Trollenäs

The Näs estate is believed to have existed as early as the 1000s on a neck of land where two streams merge. In its early days it was a manor farm within the noble Thott family. One of the owners, Tord Thott, was the equivalent of governor of Scania in the second half of the 1000s. The Thott family is very old and for many centuries it had a big influence on Danish politics, administration and, in particular, the development of estates in Scania.

The first documented owner of Näs was the knight, Stig Aagesen Thott, who is mentioned in records from 1386 and 1412. He was followed by many generations of the Thott family, among whom Tage Ottesen Thott distinguished himself by building the first castle, which was completed in 1559. Remarkably enough, today’s building rests on the same foundations as the original castle from the mid-1500s.

In what remained of the Danish period, Näs was owned by further generations of Thotts, of whom the “Scanian King”, Tage Thott, is the most well-known. His son, Knud Thott, was the last of the family, as after the Treaty of Roskilde and Sweden’s takeover of Scania he was forced into exile after a death sentence for loyalty to his former countrymen in the Scanian War.

The Näs estate was taken by the Swedish Crown and granted to Henrik Horn for a short period. Lady Helle Rosencrantz became the owner of the estate in 1682. She figures in many estate transactions in Scania at the time it became Swedish. It is clear that she exploited the uncertain legal position in Scania in the years after 1658 for her own profit, she was the widow of the Danish privy councillor and vice-admiral, Niels Trolle. Thus, she gained ownership of Näs for the Trolle family, which is still the case today. In the same year she took over the estate (1682) she gave it to her son, Arvid. One of the most renowned owners, Frederick Trolle, acquired several estates in the first half of the 1700s and in this way created the Trolle entailed estates; Trollenäs, Trolleholm, Trolle-Ljungby and Trollesund (in Nynäshamn municipality). The noble entailed estate holders also added the name Trolle to their family names, and thereby connected Trolle-Bonde to Trolleholm, Trolle-Wachtmeister to Trolle-Ljungby, and Trolle-Löwen to Trollesund. The Trolle name was linked to the Näs estate, which then changed name to Trollenäs. Arvid Trolle carried out an extensive restoration of the castle in the years 1797-1798. The next restoration, 1891-1893, gave the castle the appearance it has today. The designs, like those for the restoration of Trolleholm and many other Scanian castles, were by the Danish architect Ferdinand Meldahl. The result was that the central building was restored and new wings were constructed. In the 1980s the estate was divided within a company, Trollenäs Gods AB, with Ulf Trolle as MD and the castle and park as an independent unit under Baron Nils Trolle’s management.

Trollenäs is located 5 km north-west of Eslöv. The castle has an extensive and beautiful park.

Schnapps for domestic use

Trollenäs, like the majority of other estates in Scania, has had resources to distil drinks ”for domestic use” during the periods when the law allowed it. The first time the Swedish state prohibited distilling for domestic use was in 1698. Distilling probably continued despite the prohibition, which led Charles XII to repeat the ban in 1709 and appeal to people’s sympathy for the poor and stricken after the war, as he considered they needed the cereals more than the distilleries.

In 1746 a significant discovery was made in the field of schnapps distilling, when a member of the Scientific Academy, Eva de la Gardie, managed to produce the spirit from potatoes. At that time potatoes were not an established food and could therefore be used without pricking the conscience of the distillers for wasting cereals. An import ban on all alcoholic drinks was introduced in 1756, and distilling pans were confiscated by the state. The ban lasted for just over 30 years and in 1787 distilling for domestic use was again made legal. This led to a dramatic expansion of distilleries all over the country. In Scania it was
particularly widespread due to the rich abundance of cereals and potatoes. At Trollenäs, a special building in hewn stone was completed in 1798 solely for distilling. Internally, the house was divided into a distillery, a schnapps cellar and a chamber. The distillery’s equipment consisted of two built-in schnapps distilling pans, a mash pan and a washing boiler, all in copper, as well as nine wooden vats for different stages of the process. A master distiller was responsible for the operation and to help him he had a distillery man and a distillery hand. From the bookkeeping records it can be seen that production in 1815-16 amounted to 3,865.5 “kannor”, or cans, of schnapps (a can is 2.6 litres). Of this, 3,419 cans were to be sold and the rest, 446.5 cans, were consumed by the gentry or distributed as payment in kind to the estate’s employees. Those who produced the drink did not go empty-handed. The master distiller got the biggest allowance, 19.1 cans, or just under 50 litres, while the distillery man had to be satisfied with 9.55 cans, or just under 25 litres. Even the horses were given an allowance of 1.5 cans per horse each year. The distillery hand’s allowance is not stated in the bookkeeping.

Alcohol abuse reached such proportions during the 1800s that the state introduced several restrictions on private production in the 1850s and stopped all distilling for domestic use in 1860. Production then ceased at Trollenäs, but the building still stands and is now used as a café and gallery.