

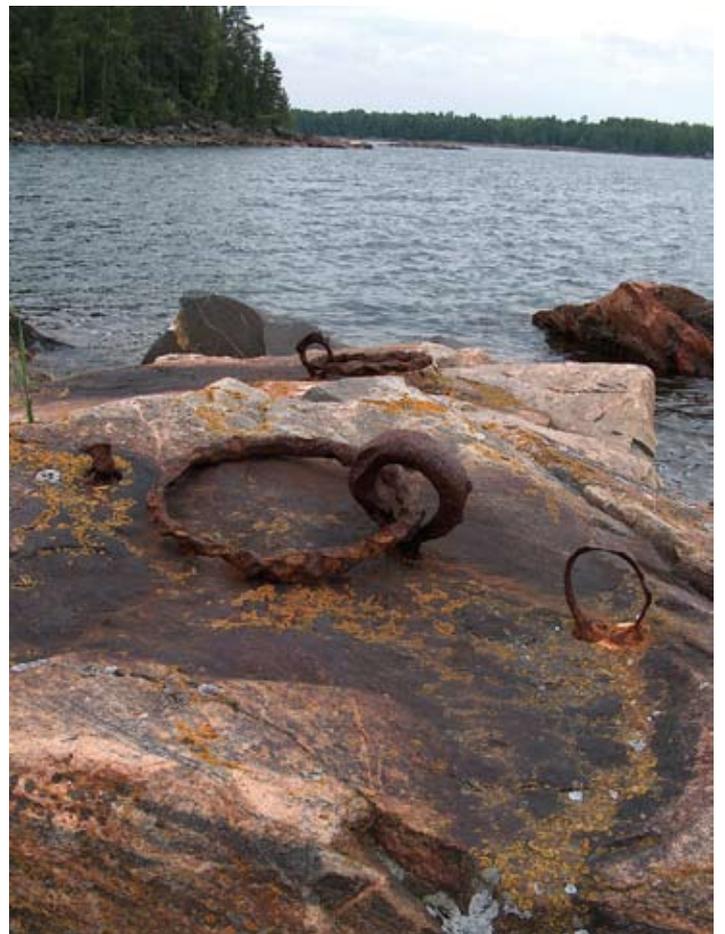
Axmar foundry at heart



Barge wreck at Malmbaren. Photo: Jim Hansson, Maritime museum.

In earlier days the inshore trail along Jungfrukusten was of same importance as the E4 is today. During centuries freight and passengers passed in a steady stream between Norrland and Stockholm and the region around the lake Mälaren. But in the late 1800s something began to happen. Sails were changed for steam, and steamships were gradually replaced by railway and trucks. This meant great changes for the communities along the coast: some expanded, while some stopped growing. Galtström, Långvind and Axmar bruk, built around foundries, were hibernated. They have not until lately started to thaw, now with a new life as travel destinations. And the main attraction now is the same things that once made them obsolete – aging buildings and facilities, along with the location in the archipelago.

In 2012 Axmar foundry was inaugurated as the third culture reserve in the county of Gävleborg. The ironworks were in operation during 250 years, between 1671 and 1927. But after that the time passed slowly and today there is a well-preserved cultural heritage with foundry, an English park and a harbour with warehouses, crane and port. The cultural environment does not stop at the port. In the water and on the islands outside you will find traces of the long time shipping was contact area with the surroundings. Here are anchorages with ballast from countries far away and here are shipwrecks. Around Axmar are nearly 20 known vessel remains. Some are barges used to transport cargo between port and anchorage. Many of the wrecks are ships that wrecked when entering or exiting the foundry. All tell different parts of the history and complement the cultural environment of the country. An example is *Beda*:



Anchorage rings. Photo: Göran Ekberg, Maritime Museum.



Broken sailing-ship at Sundsmar.

Photo: Harry Alopaeus, Gävleborg County Museum.

In late September 1883 the sloop *Beda af Harg* was loading iron ore in Strömsholm in Västmanland. After loading skipper Eriksson navigated his ship out through Mälaren and then inner route up north. The final stop for the iron ore was Axmar foundry. The night between the 4th and 5th of October 1883 Sundmarsnäset was passed and you could nearly see the blast furnace in Axmar. Then she ran aground, the hull took in water and the ship drifted towards Svartstensudden where she sank. This time all aboard survived. The steamship *Dalelfven* happened to be near and could rescue the captain and his crew. The ship could not be saved, not even the cargo. Along the shore the heap with iron ore is still there to be seen and in the slope down towards 20 m depth the broken hull is resting.

