

The left behind kingdom

South Greenland is studded with traces of the Norsemen. The Norsemen settled in South Greenland around the year 985. Mysteriously they disappeared from southern Greenland during the 1400s. During their stay, they established farms in the fiords on the west coast of Greenland.

This Sunday we visit the most famous ruin from the Norse period. In the small boat it is a journey which takes an hour from the largest town in South Greenland, Qaqortoq. Already from a long distance, we spot the most outstanding ruin: The Hvalsoe church.

The church is part of a larger complex of ruins consisting of a magnate farm with housing, stables, barns, storehouses, animal pens, etc. Just 1.3 kilometres further east the ruins of a

home farm with extensive stables and outbuildings is located.

The church was built of rough stones, which the Norsemen fetched from the rock behind the church. As cementing material between the stones they used lime mortar. The roof was made of wood covered with rice and turf. The church is surrounded by the old home field, where the Norsemen harvested the hay for winter feed.

Miles away around us there is only desert shores and mountains. While we stand here on the old fields and look at the building of our ancestors, we only have company of a couple of fell-field birds, the Wheatears, which apparently has hidden their nest in the masonry of the old church.



The Hvalsoe Church, South Greenland, August 2015

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