

The residence in Örebro Castle



Örebro County
Administrative Board

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Örebro Castle – the natural centre point

Ever since the Middle Ages, Örebro Castle has been the town's natural centre point. Ringed by the eddying currents of the Svartån, it has held constant watch over all those who have crossed the river. No one knows the castle's precise age. In the 18th century, Bishop Andreas Rhyzelius wrote that a castle had been built in the "middle of the 14th century." The oldest part of the castle was then most probably a medieval stone building to which a defensive tower of over 30 metres had been added.

Örebro Castle has always kept pace with the times. In the Middle Ages, it served as a prison and defensive stronghold. The 16th and 17th centuries saw it fulfil the role of royal palace. In the 20th century it became an office, museum, restaurant, conference venue, exhibition facility and tourist information centre. Our stone fortress in the centre of Örebro remains a supremely vibrant and accessible castle.

No king now lives in Örebro Castle. However, the county's governors have resided in its old state rooms ever since 1766.

Rose-Marie Frebran

- our county governor

Rose-Marie Frebran will go into history. If not for all that she does then, in any event, as the first Christian Democrat to be appointed as a county governor in Sweden.

There is an impressive depth and breadth to her political background. She was a member of parliament between 1991 and 2002 and the third deputy speaker from 1998 to 2002. Rose-Marie has also had several weighty directorships and led state-commissioned studies. Amongst the latter can be named that into how public services (“Swedish Radio”, “Swedish Television” and the “Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company”) are to be run in the future.

In recent years, thanks to her position as chairwoman of the unpaid board of the town’s premiership football team, many of Örebro’s residents have started to associate her more with soccer than with party politics. However, since autumn 2008, the people of Örebro (town and county) have known her as “our county governor”.

Rose-Marie Frebran was born in 1948 in Barkåkra, northern Skåne. When she was 17, she moved to Stockholm and began bible classes. In 1976, she started at Örebro Theological Seminary and took her theology exam at St. Paul in Minnesota, USA. Rose-Marie also served as a student pastor there.

In 1983, she returned to Örebro and met Hans Gunnar Fredriksson, an architect. Taking the name Frebran, they married in 1984.

“I want to be a strong voice for those who wish to develop and work in Örebro county. At the same time, by coordinating matters that might otherwise fall between two stools, I want to ensure that decisions taken by parliament and the government flourish well in our county.”

“Climate initiatives, diversity and accessibility are issues in which I have an especial interest.”





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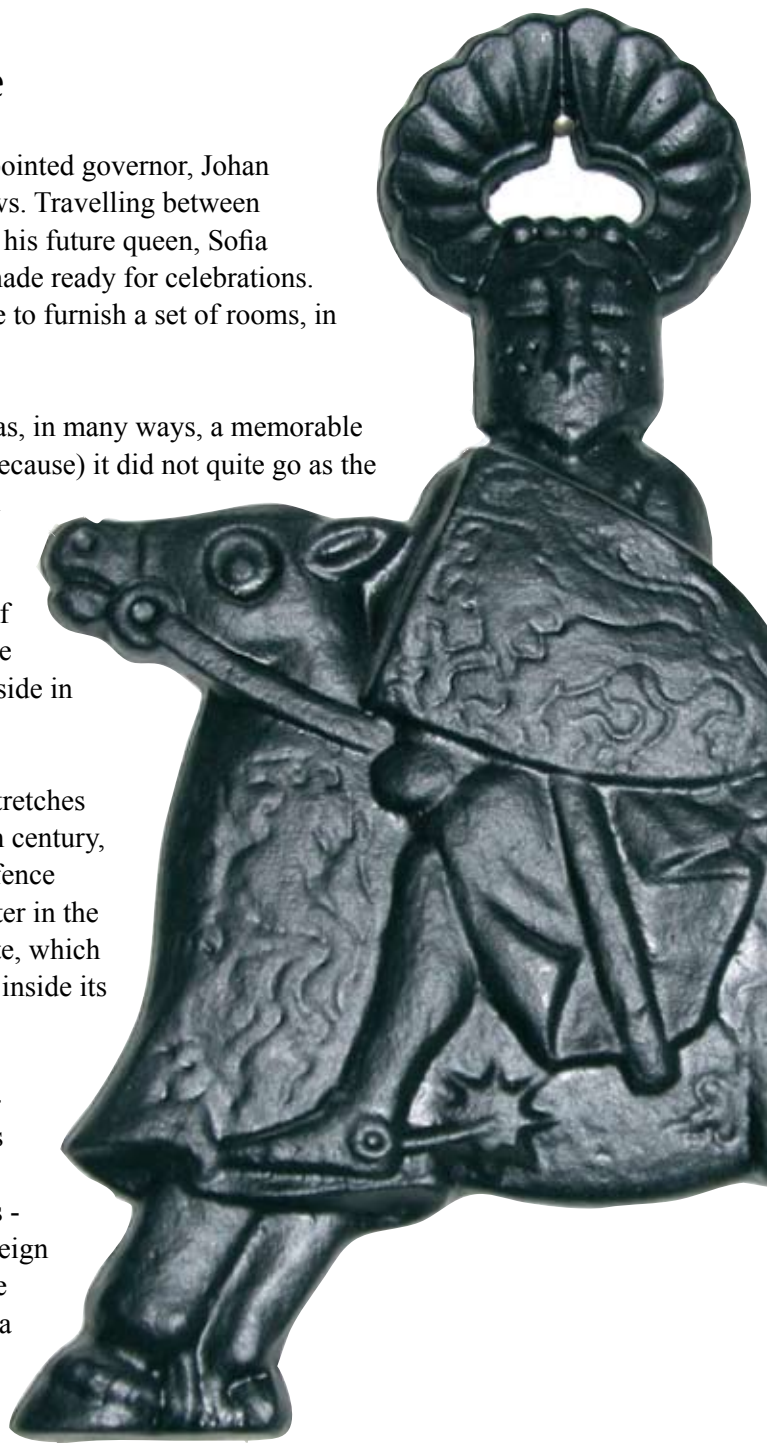
In the late summer of 1766, Örebro county's newly appointed governor, Johan Abraham Hamilton, received some very interesting news. Travelling between Helsingborg and Stockholm, Crown Prince Gustav and his future queen, Sofia Magdalena, planned to stay in Örebro. The town was made ready for celebrations. In the castle, the county governor opened his own purse to furnish a set of rooms, in stately fashion, for the young royal couple.

