

Hallandsås – An Interesting Geological Feature Near Where my Wennström Ancestors Lived

By Burks Oakley II
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Introduction

My mother was Grace Florence Brorström (1916-2000). All four of her grandparents were Swedes who immigrated to America in the 1880's. One of her grandmothers was Bernhardine Wennström (1855-1932), and Bernhardine's father was Nils Wennström (1815-1914). Nils was born in Tåssjö, in northern Skåne County, Sweden. As an adult, he moved with his family to Menlösa, in southern Halland County (*Hallands Län* in Swedish). He is buried in the church cemetery in nearby Hasslöv. A striking geological feature of this region is the Hallandsås, which translates as Hallands Ridge.



View of the Hallandsås (Hallands Ridge) from Menlösa.

Several of my cousins on the Wennström side of my family still live in Hasslöv and Menlösa. The view from my cousin Anders' farm in Menlösa is dominated by the Hallandsås in the distance.



View looking south from the back deck of Anders' house in Menlösa.



Panoramic view looking south from Anders' sheep farm.

The Hallandsås also can be seen from the property where Nils Wennström lived.



View of the Hallandsås from Nils Wennström's property.

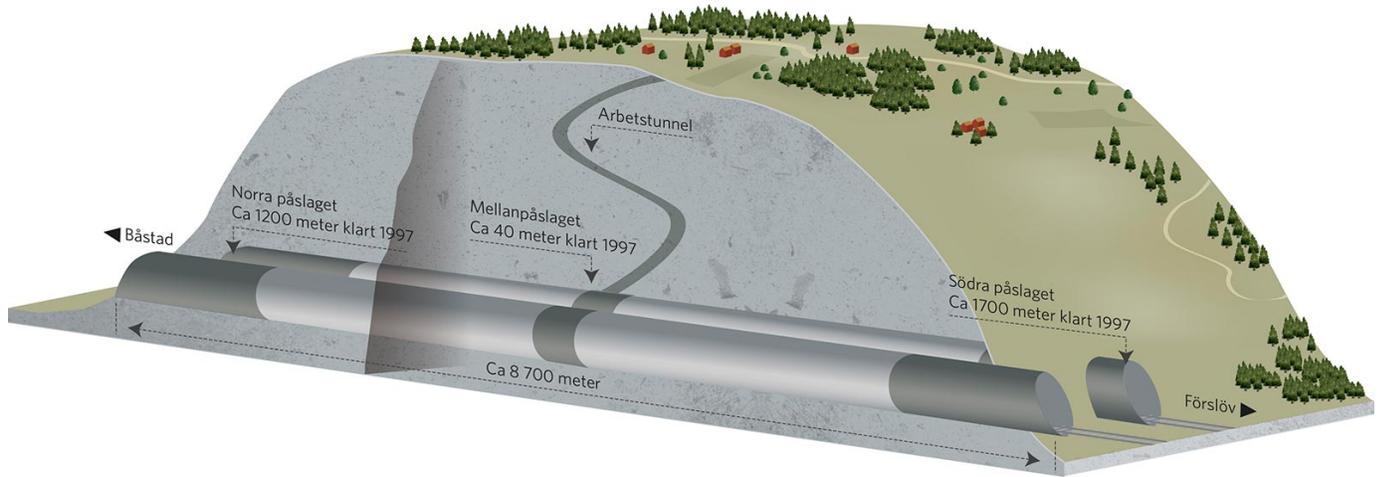


Nils Wennström's house in Menlösa.

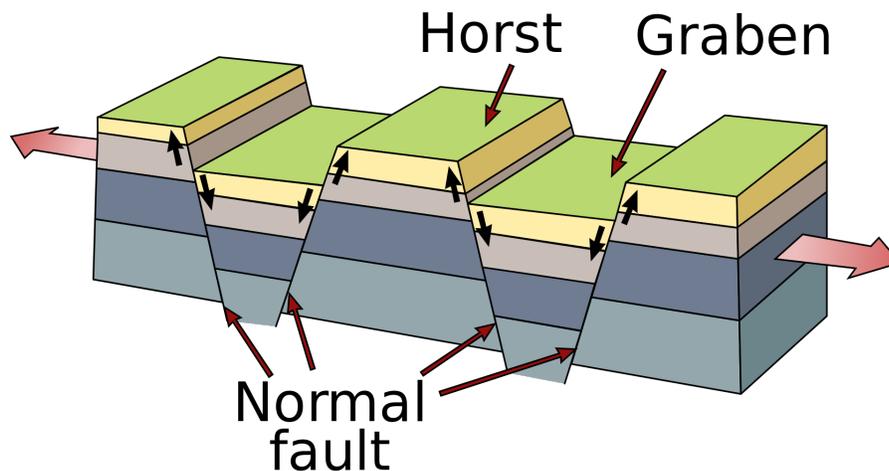
Near my cousin Anders' farm, on the Hallandsås, is a farm called *Lilla Menlösa* (Little Menlösa), which Nils Wennström's brother Andreas built in 1877. Andreas Wennström was the *farfar* of my cousin Barbro Wennström Blomberg's father. So the Wennström family has been in this specific area for many generations.

