

The creature from the Black Lagoon!

Josef Hultgren, the boy responsible for the water heating, has recorded some of his memories from Alebo Health Resort. One of his memories relates to the mud baths: "The patient was to lie or sit on a bench while the bath woman smeared the black mud all over the body. The patient was then to lie idle for a while until it was time for a shower and cleaning. A man with black beard and hair, who had been prescribed a mud bath, made a sensation one day. The bath woman Stava had left the bath room and apparently she stayed away longer than normal. Suddenly, a black figure rushed out into the corridor only dressed in mud, and continued out onto the veranda while shouting "Stava, Stava". A number of bath guests, mainly ladies, had assembled in the corridor and outside the building. The guests screamed and fled in different directions when the black 'monster' appeared. A lady from Halmstad fainted and had to be taken care of by the massage lady while Stava brought the man back to the bath.

**The Alebo spring continues to flow**

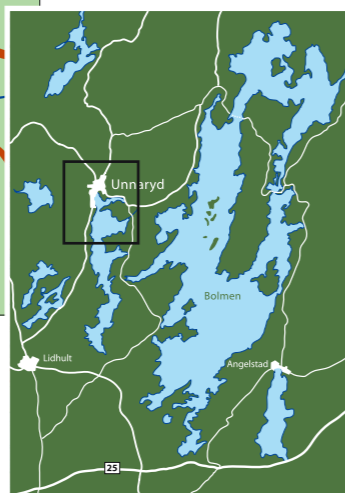
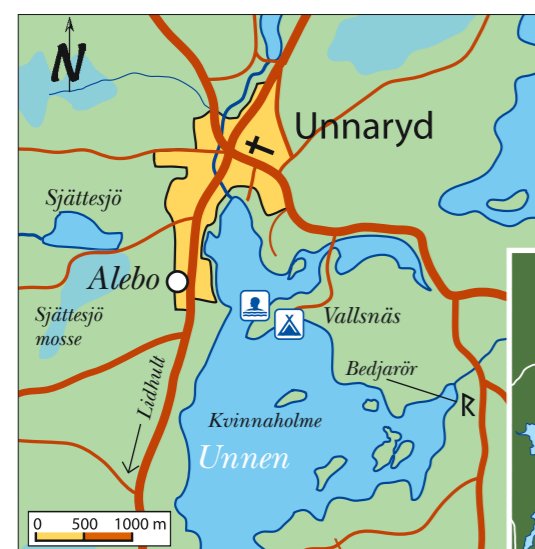
Alebo is still a calm and peaceful place. The spring flows day after day, year after year. At Alebo Inn guests are still welcome to enjoy the water. The Inn offers accommodation and food and drink. Canoes can be hired for those that wish to explore Lake Unnen. You can also swim and fish. In addition, there is a large hot-tub – an outdoor wooden bathtub with water heated by firewood. Such outdoor baths are especially pleasant when the air is cool in spring or autumn.

More reading!

About Alebo Inn:
www.alebo.se

GPS (RT 90 2.5 gon V)

Alebo Inn: 1361106 E,
6315516 N

**How to get there?**

Alebo is located on the outskirts of Unnaryd. Drive or walk from the centre of Unnaryd towards Lidhult and you will find Alebo Inn on the right side after a short distance. You may also reach Alebo by boat on Lake Unnen.

Illustration on cover: Alebo Inn. Photo: Bo Tegnäs. **Main sources of information:** "Alebo Brunns- och Badanstalt under delar av 1700- och 1800-talet" by Anita Kindstrand, published in "Södra Unnaryd-Jälluntofta Fornminnes- och Hembygdsförenings Årsskrift 1991"; "En flaska järnvatten från Alebo" by Erik Palm, published in "Södra Unnaryd-Jälluntofta Fornminnes- och Hembygdsförenings Årsskrift 1953"; Mette and Erik Dich, Alebo Inn. **Research:** Karin Tegnäs and Malin Ekvall. **Text:** Karin Tegnäs. **Bild Ångaren Vega:** Vykort från ca 1905. **Photo where there is no other indication:** Karin Tegnäs. **Drawing:** Willy Lindström. **Logotype:** Lars Lidman. Design: Tecknargården/Willy Lindström. **Production:** Naturbruk AB/Bo Tegnäs. **Project coordination:** Bitte Rosén Nilsson, Hylte kommun. **Copyright:** Naturbruk AB. **Year:** 2006.

