

## Holmvik Brygge





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## Imprint

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## Prologue

We are very busy to protect the past, to show you how people lived 100 years ago. We like the past. We like to see how pioneers started a fishing village without knowing how long this place will exist. It is a nice feeling to work with the old materials, just sitting in front of old self-made tools and think about who was using this many years ago. We love to live and work in this old building.

And we also like the modern live. We are happy that we could change the rowboat with a car and that we can send e-mails instead of hand written letters.

We have to leave the past behind us to come to a future. But we should always remember where we were coming from. We have to save some places which can show an episode of our culture. This will help us to understand which way is already laying behind us. We worked on it that *Holmvik Brygge* became such a place and we hope that you will also feel the romance of the past, the luxury of the modern time and the satisfaction to learn from an old culture and to have a reflection on your own life.

## Welcome to Holmvik Brygge

Our slogan *step into history* is not just a slogan. It is what we want you to experience while you are staying in *Holmvik Brygge*. The Northern Norwegian coastal culture is very unique and interesting. Since we started to restore *Holmvik Brygge* we got more and more impressed about how people managed to live and to work here more than 100 years ago.



Nyksund is a witness of this time and at *Holmvik Brygge* we like to give you not just information about it but let you actually feel that time. When you enter *Holmvik Brygge* you step back 100 years in time. And that is what we are very proud of.



Everything what you can see in *Holmvik Brygge* is original and was used or produced in Nyksund or Vesterålen islands. By reading this book we like to give you an overview of this unique historical building. That you can have an impression about how this house was restored and what people were doing here years before. If you like to know more about Nyksund, you are welcome to book a guided tour by *Discover Vesterålen*, our guide service. In the meantime we hope you enjoy reading this book and your stay in our house.

Ssemjon Gerlitz

## Holmvik Brygge

The building we are calling *Holmvik Brygge* today was once part of a larger mass of buildings on this island. Unfortunately, many of these have disappeared in the sea.

It was originally Haldor Hansen who secured the first lease, and after passed it on to Øyvind Kristoffersen. Øyvind ran a successful business for many years – producing caviar, storing fish and producing fish crates. It is not quite sure when *Holmvik Brygge* was built but it seems to be before 1950. Typical for *Holmvik Brygge* and many other houses was the faked front.

*Holmvik Brygge* has a pitched roof but from the front it looks like a flat roof. This has two reasons. The first was to show: “We’ve got money so we can use material not necessarily because it is important for the structure of the house”. The second reason was to give *Holmvik Brygge* a “thought of America”. The front with its arches lets *Holmvik Brygge* look like a Western Saloon. It should show the connection between Nyksund and America. You will find American architecture quite often in Nyksund, but also Norwegian architecture as we had a copy of the city hall of Oslo built up next to *Holmvik Brygge*.

When Nyksund got abandoned in the 1970es all work in and at *Holmvik Brygge* and the houses in the village stopped. It began a time of at least 20 years of decay.



When Karl Heinz Nickel from Germany bought the house in 1997 the area looked like this:



Since 2002 the house is owned by Ssemjon Gerlitz.

The decay started short time after Nyksund got abandoned. During the years Øksnes municipality sent people to take down the rest of the houses and to burn them. But they got stopped before they could finish the job. Karl Heinz and Ssemjon got the permission from the private owners to use the material of the oldest houses around *Holmvik Brygge* for restoring the building. They used a lot of time to save the material and to sort it out until it found a new place in *Holmvik Brygge*. At the time when they started to restore *Holmvik Brygge* it didn't look like that it would be possible that someone would live again in this building.

There were big holes in the roof, nearly all windows were broken and inside was a big “nothing”.

But the construction was still usable. It took two years of building, a lot of material from the other houses, many working hours and much support from friends of the project before the two men were able to open the house the first time for guests. In those two years many people from different countries came to help.

The idea was to work with Karl Heinz to get *Holmvik Brygge* done so that something in Nyksund was prepared to run a business in. *Holmvik Brygge* should have been the business of Karl Heinz. Ssemjon wanted to concentrate himself to the opening of his *Landhandel* (a local shop) in the house which is next to *Holmvik Brygge* (his residential building which he also had to restore). That was the reason why a lot of his friends came to Nyksund in the first years to help him with the restauration of his house.