About the Hallandsås

There are a number of online illustrations showing the Hallandsås, since they recently (2015) completed twin train tunnels THROUGH this ridge.



According to Wikipedia, the Hallandsås is a “horst”.



Schematic showing a horst, which is a raised fault block.

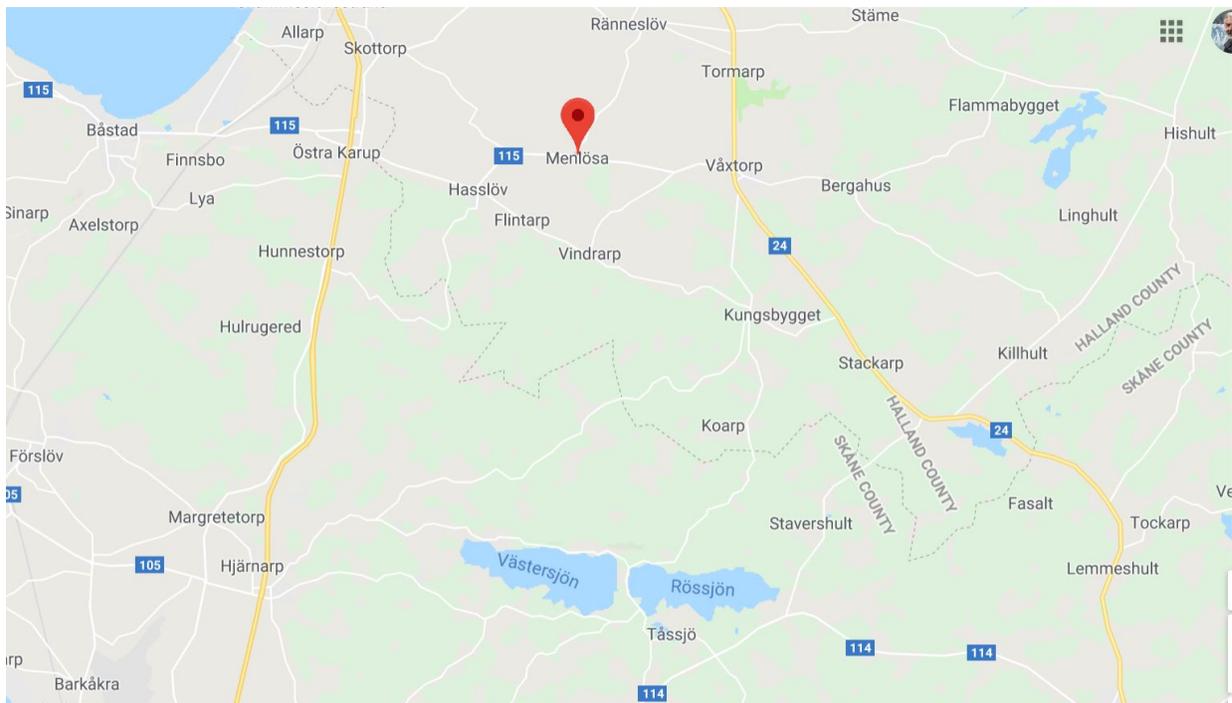
In physical geography and geology, a horst is a raised fault block of the Earth's crust that has lifted, or has remained stationary, while the land on either side has subsided.

The Hallandsås extends over the central part of this map (the dark green):



Satellite view of the Hallandsås area.

The Hallandsås straddles the border between Skåne County to the south and Halland County to the north (dotted line in the map below).



The Hallandsås area from Google Maps.

