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Limestone Mines in North Jutland, Denmark

Martin Ellis

Abstract

Four limestone mines in North Jutland, Denmark, are described and, where available, a survey is provided.

Introduction

Although Denmark does not have any natural caves it does have extensive exposures of Cretaceous Danian limestone and chalk. In northern Jutland (the “mainland” part of Denmark) this limestone has historically been mined for the production of lime for agriculture and building. Three of these old mines have been developed as tourist attractions, whilst a fourth is now a gated bat conservation nature reserve. These four mines appear to be the only mines known to the bat conservation groups.

Mønsted Kalkgruber

56.4546°N 09.1695°E

Kalkværksvej 8, 7850 Viborg

From Viborg take Highway 16 west for about 12 km to the village of Mønsted. The mine is 2 km north-west of the village.

This is a large tourist attraction, with entry costing 100 DKK (2022). The tour is self-guided and you are free to wander about underground, apart from the parts that are still used to process cheese. In the summer months a short train ride is available to take visitors into the mine.

This is by far the longest mine, reportedly over 10 km long, and has been worked using a pillar and stall method to create a maze of passages. The main passages are large, about 3 m wide by 5 m high. Some areas of the mine are partially flooded by a stream. It is claimed to be the most important bat hibernation site in northern Europe.

The mine dates back to the late Middle Ages, with extraction techniques improved in the mid 19th Century by importing miners from what is now northern Germany. Underground mining ceased in 1953 and in 1997 the Danish Forest and Nature Agency acquired the mine and 14 hectares of the land above.