“We started to save the material from the other houses.” *Holmvik Brygge* today is a collection of at least seven other houses. It is a special feeling to know that for instance a kitchen wall from one house is now used as a ceiling in the floor between sleeping rooms. So there is still a connection to the fishermen of the last century.

Step by step *Holmvik Brygge* was rebuilt. It was not always easy to convince the responsible authority about the project. The idea was to build a guesthouse with

communal areas where people could have a possibility to meet and to communicate. At the same time it was important to Karl Heinz and Ssemjon to save the history of Nyksund and to create an authentic place out of *Holmvik Brygge*. But when they wanted to restore the old fishermens time they had to follow the modern rules of construction. They invested a lot of time and money for it and of course their whole life was focused on getting this job done. One should also not forget that this has happened in a time when there was nearly no tourism in Nyksund or even in Vesterålen as well. And it didn't look like that something was going to change there. But Karl Heinz and Ssemjon believed in their idea to create a nice historical place for guests and (as it is known today) in the rebirth of Nyksund.

It wasn't only the rooms that had to be build or the roof and the windows which had to be repaired. It was also the electricity and the water installation which had to be installed completely new. For the waste water they had to find a place to set the waste water tank.

The freshwater pipe was also very old. Nyksund has its own freshwater supply company. They started to modernize the system. It was in 2001, three seasons after the opening of *Holmvik Brygge*, when they planned to change two freshwater pipes under the road outside of Nyksund. Here it happened that Karl Heinz passed away the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2001 by an accident.

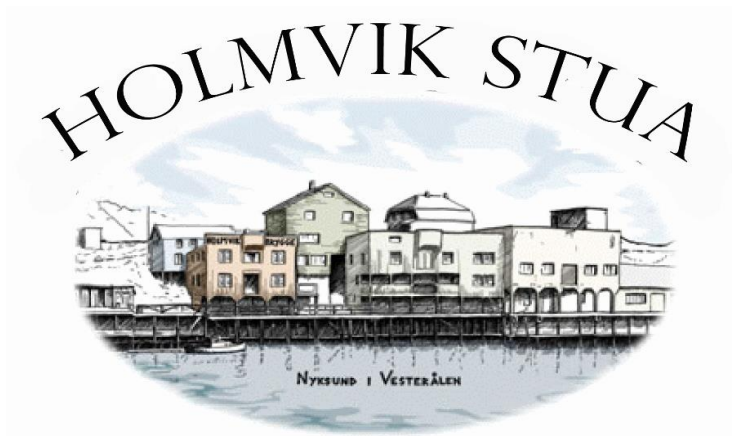




## From self-catering to café and restaurant

In the beginning there wasn't much tourism in Nyksund and the guests were "explorer". Therefore, it was planned to have a self-catering kitchen in the guesthouse. But quite soon, Ssemjon figured out that the guests were also interested in having lunch or dinner in a café. At this time, there was only one place in Nyksund selling warm food during some weeks in the summer. But they needed something additionally. The team of *Holmvik Brygge* began to restore the first floor of *Holmvik Brygge* in 2000 in order to build a café inside which later became *Holmvik Stua Restaurant* in 2008. In the café and later in the restaurant it was important to keep as much as possible from the old material and structure. Today, you can walk on the same floor as where the fishermen were walking on many years ago. In the restaurant you can see many tools they were using daily at work. *Holmvik Stua Restaurant* is serving homemade food the fishermen were used to eat.

