

Servants, Labourers, and the Manorial World: Alternative Perspectives

9th ENCOUNTER Conference
9–11 October 2025



Servants, Labourers, and the Manorial World: Alternative Perspectives

The European Network for Country House and Estate Research (ENCOUNTER) is pleased to welcome you to the 9th ENCOUNTER Conference. The conference is hosted by the network in collaboration with The Danish Research Centre for Manorial Studies and Gammel Estrup – The Danish Manor Museum.

The manor or country house is often viewed exclusively as a stage for the economic and political elite of the past, a setting for splendour, luxury, and self-presentation. However, the world of the manor also included a well-defined hierarchy consisting of landowning families, tenant farmers, servants, craftsmen and labourers, all negotiating the dynamics of power. Ideally, the manor operated as a paternalistic institution built on mutual obligations: masters provided care and protection and subordinates offered work, loyalty and obedience. This relationship was both a practical arrangement and an ideological framework, a power dynamic and a manifestation of social inequality.

These historical structures could however be a source of both resistance and conflict as well as support and benevolence. On a larger scale, country houses became both targets and symbols during major confrontations, from peasant revolts to revolutions and civil wars. On a smaller scale, historical court records reveal conflicts involving servants and owners or the owners' representatives. Conversely, the manor provided the social framework for many people's lives, offering employment, housing, and protection. Country house owners offered patronage and sought to cultivate the religious and moral development of their staff and communities. Loyal service was rewarded with promotions and comfortable living conditions. Manors funded churches, schools, alms-houses, and gave donations. However, the nineteenth century brought dramatic social changes, as industrialisation drew labour and wealth into the urban centres. To what extent were these changes driven by further political developments and societal reforms? Was social change in a rural context a one-way phenomenon dictated by landowners?

The ENCOUNTER conference will explore these dynamics, primarily focusing on a bottom-up perspective, highlighting the master-servant relationship in its full paternalistic scope, and addressing household, villages, rural communities, etc. This includes shedding light on the conditions and material realities for servants and workers, as well as the organisational structures. And to explore conflicts/resistance and limits within the relationship, as well as changes in the nature and conditions of the relationship over time.

ENCOUNTER was founded in Denmark in 2015 and has since provided a framework for interaction between scholars and cultural institutions in Europe sharing a professional interest in the research and interpretation of manor and country house history. The conference thus also marks the network's 10th anniversary.

Programme

9–11 October 2025

Ledreborg, Denmark

Thursday, 9 October 2025

8.40 **Bus departure from Scandic Roskilde**

8.55 **Bus departure from Roskilde Station**

9.15 **Arrival Ledreborg Estate/coffee**

10.00 **Welcome**

Kasper Steinfeldt Tipsmark, Gammel Estrup The Danish Manor & Estate Museum
and Signe Boeskov, The Danish Research Centre for Manorial Studies

10.15–10.50 **Keynote**

Aristocratic Servants in 17th Century Sweden: Gender, Recruitment and Career

Svante Norrhem, Lund University

Session 1: *Servants*

Chair: Kasper Steinfeldt Tipsmark, Gammel Estrup The Danish Manor & Estate
Museum

10.55–11.20 *Servants' Property and Material Culture on Swedish Manors, 1770-1870*

Göran Ulväng, Uppsala University

11.20–11.45 *The Organisation of the Household. The Role of High-Ranking
Servants at 19th Century Danish Manors*

Signe Boeskov and Søren Broberg Knudsen, The Danish Research Centre for
Manorial Studies

11.45–12.10 **Break**

12.10–12.35 *Behind the Scenes of the Manor*

Aina Aske, Vestfoldmuseene IKS and Lars Jacob Hvinden-Haug, Norwegian
Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU)

12.35–13.00 *Hidden Doors and Secret Passages; Telling the Story of Servants in Eidsvoll House*

Solveig Therese Dahl, Eidsvoll 1814, The Norsk Folkemuseum foundation

13.00 **Lunch**

14.10 **Guided tour Ledreborg**

Session 2: Labour and Estate Community

Chair: Paul Zalewski, European University of Viadrina

15.25–15.50 *The Transition from Serfdom to the Industrial Worker in the Vodka Distillery of the Estonian Manor during the 19th Century*

Mirje Tammaru, Estonian Academy of Arts

15.50–16.15 *Arm wrestling. Agency and Negotiations between Tenant Farmers and the big House. An alternative Perspective based on four 18th Century Estates within the Netherlands*

Gerrit van Oosterom, independent researcher

16.15–16.40 **Break**

16.40–17.05 *Labourers on the Estate—Esbogård ca. 1770–1920*

Tryggve Gestrin, Espoo City Museum

17.05–17.30 *Work, Family, Security — the Relationships and Life Strategies within the Håkansböle Manor Community*

