

Landesmuseum Schleswig-Holstein in Schleswig, Germany

General Notes

The "Landesmuseum" (state museum) of the state of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, is an old castle or better palais called "**Schloss Gottorf**". It is situated on an "island" next to the town of Schleswig. It is a big affair, comprising the palais, many outbuildings, and a substantial baroque garden in the backyard:

Advanced



● It is "my" museum, so I will give it a bit more room than the others. It also holds a large part of the [Nydam treasure](#) and thus is of some importance to Iron, Steel and Swords.

▮ I can't summarize the history of the castle much better than Wikipedia, so here goes:

● "Gottorf Castle (German: Schloss Gottorf, Low German and Danish: Gottorp) is a castle and estate in the city of Schleswig, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. It is the ancestral home of the Holstein-Gottorp branch of the House of Oldenburg. It is situated on an island in the Schlei, about 40 km from the Baltic Sea. It was first settled as an estate in 1161 as the residence of Bishop Occo of Schleswig when his former residence was destroyed. The Danish Duke of Schleswig acquired it through a purchase in 1268, and in 1340 it was transferred to the Count of Holstein at Rendsburg of the House of Schauenburg. The manor later, through maternal inheritance, became the possession of Christian I of Denmark, the first Danish monarch from the House of Oldenburg, in 1459. Both the island and the structure were extended through the years, and particularly during the 16th century. Frederick I, younger son of Christian I, made it his primary residence. In 1544 the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were divided in three parts; Frederick's third son Adolf received one of these parts and made his residence at Gottorp. This state became known as the Duchy of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp. **The estate became a European cultural centre in the reign of Frederick III, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, (1597–1659).**

The castle was built by the famous Swedish architect Nicodemus Tessin the Younger (1697-1703). After the ducal lineage of Gottorp were forced to move out in 1702, the palace, now occupied by the Danish, fell into disuse and disrepair in 1713 under the reign of Frederick IV of Denmark. Pieces of furniture, art and other interior were gradually moved out of the palace, and the structures were used both as Danish and Prussian barracks in the 19th century. During World War II, the estate was used as a displaced persons camp. Since 1947, the palace has been renovated and restored through a series of efforts. The restoration was considered complete in 1996. The palace is now owned by a foundation of the State of Schleswig-Holstein and houses the State Art and Cultural History Museum and the State Archeological Museum."



View of the main building

Everything you expect in a castle-museum is there:

- Leaded windows looking out into a scenic courtyard:



The court yard

- Old family pictures showing rich persons (some of them really ugly), often romantically inclined



Some former castle resident

- Then there are "real" pictures, painted by famous artists, showing for example bare breasted females...



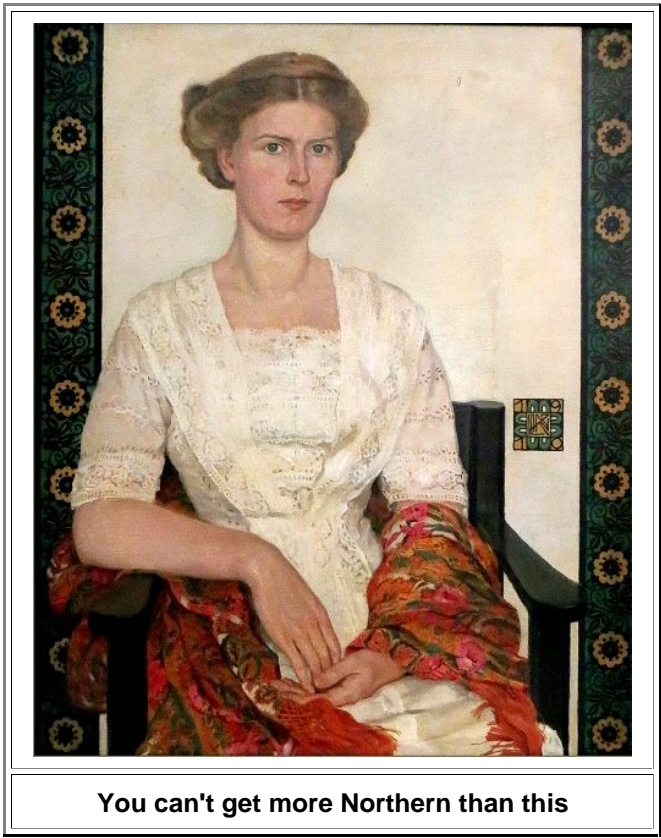
Lucretia; painted by Lucas Cranach (the younger) around 1540

