

Söderköping's period of greatness was during the High Middle Ages and many royals were crowned in the town's churches. In Söderköping there were the town churches of **St. Laurentius** and **St. Ilian** as well as the countryside church of **Drothem**. St. Ilian's was located by the current canal harbour, and was demolished in the 16th century. Just outside the town the church of **Skönberga** is situated. Near Drothem there was a Franciscan monastery from 1235 and the monastery church was probably the older church of Drothem. After the Reformation, the buildings of the monastery were demolished.

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

The medieval church room differed from today's church. There were no pews, galleries or pulpits. The congregation had to stand or kneel during the Catholic mass, which was held in Latin. The parish did not have access to the chancel which was separated by a lattice-work, a rood-screen. There were secondary altars dedicated to Mary 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 the unchristened, unclean children were not carried too far inside the church. The churches were dark with narrow windows and the vault was decorated with stuccoes. The church room changed after the Reformation, but the 19th century was the time of the greatest changes, when the churches were restored, the stuccoes covered in plaster and the old altar screens 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 A DOOR TO THE MIDDLE AGES



Drothem



S:t Laurentii



Skönberga



Gårdeby



Börrium



S:t Anna



S:t Anna g:a kyrka



Västra Husby



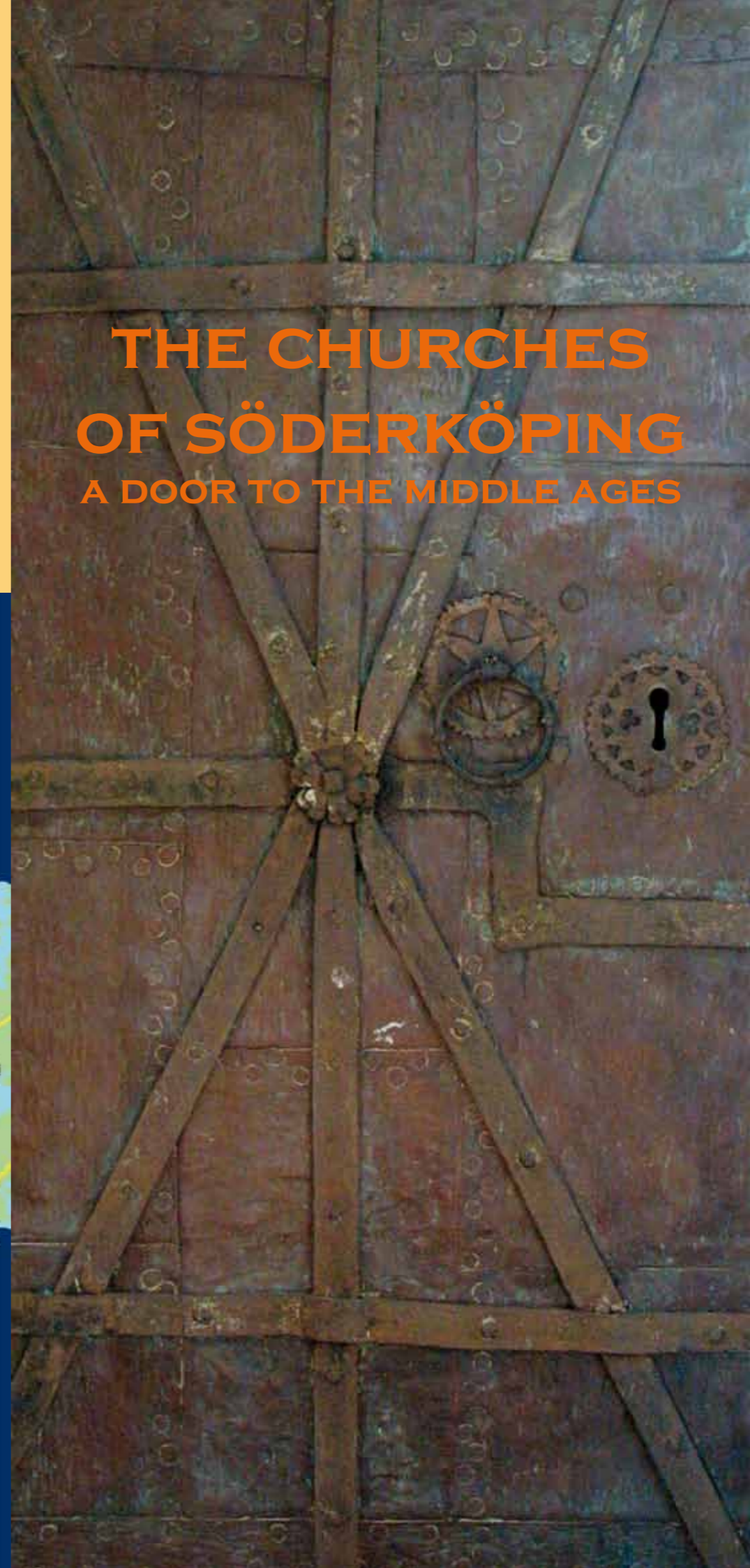
Östra Ryd



Mogata



Skällvik



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 originates from the ancient Swedish word Drotin, which means the Lord. The church was built of granite as a three-nave church hall. A chapel from the 13th century was inserted as a sacristy. The vault was built after one of the town fires in 1380 or 1418. The stepped gables are of original appearance but the blindages of the façade were painted in pink with red surrounding wall joints. During the 18th century the roof turrets were replaced with a bell tower. Interesting inventories are the **altar screen**, German, later 15th century; the church hospital's **altar piece** composed of an epitaph and a medieval crucifix; as well as sculptures of Mary and **John** from the 15th century.

