

**Inga Lena Ångström**

# **The Riddarholmen Church in Stockholm as a Burial Church for Swedish Heroes from the Thirty-Years-War**

## **Introduction**

The silhouette of the gothic brick church on the islet of Riddarholmen, close to the Old Town in Stockholm, with its tall see-through iron spire is visible from many viewpoints in the town (fig. 1). Not many people now living Stockholmers have been inside it though; it ceased to be a congregational church for over two hundred years ago and has for long only been open a few hours on Sunday in summer. Now this has changed with more generous opening times from May till September, giving people from Stockholm and visitors alike an opportunity to see the many interesting objects, that are exhibited there and to experience the very special light and atmosphere of the church (fig. 2).

The Riddarholmen Church is the second oldest church in Stockholm after S. Nikolai (also called Storkyrkan i.e. the Main Church), and the sole survivor of several medieval monastic churches, that once existed in Stockholm; it was begun around 1280 as part of the Franciscan Monastery founded ten years earlier by Magnus Ladulås (1240-90), who became king in 1275.<sup>1</sup> That it was this king, who was the builder of both the church and the Monastery, is expressly stated in the Chronicles of Erik, the oldest Swedish medieval chronicles.<sup>2</sup> It was probably completed shortly after the King's death in 1290, at the latest in the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Olsson 1937, pp. 8-9; also Kyhlberg/Torbjörn 1997, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Magnus III Birgersson, usually called Magnus Ladulås (Magnus Barnlock), was king of Sweden from 1275 until his death in 1290; historians ascribe his epithet "Ladulås" to a decree of 1279 or 1280 freeing the yeomanry from the duty to provide sustenance for travelling nobles and bishops ("Peasants! Lock your barns!"); another theory is that it is another form of Ladislaus, which could possibly have been his second name, considering his Slavic heritage.

<sup>3</sup> Olsson 1937, pp. 8-10.

During the 250 years, in which the Franciscan monks – the Grey Friars – occupied the islet, the church carried the name of Gråmunkekyrkan (the Church of the Grey Friars) while the islet itself was called Gråmunkeholmen (the Islet of the Grey Friars).<sup>4</sup> When King Gustav Vasa introduced the Reformation in Sweden in 1527 the Grey Friars were forced to leave the monastery and the church became part of the congregation of S. Nikolai/Storkyrkan. Today's name Riddarholmen for the islet means "the Islet of the Knights" and stems from the 17<sup>th</sup> century when members of the nobility were given land on the islet to build residences there.

In 1666 the Riddarholmen Church became a congregation in its own right with the king as its patron. The last regular service to be held in the church was in 1807 when it became a memorial and burial church only. Today it is run by Statens fastighetsverk (National Property Board) with the Swedish Royal Court as its tenants. Since the foundation of the Order of the Seraphim in 1748 it is also the church of the Seraphim Order, and there are more than 700 painted memorial shields of deceased Knights of the Order hanging on the inner walls of the church.<sup>5</sup>

When the Riddarholmen Church was first completed in the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century it only had two aisles; the south one was added in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century when the cloister was extended on the south side and opened in the nave. Some of the walled up openings of the cloister towards the monastery garden are still visible as ogive niches in the south wall. In the beginning the church had no tower; only towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century a tower was begun by the western gable. King John (Johan) III had completed it in the 1580s after drawings by Willem Boy(en). It had until John's reign kept its medieval look, but already in 1568 the king had started an extensive renovation of the Church. He had the walls white washed, thus covering the medieval wall and vault paintings, and he let put a new altar piece on the high altar instead of the old one, which probably stemmed from the days of Magnus Ladulås.

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<sup>4</sup> Before the Grey Friars came to the islet, its name was Kidhaskär, which earlier was believed to mean Kedjeskär and stemming from a tradition that Olof Skötkonung in 1007 had tried to close off Stockholm from the Norwegian king Olof Haraldsson with the help of chains (kedja = chain, skär = skerry); according to a more recent interpretation of the name it meant Killingskär, a skerry where kids were put – *ibid.* p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8; also Ljungström 1997, p. 3 - by command of the Grand Master, when a knight dies his shield is hung up and the "Seraphim Bell" is tolled in his memory on the day of his funeral.

He also gave a pulpit to the church and let build the monuments over the graves for the two medieval kings Magnus Ladulås and Karl Knutsson.<sup>6</sup>

The changes, that took place in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, were however much more radical, both to the exterior and the interior, since it was during that period, that the church was surrounded by a ring of freestanding burial chapels (fig. 3). These chapels erected in front of existing windows totally changed the lightning conditions of the church. In his history of the church, published in 1938 for *Sveriges Kyrkor* (Churches of Sweden)<sup>7</sup>, Martin Olsson points out, that the church did not actually become darker because of this since most of the chapels were equipped with large windows; what happened was, that the consequent carrying out and surely very effective sidelight coming in from the south into the nave was replaced by a very uneven illumination, whose distribution had come about by chance.<sup>8</sup>

The interior was at the same time given a more Baroque character. The demi-ribs on the walls and in the vaults were cut away, and the pulpit, the altar, the organ etc. either replaced by new ones in Baroque style or remade in that style. Since the following Rococo did not leave many marks in the interior, it was the Baroque, which was the dominant style until the extensive renovation of 1811-17 under the leadership of the architect Fredrik Blom. This was actually the first real renovation of the church, not a repair as in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>9</sup> The historical expert behind the works was the then protocol secretary of the foreign department C. F. Rothlieb (who later wrote a history of the Riddarholmen Church). What one tried to do in the renovation of 1811-17 was to give back the church its medieval character, however, the new interior equipment as the organ balcony and façade were not made in medieval style, which would have been more appropriate, instead in rich Empire style.<sup>10</sup> In connection with this restoration the State Collection of Trophies and other historical relics belonging to the Royal Armoury were transferred to the church.

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<sup>6</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 128.

<sup>7</sup> This inventory was initiated in 1910 by Johnny Roosval and Sigurd Curman.

<sup>8</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 128.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 129.

In 1835 the church was struck by lightning and roof and spire were destroyed in the subsequent fire. The spire was replaced by the characteristic spire made of wrought iron after the design by the sculptor Erik Gustaf Göthe (cf. fig. 1).<sup>11</sup> The necessary restoration after the fire, which took place in 1836-48, was led by the architect Axel Nyström (fig. 4). In the above-mentioned book Martin Olsson criticizes Nyström's work for being insensitive to the special character of the church. He especially does not like the way the interior was re-done in Neo-Gothic style and how a large number of tombstones were reworked into flat stones or mutilated in the process of obtaining even joints in the floor. According to Olsson they were placed "without the least consideration to their former positions and only in exceptional cases above or near the tombs to which they belonged."<sup>12</sup>

In 1906 the State Collection of Trophies was removed from the church to the Royal Armoury in the Stockholm Palace. The latest restoration of the church to this day took place in 1914-22 and was led by the architect Gustaf Lindgren; Martin Olsson acted as controller for the Royal Board of Building and the Royal Custodian of Antiquities as well as the leader of the historical works in the church. Some of the most important measures taken in the interior during the restoration were that the medieval plaster wall surface with its medieval paintings was brought out, completed and conserved. The floor of the nave was sunk to its medieval level and the tombstones were restored and placed over the tombs to which they originally belonged.<sup>13</sup>

More than 200 gravestones make up the floor; these and the burial chapels are reasons why the church sometimes has been called a "Swedish Pantheon". Several medieval kings lie buried here with the founder of the church Magnus Ladulås as the first. In his testament, drawn up in 1285, he commanded he should be buried in the church. His tomb is in front of the high altar, beside the tomb of Karl Knutsson Bonde, another medieval king. But he died almost two hundred years later (1470). The

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<sup>11</sup> The present spire is the result of a recasting made at the time of the renovation of 1969-75; the original is kept outside the Technical Museum in Stockholm.

