

Gunnar Larson (51)

m.

Kerstin Hansdotter (71)

Birth: 1640, Nusnäs,
Mora, Kopparberg, Sweden

Married: 1670, Nusnäs, Mora,
Kopparberg, Sweden (30)

Died: 1691, Mora, Kopparberg,
Sweden

Born: 1646, Sweden

Married: 1670, Nusnäs, Mora,
Kopparberg, Sweden (24)

Died: 1717

Children: Britja Gunnarsson, 1670-1677 (7)
Hans Gunnarsson, 1671-1710 (39)
Lars Gunnarsson, 1674-1754 (80)
Brita Gunnarsdotter, 1677-1753 (76)
Anna Gunnarsdotter, 1679-1750 (71)
Cherstin (Twin) Gunnarsson, 1681-
Karin (Twin) Gunnarsson, 1681-
Eric Gunnarsson, 1683-
Anders Gunnarsson, 1684-1746 (age 61)
Gunnar Gunnarsson, 1687-

Source: Household Records, Sweden Baptisms, and Death Book

Notes on the Family:

The children, Anna and the twins, Karin and Kerstin, were born at Garsås. The rest were born at Nusnäs.

Death Book 1717:

Hustrun Kerstin Hansdotter, in Nusnas at age 25 married Gunnar Larsson. They were married 23 years and had 10 children. She was widowed for 28 years, and died of anxiety at 76 years of age.

“Died of anxiety” – it looks like this is a common complaint in our ancestors that exists to this day. In those days, they had no treatment for anxiety. I feel really sorry for Kerstin – it must have been terrible for her.

There were witch trials in Mora in 1669. This must have been an extremely frightening time for the people living in Nusnäs, which is very close to Mora. This was a period in Europe when witch trials were carried out throughout many countries.

“The Mora witch trial was the largest trial of this region and most internationally known. At the start of the investigation, a total of 70 individuals were charged with practicing witchcraft as well as trying to influence children to practice witchcraft. During the investigation, 23 of these 70 confessed to crimes that included holding feasts that were “witchcraft in nature.” Among these confessions it also came out that around 300 children attended these feasts. Apparently, the majority of the children looked forward to attending these feasts but there were handfuls that were dragged against their will to the feasts (Aberg 1989).

Now, once again, we have to take a step back and think who is writing these accounts and realize that there is bias surrounding these records. One quote that stuck out the most was what one of the Bailiffs said to the governor: “In Alvdalen and Mora, children and teenagers are being seduced by old witches unto the devil” (Lagerlof). We will perhaps never know what actually went down at these so called “witchcraft feasts.” What seems to be very cut and dry though is the sentencing and execution of these so-called witches.

The judges and rest of the commission (which was a “magical board” that was mainly made up of priests) took this case very seriously. At the end, 83 people were charged with these crimes. This included the 23 that confessed, 15 children and a handful of others that were originally charged (witches.net). The charged were then imprisoned and soon after 15 were executed. The 14 women and 1 man were beheaded shortly after they were initially imprisoned. After they were beheaded, their bodies were all burned to ash on stakes that were situated at a peninsula across from a church (Aberg 1989).

The trial and punishment didn't stop there. The main problem that the commission feared was the rest of the kids that attended these feasts and were being "seduced... unto the devil" (Lagerlof).

The commission then made another 36 children run the gauntlet and then were beaten with rods over the course of an entire year. In addition to that the 20 youngest of these children were whipped on their hands three Sundays in a row before they walked into church (Aberg 1989).



This whole thing was a horrible series of events and was made to scare off all other "witches" in the area. In fact, there were depictions of these executions all over Western Europe especially in Germany. The problem was that the depictions were incorrect. The executions were just depicted as witches being burnt at the stake and not beheaded as they really were. It was in fact these images that were thought to have influenced the Salem witch trials which were known for burning the accused at the stake (Lagerlof)."

Chronicles of An Anthropology Nerd

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