



Welcome to the
Mörbylånga 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. 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 Mörbylånga church

The Mörbylånga church is situated on the Litorina wall, very close to the Kalmar Sound. The church with its vicarage is situated at the centre of the farming village of Mörbylånga. Rune stones tell the story of a church from the late Viking Age. The medieval stone church, built in the 12th century, was an ordinary church with a nave, quire and semi-circular apse. The tower, which was added at the West end in 1209, has many vaulted chambers. A staircase in the wall leads to the top room.

The church suffered badly during the Danish wars in the 17th century. The bells were taken in robbery in 1611 as well as in 1677. During the 18th century the size of the church gradually became too small. In 1811 everything except the tower was pulled down and a new church was built and dedicated in 1812. In the 1930s the current interior was created by turning the sacristy behind the altar into a new quire and building a new sacristy on the North side.

The church is situated at the centre of the old village and is surrounded by the church school, the parish hall and the former vicarage. At the turn of the millennium in 2000 the Architect Jerk Alton and the Mörbylånga Artist Sven Bertil Svensson collaborated to create the current modern church interior.



VÄLKOMMEN TILL MÖRBYLÅNGA KYRKA

Welcome inside

The porch, which is the oldest part of the church, has become a meeting place where coffee is served after Mass. You can see a staircase leading up into the tower on the South wall, and the holes for the bell-ropes from the days when the bells were rung manually also remain. Going up the steps straight ahead takes you into the church itself. During the renovation, at the turn of the millennium, the space below the gallery was re-designed to include a bridal chamber on the South side and a disabled toilet and a kitchenette on the North side.



The Rune Stone

Behind the last pew you can see a rune stone from the latter half of the 11th century, which was found in the church yard in 1960. It was originally erected in memory of Säfos and his four sons. There is a description and interpretation close by the stone.



Sven-Bertil Svensson

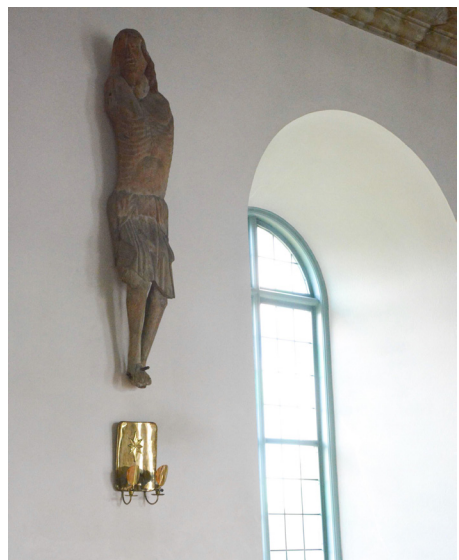
Sven-Bertil Svensson is a well-known painter and drawing artist, born at Räpplinge and living at Mörbylånga. His paintings can be found in many churches in this country and is a renowned church artist. Most of his works can be found in the Mörbylånga church. Opposite the rune stone there is a painting by Sven-Bertil Svensson entitled "The last Judgement," illustrating the 4th chapter of the Revelation to John: In a vision, St John sees the heavens open and he becomes part of the heavenly liturgy. He beholds the glory of God, both in the image of the Lamb that was slaughtered, Christ himself, and in the image of Christ in all his holiness, seated on the throne of glory, surrounded by the four living creatures. The left lower half of the image presents the glory of heaven – paradise.



On the right side is the kingdom to which the devil has been thrown down with all his fallen angels. Do read the Book of Revelation chapter 4! It will help you to recognize the details in the painting. The painting is constructed in accordance with the classical iconographic tradition.

The Triumphal Crucifix

The remains of a medieval triumphal crucifix hangs on the North wall. It is made from hardwood and was found during a renovation in 1931. The cross itself and the arms are missing, as well as all traces of colour. Once it was probably rich in detail, but inadequate storage over time has taken its toll, thus creating this sculpture, well worth reflecting on.



Baptism

During the latest renovation several pews were removed in order to create space for the choir and for lesser services. Here you also find the baptismal font, cut in Öland stone. A dove, made of gilded metal, hangs above it.



The Quire

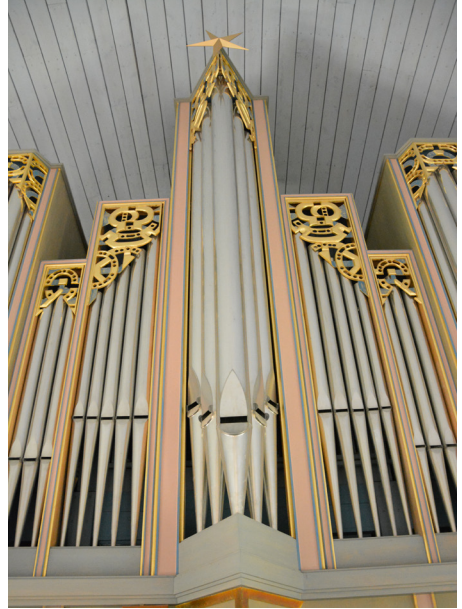
The pulpit, which now hangs to the North of the quire, was made in the mid-18th century. During the 1931 renovation, when the old sacristy was rebuilt as the quire and the new sacristy was created by an addition on the North side, the old pulpit was moved from above the altar to its current position. The quire was re-designed as part of the latest renovation and the altar was moved to become free-standing. The altar itself is made by two shades of Öland limestone.

An icon, written by Sven-Bertil Svensson, decorates the altar. Old gravestones are found in the floor and line the North and the South walls. The reredos with its Epiphany motif was painted by Nils Asplund in connection with the 1931 renovation.



The Cymbelstern

Looking to the West, you can see the organ, built in the 1960s by the Organ Firm Nils Hammarberg in Gothenburg. In 2016 the organ was supplemented by a new cymbelstern, the only one on Öland. The pews come from the millennium renovation while the gables and doors were part of the older pews. A votive ship, donated after the latest renovation, hangs in one of one of the South windows.



Welcome Back!

The Mörbylånge church is one of two churches in the parish of Mörbylånge-Kastlösa. Mass is celebrated every Sunday and during the week there is Mass on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

You are very welcome to return to this church, whether you come to join us for Mass or just for some peace and quiet in a silent and beautiful church.



This church is one of 19 churches in the Joint Parish of Southern Öland. It is situated in the Parish of Mörbylånga-Kastlösa.

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