<sup>12</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 827 – in this English passage of the summary Olsson is more explicitly critical of Nyström's renovation than in his main text.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp. 827-828.



original graves are beneath the monuments and were presumably originally covered with traditional flat stone slabs decorated with relief and/or carvings. Today's monumental tombs (fig. 5) were raised in 1573 and 1574 by order of King John (Johan) III and executed by Lukas van der Werdt.<sup>14</sup> However the own grave of John III. is in the Cathedral of Uppsala, also the grave of his father Gustav Vasa, while his brothers Charles (Karl) IX is buried in Strängnäs and Erik XIV in the Cathedral of Västerås.

With the Chapel of Gustav II Adolf the Riddarholmen Church was reinstituted as a royal burial church; all royal Swedish heads of state after him until King Gustav V (d. 1950) were buried here except Queen Christina, whose grave is in S. Peter's in Rome; the grave of Gustav VI (d. 1973) is in the Haga Park north of Stockholm.

The Gustavian Chapel was soon followed by the Banér Chapel (1636) and then by the Vasaborg (1646-53), Torstensson (1651), Wachtmeister and the two Lewenhaupt Chapels (all three from 1654). Finally the Caroline Chapel was built for Charles (Karl) XII, which shall not be discussed here, because it stems from a later period. The last chapel built in the church was the chapel from 1858-60 for the Bernadotte family after the design by the architect Fredrik Wilhelm Scholander.

The chapels treated in this study – the Gustavian, the Banér, the Vasaborg, the Torstensson, the Wachtmeister and the Lewenhaupt Chapels – are all made within a time span of about 20 years, a span, that corresponds with the late Vasa period in Swedish history as well as with the period of Queen Christina, making the Riddarholmen Church a unique place to visit for those interested in Swedish church architecture from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Baroque architecture in general as well as the decorative arts of the same period.

In the following, after a short presentation of the forerunners to the Gustavian Chapel I shall present the above-mentioned chapels in chronological order. Most interest shall be paid to the Gustavian Chapel, which is the first one and - from art historical point

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. pp. 357-390; also Fulton 1996, pp. 315-316 – also Johan III. erected tombs over medieval kings in the churches of Vreta and Varnhem.

of view – also the most interesting. I do not claim to present much new information about any of the chapels, my foremost intention with this article is instead, for the sake of the non-Swedish speaking reader, to account for the most important discussions among Swedish art historians regarding this period in the Riddarholmen Church.

### **The forerunners: Swedish burial chapels from the 16<sup>th</sup> century**

The Gustavian Chapel (fig. 6), with its free-standing, cubistic body and high spire was the first of the burial chapels built at Riddarholmen, but not the first of its kind in Sweden. In his book *Grav och rum* (Graves and their situations, 1969) Göran Lindahl discusses burial customs in Sweden from the Middle Ages to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and points out, that such a free-standing chapel with a separate roof was not a new and radical invention; such had been built also in the Middle Ages. Towards the end of this period, however, a functional simplification and thus in a sense an impoverishment of the chapel room had taken place; the cult had vanished and the only task for the room had become to house a grave.<sup>15</sup> This had for example occurred in the Cathedral of Uppsala, where already in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries noble families from Uppland had founded side chapels, whose sole function was to contain graves. When Gustav Vasa chose the foremost of the choirs in Uppsala for his grave, he actually followed a tradition, which went back several hundreds of years.<sup>16</sup>

Martin Olsson also saw the roots of the burial chapels of Riddarholmen in the Late Gothic Period, but more in the use of brick as building material, which had become common at that time in Sweden. He also traced their origin back to Dutch brick architecture of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, whose foremost representatives were the architects Henrik de Keyser and Lieven de Key.<sup>17</sup>

Only a handful of burial chapels were built in Sweden in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; Lindahl mentions the chapel from the 1540s of the Bååt family at the church of Sorunda in

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<sup>15</sup> Lindahl 1969, p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 201.

Södermanland<sup>18</sup> and the Oxenstierna Chapel in Strö in Västergötland from the 1580s<sup>19</sup>. Also Mårten Liljegren, in his book on Swedish burial chapels from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, points to some predecessors from the earliest chapel from 1586 at Fägre Church in Västergötland for Karl XI's councillor, Marshal Filip Bonde, to these in Bordsjö and Säcksted. In a rebuilding of the church in 1703-05, the last chapel was built into a transept, which was added to the church at the same time, but had before been depicted in a drawing. It shows a separate chapel with a spire, which stands out as a surprisingly early example of Renaissance forms in Nordic wooden architecture.<sup>20</sup> However Ripsa Church in Södermanland has still got its free-standing chapel with a tall crowning spire, built in 1618 for Gorgonius Henriksson Gyllenankar (fig. 7). It is also very interesting to note, that the chapel was built in 1633, the same year the Gustavian Chapel was built, at the church of Norrsunda in Uppland for Johan Eriksson Sparre by his widow Ebba Oxenstierna – sister to Axel Oxenstierna. The chapel was built as a gable building protruding from the main building. It has been suggested, that a certain Jost (Joest) Henne, who also decorated the Gustavian Chapel, was responsible for this chapel.

The fact that so few burial chapels were built in Sweden in the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries can be explained by the almost unlimited possibilities for the Swedish nobility to use the church room itself for their graves. After the Reformation, the position of the Church in Sweden as an independent organization had weakened considerably, and there was no opposition when the churches from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and onwards were filled with large grave monuments for members of the aristocracy. One example is the large monument to Erik Soop in the Cathedral of Skara in Västergötland, made 1632-35 in Amsterdam by the Dutch stone cutter Pieter de Keyser. In 1637 it was placed in the high choir where it remained till 1842; now it stands in the southern transept.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Lindahl 1969, pp. 94-101.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. pp. 125-126.

<sup>20</sup> Liljegren 1947[a], p. 76 - the drawing was designed by Jakob Hartling.

<sup>21</sup> Soop 2005, p. 9.

In Denmark (with Scania/Skåne) there were lesser possibilities for the nobility to use the church room for graves, which is why several large burial chapels were built in Denmark in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Also that was the case in Poland where the building of burial chapels already towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century had developed into a set pattern.<sup>22</sup>

Göran Lindahl concludes the discussion on the forerunners of the Swedish 17<sup>th</sup> century burial chapels by underlining, that there - even if there were predecessors, as we have seen -, the building of burial chapels in Sweden in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a novelty, not the type itself, but how it was used – that is as a manifestation of the new political situation. There is also no doubting, that the Gustavian Chapel in the Riddarholmen Church was the starting point for the coming creation of a Swedish variation of the “The Chapel Theme” in church architecture and that it revolutionized Swedish grave buildings, not only that its plan was repeated time after time, but also that it introduced the free-standing grave building with a centralizing tendency as the only real alternative for a burial chapel intended for someone from the nobility.<sup>23</sup>

### 1. The Gustavian Chapel

The death of King Gustav Adolf in the battle of Lützen on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1632 caused a new kind of problem for the Privy Council. Never before a Swedish king of his standing had died, and from the beginning it must have been clear to its members, that his remains demanded a highly dignified and representative setting. State Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, who was in Germany at the time, sent a letter with instructions for the chapel, but with the most stress on the grave vault: “First a beautiful vault, then, if it is considered suitable, an upper room ‘pro dignitate’.”<sup>24</sup>

One thing, however, caused no problems, and that was the placing of the grave as this had already been chosen by the King himself. In his instructions to the Privy Council in 1629, before he sailed for Germany to fight in the Thirty Years War, Gustav Adolf

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<sup>22</sup> Lindahl 1969, p. 125.

<sup>23</sup> Liljegren 1947[a], p. 112.

