



1\_Galärvägen\_Lejret ved Elgsjön slik kunstneren Lennart Karlsson har framstilt det\_Foto:Svein Norheim\_DSC\_2572.JPG

## ***GALÄRVÄGEN*** and the **KING KARL XII**

***In the summer of 1718 Karl XII mounded his second Norwegian campaign. He had to invest Fredriksten fortress from the sea, partly to assure his own supplies of food and ammunition and partly to stop provisions reaching the fortress. The opening Danish and Norwegian forces had closed the mouth of the fjord at Sponviken,***

***and a way across had to be found. It needed 800 soldiers to haul and row the twelve galleys 25 km to Idefjord. The largest of them was 20 metres long and up to 50 tons of weight. The journey began at Strömsvattnet on 26 June (8 July in the Norwegian calendar) Stores were moved from Strömstad with packhorses.***

The first boat, Pollus, reached Hällesmörk, north of Krokstrand, at Idefjord on the night between 6 and 7 July, but not before the beginning of September did the last galley arrive.

Large boats had an ordnance of 20 falconers and six cannon. They were crewed by 40 seamen, with five officers and a force of 100 marines. They were rowing galleys with up to twelve pairs of oars, two men to an oar.

The Norwegian had likewise portages sixteen of their galleys past the Swedish fort at Svinesund. After two months of naval engagement the Swedish fleet finally reached Fredriksten at the beginning of November. The campaign was broken off when the King received a fatal shot to the head on 30. November (11 December).

### **Blomsholm**

You are standing at the beginning of Galärvägen, the route used by Karl XII in 1718 to transport twelve galleys from the Skagerrak at Strömstad by land to Idefjorden. The operation required the efforts of up to eight hundred soldiers and took two and a half months, starting on 26 June. The purpose was to reinforce the army, as unobtrusively as possible, prior to launching an attack on the fortress of Fredriksten, near present-day Halden.

Blomsholm was suitable as one of several headquarters used by Karl XII and the place was strategically well located for the erection of a field hospital. Until November 1718 the dead and the wounded from the various battles were brought here. The main building you see today was built around 1700, not long before the fighting at the border.

Today it is difficult to imagine the scene: the vessels being dragged forward with block and tackle, timber rollers and levers, horses neighing, officers yelling out orders, the squeak of wood on wood, soldiers shouting. From the hospital barracks and the tents are heard heart-rending screams, the field surgeons call for assistance. Along the bridle path come cartloads of provisions, ammunition, arms and timber from the stores at Strömstad.



CXII\_detailj av minnestenen på Glanarudden\_Foto-Svein Norheim\_DSC\_6181.JPG

## Färnön

The galley transport did not affect Färnön itself, passing on the lake far below the precipitous coast of the island. At times the island is attached to the shore, but at high tide it appears an impregnable fortress, with its sheer drop to the water. That is sure to have been what the local population in the Iron Age thought, in the first five centuries A.D. People made their way here when there were rumours of approaching strangers of evil intent! Ancient fortresses are often hard to date and may very well have been built and used over a lengthy period. The fortress may also be seen as a territorial marker, a place for control of the area, of visitors and of various transport routes.

The island represented a natural defence against attack from any direction except the north. So here they built ramparts of stone, at least three of them, no doubt reinforced with stakes and palisades. The length of the three ramparts is between 30 - 120 metres. Through the three ramparts we can still see the entrance to the central part of the fort, an area of 300 x

140 metres.

In our own time the fortress has also acquired another history. In the theories and stories of Queen Astrid, Olav Tryggvason and the battle of Svolder against Svein Forkbeard in the year 1000. It was on Färön she lived, the queen of the legend!

Visitors are asked to respect the fact that the island is a bird sanctuary for part of the year.

## Färingen – the northern end

You are now in an area where three roads meet, routes with somewhat differing backgrounds. When the galley transport reached the northern end of Färingen it ran into a problem. The smaller vessels could take a more direct course towards new water at Prästvattnet, following what was known as Vintervägen, the winter-road, an old and heavily used route when the ground was frozen. The largest galley, the brigantine Luren, about 20 metres in length and corresponding beam, was too broad for such a manoeuvre. The pass through the rocks was too narrow! Instead Luren was taken further north, over the higher ground and across swampy mosses on its way towards and past Näsinge Rectory.

The Swedish army needed immense quantities of stores, timber, arms and ammunition in its preparation for the capture of the fortress of Fredriksten. The transport of corn, salted meat in barrels, water and materials for tents and barracks depended on packhorses and wagons. The bridle way followed a very old course across Långåsberget, where 12 cairns and stone settings mark the ancient route.

## Cairns, bigger cairns and stone circles

The Bronze Age and early Iron Age cairns often contain a cist. Substantial quantities of stone have then

been thrown on top. The biggest cairn is fully 36 metres long. The cairns frequently serve to mark the route, both along the coast and inland. At this time, some 3000 years ago, the sea was close and the lakes around here were parts of a shallow bay.