Eeva Kotioja, Vantaa City Museum

17.30 **Discussion and break**

18.30 **Bus departure for Restaurant Herthadalen**

18.45 **Conference Dinner, Restaurant Herthadalen**

Bus for Roskilde Station and Roskilde Scandic



Friday, 10 October

8.10 **Bus departure from Scandic Roskilde**

8.25 **Bus departure from Roskilde Station**

8.45 **Arrival Ledreborg Estate/coffee**

Chair: Hanneke Ronnes, University of Groningen

9.30—10.05 **Early Career Keynote**

Early Modern Estates as Communities of 'Care': Medical Practice across the Social Hierarchy in Rural England, ca. 1650—1750

Emma Marshall, University of Birmingham & University of York

Session 3: Care and Crisis

10.10—10.35 *A Manorial World in Miniature?*

The Hospital of Laurvig County in the 18th Century

Arne Bugge Amundsen, University of Oslo

10.35—11.00 *The State, the Subjects, and the Lord: Conflicts at Ängsö Manor 1690—1710*

Joakim Scherp, Stockholm University and The Riksdag Library

11.00—11.25 **Break**

11.25—11.50 *Caring Beyond the Grave? The Estate of Denis Roest van Alkemade (1720—1791)*

Thijs Boers, Amsterdam Museum and University of Amsterdam

11.50—12.05 Discussion

12.15 **Lunch**

13.35 **Bus departure for Gisselfeld**

14.30 **Arrival at Gisselfeld**

Guided tour of Gisselfeld

16.45 **Departure for Vallø**

17.20 **Arrival at Vallø**

Guided tour of Vallø

19.00 **Dinner at Vallø Slotskro**

21.00 **Bus departure**

21.45 **Arrival at Scandic Roskilde**

Saturday, 11 October

8.10 **Bus departure from Scandic Roskilde**

8.25 **Bus departure from Roskilde Station**

9.30 **Arrival Gjorslev**

Guided tour of Gjorslev

11.15 **Departure Gjorslev**

12.35 **Arrival Gavnø/Lunch at Café Tulipanen**

Guided tour of Gavnø

14.45 **Bus departure Gavnø**

16.15 **Arrival Scandic Roskilde**

16.30 **Arrival Roskilde Banegård**



Abstracts

ENCOUNTER conference

Denmark 2025



*Landscape with a Stile.
The Isle of Møn, C.W.
Eckersberg*

Aristocratic Servants in 17th Century Sweden: Gender, Recruitment and Career

Svante Norrhem, Lund University

In this paper, I will talk about the recruitment and career opportunities of servants (domestic and rural) in the Swedish De la Gardie family's sphere of palaces, estates and farms in the 17th century. The many work places owned by the De la Gardie's within modern-day Sweden, Finland and the Baltic States, offered a diverse labour market with opportunities for geographical and social mobility. A study I have just published with Anna Nilsson Hammar – *Serving Aristocracy* (Routledge, 2025) – shows that a minimum of one third of male domestic servants made a career within the Stockholm household of Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie alone between the 1650's and the early 1680's. If one includes the proportion of men who made a career in the entire sphere, the figure rises. Career is defined here as a person changing position while receiving a higher remuneration. The question I will discuss is why almost only men pursued a career, what it was that allowed them to make a career, what barriers there could be for both men and women, and what kind of careers were available. I will also discuss career movement between urban and rural areas, thus challenging previous research's strong emphasis on the difference between domestic servants and rural servants.

Servants' property and material culture on Swedish manors, 1770-1870

Göran Ulväng, Uppsala University

This paper deals with the changing conditions for manorial servants during the transition from a feudal to a capitalist economy in the 18th and 19th centuries. During this period, manor owners increased the production of grain and livestock by abandoning the traditional feudal way of running an estate in favour of a capitalist one. This process involved a reduction in real wages, the separation of family, household and work, a new division of the sexes and the privatisation of the family.

Tenant farmers and sharecroppers, as well as unmarried agricultural labourers on the manor, who had previously been supported within the manorial household, were replaced by married wage labourers living in barracks on the manor and controlled by stewards. In the process, manorial households became smaller and consisted only of the owner's family and a few indoor servants, mostly female, who were separated from the family by the introduction of servants' quarters, staircases and corridors.

Little is known, however, about how this process affected the relationship between owners and servants, or the consequences for the economic situation of the servants and their material culture.

Using over 200 probate inventories of valets, housekeepers, chambermaids and farm maids, I'm able to show how economic relations changed over time, from informal to more formal and impersonal, and the impact of the consumer revolution on servants' living standards.



*The driveway gate of
Vallø,
Thorald Læssøe*

The Organisation of the Household Through High-Ranking Servants at 19th Century Danish Manors

Søren Broberg Knudsen, Aarhus University and The Danish Research Centre for Manorial Studies and Signe Boeskov, The Danish Research Centre for Manorial Studies.

