



View eastwards from the meadow slopes near Refsgårde.

The landscape around Tørskind, Spjarup and Refsgårde is a fantastic mosaic of different kinds of natural habitat. The Egtved and Vejle Å rivers form the main features of the landscape and their respective valleys approach from the north and the south, meeting at the foot of Runkenbjerg hill. From here the river continues on eastwards through the wide Vejle Å river valley.

The Egtved Å river lies in a narrow valley with many fish farms and relatively dense tree growth. The Vejle Å river runs through a wider, more open valley of green meadows. The natural habitats in the area range from dry poor common land on the valley slopes to fertile and nutritious water meadows on the valley floors. These feature meadows and scrub as far as the eye can see, framed by the valley sides that wind their way along the course of the river.

The path of the ice and water. At some point during the Ice Age a large mantle of ice covered the landscape east of the north-south courses of the Egtved and Vejle Å rivers. Melting water from this mantle found its way into the courses of the two rivers. A large lake named Spjarup Isø was also dammed in by ice and is thought to have filled up the wide low-lying area around Sønderkær. The wide cross-section of the Vejle Å river valley was probably formed by a combination of melt water erosion beneath the ice and the erosion caused by the ice itself in its progress through the landscape. The course of Vejle Å has been straightened several times in recent history, but the meandering lines of alder trees provide an indication of the river's former course.

Arable land and common. The farms and their arable land are situated above the river valleys, with the grazing land on the slopes and in the valleys themselves. The valley floors were formerly an important asset for the farmers—the hay harvest and other crops, for example, provided winter feed in years of drought. However, the decline in the number of livestock and an increase in crop planting meant that this open landscape has been affected by plant growth and crops for many years. Work is currently under way to yet again keep the landscape of the river valleys open and easily visible.

Four parishes. The area lies at the intersection of the boundaries of four parishes. The river valley area has thus been marginal in many senses and, because of the out-of-the-way location and the peculiar nature of the area, it has to a large extent remained unaltered over the years. The imposition of conservation orders on large parts of the area in 1980 has formed the basis for the preservation and future use of the Egtved and Vejle Å river valleys.

Our ancestors' larder. Our ancestors lived in the meadow areas near Sønderkær. The area bustled with activity and the sound of flint knappers at work. In one period during the Stone Age Sønderkær was in fact the most densely inhabited area in Denmark. Hunters and fishermen were able to meet most of their food requirements from the well-stocked larder that the forces of nature had provided.

Groups of Stone Age people lived on the sandy islets in this marshy meadow area in the summer, surrounded by reed banks, birch and hazel. In the winter they moved further up onto the dry plateaus sheltered by the hills, which were covered by growths of elm, oak, ash and lime trees.

Many generations later, in the Bronze Age, the moist river valley floor was still an important source of many materials. The Egtved girl may well have searched the perimeter of this meadow area to collect the birch bark and lime bast fibre for a small bucket such as that placed in the foot of her coffin.

The water in the rivers has always been an important source of energy, providing power for e.g. the Nybjerg Mølle mill and being used to generate electricity. Nowadays the water is used by the fish farms located along both Egtved and Vejle Å rivers.



Photo: Bent Wiklund



"Tørskindmanden" is one of the sculptures by Robert Jacobsen that are located in the gravel pit at Tørskind. The Egtved girl, as envisaged by museum director Thomas Thomsen in 1921.

Raw materials and art. The area contains both large quantities and a large variety of natural raw materials, which have been exploited in different ways over the years. For example, sand and gravel was dug from the hills near Tørskind, but a growing awareness about the fragility of these precious natural resources meant that the gravel pit was later closed.

The gravel pit remains today as a man-made landscape right on the edge of the river valley created by the forces of the Ice Age. The famous Danish sculptor, Robert Jacobsen, and his French pupil, Jean Clareboudt, have created large landscape sculptures in the gravel pit, harmonising with its massive open spaces.



Photo: Lars Serritslev/BiOfOTO

The meadows and areas of common along the river valleys are used for grazing.

Grazing animals. Many animals graze in the areas surrounding Nybjerg Mølle, which are subject to a conservation order. The slopes on the edge of the river valleys were also once grassy common land, and the meadows on the valley floors were used for grazing and growing hay. In order to retain these open meadow and common areas and make them easy to see, it is important to continue using the grazing practices used in earlier times. Various forms of nature and landscape care on these lines are thus used in this particular area.

Access to the area. In daylight access is allowed on foot or by bike along all the roads and paths in the forest areas and the countryside in general, without this being limited to signposted walk routes. In areas that are publicly-owned access is also allowed after sunset. Recreation areas are open to the public in daylight hours. There are car parks located close to the signposted paths. The map shows some suggested cycle routes.

