

Kung Carls port



1-Sundsborg_Kung-Carls-port-i-sandre-del-av-området.-Her-gjikk-veien-ned-til-Svinesund_Bildet-viser-stedet-under-beredskapsida-med-speringer-og-skilderhus_DSC_1985.jpg

shapes and sizes. Right through the camp the old highway, the Royal Road, ran southwards from the ferry station.

SUNDSBORG – THE CAMP

In 1718 the central camp of the Sundsborg fort was built in between the hills. This is where the officers and some of the men lived. Here were workshops, food stocks and supplies of gunpowder. There was even a church with its own burial ground. In appearance, the camp looked like a small town, with barracks, log houses and tents of all

The camp swarmed with officers and men, with horses and carts. From here, heavy cannon were dragged up to the 12 forts that had been constructed in the surrounding mountains. In addition to the officers and common soldiers, any number of craftsmen plied their various trades. Bakers, coopers, armourers, tailors and shoemakers were fully occupied in supplying the force of over 800 men who were stationed here. The soldiers were periodically posted to Sundsborg.

Sundsborg again became important during the Second World War, when the soldiers blasted out defensive positions and shelters in the surrounding mountains. The site of the old camp was taken into use once more, although to a far lesser extent than in the time of Charles XII. Here, the remains of machine gun nests and artillery emplacements can still be seen. Eight hundred men were stationed here between 1940 and 1945. Today it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the relics of battles fought in the 18th century from those of the Second World War. They are becoming inextricably mixed in the tangled growth of the forest.

KING CARL'S PORT

The old highway, the Royal Road, ran right through the camp, of which this is the southern boundary. This was the entry into Sundsborg from the south. The ramparts on either side were thrown up to protect the central area of the camp and here there was a gateway known as Carls Port, or Charles' Gate. The church was built inside the rampart. Exactly what the church looked like is unclear, although it is likely that it was a fairly simple, barracks-like building. There were two burial grounds; they lay among deciduous trees between the mountain and the road leading to the ferry. Here, landowners later uncovered bones and military buttons when the land was brought under cultivation. Poor hygiene and limited medical resources resulted in many deaths during military campaigns. Diseases claimed more lives than did the actual fighting. The number of people who lie buried here is unknown.

On 6 December 1718, the body of Charles XII was brought from Tistedalen outside Halden to Sundsborg. The coffin was borne by men from the Svea Life Guards regiment. The body lay in the house of the commander during the night between 6 and 7 December. It was then taken to Uddevalla on a black carriage drawn by six black horses and escorted by a force of 250 men. On 13 December the procession arrived in Uddevalla, where the body was embalmed. The funeral took place in Riddarholmskyrkan in Stockholm on 26 February 1719.



Sundsborg-skanser_kart-med-detalljer-over-skansene_Sveriges-krig-14.12--Kopi.jpg

Special defensive outposts for both light and heavy weapons were established in the surrounding mountains. These were constructed of dry-stone walls, some with towers or other defences at the corners. From this sign, walk about 50 metres up the rampart to the right and follow the red markings. There you will find the remains of Post No. 3, built to cover Carls Port and protect it from ambushes from the south. Close to the road to the right of the sign lie the remains of a defence post constructed during the Second World War using concrete and stones taken from the 18th-century outposts.

THE CANNONWALL

One of the many defence installations built in the Svinesund area. This particular one is a relic of the Sundsborg fort built by Charles XII in 1716-1718 to provide protection for vessels crossing the sound or sailing up to Halden. After the king's death at Fredriksten fortress in 1718, the defensive positions and ramparts

were pulled down by both Swedish and Danish troops in the following year.

Here, the soldiers excavated a gun emplacement on the natural slope, moving the earth downwards to form a rampart about 50 metres long. On the flat surface behind this rampart they deployed Sundsborg's largest cannons, eight in all. All were aimed at the Norwegian side of the fiord and the ferry station below. The cannons were made of cast iron produced at Swedish iron foundries. A single piece could weigh about 1500 kg.

Sundsborg saw several battles during the two years in which it remained in service. On 16 August 1718, in a letter to Lützow, commander of the Danish-Norwegian army, Norwegian Fortifications Commander Landsberg described a battle that had taken place on the previous day:

"In the presence of Charles XII, the Swedes crossed Svinesund at Sundsborg, spiked 4 cannon and blew up a fifth at the Rörbeck battery without themselves losing a single man. In the face of an intense cannonade, which lasted from early morning until the evening, our own men had been forced to withdraw from those places."

In the early 18th century, this area was made up of open terrain and sparse woodland. Cattle and other livestock grazed freely and helped keep down the vegetation. Any flat surfaces, including tiny plots of land out in the woods, were used for the cultivation of crops. Today things have changed, and it may be difficult to imagine what the local landscape looked like back then. In the absence of vegetation we would enjoy a fantastic view of the sound, the ferry stations and the old roads running along the slopes.

THE ROYAL ROAD

An important bridle path known since early times as Kungsvägen, or the Royal Road, ran between Copenhagen and Christiania (Oslo), the previous capitals of the Union. The road was used by riding postmen, by bishops, army officers and royal envoys. Journeymen and itinerant pedlars travelled the road on foot – it was something of the E6 highway of its time! Today, traces of the old road can still be seen in many places; this is one of them. The steep hills leading down to the ferry stations were notoriously dangerous, especially in winter, when cart teams sometimes had to be restrained with ropes, logs and stones to prevent them from running downhill too fast – at breakneck speed. In days gone by, travelling was a real adventure. The stone monument on the wall at the crossroads commemorates a much-needed improvement to the road carried out in 1840.

In the early 19th century, Carl XIV Johan, Sweden's new king, drew attention to the imposing features of the local countryside. Tradition has it that he ordered the construction of the white building with the hipped roof for use as his personal summer residence. The building is known as the King's House to this day, even though the king himself never returned to claim it.

During the conflict of 1808, Svinesund was once again the centre of attention. Defence posts were reinforced and a Swedish officer lost his life. On the corner of the rock inside the grounds, to the right, a carving commemorates the event. A "promising young military man", Count Axel Oxenstjerna, was careless enough to be walking on the road when a shot was fired from a window on the other side of the fiord. The ball found its mark and proved fatal. Another conflict was sparked off in 1814, when a large pontoon bridge was thrown across the fiord and Swedish troops marched into Østfold. In August, peace was restored and, in the town of Moss, Norway and Sweden signed the convention establishing a personal union between the two nations.