



Swedish Society of Public Parks and Gardens (SSPPG)

Visit to Gothenburg, Sweden - 2,3 Feb 2015

A report by Oliver Maurice

1. Purpose of visit

To meet the staff of the SSPPG and visit some of their members' properties

To understand and appreciate their vision and objectives

To explore ways by which they might establish, in due course, a Swedish National Trust

To encourage SSPPG to become a member of INTO

2. Background

SSPPG's founder and former Project Manager, Cecilia Liljedahl, had visited the National Trust (EWNI) towards the end of last year on a fact-finding mission, during which time she met with Catherine Leonard with whom she outlined her plans. Catherine suggested that I should visit them and I was duly invited, at their expense.

3. What is SSPPG ?

Founded in 2010, SSPPG, a not-for-profit ngo, is a networking society with, currently, 30 member organisations from around Sweden. Its aim is to strengthen, develop and communicate knowledge and information about Sweden's garden heritage which includes a broad variety of different landscapes ranging from the clearing of the forests of the north to the formal palace gardens of the south.

Members' properties often include associated royal palaces, historic castles, mansions and buildings : one of these royal palaces, Drottningholm, forms part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The ensemble of Drottningholm – castle, theatre, Chinese pavilion and

gardens - is described as “the best example of a royal residence built in Sweden in the 18th century and is representative of all European architecture of that period, influenced by the construction of the Château of Versailles”.

For the most part the SSPPG members’ properties are owned by either the municipalities or by private foundations (ngo’s) and not by the Society itself.

In a sense SSPPG is not unlike INTO but at a national rather than international level. It is an umbrella body for many of the historic parks and gardens of Sweden, relies heavily on the membership fees for funding, offers an annual conference and training for its members and knowledge and experience through networking. Furthermore it promotes the conservation of the cultural and natural heritage.

In return for a membership fee of €2000 per annum, as well as the above benefits, members’ properties are promoted both in and outside Sweden, there is an annual seminar with the (rotating) host site being used as a case study, biennial study trips abroad, a stand at the annual Nordic Gardens Fair in Stockholm and links with international organisations

One of the drawbacks to SSPGS’s aim to become an INTO member is that, at present, it is not a legal entity although, following useful discussions during my visit, it is likely that that position may change in order that they can meet the criteria for at least Associate membership and, in the medium term, perhaps Candidate if they do agree to move towards founding a Swedish National Trust

Cecilia Liljedahl has recently appointed a new part-time Project Manager, Annelie Johansson, so that she, Cecilia, can concentrate more on her ambassadorial role as well as her other commitments.

4. Property visits

Over the two days that I spent with SSPPG I visited three of their members’ properties; Gunnebo, Gothenburg City Park and Gothenburg Botanical Garden (see Annex).

In every case, and despite a good covering of snow, it was clear that they were run and maintained to a very high standard. Indeed such standards are a prerequisite of membership of SSPPG.

Gunnebo houses the headquarters of SSPPG in one of the ancillary buildings, where I met the Chairperson, Lena Vikström, who is also the Managing Director of Gunnebo. At Gothenburg City Park we were taken round by the Programme and Events Manager, Lisa Brunströmm and at the Botanic Garden a more formal meeting took place with Mari Källersjö, the Director ; Göran Jungersten, Head of Administration ; and the Head Gardener, Anders Stalhand.

On each occasion I outlined the work of INTO and our relationship with our members and, at the Botanic Garden, some of the more detailed management prescriptions used by the National Trust.

5. Outcomes

At a final meeting with Cecilia on Tuesday evening we agreed in principle the following :

I would return to Sweden at the end of March (25-28) for the Nordic Gardens Fair and speak about the work of National and Heritage Trusts and INTO, and the value of having a National Trust. SSPPG has a half hour slot on the main platform for this purpose. I would also speak at their stand on one or two occasions during the day(s) in question. In each case there would be a question and answer session.

Cecilia will organise a lunch and discussion with SSPPG's members at the Fair where they can learn more about specific management principles as used by the NT, such as property management plans, statements of significance, use of volunteers, endowments, as well as the benefits of SSPPG joining INTO.

Cecilia will endeavour to arrange separate meetings with the Minister of Culture and the Swedish National Heritage Board during my visit so that I can promote the idea of a Swedish National Trust and the principles involved.

My expenses would be met by SSPPG.

6. Conclusion

Quite apart from the pleasure I derived from once again 'working at the coal face' I believe the purposes of the visit either were or will in due course be met.

In the short term I believe SSPPG will apply to join INTO at some level subject to becoming a legal entity and I sincerely hope we will be able to welcome them as members.

If all goes well in Stockholm their aspirations to form a Swedish National Trust could move a stage closer.

Oliver Maurice

5 Feb 2015

ANNEX

Gunnebo House, Park and Garden

This beautiful neo-classical house and all the buildings were designed by the architect Carl Carlberg for a wealthy Scotsman, John Hall (1735-1802) and are built in wood. The house dates from the 18th century. It was acquired by the Mölndal Municipality in the 1950s after the death of the last owner in 1948. The orangery is currently being rebuilt in traditional pine. Gunnebo is reputed to be one of the finest and best preserved Baroque gardens in Sweden.

SSPPG's headquarters are located in a building which also houses the shop. Adjacent is an excellent restaurant which utilises entirely home grown organic vegetables and locally sourced organic meat

Gothenburg City Park otherwise known as the Garden Society of Gothenburg, is one of the best preserved 19th century parks in Europe. It is a verdant oasis (45 acres) in the very heart of the city. Inspired by the Royal Horticultural Society of England, it was the vision of Captain Henric von Normann to establish a botanical garden and in 1842 the city authority allocated land to the newly founded Garden Society of Gothenburg (GSG).

Today the GSG is a listed historical site under the Cultural Heritage Act and is run entirely in accordance with ecological principles.

The two most important features of the GSG are the Rosarium, one of the foremost rose gardens in northern Europe in which 1200 different roses bloom in the summer, and the Palm House.

The Palm House is modelled on London's Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. It was built in Scotland and delivered in sections to Gothenburg by sea and finally completed in 1878.

Gothenburg Botanical Garden

This 175ha (432 acre) botanical garden differs in many respects from most traditional botanical gardens in Europe. It was conceived and planned by the municipality of Gothenburg in the 1910s with an extra emphasis on horticulture and a broad relevance to Swedish community life.

The largest part of the garden is a nature reserve which includes an arboretum containing thousands of exotic shrubs and trees. The garden proper is about 40 ha in which are grown around 12000 different species in various parts including the famous rock garden with 5000 species. Other fascinating parts are the Rhododendron Valley and the Japanese Glade.

The Greenhouses have over 5000 species and house the largest collection of tropical and subtropical orchids in Sweden.