... or fully dressed really ugly guys:



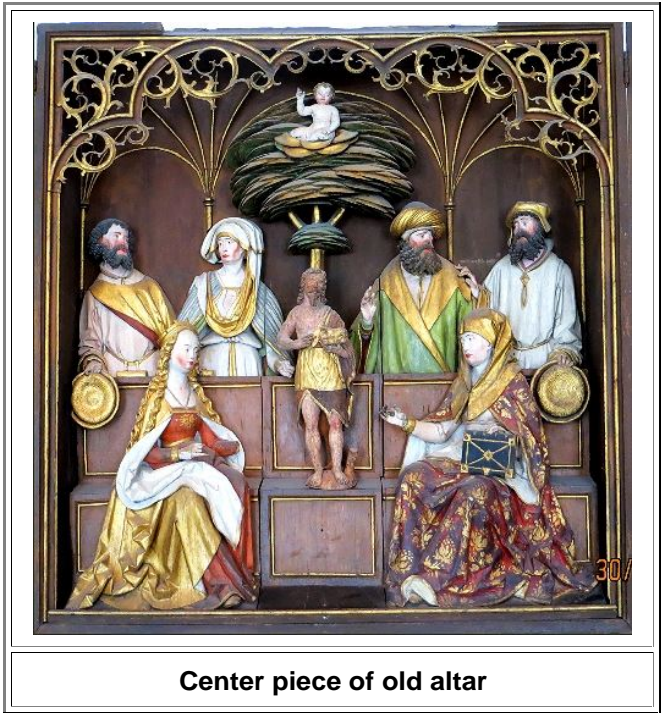
**John I, "the steady one", Elector of Saxony.
Painted around 1532 by Lucas Cranach (the elder)**

There is, of course, also plenty of more modern art (often by more local artists), showing, for example, North German (or better North European) folks

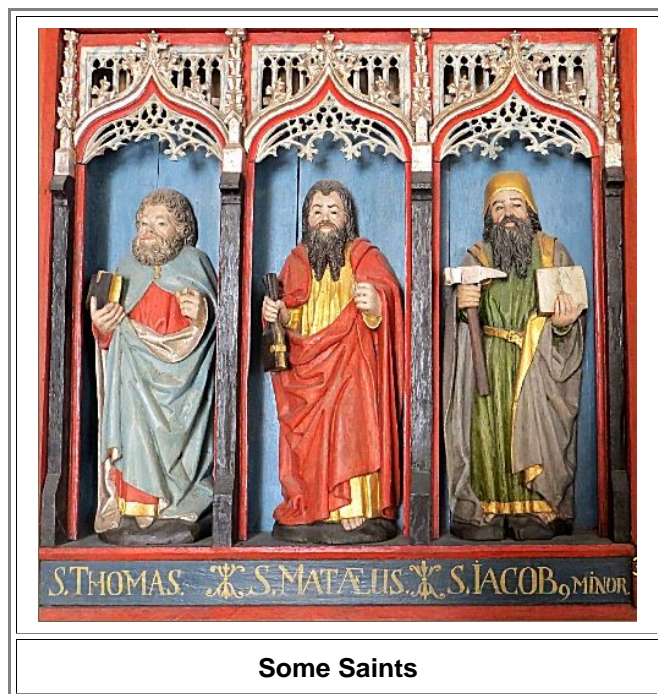


You can't get more Northern than this

Then there is a lot of old wood carvings, typically altars from churches:



Center piece of old altar



Some figures are rather old and a bit on the naive side. Here is a life-size "Saint George slaying the dragon". It's a she-dragon, obviously suckling some young ones (note the tits):



Mommy dragon doesn't want to be slain and pleads (unsuccessfully) to spare here life, it seems:



Don't kill me!

