

# The Area around the Church

The church's position in the landscape is no coincidence. It has an elevated location that provides views of the coast and the sea. Over the past millennium, the countryside has obviously changed, but certain place names endure and attest to an earlier attitude towards and use of the area.

## Settlement at Agerbygaard Farm

The shading shows the area where the National Museum of Denmark, Bornholms Museum and amateur Bornholm archaeologists have unearthed major finds over the years in the fields of Agerbygaard Farm. The part of the field with Iron Age and Viking Era settlement activity covers a large area. The settlement reveals itself by a darker soil with a high content of phosphorus. The settlement was elevated in the landscape, like the church (roughly 100 metres above sea level), which gave it a wide field of vision across the area. From the settlement there were views northward of the Baltic Sea and the coast at Gudhjem and eastward to the Rytterbakken settlement and the Bækkegård cemetery. The settlement near Østerlars Church is perhaps a precursor of modern-day Gudhjem, whose name can mean "Home of the Gods" or "Home of Gode" ("gode" is a pagan priest).

## "Thor's Back"

Thorseryggen ("Thor's Back") is a prominent ridge rising through the landscape north-east of the church. Standing at the church in the summer, you will see the sun rise over "Thor's Back". The age of this old place name is unknown, but "Thor" suggests the Norse god of thunder.

The church is roughly 3 km from the coast to the north-east. From the church, it was possible to keep a lookout for both friends and enemies on the Baltic Sea. Bornholm's medieval churches are all set back from the coast to avoid surprise attack.

## The Laggere stone

A huge boulder more than four metres tall sits in a field about 3 km from the church. According to legend, an angry woman giant in southern Sweden threw this stone at Østerlars Church – fortunately without hitting it!



## Vietsvej

Vietsvej is the road named in the church's postal address. "Vi" is an old Norse word for "shrine" and can be traced all the way back to the Viking Era, and possibly earlier. Perhaps this place name tells us that a pagan shrine was located here before today's Christian church? There are theories that "vi" specifically means a round, fenced-in shrine, which is interesting considering the round shape of the church today.

*The map on the poster contains common public geographical (FOT) data from the Danish Geodata Agency and Danish municipalities, March 2016*