

Tosterup

Tosterup, like many other castles in Scania, has a history stretching back to medieval times. The original stronghold was probably situated a few kilometres north-west of the present one, where a ruin is known to lie under a mound. It is thought to have been demolished during the period of the 1400s when Queen Margareta introduced a law forbidding the building of private strongholds. The first known owner was a member of the Grimm family, but the castle then passed to the Brahe family until 1640.

Tosterup Castle retains its old-world appearance even today. One reason is that parts of the tower and the rest of the building were built in the years following the lifting of the castle ban in 1483. During Jörgen Brahe's time, the well-known astronomer Tycho Brahe, then a child, made his first observations from the tower at Tosterup. He was the nephew of Jörgen Brahe, born at Knutstorp, but grew up at Tosterup. He started his university studies aged 13 and then had a brilliant career as a scientist, mainly within astronomy.

When the last of the Brahe family died in 1640, ownership passed to Tage Ottesen Thott, who had the reputation of being the richest man in Scania. After a further generation of the Thott family, the next generation, due to the marriage into the family of Jörgen Iversen Krabbe, got into trouble with the Swedish Crown and Krabbe was executed in Malmö in 1678, accused of high treason during the Scanian War (see Krageholm). The widow, Jytte Thott, retained ownership, but was forced to sell Tosterup in 1688 to field marshal Rutger von Ascheberg. He was governor general of Scania following major successes as an officer in many campaigns. As governor general, he had overall responsibility for the Swedification of Scania, which according to commentators of the time was carried out in a humane way. Through the daughter's marriage to Christopher Barnekow, the Barnekow family became owners of the estate through inheritance in 1753. This remained so for 30 years, after which the estate was sold to the former commandant of Sveaborg, Count John Sparre. After Sparre's death, the widow lived on at Tosterup and often socialised with her famous son-in-law, Carl August Ehrensvärd, who was a four-star admiral of the fleet. In 1832, the Ehrensvärd family took over ownership of Tosterup, and that remains the case today. The present owner is Count Jan Ehrensvärd.

Tosterup is located in fertile farmland 10 km NE of Ystad. Close to the castle is a church from the 1100s, which contains the magnificent coffin of the unjustly executed Jörgen Iversen Krabbe.

A genius of his time

Carl August Ehrensvärd was born in 1745. He was the son of the famous Augustin Ehrensvärd, field marshal, creator of the Swedish archipelago fleet, and the brain behind the Sveaborg fortress on the sea-approach to Helsinki.

Carl August Ehrensvärd became one of the most remarkable men of his time, mainly through his versatility and the unique combination of being the country's highest military leader and a sharply observant artist and art theoretician.

His life was determined from birth and as soon as he was eight years old he was placed in the cadet school for the artillery. He distinguished himself there and at the age of 15 was named as second lieutenant for Åbo county's light infantry and a lieutenant in the army's fleet. This combination at such an age already showed his inherent genius.

In the same year as he was promoted, 1760, he got to try the officer's life for real when under his father's command he took part in the Pomeranian War of 1761-1762. Among his experiences was a major defeat for the Prussian fleet in a sea battle at Stettinerhaff.

Returning to Finland after his baptism of fire in the war, he was promoted to flag captain and in that position he was subordinate to major Henry of Trolle, who would become his close friend and confidant for the rest of his life.

In 1749 his father, Field Marshal Ehrensvärd, had started the planning and building of the Sveaborg

fortress and when the son returned from the war in 1762 he became his father's assistant in the continued construction of the fortress.

He continued his naval science studies, including a spell in France where he was promoted to captain in 1770. In 1772, he became involved in the revolution planned by colonel Jacob Magnus Sprengtporten. This political detour did not prevent him from being promoted to colonel in 1777, at the age of 32.

Throughout his successful career as an officer he had developed his innate gift as an artist, principally as a draughtsman. To pursue this, he decided to make a study visit to Italy in the years 1780-1782. There, he was captivated by the cultural life in general, the landscape and remaining monuments from antiquity. The trip was to change the direction of his life from a strictly military orientation to an original blend of defence and the fine arts.

The study tour produced the books "Journey to Italy 1780-1782 – The Philosophy of the Fine Arts" and "A Humble Statement to King Gustav III 1782-1783". In these books, he gives his views on the "the nature and essence of the fine arts".

This account led to closer relations with King Gustav III and when four-star admiral Trolle died, Ehrensvärd was named as head of the admiralty in 1784. In that position he developed the Swedish fleet that was considered to be very strong at the outbreak of the Finnish War in 1788. Ehrensvärd had command of the archipelago fleet at the time of Sweden's fateful battle at Svensksund in 1789. The defeat meant that in 1790 he returned to his post in Karlskrona, but soon resigned from all his naval duties to live at Tosterup, which was then owned by his mother-in-law, Countess Sparre. Ehrensvärd lived a comfortable life there devoted to art studies, scientific research and philosophical musings on the countryside, culture and people of Scania, which he described in his burlesque drawings and laconic texts.

In 1792, he was persuaded to return to a high-ranking position in the military during the regency period and was named as four-star admiral the same year. He could not be reconciled with the conspiracy-oriented government and resigned in 1794 from all his military positions for a second time.

He returned to Tosterup and continued for a couple of years with his depictions of Scania, but also did more serious research on conditions for agriculture.

Ehrensvärd spent the last years of his life on his Dömesmåla estate in southern Halland. He died in Örebro in 1800, during a trip from Stockholm to his home.