



WELCOME TO
the Church of Smedby

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.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE CHURCH OF SMEDBY

By the church of Smedby, the open vistas of the South Öland landscape begin to open up: the East, there is Alvaret Moor and towards the West the farmland and the Kalmar Sound. A small village centre with a school and a vicarage has been built by the church, and the road towards the South and the villages by the Sound start here.

The original church was built in the early Middle Ages with a nave, a quire and a wooden beam provided a semi-circular apse. A strong tower was built soon after that over the West part of the church. The porch was placed at the South side of the tower. A wooden beam covered the square top end. The interior was very dark, only lit by one window. In 1741 Linnaeus made a visit. He described the various spaces in the church as almost separated from one another: A triumphal arch separated the quire from the nave, and the tower opened into the nave through a narrow curved archway. It was difficult for visitors to see or hear the service.

The medieval church was demolished, and a new church was built in the mid-19th century, just to the North of the previous building. The current church of Smedby is a late classicist hall-church with a West tower. The sacristy is on the East side of the worship space and in 1952 the quire was altered. The open hall-space was closed off by two smaller rooms along the sides so that a narrower quire with a straight end was created. Otherwise the 19th century character of interior with its arched ceiling divided into five parts, has been preserved.



WELCOME TO THE CHURCH OF SMEDBY

The church of Smedby is one of six churches in the South Öland parish, situated a couple of hundred meters from the Road 136, opening up the view towards Smedby. The church is the focus of small village centre with vicarage and a school.



The first church in Smedby

The first church in Smedby was built during the 12th century, a small Romanesque stone church with nave, quire and apse. In the 13th century, a tower was added at the West end.

The church of Smedby is the only church mentioned by Linnaeus in his travels on Öland in 1741. The windows were small and there were strong walls between the quire, the nave, and the porch. The arch-shaped openings between the different parts of the church were narrow and it was important to mark the status of the various areas.

On the initiative of the then vicar, Magnus Roswall, a PCC-meeting in 1772 decided that the wall between the nave and the tower should be demolished and replaced by a more spacious archway. In the night towards the 4th June 1774, when the demolition was due, most of the tower fell down, taking with it most of the ceiling arches of the nave. The remains of the tower were demolished, and the church was given a wooden roof. The old church was demolished in 1851.

Fr Roswall (the vicar who had caused the accident) is buried in the porch of the current church, and in that way, he is still present in the worship at the church of Smedby.

The church yard

At Smedby, it is obvious how people were buried according to their villages, not only next to family members, but also next to their neighbours. The burial plots are organised according to the villages. At Smedby, this custom has continued. People from Hammarby are buried close to one another, as are those who used to live at Smedby, Alvlösa, Klinta or Västerstad.



The church bells

A legend tells us that the medieval bells were taken down during the Kalmar War in 1611-13, removed from the church and buried in a boggy area to the West of the farm called Stora Smedby. People feared that the Danes would collect them, melt them down and use them to make canons. No attempt has been made to find them or recover them.

The current small bell was cast in Stockholm in 1680 and originally hung in the old church. It survived the fall of the church and was then hung under a small protective roof on the West gable. The large bell was purchased in Kalmar in 1878 for the current church.



WELCOME INSIDE!

There are several furnishings in the current church that have been preserved from the old church.

The baptismal font

A well preserved Romanesque font from the first half of the 13th century is placed in the quire. It was made on Gotland.



The pulpit

The pulpit was made in 1698, probably by Anders Colleur. It replaced the pulpit that was destroyed by the fall of the tower in 1774. Some ornaments were added in 1783, carved by the sculptor A.G. Wadsten.



The altar

The reredos was sculpted in 1755 by Anders Dahlström the Elder. The original middle part, showed a sculpted presentation of the crucified Christ, flanked by two praying women. They are currently placed on the South wall of the nave, above the baptismal altar.



Current worship at Smedby

Smedby is one of six churches in the Parish of South Öland. Services of worship are held a few times during the year. The parish works to share out the solemn services during the liturgical year between its churches. The church of Smedby always hosts the Christmas Prayers, and then the church is full. There is also a tradition to hold a Christmas Concert on Boxing Day and to celebrate High Mass here on Easter Monday.

In the summer there are organ recitals and also services of music and first Vespers of Sunday on summer evenings. Sometimes the tower is open, inviting visitors to behold the view of the Öland Alvar.

You are always welcome back to the church of Smedby!



The Joint Parish of Southern Öland consists of 7 parishes that together manage 18 churches and 1 chapel. The church of Smedby is situated in the Parish of South Öland.

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