The brochures "In the Wake of Ebbe Skammelson" are available on www.unnaryd.com and www.hylte.se

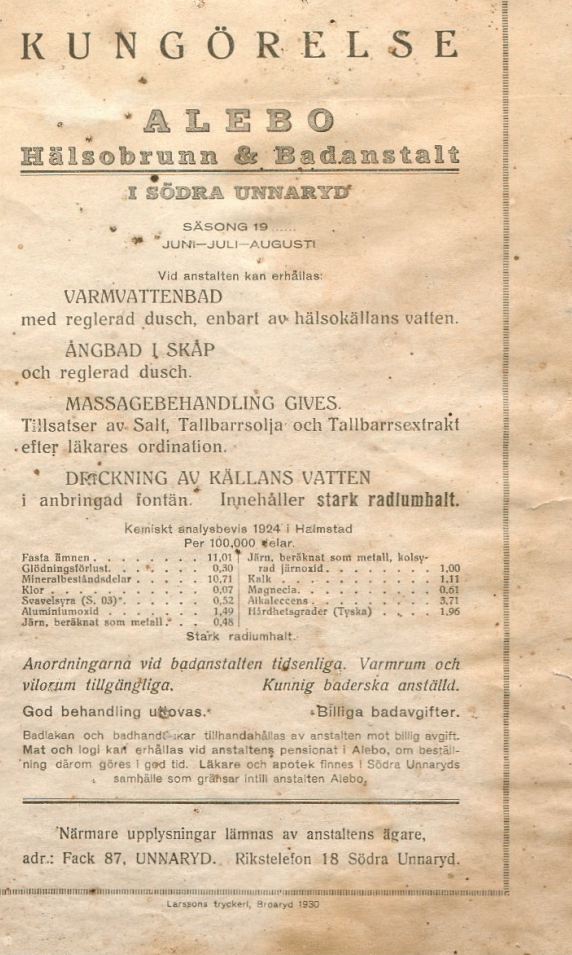


IN THE WAKE OF EBBE SKAMMELSON

"Although it may appear immature I still categorically believe, that throughout my life I have been accompanied by a drink that originates from deep underground back home. You may call it a spring with hidden secrets. You may call it whatever you like. Life from tree roots and water sources yielding life in man's root and man's veins. One is certain-there is joy, strength and healing powers in this drink. And iron. Then, why not simply call it the iron water of Alebo."

Erik Palm: "A bottle of iron water from Alebo". The Yearbook of Unnaryd – Jälluntofta Local Society for Cultural Heritage 1953 and 1993.





Alebo – an early focus for tourism in Unnaryd

Alebo was and still is very important in Unnaryd. In 1917, the Alebo was a health resort offering simplicity, tranquillity and pleasure. Visitors came in search of relaxation and improved health and strength.

is not fed by any major water courses but receives much of its water from a nearby bog, Sjättesjömosse. The stones in the lake are strongly coloured indicating that the water is very rich in minerals. Underground streams from Sjättesjö are said to be the origin of the Alebo spring.

The spring was known already in the 17th century

The spring was utilised long before Alebo became a health resort. There is evidence that it was known and used in the 17th century. A Danish coin from this time has been found in the spring. Several other very old coins have also been found. They are now displayed at the Bonads Museum in Unnaryd (bonads are traditional Swedish wall paintings). The fact that coins have been found confirms that the spring was used for offerings and worshipping in ancient times. Springs that were selected for such religious ceremonies usually had special properties. For centuries, people have believed that the iron water of Alebo spring was very special. Since time immemorial the spring has been regarded as a place of or with supernatural powers.

The bath house

Early on a dyeing facility was located where the bath house is located now. The house used for dyeing was obviously not well suited as a bath house so it was demolished and replaced in 1889. The hotel building was built in 1897. The bath house contained four rooms with bathtubs, two rooms with showers and one room for steam bath. There was yet another room for massage and a small room where the water was heated.

The water transport and heating

The room for heating the water contained two basins; the larger for cold water and

a smaller one for hot water. Pumps were not needed as the room with the basins was on the second floor and the water to the showers and bathtubs flowed due to gravity. As the spring was also located higher than the second floor of the bath house, there was also a gravity flow from the spring to the basins. The heating system was simple. There was a perforated pipe through which hot steam was let out in the basin for hot water. The steam was generated in a wood-fuelled boiler on the ground floor.

A ten-year old with responsibilities

In the late 19th century, Alebo Health Resort was owned by Gustav Hultgren. When his son, Josef Hultgren, reached the age of ten he became responsible for the heating. The work commenced at 3am. The water had to reach at least 60° C at the start of the bath at 8am. Failure to produce water, that was hot enough, resulted in an unpleasant meeting with Stava, the bath woman. In addition, Josef was responsible for bringing the massage woman to the resort by rowing boat every morning and taking her back home every afternoon. His duties also included running errands for the family or for guests.

