

CHAPTER 8

The Archaeology of the Hospitallers in Medieval Scandinavia

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Introduction

Between 2004 and 2010 the author of this article carried out research work for a PhD degree at the University of Southern Denmark. The research focused on the economy and the archaeology of the Hospitallers in medieval Scandinavia. The study was based on information from almost 2000 documents and material from a large number of archaeological investigations at the various Scandinavian Hospitaller sites. By studying the preserved written sources and the archaeological material from these religious houses side by side a number of shorter and longer periods of better, as well as of less successful, economic conditions were identified. The aim of this article is to present the most important archaeological results of this six-year-long research project, and to make some concluding remarks.

The Hospitallers founded about 15 commanderies in Scandinavia throughout the medieval period. Donations of properties, land and privileges from various noble families and kings during the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries laid the foundation for these houses

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which, especially in the late medieval period, became some of the most influential religious institutions in the region. A number of sites in the Scandinavian countries still have physical remains from the Order's properties, and even though this material is relatively well preserved a surprisingly low number of Scandinavian researchers has so far analysed the material in close detail.

The preserved remains from the Hospitallers' Scandinavian commanderies are, in comparison to the remains in the Orient, largely late medieval structures. During the latter part of the Middle Ages economic, political and religious changes swept across the western Europe. Such changes had a particular impact on the military orders that had been founded during the period of the crusades in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and whose economies were based on donations of land and privileges. By adding such aspects to the analysis of the archaeological material new conclusions can be made regarding the economic conditions of the Hospitallers, and new knowledge can be obtained regarding the Scandinavian branch of the order.

The earliest of the Scandinavian Hospitaller commanderies were founded in the twelfth century, but from the beginning of the fourteenth century few new commanderies were built due to an extensive economic crisis inside the Scandinavian branch of the order. This period of harsh economic conditions lasted to the beginning of the fifteenth century, when an increasing number of new donations to the Hospitallers in Scandinavia improved the economy of the Nordic brethren. Contemporary economic reforms of the order helped to improve the economy even further. Written as well as archaeological sources indicate that a period of extensive building activity now occurred in the Scandinavian commanderies. This period lasted between approximately 1410 and 1520, an era during which many new commanderies were founded and the existing commanderies expanded.

From this it would appear that the Hospitallers gained from the improved economic situation, with more resources available to be invested in various building projects. This development seems to have followed a similar pattern in all Scandinavian countries and can therefore not only be explained by local factors. From about 1520 onwards,

however, the number of new donations to all Scandinavian Hospitaller commanderies dropped dramatically. The sources indicate that new economic problems began to spread, and as a result further expansion of the commanderies was no longer possible. When the Reformation swept across Scandinavia a decade later the Hospitallers lost all their land in the region, and a period of 350 years of Scandinavian Hospitaller history came to an end.

Eskilstuna

The first Hospitaller houses in Scandinavia were founded in the later part of the twelfth century. This is at least true for Antvorskov in Denmark, Eskilstuna in Sweden and Varna in Norway, that all seem to have been founded in a fairly narrow period between c. 1170 and 1200. These early houses were fairly limited in size, and parts of them were most likely made of wood. This is especially true for houses where evidence for early Romanesque structures has been identified during different archaeological excavations. We know for instance that there must have been an early wooden chapel dedicated to St Eskil in the area that later became Eskilstuna Hospitaller commandery. It is possible that this wooden structure was still standing by the time the chapel and its land were handed over to the Hospitallers, around 1180. A number of postholes from a possible wooden building were identified beneath the floor of the later commandery church in the 1960s.

These excavations, carried out by the Swedish archaeologist Sune Zachrisson, indicated that most of the former commandery had been destroyed shortly after the Reformation, when a new castle was built on the site (Zachrisson 1963). However, it was still possible for Zachrisson to reconstruct the plan of the most central parts of the former commandery (fig. 1). This part of the complex had obviously been constructed around a squared yard with the chapel to the north and further commandery buildings on the southern and eastern sides. There were no traces of a west wing, but it is likely that there was some kind of building on that side as well (Zachrisson 1963: picture III).

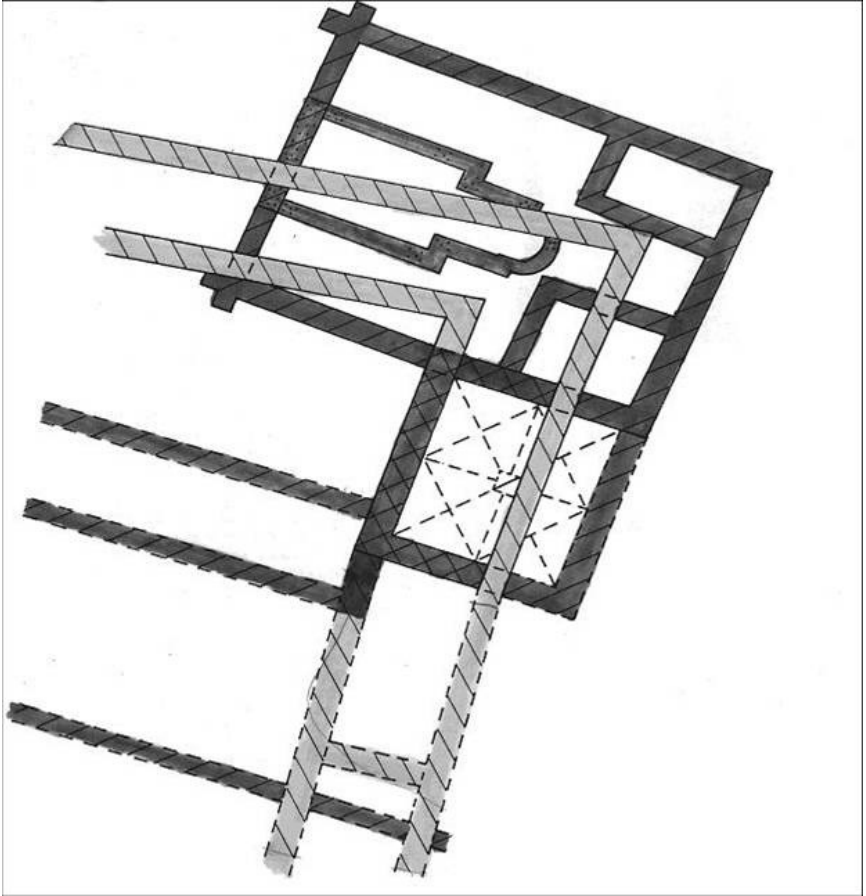


Figure 1. The different phases of building activity at Eskilstuna Hospitaller commandery. Illustration: Sune Zachrisson/Eskilstuna stadsmuseum.

