

A. THE VILLAGE OF EKEBY – IT’S A LONG STORY!

Welcome to the village of Ekeby, a cultural and historical landmark! Here you can experience a unique village environment of densely constructed farm buildings. The village site is almost square in shape, with six farms surrounded by a ring road. No other Swedish village with this layout has survived to the modern day. In the Middle Ages, many villages were encircled by ring roads, in accordance with the rules of the 14th-century Uppland Act. No one knows exactly how old Ekeby’s ring road is. The village was first mentioned in a medieval letter written in 1299, when Sko Abbey purchased a farm in the village. About twenty medieval deeds of sale mention farms in the village of Ekeby.

B. THE CHURCH AND THE NOBILITY IN THE VILLAGE OF EKEBY

Historical sources tell us that the village’s farms have passed through the hands of those in the upper echelons of Swedish society, members of both the spiritual and secular elite: Uppsala Cathedral, certain monasteries and abbeys, bishops and nobles. Various church organisations owned land here even before the Reformation. Private landowners have included the likes of Andreas And, Håkan Skytte, Jakob Ulfsson, and the noble Morgonstjärna and Böllja families. In the mid-17th century, the manor farms of Stora och Lilla Säteri were created from land owned by Ekeby’s nobility. Their initial owner was Olof Verelius, a professor at Uppsala University. The manor farms’ subsequent owners included

academics, nobles, and clerics. At times, they were owned and used as a single property. The peasants in the village were originally referred to as *landbor* [land-dwellers] (later tenant farmers).

C. GUSTAV VASA GAVE THE VILLAGE TO THE ARCHBISHOP

Around the year 1500, the village consisted of five farms. Its land value (tax-paying ability) was 5 *marklands* (an old unit of land measurement), making the village one of the largest in Vänge Parish. In connection with the Reformation, Gustav I (Vasa) reclaimed all church property on behalf of the Crown. Thereafter, the office of archbishop had to be financed by the Swedish State. In 1533, King Gustav Vasa allocated a number of farms in Vänge, including three farms in the village of Ekeby, to the archbishop “in due course”. Ekeby’s farmers paid rent for their tenancies in the form of grain, money, firewood, and labour. Until about 1910, the archbishop was personally involved in the management and yields of the village’s farms. The Archdiocese of Uppsala (more specifically, the present-day *Prästlönetillgångarna* [Priest Salary Assets] division of the Diocese of Uppsala) remains the village’s legal landowner. The continuity of its ownership is a probable reason why the village of Ekeby has retained such an old-fashioned character.

D. LAND PARCELS AND FARM BUILDINGS

The oldest known map of the village of Ekeby was drafted in 1635, while the first map with the ring road was drawn in 1764. The maps from the early 17th century to the late 18th

century show five farm symbols in roughly the same positions as today. Ringgatan [the ring road] is mentioned for the first time in the minutes of a legal proceeding in which forest land in Ekeby was divided. In this document, dated 1757, the size of the village's farm plots were also measured. In 1764, the ring road was measured and adjusted. The first preserved building inspection protocol for the archbishop's farms in Ekeby dates from 1777. All the buildings are described there in detail: their locations on the plots, use, dimensions, building materials, and condition. It appears that all three of the archbishop's farms had dwellings and outbuildings for two tenant farmer families each. At Groggården and Oppgården farms, they lived together in long, *radhus*-style farmhouses [terraced houses] known in Swedish as *manbyggnader*, while starting in 1764, Mellangården's two households each had their own residential building.

E. FROM AGRICULTURAL VILLAGE TO CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL LANDMARK

By the mid-20th century, agricultural technology had become so modern that both the farms and the buildings in the village of Ekeby had grown too small for their original purposes. Following the gradual closure of the farms during the 1950s, in 1963 all the land in Ekeby was conglomerated under the ownership of a single farmer. Residential buildings and new outbuildings were built on the outskirts of the village, where they still stand. The historic farm buildings in Ekeby proper were no longer needed for agricultural purposes, but the cost of maintaining them was high. The future of the village became a long-standing topic of discussion for the property

owner, Uppsala Diocese, the residents, and not least the Local Historical Society of Vänge. The society was founded in 1950 with the aim of preserving the village and its adjacent windmill. Together with many engaged citizens, they eventually managed to achieve the preservation of the whole of Ekeby in a virtually untouched state.

An extensive restoration of the village's buildings was carried out in 1982. In 1997, the entire village was declared a cultural and historical landmark, which means that the buildings and the environment may not be changed without permission from the County Administrative Board. The village is maintained by the property owner according to a special plan for its care and preservation. Some buildings are rented out as summer homes. Karlssongården is rented and cared for by Local History Society of Vänge.

You're welcome to stroll the streets and alleys of the village of Ekeby, wander its ring road and main street, and climb the hill up to the mill. With the exception of Karlssongården, the farm plots are private property.

NUMBERS ON THE MAP

1. RINGGATA AND RADBÝ

According to the medieval Swedish law, village plots were to be divided up in proportion to the farms' share of the village's total arable land area, pursuant to the adage: *"Tomt är tegs"*

moder” [”Toft is the mother of the selion”]. The older maps show that two of the archbishop’s farms had a land value of 1 *mantal* [an archaic unit of land assessment], while the remaining plot (Oppgården) was slightly narrower, with a lower tax rate. The two manor farms (Stora Säteriet and Lilla Säteriet) were ascribed values of 1 and 0.5 *mantal*, respectively. Lilla Säteriet’s plot of land remains the narrowest strip in the village, while the other plots have changed slightly over time. Together, the five plots form a pattern known as a *radby* [row village].