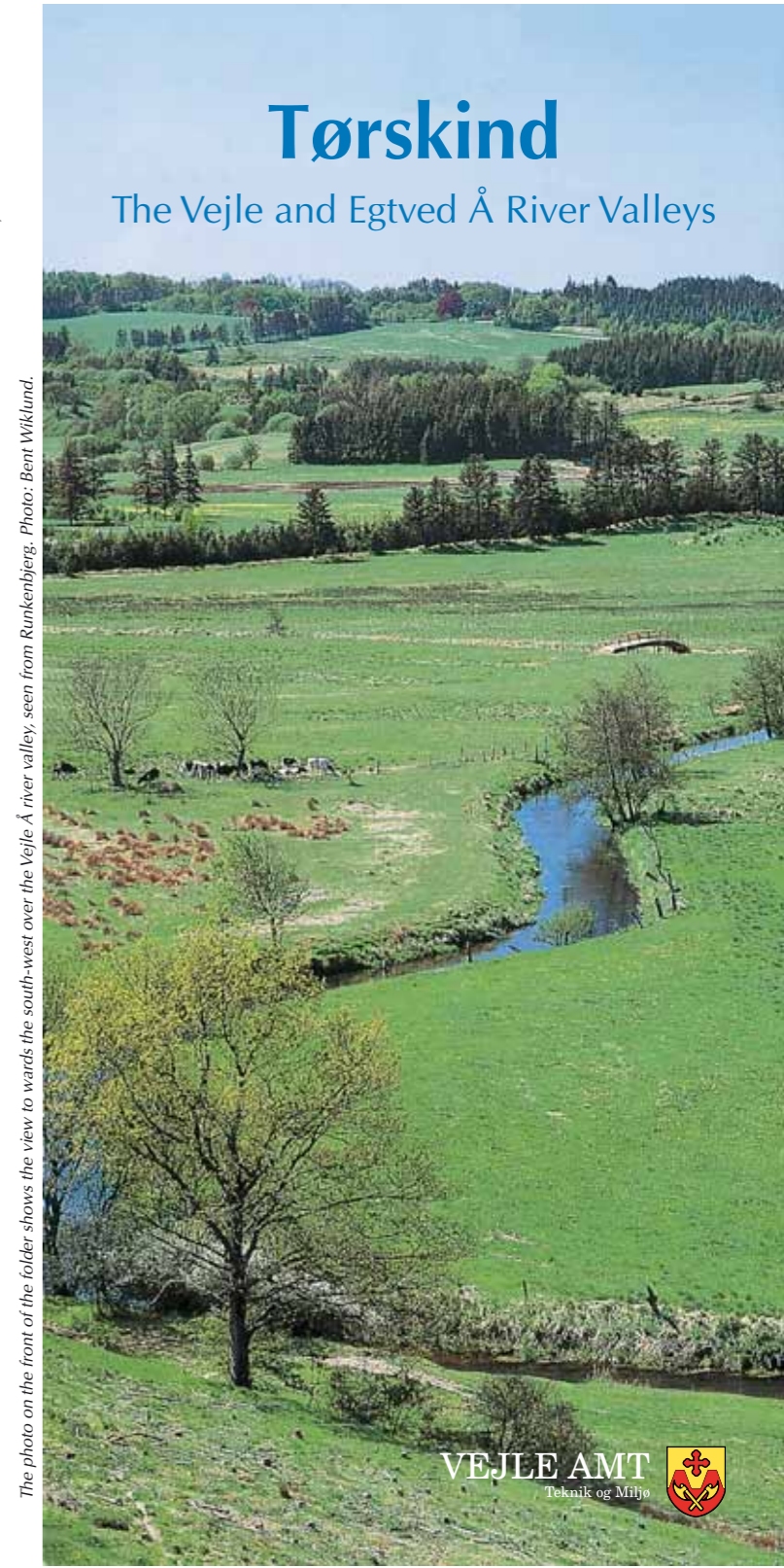
National and regional cycle routes. An easy way to get to the area is to use national bike path no. 3—Hærvejsruten—which passes about 2 km west of Bindeballe station. There is also easy access from the town of Vejle along the Bindeballestien path through the Vejle Å river valley (regional bike path no. 36). Regional bike paths nos. 35 and 62 also pass through the area, and bus no. 406 Kolding–Egtved–Billund runs along Bøgvadvej past the mill at Nybjerg Mølle. Bus departure times can be obtained by ringing tel. 75 82 97 66.

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The photo on the front of the folder shows the view to wards the south-west over the Vejle Å river valley, seen from Runkenbjerg. Photo: Bent Wiklund.