The excavations inside the chapel revealed further information about the former commandery. One important discovery was that the chapel seems to have had at least three different building phases. From a small wooden chapel the site developed into a Romanesque stone chapel in the twelfth century, which gradually expanded into a large Gothic commandery church in the late medieval period. The fifteenth century seems to have been a period of particularly intensive building activity, and finds from inside the chapel consisted of different bricks from the collapsed vaults, items from various graves and fragments of medieval gravestones. Inside as well as outside the chapel a large number of graves were discovered,

representing at least four hundred years of burial activity. Some of the skeletons were of particular interest since it was possible to identify them on account of personal seals that were found in the graves together with the bones. The most famous individual to be identified in this way was a former donor to the commandery named Hemming Hatt Pedersen, whose life has been studied by modern historians. We know today that he died in the commandery of Eskilstuna as a *donati* in about 1475 (Ståhle 1949: 85). Coins and pottery are other examples of artefacts from the excavations in Eskilstuna, and similar archaeological material is available from other Scandinavian Hospitaller houses. This material was therefore used in the comparative study of the order's activities in medieval Scandinavia.

Antvorskov

From Antvorskov, the headquarters of the Hospitallers in the province of Dacia, archaeological investigations between 1887 and 1960 have provided us with much information about this large complex.¹ These excavations have made it possible to reconstruct the commandery and to say something about the functions of the various buildings (fig. 2). The ruins that were exposed in the 1880s were situated below the hill where the late medieval commandery was later going to be built. These early remains were made of bricks with preserved doors and window openings in a Romanesque style. The ruins could therefore be dated to the later part of the twelfth century or the early thirteenth century.² A similar date for the ruins has been given by Wilhelm Lorenzen in his book on the history of the Danish Hospitaller commanderies (Lorenzen 1927: 16). On one of the walls there were traces of a medieval toilet and under the floor there

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- 1 Excavations ca 1887–1960 by Magnus Petersén, Terje Schou, H. H. Schou, C. M. Smidt, Poul Nørlund, Mogens Clemmensen and Mogens Brahde. This material is mostly unpublished, but plans, artefacts and documentation from the excavations can be found at the National Museum in Copenhagen.
 - 2 Also T. Schou, H. H. Schou, V. Schou, C. M. Smidt and others discussed the date of the ruins in so-called 'Indberetninger' to the National Museum during the years 1882–1908. These are today preserved in the collections of the museum in Copenhagen.

were the remains of what has been interpreted as a medieval hypocaust (*Danmarks ruiner*, p. 10). This tells us something about the high living standards of the complex.

The collected picture of the archaeological material from the Romanesque ruins in Antvorskov is that they were used as living quarters as well as for representation. This impression was reinforced by the findings of further medieval buildings close to the Romanesque house a few years later. To the southeast of the Romanesque structure there was an old stone cellar, which some researchers believe is the oldest structure in the complex (Lorenzen 1927: 16). This cellar possibly belonged to the original donation given by Valdemar the Great.³ Adjacent to the Romanesque house a number of Gothic structures, which have been identified as economy buildings possibly built around 1250, have also been uncovered. These buildings may have contained kitchens and stables as a rich pottery material, a baking oven and horseshoes were found among the ruins (Lorenzen 1927: 19). It is likely that these economy buildings served the Romanesque house before the large late medieval commandery was built on the top of the hill some 200 years later.

Between 1925 and 1927 Poul Nørlund and Mogens Clemmensen carried out further investigations in a small area southeast of the hill. During these investigations a possible stable, and what could possibly have been the hospital of the commandery, were discovered.⁴ Further to the east a medieval water pipe from about the year 1500 was also uncovered.⁵ This pipe is a good example of the high standards of the late medieval Hospitaller complex. In the same area as the water pipe, early maps from the seventeenth and eighteenth century show a number of fish- and mill-ponds, and it is possible that these features also go back to the Hospitaller period.⁶ All these finds are indications that a possible economy area of the commandery was once located east of the complex. The Romanesque

3 This idea was presented as late as 1991 in *Danmarks ruiner*, p. 10.

4 Nørlund's *Beretning* is today preserved in the collections of the National Museum in Copenhagen.

5 Poul Nørlund's plan of the water pipe is today preserved in the collections of the National Museum in Copenhagen.

6 A reconstruction of the gardens of Antvorskov Castle from 1768 to 1769 is today preserved in the collections of the National Museum in Copenhagen.

house, the early economy buildings and the possible hospital east of the hill give a fairly complete picture of what a typical Hospitaller commandery could have contained in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

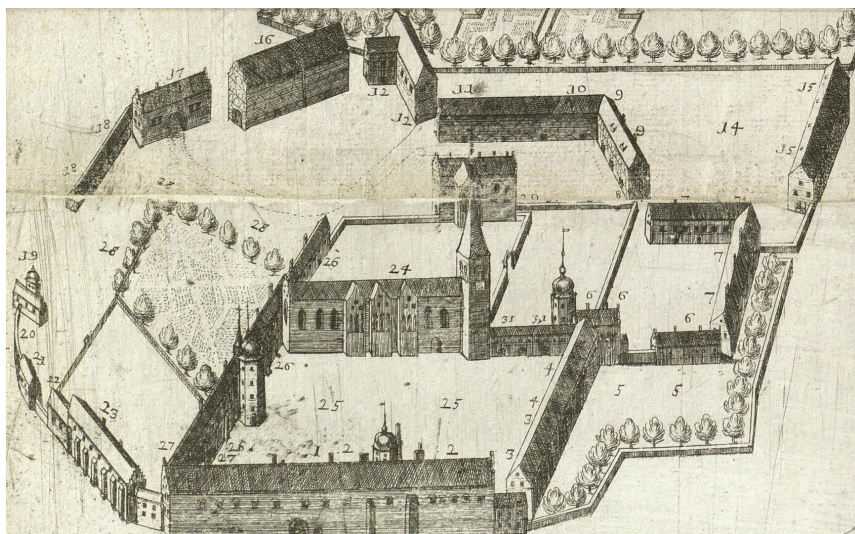


Figure 2. Antvorskov Hospitaller commandery in the seventeenth century, by Peder Hansen Resen, *Atlas Danicus*, 1677–95. Photo: Det Kgl. Bibliotek.

