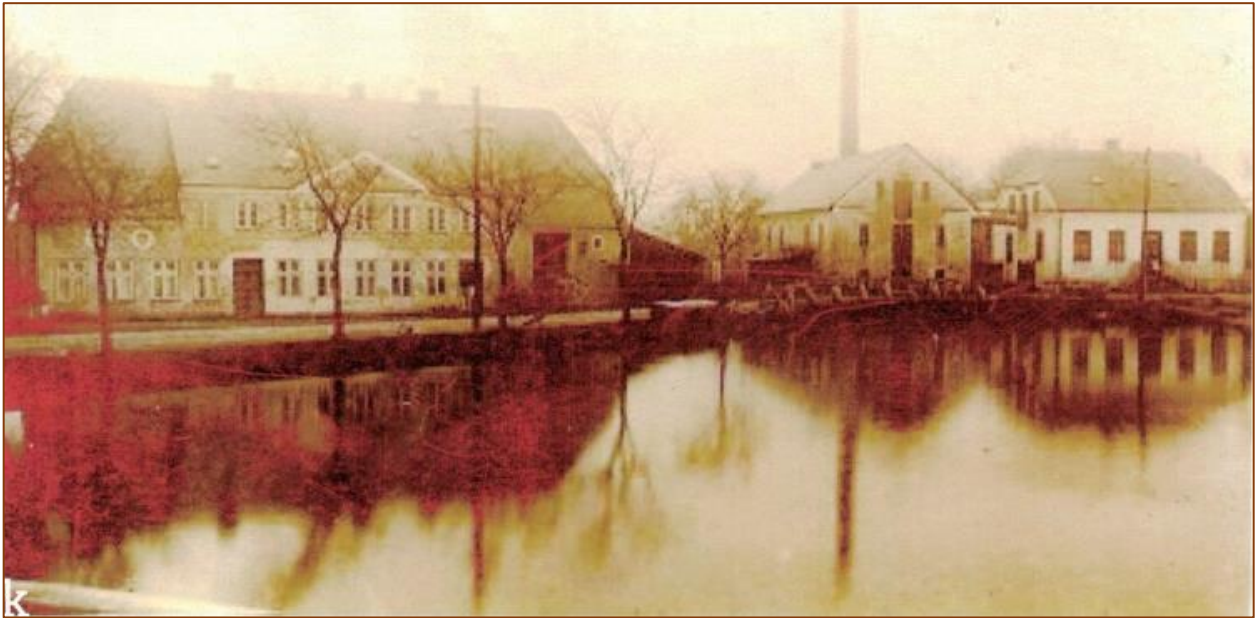


DRAFT: Tragedy at Mølledammen, near Mølby, on Monday 23 May 1836



Tovskov Mølle, a watermill with a dam, near Mølby, in the early 1900s, from arkiv.dk

Recently, while perusing an old Oksenvad church book for facts concerning my tip-tip-oldemor, who lived in the parish as a midwife, I came upon a shocking record. It revealed what happened on Monday 23 May 1836, when the weather was probably spring-like and everyone was happy to be free from normal routines to celebrate a religious holiday, Pentecost Monday.



Tovskov Mill (Tauskov M.) in yellow and nearby Mølby, in a 1880 map and Mølby on a new map

This discovery led to further research about Oksenvad parish and its residents during those years in the first half of the 19th century. Most people farmed the land or worked as servants or day-laborers, but a handful took training to become tradesmen, such as weaver, carpenter or blacksmith. People rarely moved from their birthplace and therefore within the communities, everyone knew each other.

Denmark has a history of constructing windmills to produce power, predominantly to grind grain; a rarer power source was watermill wheels. The terrain throughout the land has very little gradient but a mill owner could dam an existing stream to create a pond or lake, and release the water as needed to drive a wooden wheel. (always two wheels?)



Near a watermill in Aalborg, northern Jutland, in ~1830

Oksenvad parish had such a watermill named Tovskov, created in about 1800, which served to grind grain harvested in the area, predominantly rye. The structure stood at the edge of its dammed millpond, which contained eel and pike and attracted waterfowl for part of the year.

