

IN THE WAKE OF EBBE SKAMMELSON



Enjoy the view of Lake Unnen

At Sjö visitors can enjoy one of the most scenic views of Lake Unnen. There are good viewpoints in the area near the buildings but please avoid disturbance. There is a tiny sandy beach at Sandboviken. It is accessed by following the small forest road southwards. Land belonging to the vil-lages Önne and Nässja is visible across the lake.

The beech forest in the western part of the Reserve

A good tip is to continue along the small forest road further towards the southwest from Sandboviken. It is aligned along small old fields which have now been converted into grazing land rich in herbs and with lush trees. Further on it reaches a wonderful beech forest on higher ground in the western part of the Reserve. The tree crowns are dense forming a green “canopy of heaven” in the summer. It is in this area the oldest signs of cultivation are found. The ground is covered with wood anemones in the spring. Oak fern is another typical plant of that forest type. A walk in the area is good for the mind, body and spirit.

The terraces

Visitors should not miss the medieval cultivation terraces with narrow former fields in the northern part of the Reserve. Some terraces can be seen



GPS (RT 90 2.5 gon V)
 The car park: 1360623 E, 6310265 N
 The beach at Sandboviken: 1360968 E, 6309900 N
 The hill with medieval cultivation terraces: 1360726 E, 6310185 N
 The beech forest: 1360845 E, 6309468 N



from the road north of the buildings where there is an upward slope on the western side of the road.

How to get there?

On the road from Unnaryd towards Lidhult there is a sign “Sjö” some six kilometres from Unnaryd. It is also possible to come by boat on Lake Unnen.

Illustration on cover: The old buildings at Sjö. Photo: Sören Kabell. **Main sources of information:** The County Administrative Board of Halland; “En sällsam bildvärld i Sjö”, by Stig Tornehed, published in “Södra Unnaryd–Jälluntofta Fornminnes- och Hembygdsförenings Årsskrift 1983”; “Säterierna Sjö och Augustbo i Södra Unnaryd” by Carl Lindstén, published in “Södra Unnaryd–Jälluntofta Fornminnes- och Hembygdsförenings Årsskrift 1954”. **Research:** Malin Ekwall. **Text:** Karin Tengnäs. **Photo where there is no other indication:** Bo and Karin Tengnäs. **Logotype:** Lars Lidman. **Design:** Tecknargården/Willy Lindström. **Production:** Naturbruk AB/Bo Tengnäs. **Project coordination:** Bitte Rosén Nilsson, Hylte kommun. **Copyright:** Naturbruk AB. **Year:** 2006.
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“Old traditions characterise Sjö in more than one respect. It was most of all evident when the sister Anna offered us coffee during a visit to the house. The table was some distance from the wall so there was ample space for a couple of chairs. I was offered a seat with my back towards the wall. Anna got almost upset when one of my companions tried to take the seat next to the door to the kitchen. No! Mister must not sit there! Sit further in, sit further in! And so, we were placed in the high seat in the same way as honoured guests had been welcomed through centuries. I will always remember when I sat in the high seat in Sjö.”

Translation of a section from Stig Tornehed: “En sällsam bildvärld i Sjö”, published in the Yearbook of Unnaryd–Jälluntofta Society for Cultural Heritage 1983.

Sjö Nature Reserve



The Sjö Nature Reserve covers an area of about 40 hectares (100 acres). The area consists of an ancient agricultural landscape that is the result of human activities over many generations, for example, crop cultivation, mowing of meadows and letting livestock to graze. Small former fields are dispersed in the area around the farm buildings intermixed with attractive deciduous forest. The forest in that part of the Reserve consists mainly of oak and aspen with scattered birch trees and a rich undergrowth of hazel. Lily-of-the-valley, wood anemone and wood sorrel are common herbs adding beauty in the spring. The farmland which is now neither managed nor covered with forest has evolved into meadows that are rich in flowering herbs, such as cow parsley, meadow buttercup and S. Johns-Wort. The conditions are favourable for a rich fauna due to the varied landscape and the proximity to the lake.

Cultivation since the early Iron Age

The oldest signs of cultivation are found in an area that is now covered with beech forest. There are numerous cairns in that area. The origin of such cairns is that people have gathered stones in heaps as they cleared the land before cultivation. Remnants of old fields can be traced among the beech trees. It is known that land was cultivated already early in the Iron Age in other nearby areas. Most likely, the remnants in the beech forests at Sjö are of the same impressive age.

A new farming system emerges

Some of the oldest cultivations had already been abandoned by the middle of the 19th century. A new agricultural landscape had during the past centuries emerged around the farm buildings. The farmland was now closest to the buildings. This farmland consisted of cultivated areas and mown meadows which were all fenced off for protection from livestock. The present nature reserve is mostly located on what used to be this farming zone. The

fields were small and located at higher elevations and on well-drained soils. Further away was the less intensively utilised land. This land was primarily for grazing. Wood for construction and heating was also collected from there. An agricultural landscape of this kind has its origin in medieval times.