The E6/E20 motorway runs along the west coast of Sweden, connecting Malmö in the south with Gothenburg in the north. In the northern part of Skåne County, the motorway passes OVER the Hallandsås.



View looking south on the E6/E20 motorway. Note that this is the exit for Våxtorp, where Bernhardine Wennström was born in 1855.

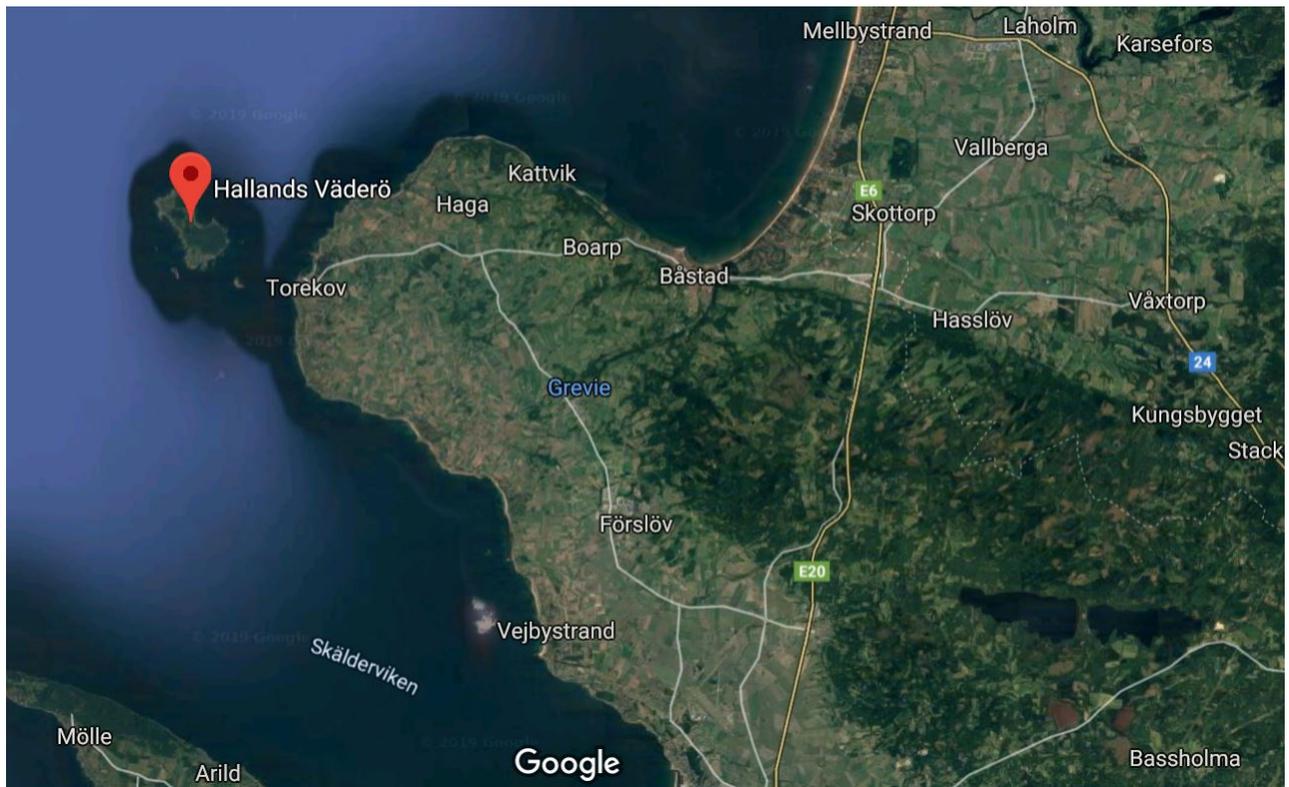


View looking south on the E6/E20 motorway.