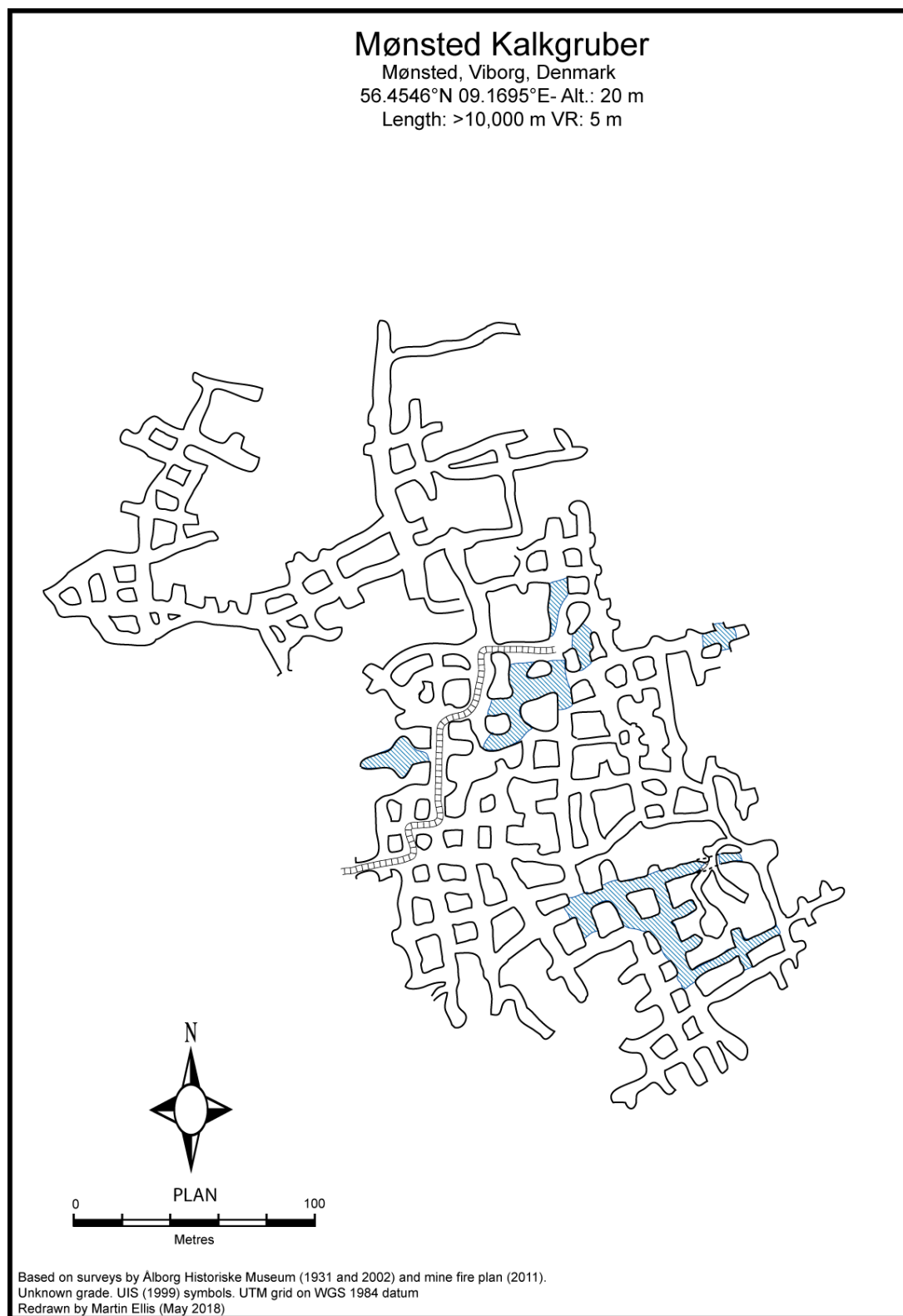


Figure 1 – Survey of Mønsted Kalkgruber

Daugbjerg Kalkgruber

56.4426°N 09.1423°E

Dybdalsvej 18C, 8800 Viborg

From Viborg take Highway 16 west for about 16 km, through the village of Mønsted, to the village of Daugbjerg. The car park (56.4437°N 09.1437°E) is 1 km north of the village and from here it is a 400 m walk through woodland to the mine.

This is a much smaller tourist attraction than Mønsted Kalkgruber with entry costing 90 DKK (2022). For 625 DKK, not including breakfast, two people can sleep overnight in the mine. The tour is self-guided. It is a much older mine than Mønsted Kalkgruber and thus is much shorter, approximately 250 m long, and the passages are also smaller, about 2 m by 2 m. The mine is dry and has a single main passage with a few short passages leading off. One part of the mine, with its temperature a constant 10°C and with 96% humidity, is occasionally used to mature cheese. It is another important bat hibernation site and is thus a nature reserve.

The mine's website claims that this is Scandinavia's oldest limestone mine with a history that goes back approx. 1,500 years. The mine ceased work in 1872 and was rediscovered in 1922. It became a nature reserve, covering 9 hectares, in 1951.

The mine is associated with the legend of the Danish outlaw Jens Langkniv (Longknife). In the woodland outside there are two or three other mines that are gated as they are too unsafe for visitors. A display board in the mine says experts reckon there could be 30 or 40 km of mines in the area and 16 distinctive entrance shafts, but no references to support this have been found.

