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Edited by

Birgitta Hårdh · Kristina Jennbert · Deborah Olausson

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Time travelling

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Introduction

THE PAST IS reconstructed and re-enacted to an increasing extent. Everything from Stone Age settlements to industries of the 20th century is recreated. Thus it is possible to travel back in time to almost any period or phenomena (Peterson 2003; Horsler 2003). Most places with reconstructions and re-enactment have come into being since the 1980s, however there are predecessors, which we tend to forget.

The open-air-museums were among the first to reconstruct early settlements and life. At the same time as threatened buildings and settings from the countryside and the towns were rescued by being moved to the open-air-museums, the museums also experimented with reconstruction and re-enactment of the Middle Ages and the Prehistory.

Thus the Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum at the Hjerl Moor in Jutland, Denmark, since the 1930s has reconstructed buildings from the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, and the Middle Ages (www.hjerlhede.dk). The reconstructions have been carried out in co-operation with leading scholars of their age, such as Gudmund Hatt, P. V. Glob, Poul Nørlund, Axel Steensberg, Hans-Ole Hansen and Ulla Haastrup. The reconstructions reflected the actual research frontier of the age. Still there is a tendency to overlook Hjerl Hede both in the present debate and in the history of the reconstructions of the past. Hjerl Hede has ended in the shadow of The Lejre Experimental Centre on Zealand and many other centres.

The aim is here, partly to present the Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum and its reconstructions, and partly to try to understand why the reconstructions of the museum unjustly have ended in the shadow.

Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum

The Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum, formerly “The Old Village”, is constructed around a village from the 18–19th centuries with farms, water- and windmill, school and parsonage conveyed there. Here are also a dairy, different handicrafts, a steam sawmill, peat production, a living Stone Age settlement, and a reconstructed medieval church.

The museum was founded by the director Hans-Peter Hjerl Hansen in 1930. The beginning was the moving to Hjerl Hede of the oldest preserved village farm of Denmark, the Vinkel Farm, from the 16th century. In 1932 for the first time in Denmark a museum made alive early country cul-

ture and handicraft. The museum followed this course more regularly from 1955. The museum was approved by the state in 1979–81 as a special museum and was then transferred from the Hjerl Foundation to a status as a self-governing institution (Hjerl-Hansen 1950; Mygind 2005).

Stone Age

An interest in Stone Age life is mirrored in an early attempt at reconstructing Stone Age life performed in 1919 in Sweden. This attempt was made by the journalist Ernst Klein at the manor of Rockelstad in Sörmland. Klein wrote a series of newspaper articles later collected in a small book called “Stone Age Life” (Swedish: *Stenåldersliv*; Klein 1920). This reconstructed life of the Stone Age was primarily performed as a basis for a series of entertaining articles in the newspaper *Aftontidningen*. But at the same time this attempt shows a genuinely felt interest in the past, probably due to the fact that Klein was deeply interested in ancient times and later became the first museum teacher at the Open Air museum of Skansen in Stockholm.

In Denmark the reconstruction of Stone Age life begins with Hjerl Hede in 1955 some 36 years after the Swedish experiment. Soon after, a person also involved in the reconstructions at Hjerl Hede, Hans-Ole Hansen, applied the idea of re-creating Stone Age houses in another part of Denmark, in Allerslev on Zealand. He involved some of his friends to build a Stone Age house in 1956. Probably this house was inspired by the attempts at Hjerl Hede, but in Hansen’s reconstructions in Lejre the prototypes were taken from Denmark (Hansen 1959).

At the very beginning of Stone Age life and buildings in Hjerl Hede two Stone Age huts were erected. These activities were performed with support from the National Museum in Copenhagen. The house models were taken from entirely different geographic parts of the world. One of the huts had a Greek round hut as its model, and the other one was made after a finding from a Stone Age hut from Langeland in Denmark.

The second phase of Stone Age life at Hjerl Hede started when the two huts were replaced in 1967. Now the reconstructions were erected with the Barkær findings as a model. The archaeologist P. V. Glob was responsible for the work. Expansions and further buildings were made during the years to come.



FIGURE 1. The Stone Age settlement and its visitors at Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum. Photo: Jes Wienberg, July 1998.

The third phase of Stone Age life at Hjerl Hede started in 1986–87 when one of the Barkær houses was pulled down and replaced by a reconstruction of a house from Limensgård on Bornholm. This work was led by the archaeologist Poul Otto Nielsen. One of the reasons why they chose to replace the Barkær houses was that Glob in 1975 had changed his mind about the Barkær houses. He now believed that they were houses of death and ritual instead of houses for the living. A second house from Limensgård was built in 1993–95 (Mygind 2005:117f).