<sup>24</sup> Alm 1996, p. 88; also Lindahl 1969, pp. 127-128.

had asked the Council “speedily” building a grave for him at a place in the south side of choir near the graves of Magnus Ladulås and Karl Knutsson.<sup>25</sup> That he did not choose Storkyrkan, which was closer to the castle, or the Cathedral of Uppsala, where Gustav Vasa and Johan III lay buried, was surely because of the King’s wish to underline the continuity from the medieval kings to his own reign. If his grave was placed there his remains would be next to Magnus Ladulås, the foremost representative from Sweden’s medieval history of the country’s unity and strong king power.<sup>26</sup>

The king had in fact already used the church twice as a burial church: in 1623 for a grave for a little daughter, who had died at birth, and in 1624 for a one year old daughter, who had been christened Kristina (born before the girl with the same name, who was to become queen).<sup>27</sup> This grave had had the shape of an underground vault outside the walls of the church with its entrance within the walls of the high choir. It seems, that it was never been talked about to build a separate burial choir above the grave vault for the little princesses. Anyhow, this would have been destroyed, when the new one for their father was being built. Probably the king had planned the same kind of grave vault for himself with the difference, that he had also wanted a monument next to the above-mentioned tombs in the choir of Magnus Ladulås and Karl Knutsson.<sup>28</sup>

In spite of the king’s outspoken wish for a burial chapel, it was only after receiving news of his death in November 1632 that the Privy Council started to build such one above the crypt, which the king had appointed for himself. The work on the chapel begun in December, but it was not until April the following year, when the frost had left the earth, that the erection of the chapel was started. The master stone cutter Jost Henne had been contracted for the sculpture work.<sup>29</sup> The sculptures were made in his workshop and delivered to the church when they were ready. Still in August Jost

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<sup>25</sup> Liljegren 1947[a], p. 100; also Axel-Nilsson 1950, p. 138.

<sup>26</sup> Olsson 1937, pp. 168-169.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 402.

<sup>28</sup> Liljegren 1947[a], p. 100.

<sup>29</sup> Axel-Nilsson 1947, p. 51 - Jost Henne was in the 1640s at work on the monument to Magnus Brahe in the Cathedral of Västerås; Soop 2005, p. 73 - according to Axel-Nilsson (1950, p. 163) it is also very likely, that he 1634 made the portal for the Riddarholmen Church for the funeral of Gustav II Adolf.

Henne was waiting for instructions from Johan Buréus in Uppsala for the inscriptions, which should be on the cartouches. Finally they came and were cut into the stone. In December 1633 Henne received his last payment for the chapel and in all likelihood immediately started to work on another piece of architecture in the church, a new west portal. This is now lost, but according to Rothlieb's description from 1822 and a drawing from 1844 it bore a strong resemblance to the south portal of the German Church in Stockholm, which accordingly has also been ascribed to Jost Henne.<sup>30</sup>

### The problem of the architect

Who made the plans for the Gustavian Chapel? In the rich documentation that exists for the construction work, there is unfortunately nowhere to be found the name of an architect. In 1904, in his book on Swedish architecture from 1530-1760, Gustav Upmark published a note, that he had come across in the Räntekammarbok, which stated that a certain Christian Blume on 22 July 1633 had received 30 Reichstaler from the widow queen for "a Schamplun for the grave for His Majesty's body", something which made Upmark surmise, that it was Christian Blume, who was the long forgotten architect of the chapel.<sup>31</sup> For over forty years this was repeated by all Swedish art-historians, until in 1947 when both Göran Axel-Nilsson and Mårten Liljegren, independently from each other in different articles - but which were published simultaneously in *RIG* that year - showed, that in all probability that was not the case; instead the note could have regarded one of the widow queen's plans for a monument.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, that this monument was being planned, the widow queen Maria Eleonora was taking measures to let build her own monument over the dead king in the Cathedral of Uppsala, a place that was later changed for the Castle of Strömsholm. Nothing of this was eventually carried out. Something that speaks against Blume as the architect of the Gustavian Chapel is, that his name is nowhere to be found in the

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<sup>30</sup> Axel-Nilsson 1935, p. 39; *ibid.* 1950, pp. 163-164.

<sup>31</sup> Upmark 1904, p. 100.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Olsson, in his book on the Riddarholmen Church mentions, that Blume received money for a Schamplun, but does not explicitly state, that he was the architect of the church. Olsson 1938, p. 165; in the summaries (in Swedish, German and English) it says, however, that the church was *built after designs by Kristian Blume* (pp. 810, 816, 824); that Blume received payment for a Schamplun is mentioned with no further comments by Alm 1995, p. 85.

archives in Stockholm or in the rest of Sweden. The payment of 30 Reichstaler was made in Wolgast, where the widow queen was staying at the time, so it is very likely, that the man with this name lived in Wolgast and maybe never put a foot on Swedish ground.<sup>33</sup>

Instead Axel-Nilsson lanced the idea, that the above-mentioned Jost Henne not only had executed the exterior decoration, but was also the central figure behind the plans for the chapel. His reasons for surmising this were, that Henne in some documents is called Master Builder, that he received quite a large sum for his work on the chapel and that the architectural style is clearly Dutch, in this maybe inspired by Casper Panten from the Netherlands, who had died already in 1630 but with whom Henne had worked earlier in Stockholm.<sup>34</sup>

Mårten Liljegren, however, did not agree with this theory, mainly because, as he pointed out, Jost Henne's only known work as a building master were the plans he made for Maria Eleonora regarding the Kungsholmen Church in Stockholm and the Castle of Strömsholm – projects generally called her Air Castles and which were never built. Instead Liljegren lanced Hans Jakob Kristler as the architect.<sup>35</sup> He is known for the palace called Makalös (i.e. "Unique") in Stockholm for Jacob de la Gardie. A contract had been written in 1630, but the building work was not begun until a couple of years later (it burned down in 1825). In his book on the Stockholm stone masonry from the younger Vasa-period (1950), Axel-Nilsson showed however rather convincingly, that Kristler could not have been the architect of the Gustavian Chapel since Makalös had a much more lavish, not to say pompous décor, completely lacking the exquisite proportions and controlled design of the Gustavian Chapel.

Göran Lindahl, in his above-mentioned book on burial costumes in Sweden, while drawing the attention to the many architectural irregularities both in the chapel and in

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<sup>33</sup> Axel-Nilsson 1947, pp. 58-59; Liljegren is of the same opinion in his article on Hans Jakob Kristler in the same issue of *RIG* (1947), p. 87-88.

<sup>34</sup> Axel-Nilsson 1947, p. 58 - already in *Svenske konsthistoria I*, 1944, intended as a handbook for students of Swedish art history, Henrik Cornell names Henne as the building master of the Gustavian Chapel, Cornell 1944, p. 303 - in his book on the stone masonry in Stockholm in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Axel-Nilsson stresses Henne's role as the leader of the building work; Axel-Nilsson 1950, p. 146.

<sup>35</sup> Liljegren 1947, pp. 90-93.

the grave vault beneath it, dismisses the thought of one single architect. With so many traces left of improvisation and experiment, the chapel can according to Lindahl hardly have been the result of a sure and purposeful planning and consequently *not* the result of one man's plans.<sup>36</sup>

### The exterior

The Gustavian Chapel is built on a rectangular plan with a three-sided façade to the south and can from the exterior be characterized as a freestanding, cubistic body with a high spire (fig. 6). The walls are made of red brick with decorations in grey limestone and the corners accentuated with pilasters, which are "folded" round the corners. The windows are high, narrow and rounded at the top. Under each window there is a cartouche with an inscription cut in high relief and originally gilded. In English they go as follows: "In times of trouble he started. Piety he loved. The enemies he defeated. The realm he widened. The Swedes he uplifted. The oppressed he liberated. In death he triumphed".

The roof over the walls closest to the church consists of a flattened-out saddle roof, which is almost invisible to the spectator. The poly-sided part of the façade is covered by an eight-sided cupola with a likewise eight-sided tambour, whose cupola is drawn out into a spire. According to an old description the Gustavian family banner, a gilded Vase, originally stood on the top of the spire and beneath it a likewise gilded Pelican, which cut itself in the breast.<sup>37</sup> These decorations were later, probably after the great fire of 1835, replaced by a cross.<sup>38</sup>

That the pelican, a common symbol of Christ since medieval times, was placed here was in line with the attempt to liken the dead king to Christ as it is obvious also from the inscriptions quoted above; he "triumphed in Death" etc. It was believed, that the male pelican cut his breast open to let the nestlings drink his blood after the female pelican had abandoned them, so they would not get anything to eat otherwise. He died

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<sup>36</sup> Lindahl 1969, p. 129.