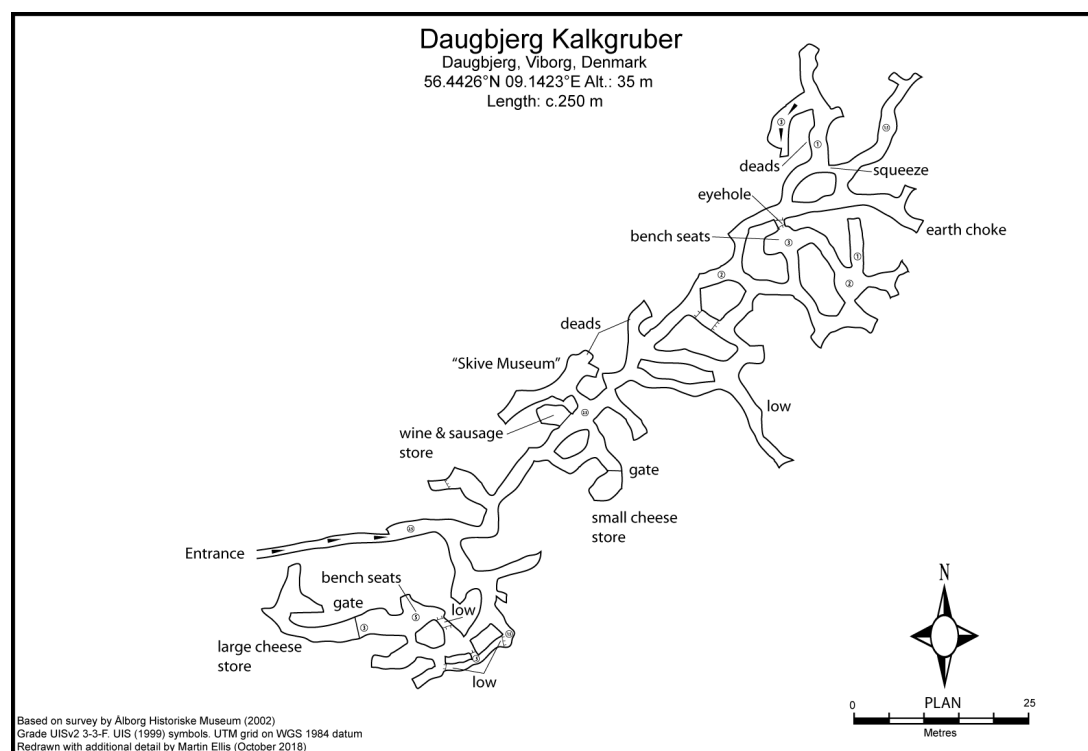


Figure 2 – Survey of Daugbjerg Kalkgruber



Photograph 1 – Passage inside Daugbjerg Kalkgruber

Thingbæk Kalkgruber

56.8326°N 09.8111°E

Red Møllevej 4, 9520 Skørping

This mine is part of the Rebild Center tourist attraction. It is on Highway 180 25 km south of Aalborg.

The Regan West Cold War bunker is 1 km south-west of the mine. This nuclear bunker was built in the 1960s and was decommissioned in 2012. It is planned to open the bunker to the public in 2022 and there is a Cold War museum in the mine entrance building. Entry to the museum and mine costs 95 DKK (2022).

The mine has large 3 m wide by 5 m high tunnels, similar to Mønsted, which run parallel to the outside slope, but the tour is only about 150 m long to a second entrance. The mine is at least twice as long as the tourist trail as there is a parallel tunnel all the way along, with other passages heading deeper into the hill.

Lime has been mined in open quarries in the area for generations, but it was not until 1926 that Anders Bundgaard and his son Christian established a mine. Limestone was mined in the "old mine" until 1936 and then was mined from the "new mine" until 1960, when production stopped when it was no longer profitable. The limestone was previously mainly used for burnt lime for mortar and building lime as well as agricultural lime.

The mine is also a sculpture museum which has been open to visitors since 1935 when Anders Bundgaard placed his original plaster figures in the caves.

With a temperature of 8°C Thingbæk Kalkgruber is another winter bat hibernation site for 500 – 900 individuals of 5 species.



Photograph 2 – Sculptures inside Thingbæk Kalkgruber



Photograph 3 – Passage inside Thingbæk Kalkgruber

Smidie Kalkgruber

56.8680°N 10.1523°E

9574 Bælum, Skørping

This mine is 23 km south-east of Aalborg and 3.2 km south-east of Kongerslev. Access is along a gravel track for the last 200 m and it is located in a small, overgrown old quarry on the north-eastern side of the low Smidie Ø hill.

The entrance consists of some 2 m diameter, horizontal, concrete pipes which have a bat grill and a locked gate. There is no public access to the mine as it is another important bat hibernation site for 4 species and was taken into state ownership as a nature reserve in 1978.

Limestone was mined here for about 100 years from the mid 19th Century. It has one chamber large enough to have been called “The Church”. There are approximately 300 m of passages which are branched like in Daugbjerg Kalkgruber.

