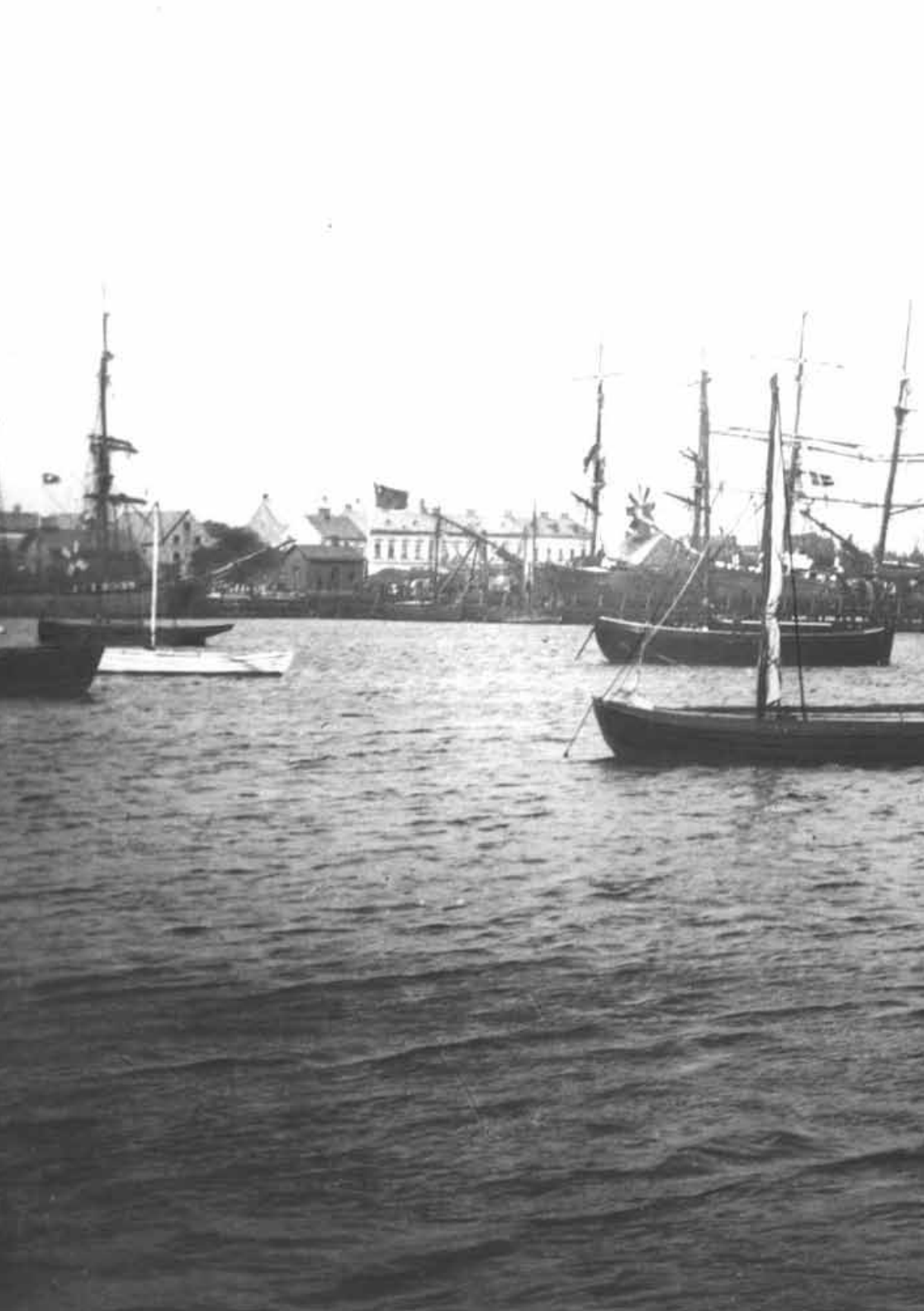


150 years with the Port of Trelleborg





The first came in hollowed-out oak logs. Others have arrived in dragon-prowed Viking ships, and the Hanseatic traders anchored their cogs in rows outside Trelleborg.

