

# Foll-



The e-Bulletin of The Folly Fellowship

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## Events calendar:

- **26 April**—A border ramble to Tenbury Wells Pump Room, Pembury Water Gardens, Shobden Arches and Gothick Church, and Bryan's Ground with its Sulking House and Dovecote.
- **18 May**—Burt's Bits: A tour of the follies of Swanage.
- **27 July**—Garden Party at Flaxbourne Gardens in Bedfordshire.
- **6-7 Sept**—Overseas trip to La Scarsuola and Bomarzo.

Full details on [www.follies.org.uk](http://www.follies.org.uk) or by writing to [trips@follies.org.uk](mailto:trips@follies.org.uk).

### The Folly Fellowship

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## Fem Lusthusen

Det är inte ett skjul, det är ett lusthus!

The etymology of the term 'gazebo' has long puzzled garden historians, especially since it has no equivalent in any other European language. It appeared here around the same time that Britain began trading with the Far East and until recently was thought to have been first used by William and John Halfpenny in

their book *Rural Architecture in the Chinese Taste* (published in 1750). Many have assumed from this that the word is Oriental in its origin. We now know that the term was used almost a decade earlier in Rev'd Wetenhall Wilkes's book *An Essay on the Pleasures and Advantages of Female Literature*, published in 1741, suggesting that



it was already in use in Britain.

Wilkes's book finishes with three long poems to *Three Poetic Landscapes in Heroic Measure*, the last of which is on the park at *Bellville* and includes the lines:

*Unto the painful summit of this  
height*

*A gay Gazebo does our Steps invite.*

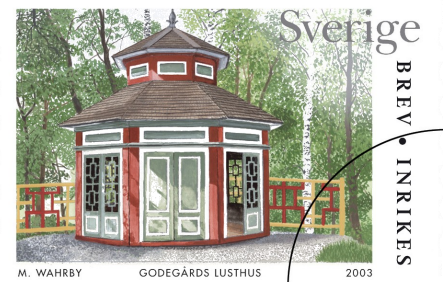
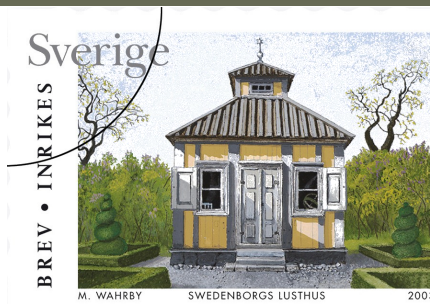
*From this, when favour'd with a  
Cloudless Day,  
We fourteen Counties all around  
survey.*

*Th' increasing prospect tires the  
wandering Eyes:*

*Hills peep o'er Hills, and mix with  
distant Skies.*

Sweden's love affair with the gazebo similarly developed through its early trading links with China, since when the nation has built thousands of them in its public parks, private gardens and in the hundreds of allotments that encircle most of its towns and cities. Ten years ago the nation celebrated its passion for these adult playhouses with the release of five (fem) commemorative postage stamps, each depicting an historic example of what the Swedes call *lusthusen*.

The term translates badly to English combining the everyday Swedish word of *lust*, meaning joy, pleasure and delight, with *hus* for house, and is today applied to any pavilion or summerhouse but most



notably those used for relaxation or private study.

In his book *Länge leve Lusthusen* (Long Live Gazebos), published in 1999, Hans Mårtensson tells us that they are places where whole families squeeze together for parties and to enjoy the last of Sweden's short summers. He also says that they provide a place where owners can 'decorate more freely than they do at home', implying that gazebos serve as a therapeutic canvas for frustrated decorators who want to reveal the colourful and eccentric side of their characters.

The stamps were released on 16 May 2003, and appear in two formats: Fredrik Blom's Djurgårds-paviljongen was a large stamp and issued separately from the main

group of four, all based on paintings by the artist Mikael Wahrby.

The first stamp shows the **Swedenborg Lusthus**, built in 1767 for the scientist, philosopher and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). At that time it was customary for gazebos to be set at the end of a garden path so they could also serve as an eyecatcher, but Carl Robsahm's *Memoirs of Swedenborg* tells us that his had been positioned 'for the sake of the public that came to see the old gentleman, generally out of curiosity.'

In reality, Swedenborg's was more likely to have been a retreat and a quiet place where he could work in private, a view that was shared by Rev. Nicholas Collin (Rector of the Swedish Church in Philadelphia) who visited Swedenborg in 1766 and described the building as 'a kind of temple, to which he often retired for contemplation; for which its peculiar structure, and dim religious light were suitable.'

Robsahm's memoirs record that the gazebo was originally fitted with two side wings: one to the north used to store garden tools, and one to the south containing Swedenborg's 'handsome library'. Both had been demolished by the 1890s, by which time the elaborate tapestries that once lined its internal walls had also been lost.

The building is the best known of Sweden's *lusthus* heritage, allowing Ingvar Storm to claim in his





*Summerhouses in Stockholm* book (1981) that 'there is perhaps no other summerhouse that has as many stories told about it as this one.'

After Swedenborg's death both his house and garden fell quickly into disrepair. By 1870 the gazebo was being used as a home for a family on low income; nine years later a newspaper article drew attention to its condition and how it was being used for the storage of junk. The owner's indignant reply was that the government should fund its repair, adding that 'none of the hundreds of foreigners, mostly Englishmen and Americans, that yearly visit the site, leave without expressing their amazement for the government's indifferent attitude toward such a historical place.'