The visit took place in October of the same year and was, in many ways, a memorable episode in the castle's history. Even though (or rather because) it did not quite go as the county governor had expected, it fully deserves its own section in the present text.

When the regal pair had left the town, Hamilton himself moved into the newly renovated rooms. He thus became the first in a long line of Örebro county governors to reside in the castle.

However, Örebro Castle's history as a dwelling place stretches back considerably further than this. As early as the 14th century, the castle bailiff lived in a part of the 25-metre high defence tower that is one of the oldest sections of the castle. Later in the Middle Ages, the fortress was extended and a royal suite, which still serves as Örebro Castle's residence, was furnished inside its walls.

Throughout most of the duration of the Kalmar Union - an alliance between several Nordic countries - Örebro's fortress was inhabited by Danish and German bailiffs. The period 1434 to 1436 was one of the few exceptions - having seized the castle, Engelbrekt, a rebel against foreign dominance of the Kalmar Union, used it as a home. The time of foreign rule ended in January 1522 when, after a nine-month siege, the fortress fell into the hands of



the future king, Gustav Vasa. Although King Gustav often stayed in Örebro, no major rebuilding of the fortress took place. As witnessed by, for example, Uppsala, Vadstena and Gripsholm, this was a significant period of castle building. Although the old Örebro fortress had to wait quite some time, its turn would come.

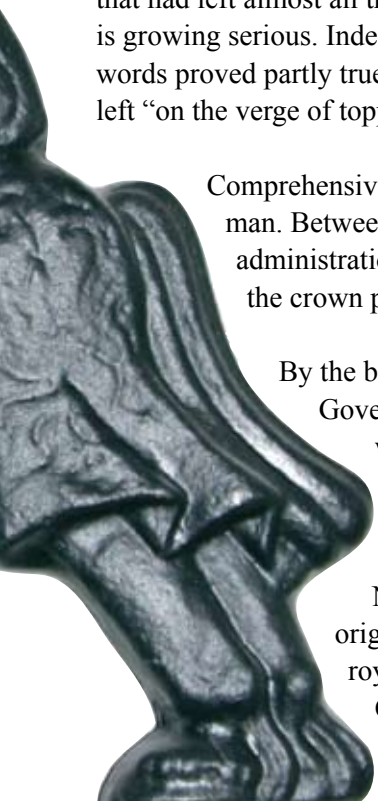
In 1560, Gustav Vasa's youngest son, Karl, was appointed duke of Södermanland, Närke and Värmland. The duke's great interest in the iron industry meant that Örebro became one of the dukedom's most important towns. As a result of this, extensive rebuilding of the medieval fortress commenced in 1573. Work went rather slowly. It was only around 1600, at roughly the time when the duke became King Karl IX, that the royal family could start using the castle during their visits to Örebro. In what is now Slottsparken (the castle park), the castle had a large number of administrative buildings, stores, mills and stables. When the post of county governor was created in the 1630's, two large residences were also built.

