

ÅKER CHURCH STABLES

Church stables were common at many churches in Sweden, and they served as stabling for horses and the storage of harnesses and travel attire for far-away parishioners coming to church. The stables were built either by the respective farm, or jointly by several farms. The right to build on the church grounds was reserved for freeholding farmers. Landless crofters and farm servants rarely owned horses and were normally reduced to walking. When cars became more common in rural areas, in the 1950s and 1960s, the stables lost their function and were demolished.

The Åker Church Stables are particularly well preserved, but also unusual because they are small, free-standing and have gable entrances. Other well-kept church stables in Småland are found e.g. in Villstad, Hallingeberg and Vissefjärda. In contrast to the stables in Åker, these were all built jointly in long rows.

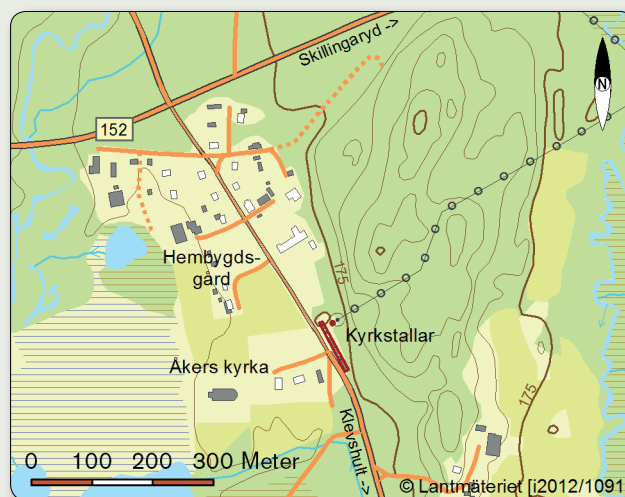
At the time of the “laga skifte” land reform in 1863, there were four stables at Åker Church, located just outside the churchyard wall to the west. When a new folk school was built close to the church in the same year, the stable area was needed as a playground. Therefore, the stables were moved to their present location.

At the time of an inventory carried out by Jönköping County Museum in 1943, there were 17 stables lined up along a street. Photos from the 1940s show that some stables still had the old roof covering of planks with birch bark underneath, but that most roofs were covered with wooden shingles. In several cases, the timber façades were subsequently covered with wooden panelling.

Following a rescue operation in the 1950s, 13 remaining stables are still grouped along the road. Most of the preserved stables were built in the latter part of the 19th century, during which time the number of stables increased significantly. The stables normally contain one or two boxes, but earlier there were two larger stables with nine boxes each.



Åker Church Stables in 1943. Archive photo: Jönköping County Museum.



HIDDEN GEM 40



HOW TO GET HERE

Around 7 km south-west of Skillingaryd. Drive on Road 152 from Skillingaryd and turn south at crossroads sign-posted Åker.

Coordinates:

N 6360214 / E 439790
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N 57°
22' 50,70", E 13° 59' 54,93"
(WGS84)



Åker Church Stables. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.

JÖNKÖPINGS LÄNS
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.