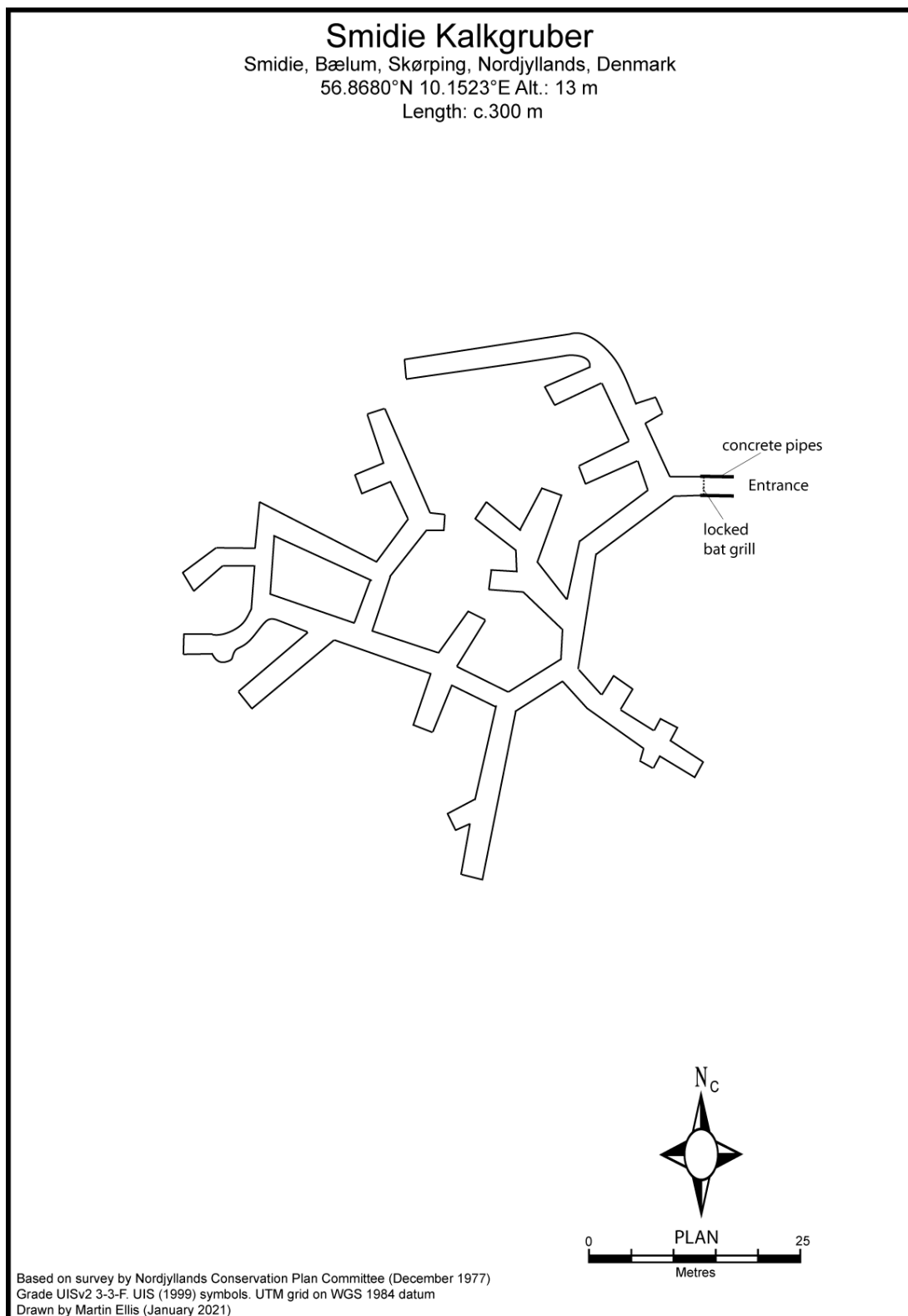


Figure 3 – Survey of Smidie Kalkgruber