Some fifty years after the work had started, the castle was finally completed in 1627. By then, royal visits had become increasingly sporadic. A long period of decline began. In 1725, reporting on the severe deterioration that had left almost all the castle entirely uninhabitable, County Governor Konrad Ribbing commented: "Decay is growing serious. Indeed, the castle seems ready to completely disintegrate." Thirteen years later, Ribbing's words proved partly true when large parts of the northeastern tower fell into the Svartån and a further tower was left "on the verge of toppling".

Comprehensive restoration was necessary and plans were drawn up by Director General Carl Hårleman. Between 1758 and 1764, the castle was transformed from a Renaissance fortress into a modern administration complex in a classical costume. Two years later, the previously mentioned visit by the crown prince took place.

By the beginning of the 19th century, a large part of the furnishings paid for by County Governor Hamilton were nothing more than a memory. From 1929 to 1933, the beautiful wall decorations were once again exposed in the latest restoration of the residence. Thirty years earlier, the castle had gained its present exterior when architect Thor Thorén masterminded its restoration in the spirit of historic romanticism.

New times have given the castle new roles, but the residence has remained. Of the original functions of the fortress, providing a dwelling for bailiffs, high-ranking officers, royalty and county governors is the only that has survived the years. The residence in Örebro Castle is thus a centuries-old tradition and a link between the past, the present and the future.







A walk around the residence

The State Reception Room

With its elegant 1920's décor, the beautiful State Reception Room is the first to greet visitors. The reception room's furniture is of different styles and periods - a Karl Johan suite from the 1850's, a Gustavian suite and a number of items from the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The walls are adorned with martial paintings: "The Battle of Halle" by Per Krafft the Younger and "The Battle of Lübeck" by C. A. Dahlström. Both these show General Jean Baptiste Bernadotte (later King Karl XIV Johan of Sweden) during his time as one of Napoleon's marshals. The Örebro connection is strong. It was here, in August 1810, that Bernadotte was chosen to accede to the Swedish throne. Örebro's St. Nicolai church was used as the hall of state while the then rather decrepit castle housed Karl XIII and Queen Hedvig Elisabet Charlotta.

In Duke Karl's time, the reception room served as the royal suite's drawing room. In the northern part of the castle, an extension that was pulled down in the 1750's housed the royal bedchamber. The tower room that is now used as a guest room was the king's private dining room. This part of the castle had once again to serve as a royal suite in 1985. King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia were then, in accordance with the Swedish tradition of Eriksgata, touring every Swedish county and province. They overnighted in the tower room.

The State Banqueting Hall

Inside the State Reception Room is the Private Reception Room. This was once the county governor's study. Nowadays, it is used primarily as a private dining room. Having traversed this, the visitor enters the State Banqueting Hall. Furnished by County Governor Johan Abraham Hamilton in 1766, it is the most majestic room in the suite. The walls were adorned with Rococo "swags and stylings" while the door lintels were decorated with painted clusters of various objects.

Having been overpainted throughout the years, the murals were re-exposed in 1929. The décor was preserved and added to. Furthermore, a pastiche of modern musical instruments (saxophone and banjo included therein) was painted on one of the door lintels. The room also received new joinery work and a beautiful fireplace in Yxhult limestone, all signed by the architect, Hallström.

The State Banqueting Hall is decorated with Rococo motifs and wall lights in the Baroque style. A portrait of King Adolf Fredrik, painted by C. J. Coernelius, hangs above the fireplace.







The Yellow Room

The Yellow Room lies beyond the State Banqueting Hall. Like the State Banqueting Hall's wall décor, this room's style-setting Grecian friezes may date from the 1760's. However, it may also be that they first appeared in 1812. The room has a fireplace that was a gift from AB Bofors in the 1940's. This fireplace has cast firebacks in the form of maps that use the individual mill stamps to mark the many ironworks in Örebro county. Two of the paintings adorning the room are Pietro Liberi's "Reclining Venus" and Giovanni Romanelli's "Christ and his Disciples in Emmaus". The chandelier in the Yellow Room is 19th century and has its own tale. It is said that King Louis Philippe of France ordered ten of them but that, for safety's sake, eleven were made. After Ambassador Gustaf von Dardel had discovered the eleventh in Paris, it eventually ended up in Örebro Castle.

