



4. Åland 2015



by Johan Kjellander 2015



Political map of Åland, by Sémhur, [© CC-BY-SA 2.5](#)

Åland (Sv: Åland) is a group of islands in the Baltic Sea, between Sweden and Finland. Politically, Åland is an autonomous region within the Republic of Finland but the language used is Swedish.

In 1958 Toves grandfather bought a small piece of land by the seaside in Saltvik on the north part of Åland. In the years to come he built a summerhouse and a sauna and when he died he left it to Toves mother. Tove spent all her summers here as a child and she is now the owner of the property. In 2014 Tove and I moved into the summerhouse to live here for good and construction work is now going on to make the place more suitable for permanent living.



First step will be a new building with car port and heat insulated garage, shower, toilet and laundry. To make space for the new building I had to cut

down some 25 pine trees.



One of our nice neighbours helped us to collect the timber and get it out to the road where a truck could take it and deliver it to a sawmill.



After 4 hours of work at the sawmill the timber was transformed into 120 pieces of 2" by 5" and another 120 pieces of 1" by 5". Three loads on my car wagon and it was all back home again so I could stack the planks in our garden.



Timber not suited to become planks, I cut to pieces and split into firewood with my new 7 ton Faxe 500 electro hydraulic wood splitter. A little too expensive for my taste but a very nice machine. I'm sure it will last for the rest of my life...

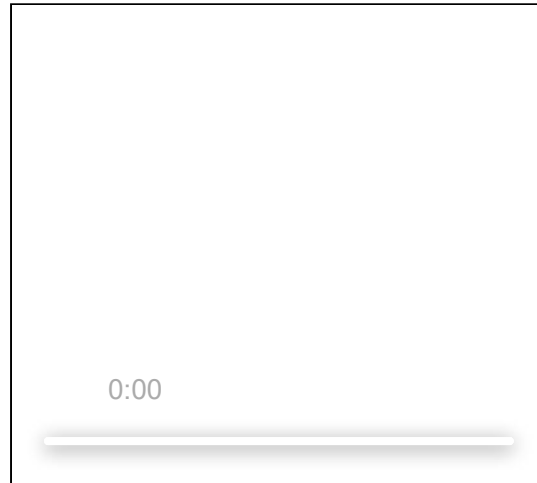


I was lucky to get in contact with a very experienced excavator driver. He had a 14 ton Volvo crawler and did all the digging for us. First he removed all the pine stumps and roots, then he prepared the new entrance from the road and covered with gravel. He also made a ditch to the old house so that we could connect the new waist system, water feed and electricity.



In order to get the new house down to the right ground level we had to call a rock blaster. He drilled around 40 holes, loaded with dynamite and covered them with rubber mats before he pressed the button. The result was perfect.

Lots of good sized rocks that were ideal to use for filling up the lower parts of the building site.



My friend Conny visited us during the event and recorded this film during the blasting.



We hired a local building construction company to help us with the house. First step was to make the foundation. Concrete plus two layers of Leca blocks.



The house was delivered as a kit of seven wall sections, prefab rafters, doors and a lot of other stuff. 8 hours after the truck arrived, the house was mounted with all rafters in position.



Floors were isolated with 100 mm of styrofoam, reinforced with steel grating and covered with 100 mm concrete. It took 4 men one day to complete this.



After a few more days the roof was covered with sheet metal, the doors were mounted and all other exterior details in place. Two interior walls were also erected to make space for the laundry room. We are now in September and there is not much time left before we will return to our boat in Las Palmas. Next summer I will complete the inside of the house, painting, electricity, water and waist etc. etc.



The building construction company took care of most of the job with the house. My own work has been to design the house and manage the project. I have also worked a lot with the garden between the new and the old house. As you have seen from the pictures above the house is located in a relatively steep slope, from the road above us down to the old house and further down to the water. This makes it necessary to create terraces and stairways. I worked many days with stone walls, stairs, tiles and new lawns.



Building the new house has been the main issue this summer but there has also been time for other activities. One day in early June I noticed a very upset Jackdaw (Sv:Kaja) sitting on top of our house. Youngest son Gustav climbed up and found a nest with young Jackdaws two meters down the chimney.



We also found time for a hike in June. The goal was the top of Orrdalsklint, highest mountain in Aland, 129 meters above sea level. Not very tough walking but long. The trail passes a stone age village, many old natural caves and fantastic shingle beaches created during the last ice age some 10.000 years ago.



Another hike is the beautiful Grottstigen in Geta. Easy to walk, only 5 km's and full of interesting sightings. I did this walk together with Anders and Berit who visited us with their boat for a couple of days in July.



Aland has a long tradition of midsummer celebration. Many people dress up in traditional clothes and many villages prepare and raise a midsummer pole.

This year we visited Högtomt and Gustav and his friends helped to erect the pole.



Once up, the pole is left to stand until next midsummer when it will be taken down, redressed, serviced and raised again.



An interesting place to visit is the medieval castle of Kastelholm built in the end of the 14:th century. In the medieval times, Aland was an independent area and ruled from Kastelholm but later Swedish kings like Gustav Vasa used the castle. As with all old buildings, it has been destroyed by war and fire, several times and rebuilt again. You can read more about its 600 years old life here: www.kastelholm.ax



In 1780 the prison Vita Björn (Eng:White Bear) was built close to the castle. It served for 200 years until 1975 and is now a museum.



Sailing and shipbuilding has always been an important part of the economy of Åland. During the 19:th century many farmers built sailingships like the Galeas Albanus above. These ships were used during the summer for transportation of goods mainly in the Baltic and sometimes to harbours in the North Sea.



The knowledge of how to build a galeas is maintained into modern times. In 1988 Albanus was launched from the shipyard in Sjökvarteren. Built by local enthusiasts on a minimal budget she still sails, mainly with tourists but also as a schoolship for young people.



Roe Deer is relatively common on the Åland islands. One morning I captured this one with my camera, swimming across our bay. It is quite a long swim and the deer made good speed all the way.



Here is an animal better suited for swimming. A Black headed Gull (Sv:Skrattmåsar). They are very quick when they dive, it took me a long time before I could capture one with my camera.



Fresh fried fillets of Perch (Sv:Abborre) is one of my favourites. Our neighbour Peter passed by one morning with his boat full of Perch after a fortunate fishing tour. He gave me these and we had them for dinner. Thankyou Peter !



Our life on Aland is seldom lonesome. With the usually good weather, nice views over the water and interesting places to visit we usually have quite a lot of visitors. (Maybe the tax free shop on the ferryboat from Sweden is a contributing factor as well).



Stallhagen is Åland's own beer brewery. You can visit the brewery, take a tour and eat a good dinner with beer tasting. One of their specials is Stallhagen Historic Beer, brewed according to a recipe deduced from investigation of an old beer bottle found in a ship wreck from 1843. The bottle was analyzed by specialists from VTT (Technological Research Centre) in Finland and living microbes were identified that are now used in the new beer.

By the end of September most of the job with the new house was finished and we prepared to return to Bird of Passage in Las Palmas. The third of October we were back in the boat.



End of Åland 2015