Between the years 1912 and 1917 further excavations were carried out at Antvorskov by Nørlund and C. M. Smidt. This time the investigations focused on the late medieval complex at the top of the hill, and especially the former commandery church, which had been demolished in 1774. The former choir and nave of the church were exposed, together with several interesting architectural details, most of which could be dated to the fifteenth century. There were signs that graves, probably belonging to an earlier church, had been cut by the fifteenth century foundations. In the quadratic late-medieval complex a reused twelfth century gravestone was also found, and this is a clear sign that an earlier church once existed in Antvorskov, even if the precise location remains unknown.

Of interest for the discussion is also a preserved church bell from Antvorskov, which is today in the Vor Frue Church in Copenhagen.

This bell bears the date 1490 and is an indication that it was made during the period when Jakob Mortensen Järnskägg was prior in Antvorskov, between 1467 and 1491.⁷ The very same Jakob Mortensen Järnskägg is also supposed to have been the man behind the large quadratic commandery at the top of the hill according to a number of (now lost) inscriptions which were placed on the walls of the commandery that once faced the courtyard of the complex.⁸ According to the inscriptions most of the building works would have been carried out around 1472 (Friis 1876: 13). If this date is correct it would mean that the large complex at the top of the hill is entirely of a late medieval date, and that it was built to replace the older and much smaller commandery below the hill. A more recent excavation was carried out on the site in 1995 by the Danish archaeologist Kirsten Eliassen. This excavation is important since it is the only modern investigation of the site. Eliassen has, for instance, used a modern contextual digging method where the artefacts have been linked to various contexts right from the start (Eliassen 1995).

Varna (Værne)

There was only one Hospitaller commandery in medieval Norway, located at Varna on the east side of the Oslo Fjord. This complex has never been the subject of any more extensive archaeological investigations as it is located on private land. For this reason we only have very limited information about the appearance and the previous building history of the commandery. A small investigation at Varna was carried out in the summer of 2008, and the author of this article was given the opportunity to participate in the fieldwork. This investigation focused on the remains of the chapel, but indicated that previously unknown remains are hidden beneath the grass in the area (Buckholm & Carlsson 2008). The investigation was also complemented by a georadar investigation, which confirmed the location of such remains (fig. 3).

7 Antvorskov klosterkirke. In *Danmarks Kirker V: Sorø Amt*, II, p. 618.

8 Langebek's studies of these inscriptions are described in *Kirkehistoriske Samlinger* 1895–97: 40.

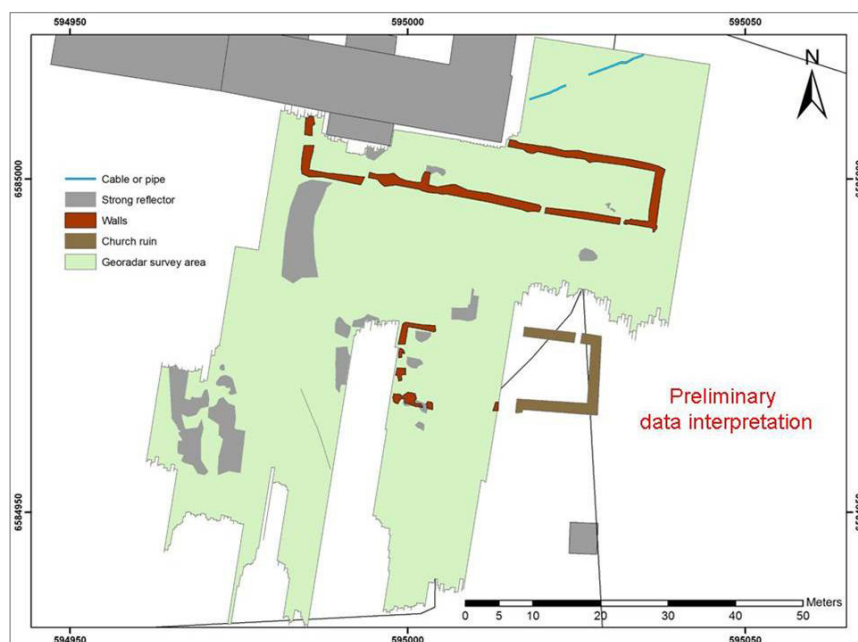


Figure 3. The results of the geophysical survey at Varna Hospitaller commandery. From NIKU Oppdragsrapport 2009. Geophysical survey at Varna Hospitaller Commandery. Illustration: NIKU.

The ruins that are visible above ground today belong mainly to the former commandery church, and especially its chancel. A number of foundation stones in the west indicate that the size of the chapel was about 30m x 11m. The original chapel, which possibly goes back to the twelfth century, is, however, likely to have been much smaller. The commanderies in Eskilstuna and Antvorskov were probably founded around small Romanesque chapels that were expanded or rebuilt into much larger churches in the late medieval period. A possibly Romanesque column is sticking out of the ground inside the chapel and may be an indication that an older church did exist at Varna. It is, however, difficult to spot traces of an earlier chapel, as any such remains would be hidden beneath the floor of the unexcavated late medieval structure.

The thick demolition layers that today cover the interior of the church are likely to be at least 1m thick. To remove, and archaeologically document, these layers would be of great scientific interest, as they are likely to hide the previous floor of the late medieval chapel. This floor may

hold important information, such as gravestones for important donors or distinguished members of the order, and could therefore contribute with important information regarding the history of the Hospitallers at Varna. An early drawing of the ground plan of the church was made by the antiquarian L. D. Klüwer in 1823 during one of his visits to Varna. In preserved correspondence Klüwer expressed his view that all remains of the previous commandery buildings were lost.⁹ In the light of the recent georadar investigation, however, this claim is most likely incorrect since at least one large structure is obviously preserved beneath the ground north of the church.

For the discussion of exactly when the present commandery church in Varna was constructed, a preserved letter from 1401–02 may contain some important clues. This year indulgence was given to people who contributed financially to the construction of a new church in Varna. This clearly indicates that a new commandery church was being planned at the beginning of the fifteenth century, but that the building work had obviously not yet been concluded (DN XVII 958). During the 2008 investigation foundations for the collapsed vaults were uncovered. Interestingly enough, it seems that these foundations had not always been tied into the walls behind them, an indication that the vaults of the church might have been secondary to the outer walls. If the outer walls are from the period after 1402, as indicated by the letter which was mentioned above, it would mean that the vaults were added later. Evidence for such a development is possibly also supported by the preserved bricks from the collapsed vaults inside the church. These bricks can probably be dated to the period c. 1450–1530, and support the impression that the remains we can see at Varna today are entirely of a late medieval date. Around 1570 this late medieval commandery church was finally destroyed during the Nordic Seven Years' War (Reitzel-Nielsen 1984: I, 204).

