

# FORSMARK VILLAGE

Located in the north-east of the county of Uppland, Forsmark was in the late 18th century described thus by the well-known Swedish poet Thomas Torild:

*"Oh Forsmark! Palace of the deserts.  
Like a sweet spell, and like a place of Valhalla  
both wild and beautiful: made by the genius of Scandinavia  
among fractures of clefts a path of honour has been cleared."*

With its location close to water, woodland and iron ore, the spot fulfilled the criteria necessary for the village's long term purpose - the iron production. Forsmark's history stretches as far back as the 16th century, and with new and different owners during the 18th century the village developed to the wonderful oasis Thomas Torild wrote about, in this otherwise quite barren landscape.

When the Crown founded a mining village here in 1570, a smaller iron production was already in operation, supposedly since the late 15th century. The earliest history of Forsmark has not been fully researched. In the long term it was not the ore in Forsmark that made it possible to continue handling iron, but the ore in Dannemora, about 25 kilometres away.

The founding of Forsmark mining village in the late 16th century was part of King Gustav Vasa and his sons' goal to build up and organize a Swedish industry and in that way provide important profits to the Crown.

## Forsmark for lease

Times changed and Forsmark was eventually for lease. Gerard de Besche, Peter Rochet, Ewert Hoes and Welam Vervier continued managing available Forsmark. In 1643 the lease was to be renewed and de Besche and Rochet managed to buy the village. After a few years Rochet had run into financial difficulties, and the de Besche family became Forsmark's new owner. The new technique of forging, which the former owners led by de Besche had introduced, demanded new competence and skills from the workers. Craftsmen and workers at this time immigrated to Sweden from Belgium. They came not only to Forsmark, but to many different parts of the country. They came from the special part of Belgium called Wallonia.



Foto: Göran Hansson

## Russians rampage 1719

A painting by the artist Johan Johnsen gives us a picture of Forsmark during the de Besche era. In 1719 the Russians rampaged through villages along the Swedish east coast. The village Johnsen pictured was made of wood and when the Russians arrived in Forsmark on July 20 they set the village on fire. They only spared a few buildings, among them the church at the time. They threw the stock of iron waiting to be shipped away, into the water.



Målning: Johan Johnsen

## The rebuilding of Forsmark

The rebuilding started immediately and after two years the iron production recommenced. However, the de Besche family were unable to rebuild Forsmark to the same high standard of the neighbouring villages. In 1735 the family sold Forsmark.

After several changes of ownership a company called Jennings & Finlay bought it in 1751. They were represented by Frans Jennings and Robert Finlay. The company also bought the neighbouring village of Gimo. When the company ceased ten years later Frans' son, John Jennings, became Forsmark's owner. Robert Finlay took over the management of Gimo village.

John Jennings belonged to a new kind of village owner in Sweden. He was a very successful businessman, and could take over the ownership of the complete village. Nevertheless, his high position put him under high expectations. He began a transformation of Forsmark to a more representative mining village environment. A transformation to a village which buildings were to be made out of stone and have their positions ruled by order. The arrangement of the village's buildings was messy. If it had caught fire the village would have been beyond all help.



Foto: Göran Hansson

## The old mansion was built

A wooden mansion was rebuilt after the Russian burnings in 1719. Despite its fine location close to the water, the new building was regarded as quite unpretentious compared to the other mansions in the neighbouring mining villages.

The wings were kept, but the mansion's main building was replaced with a new one in stone. Everything was finished by John Jennings in 1765.

*The old mansion, to the left in the picture.*



Foto: Elin Bergqvist

### **The new mansion was built**

However, the construction was still too small and narrow. It was not the kind of home that was expected for a person like Jennings. In other villages new large mansions were under construction. Therefore, not more than three years after the completion of the old mansion Jennings had the architect Jean Eric Rehn to lead the construction of a new one.

J. E. Rehn interpreted French architecture in a way the Swedish society liked. When he started receiving orders from the Royal house of Sweden in 1757, his influence in Swedish architecture increased and he became an important person. He planned for manor houses as well as complete villages.