This paper explores Danish manors as places of service, focusing on the organisation of the household as reflected in its practical and ideological structures. By analysing source material connected to high-ranking servants such as housekeepers and estate managers, the paper seeks to answer questions regarding their specific responsibilities and duties, the nature of their authority within the household, and their relationships with the broader staff. Through this analysis the paper aims to investigate the logic of household management and service relations.

Danish manor houses, compared to other contemporary Danish households, were characterised by large organisations with specialised functions, well-defined hierarchies, and internal power structures. This took place within the framework of the household, which not only provided the practical setting for the servants' tasks and material reality but also constituted the ideological framework of service, shaped by social hierarchies and power structures.

The presentation is thus based on the assumption that the scale and tight hierarchical structures of the manors make them particularly interesting settings to analyse as places of service. And that key figures such as the housekeeper and estate manager can provide insight into the underlying structures of this service.

The paper will be based on a mixed set of source materials that combine selected case studies with the comparative studies of the broader Danish manorial landscape using census data from over 700 Danish manors in the 19th century.

The manor behind the scenes

Aina Aske, Vestfoldmuseene IKS and Lars Jacob Hvinden-Haug, Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU)

Around 1700 there was a change in attitude towards servants in the upper classes - first in France, then this spread from there to the rest of Europe. The fact that the servants' presence

in everyday life was now found to be intrusive resulted in effective plan layouts to reduce their presence in the movement/traffic pattern of the owner family. The back stairs and corridors served the rooms from the side and were called "dégagements" in French. The Count's Residence in Larvik from 1674 was rebuilt in 1733 by Count Danneskiold-Laurvig, and modern distribution systems were introduced in the house. We want to show how the planning solution worked in Larvik with comparisons to Europe and describe the servants that used them. Only rarely do we hear about the servants in the manor house ("domestiques") before 1765. The noble families were mainly in Copenhagen. However, there was a permanent servanthip in Larvik when Christian Conrad Danneskiold-Laurvig (1723-1783) lived in Larvik for two periods: 1765-1767 and 1771-1783. His household was probably one of the most extensive in Norway at this time. From these periods there are accounts, letters, payrolls and other material which shed light on which people were recruited to be "domestiques": where they came from; recruited from Norway or Denmark, gender, types of positions, wages, what kind of clothes they wore in service and where they lived in the house.

*A maid in her kitchen,
Peter Henrik Gemzøe
1874*



Hidden doors and secret passages; telling the story of servants in Eidsvoll House

Solveig Therese Dahl, Eidsvoll 1814, Norsk folkemuseum foundation

The museum *Eidsvoll 1814*, or *Eidsvollsbbygningen* (Eidsvoll House), is known to Norwegians as the place where the Constitution was signed in 1814. As a national monument it plays a key role in the national narrative of the modern state and has done so for 200 years. As a historic house museum, it can also tell the stories of the people living, and working, there. Over the years this part of the narrative has changed, and in later years the museum has attempted to develop and integrate the presentation of domestic servants in the house, to tell a broader social history. This presentation seeks to describe and investigate some of these changes. The reconstruction of the domestic quarters in the basement in 2014 was a turning point, providing physical spaces and material surroundings that open up to new stories and understanding of the servants' life and work. In combination with other source materials, it gives us the opportunity to investigate the social structures within the house, providing knowledge, and give the public a better understanding of the society of the time, but the representation and communication strategies can also be problematic, and this will be further investigated in this presentation.

The transition from serfdom to the industrial worker in the vodka distillery of the Estonian manor during the 19th century.

Mirje Tammaru, Estonian Academy of Arts

Until the middle of the 19th century, the Estonian manor was predominantly a rural economic unit, where the main income was earned mostly from agriculture. The peasants of the manor were working for the manor as the serfs.

In the second half of the 19th century the Industrial Revolution reached Estonia. After that in some cases peasants became factory workers. Many reforms took place in the 19th century that formed the relationship between peasants and the landlords.

After the Nordic War (1700–1710) while under the Russian Empire the autonomous governance system was established in the Baltic provinces, preserving privileges of the Baltic German nobility. In 1765 the manors of the Baltic provinces gained an opportunity of producing vodka and selling it all to Rus-

sia. After the industrial changes some peasants were forced to work in manor factories as the factory workers, although it didn't bring any significant change in their social status and life conditions. In real life peasants remained still serfs.

I will discuss the multifaceted life of a 19th-century Estonian peasant – from the serfdom to the manor factory worker. In addition I focus on the relationship of the peasant and the landlord regarding belonging and ownership.

Arm wrestling. Agency and negotiations between tenant farmers and the big house. An alternative perspective based on four 18th century estates within the Netherlands.