- Armed Saints tend to be self-righteous and not merciful, and the poor dragon was killed. I'm happy to report that at least one of her little ones found asylum in the nearby Schleswig cathedral:



Bench decoration in Schleswig cathedral

- ▀ If goes without saying that in a castle you find cannons, suits of armor, and everything else in this line:



Defending the castle

- ▀ I spare you the furniture, the china, the coin collection, the bric-a-brac, the special rooms like the baroque chapel, etc. The real highlights are:

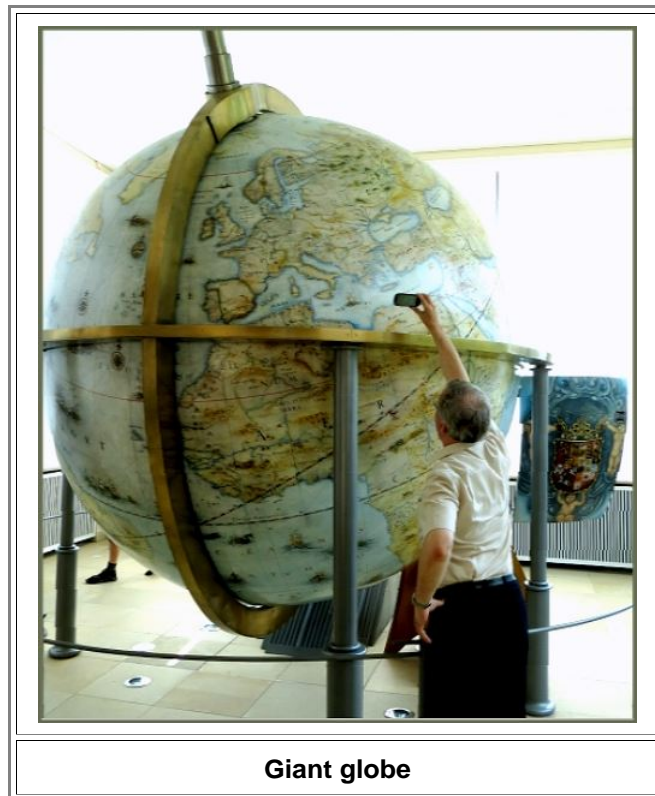
- **Bog bodies.** They date to the "iron age, i.e. roughly to 500 BC, and the bodies were partially well preserved in the acidic and oxygen free bog environment. The "Windeby I girl" shown below turned out to be a boy after DNA analysis became possible.



- Then we have the **Nydam boat.** This is the original boat that Conrad Engelhardt found in the [Nydam bog](#) around 1860. It is from the 4th century AD, just like the many pattern welded swords also found:



Not to forget: The Giant Globe of Gottorf, rebuilt in 2005. The original dates to 1650 and was world famous; it is now in St. Petersburg. It showed a map of the earth's surface on the outside, and a map of star constellations with astrological and mythological symbols on the *inside*. With a diameter of about 3 m it was huge - and about 12 people can actually *sit* inside, watching the heavenly objects move by. The globe was originally turned by an ingenious water power contraption and was a predecessor of the modern planetarium. If you ever go there - don't miss the ride!