Tørskind

The Vejle and Egtved Å River Valleys

Places of cultural interest and walks

☿ Bindeballe. A series of small “station towns” developed along the Vandel railway line. In Bindeballe the station and the grocers’ shop were built at the same time, but the town never got much larger before the line was closed in 1957. The former line of the track is now used as a path for cyclists and walkers, and the grocers’ serves as both a shop and a grocers’ museum, while the station is a working museum about the Vandel railway line. Visitors to the area are welcome to use the recreation area, tent site, kitchen facilities, etc. These are open every day from 9–20 in the summer six months and on Saturdays and Sundays from 14–17 in the winter period.

☿ Tørskind gravel pit. The extraction of gravel in Tørskind ceased in conjunction with the listing of the Nybjerg mill area as a conservation area. Landscape sculptures created by Robert Jacobsen and Jean Clareboudt are now located in the old gravel pit, which is open 24 hours a day.

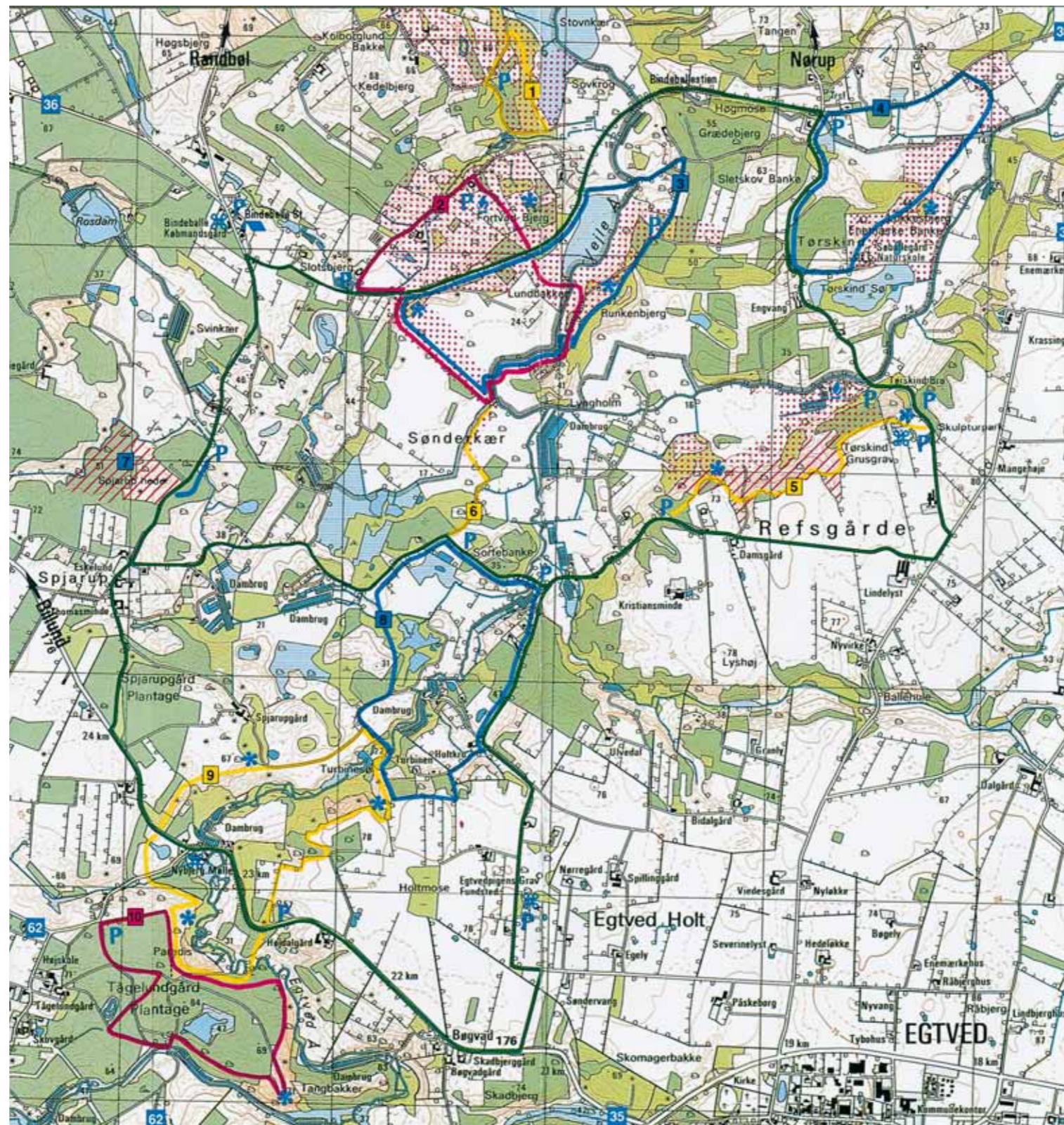
☿ The Egtved girl’s grave. In 1921 a farmer named Peter Platz was working on removing the remains of a burial mound, when he found an oak coffin. This later proved to contain the extremely well preserved remains of a young Bronze Age woman, who died around the age of 18 and was buried in the summer around 1370 B.C. There is now a small building on the site, containing an exhibition that includes a copy of the Egtved girl’s coffin, and the burial mound has been reconstructed on top of the remains of the original. The exhibition is open from sunrise to sunset in the summer months.