Gerrit van Oosterom, independent researcher

Traditionally social relationships within the manorial world are strongly perceived in terms of a one way opposed hierarchy, social inequality, submissiveness and paternalism. New research into the relationship between tenant farmers and estate owners in the Netherlands show that the real balance of power between those two parties was not a one-way street, was far more complex and differed enormously through time and space.

One of the keywords that shaped this relationship was in fact the *co-dependency* between those enjoying the benefits of agriculturally exploited property and those providing and maintaining it. Both parties involved were deeply aware of this co-dependency and used it as a weapon to each other to constantly extend their agency and position.

The aim of this paper is to give more insight into this phenomenon within the Dutch context during the 18th century, a period with profound social, economic and agricultural changes that shifted the power balance between the two parties significantly. But not everywhere in the same way or to the same extent. We will explore these different outcomes of this constant 'arm wrestling' between tenants and estate owners in four case studies into four different estates of the Van Wassenaer-Obdam family, one of the oldest and most revered noble families within the Dutch Republic. Their vast property spread out from the North-sea region in the west of the Republic where the family had their seigneurial base near The Hague, all the way to the eastern border province of Overijssel where the family owed a vast estate called Twickel. These two poles were not just spatially far apart. They also represented two essentially opposing economic, social and cultural relationships between them and their tenant farmers.

Labourers on the estate – Esbogård ca 1770–1920

Tryggve Gestrin, Espoo City Museum

The relationship between the labourers and the owners, usually represented by the bailiff, can be studied from many angles, one of which is that of their living quarters. There was also a hierarchy among those living on the estate, which is reflected in the housing. In this presentation, I propose to show the development at Esbogård from the 18th to the 20th Century using archival sources, building inventories, maps, plans of buildings and images. By showing the evolution of housing at the manor of Esbogård, I will endeavor to show how it reflects the evolution of the conditions of the work force of the manor. In a couple of case studies, I will try to show the life cycle of workers at the manor.

The economy of the estate changed radically during the period in question, from relying on the workforce of tenant farmers and crofters to a reliance on paid day labourers and a mechanization of the work. This is evident at Esbogård during two pivotal phases: When most of the tenant farms were sold off 1823-1825 and after the I:st World War, when crofters were permitted to buy their crofts. A third decisive phase which occurred when manors were obliged to give up to a third of their land to refugees from Carelia and Porkkala after the II:nd World War falls outside the scope of this presentation.

There is little evidence of conflicts between day labourers, crofters, tenant farmers, in-house servants and the estate owners at Esbogård reflected in the surviving archival material, apart from some complaints against the bailiff. Their different status is, however, evident. The owners seem to have realised that providing the workers with tolerable conditions was to their benefit as well. A conscious effort to improve living conditions for the workers was made especially during the ownership of August Ramsay in the early years of the 20th Century, which has left an enduring mark on the estate landscape.

Work, family, security—the relationships and life strategies within the Håkansböle manor community

Eeva Kotioja, Vantaa City Museum

In the late 19th century, Håkansböle manor in southern Finland was a community of approximately 180 inhabitants. This included the owners, crofter families, farm workers, craftsmen and the rural underclass. This manor estate of over 900 hectares was a significant actor in its area, providing livelihood, shelter, welfare and education to the community. In turn, the owners expected loyalty and diligence from the workers. This reciprocity was the cornerstone of the relationship between the owners and the workers. It was also present in the relationships within the worker's community.

My paper explores Håkansböle laborers' community and its internal hierarchies. By analyzing the Håkansböle census data from 1880-1920 and additional archival material, I examine the community through themes of work, family and security. What was the everyday life like in Håkansböle? What kind of relationships were visible within the community? How did the manor handle changes? I will focus on the relationships that were formed within the manor community and the manor hierarchies. I will also identify key people – managers or workers who built and maintained the stability of the community. Very often we look closely at the owners, when the real leaders of the community are to be found somewhere else.

Early modern estates as communities of 'care': Medical practice across the social hierarchy in rural England, c.1650–1750

Emma Marshall, University of York, UK

The benevolent lord and lady of the manor are familiar figures in cultural representations of England's rural past. And certainly, the gentry built almshouses, oversaw parish poor relief, and provided feasts for the 'lower sorts'. Such activity was rooted not only in Christian ideas of charity, but also in hierarchical power dynamics, as they expected loyalty and hard work in return. Such reciprocity shaped the socio-economic body of the early modern estate.

But where does the *physical* body fit in this picture? This paper draws on conduct literature and personal correspondence to argue that personal healthcare was central to relationships between estate owners and their servants, tenants and local clerics. Illness (acute, chronic and epidemic) and injury were almost constant experiences for rural workers. In response, many gentlemen and women provided medical care within and beyond their country houses. What obligations did this signify and entail, for those who both gave and received it? And did this change as landowners were increasingly drawn to urban centres in the later seventeenth century?