The explicit aim of the Stone Age houses at Hjerl Hede was to use them in the performance act of living past (Buskov 1980). Ambitions of the research was probably applied during the erection of the houses, but after that the houses became an integrated part of the presentation at the Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum (Figure 1). The Stone Age reconstruction of Hjerl Hede is the earliest Danish example of recreated Stone Age. It is even so early that the models are partly from outside Denmark. After this the models for reconstructed houses are mostly from the area of Denmark or Scandinavia.

Bronze Age

The interest in reconstructing houses from the Bronze Age is relatively late in comparison with the attempts of recreating houses from the Stone Age and the Iron Age. Hjerl Hede is also here the earliest example in Scandinavia as it starts already in the year 1974. In Sweden the earliest example is at Vitlycke in Bohuslän, western Sweden, starting in

1986. In the years 1997–2001 the Bronze Age house Bovigården in Boarp, Scania, was erected. In southern Norway there is “Bronseplassen”, started in 1993. In Denmark after Hjerl Hede there is a Bronze Age house erected at Hølufgård on Funen in 1983 and another house from the period is erected near Borum Eshøj in Jutland in 1993.

The Bronze Age house of Hjerl Hede was built in 1974 with the findings from Egehøj, Djursland in Jutland, as a model. The work was led by the archaeologist Niels Axel Boas. The erection of the house was a part of the presentation activities at the museum, and the building was performed with the tools of the Bronze Age (Boas 1980; Mygind 2005:116ff). The Bronze Age house never had the same content as the Stone Age houses. The house was an attempt of the museum to give a “full” sequence of houses from prehistory. But both the first and the second house from the Iron Age had long ago been pulled down, so it was never a full and contemporary representation of prehistoric buildings at Hjerl Hede.

Iron Age

On Gotland in Sweden Gerda Boëthius and John Nihlén 1930 built an Iron Age house on top of a “Giant’s grave”, on a ground of stone where there had been a house (Boëthius and Nihlén 1932). The house was called “The Lojsta Hall”. The building is not in an open-air museum. Boëthius and Nihlén, architect and archaeologist respectively, had an interest in Scandinavian early building tradition.

In Denmark it was at Hjerl Hede that the first building



FIGURE 2. The first Iron Age house. Photo from Hatt 1950:59.

from the Iron Age was erected. After this house was built in 1938, there has been built a lot of Iron Age long houses, especially after the establishment in 1964 of the Lejre Experimental Centre as part of an educational ambition in Denmark.

The culture geographer and archaeologist Gudmund Hatt was responsible for the erection of the first Iron Age house (Figure 2) at Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum in 1938, only eight years after the opening of the museum. This first Iron Age house was built after a model of a find from Malle Moor in Jutland (Hatt 1950; Mygind 2005:82f.). In the year 1952 a new Iron Age house was erected, this time from another model, but still from the vicinity, a locality called Gørding Hede, also in Jutland. At this time the archaeologist P. V. Glob was responsible together with Mogens Wit-tusen (Glob 1980).

The purpose of the first Iron Age house at Hjerl Hede was to elucidate a local building tradition in a long time perspective. The aim was to represent an early phase of regional architecture in Jutland and it was in close connection with the idea of showing the history of the region. It may be possible to conclude that in 1938, as well as in the year of the building of the Lojsta Hall around 1930, it was a primary aim to present national building traditions and greatness in connection with national historical traditions. The primary aim was anyway not to show a way of presentation and living history as we see today in the Stone Age reconstructions.

Middle Ages

Many Norwegian and Swedish churches have been removed into parks or the new established open air museums during the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century to be saved from destruction, when the parish needed a new and larger church. The churches removed, were wooden churches, either stave churches or timber churches. A single medieval stone church however has been removed. The ruins of St Mary Minor in Lund were re-erected at the Cultural Museum in 1914.

In Denmark, which was and is totally dominated by stone churches, fewer churches were renewed and none were moved into a museum. The churches of Rubjerg and Lyngby in Jutland were rebuilt further inland in respectively 1904 and 1913–14, when they were threatened by the sea. For the same reason it has been considered, but rejected, to move the nearby church of Mårup either to the Open Air Museum at Copenhagen or further from the sea.

