



*Decorated Farmhouses
of Hälsingland World Heritage*

GÄSTGIVARS



HÄLSINGE
GÅRDAR

»» *The highly proficient painter imitated Wedgwood's fine English porcelain, and used stencilling in a way that spread to other parts of Sweden.*



Copyright: Gävleborg County Administrative Board
Design: Region Gävleborg
Author: Lenita Jansson Herlitz
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Photography: Maria G Nilsson, Jakob Dahlström,
Hälsingbilder, Hälsinglands museum

THE LARGE festivities building at Gästgivars, in Vallsta, part of the Decorated Farmhouses of Hälsingland World Heritage, was decorated by the influential Swedish painter Jonas Wallström. Wallström's high proficiency enabled him to imitate Wedgwood's finest English porcelain, and he developed a way of stencilling that spread to

other parts of Sweden. Gästgivars has its origins as early as the Middle Ages. The nine buildings that remain at the farm were originally linked to create an enclosed quadrangle. Now the farm opens out towards the river Ljusnan instead. The farmhouse is open to visitors during the summer.



First-floor chamber



FARM WITH ANCIENT ROOTS

THE VILLAGE OF VALLSTA was already inhabited during the Iron Age, and Gästgivars has probably occupied the same site, by the main road, since the Middle Ages. In the centre of the village the buildings are close together, but Gästgivars is located a little away from the other farmhouses. The farmhouse takes its name from the inn – "gästgiveri" in Swedish – that was run at the farm during the 1600s and 1700s.

FESTIVITIES BUILDING WITH GRAND ROOMS

The farm's festivities building is at right angles to the residential dwelling. Built in 1838 exclusively for festivities, it is a two-storey double house. The timber facades of the festivities building were originally visible, but they now have timber board cladding, painted red, under a tiled roof. A small canopy, added in about 1950, protects the entrance.

THE FIRST FLOOR FESTIVITIES ROOM IS THE GRANDEST

The first floor room, the "herrstuga", is the grandest in the festivities building. Its walls are divided into different panels framed with borders imitating gilded mouldings. The wall panels are stencilled with a pattern of floral medallions in light broken pastel colours on a pale pink ground. The artist



was probably imitating a silk wall hanging. The pattern was adopted in wallpaper production 1962, and it is still produced. It is one of the most popular wallpaper patterns ever in Sweden. Above the windows, ornamental half-moons are painted to resemble carved wood or perhaps gilt bronze. The door lintel panel is different, with freehand paintings of many different species of colourful flowers. The entire section between the two windows on the east wall is taken up with a round arch panel. Its landscape motif takes the form of a waterfall with a mill and some fishermen painted freehand. This centre panel is crowned by two neo-classical winged figures in white on a blue ground, an arrangement aiming to imitate jasperware, Wedgwood's popular and exclusive English porcelain.

THE HISTORY OF THE FARMHOUSES OF HÄLSINGLAND

MANY ROOMS FOR FESTIVITIES

A Hälsingland farmhouse could have up to fifteen decorated rooms, but only a couple of them were in day-to-day use. The others were used only for really important occasions, such as weddings. These festivities rooms are often richly decorated, and the painting technique indicates the room's use and status.



LINEN, THE FOREST AND TRADE

The farmers' healthy finances were based on agriculture and animal husbandry. Many Hälsingland farmers were also able to supplement their income with activities such as linen production, trade and the sale of forest land and timber rights.



FIRST FLOOR ROOMS ARE THE BEST-PRESERVED

All the walls are decorated with stencilling on paper pasted directly onto linen. In contrast to the ground-floor interiors, the ceiling borders in the first floor rooms are hand-painted despite attempting to imitate printed wallpaper borders. The walls of the vestibule are decorated with laurel wreaths in grey.

One room intended for storing clothes remains undecorated.