Examining localised 'care' as a range of medico-political practices, rather than compassionate altruism, highlights that the lives as well as the livelihoods of household and estate staff could depend on their social superiors. In the process, this keynote will show how healthcare on rural estates intersected with complex national and local ideas, identities and performances of class.

A manorial world in miniature? The hospital of Laurvig County in the 18th century

Arne Bugge Amundsen, University of Oslo

In 1733, the count *Ferdinand Anton Danneskiold-Laurvig* (1688-1754) ordered a hospital to be established in the centre of his Norwegian county, the town of Larvik. It started rather modestly, but in 1760 the hospital was moved to a new, impressive building. The first hospital had room for 8-9 residents, increased to 21 after 1760. Both hospital buildings were situated close to the church and not far from the count's residence. The financial basis was partly the count's own income, and partly a donation from the Queen Dowager, *Anna Sophie Reventlow* (1693-1743), with whom the counts of Laurvig were related.

In the foundation charter, the conditions for admission and the rules for the residents' conduct were formulated in detail. The conditions and rules were formulated according to the Pietist ideals of pious routines, decent behaviour, and ultimate self-control. The count himself was influenced by Pietism, and he had one of his pastors write the foundation charter – later Professor at the University of Copenhagen, *Christian Langemach Leth* (1701-1764). In addition to the residents, the hospital had a director, a small number of assistants and three principals, representing local officials in service of the count. They were also chosen according to their Pietist sympathies. The hospital offered a minimum of medical care, but it was also meant as an institution for implementation of new religious ideals.

The focus of my presentation will be how the hospital functioned in everyday life, if the residents' voices were heard, how the interaction with the count was carried out, and the social hierarchy established in this new institution. My hypothesis is that Laurvig hospital represented a manorial world in miniature, with a condensed version of hierarchies and negotiations in Laurvig County at large.

The state, the subjects, and the lord: conflicts at Ängsö manor 1690–1710

Joakim Scherp, Stockholm University and The Riksdag Library

I analyze the process in which the Swedish early modern state with the help of the subjects of the manor abolished the feudal privileges of the Ängsö estate in Sweden. The privileges of the lords of Ängsö were very extensive by Swedish standards, and included judicial, clerical and fiscal advantages enjoyed by few, if any, other Swedish aristocrats. When these privileges were challenged by the Crown during the era of Caroline absolutism in the late 1600's and early 1700's the power relations changed dramatically on the manor. Even though the king's officials were vested with great authority, they needed help from subjects of Ängsö in order to claim the Crown's rights. In some cases the confrontations were quite violent, as when the lord Sparre tried to evict the parson from the parish church of Ängsö and his subjects supported their parson. Nevertheless, the lord invoked the loyalty of his former servants when he tried to reconquer the estate by force after he had been forced to sell it after bankruptcy. The benefits for the subjects of the state's "conquest" seem to have been mixed, and many aspects of life on the manor stayed more or less the same. One of the major benefits of the abolished manorial court seems to have been its proximity to the subject, while the regular district court they was distant and rarely used by the inhabitants of Ängsö.

Caring beyond the grave? The estate of Denis Roest van Alkemade (1720–1791)