<sup>37</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 172.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.; he mentions in a footnote, that the Pelican is a symbol of Christ and is used here with consideration of the King.



doing this, sacrificing himself for his children and thus it was easy to see a parallel in the pelican to Christ, who shed his blood for mankind. The use of the pelican as a symbol of Christ continued, as I have shown elsewhere, into Post-Reformation times in Sweden and is for example found in several Swedish altarpieces from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, usually in the crowning part.<sup>39</sup>

Placed on top of the Gustavian Chapel, this symbol of Christ told, that King Gustav Adolph, in the same way Christ had done, had died for his people and for his faith. The simile between the king and Christ is not as farfetched (or blasphemous) as it seems to modern viewers. As Göran Lindahl has pointed out, the mourning services over the dead king were full of allusions to him as a hero of faith and a martyr, chosen by God to die for his faith. In a sermon on the first anniversary of the King's death, the bishop of Västerås Johannes Rudbeckius not only likened him to the Roman martyrs S. Stefanus and S. Laurentius, but also expressed, that the king had surpassed them.<sup>40</sup> From such lines of thought it was not difficult to start comparing him to Christ himself.

### The interior

Inside the church we find that the Gustavian Chapel consists of two parts, a grave vault and above it a chapel room covered by one four-pointed and one six-pointed vault (fig. 8). It is obvious, that the chapel room was built to match the architectural forms of the high choir, the vault capes having the same tall and sharp shapes as the vaults in the back of the choir (cf. fig. 3). The vaults are carried by consoles of painted (grey) limestone, decorated with cartilage ornaments and cherubs' heads here and there (figs. 9, 10). The consoles are made by Jost Henne.<sup>41</sup>

There are seven windows in the chapel. On a podium, in front of the middle window, stands a large marble sarcophagus. This was put in the chapel in 1832, on the

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<sup>39</sup> A pelican also appears in the frame work made around 1650 for a medieval altarpiece, now in the chapel in Amsberg/Dalarna, originally in the church of Stora Tuna/Dalarna; Ångström 1992, p. 224-225.

<sup>40</sup> Lindahl 1969, p. 131.

<sup>41</sup> According to Olsson, one Christian Blume was also at work on the stone work, but that this Christian Blume probably never came to Sweden (cf. above) can not be true (Olsson 1937, p. 173); he certainly confused him with Dirik (Dierich) Blom (Blume), who was according to Liljegren at work in the chapel (Liljegren 1947, p. 147).

bicentenary of the death of Gustav II. Adolf, when the king's remains were deposited in the sarcophagus, which - originally intended for the remains of King Adolf Fredrik - had been executed in Rome already in 1774 after drawings by Giacomo Quarenghi (who was later become famous for his work in St. Petersburg).<sup>42</sup>

As already mentioned it was not until in 1832 that the sarcophagus was put in the chapel, which until then had stood almost empty. After the burial the head banner carried in the funeral procession was put in the chapel together with 34 landscape flags made out of "woven damask with knitted banners out of gold, silver and silk", which were hung beneath the vault on iron racks, which still exist in the chapel. However the floor space remained empty. But was that really how it was intended to be?

In 1653-54 an ambassador from England by the name of Bulstrode Whitelocke visited Sweden and Stockholm, and also the Riddarholmen Church. When he got there "to see the great church where the late King Gustavus Adolphus lies interred", he was very surprised to see, that there was as yet "no monument erected to his (i.e. the King's) memory."<sup>43</sup> What may have caused him to expect a monument, apart from his knowledge of how English chapels were decorated, was it he - on his way to Stockholm in autumn of 1653 - who had stopped in Skara and had seen in the Cathedral there the large monument to Erik Soop, which impressed him very much.<sup>44</sup>

However ambassador Whitelock was not the first foreign visitor to comment on the lack of a monument in the chapel. Already in December 1634, only a few months after the work on the chapel was finished, the French ambassador Charles Ogier had visited the chapel and commented on the lack of images and inscriptions.<sup>45</sup>

Mårten Liljegren, in his above-mentioned book from 1947, is of the firm opinion, that there never had been planned a monument inside the chapel and criticizes both the

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<sup>42</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 391-92.

<sup>43</sup> Liljegren 1947, p. 110.

<sup>44</sup> Soop 2005, p. 40.

<sup>45</sup> Lindahl 1969, p. 129.

Englishman and the Frenchman for not understanding what the chapel wanted to be, that it is “not a room for monuments but an *exterior-orientated monumental building*, that declares its spirit outwardly.”<sup>46</sup> It is, according to Liljegren, to be seen not only as a monument for the glorifying of the family, but also as the kingdom, instead a *monument in itself* over a grand personality.

Already in 1937 however, in his book on the Riddarholmen Church for *Sveriges Kyrkor*, Martin Olsson had drawn attention to a protocol of the Privy Council of 16. April 1634, in which there is a mention of a plan for a monument to Gustav Adolf in the chapel. This monument, in the protocol called “Konung Gustaf Adolfs Arestod” (Monument in Honour of King Gustav Adolph), existed already according to the wording of the protocol; it had been made earlier in that year in Nurnberg.<sup>47</sup> Olsson tentatively identified this with a bronze bust of the king now in the National Museum in Stockholm, which carries the inscription “Georg Petel ad. viv. sculpt. 1632, Christof Neidhart in Augsburg gos mich 1643.”<sup>48</sup> – The plan for a monument of the Privy Council was in fact known to Liljegren when he wrote his book, but he dismissed it whilst according to him it can only have regarded a small statue, *maybe* the above-mentioned bust but nothing grander.<sup>49</sup>

Göran Lindahl, in his above-mentioned book, is however of a completely different meaning. He strongly believes that the idea was to create a memorial room where the foremost decoration would be a statue, maybe even a rider statue of the king.<sup>50</sup> That Lindahl was right in surmising this is confirmed by the fact that in the beginning of the 1650s there was talk of a separate monument over Gustav II. Adolf. When Sebastien Bourdon, the French portrait painter, in 1652 came to Sweden, he had himself a plan for a monument probably executed in Paris by André Félibien. The plan itself has not been preserved, but according to a written description made by

<sup>46</sup> Liljegren 1947, p. 110 - my italicizing.

<sup>47</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 174.

<sup>48</sup> A small bell with the inscription „Christof Neidhardt in Augsperg gos mich anno 1645“ from the Monastery Mariacron in Oppenheim is now in the near town of Nierstein; <http://www.geschichtsverein-nierstein.de/siteseeing.htm>.

<sup>49</sup> Silfverstolpe 1919, p. 8. The plan is mentioned in André Félibien’s *Entretiens sur la vie Erica Treijs sur les ouvrages design plus excellents peintres*, Tome IV, printed in Paris in 1666; Silfverstolpe has used the London-edition from 1705.

<sup>50</sup> Lindahl 1969, p. 129.

Félibien (interpreted by Gunnar Mascoll Silfverstolpe), it showed a large, free-standing rotunda, in whose interior there was a large marble monument. It was to be built by expensive stone materials and decorated with paintings and sculptures.<sup>51</sup>

It is interesting to note, that in the interior, among other figures and symbols, there would be a representation of a phoenix. In the same way as the pelican, the phoenix was used in medieval religious art as a symbol of Christ because of its ability to rise after having been transformed to ashes in a fire.<sup>52</sup> We can also here interpret the symbol of Christ as a symbol of the King.

## 2. The Banér Chapel

The next chapel to be built at the Riddarholmen Church was the Banér Chapel, constructed in 1636 on order by General Johan Banér for his first wife Catharina Elisabeth Pfuel. Already in August of 1634 the Count's brother Per Banér had proposed to the Privy Council on behalf of Johan, that a "resting place" in the church was given to him, something which Per Banér thought "should not be denied him". We notice that there was not yet talk of a chapel, only a "resting place", i.e. a grave. The idea was actualised by the death of Catharina Elisabeth Pfuel in the beginning of 1636. In April that year Per Banér and another brother, Axel Banér, came up with a new petition to the Privy Council, this time asking, that Johan Banér would be allowed to build a chapel by the Riddarholmen Church and put the body of his wife there "while there inside the church is no place for her body".<sup>53</sup> This was granted and the chapel seems to have been built rather quickly since Catharina Elisabeth Pfuel was buried there already in that same year. Johan Banér died in 1641 and was buried there.

