

# Börtinge kloster

Börtingekloster got its name from the nunnery (nunnekloster) of the Benedictine order that was on the site in the 1100s. The nunnery was on an island in the northern part of the lake, Börtingesjön, but later drainage, damming and level-reduction of the lake has changed the landscape.

Börtingekloster was on royal land, which is why it was granted to loyal nobility with an obligation to maintain the nunnery and its inhabitants.

During the Reformation of the 1530s, Börtingekloster was taken by the Crown and bestowed on noblemen in royal service. The first to be enfeoffed with Börtinge after the Reformation was Axel Brahe of Krageholm, followed by Knud Gedde from 1551.

One of Scania's most powerful women in history, Gjörvell Faddersdotter Sparre, took over Börtinge in 1582. During her time, she had a parish church built and tore down the medieval nunnery building. After her death, the estate was granted to Sivert Grubbe and in following generations to members of the powerful Thottska family of Ericsholm, now Trolleholm.

After Scania became Swedish, Börtingekloster went to a son of King Charles X Gustav. He was an officer and served for long periods in the Dutch army. During his time, Börtingekloster was pledged to a financier, Gripenstierna, and thereafter for short periods in the 1740s it belonged to families such as Stenbock, von Königsmarck, Clefwe and Hegardt.

In 1745, the estate was sold to the chamberlain, Joachim Beck-Friis. He was then only 23 and had a very successful life including a period as Börtingekloster's owner until 1797. With King Gustav III's approval, he transferred his right of entailed estate from his Danish estate to Börtingekloster. The king issued a letter of conferment in 1791, making Börtingekloster Sweden's only countship – then as now. Descendants of the first owner, Beck-Friis, then held the estate for several generations until the present day. The current owner of Börtingekloster is Baroness Eva Ramel.

No building remains from the medieval nunnery or the later half-timbered houses. The ruin of the first parish church from the 1580s can still be seen. The present castle, originally in Gustavian style with two storeys, was built by Joachim Beck-Friis in 1763, based on designs by Carl Hårleman. A third storey was added in 1873.

## The surroundings

Börtingekloster is located 10 km west of Skurup. Close to the castle is the lake, Börtingesjön, where one of Scania's most important defensive castles, Lindholmen, was situated. The remains of medieval fortifications can be seen on the estate

## The counts' railway

The 1800s was in many ways a dynamic century with a sharp increase in the population, both in the country and the cities. Agriculture adapted to the new times with land reform, new crops and cultivation methods, the expansion of acreage by land reclamation and ditching, and the introduction of artificial fertilisers. The population rise meant a need for more food, but as farming became more efficient there were no difficulties in meeting the increased demand.

In the middle of the century, a new communication technology was introduced that was to have a huge significance for the entire country, and with it the province of Scania. The railway was introduced on a broad front and gained a lot of attention. Most people saw the opportunities, but many were also scared by the new technology's inhuman strength and speed.

Count Corfitz Beck-Friis at Börtingekloster was one of the first landowners in Scania to see the possibilities for increased trade in agricultural products if the railway could be extended. He

contacted the district's estate owners in the mid-1860s and voiced the idea of a shared, privately owned railway running eastwards from Malmö towards Ystad. It was quickly shown to be a good idea, and there was enough support to start planning railway construction. In 1872, the planning was completed, the company, Malmö-Ystads Järnväg, was founded, and a share issue attracted great interest. A subsidy application was made to the state, which was rejected on the grounds that the region and its noble businessmen were too well off for the project to receive a state subsidy.

However, the truth was revealed towards the end of the project, when funds were lacking to put in the broad gauge track as planned. It was only when Baron Julius Stjärnblad of Marsvinsholm made an extra contribution that the threat of a narrow-gauge railway was averted, and the track was built according to the original plans.

It was inaugurated in December 1874 and was quickly christened "the counts' railway" due to the estate owners' involvement. The consequence was that every estate represented in the company was guaranteed its own railway station on its own land. Skabersjö, Börringe, Näsbyholm, Marsvinsholm and Charlottenlund were some of the "castle stations". This consideration for the owners strengthened the concept as such, but lengthened the route with some extra detours.

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