Thijs Boers, Amsterdam Museum and University of Amsterdam

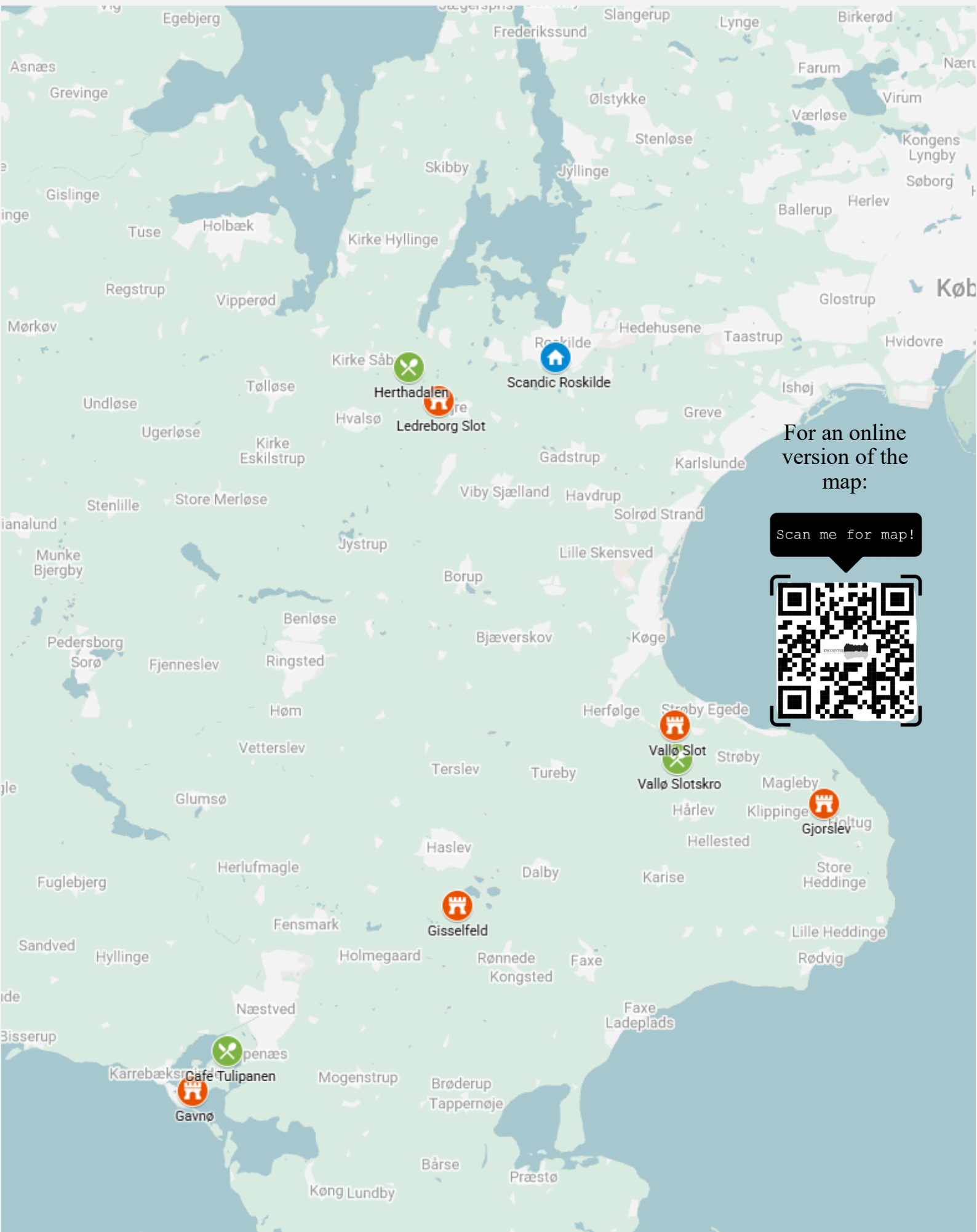
How a prominent member of Amsterdam's Roman Catholic minority continued to care for his community and church after his death.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Roman Catholics formed a significant minority in the Dutch Republic, standing alongside the Reformed as a major religious group. However, they were excluded from holding official positions and were largely confined to earning their livelihoods through commerce.

In eighteenth-century Amsterdam, the Roest van Alkemade couple belonged to the city's wealthiest elite. Denis Roest van Alkemade died in February 1791. This presentation explores how he used his will and bequests to financially support the Roman Catholic community both within and beyond the city. His support extended outside the city walls to include people who worked and lived on the couple's country estate, Het Klooster, near the town of Heemstede. Het Klooster served as the family seat for over 150 years.

His will and codicils clearly show to whom he left money and possessions — not only to his immediate family, but also to Roman Catholic institutions, resident clergy, household staff, and the poor living near the country estate. However, alongside these bequests, there were also obligations to the religious community. How dependent was the community, in fact, on this benefactor?

Map of Destinations



Conference location

Ledreborg

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the village of Lejre was known to be the center of a small royal fief of the same name. Later, it was incorporated into the larger Roskilde fief. In 1661, the Roskilde fief was gifted by the Danish king to the city of Copenhagen. By 1663, however, large parts of the fief had already been transferred to the king's rentier, Henrik Müller, who had lent the Crown large sums to finance the warfare during the Dano-Swedish Wars of 1657–1658 and 1658–1660.

As payment for the large loans, Henrik Müller was given ownership of several royal fiefs, as well as many farms in and around Lejre. In the 1660s, he demolished two farms in the hamlet of Udlejre and built a main building on approximately the same site, calling the estate Lejregaard. In 1685, Lejregaard was established as a manor with so-called 'hovedgårdfrihed' [manorial freedom]. Manorial freedom could be achieved if the landed estate of the manor exceeded a certain production size. This status entailed a number of privileges, including tax exemption on the agrarian production of the estate.

In 1740, Lejregaard was sold to the Danish Prime Minister Johan Ludvig Holstein (1694–1763), who completely transformed the manor. The Baroque-style building complex seen today is the result of a construction programme carried out during his ownership. The king's gardener and architect, Johan Cornelius Krieger (1683–1755), designed the main building. The court architect Lauritz de Thurah (1706–1759) added the side wings, while the court architect Nicolai Eigtved (1701–1754) was probably responsible for the interiors. The basic structure of the ambitious baroque garden that once accompanied the house has been preserved. The baroque garden has long been a pride of Ledreborg, and as was typical for large estates, the manor had a gardener on location with his own staff. Working at the manor could serve as a springboard for a career. In the mid-19th century, Frantz Wilhelm Wendt (1815–1895) was the gardener at Ledreborg (and previously at Vallø) until he established himself as an independent landscape architect and nursery gardener in Roskilde in 1851. In recent years, attempts to enhance the baroque character of the garden have been carried out.