For thousands of years people have come by sea to the part of the coast where Trelleborg is located today. Sea routes have linked countries and peoples throughout the ages. For the people of Trelleborg the sea has always been a natural part of their lives, with the port the hub around which life has revolved.

In Viking times Harald Blutooth sailed his ships up to Trelleborg's palisades to unload his cargo; goods that were then transported onward to Uppåkra, the trading centre that became the city of Lund. In the Middle Ages the herring fishing in the Baltic Sea attracted traders who arrived with their vessels loaded with salt to exchange for the silver of the Baltic Sea, the herring. The trade links between the salt of Lüneburg and the herring of Trelleborg were numerous and fortunes were made. The first written record of the name Trelleborg is from 1257 and concerns money – who should receive the income from taxes in Trelleborg – the King in Copenhagen or the Bishop in Lund?

Three years later the incomes from Trelleborg and Malmö formed part of the Danish princess Sophia's dowry when she travelled to Stockholm to marry the Swedish prince Valdemar.

Expansion that worried others

'Cross-border' (international) trade increased and Trelleborg became more and more powerful. This caused much grinding of teeth among the ruling factions based in Malmö. Time after time they travelled to Copenhagen to complain to the King. Trade was bypassing the people of Malmö and ending up in Trelleborg! By 1619 the King had heard enough. He revoked Trelleborg's borough charter and consequently the rights to participate in trade and craftsmanship.

But the citizens of Malmö could not alter the fact that Trelleborg was in a strategic location on the south coast. Trelleborg was a natural anchorage in those days, and it still is today. The people of Trelleborg were also not the sort to give in easily. One way to survive was to light false beacons along the coastline, as well as out to sea, to lure vessels into running aground. The salvage of bounty from shipwrecks was legal...

Trelleborg was denied official status for 248 years and its borough charter was not reinstated until 1867. Then belief in the future spiralled, entrepreneurship blossomed, and at the heart of the new town was its port.

During the years the people of Trelleborg fought to have the borough charter reinstated they had worked in many ways, with varying degrees of success. It must have seemed like a victory when a pilot station was established in Trelleborg in 1823. The need was great. The fertile soils of the surrounding Söderslätt countryside produced grain for the production of strong spirits, as well as other cereal crops, but wooden goods needed to be imported. The Söderslätt area is well known for its paucity of trees.

The Port of Trelleborg was founded in 1862

It was the interests of the major landowners that paved the way for the establishment of the Port of Trelleborg. The driving force behind the port was Count Corfitz Beck-Friis of Börringe Priory Castle.

In March 1862 the commercial Port of Trelleborg received royal approval and on 20 September that same year the Malmros family's wooden schooner 'Njord' became the first ship to sail into the new port. A few years later the port had two breakwaters and a larger wooden cargo berth. The port approach and harbour basin was dredged first to a depth of eight feet, and then deepened to eleven feet.

When the old town was reborn in 1867 the private owners of the port and the town governors entered into negotiations. On 30 January 1869 the port became the property of the town, but the Count remained at the helm, so to speak, as he became the chair of the newly elected Board of Directors of the Port of Trelleborg.

The new port was a strong argument for rerouting the postal steamship traffic to Trelleborg. Since the 17th century the mail had been routed through Ystad and Stralsund, but during the second half of the 19th century the costs had become too high and the service was discontinued in 1868. In Malmö things looked promising for a private initiative that started up, but this did not last long as the route between Malmö and Stralsund was far too long and the ice in the winter made passage through Öresund difficult.

In Stockholm the fact that it took 37 hours to reach Berlin from the capital was not popular. The route was via Copenhagen, Gedser and Warnemünde. There was much interest in a direct route from Sweden and as the new Port of Trelleborg was relatively free from ice in the winter there was reason to believe that such a link could be used all-year-round. On the German side the railway had been built from Berlin to Crampas-Sassnitz and it was now possible to travel all the way from Rügen without having to change trains. On the Swedish side there had been a railway between Trelleborg and Lund since 1875.