On that ill-fated Pentecost Monday, a group of teenage girls, along with a man of 26 years who was employed at the mill, headed for the pond to undertake a fun outing on a boat. They all piled in and someone – presumably the young man, Jørgen – propelled the vessel away from shore.

The boat may have been too full. Perhaps its wooden planks leaked, or the occupants misjudged how to spread their weight, or someone fell out and the rescue went terribly wrong. That part of the story was not described in the priest's terse note. But what he wrote is that the boat capsized – and all five occupants drowned.



Tovskov millpond in the early 20th century many years before it was drained

The main account of the tragedy is written under Jørgen's name – he was probably regarded as the most responsible for the tragedy as the oldest, the only male, and the most likely to have access to **a boat kept for mill business**. Most of the victims were buried five days later in Oksenvad churchyard; the fifth person was taken back to her childhood parish of Frørup. All were single, but would have been grieved by parents, siblings and their entire community.

Here is the transcribed text from the Oksenvad record in Kontraministerialbog, along with an excerpt of the original script:

"Jørgen Clausen Schau, Møllersvend i Tauschau Mølle, ægte søn af Claus Hansen og Margrethe JensDatter af Gabøl i Nustrup Sogn. Han druknede paa Mølledammen ved Mølbye tilligemed 4 andre ved at kæntre med en Baad paa 2den Pintsedag og døde ugift i en Alder af 26 Aar og 4 Mndr."

Oksenvad and Frørup churchbook death records:

<https://www.sa.dk/ao-soegesider/da/billedviser?epid=17217150#202223,38337115> – Oksenvad

https://www.sa.dk/ao-soegesider/da/billedviser?bsid=450573&fbclid=IwAR1s184qgDb5F-M6H0_Od670HHid--6YvgvOfZwQLZIMWtR-HySw2d1aE2c#450573,80735903 – Frørup

Today, it is very common for children to know how to swim, but hardly any of our Danish ancestors before the 20th century ever learned how. There were certainly no formal swimming lessons offered by schools. Despite Denmark's extensive coastline and numerous ponds, people typically did not swim for fun – especially females subject to taboos against showing much skin – until the late 1800s.



Skagen, in 1884, with a girl apparently prevented by social mores from joining the frolicking naked boys. This excerpt is from an artwork by Peder Severin Krøjer

So, perhaps in the blink of an eye, these five young people on Tovskov millpond suddenly found themselves out of their depth in the chilly water, laden down by soggy clothing and rapidly developing hypothermia. They might have grabbed each other in panic, worsening the situation; whatever happened, it seems clear that no one was able to swim to shore nor save anyone else.

The following brief descriptions of the victims, in order of their age at death.

1. Jørgen Clausen Schau – 26 years

Jørgen had trained in mill work and obtained a job at Tovskov Mølle. He was born in Gabøl in Nustrup parish on 1 April 1810, to parents of Claus Hansen and Margrethe Jensdatter. He had both older and younger siblings, all with the name Schau, which morphed into Skov. This name was presumably taken from the village where Jørgen's father grew up – Enderupschau (Enderupskov). A census nine years after the accident showed Jørgen's parents, in their 60s, still in Nustrup, and several of Jørgen's siblings living nearby, including an older brother, who weaved, and younger sister, who named her son Jørgen. She faced another tragedy, becoming a widow by age 29.

2. Cecilie Marie Christensen – 19 years

Cecilia was born on 4 December 1816, in Mølby, and was nearly 19-1/2 at her death. At the time, she no longer lived with her parents and two younger brothers, but would have been earning her living in a servant job. Her father, Christen Madsen, was a farmer and day laborer, and her mother Kjerstin Rosenberg, had apparently died by the time of her burial, although this needs to be confirmed.

3. Anna Kruse – 17 years

Anna Kruse was born on 18 June 1819 in Oxenvad, to farmer Jeppe Kruse and Kjersten Malene (Magdalene) Lauritzdatter, and was one of five children. She had suffered tragedy in her life

before the accident, when her father died in 1829 at age 48. Her mother never remarried and died nine years after the tragedy, at age 66.

