



## Welcome to Æbelø!

Æbelø is only 3.5 km from the north coast of the motherland, linked to it by a drag – like a child that is still linked to its origins by its umbilical cord. (Achton Friis: Islands of Denmark.)

Some of the first conservation measures taken in Denmark were to preserve the old oak trees on Æbelø, the most important purpose of which was to protect the large stag beetle. Since the beginning of the 20th century, nature enthusiasts have made a pilgrimage to the island to study its natural wealth.

Æbelø was bought by the foundation Aage V. Jensens Fonde in 1995. You are allowed to sail or wade out to Æbelø – make sure to check the tides and the direction of the wind.

*Guarded old beeches in that part of the wood that was made a conservation area in 1924*

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**AAGE V. JENSENS FONDE**

**Kattegat**

**Bogense**

**Vester Egense**

**Lindø Hovet**

**Drætte Holm**

**Drætte Holm**

**Æbelø Holm**

**Brådet**

**Brådet**

**4 km from P**

**1.5 km from P**

**4 km**

**100 m**

**Hunting is forbidden 100 m out into the water off Brådet, Æbelø Holm, Drætte and Drætte Holm.**

**A trip to Æbelø is 4 km.**

**A trip round Æbelø is 7 km.**

**Photo of water: Birgit Ejlers Laurssen - photo of coastline: Bert Wiklund**



### The island and the surrounding waters a conservation area

Æbelø and the shallow waters that surround it were declared a conservation area in 1998, the aim being to preserve and recover natural-historical and landscape values by

- ensuring continued natural development of the sea and the coast
- allowing the woodland on Æbelø to develop naturally.

Originally, the north coast of Funen was a lacinated coastal landscape, with a host of islands surrounded by shallows. Towards the end of the 19th century, the islands were connected by dikes and the areas behind the dikes were drained and cultivated. All that is left of this North Funen landscape is Æbelø, with its small islands and islets. By declaring the area a conservation area, the coastal landscape has been preserved for posterity.

Parts of Æbelø have presumably been wooded ever since the woods began to encroach after the Ice Age. Parts of the woodland have remained untouched since the first conservation orders of 1924 and 1934. And since 1998, the entire area of woodland has been allowed to develop freely – after most of the conifers have been felled.

## The moraine island's tail

The former moraine hill became Æbelø 8,000-9,000 years ago, when the stone-age sea inundated the area. Wave-currents from the north gnaw at the cliff faces. Rocks from the cliffs are left on the shore, while finer material is carried round the island by the current and deposited to leeward on the south side of the island. Here, a point or drag (Brådet) is formed. At the end of this, a wider islet is deposited, Æbelø Holm, of small curved spits, which form like onion rings. The area has doubled over the last century.

The sand and the rocks in the cliffs come from the last two ice ages. It is possible to find the bluish-gleaming rock Larvikite from Norway here as well as rocks with fossils (Katholm rocks).

## The Æbelø Clay



Photo: Fyve Amt

The cliff just west of Østerhoved, with the folded strata in the Æbelø Clay. The light strata are silicified clay, while the dark strata are pure clay.

Utterly unique is the 55-60 million-year-old dark-grey Æbelø Clay, from the Tertiary period. It is seen at its most beautiful in the cliff northwest of Østerhoved Spids ⑨, where the light, silicified strata and the dark clayey strata have folded to form an bow, though other places to find it are the former harbour Skibsdal and Tjørnehule. The clay from the Tertiary period has a high content of the mineral smectite, which has a phenomenal capacity to absorb water. When saturated, it becomes as liquid as gruel and, down by the coast, can form large tongues of clay out into the sea. Trees are often dragged down to the shore in the process. The island is an internationally known locality for these clay deposits.



Æbelø, Æbelø Holm and Dræet. On Dræet (in the foreground) the farms can still be seen that were abandoned in the 1960s.



Photo: Kommy Kristensen

In the main building of the 'forester's house', the school mistress lived at one end and the school was at the other end. ③



Photo: Kommy Kristensen

Æbeløgaard in 1946, when many people was involved in forestry and agriculture – in the foreground one can just make out some of the children who lived on the island.

