

JOHANNES ANDERSSON'S CANAL

In the heart of the Gnosjö Region, approx. 6 km south of Gnosjö, you find Johannes Andersson's Canal, also called the "Deserter's Canal". In many ways, this is an early expression of the "Spirit of Gnosjö". The hand-dug canal embodies much of what is associated with this renowned spirit: "... vocational skills, diligence, thrift, humbleness, respect, collaboration and entrepreneurship" – according to the Gnosjö Region's own website.

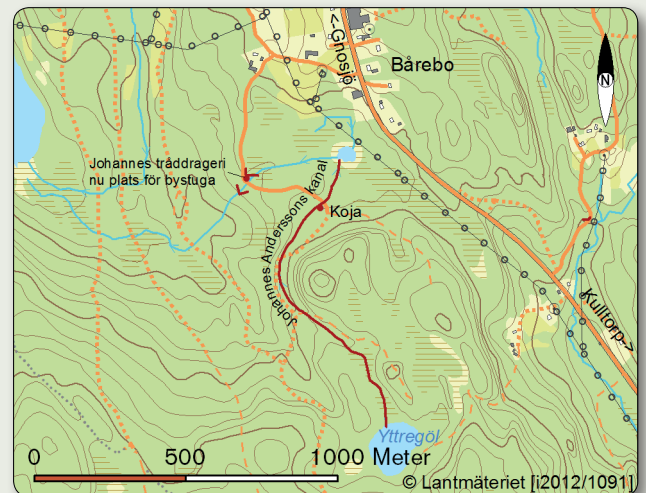
The history of the canal begins in the early 1800s, in the area around Bårebo. The enterprising wire maker Johannes Andersson operated here. Just when he had finished building his watermill, he was called up to go to Finland to serve in the 1808–1809 war against Russia. It was "with an aching heart that he was forced to abandon his surely very dear wire-drawing plant and its water wheel", wrote F.J. Eneström 1906 in the book *Gnosjöborna* (The People of Gnosjö). Andersson went, but knew that military life was not for him – so he ran away. His uniform was found, and it was assumed that he had deserted and possibly drowned himself.

But he had returned to his homeland and was hiding in the forest near his family home. He remained hidden and lived in a hut in the forest. His parents brought him food and clothing. During this time, he dug a dam, which operated his wire-drawing mill, and a 1 kilometer long canal that supplied water to the dam. When he eventually returned to the district, everyone thought that he had come home from the war. He ran his wire production successfully and became a respected citizen. In 1815, he received a gold medal and 100 Swedish riksdaler as a reward for his innovative use of water power in the wire production. So perhaps the "Deserter's Canal" should be renamed the "Entrepreneur's Canal"? Johannes Andersson's life is depicted in the novel *Svikaren* (The Deserter) by Harry Sjöman.

The wiredrawing mill was located on the site of the village hall. A reconstructed water wheel reminds us of the industry. The hut is rebuilt in its original location, 300 metres to the east along the gravel road; follow the signs. The canal is best viewed from here, and you can then follow it upstream.



Johannes Andersson's hut. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.



HIDDEN GEM 57



HOW TO GET HERE

From Gnosjö: Drive south towards Kulltorp, approx. 6 km. At Bårebo, turn right by the sign for "Sunnerbo" and continue for 300 m to the crossroads. Turn left and drive around 500 m.

Coordinates:

N 6351931 / E 425026
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N 57°
18' 15.03", E 13° 45' 20.19"
(WGS84)



Part of Johannes Andersson's canal. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.

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HIDDEN GEMS

There are so many things to discover in the countryside! Here, Jönköping County Museum presents some of the cultural environment and heritage attractions in the county.

They include well-known cultural monuments such as Habo Church and the Smålandsstenar Stone Circles, but also lesser known gems such as log-driving remains in the river Valån and Stengårdshult Church. Around the county you can find evidence of how people lived and worked in the past, everything from castles and manors to abandoned embankments and clearance cairns in forest areas.

The idea with Hidden Gems is to tempt you to make excursions in the cultural landscape – here you find our history, revealed in different ways in the physical environment. This heritage is worth experiencing and protecting. Bit by bit, we will be adding more sights under the heading Hidden Gems, both for people living in the county and visitors from further away. The more people who discover these gems, the better chance that they will be preserved for the future.

FACTS

In Jönköping County there are more than 4 000 registered ancient remains, 87 cultural environments of national interest, close to 130 listed buildings, around 150 churches, some 100 rural community centres with old settlements, a large number of industrial heritage sites, and two cultural reserves. There are also a large number of cultural environments with buildings worthy of conservation. More information about the sites can be found on the websites of the County Administrative Board, the municipalities and the local heritage societies.

GOOD TO KNOW

Access to the Hidden Gems varies. Some sites are well signposted, with easy access and proper parking facilities, etc. Others are more challenging to reach. Visitors may have to walk some distance, sometimes through scrubby forest, only to be met by a broken sign (if there ever was one) when they reach the site. All the sites, however, have an exciting and interesting history.

Please note that many of the cultural heritage buildings are privately owned and can only be viewed from the outside. Also, please respect private land. Many churches are open in the summer. During other times of the year, the churchwarden may be able to open the church for you.