Exterior: The façade is similar to the Gustavian Chapel but simpler, with less pronounced buttresses and instead of a cupola a saddle roof, covered by copper (fig. 11). This was destroyed in the fire of 1835, but rebuilt to look as before the fire.

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<sup>51</sup> Silfverstolpe 1919, pp. 8–123; cf. Liljegren 1947, pp. 176–179.

<sup>52</sup> Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie; also Christie 1973, II, p. 240 and Norges kunsthistorie 3, p. 192.

<sup>53</sup> Liljegren 1947, p. 142.

Interior: In the same way as the Gustavian Chapel and all the other burial chapels in the church, the Banér Chapel is divided in an upper chapel and a half-underground grave vault beneath it (fig. 12). Above the door to the grave vault there is a small niche in the wall, containing a soapstone statue of Johan Banér on a horse (fig. 13), carrying the simple inscription of “1596. JOHAN BANÉR. 1641” and under that a sentence in Latin: TU NE CEDE MALIS (Do not give in to evil). The horse is represented in a rearing position, facing right. Supported in the middle by a shield in the back, it is only partly freestanding. Although very 17<sup>th</sup> century in style it was made as late as in 1942 by the Swedish sculptor Ivar Jonsson. In one of the documental files there is a letter from March 1942 signed by Sigurd Curman, then in charge of Riksantikvarieämbetet, regarding a memorial to Johan Banér, which is to be put at the “suggested spot”.<sup>54</sup> He continues by saying, that Riksantikvarieämbetet would have preferred a portrait bust or a portrait medallion in big scale, but since it probably would have been very difficult to find reliable starting points for a portrait, they will allow the execution of the memorial in its present, reworked state, which without any doubts “has priority over earlier presented suggestions”; of these, however, nothing remains.

The small statue shows a certain likeness to the painting *Gustav II Adolf on a horse* in the main building of the University of Uppsala, painted by Cornelius Arendtz in 1636 on order by Gabriel Gustavsson Oxenstierna at Tyresö as a posthumous portrait of the king at the moment of the crossing of the river Lech in Germany.<sup>55</sup> The similarities lie in the position of the horse and that of the rider. There is however one main difference; the king wears only a vest made of elk-skin as protection (as it was his habit), whilst Johan Banér is in full battle dress.

The upper chapel almost closes upon itself since it has no valve that opens into the church; just a small opening and a narrow stairway, which leads to the upper room (fig. 14). The sarcophagus was put there in 1758 and there is no information of how the room originally was decorated. We might assume, that it was very modest, as maybe the builder himself; Mårten Liljegren has pointed out, that Johan Banér, in

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<sup>54</sup> ATA, Stockholm: letter in the Sigurd Curmans files.

<sup>55</sup> For the rider portrait as a genre, see Ellenius 1995, p. 38; also Ångström-Grandien 1997, pp. 355-358.

striking contrast to many of his contemporaries, never showed any interest in the art of building.<sup>56</sup>

It does not lack a personal touch, though, since on the northern wall there is a painted portrait of Johan Banér in natural size (the only painted portrait in the Riddarholmen Church; fig. 15). He is depicted in a way, which closely resembles the style of Jacob Henrik Elbfas, but against a landscape background, unusual in Elbfas' production.<sup>57</sup> On the sarcophagus there lies a helmet from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and on the eastern side of the chapel there is a suit of armour from the same period; they both probably belonged to Johan Banér (fig. 16).<sup>58</sup> In the niche above the entrance to the grave vault underneath there is another helmet and a cuirass; all these things stemming from the armoury to the Banér family at Djursholm (now at Sjöö).

### 3. The Vasaborg Chapel

The next chapel to be built in the Riddarholmen Church was the burial chapel for the Count of Vasaborg (figs. 17, 18). It was built in 1647. Situated between the Bernadotte Chapel and that of Banér, it contrasts very strikingly both in the exterior as well as in the interior to the simplicity of the Banér Chapel. It was built for Gustav Gustavsson Vasaborg (1616-53), the natural son of Gustav II. Adolph and Margareta Slots. In 1646, after some years in Germany with the Swedish army, Gustav Gustavsson was called back to Stockholm and given a seat in the Privy Council; he was also awarded the county of Vasaborg in Finland.<sup>59</sup> Probably it was about this time, that he decided to have a chapel built for him in the church, since, according to the archives, the stone cutter Didrik (Dierich) Blume (Blom) already in 1646 was working on the stone decoration for the chapel.<sup>60</sup> After a controversy with Queen Christine, Gustav

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<sup>56</sup> Liljegren 1947, p. 143.

<sup>57</sup> The portrait is *not* mentioned in Boo von Malmborgs extensive *Svensk porträttkonst från fem sekler* (Swedish portraiture painting from five decades), Malmö 1978.

<sup>58</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 562.

<sup>59</sup> Liljegren 1947, p. 144.

<sup>60</sup> Axel-Nilsson 1935, p. 46; also Liljegren 1947, p. 144.

Gustavsson Vasaborg left Sweden for Germany where he died in Wildshausen in 1653.<sup>61</sup> His body was transported to Stockholm and buried in the chapel.

### The exterior

On a rustic six-cornered base, corresponding with the grave vault inside, the exterior forms a massive brick building with corner chains and lists made of grey limestone. The chapel has no windows; the only light openings are those in the roof construction, surrounded with mussel-shaped window-frames, and on top of an eight-sided cupola, a lantern, shaped as a proper tambour and covered by one more eight-sided cupola. As Mårten Liljegren has pointed out, the lantern can be interpreted as a small tempietto in correct Tuscan order with obelisks at the top of each mitre round. He saw a deep symbolism in this. The tempietto, as a round temple, has been put there to crown the chapel of the dead Swedish hero.<sup>62</sup> The idea to let light in from above is completely new in Swedish architecture. No name of an architect is known for the chapel, but the way the lightning has been arranged has led Liljegren to suggest Nicodemus Tessin the Elder.<sup>63</sup> Also the details are worth looking at. The mussel frames of a type, that first much later was used at Riddarhuset in Stockholm, are outstanding in contemporary stone decorations in Stockholm, and actually look more Rococo than Baroque in style. Similar ones but from a later period can be found on the cupola of the Katarina Church in Stockholm, which was designed by Göran Josua Adelcrantz in 1728.

### The interior

The interior ceiling consists of a cupola-shaped, eight-sided vault with a tambour. The ribs, made of limestone, are shaped from laurel leaves and painted in green and gold (fig. 19). They are held up by consoles in the shape of angels' heads surrounded by fruit garlands, also of limestone, which are gilded and painted in red and green metal-shining colours. The faces are painted pink and the hair on each is carefully treated, parted in small curls that have been rolled together in volute-shaped balls (fig. 20). As Martin Olsson has observed, the faces are of two kinds, some fat and rather sloppy

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<sup>61</sup> Liljegren (1947), p. 147.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 146

with hanging cheeks and eyelids, some powerful and energetic with drawn-together eye-brows.<sup>64</sup> Originally each angel carried an insignia, which, according to an old description, symbolised “praiseworthy behaviour, sweet death and joyful resurrection”.<sup>65</sup> On the floor, on a podium of red chalkstone made in 1920 after a drawing by the architect Ivar Tengbom, there stands the tin coffin for the remains of the count of Vasaborg. The balcony and the benches in the chapel stem however from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the accounts from 1681 there is a mentioning of blue paint for the benches so they may have been put in there that same year.<sup>66</sup>

#### 4. The Torstensson Chapel

The burial chapel to General Lennart Torstensson was constructed after his death in 1651 on order by his widow, the Countess Beata de la Gardie. Built of brick and grey-coloured sandstone it is situated in the very west of the church, next to the portal and immediately to the left of the entrance (cf. fig. 3). Of the hitherto described chapels this is the one, that most resembles the Gustavian, although it is simpler with the details less pronounced. It is built on a rectangular plan with a three-sided ending-part in the west.