## Näsinge Prästgård

You are midway along Galärvägen, the route used by Karl XII in 1718 to move 12 vessels over land from Strömstad to Idefjorden. The project employed eight hundred soldiers and took two and a half months, beginning on 26 June. The aim was to reinforce the army, as unobtrusively as possible, prior to an attack on the fortress of Fredriksten at present-day Halden.

The officers of Karl XII had quarters at the rectory during the summer and autumn of 1718. Several hundred grenadiers, infantry and artillery were billeted at Näsinge under Colonel Baltzar von Dahlheim. Guns, ammunition, food, fodder and all other equipment were brought by horses on simple bridle paths over rugged terrain from Strömstad. All the galleys except Luren, the largest vessel and roughly 20 metres in length, were rowed across Prästvattnet and hauled across the fields past the rectory and on to Lake Längen, further east. Luren was instead drawn north of the lake and the church.

## Huslös

Shouts and the neighing of horses cleave the air in the late summer of 1718, groaning blocks and wood grating on stone. Officers yell out orders, cursing and gasping for breath. Heart-rending roars from a trapped soldier, a rope that snapped and logs that slipped. There was nothing to be done except horse transport to the field hospital at Blomsholm.

Sounds and smells, far, far from the tranquillity that you find here today.

A gigantic effort was needed to haul the galleys up the steep gradient from the lake. Here there was open terrain with hardly a tree. Such timber as there was, it was needed for the transport. As well as enormous manpower, several hundred men with ropes and levers, they used winches, pulleys and rollers to heave the vessels up. Logs laid end to end made the haul easier.

## Dödmanstenen – The Dead Man's Stone

The population of an area have often linked particular events or phenomena to unusual natural formations. Impressive size, for example, has to be given a "natural" explanation. Giant trees, caves, erratic boulders and bodies of water have thus acquired their own story, more or less factual. The Dead Man's Stone is the range of a shotgun up the path (about 60 metres).

Pulling 12 galleys over dry land was such a huge undertaking that the event has had a long life in popular memory and oral tradition, even down to our own time. The erratic boulder, deposited by the enormous movements of the inland ice, has therefore become associated with the transport of the galleys. Ever since the "Wars of King Karl", the great boulder has been known as the Dead Man's Stone, "... in memory of one who died there on that occasion, whose spirit superstition says can still be heard at midnight, bewailing its fate."

What is the time now, dear traveller?

## Galejemyrarna - The galley moors

The transport over the marshes in the late summer and autumn of 1718 was very difficult with back-breaking labour across often bottomless mires, wet and heavy. In such habitats mosquitoes and flies thrive, and the sweating soldiers were the target of myriads of angry insects. No hiding place, no

escape. Beneath the vessels were laid beds of "brushwood, logs and oak planks and rollers at least 2 ells high".

Once they had crossed the marshes the vessels were launched at Galärhällen in Älgsjön, rowed across to the north end of the lake and dragged ashore near Leijret.

Only a hundred years ago the beds were still there, relatively undisturbed, but they have since been raided by the local population in search of fencing. Ship's planking was also recovered, and iron mountings, which were used for forging. Even today, timber can be found under layers of wet moss and grass.

## Leijret - The camp

Leijret, or Karl XII's Camp, is the site of one of the camps of soldiers and officers during the transport of the galleys. During the summer and autumn months of 1718 there were several hundred Caroline soldiers and ships' crews here, in tents and wooden barracks. Most of these had been erected in the area between the northern part of the lake and the rock face to the west. Here the trees grew sparsely and the ground had been beaten down by soldiers' boots and horseshoes. Over the area hung the smells of horses and latrines, of new-baked bread and salted meat. The air was filled with hammering and sawing, neighing horses and noisy soldiers... or were the young lads just apprehensive? Perhaps there was an oppressive silence in anticipation of what was to come when battle was joined.

## Hällesmörk – The battle can start

You are at the end of Galärvägen, the route used by Karl XII to move twelve galleys over land from the Skagerrak at Strömstad to Idefjord. The operation required up to eight hundred soldiers and took two and a half months, starting on 26 June. The aim was to reinforce the army as unobtrusively as possible prior to an attack on the fortress of Fredriksten near present-day Halden. The first ships were launched on the night of 6-7 July 1718.

On Skriverøa, which lay opposite, the enemy saw what was happening and attacked with four vessels. The Swedish land battery at Hällesmörk opened fire on the Dano-Norwegian forces with cannons and muskets. Karl XII and the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp followed the battle from a cliff on the shore.

The fleet was gradually strengthened. When the largest vessel, Luren, had been launched on 2 September 1718, the Swedes had twelve vessels in the fjord. The Dano-Norwegian fleet was for the most part beside or behind Skriverøa, which was fortified with a battery of heavy cannon and mortars. During the summer and autumn there were at least four battles, with losses on both sides. Karl XII was himself on board on a couple of occasions.

The two batteries at the monument on Glanarudden were also armed and prepared in 1814 at the time of the last war between the two neighbouring countries.