

Forsmark manorial estate

The Forsmark estate was originally an iron work. It was the iron ore in the Dannemora mine that was the prerequisite of all of the iron works and the manorial estates that characterize the north east part of Uppland. Mining at Dannemora started already during the fifteenth century and provided ore for several foundries. The ore was very rich and of high quality. The mine was in operation for more than 500 years and was closed as late as 1992. Because of the current high price of iron ore the mine will be reopened.

The blast furnaces and the foundries required large quantities of char-coal and a good supply of water power for bellows and hammers. Every stream was explored and at Forsmark it was possible to dam up the river and use the height of fall efficient. The first written traces of Forsmark are from 1570 when the foundry was operated by the Crown. The distance between Dannemora mine and Forsmark is about 25 kilometres. The ore from the mine was transported on sledges in winter time.

In the beginning of the seventeenth century iron workers from Wallonia in Belgium was invited to come to Sweden to develop the steel making. The Walloons introduced a method for refining pig iron into forge iron with a very high quality. In 1624 the Swedish Crown leased out the Forsmark estate to the Walloons Gerard de Besche and associates. Gerhard de Besche and his companion Peter Rochet bought the foundry in 1664. A few years later Gerhard de Besche became the sole owner and the foundry was thereafter in the belonging of the de Besche family almost 100 years. Gerhard de Besche and his companions modernised the iron works and introduced the Walloon process. The forge iron made at Forsmark and other foundries was well known in England and on the continent for its high quality and suitability for making rapiers, sabres, knives and other tools of steel.

In 1718 the Swedish king Karl XII was killed during the Swedish siege of the Norwegian fortress Fredriksten. Sweden was at that time in war with both Russia, Denmark and Norway and when the king died the Russians saw the possibility to gain a more profitable peace in ravaging the Swedish coast. During the Russian ravages the Forsmark estate was burned down completely. The de Besche family rebuilt the foundry in record time and only two years after the Russian attack the production could restart. Eventually the de Besche family had to sell the estate and it had several owners until two enterprising ex Irishmen, Robert Finlay and John Jennings bought it. The two had a trading company which was the owner of the estate at the beginning but after ten years John Jennings was the sole owner. Finlay and Jennings were skilful entrepreneurs and industrialists who developed Forsmark and other foundries in Sweden and Finland and made them again competitive on the European market. It was John Jennings who started the building of the new manor house in 1768. The manor house was however not completed until one year after his death in 1773. When John Jennings was gone his family had to sell the estate and in 1786 it was bought at a public auction by Samuel af Ugglas.

Samuel af Ugglas was at that time making himself a career in the civil service. He was among other things Judge in the Supreme Court of Appeal. He supported the Swedish king Gustaf III and was rewarded with a knighthood after having participated in a coup d'état lead by the king. He successfully continued the developments initiated by John Jennings and many of the buildings in the Forsmark village and in the foundry bear his initials. Following the fashion of the romantic era, at the end of the eighteen century, Samuel af Ugglas founded an English

garden north of the manor house. The garden is very well preserved and today one of the few of its kind.

At the end of the nineteenth century the Walloon methodology for making steel was driven out of the market since the Bessemer process made it possible to make high quality steel with the use of pit coal. The foundry was closed and instead paper pulp was manufactured at Johannisfors, a village not far from Forsmark. The pulp factory was burned down in the beginning of the twentieth century and never rebuilt. However the estate carried on with foresting and farming until 1975 when the whole estate was sold to Forsmarks Kraftgrupp AB. Today the power company owns the manor house and all other buildings in the Forsmark village except the church. The forests and farm land have however been sold out. With a strong owner Forsmark estate is well preserved and illustrates well, together with other similar estates like for example Gimo, Lövsta, Harg, Österby and Söderfors, the wealth and prosper that the Dannemora iron ore gave to this part of Sweden.

Olle Andersson