

SKEPPERSTAD CHURCH ENVIRONMENT

Rune stones belong to a time of transition. They were erected in the 11th century as the Viking Age gave way to the Middle Ages. Close to the southern corner of Skepperstad cemetery is a rune stone with the inscription “Holme erected this bridge in memory of Torgöt, his father”. The text frames a carved cross. From this we can draw two conclusions: Firstly, Holme and Torgöt were Christians judging by the cross. Secondly, the stone was probably erected close to a watercourse or wetland, where Holme had built a bridge. From the text we understand that the stone is not in its original position. In the 17th century, the rune stone stood on land belonging to Skärjsjö seat farm, 2 kilometres south-west of the church village, and in the 19th century it was used as a threshold stone in the village.

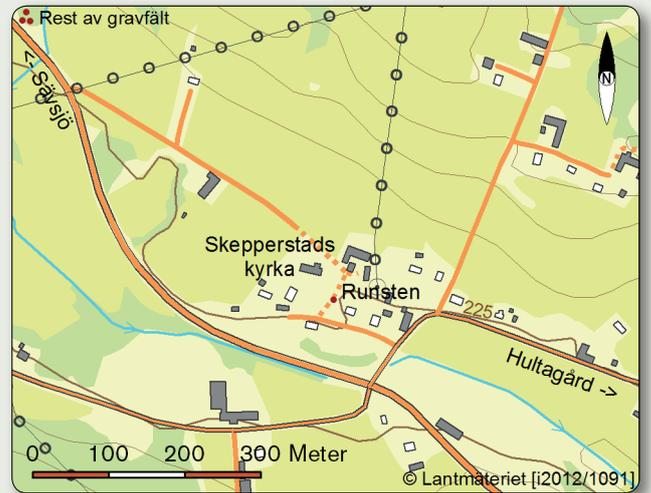
The church building in Skepperstad has roots all the way back to the early Christian era. By dating the annual rings in the timber of the roof trusses, it has been established that the church was built around 1160 at the earliest. It then consisted of a nave, a chancel and a semi-circular apse to the east. Eventually, a tower was added, but this was demolished in the 17th century, and only the bottom parts remained. Instead, a wooden bell tower was built in 1710.

The church underwent extensive changes in the 19th century. A new tower was built in 1809 on top of the remaining tower walls. The bell tower had been struck by lightning in 1801 and burned down. The parish also carried out an extension in the period 1833 to 1835. The eastern, narrow parts of the church – the chancel and apse – were demolished and replaced with a new, elongated part. The church’s medieval appearance disappeared and was replaced by a completely new look in the Neoclassical style.

Skepperstad Church, unusually, has a slate roof. One reason for this is probably that there was a slate mine in Hörnebo, around 10 kilometres to the south. According to records, the roof was laid in 1901.



This picture of the interior from the early 20th century shows the painted columns next to the simple pulpit on the northern wall. To the right, a stove. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.



HIDDEN GEM 70



HOW TO GET HERE

From Road 127 between Sävsjö and Vetlanda, turn southwards approx. 7 km east of Sävsjö. After just under 6 km, you reach the church village Skepperstad. The church is somewhat north-west of the crossroads.

Coordinates:
N 6356500 / E 485883
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N 57°
21' 4.137", E 14° 45' 55.420"
(WGS84)



The area around the church has changed somewhat since this picture was taken in 1939. To the left is the parish hall. 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.

