

Söderköping's era of greatness was during the High Middle Ages and many royals were crowned in the city's churches. In Söderköping there were the city churches **St. Laurentii** and **St. Ilian** as well as the countryside church **Drothem**. St. Ilian, which was located by the current canal harbour, was torn down in the 16th century. Just outside of the city lay **Skönberga** Church. Alongside Drothem there was a Franciscan monastery from the year 1235 and the monastery church which is probably the older church of Drothem. After the Reformation, the facilities at the monastery were torn down.

The churches of the countryside within the Municipality all date back to the Middle Ages with the exception of the Church of **Börum** from 1718 which is built in wood in late Caroline style. The Church of **Mogata** was built 1842-44 above the old 13th century church. The ruins remain hidden under the floor. The baptismal font is from medieval times. The Church of **Östra Ryd** was built of granite during the 13th Century and completely rebuilt during the 18th Century, when the spire was also added on. The baptismal font and a crucifix are from the 13th Century. The Church of **Västra Husby** was built in 1816-17 above and outside of the previous church from the 12th Century. The spire was added during the 14th Century. The church burned down in 1977 and was reconstructed in 1979. The churches of **Skällvik**, **Gårdeby** and the **old church of St. Anna** still have their medieval-aged character.

The medieval church area differed from today's church. There were no pews, galleries or pulpits. The congregation had to kneel during the Catholic mass, which was held in Latin. The parish did not have access to the chancel which was separated with grating called an altar screen. There was a secondary altar dedicated to Maria on the north side, the women's side, and to the patron saint on the south side, the men's side. The entrance to the church was on the southern long side and just inside stood the baptismal font so that unchristened, unclean children were not borne too far inside the church. The churches were dark with narrow windows and the vault was decorated with stuccoes. The church areas were changed after the Reformation, however the 1800's were the time of the greatest changes, as the churches were reconstructed, the stuccoes were covered over in plaster and the old altar cabinets were removed.

If you would like to visit the churches, the Drothem, St. Laurentii and Skönberga Churches are open all year around. Other churches are often open during the summer. The tourist office is happy to help, just call +46(0)121-18160. For more information see: www.svenskakyrkan.se and www.soderkoping.se.