The place where *Beda* is lying is one of nine locations around Axmar which in the summer of 2015 will be fitted with a buoy and an information board. The idea is to make the submarine world a little more accessible. Some sites can be reached from shore, but most are



The Axmar archipelago from the air. Photo: Peter Hansson, Kustfilm.

best accessed by boat or kayak. The archipelago is shallow and many of the wrecks are seen from the surface. During 2015 a small exhibition in the boathouse in the harbour will tell more about what is to be seen under the surface of the water. From the harbour a small path leads north and passes wrecks of barges lying half way out of the water. The path goes through unexploited nature that forms Axmar nature reserve – the largest in Gävleborg.

If you today are coming in to the archipelago of Axmar by boat, you need not be afraid of new wrecks in the culture environment. A marked route leads in to Axmar bruk, and on the islands outside there are good natural harbours with prepared camp.

You can read more about Axmar on www.Axmarbruk.se

Bo Ulfhielm, Gävleborg County Museum



Wreck at Oxelharen. Photo: Joakim Andersson, Bluepix.

Fishing villages along Jungfrukusten

Along Jungfrukusten is a magnificent archipelago, fragmented in a multitude of islands, isles, rocky islets and bays. Many of the fishing villages of today were built during 1500s and 1600s as so-called "Gävle-bohamnar". The fishermen from Gävle had exclusive rights to catch all Baltic herring along the coast of Norrland at that time.

As soon as the sea was free of ice the fishermen from Gävle left for their particular fishing grounds, their Gävle-bohamnar. The whole family together with servants and domestic animals, household utensils, food and tons of salt for the herring were brought on the voyage. Often relatively large boats so-called "haxar" were used. These boats were not used for fishing, only for transport. When fishing much smaller boats so-called "skötbåtar" were used and they were left in the summer harbour each autumn.

These seasonal fishing villages had simple buildings. The houses did not have to be lived in during winter. A primitive shed for mostly goats and sheep also belonged to each house.

Near the dwellings were so-called "gistvallar", a kind of drying rack for the fishing-net. In some places the fishermen also owned a bakehouse together.



The priest's chamber in Agö chapel outside Hudiksvall was built 1845, the chapel is from 1660. Photo: Mats Fallqvist.

In most harbours a simple chapel was erected. The harbour, the chapel and the bakery were collectively owned. To make the life in the harbour and the work with the fishing as free of friction as was possible all fishermen belonged to a port team. The team had a harbourmaster as a chairman and rules of order that were read in the chapel in the beginning of each season. Those who broke against the rules, for instance destroyed someones tools, could be punished with fines.



Rönnskär is an island outside Stocka where in earlier days "prima klabbströmming" was salted. Photo: Mats Fallqvist.

Barter was, besides fishing, an important source of income for the fishermen of Gävle. Trade was well into the 1840s limited to the city. All trade should take place within the boundary of the cities. The Gävle fishermen got never the less in the late 1500s the right to trade herring for salt outside the trade monopoly. Later the range of goods was extended and the fishermen transported large cargoes of sugar, coffee, salt and grain which were switched for fish, linen and fowl by the coastal population.

The fishermen's summer trips, which stretched from Älvkarleby in the south to Örnköldsvik in the north, began to decline during the 1800s and the last trips took place in 1900. The improved communications led to increased competition in fishing and the rapidly emerging industries attracted many of the fishermen.

Many of the original fishing villages, especially in the proximity of towns, developed into permanent fishing villages with a stationary fishing population.

Most fishing villages are well preserved even today and are used both in their original function and as a place to relax. Beautiful and historically interesting places for both residents and visitors.

In the summer of 2012 and 2013 Mats Fallqvist and Mats Lundblad, Gävleborg County Museum, did a photographic tour along Jungfrukusten to document the fishing villages. A selection of pictures are collected in the booklet "Fiskelägen längs Jungfrukusten". We hope they will inspire you to take part of the cultural heritage of the coast!

The booklet will be found in the County Museum and in the tourist offices of Söderhamn or Hudiksvall.

Ann Nilsén, Gävleborg, County Museum.