

# THE HISTORY *of Iggesunds Bruk*

*Igesund is associated with white paperboard. But the village wasn't always known for paperboard products. Far back in its history, its industrial base wasn't even timber.*

Igesund Paperboard has its origins in the forests outside Hudiksvall in mid-Sweden, in the small industrial village of Iggesund.

The community has a long, varied history. As far back as the mid-16th century there were minor industries in and around Iggesund. These days the village is associated with white paperboard, but paperboard production wasn't introduced at the mill until the early 1960s.

One man who was there during the expansive developments of the 1960s and '70s is Lars G Sundblad, who led the development and modernisation of Iggesunds Bruk between 1956 and 1984.

"It was the late '50s when the food industry started changing radically," he says.

Self-service supermarkets replaced old-fashioned grocery stores where customers were served over the counter. As supermarkets developed, demands on packaging grew. Packages needed to do more than simply contain the product. They needed to be hygienic and attractive to buyers.

Packaging took on new significance, giving Iggesund the opportunity to cultivate demand for bleached board. Previously, the demand had been for paperboard made of ground wood pulp covered with a layer of bleached cellulose. This material was not suitable for food products.

"I had travelled in America and studied developments there," Sundblad says. "I realised that bleached board was the material of the future, primarily in the food industry."

Igesund was one of the first three manufacturers in the world to acquire a modern paperboard machine. The other two were in Australia and the United Kingdom. When Iggesund started up production in 1963, personnel travelled to Australia to learn techniques of making paperboard.



A transport boat leaves ore at the wharf in Iggesund. The picture is from early 1890.

"It was a very exciting time. After a while, demand for bleached board started picking up among the graphics industry and tobacco companies," says Sundblad, who has had a major influence on developments during his years at Iggesund.

Sundblad followed in the footsteps of his father, Gunnar Sundblad, who ran the company for 35 years. He helped found the first cellulose factory in Iggesund in 1916. A few years later, in 1921, at 25 years of age, he was appointed managing director of the factory. In 1956 he handed over the reins to his son.

But Iggesunds Bruk enjoyed a rich industrial life much earlier than that. Isak Breant Sr, a businessman and former court commissioner to Queen Kristina, established the mill in 1685. Iggesund was originally an ironworks, and the nearby forests were used to produce charcoal for the factory – the



The Iggesund River was important for transportation. This is what Iggesunds' iron mill looked like in 1897.

## *The first sawmill at Iggesunds Bruk, in 1869, signalled a major transformation.*

only profitable way to use the forests in those days. The ore was transported to Iggesund from mines in Uppland and from Utö in the Stockholm archipelago. The iron bars were then produced at Iggesunds Bruk. The Iggesund River played an important transportation role in the village and provided power for the machines.

In 1771, Iggesund Bruk acquired a small nearby company that made paper, Östanå paper mill. It was a progressive company, and one of the first in the world to try to use sawdust and wood to produce paper. However, the technique remained experimental. The mill burnt down in 1842.

In 1869, Baron Gustav Tamm became the owner of Iggesunds Bruk, and built a large sawmill. It was a major transformation for the factory, which had always been a small, traditional ironworks.

The sawmill represented Iggesund's first step into the world of modern forest products, and the beginning of the modern forest industry. The initiative created jobs for people in the area, but the work was hard – almost everything was done by hand using simple tools, as there were no machines.

The “sawmill period” of the Swedish forest industry was a hectic time. In Iggesund, a power station was built in the middle waterfall in the Iggesund River to supply energy to

the sawmill, and a saw-blade factory was established.

Business boomed, attracting new labour to Iggesund, which in turn gave rise to a demand for more housing, schools and meeting places. Thus the community of Iggesund grew.

The forestry work demanded manpower, and the work was heavy. Trees were felled by hand with handsaws and axes. The logs were laid up in large piles, and remained there until it snowed. The only way of transporting the heavy logs was by horse and sled, and this could only be done when the land was snow-covered.

The timber was taken to the nearest watercourse, where it was loaded onto the ice. When spring came and the ice melted, the logs could be floated downstream for sorting.

At the end of the 19th century the focus was on renewal, which included installing a mechanical pulp mill in Iggesund.

The foundation for today's Iggesund was laid when the cellulose factory was built early last century.

“I worked at Iggesund for over 30 years, and the entire period was an exciting one. The main challenge was the constant high demands placed on the paperboard. This required technical innovative thinking, which produced excellent results, and still does today,” Lars G Sundblad concludes.