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THE CHURCHES OF SÖDERKÖPING

THE DOOR TO THE MIDDLE AGES



Drothem



S:t Laurentii



Skönberga



Gårdeby



Börum



S:t Anna



Västra Husby



S:t Anna kyrka



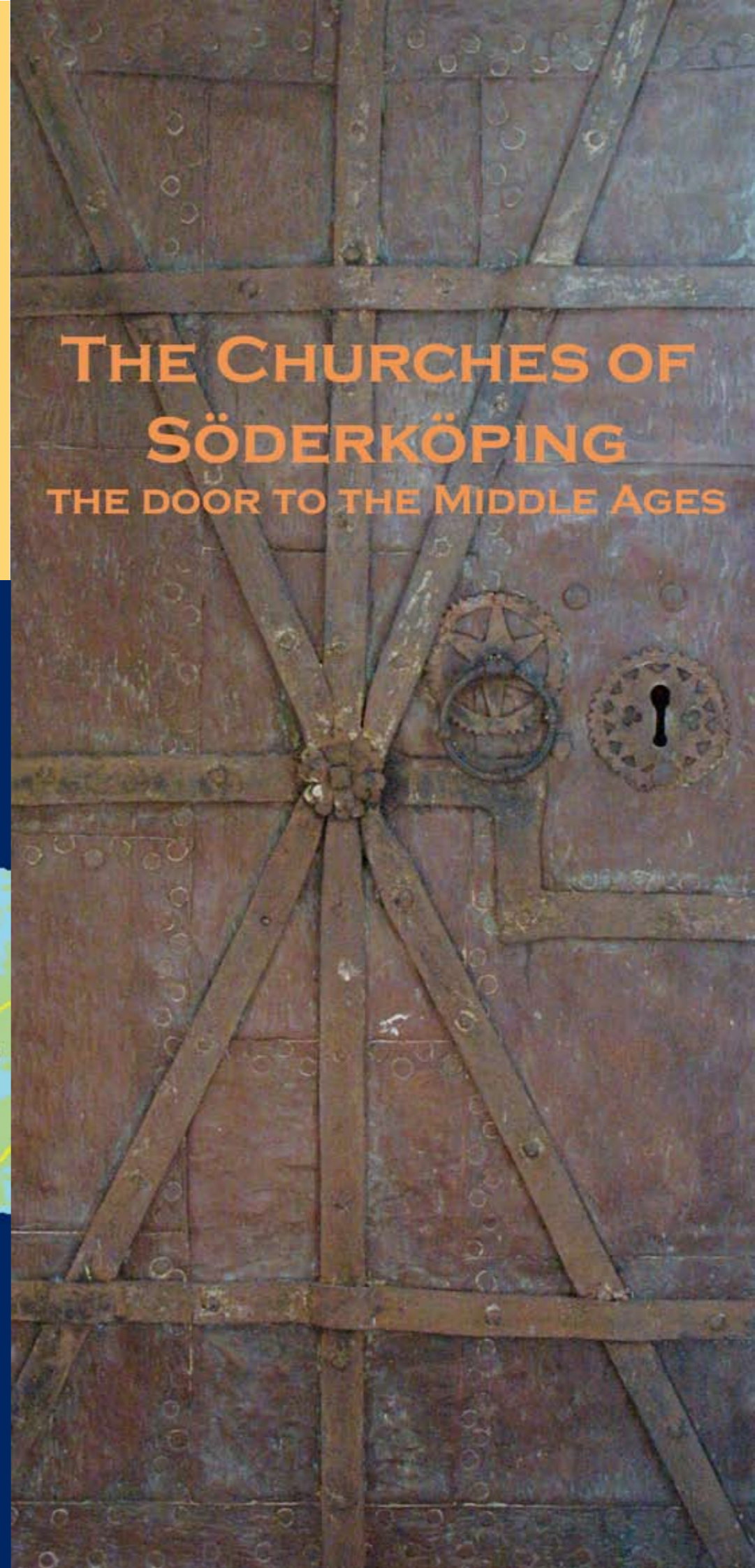
Västra Husby



Östra Ryd



Mogata



The Church of Drothem, the countryside church was first mentioned in 1307. The previous, Roman 12th Century church was probably donated to the monastery in 1235. The name comes from the ancient Swedish word Drofin, which means the Lord. The church was built in granite as a three-nave church hall. A chapel from the 13th Century was inserted as a sacristy. The vault was cut after one of the city fires in 1380 or 1418. The stepped gables are of original appearance but the blind rings of the facade were painted in pink with red surrounding wall joints. During the 18th Century the ceiling riders were replaced with a bell tower. Interesting inventory are the **altar cabinet**, German, later 15th century; the church hospital's **altar picture** composed of a epithet and a medieval crucifix; as well as sculptures of Maria and **Johannes** from the 15th Century.

The Church of St. Laurentii, the city church, is also called St. Lars and was dedicated to the martyr Laurentius. The parish was mentioned in 1253; however the current church was built of brick as a three-nave basilica at the end of the 13th Century. After a fire in 1494, it was reconstructed into a hall church. In 1583 the chapel was built between the sacristy and narthex (where any visitor's weapons were kept) in a fourth nave. The bell tower was also built then, however the ceiling rider was left untouched. In the blind rings of the facade, there were paintings like the **St. Laurentius picture** which is seen in the sacristy. A limestone painting can also be seen in the previous narthex. Interesting inventories are the **altar cabinet** from the late 15th Century; the **triumph crucifix** from Vadstena, approximately 15th Century; the wooden sculpture of **St. Katarina**, German 15th Century; and the Östgötska **crucifix** from the 15th Century.

The Church of Skönberga was built on granite during the turn of the 13th Century. The church was then shorter and during the later part of the Middle Ages an altar and crossing square were added on. The copper door of the sacristy and richly **decorated gateway** of the crossing square was added on at that time. The church vault was built during the 15th Century; it had no inner ceiling to begin with. In the attic above the vault there is a **medieval painting** on the width of the entire old altar wall. Here, Christ is depicted as the judge of the world against an ultramarine blue background. Of interest are Johan Axelsson Bielke's and Margareta Posse's graves in the altar, parents of Johan III's wife Gunilla; the altar cabinet and the picture cabinet with St. Anna, both Swedish 15th Century; as well as the wooden sculptures of **St. Olof** and Christ from the 14th Century.



The Church of Gårdeby was raised at the end of the 13th in granite. It is built in Roman style with a lower altar and stepped gables. It is the eastern-most stepped gable church in Östergötland. Originally, the church had no inner ceiling and has never had a plastered ceiling vault, it was built of wood. It was, during Medieval times, very dark and gave a closed appearance; the west side was completely without openings and the triumph wall probably only had an opening a half meter wide towards the altar. The low clock-house was taken from Skärkind's Church in 1830. There are no medieval inventories; however of interest are a baptismal font of oak from 1664 and a wooden **chandelier** with natural-looking arms and hands from 1689.

The Church of Skällvik was built of granite during the first half of the 14th Century as a rectangular church with stepped gables. In 1593, Johan III reconstructed the church to a central church of Italian Renaissance style. The outer walls were kept, but new piers and a vault formed a cruciform with a marked, higher middle tower of wood. The gables were truncated which can be seen from the original blind rings. The bell tower was reconstructed in 1754. Of interest are the **Maria cabinet**, German 15th Century; a Roman **bishop's chair** from the 13th Century which was used during visits from bishops; and a "ceiling rose" from the castle church of Stegeborg, approximately 1580. The castle is a ruin today and can be found not far from the Church of Skällvik.

The Church or St. Anna was built during the 14th Century as a chapel; it was dedicated to the seafarer's saint St. Anna, Maria's mother. Seafarers came here by sea and tied their boats at the log wall surrounding the church. The chapel became the altar in the twice as large church that Bishop Hans Brask inaugurated in 1521. A new church was built 1819-21 a little farther away. Building blocks and inventories were removed and the old church was left as a ruin. The oldest chapel and a bell tower were recreated during the 1960's. Fragments of limestone paintings on those walls are the original ones. The oldest inventories are an **altar cabinet** from 1590 and a picture from 1512; these can be still be seen in the new church.