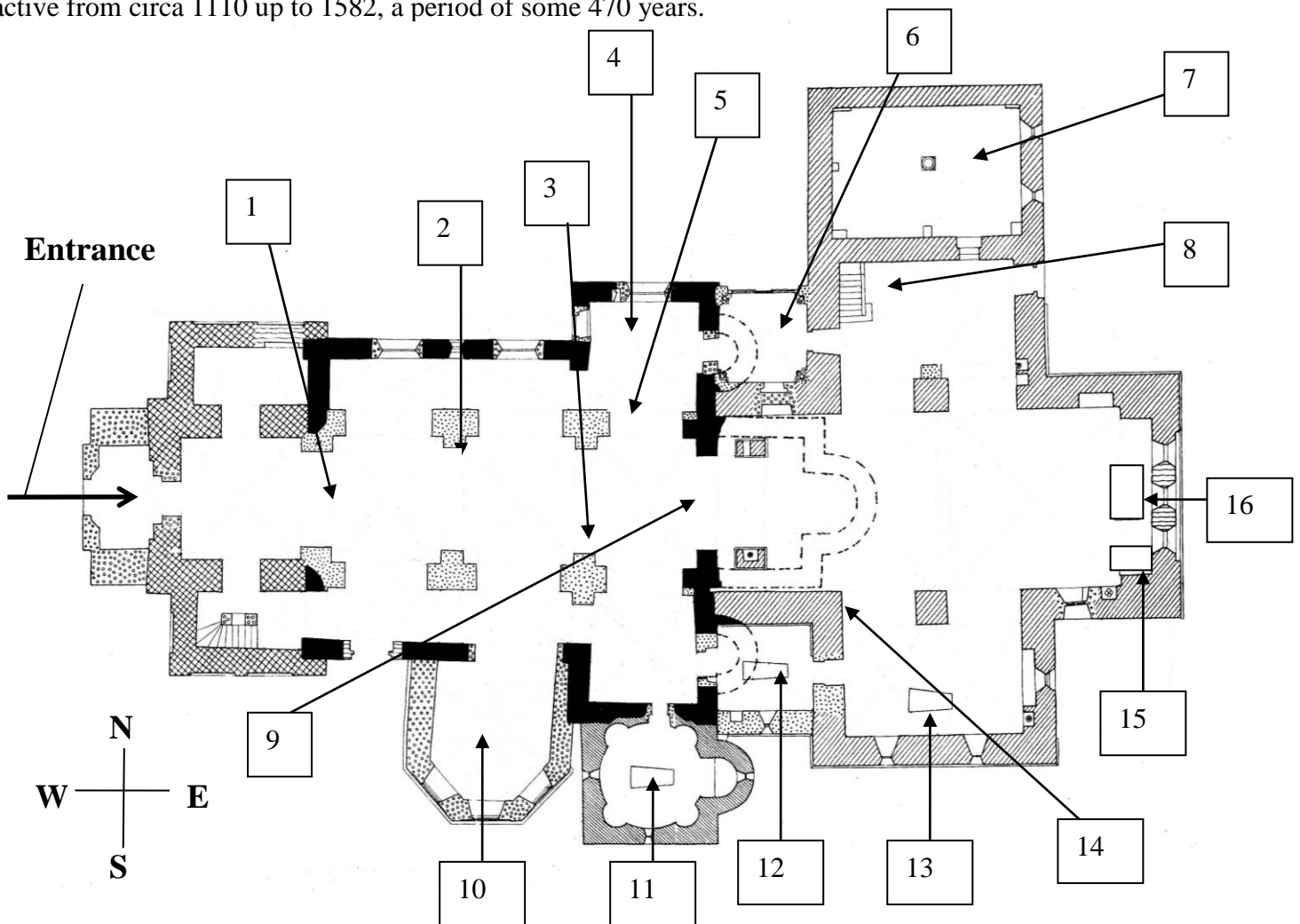




Short guide: The Church at Vreta

The first stone church at Vreta, marked in black on the plan below, was completed by 1100 at the latest. It was a towerless limestone basilica. The Stenkil burial vault, see below, was joined to the church ca 1110. It is believed the west tower was added then. The choir and east transept, sections on the right of the part marked in black in the diagram, were added at the end of the 12th century. In the time of the convent, a high altar stood in the eastern part of the lay church, marked in black, under the large and beautiful triumphal crucifix. It was here parishioners celebrated divine worship. The convent nuns, who from the 13th century belonged to the Cistercian order, then kept to the eastern part of the church separated from the lay church by a choir screen. The convent in Vreta was active from circa 1110 up to 1582, a period of some 470 years.



