



Boathouses and Fishing Huts

Throughout the ages, all coastal villages have looked for the best landing sites, and the landing place has later turned into the village harbour and boathouse area. The key requirements for a landing site have been that it is relatively sheltered from storms, located near settlements and homes, the water is deep enough right up to the shore, and there is enough room for the boathouse and the net-drying poles. In larger fishing villages it often happened that the inshore waters became too shallow, forcing the fishermen to move their boathouses to a new location.



FISHING HUT. PHOTO: HANS HÄSTBACKA

In the past, most farmers had their own boathouse. Next to the boathouse were the drying poles, on which the nets were hung after fishing trips and the fyke nets were laid to wait for cleaning.

It was common to dry all the fishing gear on the net-drying poles, which were usually surrounded by a fence as cows, sheep and horses could freely roam on the village common land.

The boathouse was also important for other tasks, such as gathering feed for the cattle, berry picking, hay-making and reed collection, even if fishing was the major use.

The distances to the fishing areas in the outer archipelago were quite long, so overnight shelters were built in suitable spots on the outer islets. The fishing hut was a simple cottage or cabin that

was meant for overnight stays or temporary dwellings during the fishing seasons; in written sources they are often called “fishing saunas”.

There are few original fishing huts left, and the many fishing villages of the early 20th century have now practically disappeared. The most significant fishing villages were Storskär (formerly Kirkegardzskäret), Storsand, Malaxkallan, Norrskär (formerly Alckenn), Lappören, Rikgrund (Ritgrund) and Mickelsörarna. There have also been fishing villages in Byviken at Valsörarna and at Klobbhällan, Skötgrund and Rödgrynnorna. About ten fishing huts are still used by professional fishermen, some have been converted into summer cottages, but most of them are in very bad condition and continuing to deteriorate. For the residents of Molpehällorna, the most important fishing village has been and still is Kobberget.

All old fishing huts had a birch bark roof, an open fireplace built from grey granite and bricks, and basic furniture consisting of benches and a bunk bed, which was located at the far end of the room. The floor was built directly on sand, and there was no ceiling. The hut received light through a window, usually about 20 x 20 cm, located on the other long wall. The hut had a storage and equipment room, and in addition to a pantry, it sometimes had special fish storerooms, either built in connection with the hut or as separate buildings. In Kobberget, for example, there were at least seven storerooms that had large salt barrels and containers in which the catch was salted each day. The usual size of the fishing hut without the pantry and storeroom was about 4 x 4 m.