THE PAINTER JONAS WALLSTRÖM HAS LEFT HIS CLEAR MARK

The festivities building is decorated entirely by the renowned painter Jonas Wallström, from Vallsta. He is among the foremost representatives of the artistic, large-scale, high-quality landscape painting carried out in several of the large farmsteads in southern Hälsingland around the mid-1800s. Gästgivars is the best-preserved example of the well-developed stencilling that was then picked up by various folk-art painters, not only in Hälsingland but also in several neighbouring provinces. The central motif in the Gästgivars festivities room is one of the best examples of decorative work that follows original copperplate engravings and lithographs.

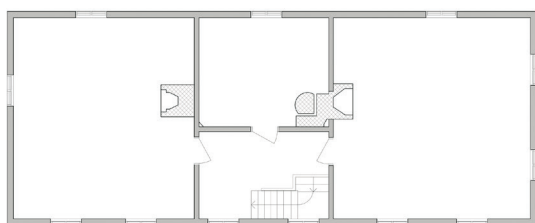


THE GROUND FLOOR WAS DECORATED FIRST

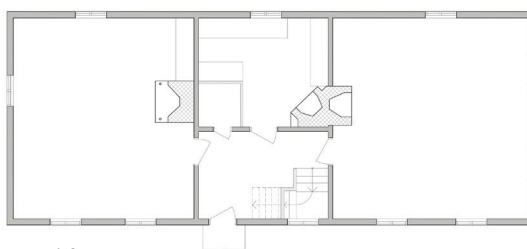
Wallström painted the ground floor first, in about 1840. The festivities room is still in its original condition, in contrast to the other ground-floor rooms, which underwent various changes in the years around 1950. The walls are embellished with a stencil pattern that imitates silk and uses a restrained palette. The wallpaper borders on the ground floor, with a multi-coloured rose pattern, are unusual for Hälsingland. They probably originate from the Swedish court painter Carl Fredric Torselius. He had a workshop in Stockholm where Jonas Wallström was a journeyman for a time. That was probably when the artist learned to paint rich floral borders directly onto the wall, something inspired by the French wallpaper fashion of the 1820s. The walls show clear signs of wear at seat height, indicating that the room has been much used.

In 2020, the middle chamber on the lower floor was regained to its original appearance. Saved pieces of painted fabric made it possible to reconstruct the wall paintings in its entirety.

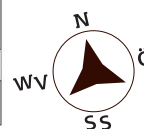
PLAN OF THE GÄSTGIVARS FESTIVITIES



First floor



Ground floor





» The walls are painted directly onto the linen instead of onto the more common pasted layer of paper.

Ground floor festivities room.

THE RESIDENTIAL DWELLING WAS BUILT ABOUT 1882

The residential dwelling, which now contains two apartments, is at right angles to the festivities building. It acquired its current exterior in 1882, when it was renovated and horizontal board cladding was applied. The window casings have a decorative design also found at other farmhouses in the village, and the roof is tiled. In the 1860s, the farm buildings formed an enclosed quadrangle. One wing has subsequently been demolished, and today the farmhouse has instead a view towards the river Ljusnan.

STABLE, STORAGE SHEDS AND STOREHOUSES

On the southern side of the farmhouse there is a wing housing things like stables, storage sheds and accommodation for maids and farmhands. The interior details indicate that it probably originates from the 1700s. To the south there is also a large barn, and to the west a cowshed built in rendered brickwork around 1900. It is linked to the residential dwelling by a bakehouse. A woodshed is also built onto the residential dwelling, while a little beyond the other buildings there is a storehouse and a barn for drying flax. Today there is a restaurant and café in the cowshed and a Visitor Center is housed in the stable.

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JONAS WALLSTRÖM

Jonas Wallström (1798-1862) was born in Vallsta, in Arbrå parish. He was the son of the soldier, and later carpenter, Anders Krok. From 1814-1821, Wallström lived in Hudiksvall, where he was apprenticed to the master painter Anders Winberg. Later, he was a journeyman with the master painter Söderberg in Stockholm and briefly with the court painter Carl Fredric Torsselius. Wallström married Karin Jonsdotter in 1831. By then he had moved back to Vallsta, where he lived until his death in 1862.

