

Knutstorp

Knutstorp is strongly associated with the astronomer, Tycho Brahe, as he was born here in 1546, some years before the building of the present castle.

Knutstorp was already mentioned as a manor farm in the mid-1300s, and it is known that from 1505 the powerful Brahe family owned the estate. In the mid-1500s, privy councillor Otto Brahe was Knutstorp's owner. He had 10 children from his marriage with Beate Bille – one of the sons was the future scientist and astronomer.

In the early 1550s, Otte Brahe had a quadrangular castle built in a Nordic Renaissance style. He dammed a stream to create a small lake and a moat around the castle. The north and south buildings had three storeys, whereas the wings between them had two storeys. The four buildings enclosed a paved courtyard.

The castle's purpose as combined living quarters and defensive complex is seen clearly from the loopholes that remain under the roof projection on the still-preserved south building.

After Otte Brahe's death in 1571, his son Tycho took over ownership of Knutstorp until the mid-1590s. Knutstorp was inherited within the Brahe family until 1663, when Steen Brahe, after disputes with the Swedish Crown, left the estate to his daughter and her husband, Knut Ottesen Thott of Näs. Knut Thott also got into trouble with the Swedes after continued contact with Denmark, and Knutstorp was confiscated.

In the summer of 1678, during the Scanian War, large parts of the castle were burned down by Danish local militia. After the peace agreement in Lund (1679), Thott Knutstorp got the estate back, but the heirs sold it in 1704 to Baron Cornelius Ankarstierna, whose son rebuilt Knutstorp in 1726. Then the three-story north building was demolished and the castle courtyard became an open square, surrounded on three sides by the south main building and two wings.

After another owner from the Ankarstierna family, Count Frederick George Hans Carl Wachtmeister of Johannishus bought the estate in 1771, and since then Knutstorp has remained in the family's ownership. The present owner is Count Henry Wachtmeister.

What was once an extensive building has been gradually reduced by wars and fires. The latest accident was in 1956, when Knutstorp was yet again ravaged by fire and the wings had to be demolished. However, the south building from the 1500s is still standing.

Knutstorp Castle is situated 8 km north of Svalöv in beautiful countryside on the southern slope of Söderåsen. The motor racing circuit, "Ring Knutstorp", is part of the estate, located just over 2 km from the castle.

The genius of Tycho Brahe

Tyge Brahe was born at Knutstorp Castle on 14 December 1546. He was the oldest son of Otte Brahe and Beate Bille, who both belonged to the Danish nobility. The name Tyge was soon translated to the Latin form, Tycho, and it was with this name that he was to become Scania's most well-known person of all time.

He spent most of his childhood with his uncle, Jörgen Brahe, and aunt, Inger Oxe, at the Tosterup estate, as they had no children of their own. He also spent long periods with relations at Herrevadskloster.

His talent and thirst for knowledge meant that he was sent to university in Copenhagen at the early age of 13 to study philosophy and rhetoric. In 1560, there was an eclipse of the sun, which captivated the young Tycho so much that he began to buy astronomical literature and observation instruments to complement his studies.

His great thirst for knowledge led him out into Europe to universities in Leipzig, Wittenberg, Rostock and Basel to study law, the humanities and science. His interest in astronomy meant that during his stay in Leipzig he devoted himself to astronomy studies without permission, but he was forgiven when the great success of his studies was recognised. He also had time for other things

such as having part of his nose cut off in a duel with another student in Rostock. It was an "accident" that he was reminded of every day for the rest of his life, as he always covered the injured part of his nose with a metal plate.

In 1571, Tycho Brahe returned to Scania, and a year later he took over ownership of Knutstorp after his father died. However, he spent long periods at Herrevadskloster, where he built a laboratory for chemistry studies.

It was during such a stay there that on 11 November 1572 he made his momentous discovery of a new and very bright star in the constellation of Cassiopeia. He observed the star for a year and noticed how the brightness gradually dimmed and disappeared. He called the phenomenon "stella nova" and described it in a book titled *The Stella Nova*, in 1573. The observations became known throughout Europe and made him one of the most well-known scientists of his time. Much of his fame is attributable to the fact that he questioned the prevailing belief in the stars' heavenly perfection and eternally static condition. Today's astronomers verify Tycho Brahe's "stella nova", i.e. a dying star that disperses its material after a powerful explosion. One can still see the "remains" of his discovery through a powerful telescope.

The year after his famous discovery, he married a commoner, Kristine Barbara Jörgensdatter. The couple had eight children. After Tycho's death in 1601, she lived on her own farm at Böhmen. When she died in 1604, she was buried beside her husband at his grave in the Teyn Church in Prague.

From 1574, Tycho Brahe taught at Copenhagen University. He was convinced that advances in astronomy require great precision in observations. King Frederick II proposed that Brahe should found an astronomical observatory on the island of Ven in the Öresund. He accepted the proposal and built an observatory that he called Uraniborg, which became the most advanced of its type in Europe.

He also made his own instruments, which had such precision that it is estimated that Tycho Brahe's measurements were 100 times more exact than previous observations. In particular, he studied the planet Mars and produced reports with extensive data.

However, Tycho Brahe got into trouble with the Danish court and left Uraniborg in 1597 to go into exile in Prague. There he was appointed as the astronomer to Emperor Rudolf II with the Benatky Castle as his "official residence". He died in 1601.