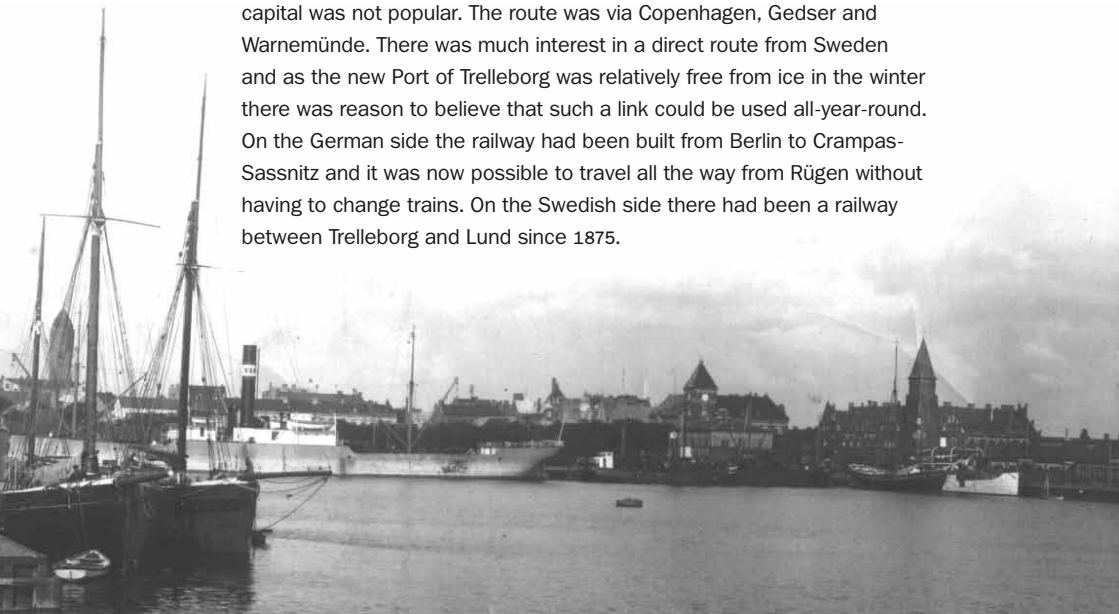
Trelleborg--Sassnitz

In 1891 a trial sailing between the two Baltic Sea towns was made by the steamship 'Freja'. Everything went well and the authorities on both sides were convinced that the route was excellent. The Port of Trelleborg needed to be expanded and the town council promised to pay for this. Trelleborg rented land free of charge for storing coal, waived port fees, built a customs station and dredged the harbour entrance. In addition the council agreed to lend SEK 100,000 to the company that took up the route.

Gustaf O Wallenberg, backed by a ten-year agreement with the postal services in both countries, ordered a post and passenger steamship from England. The vessel had the impressive name of 'Rex' (the Latin for King) and was at that time the largest passenger-carrying ship in Sweden. 'Rex' cost GBP 22,000 to build and was 68.9 metres long and 10.7 metres wide.

The service quickly became popular and in the first few years 20,000 people travelled annually between the two towns. The numbers grew until they doubled in the last few years before the train ferries took over in 1909. More than ninety percent of Swedish overseas post was transported via the postal steamship route. Although the service itself became a success, the fate of 'Rex' was more tragic. On 27 February 1900 the ship ran aground on the Danish chalk cliffs in a snow storm and six people were lost. The news of the disaster was brought to the attention of the general public via the media of the day – the broadsheets.

The success of the postal steamships prepared the way for the next stage of development, the train ferries. Several investigative reports reached the same conclusion – Trelleborg was the best choice of location. In March 1908 the Swedish Government allocated funding for the building of two ferries, as well as to establish a ferry quay in Trelleborg. The joy at this decision was boundless in Trelleborg – flags were raised and the leading citizens of the town gathered at the town's central hotel, Stadshotellet, to celebrate.



Kungsleden (The King's Route)

There are some dates in the history of Trelleborg that are more important than others, and 6 July 1909 is one of them. That was the date the ferry route known as Kungsleden (The King's Route) was launched. For just over one hundred years – with only very few exceptions – ferries have ploughed the waves of the Baltic Sea like a floating bridge, surviving two World Wars, icy winters and the rise and fall of the Iron Curtain.

