



WELCOME TO THE

Sandby church

CHURCHES ON ÖLAND

If you live on an island, you must be able to sail. Living by the Southern Baltic Sea has brought extensive contacts with the nations to the South.

Already in the Viking Age, the change of religion became obvious on Öland, not least because Christian graves began to appear on the village burial sites. The first churches were built during the 11th century, using wood and stave technique. A few scattered stave church planks still remain. Monuments engraved with runes have withstood the ravages of time and are preserved in six churches.

During the 12th century, 34 stone churches were built here. Soon after that, seven chapels were added at fishing villages and trading places. The earliest churches had windows and porches facing both the North and the South. A few even had a tower at the West end, and if so there would also be a porch there. Around each church, a burial place was provided for the dead and a stone wall surrounded the holy place. These churchyards are still in use.

In the 13th century and the Middle Ages many churches were provided with secular top floors and to almost half of them, a tower was added at the East End as well. The church buildings served as places for worship as well as storage space and for overnight accommodation. The role of the church during the Middle Ages shows how the church and the world went hand in hand. The following centuries saw only interior changes to most of Öland's churches.

They were provided with arches and sometimes with new quires or porticos. Following the Reformation, new demands were made on church buildings. Preferably, the congregation should be seated, but the small medieval churches were short of space. Additions widened many churches, but towards the end of the 18th century, the thought of new buildings gained ground.

The churches on Öland have very few medieval artefacts. Numerous wars and the ravages by the Danes in 1677 left little behind. Today only one medieval church on Southern Öland is preserved intact. In another three, medieval rooms have survived. Seven churches have medieval towers.

Today's churches preserve ideals of style and function from the 18th and 19th century hall churches. The seated congregation listens to the service and sings together. Large windows make it easy to read from the Hymnal and the sermon spreads the Word throughout the entire building. Modern churches are gradually adapted to modern forms. Flexibility, participation and even technology make demands. On Southern Öland, one church has been adapted to modernity while preserving its medieval structure – the Church of Ventlinge.

The Sandby Church

Like most churches on Öland, the church at Sandby has a thousand years old history. Flat gravestones, once part of a Viking Age burial monument, are preserved in the church yard. The first stone church was built next to the farming village, a little way from the Baltic Sea and a small port.

During the Middle Ages, towers were added at the East and the West ends as well as a high top floor for secular use. In the 1780s, the interior arches and pillars as well as the East tower and the secular top floor were knocked down. The West tower was given a wooden wall towards the East. This was not altogether successful and there were plans to amalgamate this parish with its neighbour, Gårdby, to the North. It was however decided to build a new church, which was completed in 1863: a light and spacious hall church with some aspects of Gothic architecture. The parish vicarage is appreciated as a summertime campsite for Latvian youth.



THE SANDBY CHURCH

A WALK IN THE CHURCH YARD

The Rune Stones

The rune stones are situated in the church yard on the South side of the church. They originate from the 11th century, when they were made to be gables of a so-called Eskilstuna coffin. In 1741, when Carl von Linnaeus visited Sandby, they were erected in the church yard, having previously been pictured as floor stones in the church. These stones are twins, made by the same rune

carver. One of them was erected by a mother and her two sons to commemorate her husband, and the other stone was later erected by the same sons over their mother and a sister. It is assumed that the reason why two stones were erected was that the sister, Åfrid, was not the daughter of the mother, Helgum, but of the father, Sven, from an earlier marriage.



The Old Grave Slabs

North of the rune stones there are three grave slabs. Two of them lie next to one another, close to the end of the central aisle, Southwards from the church. The southernmost of the paved graves has a lid; it is a so-called tumba grave.



The Patriarchal Cross

The cross made of stones standing on edge is found to the East of the church. It was discovered in 1960 by the then caretaker, John Berglund, while cutting the grass. John Larsson, the Representative for the Director-General of the Central Board of the Swedish National Antiquities, from South Sandby stopped the intention to remove the stones, since he realised they had been put there deliberately. The place was excavated by the then Curator KG Petersson, but no other discove-

ries that could explain the place or the history of this cross were made. Maybe it is a dedication cross, intended to sanctify the place where the first church at Sandby was to be built. There are details on the cross that bring to mind the possibility that it could be an image of a processional cross used in the East-Roman Church. The original cross is protected and marked by new added stones. (Information from the old parish register (1972) held by the local cultural society.)