In view of the fact that, as noted above, a previously unknown building has been located north of the church in Varna, it is interesting that the georadar investigation also indicated that yet another structure may

9 Klüwer's travel description is today preserved in the collections of Østfoldmuseet.

have existed to the west. If this is the case, a closed courtyard may have existed north of the chapel, giving Varna a similar layout to Eskilstuna and Antvorskov, but on a somewhat smaller scale. The medieval complex may therefore have been much more impressive than what is the case today. The commandery was most likely entered from the south, where a part of the old medieval road still exists. This is the road where pilgrims would have passed the commandery on their way to the shrine of St Olav in the Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim.

An area some 20m west of the commandery church is heavily undermined and this has caused the ground to sink. This may indicate that fishponds or further building structures were located in these parts of the commandery compound. Northeast of the present main building two further ponds exist that may go back to the Hospitaller period. Such fish ponds were common at military order sites and the commanderies in Odense and Antvorskov certainly had similar ponds. Areas of open water would typically have been located towards the outer ends of a medieval commandery complex and further investigations may give us a better idea of the previous layout and contribute more information about this fascinating Hospitaller site.

Kronobäck

The second Hospitaller commandery in medieval Sweden was Kronobäck, located on the Swedish east coast and given to the order in about 1480.¹⁰ Excavations in the complex were carried out by the Swedish archaeologist Nils Lagerholm in the 1940s. They were, however, mainly concentrated on the chapel, the best-preserved part of the complex, and no traces from other buildings were ever identified, although it is likely that the living quarters were situated to the south of the chapel. Inside the church was much demolition material from the vaults that had collapsed shortly after the Reformation. Lagerholm removed all this material in order to clear the interior of the chapel.

¹⁰ Johan Peringskjöld's *Diplomatarium* 18. Letter dated 16 July 1480.

He also identified and dated different building phases in the walls of the chapel and collected a large number of smaller artefacts, such as pieces of pottery, coins and liturgical items, from the cultural layers inside the church (Lagerholm 1949–51: 56).

Unfortunately Lagerholm was not as careful during his excavations in Kronobäck as Zachrisson would be in Eskilstuna some twenty years later. This makes it more complicated to work with the material from Kronobäck, since few artefacts can be tied to specific contexts. We simply have to trust that Lagerholm's interpretations of the layers inside the chapel are correct and that he was right in saying that the building activity in the fifteenth century was especially intensive. Further studies of the standing walls, carried out by the author of this article, have largely confirmed Lagerholm's conclusions that an old Romanesque chapel, which today forms the eastern part of the commandery church, is the oldest structure in the area and that the vast commandery church was erected by the Hospitallers as a western extension of this twelfth century chapel. Lagerholm also identified an old cellar south of the chapel as being of possible medieval date (fig. 4).



Figure 4. An aerial photo of Kronobäck Hospitaller commandery. 1. Chapel, 13th century; 2. Commandery church, ca. 1480; 3. Cellar, dated to ca. 1482; 4. Medieval cemetery; 5. Excavated area. Photo: Lantmätaren.

Prompted by construction works on the former graveyard east of the chapel, further excavations were carried out at Kronobäck in the 1950s. During these investigations some late medieval skeletons were found, most of which showed signs of recovering from severe war injuries. These individuals must have lived for some weeks after the injuries were first inflicted, so it is likely that they had been treated in the commandery for some time before finally dying from infections.¹¹ If this was indeed the case, the skeletons can hopefully tell us something about the medical skills that existed among the members of the Order of St John, if studied in more detail by a pathologist.

In an attempt to investigate the cellar south of the chapel a research investigation was carried out in Kronobäck by the author of this article in the autumn of 2007. This investigation focused on finding evidence for a connection between the cellar and the ruins of the Hospitaller chapel. For this reason a trench was opened up in the gap between the cellar and the church, but no foundation walls linking the two structures could be found. A number of burials, however, were found, indicating that the former cemetery had stretched into the area south of the chapel. Some of these skeletons proved to have war injuries, just like the skeletons from the 1950s. This is of interest as fights between the Danes and the Swedes did take place in this region around the year 1500 (Holmén, Ring & Carlsson 2008).

In order to date the preserved cellar more closely, a sample for dendrochronological analysis was collected from a preserved oak beam deep inside the masonry. This sample gave the date 1482,¹² a result which was later confirmed through carbon dating.¹³ The result fits well with the information that Kronobäck was given to the Hospitallers around 1480. It is likely that a fifteenth-century building was once located above the cellar. Such a building could have functioned as living quarters for the brethren and may also have contained kitchens and storage rooms. Further archaeological investigations at Kronobäck may reveal more information about this rural Hospitaller site.

11 The Kronobäck Infirmary Church. Kalmar County Council, p. 4.

12 Report with the results of the dendrodating, Lund University.

13 Report with results from ¹⁴C-analysis, Lund University.

Odense

The former Hospitaller commandery in Odense is the best preserved such site in Scandinavia. The complex is characterised by its irregular shape, where the church sticks out towards the east while the commandery buildings form a closed quadratic yard in the west (fig. 5). The site has been the subject of several archaeological investigations over the years. It is likely that the foundation of the commandery goes back to the donation of an old church to the Hospitallers in Odense around 1280. This church may have been a Romanesque chapel, as several stone fragments of possibly twelfth-century origin have been found in the area.¹⁴

The commandery and its church are mentioned in several preserved medieval documents, but it was only in the later part of the Middle Ages that the complex was given its present layout. The architectural design,¹⁵ as well as a number of dendrochronological samples from the roof structure of the church (NNU report, No. 5, 1998), suggest that most of the present complex was created in the later part of the fifteenth century. One of the bells in the church tower also bears the date 1496 (Lorenzen 1927: 45). All this evidence suggests that a large building program took place in the commandery in the period c. 1460–1500 (Boldsen Lund Mortensen 2000 & Tue Christensen 2008: 13). It is possible that the southern wing of the complex is the oldest, as it does not seem to be tied in with the western and eastern wings. The southern wing may have functioned as a kitchen and economy building (Lorenzen 1927: 83) and could date from about 1400 (Boldsen Lund Mortensen 2000: 84). The quadratic complex has in that case developed from this wing during the late medieval period (Krongaard Kristensen 2000: 47). The church had a number of side chapels, most of which are still preserved, that are linked to various Danish noble families of importance to the Hospitallers (Olesen 1975). The church has also preserved an external opening for preaching. Such openings are rare in Scandinavian monastic architecture and may also have been used to display relics to the crowds (Reitzel-Nielsen 1984: I, 172 and Lind *et al.* 2004: 17).

