



The Drottningsskär Citadel



THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The defence of the Karlskrona Naval base has always been of paramount importance. At the same time as the town was established Count Erik Dahlberg, the Commandant of the Royal Engineers, drafted a proposal for the construction of the fortresses of Båkholmen and Dynan on two islands on each side of the fairway. These were later renamed Kungsholmen and Drottningsskär respectively and by the middle of the 18th century Drottningsskär had with the exception of three round



towers originally envisaged by Dahlberg and which were never built, been more or less completed according to his design. In the beginning Drottningsskär was the most important of the two fortresses, but the main defence of the fairway soon came to be centred on Kungsholmen, for when it was later found necessary to strengthen the defences, the former islet was quite simply too small. As Drottningsskär was never enlarged or reconstructed,

it therefore presents the visitor of to-day with an exceptionally well preserved illustration of fortress construction from the 17th century.

THE DONJON

The fortress is dominated by the mighty donjon, a defensive structure which was used to house the artillery, the powder magazine and the garrison's living quarters. It is three storeys in height, built of granite with walls, which are in places up to five metres thick. The thickest walls, which have been built to withstand heavy siege artillery, face the mainland.

THE FORTRESS COURTYARD

On the seaward side, the courtyard is protected by the main rampart, which also houses the living quarters for both officers and men. These barracks are built strong enough to be able to withstand enemy bombardment. Although most of the rooms had open fireplaces, the damp could cause considerable problems and there were times when water would flood the entire floor. The middlemost of the rooms, the one with the two stoves, was the bakery. The garrison commandant's quarters were situated adjacent to the bakery until 1721 when the wooden house in the courtyard was built for the

commanding officer. A bell, dated 1796, hangs in the courtyard, and it would seem that this is a ship's bell donated by a trader from the north German town of Flensburg as a token of gratitude after his son had been rescued from a shipwreck.

THE BASTIONS

Four bastions are incorporated into the fortress, all of which are named after Queens of Sweden. Thus the south bastion is called Hedvig, the west, Maria, the north, Ulrica, and the east, Christina. In the courtyard, a Latin verse carved in a stone slab, declares that these Queens shall control the kingdom of the sea-god.

ERIK DAHLBERG'S PROUDEST WORK

Erik Dahlberg was very proud of the Drottningsskär citadel and he had a commemorative tablet placed over the gateway on the landward side, which proclaimed that the fortress had been completed in 1696. He also affirmed, when the defensive works had been completed, "that not along the entirety of the coasts of Europe could there hardly be a more beautiful citadel".

TALES AND LEGENDS

There are many tales and legends surrounding Drottningsskär, both of the ghosts and apparitions that have wandered along the ramparts and of the prisoners that have languished in the depths of the fortress. One of the most gruesome tales told is that of a certain "Count Rålamb" who at the end of the 18th century had been cast into the dungeons for unspecified crimes, and of the marks after his manacles which can still be seen on the walls. Rålamb had possibly been involved in the Anjala League and the conspiracy which led to the assassination of King Gustav III in 1792 but who, when set free after 18 years of imprisonment, died but a few days after his release.



During the three hundred years that the Drottningsskär citadel and the Kungsholm fortress have served as the guardians of the fairway into Karlskrona, they have never yet had to fire a shot in anger against an enemy of Sweden.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Karlskrona in sight!