Tunbyholm

Tunbyholm Castle has been through several phases of rebuilding in its 550 years of existence as an estate. The earliest known owner was a member of the Rud family, who lived on a manor farm in a medieval village on the site. Nothing is known about the oldest building. During the rest of the 1400s, Tunbyholm was owned by individuals from the Falk and Gjöe families, among whom Mogens Axelsen Gjöe and his son, Eskil Gjöe, distinguished themselves as leading and entrusted officials in the service of the Danish state. It is possible that the first castle at Tunbyholm on the present islet was built during Eskil Gjöe’s time, as the castles of that period were often built on islands and islets in lakes and on marshy ground to be more easily defended.

In the early 1530s the last of the Gjöe family died and Tunbyholm went to the Brahe family. After several Brahe generations, Tunbyholm was acquired in 1610 by Erik Axelsen Rosenkrantz. He was influenced by the splendour and magnificence of the aristocracy era and Christian IV’s long reign. Therefore, it was natural for Rosenkrantz to build a magnificent castle at Tunbyholm in Christian IV’s Renaissance style, and construction began in 1634. After his death, Tunbyholm was bought by Henrik Huitfeldt, who had married into the family. In the early 1640s he completed the grand castle, which consisted of three high buildings facing towards the north, east and south, thereby creating an open square with a castle courtyard.

The next owner of Tunbyholm was one of Denmark’s most successful people in the mid-1600s, Joachim Gersdorff, who was married to the daughter of the late Henrik Huitfeldt. His positions over the years included privy councillor, governor of Copenhagen, lord chamberlain, feudal lord of Bornholm, lord chief justice, president of the Central Board of Administration and Knight of the Elephant Order.

His glory days coincided with what was intended to be the final phase of the virtually permanent state of war that has existed for several hundred years between Denmark and Sweden. He was therefore one of the advocates of a declaration of war against Sweden in the autumn of 1657, which was to be disastrous for the Danish state. At that time, Sweden’s army was considered to be one of Europe’s best after successes during the Thirty Years’ War. Large parts of the Swedish army were in Germany and could attack Denmark from the south. The unusually cold winter of 1657 made it possible to move over the ice between the islands, which favoured the Swedish attackers and the Danes were forced to surrender at Christmas in 1657.

The following peace negotiations in January and February 1658 ended with Joachim Gersdorff and Christen Skeel being forced to sign the peace treaty that "liberated" Denmark from one third of the country’s territory, including Skåneland, Bohuslän and Bornholm.

With the conclusion of peace Gersdorff sold his Scanian estates to the Danish Crown, and as a result of the peace settlement in Copenhagen in 1660, Tunbyholm, together with 17 other noble-owned estates in Scania, became a mortgage loan for the return of Bornholm.

The castle declined in the late 1600s and the east wing was demolished in 1707. The Swedish Crown continued to own the estate, but the main building was not lived in for long periods. During the 1730s the estate was owned by Gustav Abraham Piper who carried out an extensive restoration, particularly of the south wing, where the middle section was demolished to open up the view towards the lake. Another restoration, in the 1830s, gave Tunbyholm the appearance it has today. Tunbyholm is located in the varied countryside of Österlen by the road between Smedstorp and St. Olof. The castle is beautifully situated by a lake.

Since 1918, Tunbyholm has been owned by the Akrell family. The present owner is Peter Akrell.

A hero from Smedstorp

In 1859 the member of parliament Ola Månson emigrated, or rather fled, from Smedstorp. Politically, he represented the farming class and in everyday life he was a farmer on one of the farms in the village of Gårdlösa. Månson’s emigration was caused by the threat of jail for financial
irregularities as well as his marital troubles. His extramarital relationship was revealed when he left Sweden in the company of his 21-year-old lover and the son they had together, Karl-August. She had become the woman in his life, as he had left his lawfully wedded wife and their seven children at home in Smedstorp.

When he arrived in America, he decided to start a new life and settled down as a farmer in Melrose, Minnesota. He changed his name to August Lindberg and soon became a respected member of society. His family grew with a further six children, but three died as infants.

The first-born son, Karl-August, who had been on the voyage from Sweden, soon took the more American-sounding name, Charles. He was very gifted, studied law and became a respected lawyer in Little Falls, a town close to Melrose. He was also a member of Congress in Washington, where he represented the state of Minnesota. However, he ended his days unhappily, as he became an opponent of America’s involvement in World War I. In surviving letters of the time to Brantevik from neighbours in America, it is stated that: ”...he (congressman Lindberg) said that the US had no grounds for going to war, so they had tried to put him in prison and tell all the lies they could make up.” and furthermore how: ”his body was burned to ashes and the young Lindberg went up in an aircraft and spread the ashes over his land”. These dramatic events happened in 1924 and the person who flew the plane and spread the ashes over the fields was the 22-year-old son, Charles Lindberg Jr. He would become one of aviation history’s heroes with his solo flight over the Atlantic on 20-21 May 1927.

The Atlantic flight started at dawn on 20 May from an airport in New York. The simple plane, a single-engine Ryan called the Spirit of St. Louis, had 1,700 litres of aviation fuel on board, both in the ordinary tank and an extra tank installed in the cockpit, which considerably restricted his view. After over 33 hours in the air, he landed at Le Bourget in Paris and was greeted by a huge crowd. He returned to America and was honoured as one of the country’s greatest heroes. However, there were darker times to come; his young son was kidnapped and murdered in 1932, and for a period in the 1940s he was accused of being a Nazi. Charles Lindberg died in 1974.