4. Ingeborg Cathrine Juhl – 15 years

Ingeborg Cathrine was born on 20 May 1821, so had turned 15 just three days before her death. Her childhood home was in neighboring Frørup parish and her parents were farm owner Søren Sørensen Juhl and his wife Cille (Cecilia) Jespersdatter. This drowning came just a couple of years after the loss of Ingeborg's 10-year-old sister. The three surviving children, all younger, were boys. The 1845 census showed the parents had taken in a young foster girl, Rebekka.

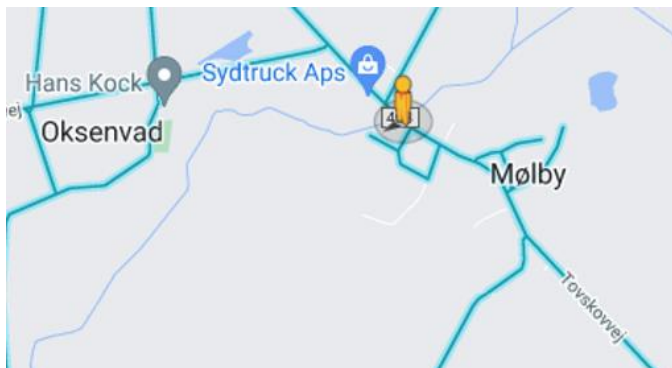
5. Ingeborg Kjerstine Juhl – 14 years

Ingeborg Kjerstine was born on 3 August 1821 in Mølby, the daughter of farmer and innkeeper, Hans Sørensen Juhl, and Christine Marie Jørgensen. She had two younger brothers but seems to have been the only daughter. In the census a year before Ingeborg died, the family employed three servants. In 1860, at least one brother, Mads Hansen Juhl, remained in the parish, working as a farmer and with a wife and several children.



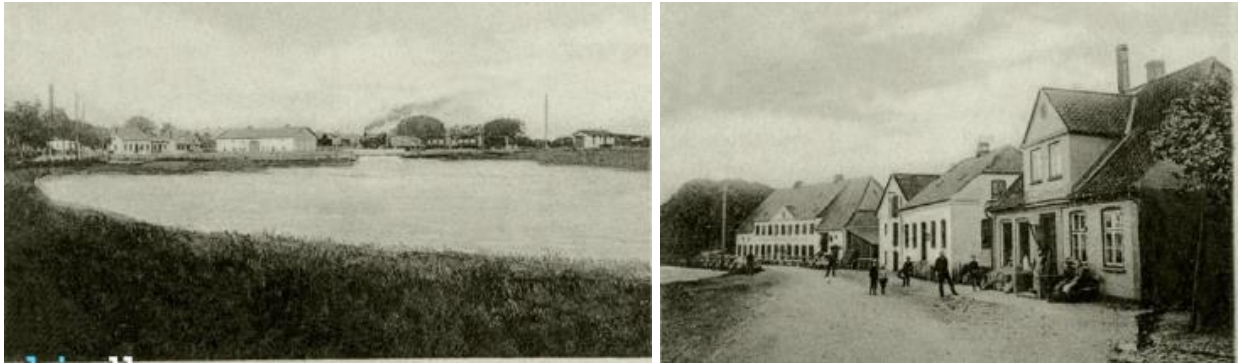
A peasant girl in 1833, around when the four teenage girls died, perhaps wearing similar clothing. This is an excerpt from a painting by C.W. Eckersberg

Tovskov mill itself suffered a violent end, burning down in summer 1969 and indirectly contributing to the death of a young local boy killed by falling debris from the unsecured ruins. Although rebuilt, the mill business failed to thrive and today the buildings have been taken over by Circus Dannebrog. The lake was drained in 19xx, when xxxxx. Ironically, there are now efforts to restore the wetlands in this area – but without creating a dam.



Google Map 2022, showing a person on the mill site. [Is this the correct place?] The original stream still exists, in blue [was it diverted?], but there's only a tiny pond where the much bigger millpond once flooded the land until being drained in 1960

Extra, FYI:
From Arkiv.dk



Both 1900-1920, from arkiv.dk



From oksenvad.dk website, showing Tovskov Mill and xxx, before 1969



Is this where part of the Mølledammen was??



By P Mørk Mønsted



Painter Ussing's son Stephen