Hallandsås in Swedish Mythology

My cousin Eva, who lives ~40 km north of the Hallandsås in Halmstad, sent me a story about the Hallandsås from Swedish mythology. She wrote:

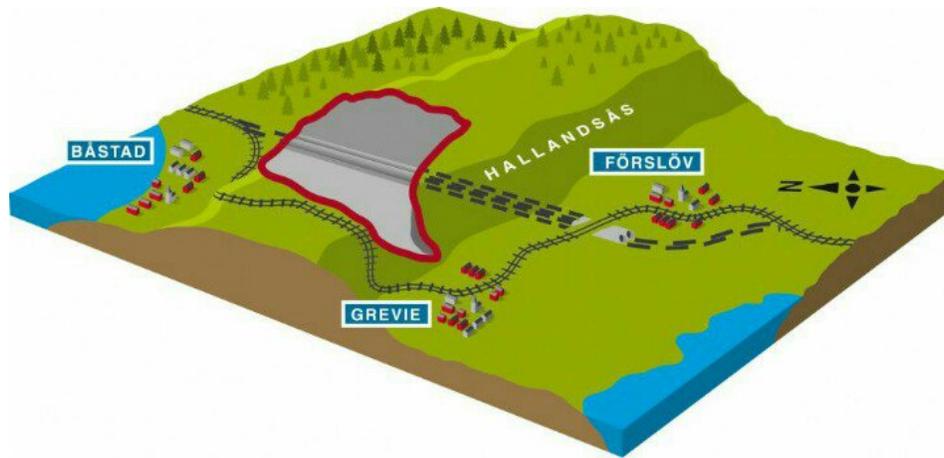
The story says that two giants lived far up in Småland. Then once they had a fight and one of them took all his belongings and his land and stuffed it into a sack. Then he took the sack on his back and embarked on a hike. There was a hole in the sack, and everything ran out, and so it became Hallandsås. When he came to the sea, he sat down to rest and he noticed that the bag was almost empty. He then became so angry and threw the whole bag out into the sea. It became Hallands Väderö, the island off the coast of the Bjäre peninsula near Torekov.



Satellite view of the Hallandsås and the Bjäre peninsula, showing the location of Hallands Väderö.

The Hallandsås Train Tunnel

The twin-bore Hallandsås Tunnel (*Hallandsåstunneln* in Swedish) connects the northern and the southern sides of the Hallandsås geological formation.



Schematic diagram of the Hallandsås Tunnel.

Constructing these tunnels was no simple task. One bore is 28,615 feet in length (5.42 mi), while the other bore is 28,576 feet (5.41 miles) in length.

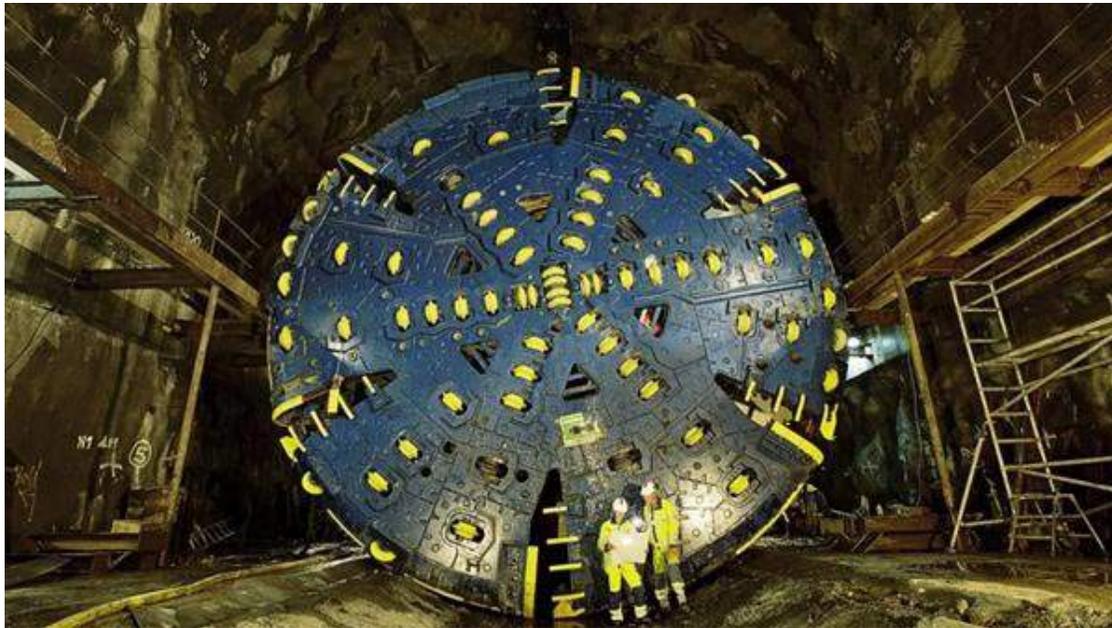


Inside the Hallandsås tunnel.