14 Lorenzen 1927: 36 mentions that older, possibly Romanesque worked stones were spotted during restoration work 1878–80, and Arentoft 1997: 10 mentions a Romanesque detail which was found during his investigations in 1997.

15 Lorenzen 1927: 29; S. Hans kirke. In *Danmarks Kirker IX: Odense Amt, III*, pp. 1221–1555.

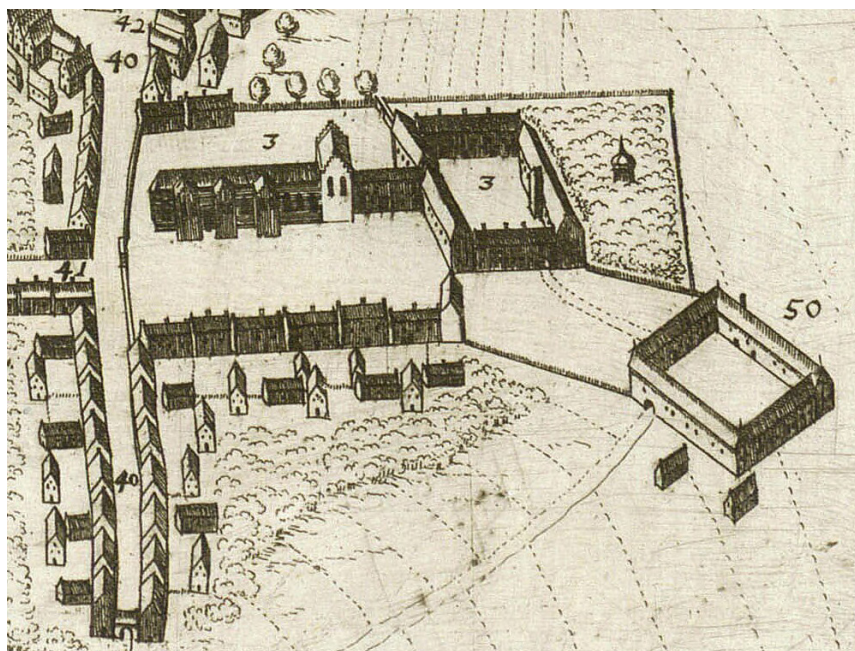


Figure 5. Odense Hospitaller commandery in the seventeenth century by Resen.
Photo: Det Kgl. Bibliotek.

It is likely that the first version of the commandery in Odense was considerably smaller, and that early buildings may have been located north of the church. During ground works thick demolition layers from possible earlier structures have been found in this area (Tue Christensen 2002) and remains from the thirteenth century have been uncovered in the same area.¹⁶ A recent georadar investigation has also identified a large stone foundation from a possible older building within the commandery.¹⁷ In the nearby park Kongens Have, north of the preserved commandery buildings, there are still a number of partly backfilled ponds that may go back to the Hospitaller period. Preserved pictures and maps of this area from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century show that stables and economy buildings were then located here. This suggests that

16 In a report by Dorte Lund Mortensen and Lars Froberg Mortensen from 1996 they mention on page 7 pits from the beginning of the thirteenth century, which the authors think predate the Hospitaller commandery.

17 A report of the georadar investigation is today preserved in the collections of the Møntergården Museum.

a large economy area was present here which may date back to the medieval period. The archaeological information from Odense Hospitaller commandery suggests that the complex was founded in the late thirteenth century, but that the buildings we know today are the result of a large building campaign during the latter half of the fifteenth century.

Ribe

In Ribe there is archaeological evidence for a 0.5m thick fill, which was spread out over the area for the later Hospitaller commandery around the year 1300. A wooden well, which was completely covered by this fill, has been dendrodated to 1273 (ASR 1200, p. 41), and the same area contained remains of simple wooden houses with domestic floor layers. This archaeological information suggests that a significant change occurred in the plot around 1300 and that this may be linked to the donation of land in the city to the Hospitallers. Archaeological investigations also indicate that the area where the Hospitaller commandery in Ribe was erected was not a former church site, but rather an ordinary block in the medieval city. If there was no church present from the beginning, it is likely that one of the first buildings to be erected by the Hospitallers would have been a new commandery church. The need for a large commandery church for the Ribe brethren would, however, have been limited around the year 1300, since the Hospitaller community must have been fairly small.

From 1371 there is a preserved letter mentioning that the brethren were complaining about the living conditions in their Ribe commandery. This was largely due to the fact that the plot was small and squeezed in among existing houses in the medieval city. The brethren were also afraid that the location of the commandery close to the sea increased the risk of flooding.¹⁸ There is evidence in the written material that the Hospitallers tried to trade the small plot in central Ribe for a larger site. For this reason the commandery was involved in a conflict with St Nikolai Benedictine monastery outside the town walls between the years 1479 and 1502. King Christian I (r. 1448–81) had granted the Hospitallers the right to take land from the monastery, but the nuns of the monastery opposed his

18 *Repertorium diplomaticum regni Danici mediaevalis*, Ser. I, vol. II, No. 2914.

decision (Reitzel-Nielsen 1984: I, 178). The Hospitallers were obviously not very successful in their claims, as they seem to have stayed in central Ribe until the Reformation.

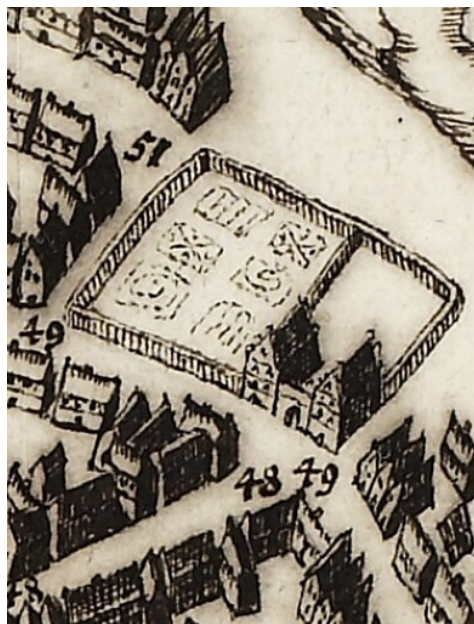


Figure 6. Ribe Hospitaller commandery in the seventeenth century by Resen. Photo: Det Kgl. Bibliotek.