1. Up on the gallery we see the remains of an organ made by Jonas Wistenius in the 18th century. Today however it is only a façade and the organ itself is missing. The church organ in the eastern section used today was built in 1998 by Grönlunds organ builders in Luleå. It has 2 manuals and 17 stops.
2. On the column hangs an epitaph, i.e. a memorial tablet, to Quartermaster Major Måns Haraldsson of the Ostrogothia Cavalry Regiment, who lived in the 17th century.
3. On this column hangs an epitaph, i.e. a memorial tablet, to Dean Anton Münchenberg and his wife Christina. The dean served in Vreta 1735-1743.
4. The font is shaped as a chalice with a quatrefoil upper section, the basin, in Gotland limestone. The upper part was made in Gotland in the latter part of the 13th century.
5. The mid-17th century pulpit was made by the sculptor Johan Larsson Wimmer.

6. This is the so-called north narthex, originally part of the nuns' cloister, with an intact cross vault. The entire cloister, today a pergola, continued round the garth and was cross-vaulted in this way.
7. The sacristy was re-created in the 1920s on its old walls. On the floor above is a small museum with finds from church and convent. The museum is reached by a stone staircase which was formerly the nuns' night stair. It led up to the dormitory, i.e. the nuns' bedroom.
8. Beside the sacristy and the stairs to the museum stands Duke Magnus's private pew from the 16th c. He was King Gustav Wasa's third son and owned Kungsbro Manor near Vreta Kloster.
9. The rood cross in the chancel arch is from the late 12th c. It was originally created with Christ as the triumphal King, a crown on his head, but during the later Middle Ages it was altered to the suffering Christ with a crown of thorns. The head was sawn off and bent to one side. Under the crucifix stood a lay altar in the monastic period and the gates of that time were closed, with the nuns in the choir section and the public in the western part of the church.
10. The Douglas family burial chapel was erected in 1663. Over 50 people are buried in the chapel and a vault beneath. In the middle is a coffin for Field Marshal Count Robert Douglas who was in Swedish service in the Thirty Years War.
11. The Stenkil burial chapel with a cenotaph, i.e. an empty tomb, was erected in the very early 12th c. and constitutes the repository of the Stenkil royal dynasty. Under the floor there are nine graves containing skeletons. Here, according to recent research, lie King Inge the Elder, his queen Helena and their son Ragvald who pre-deceased his father. Ragvald's young son seems also to be buried here. The royal crown above the cenotaph dates from 1672. Note the attractive layout of the chapel, considered by many to be the most remarkable medieval building in Sweden. The little window in the west is a hagiocope, meaning "see the holy".
12. Magnus Nilsson's burial chapel was erected ca 1290. A cenotaph, i.e. an empty tomb, is centrally placed. Who the chapel and memorial were built for is uncertain. It might very well be one of the monastery's major donors. The royal crown above the cenotaph was put in place in 1672.
13. The funeral monument in the south transept, a cenotaph, an empty grave, was erected in the early 13th c. to Sune Sik. He was a son of King Sverker the Elder, who died in 1156, and was the maternal grandfather of Birger Jarl. The ducal coronet above the monument was erected in 1672.
14. Along the wall stands a nuns' bench, i.e. a choir stall for four nuns. It is medieval and was used by the Vreta nuns. The seats are folding with a small shallow wooden ledge on the underside. This gave the nun support when standing and is therefore called a "misericordia", i.e. pity.
15. The funeral monument in the chancel, a tomb, is thought to date from 1289. It contains the bones of a man and a woman. These were formerly believed to be the remains of King Inge the Younger and his queen, but more recent research has cast doubt on this. The royal crown above the tomb is from 1672.
16. In front of the flattened east wall with its three windows, typical of the Cistercian Order, is the medieval high altar. On both sides of the altar are niches in the walls which formerly functioned as repositories for the liturgical vessels and mass vestments.

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Svenska kyrkan 
VRETA KLOSTERS FÖRSAMLING