## People have always fetched their firewood from Æbelø

Æbelø was mentioned for the first time in the late 13th century in King Valdemar's Court Roll, which was a survey of royal land. No one lived on the island, but firewood was fetched and there was hunting and fishing. Livestock also grazed on the island. Wood was a scarce commodity in North Funen in the 15th century and the farmers of the nearest parishes felt they have the right to fell timber free of charge on Æbelø. Until c. 1600, people also used to travel to Æbelø in order to fish during the summer months.

The Crown has kept horses on Æbelø – the first evidence of this dates from 1480. In 1578, the Crown lost interest in Æbelø and the island was owned by nobles until 1623, when the citizens of Bogense bought the island and began to clear the woodland. Around 1650, there

was so much land that could be cultivated that the island was inhabited all year round. The first farm lay to the south of the island, but when people found out that the land was better to the north, Æbeløgaard ⑩ was built around 1680. In 1688, it was valued on a par with the best copyhold farms of North Funen.



Æbeløgaard in 1905 - photo lent by the Local Historical Archive of Bogense municipality

In 1780, the largest of the oak trees were sold as ship timbers, the rest of the trees only being suitable for firewood. From 1795 to 1920, Æbelø was under the Roepstorff estate, the emphasis being on hunting and forestry. Cultivating part of the land was abandoned. The landowner E. Grevenkop-Castenskiold bought Æbelø in 1955 – and subsequently properties on Dræet, discontinuing them as dwellings. Dræet had been inhabited for a hundred years – c. 1860 the first family moved out here, and in 1911 five households with 18 inhabitants eked out their existence from agriculture on the island and fishing in the surrounding waters. In 1992, the last harvest on Dræet took place.

In 1787, 19 people lived on Æbelø. This number rose to 30 in 1845 and to 50 around the time of the Second World War, when the island had its own school. Migration from the island accelerated in the 1960s. Today, all the houses have been removed except Æbeløgaard, the light-house keeper's dwelling and Østerhovedhus.

## A rich insect life

There are many species of butterflies, beetles and other insects living on Æbelø, because of the great variety of the island's natural habitat – the old trees, in particular, are the home of insects that otherwise do not have many places where they can live in cultivated woodland.

The large beetle, the stag beetle, was numerous on Æbelø around 1900. Its larvae live in the roots of old trees for five years before, having changed into beetles, they live their short lives above ground for somewhere between two and four weeks. Æbelø was the last habitat of the stag beetle in Denmark, although none has been recorded since 1954.

The speckled wood butterfly is the characteristic species on Æbelø, often seen in small openings in the woods. The first examples are seen in late April during a warm spring, although they are not numerous until late May.



Speckled wood butterfly



Male stag beetle

## Long-eared owl

The long-eared owl breeds in the woods on Æbelø – normally one pair only, although there may be several pairs during a good 'food year'. The combination of woodland and large expanses of uncultivated land suit long-eared owls and night owls well. Food in the form of small rodents is found in the plains and there are nesting sites in the woods. The fine yellow oriole lives in deciduous woods by the coast – it is also to be found on Æbelø. It is very difficult to catch a glimpse of, high up in the tree-tops, but its pleasant call is easily recognisable.



Long-eared owl

Photo: Bert Wiklund



Photo: Bert Wiklund

## Ramson

In May one can enjoy the beautiful sight of a host of ramson beneath the beeches that have just come into leaf. Ramson grows in relatively few spots, but forms compact colonies when it does – out-rivalling all other plant life.

In the early 20th century, there were many different and rare plants on Æbelø, but intensive game management, with large numbers of pheasants being put out and the cultivation of food in the salt meadows that game eat have – combined with the considerable grazing pressure exerted by many cloven-footed animals – eradicated many of the favourable spots. Hopefully, the variety of plant life will return now that the island is being run in a different way.



Photo: Viggo Lind

Moufflon rams

## Fallow deer and moufflons

Fallow deer have probably existed on Æbelø since the Middle Ages and, according to the conservation regulations, they are to be preserved on the island, with a winter population of at least 100 cloven-footed game animals, although their numbers must not hinder the natural rejuvenation of woodland. A small number of moufflons (Corsican mountain sheep) are allowed to live on the island – provisionally for 10 years. They were put out for the first time in 1955.