The whole of Trelleborg was present on 6 July. After all, it isn't everyday that a town is visited by King Gustav V and Emperor Wilhelm II. In the port there was also a queen – the new steamship 'Drottning Victoria' (Queen Victoria).

The Queen, or 'Drottningen' as she became known, was in service for almost 60 years. She was built in a shipyard in Newcastle, England, and no expense was spared to make her elegant. It is said that the blueprints were partially reused to build another ship a few years later, the sadly legendary 'Titanic'.

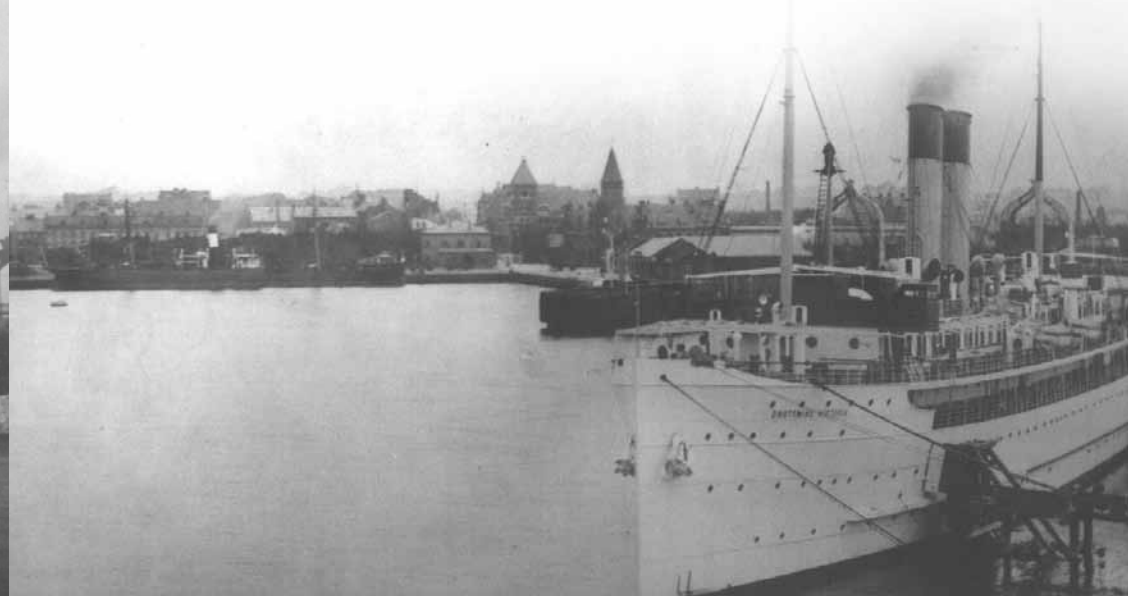
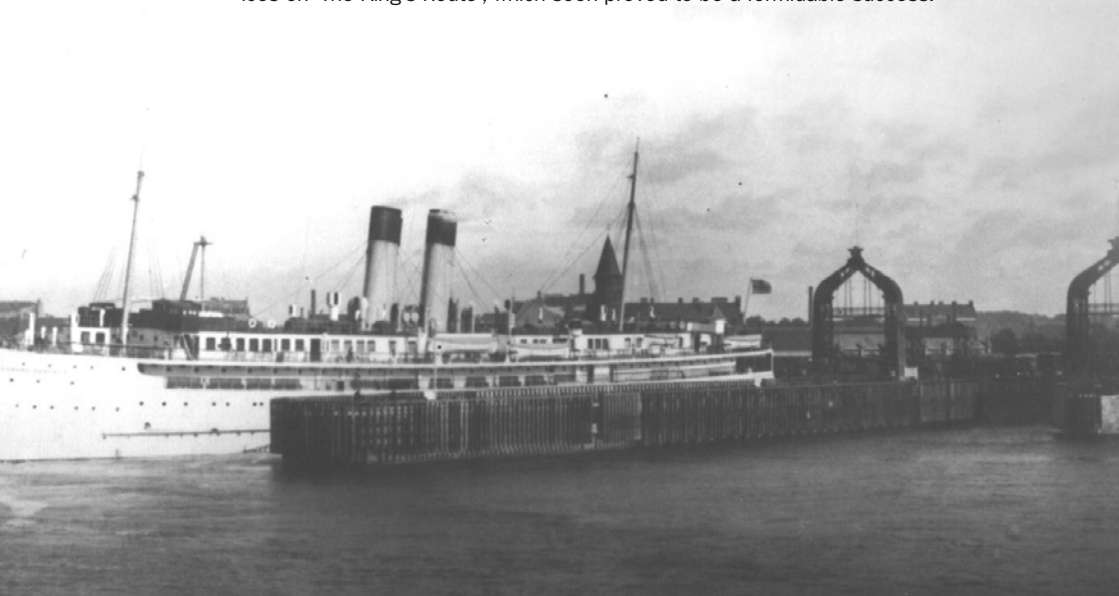
In March 1910 'Drottningen' was joined on the route by a King, 'Konung Gustav V', built at Lindholmen in Gothenburg. Both ferries had the capacity to carry up to eighteen railway wagons and 974 people. On the German side the 'Deutschland' and the 'Preussen' were introduced to provide services on 'The King's Route', which soon proved to be a formidable success.