2. MELLANGATAN

Mellangatan is the Ekeby’s main street and runs lengthwise across the village. It is not marked on any older maps; back then, the plots directly abutted each other. There was space along the long sides of the plots between Gropgården and Mellangården farms. This allowed room to drive out towards the ring road in the southwest and northeast. Cattle were driven down to the village spring to drink. Due to legislation and increased knowledge about improved fire safety, this impromptu street gradually became a permanent feature of the village. Well into the 19th century, the roofs of the buildings in Ekeby were covered with materials such as straw, peat, and wooden shingles. Greater distances between the structures reduced the risk of spreading in the event of a fire. Luckily, the village of Ekeby has never suffered any major fire!

3. MELLANGÅRDEN FARM

The upper half of this farm plot has been occupied since the mid-1760s. The current residential building dates from the

1800s. The main building of the lower farm unit (the residential building) was demolished and replaced with a new one on the same site in the early 1950s. The other outbuildings are well-preserved and most of them still stand in the same locations as in 1777.

4. GROPGÅRDEN FARM

The main (residential) building was constructed in the late 18th century. It replaced a long "two-family house" that stood on the site until at least 1777. When the buildings on the site of the old Stora Säteriet manor farm were demolished in the mid-19th century, Gropgården's land plot was widened to extend towards the south-east corner of the village. Gropgården used as a summer residence by the surviving spouse of the farm's last tenant until about 2015.

5. BYKÄLLAN

The spring known as Bykällan was the village's primary water source and has probably been used since the Middle Ages. Horses and cows were driven down here to drink. Horses also pulled barrels of spring water up to Ekeby's barns and households. Bykällan was an important meeting place in the village! The installation of running water began around 1935. The first pipes ran to the barns, but the network was later extended to the kitchens of its various farms.

6. LILLA SÄTERIET

Of the older structures here, only one residential building has been preserved. No one knows how old it is, but the stone cellar under the house has been estimated to date from the 17th century. In 1752 there were two residential buildings here – one for the owners, one for the tenant-farmer and his family. There were also seven outbuildings, with room for ten cows, four horses, sheep, pigs, and chickens.

7. OPPGÅRDEN FARM

This was originally the smallest of the archbishop's three farms. In the 18th century, the households of the farm's two tenants lived here in the village's longest *radhus* [terraced house], which was 23 metres in length. The current residential building was erected when this long two-family home was demolished in the 19th century.

8. STORA SÄTERIET (NOW DEMOLISHED)

Ekeby's Stora Säteriet manor farm was founded by Professor Olof Verelius (1618–1682). It consisted of a stately manor house, with outbuildings a dwelling for the tenant-farmer and his family on the lower part of the plot. The last private owner was the *geschwornen* (mining engineer) at a long-defunct government authority known as *Bergsförvaltningen* [Mining Administration], Daniel Thelaus (1732–1796). After his death, Stora Säteriet's land was absorbed by Brunna Farm. The buildings were used as housing for farm labourers and craftsmen until the manor farm's demolition, around the

middle of the 19th century. The land was then divided between Karlssongården and Gropgården farms.

9. THE WINDMILL

The windmill was built in 1807 by the Uppsala merchant Olof Forsslund, and in 1815 it became part of Brunna Farm. The mill was in use until about 1909. The Local History Society of Vänge was founded in 1950 and managed to purchase the windmill from Brunna Farm for a symbolic sum. At that time, the mill lacked both blades and machinery, which were subsequently reconstructed through the enthusiastic and diligent work of the society's members. The last major renovation was carried out in the 1970s, when the mill was restored to such condition that it could once again be powered by wind. In 2024, a new, major renovation of the mill's timber frame will be necessary.

10. KARLSSONGÅRDEN FARM

This farm is named after the last farmer to cultivate it, whose last name was Karlsson. His grandfather came here as a tenant farmer in 1885. The Local History Society of Vänge disposes of the farm as a folk museum and arranges exhibitions and guided tours, runs a summer café here. The main building dates from the late 18th century, when the upper part of the farm plot where it is located was first occupied by the owners of Gropgården farm. Parts of the sheds facing the village street are from the same period. From the beginning, the farm buildings occupied only a narrow tract of the plot, which was then only half as wide as it is now. This layout persisted until the buildings of Stora Säteriet were

demolished in the mid-19th century. Then the outbuildings' area of the farm Karlssongården were rotated 90 degrees. New outbuildings were gradually erected in their current locations.

11, 12. TVÄTTSTUGAN AND THE VILLAGE SMITHY

Tvättstugan, the village laundry, (11) was built in 1927 by the tenants of Karlssongården and upper Mellangården (then Falk's Farm).

There is a WC in the right part.

Bysmedjan, the village smithy (12), was erected outside the village, for fire safety reasons. It probably dates from the 19th century, and was last restored in the 1990s by the Local History Society of Vänge. Its members hope to eventually renovate the smithy and arrange activities here, just as soon as the society has the necessary manpower and funds.

GUIDES AND TOURS

Do you and your fellow visitors want to know more about the village of Ekeby? Members of the Local Historical Society of Vänge can point out details, share stories, and offer knowledgeable guidance around the village. Contact the Local History Society of Vänge at info@vangehembygd.se .