The Yellow Room's fireplace has cast firebacks in the form of maps that use the individual mill stamps to mark the many ironworks in Örebro county.

The Karl Johan Room

At the start of the 19th century, all parts of the castle, and this room in particular, were in very bad condition. The room served as the king's bedchamber in 1810 during the election of the successor to the Swedish throne. The walls were cracked and the window frames so rotten that they hardly managed to keep the rain out. King Karl XIII suffered much from the coldness of the room. His queen vociferously maintained that the decrepit residence was a danger to her husband's life.

However, as the relevant parliamentary session was held in August, the threat was hardly great. Still thoroughly alive in this room, Karl XIII received the news that he had been blessed with a "son". Because, formally speaking, the successor to the throne had to be adopted by his predecessor, this was how the election of Karl Johan was announced. The last act in the entire procedure, the ratification of the election, was concluded at the same time with the king's signature.

Although it may seem remarkable, the "son" never attended the parliament that elected him. It was only two years later, in connection with the 1812 Örebro Parliament, that Karl Johan visited the town and the castle. In his baggage, he had the portrait of himself that, signed by Fredrik Westin, still graces the room to which it has given its name. This room includes one of the castle's furniture gems, a Gustavian suite with blue, patterned fabric.





The Royal Bedchamber

Having passed through the “Sibylle Room” (a small guest room), the visitor arrives in the “Royal Bedchamber”. The room’s name is the result of confusion with the room that, during the 1810 election of the successor to the Swedish throne, served as Karl XIII’s bedchamber (i.e. the present Karl Johan Room). The Royal Bedchamber first appeared with the renovation of 1811 – 1812. Here, an imposing double bed and a stately mirror with a console table, all in Empire style, attract the attention. Inside the bedchamber, there is a small but elegant sitting room furnished in Empire style. It has an 18th century crystal chandelier.

Above the bedchamber, there are a number of small mezzanine rooms that were previously used by valets. The position directly next to the southwestern staircase meant that valets did not need to traverse the entire residence but, in the manner of all good menservants, could be “invisible” until their services were required. Malicious rumours maintained that other nocturnal callers also occasionally frequented the bedchamber. However, whether there was any truth in the gossip is just one of the castle’s many mysteries to be shrouded in the mists of time.

Magnificent Empire mirror and console table in the Royal Bedchamber.



Sitting room with Empire style furniture and an 18th century crystal chandelier.



The kitchen and bottom floor of the northeastern tower

From the Middle Ages onwards, the castle's great kitchen was housed on the bottom floor of the southern wing. Around 1770, it was transferred to its present place in what, from the start of the 17th century, had been the bakery. The impressive range hood, which still catches the eye, was constructed at the time of the move.

From the kitchen, stone stairs lead to the bottom floor of the northeastern tower. In the 18th century, this was the housekeeper's home. The faithfully preserved stairs are painted with white crosses, an invaluable aid for those forced to use the steps in the dark.

In the 17th century, mortar making equipment had been stored in the tower. The inventory also contains the somewhat surprising information that, at one time, the tower also housed "two gun carriage wheels shot to pieces at the crowning of King Karl XI". However, it is not revealed how and, more interestingly, why these came to Örebro.

Having been the housekeeper's home, this part of the tower was subsequently used as a pantry. Several large hooks in the ceiling are a permanent reminder of this time. Today, one of the rooms serves as a store. In the 1920's, the other was divided into two rooms, one of which is used for wine tasting. The second is the castle's wine cellar.

The impressive, 18th century range hood remains fully preserved in the kitchen. The kitchen floor is 75 cm lower than the rest of the storey – in the absence of fans, it was hoped that space would create the necessary draught.

The stairs from the kitchen down to the tower room are painted with white crosses, an invaluable aid for anyone who had to make his or her own way, in the dark, to the old pantry.





