Sinclairsholm

Sinclairsholm is located on the southern side of the river, Almaån, at a natural fording place on the route of the medieval road northwards. During Gustav II Adolf’s ravages in the Göinge and Villand hundreds in the Kalmar War of 1611-1613, 23 parishes were devastated, including Gumlösa. The Danish privy councillor and knight, Anders Sinclair, came to this destroyed village. He was born in Scotland and was the son of Lord Henry of Saint Claire. In 1600, Anders Sinclair had married Kirsten Kaas, who had several homesteads in Gumlösa in her dowry. Through three purchases between 1613-1620 and exchanges, he acquired 3 1/2 parishes and built a main manor, which he called Sinclairsholm. He died in 1625, the year before the manor farm was completed. His son sold the estate in 1640 to Scania’s biggest landowner of the time, Jochum Beck. However, he was forced to sell Sinclairsholm in 1650, after major financial losses, including those at the alum works in Andrarum. The buyer was Jörgen Marsvin of Restrup, who thus became the last Danish owner. The governor of both Kristianstad and Blekinge counties, Håkan Nilsson Skytte, bought the estate in 1667. In 1710, during the last war in Scania, the Danish field marshal, Reventlow, located his headquarters at Sinclairsholm. He left the estate in such a bad condition that a new manor house was built on the old foundation. The building was completed in 1733. In 1788, the main building burned down, but the wings survived. The year after, a new main building was constructed, designed by A F Barnekow. It was a house in horizontal timber that was plastered externally. The frontispiece was added in 1825. The Skytte family died out in the early 1800s and a nephew belonging to the Duvall family inherited the estate. He was childless and sold the farm in three parts in 1820. The part that is in Gumlösa and Northern Sandby parish was bought by Frederick Gyllenkrok. The farm’s present owner, in the sixth generation, is Baron John Barnekow and his wife, Inger.

The surroundings
Sinclairsholm is located 15 km east of Hässleholm. Beside the castle is Gumlösa Church, the oldest brick church in the Nordic countries, consecrated in 1192. It was once selected as one of Scania’s most distinctive buildings. West of the castle is the hill, Hälleberga backe, with traces of a very ancient stronghold.

The black board in Gumlösa Church
Just south of Sinclairsholm Castle, and its closest neighbour, is one of Scania’s most remarkable buildings, Gumlösa Church, which was consecrated with a grand ceremony on 26 October 1192. The high-ranking guests arrived in their horse-drawn wagons, many certainly on horseback, a few of the poor on foot, if they were actually invited to the festivities. The highest of the church leaders of the time, Archbishop Absalon of Lund went first, closely followed by Archbishop Erik of Nidaros and Bishop Stenar from Växjö, which were subordinate to Lund. They certainly had a lot of trouble getting there on bad roads, accompanied by servants and soldiers prepared to protect them if robbers should emerge from the dark Göinge forests in the borderlands between Denmark and Sweden.

How do we know so much detail about the consecration of a church on this perhaps dull, grey day in late October 1192? The background to the building of the church was a relationship that arose between the wealthy and kindly-disposed Trugot Ketilson from Göinge and his kinsman and friend, Archbishop Absalon. When Ketilson got the divine inspiration to build a church in his native district, he quickly understood that it was a sensible way to combine the manifestation of God and Trugot Ketilson himself in the same building. He presented his idea to Archbishop Absalon, who
gave it his blessing and encouragement. The construction was also justified and hastened by the fact that the farmers in the area were in rebellious mood and that the dangerous Swedish border was not that far away to the north. The church would therefore be a military outpost in the borderlands, and it would prove to be based on legitimate fears as long as Scania was Danish and for some time afterwards.

The initiator of the church construction, Trugot Ketilson, was a thorough man and therefore arranged for an account of both the building of the church and its consecration ceremony to be written on a piece of parchment. This documentation was stored in the church’s chancel until the 1660s, when the parish priest and the county governor of Kristianstad, who was also the owner of Sinclairsholm, Håkan Nilsson Skytte, agreed that the document should be destroyed. The parish priest, however, had the sense to make a copy of the text on a black painted wooden board that was hung in the chancel and remains there today. The text is in Latin, but a sign beside it provides a Swedish translation that carefully describes the church’s exact age, who its builder was, what building material was used, the consecration ceremony, etc.

Gumlösa Church is architecturally important because it is the oldest Swedish brick building that can be dated with certainty, and therefore probably Sweden’s oldest brick church. Through the documentation, people of today can see that the church has undergone very small changes since medieval times, which is partly due to the depth of knowledge about the church and its importance. The most striking rescue actions have been the restorations after two fires. The original windows, in the form of slots in the walls, have been restored, while the loopholes and interior whitewash from the 1600s have been removed.