In 1896 the gazebo was bought by Arthus Hazelius and taken to the world's first open-air museum at Skansen, on the central Stockholm island of Djurgården. The event attracted a lot of attention and was marked by the release of a commemorative medal in silver and bronze showing a bust of Swedenborg on one side, and his gazebo on the other.

The second stamp shows the oldest gazebo in Sweden—**Ebba Brahe's Lusthus** at Bockhammar in Västmanland.

In the early seventeenth century all that stood at Bockhammar was a Forge and a Mill, both of which were bought by Magnus Brahe, Lord High Steward to the Royal Court. His daughter (Ebba) was a Maid of Honour at Court and soon formed a close friendship with Prince Gustavus Adol-



phus, later King Gustav II. His mother, the Dowager Queen Kristina, thought Ebba was an inappropriate choice of consort so she intervened to stop the romance and encouraged her son to marry Maria Eleonora of Brandenburg instead.

Although initially heartbroken, Ebba later married Commander Jacob de la Gardie and had fourteen children by him, half of whom died at an early age. In 1633 she inherited the Bockhammar estate from her father and continued to run it even after her husband died in 1652.

According to legend Ebba built her gazebo in 1636 on the site where she and the Prince used to meet to read poetry together. By then he had been killed at the Battle of Lützen in Saxony, a tragedy that was said to have affected

Ebba so deeply that she sang happy songs in the gazebo during the mornings and sad ones in the evenings when her melancholy returned. Some claim that her spirit continues to occupy the gazebo.

The third stamp illustrates the **Västana Lusthus** at Borensberg. It was built in 1872 by John and Augustus Robert for their aunt Johanna, who with her husband had bought the estate in 1846. In what was intended to be a playful representation of the small castles lining the rivers and gorges of the Loire Valley in France, the two men chose to erect their gazebo on a dramatic bend of the Göta Canal that flows through part their estate, at a place that is still known as 'Helmsman's Horror'.

This picturesque setting has made the gazebo a familiar sight





in Sweden and even given it movie star status through being featured in a series of canal films. Despite this, the building was dilapidated and on the brink of collapse when the current owners bought the Västana estate in the 1980s. Since then they have lovingly restored the gazebo to its former glory.

The best preserved of these early structures is the **Godegård Lusthus**, which appears on the fourth stamp.

In the mid-eighteenth century Godegård was a small mining parish in Östergötland. It was bought in 1775 by Johan Grill, a merchant and later director of the East India Company who later spent a small fortune improving both the estate and its nearby ironworks. As part of those improvements he added an English Park around the Manor using a design created by Fredrik Piper, one of the best landscape architects of his day and designer of Sweden's great parks at Haga and Drottningholm.

In 1788 he added the Chinese style gazebo on Lustigkullevägen, which was said to complement the wallpapers used inside the manor house. Today that gazebo is approached from a long path lined with lilacs, and is one of two pavilions in the Park.

The last of the stamps shows Fredrik Blom's **Djurgårdspaviljongen** from the 1820s. Blom was one of Sweden's most sought-after architects in the nineteenth century, having developed his skills under the tutorage of Louis Desprez and Fredrik Piper. He is best known for being the architect to Rosendal's Palace on Djurgården Island, where his classical gazebo now stands. Perhaps foreseeing its future, Blom designed the gazebo with prefabricated panels that were held together with

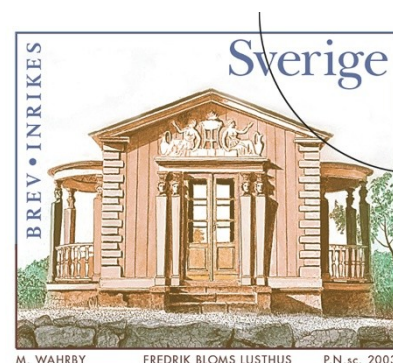


large iron bolts, each capable of being undone if the pavilion had to be moved. In fact it has moved three times: firstly serving as a gazebo to a private house in Stockholm, then as a waiting room on one of the islands for a local steam ferry, and finally to Djurgården where it stands as a centre piece at Skansen.

Lusthuses remained popular features of the Swedish landscape until the late 1880s when it began to be more fashionable to build conservatories. Many Swedes still prefer these wood structures and they build them by the thousands each year, encouraging a whole industry to spring up and offer a selection of bespoke and off-the-peg structures in any number of styles and sizes. Most are bought from catalogues in the same way that other people buy sheds, but it is true to say that these lack the style and finesse of the earlier structures. Perhaps this is why they were celebrated on the Fem Lusthusen postage stamps.

Despite their resemblance to the garden shed, at least one Swede is sensitive to the accusation and has erected a sign on his

pavilion declaring: "*Det är inte ett skjul, det är ett lusthus!*"—It's not a shed, it's a gazebo!



### WNS Stamp References:

- SE25.03—Swedenborgs Lusthus
- SE26.03—Ebba Brahes Lusthus
- SE27.03—Lusthuset vid Borensberg
- SE28.03—Godegårds Lusthus
- SE29.03—Fredrik Bloms Lusthus

### Picture Credits:

1. Ebba Brahe's Gazebo—Photo: Clara Ruyter on Wikimedia Commons.
2. Emanuel Swedenborg's Gazebo—Photo: Holgar Ellgaard on Wikimedia Commons.
3. Emanuel Swedenborg's Gazebo—postcard c.1910.
4. Ebba Brahe's Gazebo—Photo: <http://lusthuset.wordpress.com>
5. The Västana Lusthus—Photo: E. Mike on Panoramio
6. Fredrik Blom's Lusthus—Photo: Marie Andersson on [www.skansen.se](http://www.skansen.se)

