



BRÄKNE-HOBY CHURCH



A COUNTRYSIDE CATHEDRAL

In the rich community of Hoby in the province of Blekinge there was a large towerless cruciform church from the 12th century. This church was taken down in the 1860s. The current Bräkne-Hoby church was built in its place and it was completed in 1872 with 1800 seats. It is a child of its time's fashion and popularization. The church impresses through its magnificent design and by its size. It has been considered the largest countryside church of the diocese of Lund. It was designed by the cathedral architect Helgo Zettervall in Lund. Being constructed in the epoch of the style imitations the church got a Neo-Roman costume. The nave is a full 20 meter wide and the church's sky-catching tower is visible wide over the plain of Hoby. In 2009 the side benches in the choir were taken away and far to the right is the great church room where there is a Maria Chapel. Here is the icon "The Sign's Godmother", painted by the artist Lars Gerdman from Lund.



MAGNIFICENT CHURCH

The church has the shape of a basilica, a three-nave building where the middle nave rises above the side naves and forms a lantern with its rows of windows. A beautiful light falls from these windows down over the church room. At its disposal it is a church with a choir apse in the east but without a marked sanctuary. It has only a semi-circular altar podium. The apse serves as a sacristy. The west portal in the ground floor is the main entrance and porch of the church. Here you will find a door from the old church. The upper floors of the side naves serve as galleries. The decoration paintings are rich and colourful. Especially beautiful is the cassette roof in the middle nave which is left from the original painting of the church. A painted branch in the arch of the organ loft is too a remaining of the original painting.



ORGANS

The organ may not be what you expect in this extraordinary church but it is nevertheless an interesting instrument. It is what you call a romantic organ built in 1872, that means it is as old as the church and essentially preserved in its original version. In 1906 it was expanded from 18 to 20 voices and in 1985 a careful restoration was carried out. That is all that has been done to it. The organ builder, C A Johansson of the village of Broaryd near to Växjö in the county of Småland has constructed it and it counts as his masterpiece. It is also one of the best kept of the 40 organs that he constructed. The façade has an original fan-shaped organ pipes arrangement. In the sanctuary there is a smaller organ with eight voices built by Anders Persson in the village of Viken in the county of Skåne (Scania) in 1970.



THE BAPTISMAL FONT

The baptismal font is from the beginning of the 13th century and it is the oldest and finest of the inventories that was moved from the old church. It was cut in sandstone from Åhus and belongs to the so-called "Group of Maglehem". The foot is decorated with four lions biting each other. At the last row of seats there is a pull-out church pavement pallet. Here a ceremony called "A Mother's Thanksgiving" took place. The ceremony was led by the minister when a mother thanked God after having born a baby and she was welcomed back into the congregation's divine community. The 1986 church manual does not contain the act but parts of the motives are found in the thanksgiving prayer that begins the scheme of the baptism of children.



OLD AND NEW

A row of tombstones from the old church are placed as a floor in the main aisle. The inscription on the oldest stone reads: "Here under blessed Peder Torbiörnson rests. He was a shoemaker in Kullery, before that the King's farmer. He was a policeman here in Hoby for 36 years. He died at he age of 71 years. God has his Soul. Anno 1651." Also the altar plan, which shows the last Supper was taken care of and it is now in the sacristy. The pulpit from 1634 was sold in an auction, but parts of it were taken back to the new church and are now hanging as pictures on the south wall. The artistical ornate is dominated by the mural paintings by Paul Höm, an artist from Bornholm in Denmark. Paul Höm and his assistant painted the church at an restoration that took place in 1958-1959. In the choir apse Christ is sitting on his heavenly throne with his hand raised for blessing. Over the pillars of the main nave the twelve apostles are painted and below the northern gallery there are another three works of art, Jesus's entry into Jerusalem, The Kiss of Judas, and Jesus facing Pontius Pilate.



THE VICAR LARS SCHLYTER

On one of the walls in the southern gallery an old epitaphium is hanging. It is somewhat damaged and not quite complete. It has the picture of Lars Schlyter, vicar of Hoby in 1676-1713, and his family. The memory board which has been painted on a wooden panel disappeared when the old church was demolished but could be taken back to Hoby in the 1940s after having been found in the county of Skåne (Scania). The vicar's father and grandfather were both called Herman Schlyter and had been mayors of Ronneby - the older of them immigrated from Germany in the 1590s and founded a trading house in the town of Ronneby. Lars Schlyter was captured during the wars in Skåne (Scania) in 1675-1679 for unknown reasons and was put to jail in the castle of Karlshamn before he was allowed to return to his completely plundered vicarage.

TEXT: Gunnel Alvhäll/Björn O Svensson
PHOTO: Franz Feldmanis

FRONT

Photo: Helena Johnsson

In 2012 there was a major renovation including geothermal that was installed. The church room was given a new lighting system. Furthermore, glass panels were added.



FACTS

Building time: 1868 - 1872

Building style: Neo-Roman style

Material: Brick

Architect: Helgo Zettervall

Organs: 1: C A Johansson, Broaryd 1872, 20 voices. Donated by merchant M Magni, Järnavik.

2: Anders Persson, Viken 1970, 8 voices

Bells: 2 bells hanging in the tower. Carillon donated in 1992 by Nina Gustafsson, Trånhem

Altar picture: Mural painting in absidency, Paul Höm 1959

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