Since the 1990s several stave churches have been reconstructed in Scandinavia: Fantoft at Bergen 1992–97 after a fire, Jørundgard Medieval Centre in Oppland 1994, Gol Medieval Park in Hallingdal 1994, Moesgård Museum in Jutland 1995–97, Mannaminne Open Air Museum in Västernorrland 2000, Heiamøy in the Vestmanna Isles at Iceland 2000 and Brattahlid in Greenland 2000. Reconstructions of wooden churches have also been planned at the Viking Village “Viking Ages” in Scania and at Södra Råda in Värmland (after a fire).

Many wooden churches have been reconstructed, but only a few stone churches. At the Open Air Museum Murberget in Härnösand in Västernorrland a North-Swedish late medieval church was erected 1925–30 after the model of the churches in Hackås and Ramsele. The church of Murberget has wall paintings and furniture from different models of northern Sweden. The purpose at Murberget was threefold: To create a symbol for the new open air museum of Northern Sweden; to build a functioning church; and finally to have a museum for church art (Bäckström 1994; 2002). A Romanesque stone church (Figure 3) was reconstructed at Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum in 1950. Early Christian monastery churches have been reconstructed in Ferrycarrig and Gortin in Ireland in the 1980s and a Merovingian church in Herrsching at Ammersee in Bavaria, Germany, in the 1990s.

The idea of a reconstruction of a medieval stone church in Denmark at a museum came from the leader of Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum, Hans Peter Hjerl Hansen. The church was however built after the death of Hjerl Hansen.

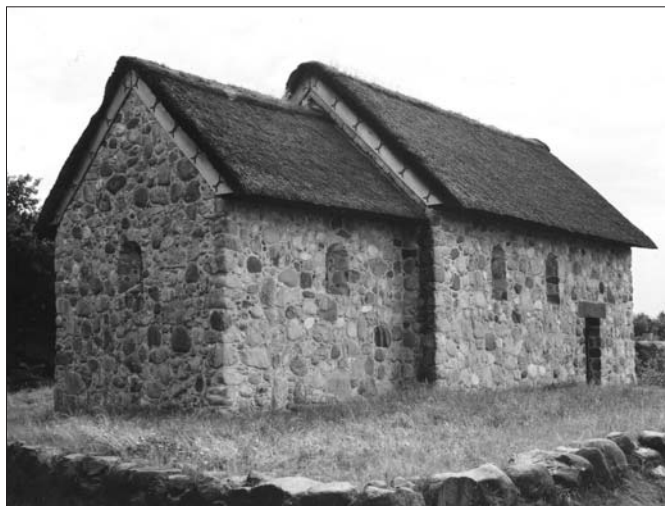


FIGURE 3. The reconstructed Romanesque stone church at Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum. Photo: Jes Wienberg, July 2005.

The reconstruction was managed in close corporation with the National Museum in Copenhagen with its director Poul Nørlund and the architects and curators C. G. Schultz and Aage Roussell. The church was drawn by the architect Leopold Teschl.

The building of the medieval church started in 1949 and the church was opened at the jubilee celebration in 1950. King Frederik 9 and Queen Ingrid participated at the celebration, and a speech was given by Nørlund.

The first intention was to copy an existing Jutlandic medieval church, which then should be filled with collected furniture. This idea were soon dropped, as Jutland already is dotted with preserved medieval churches, and furthermore it became apparent that it was difficult to acquire furniture. Instead the intention turned into building an ideal type, which could represent the first Romanesque stone churches from the period *c.* 1100–50. Thus the church of Hjerl Hede became simple with a chancel and nave without additions, with a pavement, wall benches, timber ceiling and a thatched roof.

The chancel and nave of the church at Hjerl Hede was erected using as a model the church of Tjørring at Herning, but without its later additions such as its western tower and porch. The idea to the model came from the leader of Herning Museum, H. P. Hansen. The baptismal font at Hjerl Hede is a genuine medieval font found in a garden at Hørning. The model of the altar table was taken from Tømmerby, the candlesticks from Visby, the crucifix from Åby, the doors from Stadil and the bell from Smøllerup. Thus the architecture and the furniture of the church all have its models in Jutland (Nørlund 1950; Mygind 2005:85ff).

In 1985–86 the church was used in an experiment. The art historian Ulla Hastrup at the restoration School at the Danish Academy of Fine Arts, in co-operation with the National Museum had painted wall paintings in fresco- and secco-technique in the chancel, in the triumphal arch and on the triumphal wall using the preserved Romanesque wall

paintings of the church of Råsted, Jutland, as a model. In 1992 also the font was painted (Hastrup 1986; 1993). And finally in 1994 coloured glass was put into the windows.