Large volumes of goods were transported and the shipping companies often had to add extra sailings to cope with all of the goods wagons. The slow trains from Berlin/Hamburg and from Stockholm and Oslo were all routed via Trelleborg. As early as 1913 the SJ Swedish railway company had plans to build and introduce an additional ferry to the route, but then came the fighting in Sarajevo and the First World War began.

After a short period of conscription to military service the 'King' and 'Queen' returned to Trelleborg and services ran on the King's Route during the war years. This was not without its share of dramatic events, including a comprehensive exchange of prisoners of war via Trelleborg.

In 1917 a very well known passenger travelled the King's Route in his own railway carriage, Vladimir Iljitič Lenin. It is said that he stopped in Trelleborg to buy a pair of trousers on his way home to Russia where he would start a revolution.

After the last wisps of gun-smoke dissipated over the trenches in Flanders it didn't take long before trade started up again. In Trelleborg the railwayman Louis Hanell from Fjärdingslöv invested in what would become the country's first forwarding company, Nordisk Transport. Trelleborg is often cited as the cradle of the Swedish forwarding industry.



The opening of Nyhamnen

The years between wars were characterised by icy winters and growing trade, not least due to unscrupulous individuals who exploited the weak position of the German economy. In 1927 a new harbour basin, 'Nyhamnen' came into operation; an indication of the steadily growing shipping traffic to and from Trelleborg. Two years later the port had a radio beacon, with two tall radio masts erected on the bridge at the port, as well as a cable running out to sea to transmit Morse code to vessels.

The icy winters led to SJ ordering an ice breaking ferry that was named 'Starke' (Strong). In the same year the Trelleborg shipping company Eruths bought the steamship 'Alfred Rehder', and renamed the ship 'Bengt Sture'. This was a name that would enter the history books. She was lost without trace, with all hands and cargo, and the mystery of her disappearance has never been solved.

In 1930 a permanent lighthouse was erected to replace the previous lighthouse ships in protecting the entrance to the Port of Trelleborg. The lighthouse is still standing today, towering 14.5 meters over mean sea level.

The 1930s became the decade of travel. The Berlin Olympics also played a major part in encouraging people to travel via the King's Route. On one single day almost 4,000 people travelled the route by ferry!