WELCOME INSIDE

The Reredos

The first thing to catch your eye in this softly coloured church is probably the "new" (1865/1889) reredos: "Let the Children Come to Me!" which replaced the old one in the 1860-built church. It was painted by Gustaf Ljungqvist at Korsnäs, Östergötland, a priest who also painted reredoses. It would be easy to assume that this reredos dates from a considerably later period, given its light colouring

and the image of Christ with the children on his lap and the mothers all around. We see it as the light and joy of our church. The old reredos from 1794, found on the South wall, was made by the local painter Jonas Berggren. It shows a much darker aspect of the life of Jesus, the night spent in Gethsemane, and thus that too has its own proper place to fill.

The Quire Chandeliers

Originating from the same year as the reredos, the chandeliers arise magnificently either side of the altar. The altar round was made in the same year by the Master Painter A. Th. Lindeman, Söderåkra.

The Quire Carpet

The beautiful quire carpet in well-matched colours was designed by the parishioner, Nursery School Teacher and Artist Gunnel Ohlsson. She was assigned the task by the then serving priest, Bo Hallberg (who cared greatly for local volunteers,) in connection with redecoration of the church interior in the 1980s. Her neighbour, Greta Abrahamsson, did the weaving. Gunnel was sometimes invited to come and see if it worked out as she had imagined. If your thoughts are led to catching fish, you are on the right lines. That reference works well,

The Organ

The organ was built in 1876 by the company P L Åkerman och Lund in Stockholm. It had 10 stops with one console. It was rebuilt in 1948 by Frederiksborg's Organ Builders, Hilleröd, Denmark and extended by 17 stops divided into two consoles. The entire pipe material from the old organ was reused. The fascia and the organ case from

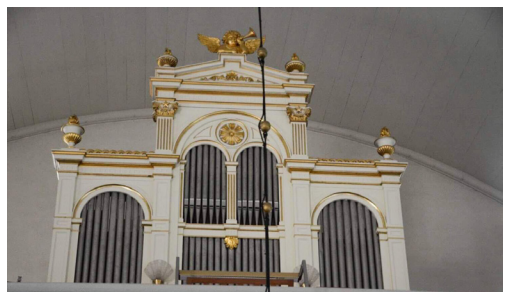


both with regard to the people of this area and to the words of Jesus.

The Candle Bearer

The opportunity to light a candle as you enter a church is very important to many visitors. Our beautiful candle bearer in the shape of a stylized tree was designed by a previous Caretaker and Artist, Anne Wilks. She allowed Lars Jaensson at Skogsby to produce it in memory of his father, who died 1987. It was inaugurated in 1992.

1876 also remain, but an electrical blower has been added. The console is free-standing just as it was on the old organ.



The Baptismal Font

The oldest item in the church is the baptismal font, which was imported from Gotland in the early 13th century. At the building of the new church, it was probably moved out into the church yard where it stood for a long time, turned upside down and serving as the foundation for a sundial before being returned into the porch in 1928. It was renovated in 1939 and given its current place.



The Votive Ship

The Sandby church votive ship was stolen in 1996. It had been made by a local sailor from the area some time before 1890. It was decided to make a new ship within the parish. The start-off material was the hull of a boat, cut in one piece of wood by an boatswain from Gårdby. The manager of the Öland Cultural Association, Anders Nilsson, was appointed as an expert to draw the rig. Eight people worked for about a year to complete this model of a three-masted barque from the latter half of the 19th century.

Manual Bell-Ringing

The bells of the Sandby church were rung manually right up until the year 2000. On Saturday evening, it was rung at 18.00 hours for prayers to begin Sunday in the summer and 15 minutes before sunset in the winter. Only the large bell was used unless it was a

major feast. Then both bells would be rung. According to the book *Ölands klockor* (The Bells of Öland) the death toll was rung the day after a death, different for a man or a woman. Nowadays the death toll is rung in connection with the Saturday Vespers ringing.

A Prayer

Carry me slowly, step by step
across the hard and frozen field.

Carry me carefully to my bier.

Nothing else remains.

Illuminate me with your eyes,
the only light I have.

Mean and cold it seems sometimes,
warm me with your Father's hand.

Anxiety haunts this earth,
calm me with your words.

Nothing else I ask,
but to be always near you.

Amen

Henning West, the last Vicar of Sandby.

Henning West, Sandby församlings siste kyrkoherde

This church is one of 19 churches in the Joint Parish of Southern Öland. It is situated in the Parish of Norra Möckleby - Sandby - Gårdby.

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Svenska kyrkan södra Öland