Farming on terraced land in the northern part

A hilly area in the northern part of the Reserve is particularly interesting. There, elongated, small fields on built-up terraces were intermixed with meadow areas. The meadows were mown to secure hay for the livestock during the winter. Although each piece of land used as a meadow was small, the total area was considerable. This was typical of the old way of subsistence farming in the area. The livestock feed had to suffice for the winter and large areas had to be mown as the grass yields were rather low. Now the former fields are under permanent vegetation cover with a lot of herbs. Between these open areas are strips of forest on the areas that were previously mown. Stone clearance cairns bear witness to the hard work of past generations.

The newest cultivations

The newest cultivations were put under the plough as late as about a hundred

years ago. Thanks to better farm equipment it was, by then, possible to drain and cultivate the wetter areas. There are areas with formerly cultivated peat bogs in the southern part of the Reserve.

The old residential buildings

There are two attractive buildings placed near the lake shore and at a right angle. These are the old residential buildings, still located at their original site. Both are typical houses of more wealthy farmers of the 18th and 19th century in this area. The southernmost building is the oldest, built before 1850. The northern building is from the late 19th century. Both houses have beautifully decorated glass verandas. The houses are constructed from timber



This bonad, painted by Johannes Nilsson, illustrates the wedding in Kana.

arranged horizontally and lined with thinner boards that are placed vertically. In line with local tradition the houses are painted red. This tradition dates back to the 18th century. At that time, however, it was only very wealthy house owners who could afford to paint the houses. It was only by the end of the 18th century and in the 19th century that it became popular among the ordinary farmers to paint the houses red. From the middle of the 19th century, the red houses with white decorations have featured in the Swedish countryside.

Sjö under the manor Vallsnäs

In 1562, Sjö was one of a group of farms that belonged to the manor of Vallsnäs. The earlier history in terms of tax privileges is not known. The owner of this cluster of farms, Lasse Jönsson, betrayed the Swedish nation in 1563. As he was

a traitor all his assets were nationalised, including the farms at Sjö. But in 1630, the farms were again privately owned and awarded the status of a manor. The owner was by then Adolf Gustav Hård, the same man that inherited Sundranäs and Norrnäs at the southern tip of Lake Bolmen. After that time Sjö changed owner repeatedly. In 1667 the following was noted in conjunction with a shift of owner: The afore-mentioned manor was “built up” with decent houses. Good farmland and meadows, wonderful hops gardens, good and profusely producing acorn forest, good fishing and good waterfall for the mill. Sjö was by then in an excellent condition. It is likely that the tax privileges were withdrawn in conjunction with the “reduction” in the 1680s. That so-called “reduction” was a nationalisation of assets that belonged to the church. Similar reductions have occurred at other times of the Swedish history.

Old wall paintings (bonads) from Sjö

“Three holy kings ride on three well-fed horses. The wise virgins stand there with their lit lamps. To the tunes of violin and clarinet commenced the dance at the wedding in Kana and water was made into wine”. This is the text on one of the old bonad paintings from Sjö. Many of the paintings illustrate biblical events. They are the predecessors of today’s strip-cartoons. In the area around Unnaryd and Sjö the tradition of bonad painting is about 200 years old. The paintings that were kept in Sjö were originally painted to decorate a smaller cottage in Fägerhult in 1808. Johannes Nilsson (1757–1827) was the most skilled painter of bonads and he was awarded the task. He started the work by measuring the walls. The woven material made from linen was produced on the farm. Then, when the artist came to start his work, he told everyone to keep away. He wanted to keep his secrets for himself. Gradually Johannes’ painting skills evolved and became eventually very personal and independent. His production is regarded as the peak performance of the southwest-Swedish school of bonad painting. The collection that used to be at Sjö was no exception. The collection is now kept at the Bonads’ Museum at Unnaryd.

Rules and regulations in the Nature Reserve

The objective of the Nature Reserve is to

maintain the socio-cultural, botanical and aesthetic values of the area. Most of the small former fields are to be maintained as open areas, mainly by livestock grazing. The deciduous forest is to be maintained at its current level. Careful use of the area for recreational purposes is to be promoted. Certain rules and regulations have been declared in order to reach these objectives. For example, you must not camp overnight, make fires, ride a horse, park a car outside the designated car parks or deliberately disturb the fauna.

The Iron Age. In the Nordic countries the division into different historical periods differs from that of the Mediterranean countries. In the Nordic countries the Iron Age commenced about 500 B.C. and lasted until 400 A.D.

Hectare. A hectare is 100 metres x 100 metres corresponding to 2.5 acres.

Falu rödfärg is the red paint that provides much of the house decoration in the Swedish countryside. The paint is based on pigments that were originally derived from by-products of the Falu copper mine in the province of Dalecarlia. Copper ore low in copper that is left to weather for a long time turns into a red rather soft mass, “rödmull”, which besides copper contains iron oxides, silicic acid and zinc. The paint production at Falun started before 1616. The pigment has been produced industrially since 1764. The pigment is ground, packed and sent to paint producers for the production of the paint.

A manor (säteri, sätesgård) was originally a land holding owned and inhabited by a person belonging to the nobles. As the nobles had privileges, such land holdings were exempted from land tax. The building was supposed to be well maintained to match the status of the owner. The tax privileges could be jeopardised if the building or the land was neglected.

A stone clearance cairn.

