

HJÄLMSERYD OLD CHURCH

Njudung is the part of Småland where most stone churches were built in the 12th century. Some of these churches have been preserved and can to this day convey the feeling of a place of worship almost 1 000 years ago.

The church in Hjälmseryd was built in stone during the Early Middle Ages with a nave, chancel and semi-circular apse to the east, which was the common design at the time. The medieval churches must have been dark, with only small windows and no comfortable pews. There were also paintings on the walls.

By the mid-19th century, the old church was considered too small, and a new, purpose-built church was created 7 kilometers further south. The abandoned church was sold to a country shopkeeper, who demolished the roof and some decorative sandstone which he sold.

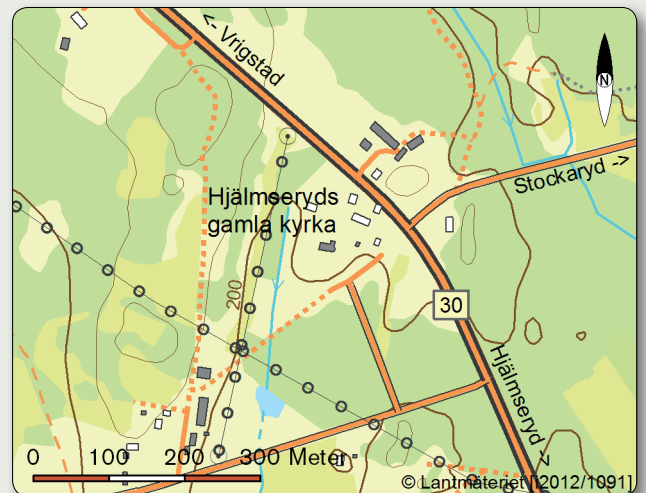
Some of the sandstone was used for the new church and some is believed to have been used for the church in Vrigstad, which was being built at the same time. The stone altar slab was first reused as a step, but later served as a garden table top.

Without roof, the old church quickly decayed, and in the early 1930s, all that remained were the lower parts of the outside walls. Then, the idea was born to reconstruct the church. Led by the renowned church restorer Erik Lundberg, large parts of the church were rebuilt in the period 1933 to 1934. The most striking part of the original church was the canopied portal. In the restoration, some of the original stones that had been saved, together with new stones, were used to reconstruct the porch.

Three metres to the west of the western entrance is a loose boulder with rock carvings from the Bronze Age – three concentric circles and a cup mark in the middle. At the bottom of the rock is what could be the figure of a ship. On the other side of the road is a grave field from the Late Iron Age.



Church interior. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.



HIDDEN GEM 3 I



HOW TO GET HERE

Hjälmseryd Old Church is located near Road 30 between Vrigstad and Lammhult. Approx. 7 m south of Vrigstad.

Coordinates:
N 6351751 / E 470655
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N 57°
18' 27.96", E 14° 30' 46.49"
(WGS84)



Hjälmseryd Old Church. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.

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HIDDEN GEMS

There are so many things to discover in the countryside! Here, Jönköping County Museum presents some of the cultural environment and heritage attractions in the county.

They include well-known cultural monuments such as Habo Church and the Smålandsstenar Stone Circles, but also lesser known gems such as log-driving remains in the river Valån and Stengårdshult Church. Around the county you can find evidence of how people lived and worked in the past, everything from castles and manors to abandoned embankments and clearance cairns in forest areas.

The idea with Hidden Gems is to tempt you to make excursions in the cultural landscape – here you find our history, revealed in different ways in the physical environment. This heritage is worth experiencing and protecting. Bit by bit, we will be adding more sights under the heading Hidden Gems, both for people living in the county and visitors from further away. The more people who discover these gems, the better chance that they will be preserved for the future.

FACTS

In Jönköping County there are more than 4 000 registered ancient remains, 87 cultural environments of national interest, close to 130 listed buildings, around 150 churches, some 100 rural community centres with old settlements, a large number of industrial heritage sites, and two cultural reserves. There are also a large number of cultural environments with buildings worthy of conservation. More information about the sites can be found on the websites of the County Administrative Board, the municipalities and the local heritage societies.

GOOD TO KNOW

Access to the Hidden Gems varies. Some sites are well signposted, with easy access and proper parking facilities, etc. Others are more challenging to reach. Visitors may have to walk some distance, sometimes through scrubby forest, only to be met by a broken sign (if there ever was one) when they reach the site. All the sites, however, have an exciting and interesting history.

Please note that many of the cultural heritage buildings are privately owned and can only be viewed from the outside. Also, please respect private land. Many churches are open in the summer. During other times of the year, the churchwarden may be able to open the church for you.