The area of the former Hospitaller commandery in Ribe has undergone a number of archaeological excavations in recent years. This makes it, from an archaeological point of view, one of the best known Scandinavian Hospitaller sites. A large excavation in 1987 made it possible to establish a number of activity phases within the former Hospitaller compound (Madsen 1999: 89). The first of these phases is characterised by the abandonment of the pre-Hospitaller settlement in this part of Ribe around 1300 (Madsen 1999: 92). The second phase c. 1300–20 is characterised by the previously mentioned fill being spread over the area (Andersen 1999: 31). The first brick building may have been erected during this phase, and could have consisted of the commandery church itself. The third phase, c. 1320–50, consisted of a slow growth of the occupation layers within the area, but with few signs of building activity (Madsen 1999: 104).

An east-west orientated building with buttresses obviously existed in phase four c. 1350–1410, and was seen resting on the occupation layers from phase three. In phase four the footings for a new building were also dug adjacent to the building with the buttresses (Madsen 1999: 95). This new building was about 15m long and 8m wide and was located just north of the building with the buttresses. The situation could be interpreted like this: Buttresses were being added to an existing brick building (possibly the church) and a new building was being erected at a 90-degree angle to this supposed church. It is also possible that the buttresses were added to an existing church in order to support the weight of new vaults.

A new activity phase was identified between the years c. 1410 and 1465. This phase was characterised by thick demolition layers being created in the area. These layers contained a large number of roof tiles, indicating that the upper parts of a building must have been altered during this period. One last phase of activity, phase six, indicated demolition and destruction in the area following the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

Another archaeological excavation was carried out in the northern parts of Ribe Hospitaller commandery between 1997 and 1998. This investigation indicated that remains of the pre-Hospitaller settlement had been preserved in the northern parts of the plot as well and that a well-defined border existed between the city and the Hospitaller compound in the north and west (Andersen 1999: 30). The thick fill of around 1300 could also be traced during this investigation and it was clear that this fill was covering an older domestic settlement. This gives further support to the assumption that the Hospitallers in Ribe planned their new commandery around 1300 (Andersen 1999: 31; ASR 1200, p. 22). Another interesting result of the 1997–98 investigation is that the northern wing of the commandery was discovered. This wing seems to have been parallel to the building with buttresses further to the south (the supposed church) and had the remains of a fireplace inside. The wing had been rebuilt and heavily altered during the course of the fifteenth century (fig. 6).

In the southern section of the 1997–98 investigation area yet another building showed up in the shape of floor layers and cuts for various foundation walls. This may be the remains of the eastern wing of the Hospitaller complex. If put together the two investigations of 1987

and 1997–98 indicate that the Hospitaller commandery in Ribe had an almost square shape towards the end of the Middle Ages, and that it is the fifteenth century that can be seen as the main period of expansion (Andersen 1999: 35; ASR 1200, p. 41).

Dueholm

The starting-point for Dueholm Hospitaller commandery was probably a donation around 1371 (Dueh. Dipl., p. 15) and later donations of *S:t Clements Church* and the *All-Saints House* in nearby *Nyköbing* around 1380.¹⁹ The commandery church was mentioned for the first time in 1420, when a new altar was being constructed (Dueh. Dipl., No. 106). In a preserved drawing of the complex from about 1670 the church is surrounded by a number of freestanding buildings to the north and east.²⁰ The area seems to have been divided into two distinct parts; a living block north of the church and an economy area to the northeast of the chapel. It is possible that this structure goes back to the Hospitaller period (fig. 7).

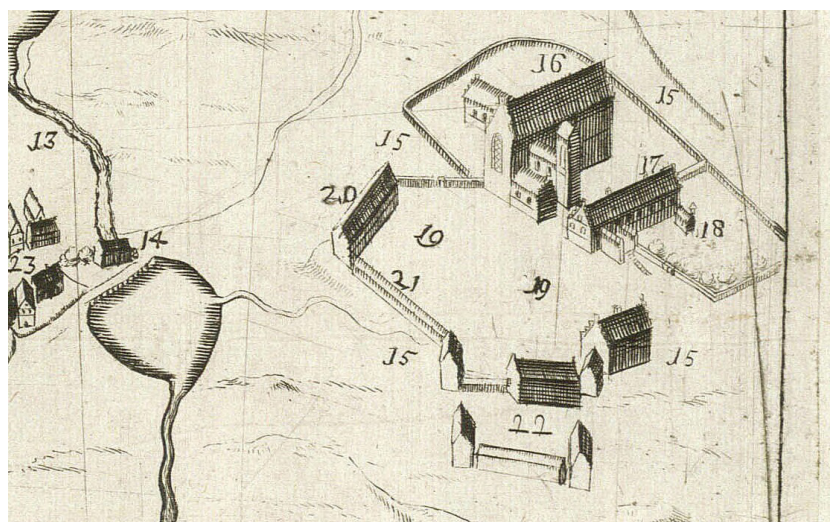


Figure 7. Dueholm Hospitaller commandery in the seventeenth century by Resen. Photo: Det Kgl. Bibliotek.

19 The donation is known through a confirmation by the Pope on 3 April 1445. The letter is published in *Acta Pontificum Danica*, III, no. 1870.

20 Resen's Atlas from 1677 is today available in a new edition.

The commandery at Dueholm has been the subject of a number of archaeological investigations between the end of the nineteenth century and the present day. These investigations have contributed towards a much better understanding of the medieval complex.²¹ Among the structures that are left from the medieval period is the main building, which today contains Morslands Historiske Museum, and medieval masonry in a nearby building which until recently functioned as a dairy. Several other buildings were, however, most likely present in the medieval commandery.

The main building has been interpreted by some researchers as a former mill (Bugge Vegger 1996: 91), but this claim is doubtful for a number of reasons. The architecture of the building is far too sophisticated for a mill and its solid stone walls indicate that it was most likely built as a dwelling. This impression is further supported by the fact that another mill is clearly visible in a different location on Resen's picture of the complex from about 1670. In the same picture the building in question also has a chimney. The Danish researcher Lorenzen thought that the building might have been the Prior's lodgings, and that it may have been a parallel to the previously mentioned house at Antvorskov (Lorenzen 1927: 60, 82). The fact that the king's local man moved into the house during the Reformation around 1539 makes it highly likely that it was a comfortable house by the 1530s. The author of this article has suggested that the preserved building might have functioned as a freestanding hospital which belonged to the commandery (Carlsson 2010: 227–229).