The Church of St. Laurentius, the city church, is also called St. Lars and was dedicated to the martyr Laurentius. The parish was mentioned in 1253; but 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 chapels were built between the sacristy and the church porch into a fourth nave. The bell tower was also built then, but the roof turret was left untouched. In the blindages of the façade, there were paintings like the one **of St. Laurentius** which is seen on the sacristy. A fresco painting can also be seen in the previous church porch. Interesting inventories are the **altar screen** from the late 15th century; the **triumph crucifix** from Vadstena, approx. 15th century; the wooden sculpture of **St. Katarina**, German 15th century; and the 15th century **crucifix** from Östergötland.

The Church of Skönberga was built of granite during the turn of the 13th century. The church was then smaller and during the later part of the Middle Ages a chancel and a transept were added. The copper door of the sacristy and the richly **decorated porch** of the transept were added at that time. The church vaults were built during the 15th century; it had no ceiling to begin with. In the attic above the vaults there is a **medieval painting** on the entire width of the old chancel 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 chancel, parents of Johan III's wife Gunilla; the altar screen 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 built at the end of the 13th century of granite. It was built in Roman style with a lower altar and apse. It is the easternmost apse church in Östergötland. Originally, the church had no ceiling and has never had plastered vaults, but vaults built of wood. It was during Medieval times very dark and gave a closed appearance; the west gable was completely without openings and the triumph wall probably only had an opening half a meter wide towards the altar. The low clock-house was taken from the church of Skärkind in 1830. There are no medieval inventories; of interest are, however, a baptismal font of oak from 1664 and a wooden **chandelier** with life-like 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 columns and vaults formed a cruciform with a marked, higher middle with a tower of wood. The gables were truncated which can be seen from the original blindages. The bell tower was reconstructed in 1754. Of interest are the **Mary screen**, German 15th century; a Roman **bishop's chair** from the 13th Century which was used during visitations from bishops; and a "ceiling rose" from the castle church of Stegeborg, approximately 1580. The castle is a ruin today and is situated not far from the Church of Skällvik.

The Church of St. Anna was built during the 14th century as a chapel; it was dedicated to the seafarer's saint St. Anna, mother of Mary. Seafarers came here 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 from the old church and it was left to fall into decay. The oldest chapel and a bell tower were recreated during the 1960's. Fragments of fresco paintings can be seen on the original walls. The oldest inventories are an **altar screen** from 1590 and a picture from 1512; these can still be seen in the new church.