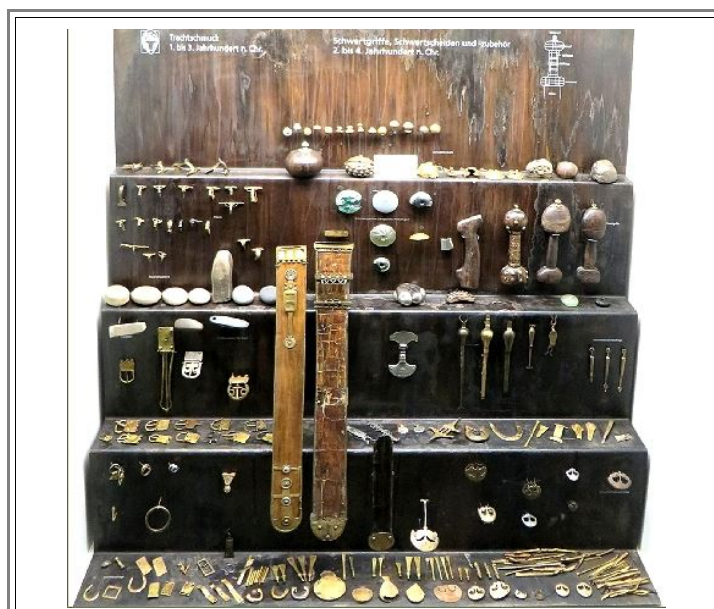
Giant globe

Iron, Steel and Swords in the Gottorf Castle Museum

Eschewing the usual junk always found in major "everything" museums - kitchen pots, medieval swords, Samurai swords, guns, etc. - we only look at the Nydam and Thorsbjerg treasure. That is the name given to the wealth of objects, including many pattern welded Roman swords from around 300 AD, that **Conrad Engelhardt**, an archaeology pioneer, dug up around 1860. The sensational stories that go with that are recounted [here](#) in some detail. The two bogs, just a few 10 km apart and not far from Schleswig, were chemically quite different. Thorsbjerg bog was acidic, completely destroying iron but preserving textiles, gold, and much other precious stuff. Nydam, in contrast, was (and still is) basic, preserving iron but dissolving organic stuff.

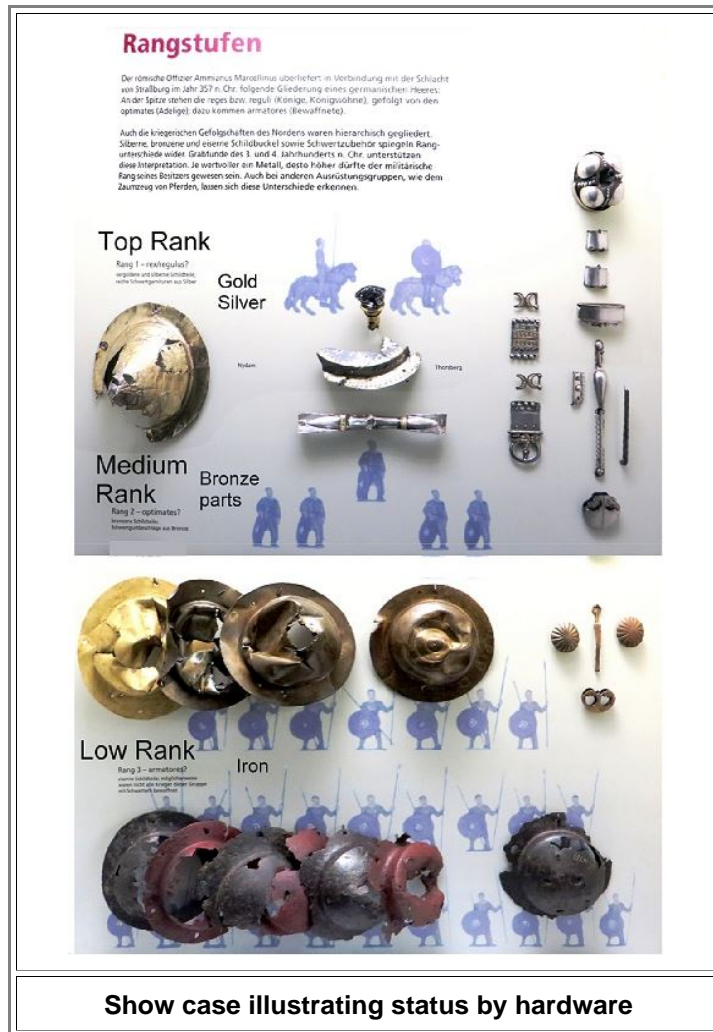
Of prime interest to us are the pattern welded swords from Nydam; they will be given much room in their [own chapters](#). In what follows I will just give a brief survey of what you find in the Gottorf castle museum.

There are many show cases displaying items of the treasure:



Show case with items from mostly Thorsbjerg bog.