Jonas Wallström mastered many techniques, and often used combinations of printed borders, stencils and free-hand painting. He worked mostly on room interiors, but also painted furniture and pictures. Painted richly "gilded" frames and ornaments are also typical of his interiors. Wallström painted many farmhouses in Arbrå and its environs, and his stencilling spread across the province.

Jonas Wallström's painting can be seen in the local heritage centre in Undersvik, for example.



A LITTLE ABOUT WORLD HERITAGE SITES

A World Heritage Site is an environment considered globally unique and therefore important to all of humanity. The criteria that must be met to warrant designation as a World Heritage Site are governed by a 1972 convention adopted by the UN agency UNESCO. Once something is entered on the World Heritage List, the country where it is located is obliged to ensure that it is preserved for posterity.

THE DECORATED FARMHOUSES OF HÄLSINGLAND ARE ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

There are over 1200 sites on the World Heritage List, with about thirty being added each year. Italy accounts for most, while Sweden has fifteen. Since summer 2012, seven farmhouses in Hälsingland have become a World Heritage Site, Gästgivers being one of them.

The Hälsingland farmhouses were inscribed on the World Heritage List under the name “Decorated Farmhouses of Hälsingland”. The focus is on what is truly unique about the farmhouses, the vernacular architecture and the interiors. It is unusual for ordinary farmers to have built such large houses with so many large rooms exclusively for festivities. There are also more decorated domestic interiors preserved in Hälsingland than anywhere else in the world. Most of these farmhouses were built in the 1800s when construction reached its peak.

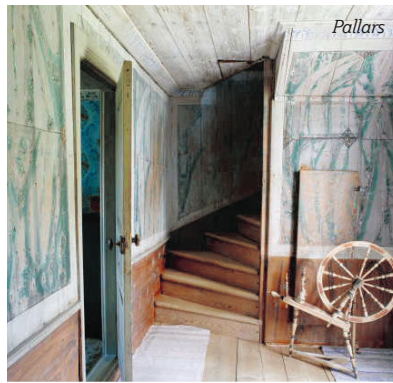


Photo: Lars Gustavsson
(Länsstyrelsen Gävleborg)

