



THE CHURCH OF HJORTSBERGA



THE CHURCH AT THE GRAVEYARD

On top of the mighty mountain ridge of Listerby there is a large graveyard that bears witness about a countryside that already in pre-Christian time had come far in colonization and development. The place for the Christian church has then been consciously chosen on the eastern slope beside the graveyard. The current building there has probably been preceded by a wooden church in the same place during the missioning time. That place was at that time a part of the parish of Listerby. One or two centuries later, in the beginning of the 13th century, the stone church was built and perhaps it was now that the parish of Hjortsberga with its annex Edestad was divided from its mother parish. Nowhere in Blekinge you can feel the links to the past as perceptibly as in Hjortsberga.

THE CHURCH BUILDING

The walls of the church are built of split greystone that is plastered both on the inside and on the outside. Brick occurs only in later built parts or changed parts of the church as the sacristy or around the enlarged windows in the old church. The chancel has straight joints outside in the east but inside it has an apse that dates the church to an unusual transitional form between Roman and Gothic style and it tells us that this was made around 1200. Today the church has no belfry but as well as a filled arcade in the west gable as also foundation walls beneath the surface on the west side of the church indicate that there has been a wide belfry in the west and that it has been torn down - or it has been planned and prepared. The porch on the south side might be from the later part of the Medieval time, while the sacristy was built in the 1770s.



OLD AND ANTIQUE

Even if Blekinge (the province of Blekinge) still has seven Medieval churches and many of them probably are older than the church in Hjortsberga, this church is unusually rich concerning cultural-historical accents. Above the altar there is an architecturally made antemensale of wood with three round bows, ribbed pilasters and a tooth cut strip, dated to the end of the 16th century and very rare. Beneath the gallery in the west part we can see the remaining parts of the church's oldest pews with their origin from shortly after the Reformation and they are believed to belong to the oldest Evangelical pews in the country. The other pews from the middle of the 17th century have beautifully painted gables with the names of the owners on them. Notice that here the women sat in the south and the men in the north.

*decorated trimming made of wood or metal on the front part of the altar



THE PULPIT

You might think that the pulpit may be too big for this little church but it is undeniably a magnificent work from the later part of the 17th century. It has elegantly carved sculptures on the parapet and masterfully made reliefs in the fillings that show The Fall of Man, The Deluge, The Birth of Christ, The Crucifixion of Christ and The Ascension of Christ. The pulpit was given to the church in 1684 by the colonel Carl Gustaf Skytte, the owner of the estate of Johannishus, that nowadays is owned by the family of Wachtmeister in Hjortsberga. In those days the estate was called Skunckenberg. The creator was the skilled sculptor Åke Truedsson in Jämjö. The pulpit has had three places: firstly in front of the chancel, in 1758 it was moved to the window on the south wall and in 1838 it was moved to its current place when a staircase was made through the wall from the sacristy.



THE ALTARPIECE AND THE SCULPTURES

On the mortared altar with its antemensale there is an altarpiece in Baroque, cut and painted by the well-known Sven Segerwall from Småland in 1745. It then replaced an old "altar picture" that was mentioned in 1665. There has been an altarpiece from the late Middle Ages; four wooden sculptures from this altarpiece are now kept in the Blekinge Museum together with six other figures bailed there from the church of Hjortsberga. One of them, Holy Bishop, stands in a league of his own by age and origin. The figure was cut in the middle of the 12th century and is said to be in connection with the sculpture school of the Cathedral of Chartres. But, alas - this and the other ones can no longer be seen in the church to which they belong.



ANGELS

The main farm of the manor of Johannishus occupies a great part of the parish of Hjortsberga and the traces of the interest the members of the Wachtmeister family have had for their church are many. It is not only the thing that many members of the family rest in the tomb of Wachtmeister, but inside the church we can see the façade of the organ (the first one of the church) that the countess Agathe Wachtmeister donated to the church in 1834 together with a chandelier of silverplated brass. The countess Carola Wachtmeister succeeded in 1930 to buy a wooden angel belonging to the church's baptismal font from 1763 at an auction. The angel was already in 1807 spoken of as disappeared. She returned it to the church where the group since then has been reunited.

TEXT: Björn O Svensson
PHOTO: Franz Feldmanis
TRANSLATION: Ann-Margret Olofsson



THE FAÇADE OF THE ORGAN

The organ that was donated to the church in 1834 (or according to another note in 1835) and whose façade still adorns the gallery was built here in Hjortsberga by the musical instrument maker Per Jönsson. His son Andreas Jönsson, later with the surname Åberg, took part as an apprentice in this and other organ manufacturings. Later he himself became well-known of at least sixteen church organs, among these twelve in churches in Blekinge. Behind the façade an organ from 1976 built by Mårtensson in Lund hides today.



SHORT FACTS

Building time: Around 1200

Building style: Late Roman

Material: Greystone, plastered

Architect: -

Organ: A Mårtensson, Lund, 1976

Bells: Two bells 1585 und 1599/1782, are hanging in the belfry

Altar picture: Sven Segerwall 1745

Other objects of art:

Pietà (Mary with the corpse of Christ), wooden sculpture, 15th century. Pulpit by Åke Truedsson 1684