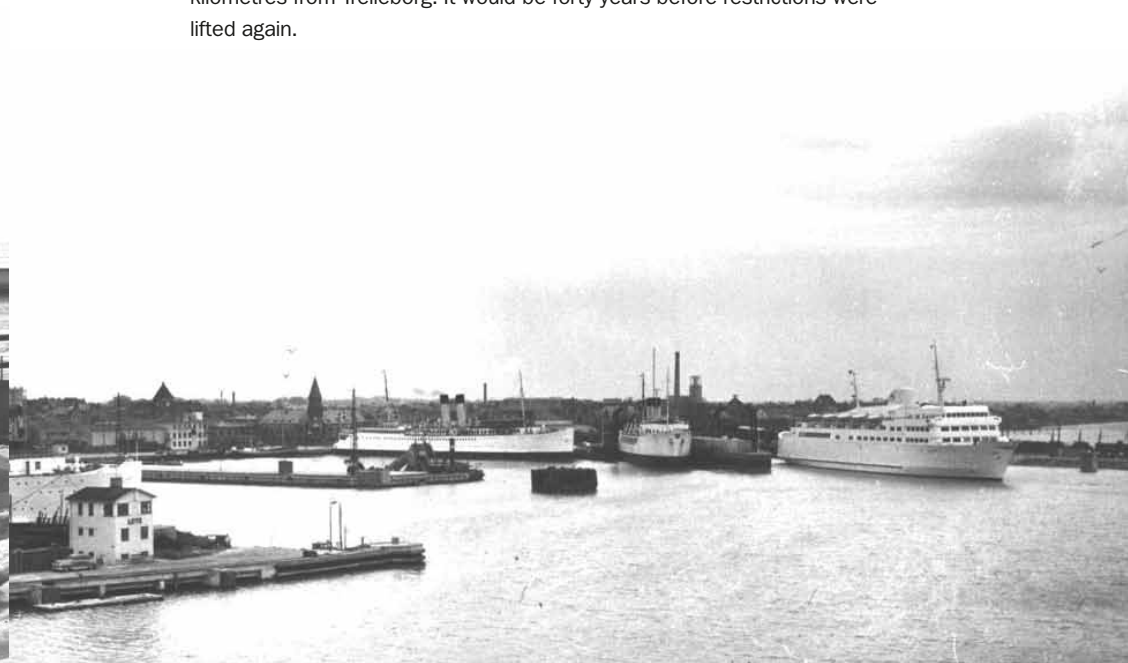
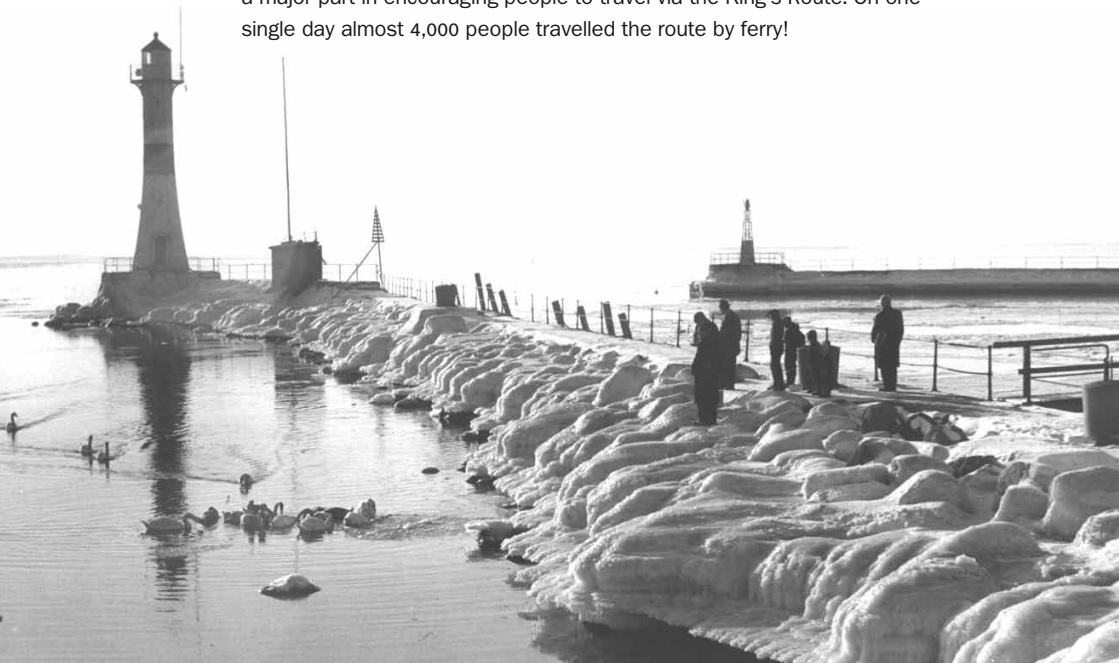
Wartime

Three years later the Second World War broke out, and the first sinking of a Trelleborg vessel occurred soon afterwards, in December 1939. This was the Malmros 'Agol', which sank off the coast of Falsterbo.