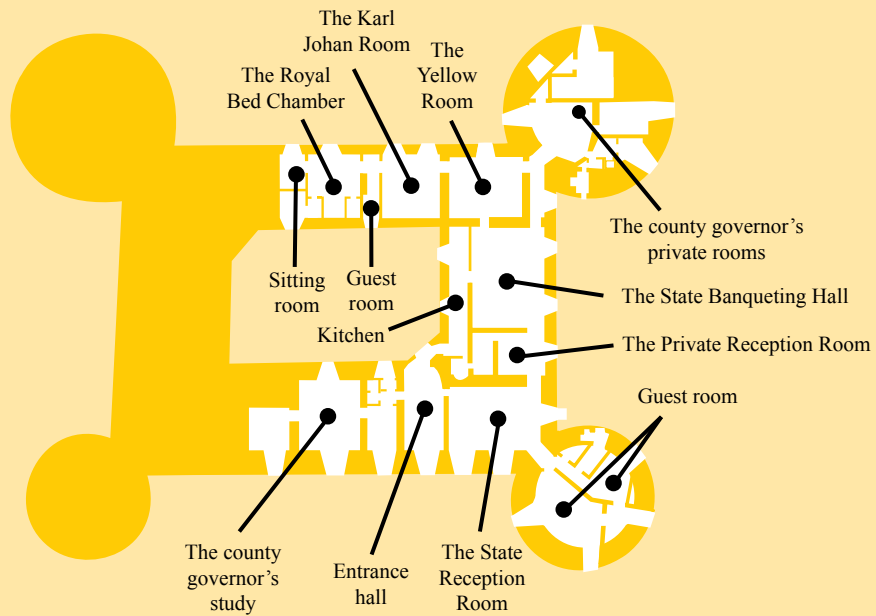
The county governor's study

The county governor's present study is in the east wing. Together with the surrounding rooms, it has its own special place in the castle's history. In 1637, Georg von Arnim, a field marshal in the army of the Holy Roman Empire, was taken prisoner. It being greatly feared that he would escape, the decision was taken to slightly reduce the risk by moving him from Stockholm to Örebro. In the castle, a suite of three rooms was prepared for this prominent prisoner of war. However, he never arrived. Precisely as feared, von Arnim escaped before he could be taken to Örebro. Nonetheless, the suite still came to be named "Arnhem's Chambers" and found a use twenty years later. Vice Chancellor Radziejowski of Poland was the prisoner of war this time. The Pole is reputed to have been a particularly difficult guest. He complained both loud and long about his food and accommodation. Perhaps he should have done just as the next important prisoner in "Arnhem's Chambers", the Russian general I. J. Trubetskoj. When he became a prisoner of war in 1750, not only did he have his valet with him, but also his serving boys and his own cook. For this reason, one of the rooms (currently the cloakroom) has ever since been called the "Little Russian Kitchen".

Governors of Örebro county

| | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Gustav Leijonhufvud | 1634–1648 | Salomon Löfvenskjöld | 1801–1816 |
| Krister Bonde | 1648–1653 | Nils Gyldenstolpe | 1817–1834 |
| Gustav Soop | 1653–1658 | Erik Johan Bergenskjöld | 1835–1856 |
| Abraham Leijonhufvud | 1658–1676 | Carl Åkerhielm | 1856–1876 |
| Jakob Fleming | 1676–1677 | Axel Bergström | 1876–1893 |
| Mårten Reutercrantz | 1677–1680 | Axel G. Svedelius | 1893–1904 |
| Klas Fleming | 1680–1681 | Theodor Nordström | 1904–1911 |
| Gustav Lilliecrona | 1681–1685 | Karl Johan Bergström | 1911–1925 |
| Didrik Wrangel | 1685–1693 | Henning Elmquist | 1925–1928 |
| Fromhold Fägerskiöld | 1693–1706 | Bror C. Hasselrot | 1928–1947 |
| Salomon Cronhielm | 1707–1714 | Karl Johan Olsson | 1947–1960 |
| Klas Ekeblad | 1714–1719 | Valter Åman | 1961–1971 |
| Konrad Ribbing | 1719–1729 | Harald Aronsson | 1971–1980 |
| Erik Wrangel | 1729–1739 | Elvy Olsson | 1980–1989 |
| Nils Reuterholm | 1739–1756 | Sigvard Marjasin | 1989–1994 |
| Adolf Mörner | 1756–1766 | Gerd Engman | 1995–2004 |
| Johan Abraham Hamilton | 1766–1780 | Sören Gunnarsson | 2004–2008 |
| Evert August Franc | 1780–1796 | Rose-Marie Frebran | 2008– |
| Karl Didrik Hamilton | 1796–1801 | | |

The residence



The great kitchen and wine cellar are on the bottom floor, below the State Reception Room and the guest rooms.



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www.lansstyrelsen.se/orebro