

ÅSENHÖGA ABANDONED GRAVEYARD

To the west of Åsenhöga Church is the site of the old parish church. When the current neoclassical church was built in 1857, the old wooden church was demolished, and the graveyard was abandoned. During the 20th century, the graveyard has been carefully restored. The atmospheric site gives a true picture of what rural graveyards looked like in Småland before industrialisation. They were wild meadows with well-trodden paths. The parish clerk was often allowed to cut the hay in the graveyard to supplement his income.

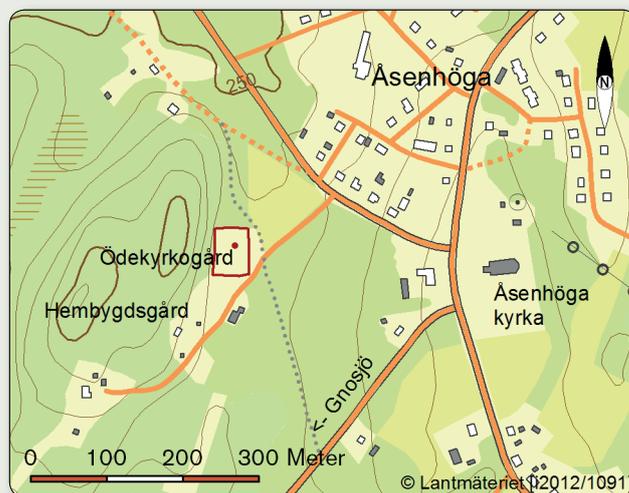
The church site in Åsenhöga was established in the Middle Ages. As in many other forest parishes, the farmers built a church from wood. The location of the altar is now marked with a cross. What may seem unique here are the around 30 carved sandstone grave markers standing in the graveyard. These are from 1684 to 1832 and bear witness to a local funerary art tradition that died out with the emergence of industrially manufactured headstones. In other parts of the county, hand carved gravestones were a real luxury. Graves were often just marked with a small mound of earth or a wooden marker that eventually decayed. Even more unusual is the beautiful cast iron slab from 1712 on the grave of the vicar Lacander.

The different farms in the parish all had their own part of the graveyard, and each property had its own family grave. Most of these are north of the site of the church. Usually, the northern side was associated with darkness and evil forces, but in this case the southern side was too waterlogged for burials. In 1770, it was noted that the church was “standing in such a depression she required deep ditches to stop the water from rising”.

Around the graveyard is a mossy stone wall from 1789. Inside the wall is a ditch constructed in 1811 to divert the water. The eastern entrance has a timbered lychgate, covered by a shingle roof. The gate is from 1695, and originally there were also similar gates to the south and north – creating a secluded place for the peasants to discuss and do business on their way to church.



Tufted meadowland and hand-carved gravestones from the 18th century. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.



HIDDEN GEM 13



HOW TO GET HERE

Åsenhöga is located approx. 6 km north-east of Gnosjö. The abandoned graveyard is located by the rural community centre, around 300 m to the west of the church.

Coordinates:

N 6363298 / E 427390
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N 57°
24' 23.90", E 13° 47' 29.31"
(WGS84)



Åsenhöga abandoned graveyard. In the background is a timbered lychgate from 1695, once a common sight at graveyards in the county. 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.