The project was troubled by construction difficulties caused by groundwater ingress, and a scandal when dangerous sealant materials were used improperly,

sickening workers and killing local fish and cattle. These difficulties caused the project to be halted from late 1997 to 2005 and resulted in large cost over-runs. The total cost ended up being over SEK 10.5 billion (approximately 1.25 billion USD).

The project was finished in December 2015, over 23 years after start of construction. The tunnels are the longest tunnels in Sweden.



The boring machine used in the construction of the Hallandsås Tunnel.

There are 19 emergency cross-passages between the two tunnels every 500 m (1,640 ft). These were bored and lined separately, a process completed in February 2014.

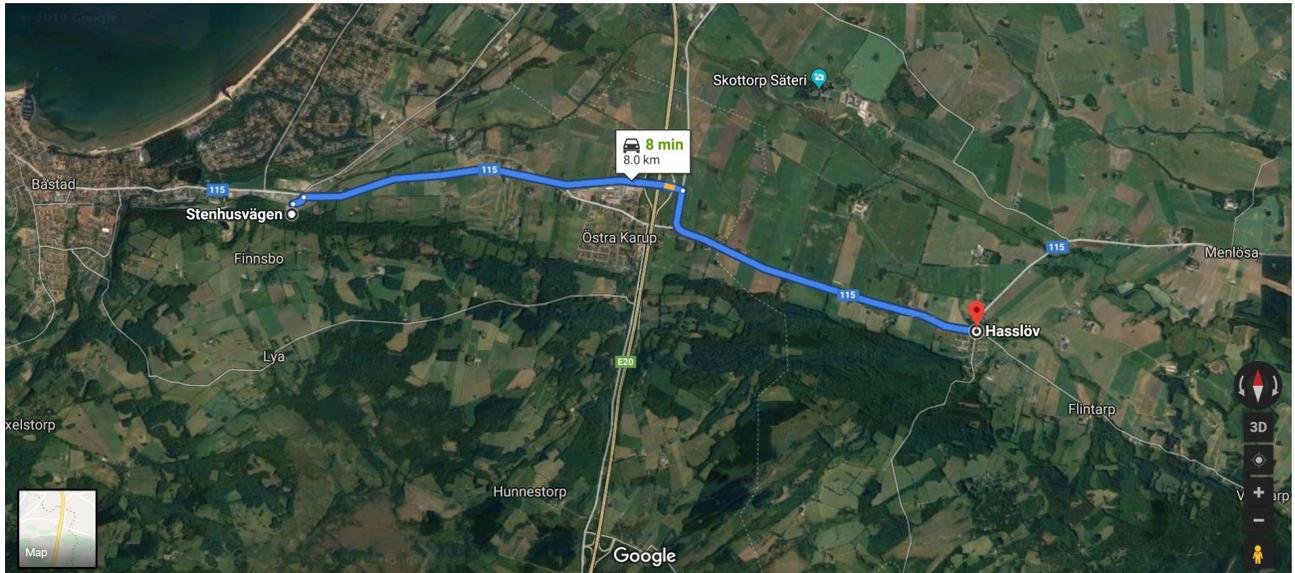
The twin-bore tunnel was part of a project to eliminate one of the remaining single-track bottlenecks on the west coast trunk line between Göteborg and Malmö, replacing a steeply-graded route over the Hallandsås (Hallands Ridge). The project was financed in part by the EU as part of the Trans-European Transport Network. Completion of the second track boosted the capacity from four to 24 trains per hour, while the easier gradients now allow heavier loads for freight trains using the route.



The north portal of the Hallandsås tunnel.



Satellite view of the north portal of the Hallandsås Tunnel.



Hasslöv, where Nils Wennström is buried, is just 8 km from the northern portal of the Hallandsås Tunnel.

Several days before tunnels were first used in November 2015, the Swedish State Railways (SJ) operated a vintage train pulled by two steam locomotives on the old set of tracks. Here is a YouTube video showing a modern class X55 train passing the old train in the town of Grevie, at the western end of the Hallandsås.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icHzlLqb_9o

I guess that the train buffs really liked the old single-track line over the Hallandsås, which dated to 1885. Here is a YouTube video of a train crossing the Hallandsås on that single track.



