THE CHURCHES IN SILKEBORG

ENGLISH SUMMARY

THE CASTLE AND THE TOWN. Silkeborg has developed as a town since 1844, when the founder Michael Drewsen built a modern paper factory to exploit the water power in the river Gudenåen.

However, the history of the place is considerably older, going back to a vanished castle, "Silckeborigh", which was built in 1385 on a point that forms the eastern bank of the mouth of the river in the lake Langsø (cf. p. 6275 fig. 2A and p. 6336 fig. 1).

In the period *c.* 1420-1536 Silkeborg was an important possession of the Århus bishops, who had a †*chapel* in the castle. All we know of this is that its Mass furnishings – altarcloth, chalice and paten, altar candlesticks, etc., – were later preserved at the place.

After the Reformation the castle became the residence of a Royal vassal in this wild region. In 1664 King Frederik III granted Silkeborg as a private estate to one of his creditors, the cupbearer Christian Fischer in Glückstadt. Around 1779 a later owner, Captain Nicolai Hoff, abandoned the residence on the isolated point and moved it to a place some 600 metres farther south, where the estate farm and mill were already located. There Nicolai Hoff built a new manor house, at the same time renovating the farm in brick (cf. p. 6275 fig. 2B and p. 6339 fig. 1).

This estate, Silkeborg Hovedgård (i.e. Silkeborg Manor), was again acquired by the Crown in 1823. An awakening interest in the potential of the place as a production and trading unit led to its transfer in 1844 to the enterprising brothers Christian and Michael Drewsen from Copenhagen to run a factory at the old mill dam. Likewise, the King issued the first resolutions for the building and equipping of a trading centre. And soon the place grew, as it was put, at 'American' speed.

All the way up to the mid-nineteenth century Silkeborg must have been one of the places in the country where one would have hardly heard the sound of a church bell. It was in a remote corner of Linå Parish, but it can be seen that the family also used Them Church.

With the establishment of Silkeborg as a trading place in 1844 there was also a desire to give it a new ecclesiastical status. The King recommended that services should be held on Sundays and feast days as soon as possible 'at the place'. And in 1846 it was decided that such services would be held in a 'room at the southeastern end of the manor house'. In 1850 a †*chapel* was established there; at first it was served by the incumbent of Linå. But in 1856 a joint incumbent was brought from Copenhagen, the well known playwright Jens Christian Hostrup, who was able to take up residence in 1857 in a newly-built parsonage in Silkeborg.

The chapel appears to have been installed in the eastern part of the existing manor house. But the exact placing cannot be established. According to an inspection of the newly established chapel from 2nd October 1850, the chapel hall had four bays of 'double windows' and three 'double doors', which like the windows were painted in a pearl colour. The benefactor of the chapel was the local grocer, Rasmus L. Høltzermann, who procured all the furnishings; all that is preserved of these now is the altar plate with his name (p. 6289 fig. 10 and p. 6341 fig. 2). The space in the interior was so cramped that the pulpit had to project in a little over the altar. The pews consisted of twelve 'fixed' benches, and a wooden font had its place farthest west in a wall niche.

The unassuming appearance of the chapel meant that as early as 1858 forces in the congregation began working for the erection of a proper church building.

SILKEBORG CHURCH. The new incumbent from Copenhagen was a keen advocate of 'the church matter', which was otherwise the concern of a committee with Michael Drewsen and other leading men of the town at its head. Af-

ter some discussion there was agreement on the placing of the church: a location at the edge of the plateau just west of the manor house, where the new church could at the same time connect with the town square on the area behind (cf. p. 6275 fig. 2C). The site was acquired in 1873, but otherwise there was considerable difficulty funding the plans. For this reason among others several batches of new drawings had to be made for the church, since it was necessary to find the least expensive project.

The church that was erected in 1876-77 was designed by the architect Henrik S. Sibbern, Copenhagen, and was intended for a congregation of 800 seated and standing members. The foundation stone had hardly been laid on 29th June 1876 before the magazine *Illustreret Tidende* was able to feature an article with a picture of the church in finished form "built with red, beautiful pressed bricks" (p. 6276 fig. 3). The church is cross-shaped with a tower in the west. The interior, which originally had an exposed roof truss of wood, was completely changed by a rebuilding in 1942-44, when brick vaults were built in. At the same time all the window openings of the church were renewed.

MORE RECENT CHURCHES. In the twentieth century the need arose for further churches in the town as a result of the growing population, and at the same time new religious communities arrived.

The presence of Bohemian workers at the paper factory meant that in 1898 the Catholic Church acquired the western corner site between Vestergade and Hostrupsgade, where a †*chapel* was run by 'The Sisters of Christian Charity'. In 1912 this was superseded by a proper *Catholic church, Vor Frue Kirke*, whose construction and furnishings were to a great extent due to the enterprising pastor Johs. Frederiksen, while the architect Edv. Jensen, Silkeborg, made the drawings.

In 1907 the *Methodists* began using a provisional †*church* in Søndergade, an octagonal building of wood that had earlier been a seamen's church in Odense. It was replaced in 1923 by a *church* with a distinctive tower on the corner of Nygade

and Tværgade, built to drawings by the architect Vilhelm Olsen, Holbæk. On the dissolution of the Methodist congregation in 1997, the church building was sold, and it now serves as offices.

In 1925 the desire of the rapidly growing neighbourhood *Alderslyst* north of Silkeborg Langsø for a church of its own was raised at a meeting in the meeting hall. The next year the churchyard was laid out on an area west of Kejlstrupvej, where *Alderslyst Church* could then be built in 1929 with Edv. Jensen, Silkeborg, as the architect.

After an interior rebuilding of Silkeborg Church in 1941-43, a collection was begun in 1944 for a new church in the southern neighbourhood of the town, and deliberations on its location began. The choice fell on *Mariehøj* above the lake Lyngsø. The construction began but was interrupted by the death of the architect, Harald Lønborg-Jensen, in 1948. His work was taken over by the architect Viggo Hardie-Fischer, who drew up his own project and was able to finish the church in 1958 as an unorthodox centralized building.

Architecturally the churches of Silkeborg bear the marks of nineteenth-century 'historicism', whose borrowings of older styles continued to prevail in the twentieth century. This 'style' has interestingly enough made the churches of the town highly varied. Henrik S. Sibbern's Silkeborg Church from 1877 is influenced by Late Romanesque forms from the thirteenth century, but in a free and independent interpretation.

In the Catholic Vor Frue Kirke (Church of Our Lady) from 1912 and in the Lyngby Church Hall from 1920 the style has associations with Danish medieval churches from *c.* 1500, while Edv. Jensen's Alderslyst Church from 1929 is essentially a fantasy over a Danish medieval village church. With Vilhelm Olsen's *Methodist Church* from 1923 the town acquired a church building in a rigorous, simple Baroque style.

By comparison Hardie-Fischer's *Mariehøj Church* looks more unconventional and modernist. He himself referred to models on Gotland. In reality the inspiration for the building must have been drawn from P. V. Jensen Klint's Grundtvig Church from 1927-40 and Kaare Klint's Bethlehem Church in Copenhagen from 1935-38.