

STENGÅRDSHULT CHURCH

The 19th century meant a renewal for country churches. Many churches were rebuilt and even more were newly built. As a result, few rural churches were constructed in the 20th century, other than those that replaced churches that had burned down.

Right in the middle of a Sunday worship in November 1907, it was discovered that sparks from the stove pipe had started a fire in Stengårdshult Church. To start with, focus was on putting out the flames, but when the fire got out of hand, fixtures that could be saved were carried out. A few hours later, the church was in ruins.

This was not the first church in Småland to burn down. But here the consequences were especially severe, as the church, unusually, was built entirely out of wood. Work on the new church was carried out on two fronts. On the one hand, new plans had to be drawn up, and on the other hand building material had to be collected. The responsibility for designing the new church was given to the architect Torben Grut in Stockholm. At the time, Grut became known for his design of the Stockholm Stadium for the 1912 Olympic Games.

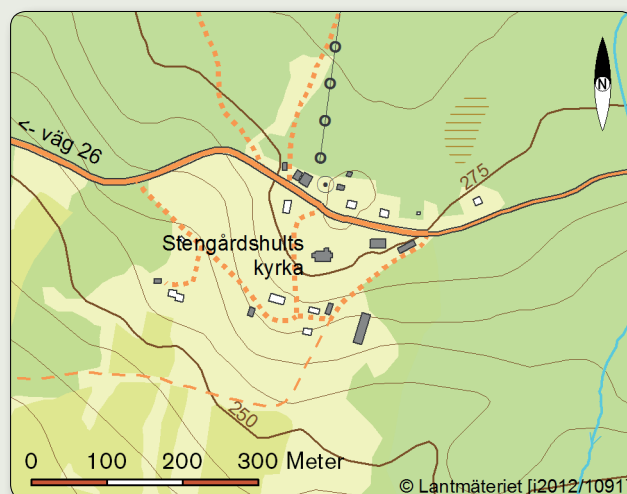
The stone foundation for the new church was built in 1910, and the rest of the church and the bell tower were constructed in the following two years.

Stengårdshult Church has a so called basilica design: The central nave is raised with windows at the top, and the side aisles are lower. When the church was new, it had a white façade, and white also dominated the interior. The only deviation from the white colour scheme was occasional gilded details and the grey-blue shade of the benches and pew doors. During recent renovations of the church, the aim was to recreate the original colour scheme.

In his youth, the architect Grut was an athlete and Swedish tennis champion. This may be the reason for asking him to design the Olympic Stadium. During his professional life he designed several churches, for example in Norrland.



Stengårdshult Church interior. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.



HIDDEN GEM 8



HOW TO GET HERE

The church is located to the east of Nissastigen (Road 26). Turn east at the church village Norra Unnaryd towards Stengårdshult.

Coordinates:
N 6379510 / E 429500
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N57°
33' 9.288", E13° 49' 18.798"
(WGS84)



Stengårdshult Church and bell tower. 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.