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THE SEVEN WORLD HERITAGE DECORATED FARMHOUSES

Gästgivars in Vallsta, Arbrå

Kristofers in Stene, Järvsö

Jon-Lars in Långhed, Alfta

Bortom Åa in Fågelsjö, Loos

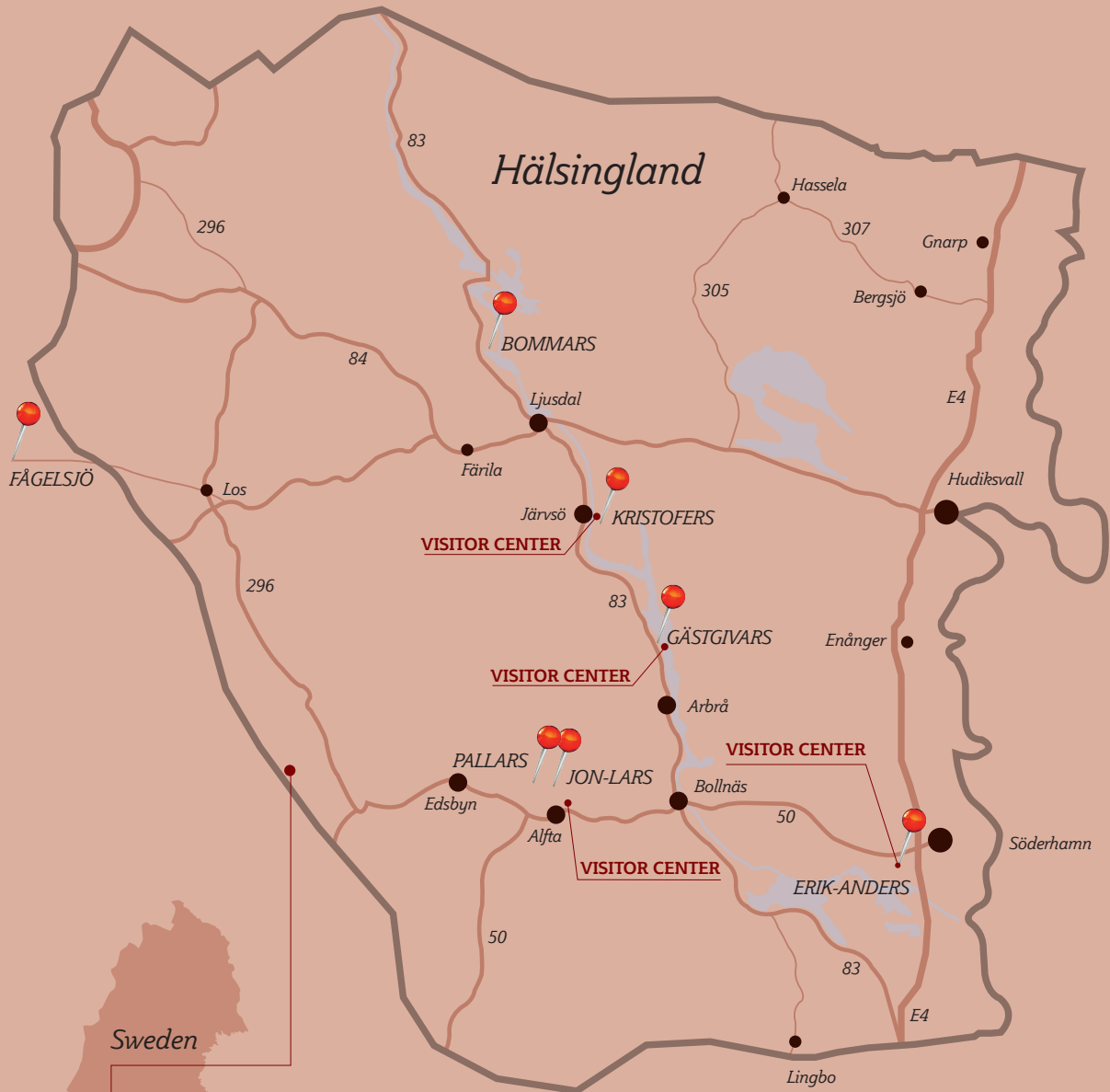
Bommars in Letsbo, Ljusdal

Erik-Anders in Asta, Söderala

Pallars in Långhed, Alfta

TOURS, VISITOR CENTER AND OPENING HOURS

Gästgivars is a privately owned farm with open activity, primarily during the summer. There is a fully licensed restaurant and café, Visitor Center, and a shop. In the store you will find products for building care and newly produced wallpaper with a long history pattern from the farm. Gästgivars is open daily during the summer with guided tours several times a day; drop in or booking via www.varldsarvetgastgivars.se. At other times of the year, pre-booked tours can be arranged.



CULTURAL HERITAGE AT GÄSTGIVARS

Here you can get close to sheep, cows, chickens and rabbits. Feed and get to know the animals that have helped man for generations. Garden to enjoy. In the café you can try local products such as Hälsinge cheesecake with cloudberry jam. Various events all year around.

Read more at www.varldsarvetgastgivars.se

GET TO KNOW YOUR HERITAGE – BUT NOT WITH YOUR HANDS!

It is important to remember that our common heritage must continue to be protected. Do not smoke in the area, and do not touch the painted surfaces, wood and fabrics.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The farm's website:

www.varldsarvetgastgivars.se

Facebook: **Världsarvet Gästgivars**

Instagram: **@varldsarvetgastgivars**

www.varldsarvethalsingegardar.se

Gävleborg County Administrative Board

www.lansstyrelsen.se/gavleborg

We reserve the right to make changes.

VISITOR CENTER

Stenegård, Järvsö

www.stenegard.com

Gästgivars, Vallsta

www.varldsarvetgastgivars.se

Hälsingegård Ol-Anders, Alfta

www.ol-anders.se

Erik-Anders, Asta

www.erik-anders.se

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