##### The exterior

The chapel is built of brick and grey limestone on a high base of ashlar made of red limestone. It has three tall, narrow, round-vaulted windows with a frame of grey limestone and corner chains of the same material (fig. 21). The keystones in the windows are decorated by angels’ heads carrying bunches of grapes (fig. 22). They are of roughly the same appearance as the “energetic” ones in the Vasaborg Chapel and the angels on the façade to the Wachtmeister Chapel (some of these, as well as parts of other details in limestone have been exchanged for new parts of the same appearance; the originals are kept in the collections of the church). Above and beneath

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<sup>64</sup> Images in Olsson 1937, figs. 152, 153; ATA: Stockholm 2. Riddarholmskyrkan; R. 289, 92, R. 287, 91 (2702:6).

<sup>65</sup> According to the account of J. Possieth (1667-1728) in the University Library to Uppsala; Olsson 1937, p. 188.

<sup>66</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 190



each window there is a cartouche decorated with cartilage ornament but without inscription.

The chapel is covered by an octagonal cupola with a like-wise octagonal onion-shaped cupola finished by a flaming cross. The roof is completely covered in copper. At the base of the roof there are crowned copper dragons at each corner (fig. 22). The roof was destroyed in the fire of 1835, but rebuilt to the same appearance as before the fire. However, it is not known, whether the dragons were part of the original roof or not. Martin Olsson surmises they were,<sup>67</sup> without, however, mentioning that they can be seen at a drawing made the same year as the fire, but *before* the fire. It was made by the architect Fredrik Blom and is kept in the National Archives (fig. 23).

### The interior

Also the Torstensson Chapel consists of a grave vault underneath a memorial chapel, which opens up through a large round-bowed arcade opening towards the northern aisle of the church (fig. 24). At the top of the door to the vault there is a trophy group made of golden metal. On memorial stone slabs on each side of the door one can read his epitaph, written by the historian and poet Olof von Dalin.<sup>68</sup> The chapel is practically impossible to enter (apparently it happens only twice every 100 years), so the interior can only be seen at a distance, from inside the church and from photographs. It is covered by a six-parted cross-vault. In the crown of the vault there is a bunch of grapes. The ribs in the vault are supported by consoles in the shape of angels' heads (fig. 25). Everyone has a very turned-up nose and the hair is arranged in large, ornamentally treated curls. Martin Olsson has observed that each has its special facial expression.<sup>69</sup> There is a close resemblance between these heads and the work from the workshop of the stone cutter and architect Christian Julius Döteber, who is most known for his so called Petersenska House close to the bridge to Riddarholmen from the Old Town.<sup>70</sup> A reoccurring theme is the scarves round their necks, which also can be found there (fig. 26).

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p. 191.

<sup>68</sup> Olof von Dalin, called the Swedish Argus, is most well known for his "Tale about the Horse" (Sagan om hästen).

<sup>69</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 191.

<sup>70</sup> Liljegren 1947, p. 113; also Fulton 1997, pp. 119, 161-164.

On a pedestal made of marble from the area of Kolmården in the back of the chapel, there stands a white marble bust of Torstensson (figs. 27, 28). It has traditionally been ascribed to Carlo Carove; Martin Olsson says in *Sveriges Kyrkor*, that it is *probably* by Carove.<sup>71</sup> In his book about Millich and his circle, Bertil Waldén has however convincingly ascribed the bust to Heinrich Millich.<sup>72</sup> According to Waldén, it can hardly have been executed as early as in 1651 (the year of the death of Lennart Torstensson); it is therefore probably post-humus and made to order of the widow, Beata De la Gardie, who died in 1681, thirty years later than her husband.<sup>73</sup> On the walls there are the carved and painted funeral shields and one of the banners from the funeral procession of Torstensson. There are also the family trees for him and Beata de la Gardie.<sup>74</sup> The present state of the chapel stems from 1761 when it was put on order after drawings by the architect Jean Erik Rehn.

### 5. The Chapel for the General Wachtmeister

Beyond the Chapel of Count Torstensson on the northern façade of the church there is the chapel of the General, Royal Equerry Count Hans Wachtmeister.<sup>75</sup> He died in 1652, but the chapel was not finished until in 1654, at the same time as the two for the Lewenhaupt brothers on the other side of the medieval vestry that stands between his chapel and the Lewenhaupts'. It is obvious, especially from the exterior of the church that the three chapels were built to form a homogenous architectural unit together with the vestry (fig. 29). The limestone bases, the roof arrangements and the windows reach the same height and there are rustic chains on the corners on all three chapels.

#### The exterior

The chapel stands on a high base of limestone. It is built of brick with ornamental details of grey limestone. The exterior resembles the Torstensson Chapel although it is

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<sup>71</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 193.

<sup>72</sup> ATA: W 424; photo: I. Andersson 1942.

<sup>73</sup> Waldén 1942, p. 112. Cf. Olsson 1937, p. 602.

<sup>74</sup> Olsson 1937, p. 12.

<sup>75</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the chapel was generally called the Fersen Chapel since it in that time belonged to the family von Fersen through marriage; the members of the von Fersen family that were buried there were later moved to Church of Ljung in Östergötland; Olsson 1937, pp. 200-201.

much simpler in details (fig. 30). As in this chapel, the keystones in the windows are decorated by angels' heads carrying bunches of grapes (fig. 31). The roof is made of copper and ogee-shaped. It is finished by an open lantern, decorated with a pointed spire with a golden cross.

#### The interior

The plan of the chapel is five-sided. It has three big windows, which are larger than the windows in the other chapels, maybe due to the fact that the church now was getting rather dark with all the new chapels (fig. 32). The ceiling consists of a six-parted cross-vault with ridges shaped in the plaster. They proceed from consoles shaped as angels' heads. The chapel has three large windows with frames of wrought iron and leaded panes. It is covered by a six-parted cross-vault with a key-stone shaped as a bunch of grapes. The décor is kept to a minimum, something which maybe is due to suggestions from the architect Jean de la Vallée who by now was in charge of the building.

### **6. The Chapels for the Family Lewenhaupt**

East of the Wachtmeister Chapel there is first the already mentioned vestry, that stems from the building period of the church (i.e. the 13<sup>th</sup> century), followed by the two chapels for the Lewenhaupt brothers (in earlier documents often called the Leijonhufvud Chapel, which is the same name in Swedish), built in 1654 for the field marshals Gustav Adolf Lewenhaupt (1619-56) and his brother Carl Mauritz Lewenhaupt (1620-66). It was told of them, that they loved each other so much in their lifetime, that they wanted to rest with each other under the same grave roof when they were dead. According to Johan Possieth (1667-1728), who from 1722 was vicar to Riddarholmen Church, in his undated hand written manuscript about the church, they had made up the plans for the chapels themselves.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> See Olsson 1937, p. 196.

### The exterior

From the outside, the two Lewenhaupt chapels are seen as one (fig. 29). They are built of brick with ornamental details of grey limestone in the same way as the Chapel of General Wachtmeister and the Torstensson Chapel. There are two windows, one in each end, and between them an empty niche in the same size of the windows, which may have been intended to house a sculpture of some kind. Considering the lack of sculptures inside the church it is also possible, that there was never the intention to put a sculpture there. The niche is framed by long straight laurel garlands made of oil-painted limestone.

The ogee-shaped roof is covered by copper and finished by an open lantern, decorated with a pointed spire with a golden cross, in every detail resembling the Wachtmeister Chapel. Certain considerations seem also to have been taken to the Torstensson Chapel as for example in details like the keystones in the windows, which are decorated by angels' heads carrying bunches of grapes, exactly as in Torstensson Chapel.