There were many incidents during the wartime winters, involving both ice and mines. The 'Starke' was blown-up and sank off the coast of Rügen, where she lay on the sea bed for thirteen months. 'Drottningen' became trapped in pack ice and her cargo had to be evacuated by air.

After the war ended the survivors of the concentration camps arrived in Trelleborg in ships hired by the Red Cross. The most severely ill had to be winched ashore. The Extradition of the Balts also became headline news when the refugees mutilated themselves on the quayside as a protest.

Despite the fact that Germany lay in ruins, 'Drottningen' continued to operate ferry services to Gdansk in Poland, following the closure of the Port of Sassnitz by the Soviet Union in November 1945. The Trelleborg ferries also operated services to Gdynia, Odraport and Warnemünde. In 1948 the services to Sassnitz also resumed. World politics, however, imposed new restrictions on this route when the Iron Curtain was raised a mere seventy kilometres from Trelleborg. It would be forty years before restrictions were lifted again.



Trelleborg–Travemünde

The 1950s brought a new route to Trelleborg, with sailings to Travemünde. During the summer months the ferries sailed to the West German spa resorts and the route soon became a success. Trade blossomed once again and in February 1955 the people of Trelleborg flocked to the port for the Swedish premiere of the import of the Volkswagen Beetle. No less than 41 examples of the car were aboard the cargo ship.

Despite the Cold War and the arms race on both sides of the Iron Curtain, the building of the notorious Berlin Wall and a world that held its breath during the Cuban Missile Crisis – in Trelleborg the ferries continued their relentless crossings of the Baltic Sea. The 1960s marked the introduction of new ferries, and when SJ decided that there was no justification for running year-round services to Travemünde a group of entrepreneurs in Hamburg decided to launch the TT Line. In 1962 the 'Nils Holgersson' came into service and in its first year the new shipping company carried just over 66,000 passengers. There have been several generations of TT ferries since then.

In the 1970s a route between Sweden and Poland was discussed, but regional politics led to the service being located at the Swedish Port of Ystad instead. It was not until the first decade of the 21st century that market forces dictated that services should be moved west to Trelleborg. Floating dance palaces then dominated the waves in the form of huge ferries that became ever larger and more luxurious.

Trelleborg–Rostock

Another date that has major significance for Trelleborg is 9 November 1989, the day the Berlin Wall came down. It was then only a few days before the first East Germans arrived by ferry from Sassnitz. After forty years of only being able to watch the ferries sailing past, it was now possible to travel with them again. It was an opportunity many were eager to sample.

In Trelleborg the fall of the Berlin Wall had major consequences. Now people and goods could flow freely across a 'borderless' Europe. Soon another ferry route was introduced from Trelleborg, with sailings to Rostock. Services to the Port of Sassnitz disappeared, in favour of sailings to Mukran – a facility originally built to quickly transport troops to the border to the West.

Trelleborg–Swinoujście

Although in 1945 there were sailings to Poland from Trelleborg, the services were discontinued after the war. It would not be until 2007 before sailings began again, with a direct service between Trelleborg and Swinoujście.