<https://youtu.be/9JViMyiohb8>

This certainly is quite different than the new double-track through the tunnels. On the old track, the trains could only go 70-80 kph. In the new tunnels, the trains can go 200 kph.

Nils Wennström and the Hallandsås

Nils Wennström was born in 1815 in a house northwest of Tåssjö, right in the middle of the Hallandsås. On 13 May 2019, I visited this location with my Swedish cousin Eva and her husband Sterner.



The site of the house (no longer there) where Nils Wennström was born.

The location where Nils Wennström was born is very close to the border between Skåne County and Halland County.

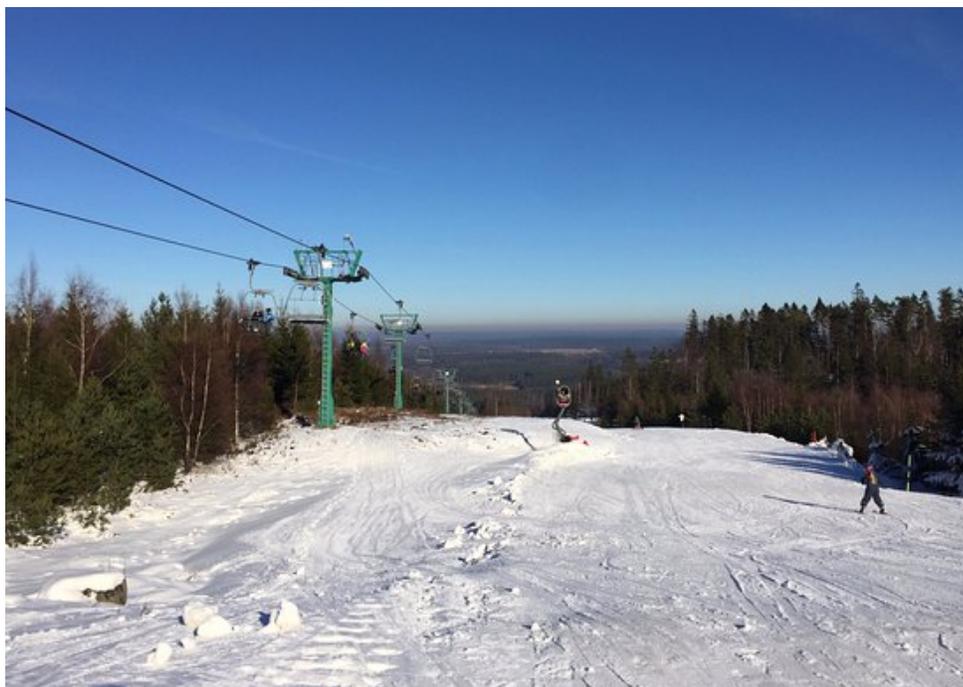


In Skåne County, looking into Halland County.



Across the road in Halland County, looking into Skåne County.

And interestingly, the location where Nils Wennström was born is very close to the Vallåsen ski resort, which takes advantage of the height of the Hallandsås for winter skiing.



Vallåsen ski resort, looking northeast into Halland County.

A few kilometers southwest of the Vallåsen ski resort is the highest point of the Hallandsås (226 m above sea level), which is called Högalteknall.¹

The Hallandsås in the Late 17th Century

In older times, the Hallandsås was noted for being a dangerous route for travelers, who often were robbed by people in the area. The “Snapphane” guerrilla movement of the late 17th century operated out of the woods on the horst. A *snapphane* was a member of a pro-Danish guerrilla organization that fought against the Swedes in the Second Northern and Scanian Wars, primarily in the eastern Danish provinces (which now are southern Sweden). Many pro-Danish guerrilla fighters referred to themselves as *friskydter* (volunteer militiamen).

Even during the 19th century, travelers over the Hallandsås were assaulted by robbers in the forests. Travelers stayed at inns on each side of the Hallandsås until they formed a large enough group to cross over the ridge safely.

Conclusion

When I have been at the Nils Wennström house in Menlösa, I always have been impressed by the beautiful view of the ridge to the south – which I now know is the Hallandsås. I’ve gone over the Hallandsås in a car on the E6/E20 motorway, and also over the Hallandsås by car on some back roads. I’ve gone through the Hallandsås in the train tunnel a number of times now. And how nice that I can associate this interesting geography with my Swedish ancestors!

¹ <https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Högalteknall>