The medieval church is used for service in the season and used as a background in a historical movie. On the other hand the church at Hjerl Hede has not, as is nowadays the case with other reconstructed churches, been used at baptisms or weddings, as it is not consecrated.

The reconstructed church at Hjerl Hede is built with assistance of the most competent experts of its period using the actual knowledge of the time of its origin. From the letters in the archive of the museum it appears clear that the persons involved carefully considered the elaboration of the church and did their best to reach the highest possible authenticity. Thus Teschl made an investigation of the masonry at the church of Tjørring before the construction work at Hjerl Hede.

Today the church might be conceived as a little too “primitive” with its coarse walls, ceiling, and thatched roof. However the wall paintings and the painting of the font in bright colours have taken the interior of the church up to the present research front. Basically the Romanesque church fits badly with the core of the open air museum in the 18th and 19th centuries. It ought to have been a Jutlandic church as they looked like in those centuries, *e.g.* a Romanesque church, where a porch and a tower were added, possibly vaulting and partly new windows. Or the other way around, the Romanesque church needs the context of a medieval village.

There is no medieval village but it should be mentioned that the museum made medieval ploughing experiments with a wheel plough in 1956. The experiments were made in co-operation with the ethnologist Axel Steensberg from the National Museum (Mygind 2005:94).

Research and presentation

The reconstructions and the experiments at Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum are all conducted consistently with the actual knowledge by leading scholars of its time. Thus research and presentation have been closely connected. When nevertheless Hjerl Hede has landed in the shade of the Lejre Experimental Centre and other centres, it might be for several reasons. Here follows an attempt to present six concurrent causes, which have to do with a mixture of conscious choices and coincidences, geography and resources of money and staff:

1) Priorities

Reconstructions of settlements from the Prehistory and Middle Ages have been subordinate to the main focus of Hjerl Hede on the transferred buildings of the 18–19th centuries. The reconstructions have been of secondary importance, opposite to the case in Lejre and in other places, where settlement from prehistory and the Middle Ages has been the primary aim (in Lejre the 19th century is subordi-

nate!). The transition to become a state approved museum might have reinforced a tendency towards priority of preservation, not reconstruction.

2) Continuity

The reconstructions and experiments have been marked by a loss of continuity. There have been many excellent contributions more or less regularly since 1938, but no continuously activity such as annual experiments as in Lejre. The Iron Age and Bronze Age houses were allowed to decay without being replaced.

3) Publication

The reconstructions have attracted many visitors, not least the Stone Age settlement, but apart from a few brief and popular articles in Danish (cf. Hatt 1950; Nørlund 1950; Boas 1980; Buskov 1980; Glob 1980; Hastrup 1986; 1993) publications, that might have contributed to a national and international interest, are absent. A reason might be the absence of scientific staff responsible of research before 1986.

4) Private museum

Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum functioned as a private museum for a long period. It should not be a problem, but it is a fact that many scholars have been sceptic to initiatives from non-professionals. They believe that professionals and tax financing as a principle are better than amateurs and private donations. In that Hjerl Hede has had less prestige than Lejre Experimental Centre.

5) Remote reconstructions

The museum of Hjerl Hede is geographically and mentally far away from the universities and centre of population at Århus and Copenhagen. Archaeology in Copenhagen (and Lund in Sweden) focused on the nearby Lejre from 1964, while archaeology in Århus focused on its own reconstructions and experiments along the "Path of Antiquity" at Moesgård Museum since 1968.

6) Presentation

Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum was early in its performance act of making alive the past, but has (just as the Old Town in Århus) insisted on a form of presentation, where often the visitor from outside observes a staff re-enacting the past behind fences or bars. Most other centres now invite the public to participate in the past life, for instance by letting families live in the houses during their vacation or try old handicrafts within the area of the open air museum.

There are, however, some changes to recommend which are more or less realistic: 1) Increased focus on prehistory and the Middle Ages by supplementing with houses from the Bronze Age, the Iron Age and the Middle Ages. 2) Annual experiments in the high season. 3) Both popular and scientific publication of the reconstructions and the experiments

in Danish and foreign languages. 4–5) Invitation of professionals to conferences concerning both the history and the future of the reconstructions and re-enactment at Hjerl Hede. 6) Public access to the re-enactment of the past and for instance opening up the church for baptisms and weddings. The visit at Hjerl Hede Open Air Museum might then not only become a travel to the past, but a travel also in the past.

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