Forsmark's mansion was meant to resemble the neighbouring mansions in Harg and Gimo, the latter which was built by John Jennings' father's former company companion, Robert Finlay. Finlay preceded Jennings with the hire of Jean Eric Rehn and Rehn was given the task to do a complete plan of the mansion and village. When Jennings and Rehn later on worked out a similar plan for Forsmark it was decided that, unlike the Gimo mansion with its two wings, the guest rooms in Forsmark were to be placed on a third floor of the main building. The large pond in the northern direction of the mansion made the placing of a wing there impossible. Rehn also gave extra emphasis to the front facade's two sides.

### **New owner Samuel af Ugglas**

Jennings died in the year before the new mansion was finished in 1774. His inheritors were unable to keep Forsmark, and the complete village was sold by auction in 1782. It was bought by Samuel af Ugglas and his family came to own it until 1975.

Samuel af Ugglas was the son of a priest from the county of Dalarna. He studied in Uppsala and had close connections to the Royal house after he took part in King Gustav III's coup d'état in 1772. Not more than a month afterwards he was ennobled and advanced to new positions in Swedish politics and administration. Like Jennings, af Ugglas had high expectations on representation, and he completed the work Jennings had begun to transform the wooden village to one of stone. Many of af Ugglas' preserved possessions tell us about his close relationship to the king.

Apart from a few details of the exterior that have been changed or added during the af Ugglas era, the mansion greets us today just as it did when constructed in the 1770s. Among the changes af Ugglas had done are the two columns and urns at the front door, as well as the larger windows on the upper floors.



Foto: Göran Hansson

### **The church**

One of the finesses of Rehn's plan was the central axis of the village in the form of its main street. In the west the street ends with the mansion, from which the lord of the village could get a good view of the village, and in the east the church. Between the spiritual power in the east and the worldly power in the west, the people's houses are in between.

When the church was completed in 1800 it was intended to mirror this system. As the church is built along the axis, the chancel is located in the east end of the room and the gallery of the master and mistress in the west, with the people's seats between them.

### **The English garden**

The English garden of Forsmark was created after Samuel af Ugglas' purchase of the village in the later part of the 18th century. The king at this time, King Gustav III, was very interested in culture, and he sent artists, architects and musicians to different countries in Europe. They took impressions of the modern culture which they brought back to Sweden and this was integrated into their specific areas of art. King Gustav III wanted to make sure that his kingdom was not left behind as far as culture was concerned.

The Swedish architect and garden creator Fredrik Magnus Piper was one of them. He spent seven years in England and when he arrived home in 1780 he constructed two gardens at Drottningholm and Haga on the order of Gustav III. Both gardens were inspired by this new direction of gardening he had observed in England. Unlike the regular and carefully cut gardens of the past Baroque era, an English garden has no straight lines. Nature is the model. Winding paths, water, deciduous woodland, meadows, sculptures and different beautiful and thought-provoking installations are all parts of an English garden. It is a place for reflection. All in line with the ideas flowing through Europe during the Romantic era. This is exemplified splendidly in Forsmark by the garden made by Samuel af Ugglas and the Royal gardener Johan Christian Ackerman, who gained experience from Haga.

The garden was placed west of the manor house, on rough grounds and over the left foundations of old village buildings. The area is small but contains all the different ingredients of an English garden. It is one of the best preserved English gardens in Sweden.



Foto: Göran Hansson

*In the spring the English park is full of windflowers.*

### **Forsmark today**

Since Forsmark was bought by Forsmarks Kraftgrupp AB in 1975, a huge amount of renovation work is taking place. The company uses the mansion for conferences. All the village's buildings are furnished to suit the usage of their modern inhabitants. Today about a hundred people live in the village. Forsmark is classified as an historical heritage, and the picture of the historical buildings and environment is preserved and maintained by Forsmarks Kraftgrupp.

The education in Forsmark ended when the school closed down in the 1960s. However, it was re-opened with a science-specialized upper secondary school in 1987. The school uses the same buildings that have been used since the former half of the 19th century. There is in addition a newly constructed main building for classrooms and the usage of the old vicarage for staff and administration.

The former dairy was in 1970 turned into an inn, and is today a place for eating and accommodation for the village's visitors.

To be able to preserve this unique environment it is important that the village lives and the buildings fill practical purposes. This is done today.



Foto: Eln Bergqvist

*Forsmarks Wårdshus serve delicious food in a beautiful environment.*