The reputation about the Alebo iron water spread

The heyday of the Alebo Inn was between 1896 and 1899. The extraordinary water had achieved widespread fame. Many guests came, mostly from the Counties of Halland, Scania and Småland. In “A bottle of iron water from Alebo” by Erik Palm, the author tells about a wish he had as a child. As many others, the young Erik had heard about the wonderful properties of this drink. Therefore, he wished that his mother should bring a bottle for him. His hope was that, in case of difficult times, he would gain strength and courage from drinking a few sips of the water.

Drinking on a swing-plank cured those crippled with rheumatism

Medicinal spring water drinking took place in the mornings between 7am and 8am. A glass of water was served while guests were seated in pairs on a specifically

designed swing-plank. The theory was that the water would be more evenly distributed in the body if the guest was in motion while drinking. This practice would yield the best effect. The water was particularly famous for its strong ability to counteract anaemia and rheumatism. Many of the guests coming to Alebo suffered from these particular ailments. Crippled people returned home stronger and without pain after a couple of weeks’ treatment. A further development was when the drinking was combined with various types of healing baths. At 9am Dr. Essén arrived to his practice to receive patients for a couple of hours. He prescribed the number of glasses of water that each patient required as well as the kind of baths that were most suited. In addition massage and gymnastic treatments were offered.

The myth about the crutches

Crippled people coming to Alebo are said to have been effectively cured. According to myth, treated people who no longer needed their crutches, were told to put the crutches in a special space between the hotel rooms. Could it be true? There

Sjättesjö.



is still such a space in the hotel for which there is no logical explanation. But the space is now well covered by walls on all four sides and so far no one has dared to open and check what it may contain.....!

The two most popular baths: Bath in bathtub and mineral bath

In the “bath record” from 1889 and 1890, all guests were recorded with names, residential area, number of times they saw the doctor and the kinds of bath they enjoyed. They were offered a bath in a bathtub, mud bath, pine needle bath, steam cabin, salt bath and shower. Some guests spent more than 10 Crowns on baths, an amount that would correspond to something like 500 Crowns now. The bath in a bathtub was, by then, the most popular. The bath record of 1892 shows, that a mineral bath was introduced. It became very popular. Eight mineral baths would cost 4.20 Crowns, including the entrance fee of 1.25 Crowns. The records of 1897 and 1898 indicate that the doctor’s fee was two Crowns per guest. These records also served as the accounts and they are still kept at Alebo.

Dr. Essén’s journal

In 1897, Dr. Essén kept his own journal where he noted the diagnosis and how many glasses of water and what kind of baths he prescribed for the different patients. The prescription for a person suffering from both anaemia and rheumatism was two glasses of water, three salt baths and three steel baths as well as a follow-up visit to the Doctor. A steel bath was a bath in the spring water rich in iron at a temperature of at least 43° C. Dr. Essén’s journal is also kept at Alebo.

What is the real content of the water?

According to chemical analysis more recently, the spring water contains 19 mg of carbonated iron oxide per litre. It indicates an extremely high level of iron. Water with that level of iron cannot be used as drinking water in piped systems. The high iron content explains that the water tastes of iron and also why there are rust-coloured deposits wherever the water flows. Indeed the water deserves the name “iron water from Alebo”.

Anaemia is caused by low levels of haemoglobin; the protein that transports oxygen in the blood. The most common cause of anaemia is low intake of iron.

Rheumatism is an everyday term used as a collective description of various ailments that affect the skeleton and are associated with pain and limitation of the function of, for example, the limbs.

In 1930 it was announced that the water from Alebo spring was radioactive. This information to the public was made to attract even more people to the health resort. A similar announcement now would certainly not attract more visitors!

The healing water

In the late 19th century the local clergyman, Magnus Forsander, drank a bowl of water from the Alebo spring. According to local tradition it was Forsander’s discovery and confirmation of the healing properties of the water that paved the way for the healing baths and for Alebo Health Resort, later renamed Alebo Inn.

Originating from Sjättesjö

A large lake, Lake Fjällen, is located west of Unnaryd. This lake is fed with water through a small stream, Fjällabäcken, originating from a smaller lake called Sjättesjö. Sjättesjö is not far from Unnaryd, but still its surface is more than 20 metres higher than Lake Unnen. Sjättesjö



The steamboat Vega arrives at Alebo