The still fairly intact collection of paintings at Ledreborg was created by Johan Ludvig Holstein and, to some extent, by his son Christian Frederik Holstein (1735–1799).

In 1746, Johan Ludvig Holstein had the estate of Lejregaard, or Ledreborg as it was now called, elevated to a county, and the descendants of Count Johan Ludvig Holstein still own the estate today.



Excursions

Gisselfeld

Gisselfeld is known to have existed in the 14th century, but it seems to have been only a minor estate. When Peder Oxe (1520–1575) took over in 1545 the estate grew substantially, and a new main building was erected. Oxe, who was Danish finance minister and Steward of the Realm, built a house that introduced renaissance features but still retained many characteristics of a medieval castle. Surrounded by moats and equipped with embrasures the house testifies to the political climate in which it was built – only a few years earlier Denmark had gone through a chaotic civil war “Grevens Fejde” [The Counts Feud], during which rioting commoners had burned many estates to the ground. Oxe had good reasons for building a house which signaled a certain capacity for defense, but nonetheless renaissance impulses can also be detected; the fairly large and regularly placed windows, the horizontal band on the façade between the first and second floor of the house and the peculiar gables which seem to be a mix between gothic and renaissance features.

During the 17th century Gisselfeld was owned by different noble families – and for a few years also by the crown. In 1699 Gisselfeld was handed to Christian Gyldenløve, the son of the Danish king Christian the 5th and his mistress Sophie Amalie Moth. Christian intended Gisselfeld to be converted into a “Jomfrukloster” – an institution created with the purpose of housing and maintenance of unmarried noble women. His wish was never honored *de facto*, but Gisselfeld did to some extent function as an institution of sorts after his death – the “convent” has no formal owner, but a director among the descendants of Christian Gyldenløve is appointed as directors of the manor. The current director of Gisselfeld, and the twelfth in line, is Helene Danneskiold-Samsøe.

The collections of portraits and porcelain at Gisselfeld, and the old conservatory built in 1876 are considered to be some of the highlights of the house.





Vallø

Shortly after ascending to the Danish throne in 1320 Christoffer 2. (1276–1332) issued a document confirming that a nobleman named Eskild Krage owned Vallø. The exterior of the current main building is mainly the result of a building campaign undertaken by Mette Rosenkrantz (ca. 1533–1588) and her son Oluf Steen Rosensparre (1559–1624). The south wing with its imposing towers and richly ornamented façade witness to the strong influence from the Dutch and Flemish Renaissance in Denmark during the late 16th century.

Mette – whose second husband was Peder Oxe who build Gissselfeld – owned only half of Vallø, her sister Birgitte owned the other half. In 1651 the two parts were, however, once again joined. In 1708 Vallø was bought by the Danish king Frederik the 4th. He gave it to his mistress Anna Sophie Reventlow in 1713, but after his death his son, king Christian the 6th, took the manor away from his stepmother and gave it instead to his wife queen Sophie Magdalene, who made it into an “adelig Jomfrukloster”, [literally; convent of unmarried noble women]. To accommodate its new function a new east wing was added to the main building between 1735 and 1738. The new wing was designed by the court architect Lauritz de Thurah (1706-1759) in the baroque style. The function of Gjorslev as a convent for unmarried noblewomen naturally influenced the composition of the household staff. For example, the abbess, Princess Louise of Schleswig-Holstein-Glücksburg, alone had a lady-in-waiting, two maids, a married chamberlain, a housekeeper, a maid for the lady-in-waiting, two servants, and four additional maids in her service.

A big fire in 1893 destroyed much of the interior but left the exterior relatively unharmed. The house was restored/reconstructed by the architect H. J. Holm (1835-1916) in the following years and the noble women returned. Vallø is still referred to as a Jomfrukloster but do no longer aim to provide housing and maintenance for noble women – instead the institution supports charity and hand out the Vallø Prize, which is an annual award given to a person, association or company that has made a special effort to improve the conditions of women. The award is accompanied by 150,000 kroner.



*Fru Mette Rosenkrantz,
Antonius Sandfeldt*

Gjorslev

According to the Danish chancellor and historian Arild Huitfeldt (1546–1609), Gjorslev - named after a now-disappeared village - belonged to the squire Rane Jonsen at the end of the 13th century. He was accused and convicted of involvement in the murder of King Erik Klipping (1249–1286) and was executed in 1294.

