



Kungsholms fort



THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Kungsholmen stronghold is one of the old fortifications on the southern fairway into Karlskrona. By as early as July 1680, the first guns had been positioned in temporary earthworks on the Kungsholmen islet. Soldiers from the Småland and the Östergötland regiments, sailors from the Navy, craftsmen and artisans were recruited as construction workers, and of the building materials dressed stone came from the demolished town walls of Kristianstad, Landskrona and Helsingborg, lime and spruce poles from Gotland and bricks from the island of Öland. When war broke out in 1788, the Kungsholmen fortress had been more or less completed, but as the fortifications were insufficiently equipped with artillery, additional guns had to be requisitioned from the Navy. During this war Karlskrona was blockaded by squadrons from the Russian fleet on three occasions. In the late winter and early spring of 1808,

the guns of the stronghold were again prepared for action, for in addition to being at war with France, Denmark and Prussia, Sweden was also involved in hostilities with Russia in what came to known as the Finnish War. However, after the Peace of 1809 and from the following year until the summer of 1812, the fortress had to ready itself to meet a threat from another quarter. In accordance with the Peace Treaty signed with Napoleon's France, Sweden had bound itself to close its ports to vessels flying the British

flag, and British naval forces in the Baltic were now prepared to challenge this restriction. During these years of conflict and tense international relations, the Kungsholm fortifications were constantly being strengthened and repaired.



THE REBUILDING

During the years of peace following the Napoleonic wars, only meagre sums of money were appropriated by the Government for the upkeep of Kungsholmen, and by 1820 the fortress was in a sad state of deterioration. That year the Crown decided that a plan for the reconstruction of the Fortress of Kungsholmen as it was now officially named, should be drawn up. The fortress would be armed as never before, and replace the Drottningkärr citadel as the main defence of the fairway into Karlskrona. Work on Kungsholmen commenced the following year, but it would not be until the 1850's that the fortress was finally completed. The Kungsholms fortress was operative during both World Wars. Among the buildings and places to see on Kungsholmen, the North Redoubt, the Main Magazine, the park and the harbour should be of particular interest to the visitor.

THE NORTH REDOUBT

A redoubt is an independent bastion, and the North Redoubt was so named after the redoubt which during an early part of the construction of the Kungsholms fort, had been built on a small skerry to the north of Kungsholmen itself. By the middle of the 18th century a spit of land had united the skerry to the Kungsholmen islet, and after reconstruction during the first part of 19th century,

the North Redoubt became a powerful defensive bulwark and an integral part of the Fortress as a whole. The redoubt was designed by Baltazar Cronstrand with the greater part of the construction being carried out under the supervision of Gustaf Elis Cronstrand. From an architectural point of view it is a quite remarkable building.

THE MAIN POWDER MAGAZINE

The Main Powder Magazine is situated between the park and Östra Vallgatan. The cross arm of the magazine which extends out into the park itself, is from 1736 and is the oldest building on Kungsholmen while the building on Vallgatan was built some hundred years later. The high windows in the cross arm section of the Magazine are from the 1890's.

THE PARK

The park was created during the latter part of the 1870's on land, which had previously served as a drill and parade ground. The Navy would often bring back trees and plants, collected during their training cruises and expeditions abroad and although these plants native to a milder climate than Sweden, suffered badly during the severe winters of the early 1940's, in general they have flourished in the sheltered environment of Kungsholmen.

THE HARBOUR

As late as during the 1890's each evening the outer door and the inner gate to the harbour were shut and remained closed until the following morning when the bugle call signalled that they should be opened. The outer door was managed with a system of ropes and chains that ran through a hole in the walls and that this operation was pure drudgery is evident by the words the people of the garrison put the bugler's tune: "Shut the door, you rascals, each evening slam it shut".

THE DONJON

The word donjon is French, but comes from the latin dominus meaning "Lord" or "master". In a military context the donjon is the central keep of a castle or fortress but can also, as is the case with Kungsholmen, be the principal structure in a defence complex. The donjon, designed to withstand heavy bombardment, was built during the years 1831-41 and is three storeys high. The main purpose of the donjon was to protect the island of Tjurkö and it was with this in mind that the present site was chosen. It is equipped with 42 guns, 31 being placed in the vault, and 11 on the roof floor. The outer walls are built of granite, the inner of limestone, and the roof is of wood as during the 1840's it was found that it was not possible to make the original stone roof watertight.

THE TRAINING CAMP

After the Second World War extensive renovation and reconstruction work has been carried out on Kungsholmen, with the aim of converting the fortress into a modern Training Camp for the Coastal Artillery. It is even used as a training centre for the Navy's Southern Command, thus preserving both the continuity of a 300-year-old tradition of protecting Sweden's coasts, and ensuring the prominence of Kungsholmen in the future defence of the Realm.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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