### The interior

In the interior the space is divided in two equally shaped chapels on a square ground plan, that are separated from one another by a wall in which a medieval flying buttress has been included (fig. 33). They are covered by cross-vaults without ribs. The arcade-openings to the chapels are closed by richly decorated iron gates, of which the eastern is from the time building period, the western from the renovation 1914-44 after a drawing by Gustaf Lindgren. In both chapels there are impressive pewter sarcophaguses and several funeral weapons and two white banners out of satin, carried in the funeral of Gustaf Mauritz Lewenhaupt in 1700. The décor is here truly classicistic and have motifs, which about the same time were getting popular in palace architecture. The unruly, freely growing cartilage ornaments have been exchanged for rigid laurel garlands.

### Followers to the Gustavian Chapel

Almost as soon as the Gustavian Chapel was finished, there were some burial chapels being built, that can be seen as close followers to the Gustavian Chapel. One is the chapel to Herman Wrangel at Skokloster, next to the Church of Skokloster, that was finished in 1639 (fig. 6). Most of them appear however first after 1650 as the chapel to Nils Ryning in Sköldinge in Södermanland, that was finished in 1655.<sup>77</sup> The leading architect in the burial chapel building field was Nicodemus Tessin the Elder but also Eric Dahlbergh designed several burial chapels. The most impressive of the followers to the Gustavian Chapel is the Caroline Burial Chapel from 1672 at the Riddarholmen church, but, since it belongs to another period it is not treated here. Also the burial chapel for Falkenberg Family at Vadsbro is a follower even though it is made as late as in 1718-19, almost a hundred years later after the Gustavian Chapel was built; a good example of how long-lived the tradition was.

What is interesting is that the interiors of these chapels follow the pattern that had been set by the Gustavian Chapel – that is, that the decoration is kept to a minimum, there are – with the one exception of the Wrangel Chapel at Skokloster – no monuments, no paintings on the walls or other forms of décor.

### Interpretations of the burial chapels at Riddarholmen

The latest writings on the burial chapels in the Riddarholmen Church in Swedish art history can be found in *Signums svenska konsthistoria (Signum)*, in the volume on Renaissance Art (1995). Unfortunately for the chapels there is however a distinction in the treatment of the art works of the period between “Architecture” and “Sculpture” and since the chapels can not really be included in either – not being “big” architecture, not containing any sculpture – they consequently do not get much attention. Göran Alm, the author of the chapter on architecture, after having told a little about the background of the building of the Gustavian Chapel, stresses the Dutch influences on the exterior. He underlines the “contrast between the warm exterior and the cool interior”, ending this passage – after having quoted the

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<sup>77</sup> Liljegren 1947, p. 116.

inscriptions on the façade – by concluding that the burial chapel of king Gustav Adolf is not only a grave but also a monument of victory.<sup>78</sup> He then goes on to mention the names of some - but not all – of the other chapels, underlining that the façades to all chapels are dominated by Dutch Renaissance.<sup>79</sup> In his article on sculpture in the same book, Torbjörn Fulton mentions the Gustavian Chapel but only in passing, saying that it was copied many times by the nobility.<sup>80</sup>

The following volume of *Signum*, on the Baroque period (1997) has a foreword by Kurt Johannesson in which he discusses at length Tessin's (the Younger) plans for a new church instead of the old Riddarholmen Church since this church was so “ugly and plane”.<sup>81</sup> I have not mentioned these plans in my article whilst they go outside the chosen time span for the article. It is however interesting to note, that Tessin finds the Riddarholmen Church both “ugly” and “plane”, understandable when one considers he had other royal burial churches like the one in the Escorial in Spain and the Saint-Denis in Paris in mind.<sup>82</sup> It is enough to look at the altarpiece in the Riddarholmen Church, that he designed together with his father, Nicodemus Tessin the Elder, or the so called King's Chairs in Storkyrkan, to get a glimpse of what he wanted to create.

Claes Ellehag, in his article on Swedish architecture from 1650-90 in the same volume of *Signum*, does not mention the chapels at Riddarholmen (apart from the Caroline Chapel) but talks about burial chapels in general, underlining, that the building of such a one became an important issue for the birth status conscious families of the nobility, whose honour and success were intimately connected to Sweden's position as a great power. At the same time the chapels became a way of spreading the latest ideas within sacral architecture.<sup>83</sup> It was the centralised building, that became the most popular type and many burial chapels shaped as miniature centralised churches were now being added to the old Swedish parish churches. They have very often come to completely dominate the medieval church they are standing next to.

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<sup>78</sup> Alm 1995, pp. 85-87.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 87.

<sup>80</sup> Fulton 1995, p. 331.

<sup>81</sup> Johannesson (1997), p. 28.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>83</sup> Ellehag 1997, p. 68.

Reading Ellehag – since he is only concerned with the architecture – and Liljegren, one almost gets the impression, that *all* burial chapels imitate the Gustavian Chapel and hence stand/stood undecorated and plain. From the chapter on sculpture in the same volume of *Signum*, written by Peter Gillgren, one gets however a somewhat different picture. There we meet a large epitaph, made out of stone – with sculptures – for people from the nobility. One example is the Bielkenstierna Monument in the Church of Österhaninge, south of Stockholm; another is the epitaph to Knut Kurck and Barbro Natt och Dag in the Church of Näshulta in Södermanland.<sup>84</sup> According to Göran Lindahl, a monument was placed in the chapel, if it was intended for only one person or a family,<sup>85</sup> but already the burial chapels at Riddarholmen are proofs of the contrary, something, which brings us back to the question of how the Gustavian Chapel originally was intended to be. I agree with Lindahl in surmising a monument of some kind must have been planned, but when it ended up with no monument of any kind inside, the interior decoration of the other burial chapels could not very well be made more lavish, surpassing the King's. The owners of the chapels “made a virtue of necessity” and left the chapels just as undecorated as the Gustavian Chapel. The rooms were left to speak for themselves, through the architecture, and that is what became the “Swedish type” of a burial chapel, the empty room that speaks (or spoke, since sarcophaguses now stand there) its own silent language, as *une architecture parlante* long before that phrase was invented.

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<sup>84</sup> Gillgren 1997, pp. 338-340.

<sup>85</sup> Lindahl 1969, p. 222.

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Fig. 1 Riddarholmen from the south



Fig. 2. The Riddarholmen church to the east







Fig. 4. Riddarholmen from the south and the Riddarholmen Church with its new spire



Fig. 5. The tombs of Magnus Ladulås and Karl Knutsson Bonde



Fig. 6. The east side of the Riddarholmen Church, the Gustavian Chapel on the left

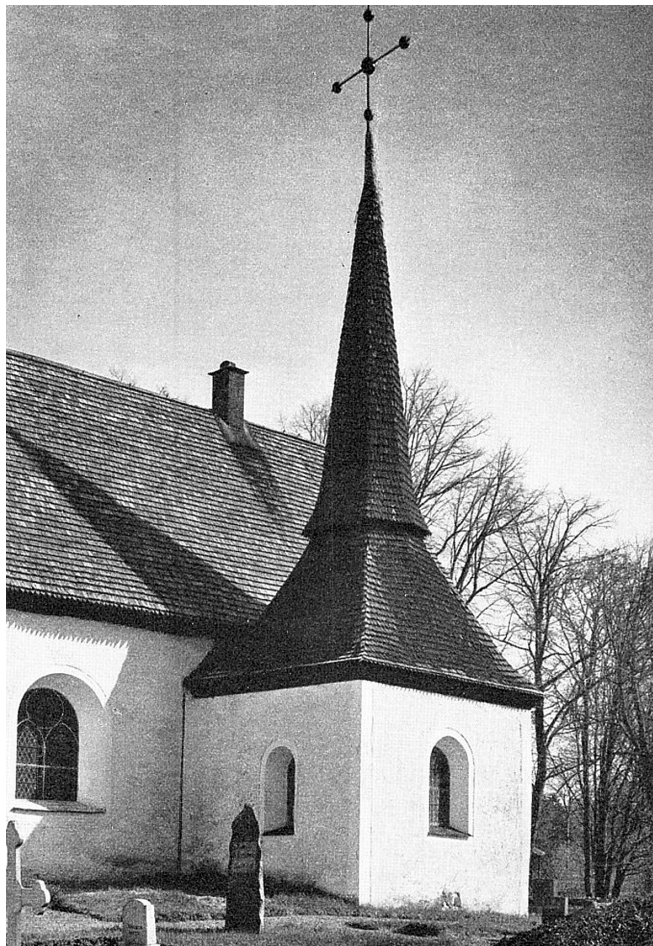


Fig. 7.  
Ripsa Church, Södermanland





Fig. 8. The Gustavian Chapel, interior

Fig. 9.  
Gustavian  
Chapel, console  
of limestone with  
cartilage



Fig. 10. Gustavian Chapel, console in the shape of a cherub's head





Fig. 11. The south side of the Riddarholmen Church, the Banér Chapel on the left





Fig. 12.

