estate manager’s quarters at Rössjöholm, where his father, Sven Bengtsson, was manager and inspector. His mother, Ella, who was a trained dressmaker, became a housewife after the marriage and the mother of the future writer and five siblings, two of whom died as infants. In his autobiography, The Eden That I Remember (1953), he described his childhood at Rössjöholm as very happy. He felt grateful to have experienced a childhood among the simple things that make up country life in the Scanian forest district. He considered that he was more fortunate than ”all the poor things who are born in cities and station towns”. He describes Rössjöholm, with the lake and surrounding woodlands, as one of the most beautiful place in Scania. His mother is described as happy and patient, while he portrays his father as melancholy and gloomy.

He brings his childhood to life by writing about nature, school, remarkable characters, parties and festivals, but he also relates that when he was six he contracted scarlet fever, pneumonia, diphtheria and quinsy all at the same time. Doctor Nylander diagnosed him as a hopeless case, which made
him take heart and survive, if only to spite the doctor. There was a break from schooling and one year in bed. His recovery began when his father gave him a storybook and the doctor at the same time proscribed fortified wine. He later confessed that the recovery was accelerated when he secretly increased the dosage of fortified wine.

Frans G. Bengtsson’s literary interest started early and he gradually read everything available by borrowing or buying books. In school he was most interested in history, geography and biology, but his talents meant he was also good at maths and essay writing. He claims that he lacked interest in reading the catechism and other religious writings.

His time at elementary school finished when he was nine and was forced to move from his beloved Rössjöholm to secondary school studies in Kristianstad. He took his high school certificate in 1912 and continued his studies at the University of Lund in history and literature, and later history of religion, English and philosophy. It was here that his literary interest began to show in his own writings, mainly lyrical poetry. After four years at Lund, filled in the right proportions with studies, chess, literary production and socialising, he became ill with a kidney condition and was forced to return to Rössjöholm in such a condition that the doctor again gave him only a limited time to live. This time he was prescribed no wine, in fact he had strict orders to avoid it and had to live a calm country life at home on the farm.

After several years as farm foreman for his father, when he combined agricultural work with writing, he returned to Lund in 1927 to devote himself to being an author. He mixed with contemporary modernists, but was never influenced by the spirit of the time and continued to write about historical figures and heroes from the past.

His literary output can be divided into four main areas, lyrical poems, essays, historical novels and local district stories. He debuted in 1923 with the poetry collection Cast of the Dice, which was followed by The Legend of Babel (1925). The essays were published in the years 1929-1943 and were mostly history-related accounts of his native district. His two-volume work on Charles XII’s life was published in 1935-1936. His biggest success, Red Snake, was published in two volumes between 1941-1945. He finished his literary production in 1953 with The Eden That I Remember. Frans G. Bengtsson died in 1954.