Whatever the original purpose was of this beautiful medieval building in Dueholm, it is clear that it is once again the fifteenth century that stands out as the most expansive period of this former Hospitaller complex. A bell from the commandery church, possible cast as early as 1410, has been preserved in Resen Church, and in the church of the nearby city of Nyköbing there are a number of choir stalls that may come from Dueholm. These stalls have an inscription saying they were made for the new choir in Dueholm commandery church around the year 1500.²²

21 Per Bugge Vegger has concluded the archaeological investigations at Dueholm in an article from 1996.

22 Dueholm Klosterkirke. In *Danmarks Kirker* XII: Thisted Amt, I, p. 88.

Viborg

It is likely that the origin of Viborg commandery was the chapel which was given to the Hospitallers in 1284 (*Diplomatarium Danicum*, Ser. 2, vol. III, No. 108). The first archaeological studies of the area were made as early as 1817, and by the middle of the nineteenth century several ruins were uncovered by the local researcher Christian Gullev. He found several stonewalls and was able to reconstruct the central parts of the complex. It is obvious that the commandery had a squared shape towards the end of the Middle Ages and that the church constituted the northern wing (fig. 8).²³ In the church, worked stones from doors and windows were uncovered, together with glazed floor tiles (Lorenzen 1927: 51).

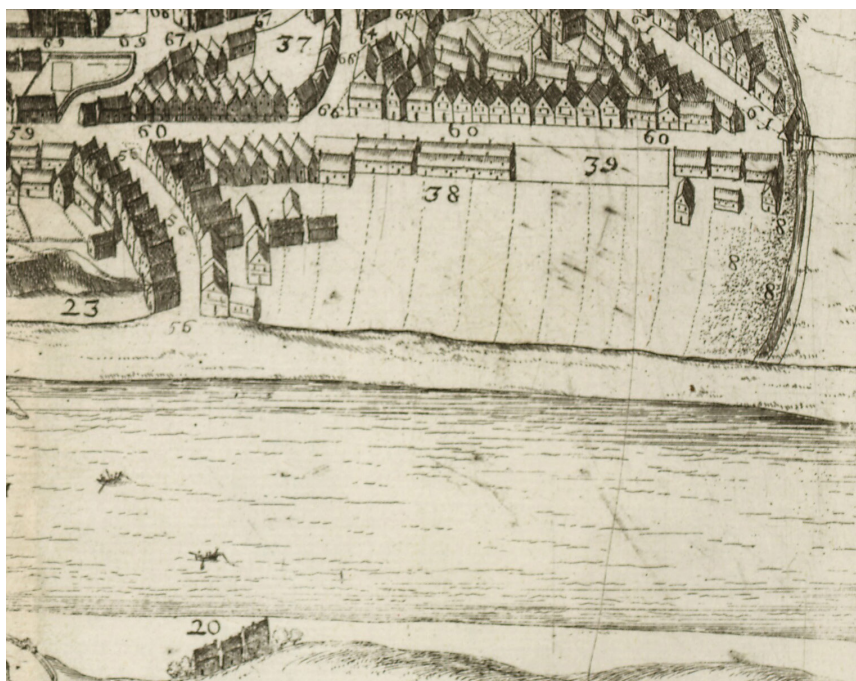


Figure 8. Viborg Hospitaller commandery in the seventeenth century by Resen. Photo: Det Kgl. Bibliotek.

23 Gullev's so-called 'Beretningar' are preserved in the collections of the National Museum in Copenhagen.

When new sewage pipes were put down in nearby St Ib's Street in 1970–71 further remains of the eastern parts of the complex were uncovered. The walls had partly rested on timber, which had been driven into the natural clay. As a result, it was possible to collect samples for dendrochronological dating. Five individual samples gave the collected result of 1282–1317 (NNU rapport, No. 40, 1999). It can be questioned, however, whether the squared layout of the complex goes back to the thirteenth century. It is more likely that this shape developed gradually, as was the case in the other Scandinavian houses of the order.²⁴

A fire hit the commandery church in 1501, and it is possible that the squared layout is the result of a redesign of the complex after the fire (Reitzel-Nielsen 1984: I, 168). The foundations of the commandery were unfortunately almost completely removed during the nineteenth century, something that makes further investigations of the site complicated. Just outside the actual commandery area there existed at least two other buildings that probably belonged to the complex; namely a hospital and a timber framed building of unknown purpose. The later of these structures might have contained dwellings with storage rooms attached, as indicated by the 1970s investigations. The artefacts from the building indicate that it was a late medieval construction, possibly used by the inmates of the commandery (Levin Nielsen 1970).

The same area was included in a small investigation in 1988, which complemented the picture of the southern parts of the complex. During this investigation further buildings for potential inmates and more economy buildings with a possible link to the commandery were uncovered (Levin Nielsen 1988). Further to the south remains of a blacksmith's activities have been identified, but to link these finds to the commandery remains difficult (Hjermind, Iversen & Krongaard Kristensen 1998: 18). Adjacent to the previously named hospital there was also a cemetery, where several human burials have been found. The remains of the hospital itself have been identified through its solid stonewalls and pieces of window glass north of the commandery.

24 This development of the area has support in the archaeological material according to Jesper Hjermind at Viborg Stiftsmuseum.

In 1578 the Danish king decided to pull down the church and the commandery buildings and to reuse the stones in Viborg Cathedral and a new courthouse (*Kancelliets Brevbøger*, 17 Aug 1578). An excavation in 1985 found the remains of a possible barn that may have belonged to the commandery. Such Hospitaller storage units existed in many Scandinavian towns and were used to store products that were going to be sold at the local markets (Vedsø 1986: 2). In the years 1518–19 the Hospitallers in Viborg also controlled a brick kiln which was possibly linked to the expansion of the late medieval commandery (*Ældste Danske Archivregistraturer*, II, p. 391, No. 1–6). The large rebuilding program of the complex in the late-medieval period could have made it necessary for the brethren to produce their own bricks. Even in Viborg it is the late medieval period that stands out as being the most expansive.

Horsens

The commandery in Horsens has never been the subject of any extensive archaeological investigations and our knowledge of this complex is therefore rather limited. A number of preserved pictures of the area show the later Stjernholm Castle which was built on the plot shortly after the Reformation (fig. 9). It is possible that this castle contained masonry from the former commandery, but few remains from the castle exist today. If the pictures of the castle show parts of the original Hospitaller complex it seems to have consisted of a squared complex, where the church might have formed the northern wing, since a number of buttresses can be seen on that wall.²⁵ The commandery was located just to the east of the city of Horsens and next to a wide stream.²⁶ This location gave the Hospitallers an advantage in terms of transport and trading activities.