- Other show cases consider a certain topic. The one in the next picture illustrates how the quality of certain hardware pieces changes with the rank of the owner, here shield buckles and belts:



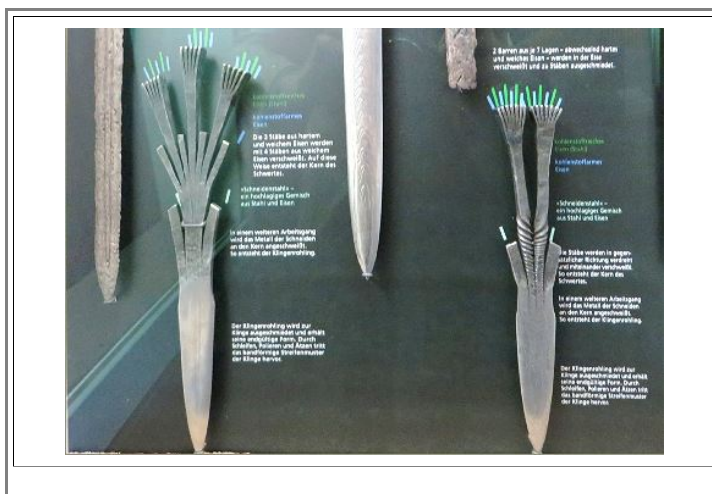
Show case illustrating status by hardware

- Then we have the precious silver / gold pieces like this mask of (presumably) an army leader. Note that like most of the pieces it has been ritually "killed", i.e. damaged before it was sacrificed:



Silver / gold mask of a high officer

Some cases demonstrate techniques; here pattern welding with straight and twisted "striped rods".



Then we have perfectly preserved **sword hilts** and scabbards or at least the chapes and other metal parts:



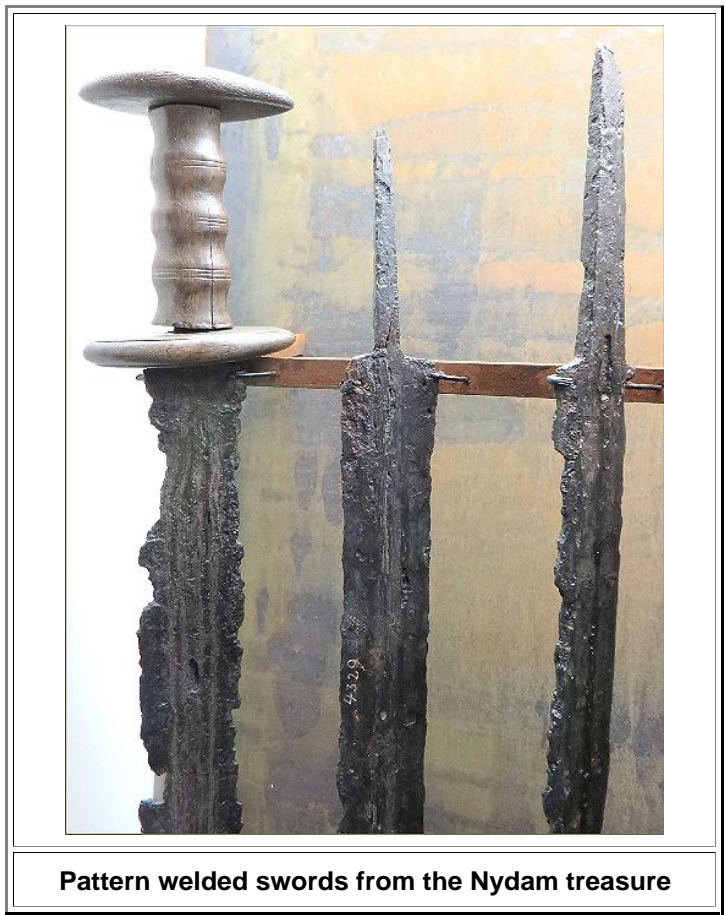
Sword hilts



And we have the pants of one of the guys; almost like new



Finally, there are all those pattern welded iron /steel swords. We will encounter many pictures of those in chapter 11, here is just a taste treat:



Pattern welded swords from the Nydam treasure

● I essentially skip the bronze swords - you find them in other modules - and the stone age stuff. I just give one more taste treat:



Bronze weapons found in female graves!

By now you are probably I thinking: "this is supposed to be a critical museum guide. I haven't read anything critical so far - in contrast to what I found about other museums". Right. So what are the critical points?

- The labeling of the objects, while maybe a bit better than the average, could still be improved upon.
- What one reads is essentially correct and not too far behind the present state of .the art. Damage to sword blades, for example, may not only have resulted from a fight (shown and described in detail) but also from "ritual killing" (not described).
- Some artifacts (like a Japanese sword) have been polished (apparently with emery paper) and thus have also been "ritually killed" - albeit in modern times.