☿ Nybjerg Mølle. This mill was built in 1850 and remained in operation right until 1934. The mill was restored in 1959–60 with the aid of the Danish National Museum’s mill committee, so that the machinery is yet again in full working condition. In 1990 the mill pond was also restored, and Egtved Å river was redirected around the pond for the benefit of wildlife in the river. The garden at Nybjerg mill contains Johan Galster’s bronze sculpture of the Egtved girl, and the mill itself is a listed building that is privately owned.

1 Birkelund. A 1.5 km walk, taking about 30 minutes, and passing through rolling countryside and deciduous forest. The path passes under the beech trees down to the edge of the river valley, where it opens into a meadow landscape. In quiet moments the path on the edge of the forest provides vantage points for observing the wildlife in the meadows.

2 Fortvad Bjerg. This is a 3.5 km walk over the grazed common at Fortvad Bjerg, and takes about an hour. From here it’s possible to see how the Vejle Å river follows the Runkenbjerg hills and then turns eastwards in the meadows near Sønderkær. The walk crosses the river valley from the hilly slopes near Fortvad Bjerg, through the valley sides and upwards again at Runkenbjerg. The sides of the river valley and the expanse of meadows are particularly striking when seen from the valley floor. Please note that there are animals grazing in the meadows and on the common.

3 Runkenbjerg. This is a demanding 4 km walk that takes about 1 1/2 hours and includes climbing Runkenbjerg hill, providing excellent panorama views over the river valley to the north, south and east. The walk starts out from Runkenbjerg, leading down into the valley and along the course of the river, over the bridge and through the Sønderkær meadow area, before returning via the Bindeballestien path. Animals use the meadows for grazing.



4 Tørskind. An easy 3.5 km walk that takes about an hour, starting from the car park at Lihmskov station on the Vandel railway line and following the former route of the Vandel line along the Bindeballestien path across the meadows, on over the rolling moraine hills north of the Søballegård nature centre and back again along Tørskindvej. Please note that the walk passes through an area where there are often cattle grazing.

5 Refsgårde common. This demanding 2 km walk takes about an hour, from the gravel pit where the landscape sculptures are set up, along the old cattle path on the slopes of the winding river valley, and through an area of common land where grazing cattle keep the grass well-trimmed and the landscape easily visible. There is an excellent view from the top over the river valley near Tørskind. The fish farm previously located between the gravel pit and the river has now been closed down and made into a lake.

6 Sønderkær. This walk through the wide meadows near Sønderkær is 1 km long and takes about half an hour. There was considerable activity in this area in the Stone Age, due to the wealth of food available from the river and in the valley. Today fishing is allowed at designated spots along Vejle Å river. Fishing licences and instructions are available from the tourist offices in Vejle and Egtved. The meadows are used for grazing.











7 Spjarup hede is one of the largest continuous stretches of heathland in the area. A path for walks and recreative purposes has been laid out from the car park nearby.

8 Turbinesøen. This 3.5 km walk passes through scrub forest and by the lake and marshes of the Egtved Å river valley, and takes about 1 1/2 hours. You may be able to see herons fishing near the many fish farms. Turbinesøen (the turbine lake) was used in the production of electricity for a number of years, but the dam was removed in the summer of '94, allowing fish and other forms of wildlife to pass along the course of the river unhindered. The walk passes through a meadow where there may be horses.

9 Nybjerg Mølle. This is a walk along both sides of the valley of the Egtved Å river, providing excellent views, e.g. from Nybjerg Mølle. This strenuous walk takes about two hours and is 4 km long. The area of common northwest of the river is grazed by horses and cattle to maintain the natural environment of grass and juniper bushes.

10 Tågelundgård Plantage. This is an easy 3 km walk that takes about one hour, taking the forest roads and paths through plantations of conifers and along the heather-clad slopes named “Paradise” in Danish, with the Egtved Å river winding below.

Key:

	Signposted walk		Car park
	Bike path		Place of cultural interest
	Regional bike path		Vantage point
	Area owned by the state		Tent site
	Recreative area		Site for open fires

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The distance between the lines in the map network = 1 kilometre on the ground.