The Banér Chapel, the entrance to the grave vault on the left, the entrance to the chapel on the right



Fig. 13. The Banér Chapel, close up of the rider statue



Fig. 14.  
The Banér Chapel, the entrance to  
the upper part of the chapel



Fig. 15.  
The Banér Chapel, potrait of  
Johan Banér



Fig. 16.  
The Banér Chapel, the  
upper part





Fig. 17. The south side of the Riddarholmen Church, the Vasaborg Chapel on the left



Fig. 18. The Vasaborg Chapel from inside the church



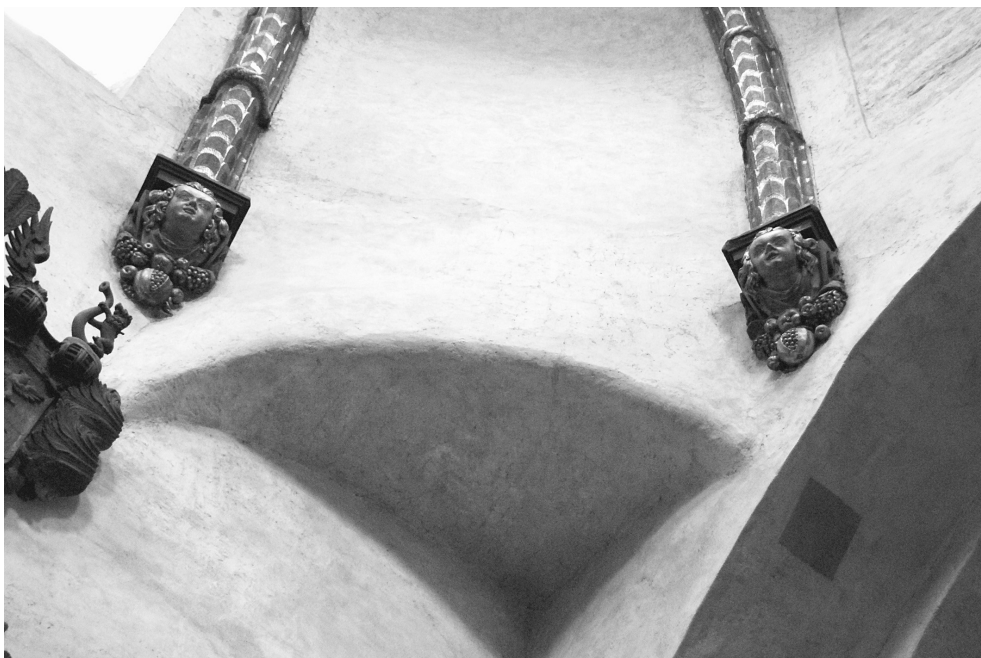


Fig. 19. The Vasaborg Chapel, interior



Fig. 20.  
Vasaborg Chapel, cherub



Fig. 21. The Torstensson Chapel



Fig. 22. The Torstensson Chapel, a keystone of the window and the crowned dragons above

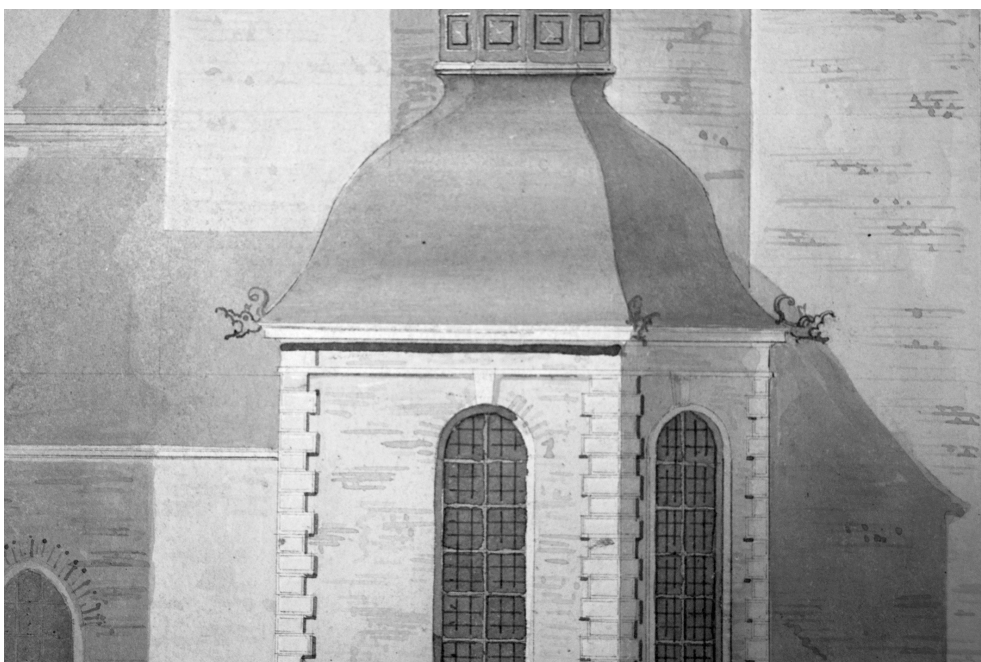


Fig. 23. Detail of the drawing showing the crowned dragons





Fig. 24. The Torstensson Chapel from inside the church



Fig. 25.  
The Torstensson Chapel, cherub

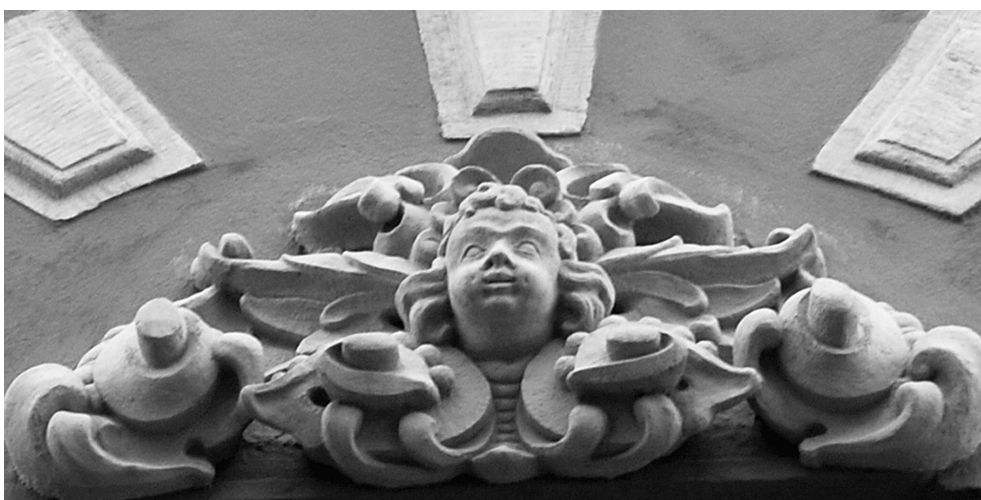


Fig. 26. Head from the Petersenska House



Fig. 27. The Torstensson Chapel with the bust of Lennart Torstensson in the middle



Fig. 28.  
The bust of Lennart Torstensson the right, the  
Lewenhaupt Chapels on the left of the vestry



Fig. 29. The north side of the Riddarholmen Church, the Wachtmeister Chapel on





Fig. 30. The Wachtmeister Chapel



Fig. 31.  
The Wachtmeister Chapel, a keystone of the window



Fig. 32. The Wachtmeister Chapel from inside the church



Fig. 33. The Lewenhaupt Chapels from inside the church