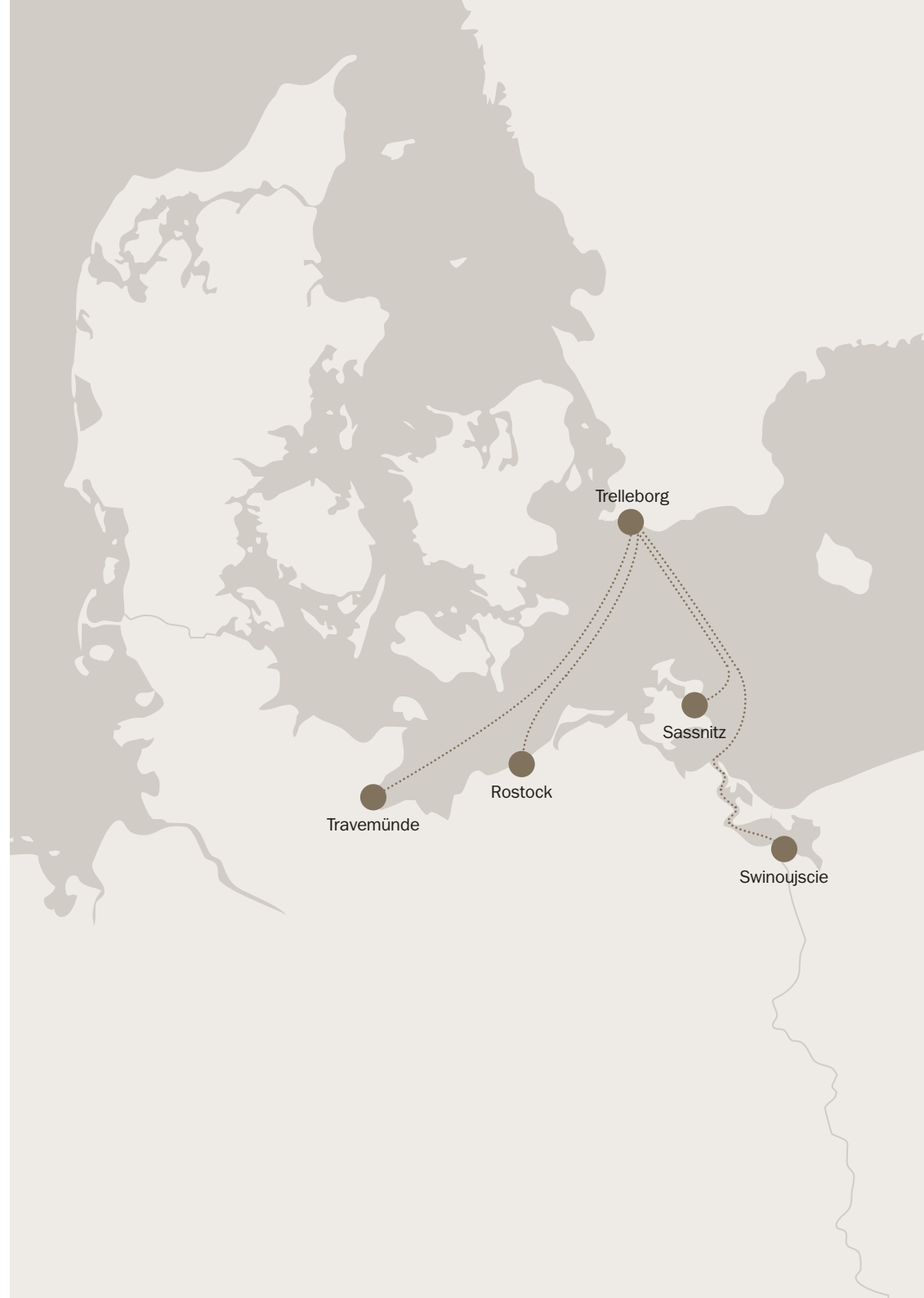


The largest RoRo port in the Baltic Sea

In the twenty years or so since Europe's borders opened up, the Port of Trelleborg has been on a journey that has led to the port becoming Sweden's second largest port and the largest Ro-Ro port in Scandinavia. Its geographical location as a gateway to Europe makes Trelleborg a natural choice of port for traffic to the southern region of the Baltic Sea.

Ferries sail the waves between three ports in Germany and one in Poland, 24 hours each day, 365 days of the year and with a reliability of 99%. As there was in the past, there is once again a floating bridge that links the countries and peoples of the Baltic Sea. Regardless of whether the voyage involves a hollowed-out oak log, a dragon-prowed Viking ship, a Hanseatic cog or one of the largest railway ferries in the world.

Ingrid Wall, October 2012





Trelleborgs Hamn AB

Box 51, SE-231 21 Trelleborg

PHONE: +46 (0) 410 36 37 00

E-MAIL: trelleborgs.hamn@port.trelleborg.se

WEB: www.trelleborgshamn.se