Around 1370, Gjorslev is mentioned in the Roskilde Bishopric land register. At that time, half of the village's land was owned by a single farm, which later came to be regarded as a fief. During its time as a fief under the bishopric, Gjorslev was managed by fief-holders appointed by the bishop.

Shortly after taking office in 1395, the Bishop of Roskilde, Peder Jensen Lodehat (d. 1416), built the manor that still forms the central part of the building complex today. The cruciform layout of the original castle is topped by a sturdy tower - originally crenellated - and the interior features a well-preserved Gothic hall.

After the Reformation of the Danish Church in 1536, Gjorslev was transferred to the crown, which later sold it to the Pomeranian nobleman Peder Svave (1496–1552), who had served the Danish king.

In 1638, a modest north wing was added to the manor, and in 1666, the short eastern wing—or crossarm—was converted into a stairwell. The conversion was designed by architect Ewert Janssen, who was of Dutch descent, and the new façade of the eastern crossarm bears a resemblance to Dutch 17th-century townhouses. The transformation of the eastern crossarm into an open stairwell was a novelty in Danish architecture at the time; until then, towers with spiral staircases had been the norm.

A large home farm was established at Gjorslev in 1713. From that time onward, Gjorslev – by Danish standards – employed a large staff of approximately 50 to 90 people, primarily focused on agricultural production. In 1794, the then-owner Jacob Brønnum Scavenius (1749–1820) had Gjorslev modernized by architect C. F. Harsdorff. Between 1843 and 1845, his son Peder Brønnum Scavenius (1795–1868) added a large south wing, designed by architect G. F. Hetsch in the neo-Gothic style. The interiors of the new south wing display a variety of styles - neo-Gothic, Pompeian, and neoclassical - that reflect the eclectic taste of the mid-19th century.

As is typical in Denmark, the manor farm is located in front of the main house. However, the layout at Gjorslev is somewhat unusual: there is no enclosed courtyard. Instead, a road flanked by long, half-timbered farm buildings on either side leads directly to the manor.

The estate has been owned by the Tesdorpf family since 1925.





Gavnø

During the reign of the Danish king Christoffer II (1276–1332), Gavnø is known to have been in the possession of the dukes of Holstein, presumably as a pawn for lending money to the Danish crown. Under King Valdemar Atterdag (1320–1375), it came into the possession of the Danish nobleman Hans Lykke. However, in the early 15th century, Valdemar's daughter, Queen Margrethe I, turned Gavnø into a Benedictine nunnery.

As a consequence of the Reformation of the Danish Church in 1536, Gavnø became crown property, and the nunnery was no longer allowed to accept new members. The remaining nuns were, however, permitted to stay at Gavnø for the remainder of their lives. In the following years, the estate was managed by officials appointed by the crown. In 1584, however, King Frederik II (1534–1588) exchanged Gavnø for another estate. The new owner, Hans Johansen Lindenov (1542–1596), had the old convent rebuilt to suit his needs for a proper residence.

In 1682, the Thott family, who still reside at Gjorslev, took over the estate. The house, as it appears today both inside and out, is largely the result of a comprehensive rebuilding programme carried out during the ownership of Otto Thott (1703–1785). After taking over in 1737, he transformed the old manor into a late Baroque/Rococo residence. Thott, a statesman as well as a scholar, was an avid collector. His extensive collection of books, kept in his mansion in Copenhagen, was auctioned off after his death, but a substantial portion of his art collection still remains at Gavnø.

The relationship between the estate and the local community was often framed within an ideal ideological context of loyalty and gratitude. As a result, Danish manor landscapes feature a string of monuments gifted to the estates by "grateful peasants." This relationship was also emphasised through ritualised events, such as funerals or other significant life occasions. When Baron Otto Reedtz-Thott died in 1862, the tradition says that he was so beloved by his farmers that they carried his coffin the long distance from Gavnø to Vejlø Cemetery – a march of 3 kilometers.

Gavnø has been a tourist destination since the 1950s, when the manor opened its popular tulip park to the public.

Practical details

Location:

The conference will be held at **Ledreborg Slot**, Ledreborg Alle 2, 4320 Lejre

Transportation:

A shared bus has been arranged to and from Ledreborg and for excursions. This bus departs from Scandic Roskilde, Ved Ringen 2, 4000 Roskilde and from Roskilde Station, every morning. The same bus returns to Scandic every day.

All other transport is the responsibility of the participants.

Catering:

Conference participants are offered lunch (Thursday - Saturday) and dinner (Thursday and Friday) as well as coffee breaks along the way.

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The research centre was established in 2004 with the specific purpose of promoting research, education, documentation and interpretation on the cultural history and heritage of estates and country houses.

Today, the Research Centre focuses both on research, research communication, and research networks, with a special emphasis on manor house studies. The Centre is also responsible for creating the extensive website **[danskeherregaarde.dk](#)**, which features thematic content and presentations of all 700+ Danish manors.

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