25 Vor Frue Kirke. In *Danmarks Kirker XVI: Århus Amt, Horsens*, p. 6140.

26 Resen's Atlas from 1677 is today available in a new edition from 1925 onwards.

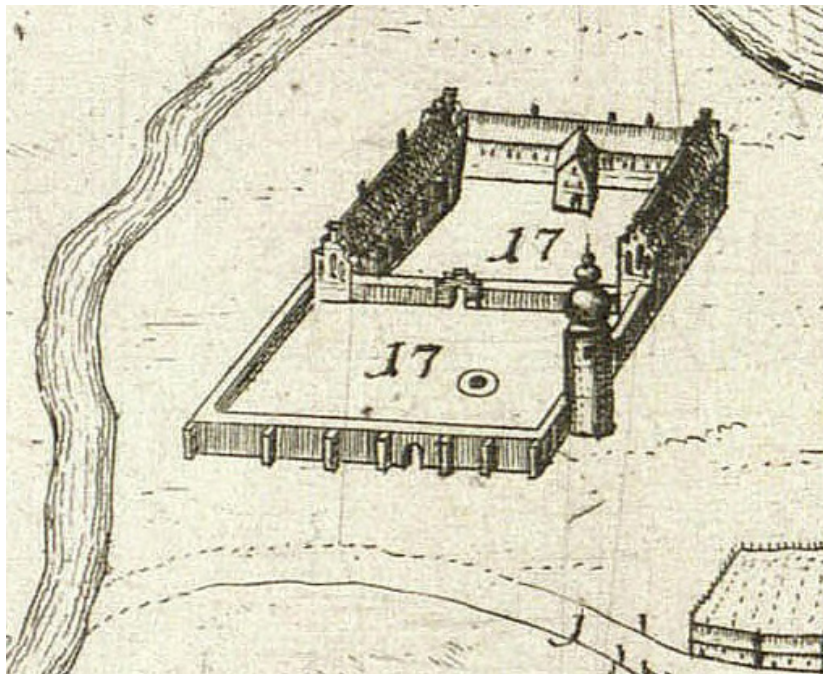


Figure 9. Horsens Hospitaller commandery in the seventeenth century by Resen. Photo: Det Kgl. Bibliotek.

In the year 1390 a *domus nostra* in Horsens is mentioned in a preserved letter written by the Prior of Antvorskov. This may be an indication that the commandery at this point was still fairly small, and that it did not expand into a larger complex until later in the Middle Ages (*Repertorium diplomaticum regni Danici mediaevalis*, Ser. I, vol. II, No. 3742). It is only in the year 1438 that we can confirm that members of the order actually lived in Horsens (*Ældste Danske Archivregistraturer*, I, p. 173). Further excavations of the area are therefore needed in order to establish a more comprehensive chronology of the development of the commandery.

A number of artefacts can nevertheless be linked to the complex. A stone container with a possible Hospitaller cross was found during ground works in the area in the nineteenth century.²⁷ A smaller archaeological investigation by Horsens Museum in the 1980s also uncovered human burials and thick layers of medieval demolition material in the

²⁷ Vor Frue Kirke. In *Danmarks Kirker XVI: Århus Amt, Horsens*, p. 614o.

area. Some of these remains may go back to the twelfth century and can therefore predate the Hospitaller compound. It is possible, however, that an older church was given to the Hospitallers in Horsens and that the older burials belong to this church (Kieffer-Olsen, Boldsen & Pentz 1986: 24). Such a development has been seen at many other Hospitaller sites, and the old church in Horsens may therefore be identical with the now lost Vor Frue parish church, which is known from written sources.²⁸

In a will from 1514 a donation was given to the brethren in Horsens to expand their commandery church, and it is clear from the letter that the church was under construction in this period.²⁹ Another preserved letter mentions that the Hospitaller church in Horsens was demolished in 1540 (*Kancelliets Brevbøger*, 28 June 1540), so it is possible that this new church only existed for some 30 years. During two smaller archaeological excavations at Wormsgade 8–10 and Wormsgade 12 further remains of the Hospitaller commandery were uncovered. During the first of these two investigations a large east-west orientated stone foundation with traces of a large buttress was discovered. This foundation may come from the former Hospitaller church, and close to the foundation about 60 human burials were uncovered (Klemensen 2002: 7).

The second investigation revealed the foundation trench for a large medieval wall as well as several fragments of medieval roof tiles and further human remains (Kjærgaard 2004). An unpublished archaeological investigation was also carried out by Horsens Museum in the area in 2009.³⁰ Further investigations of the former Hospitaller commandery in Horsens will hopefully increase our knowledge of this complex. Any such investigations are unfortunately made difficult by a modern residential area covering parts of the site.

Smaller Hospitaller sites in medieval Scandinavia

There were also a number of smaller Hospitaller sites in medieval Scandinavia, which are less well known than the larger commanderies.

28 Kirkerne i Horsens. In *Danmarks Kirker XVI: Århus Amt, Horsens*, p. 5348.

29 Klevenfeldts saml. Pk. 26. Håndskriftsamlingen. The National Archives in Copenhagen.

30 Horsens Museum has not published the final report yet.

Many of these sites were located in, or adjacent to, important towns where the Hospitallers had economic interests and could benefit from trading activities or the local town markets. Such houses were located in Stockholm, Lund, and Köpinge in Sweden, and Nyborg and possibly Svenstrup in Denmark. These sites cannot, however, be covered by this article.

Summary

This study of the medieval Scandinavian Hospitaller commanderies has shown that small-scale Romanesque complexes were founded by the Hospitallers during the twelfth century in Antvorskov, Eskilstuna and Varna. These three commanderies represent the very beginning of Hospitaller activity in Scandinavia, and also fulfilled the functions as headquarters of the order in each one of the three Scandinavian countries. All other Hospitaller houses in medieval Scandinavia are likely to be of high medieval or even late medieval date.

The expansions of the Hospitaller complexes in Scandinavia is closely linked to the economic development of the order on a local as well as a more international level: events such as the loss of the Holy Land, the Trial of the Templars, the Black Death, several European wars and conflicts in the fourteenth century, and a general recovery of the European economy in the late medieval period, contributed towards a more stable flow of cash and donations to the Scandinavian Hospitallers from about 1400 onwards (Carlsson 2010). This economic development can be proven by written as well as archaeological sources.

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