



The Old Church, Ytterlännäs

by
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The Ytterlännäs Old Church dating from the beginning of the 13th. century is with its chancel without apse typical of the medieval churches found in the Ångermanland district.

THE MIDDLE AGES

The **original church** was of Roman style comprising a nave and a narrow chancel without an apse. The joints which designate the original church are clearly visible, particularly at the East Window in the South Wall. The porch and the vestry are later additions believed to date from the end of the 15th. century.

The present **inner door**, which was the outer door before the porch was built, is typical of a group of early Roman churches. Both the woodwork and the hammered iron ware are believed to be original. The oldest fixture in the church is the **door knocker** shaped like a lion's head. Informed sources have suggested that the knocker is early Byzantine and reached Ytterlännäs by an unknown route from the Middle East.

Also dating from the Middle Ages are the **font**, made of limestone from the island of Gotland in the 14th. century, the **censer**, the **crucifix** on the North Wall and the **candle sticks** as well as the **church clock** cast in 1450.

THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

The famous **ceiling paintings** by a master of the Tierps school date from the construction of the vaulted roof just before the end of the 15th. century. The same painter is believed to have also painted Enånger church in Hälsingland and the neighbouring Torsåker church. Characters on one of the north webs of the chancel were interpreted in 1918 by Professor Henrik Cornell as 'maalede Eghil' (painted by Eghil). However in 1967 Einar Bager Ph. D. interpreted the same characters as three variations of the letter 'a' followed by the letters 'b' to 'k'. This is the interpretation accepted by the Central Board of National Antiquities and therefore the identity of the painter is still unknown. The ceiling paintings have never been whitewashed over, but in the 18th. century this was the fate of the **wall paintings**.

Two works from the early 16th. century are the **reredos** on the South Wall, a Swedish product in the Lübeck style and the **sculpture of the Madonna** by the carver Haakan Gulleson which was donated to the church by the then archbishop Jakob Ulfsson. The archbishop's heraldic bearing — an eagle's claw — can be found at the bottom of the reredos.

THE REFORMATION PERIOD up to 1854

The emphasis that the Reformation laid upon the textual content of the Bible as the central feature of church services led to the pulpit assuming a more prominent position. A small part of the oldest pulpit known to have existed in this church can be seen on the pilaster in the middle of the North Wall. The present **pulpit** in the Caroline Baroque style was made by the Kramfors carpenter Jon Göransson Westman and erected in 1761. The **retable** from 1739 featuring elements of the Baroque, Rococo and neo-classic styles was constructed by Magnus Granlund, the sculptor from Hudiksvall.

A shortage of seats led to the construction of the rear section of the **lower gallery**. The central pillars are from 1652.

The Finnish church sculptor Hans Gabriëlsson Biskop was commissioned in 1718 to construct the wings to the lower gallery, the present **pews** and the baldachin above the pulpit. The painting was executed by Captain Hofverberg and Abraham Segerström, his assistant. The **upper gallery** is a later addition.

The present external appearance is the result of a lightning striking the bell-tower on July 9, 1773, causing a fire which destroyed the church roof. The bell-tower was not replaced and the clock, which was cast in 1450, was mounted in a ridge turret which now adorns the 18th century mansard roof.

The great increase of the birthrate of the 19th. century meant that a new church had to be built. On October 29, 1854, after six years work, it was ready for inauguration. The last church service in the 600 year-old church was held on the previous Sunday, October 22.

The future of the old church had been discussed while the new one was under construction. As was the case in other parishes it was suggested that it should be demolished to provide stone for the new church. However, at the parish meeting of November 10, 1850, the first secretary, Martin Schönmeier made such an eloquent plea for the preservation of the church of his forefathers that the meeting unanimously voted that the old church should left intact — a decision and a manifestation of reverence that places a debt of gratitude upon us, the members of succeeding generations.