## Holmvik Stua Restaurant

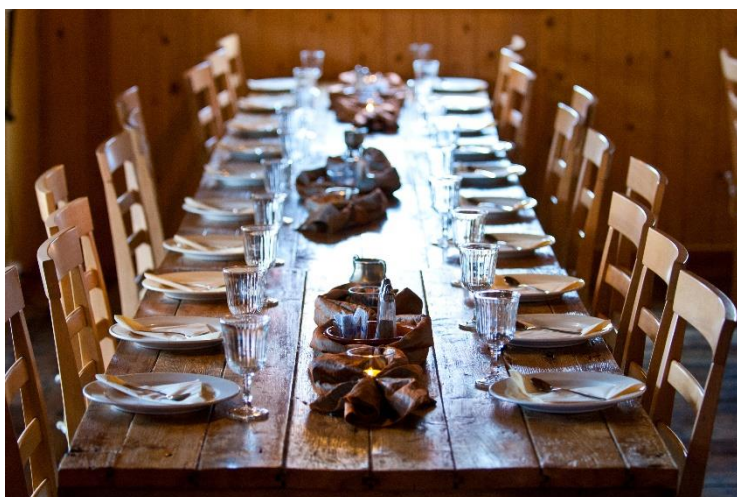


During the years, *Holmvik Brygge* became more and more the historical guesthouse that it was supposed to be. Therefore, it was and still is important to offer just local and traditional food with products from local farmers in the restaurant.

Almost 100 percent of the dishes that are sold in the restaurant are homemade.











## Holmvik Sjøhus



There are also guests who want to enjoy history but also stay in a safe and comfortable distance to it. That was the reason why Ssemjon and his team started to build three studio apartments in a modern style in 2006.

After one year of work and with the help of some good friends who spent a lot of time helping to build this house, Ssemjon could offer a new place to stay in Nyksund. It is called *Holmvik Sjøhus*.

The three studio apartments called Nyken, Mælen and Delpen, are identically constructed and provide a fully equipped kitchenette, sleeping room and a bath room with shower and toilet.







## Landhandel Nyksund



During the years, Ssemjon never forgot the shop of Nyksund, called *Landhandel*. The Norwegian supermarket chain *Rema 1000* got its name because they started with 1000 products. Ssemjon was thinking to call his shop *Landhandel Nyksund 1000*. But not because he started with 1000 products but with just 1000 Norwegian kroners. Ssemjon and the team were producing their own souvenirs or were driving around looking for other historical things which they could sell in the shop. Some years, they were also selling food. But since they opened the restaurant people were no longer interested in buying food in the shop.



## Discover Vesterålen



We wanted to show the beautiful places in our area to our clients and therefore we started in 2007 to run a guide service. We offer various tours for groups and individual travelers.



Today, *Discover Vesterålen* is the biggest actor for cruise ships in Vesterålen islands. Several times in the winter and in the summer, different international cruise ships come to Sortland or Stokmarknes and get all the guiding service



provided that they need for their guests. Also other groups can take advantage of the service that *Discover Vesterålen* is offering.

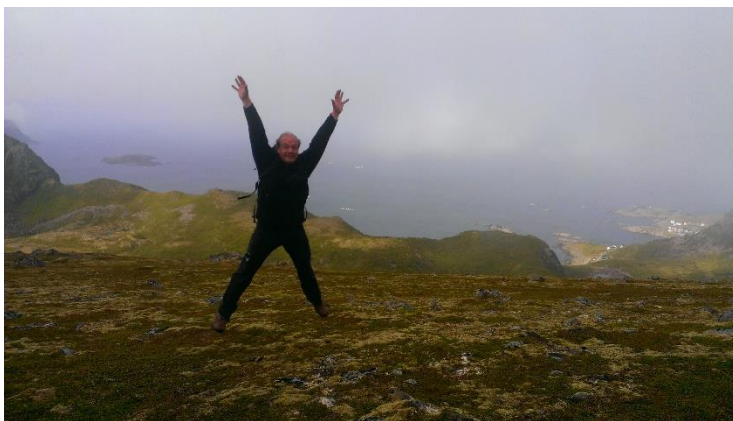
But also individual tourists can book guided tours at *Discover Vesterålen*. One opportunity is: Trained nature guides take guests with them into the mountains for hiking tours, e. g. to the famous and popular *Dronningruta* leads from Nyksund to Stø and show and explain them the stunning landscapes of Vesterålen islands.





## Holmvik Brygge & Discover Vesterålen

... is a family company. We are proud to do the most things on our own. Painting, reparation and gardening are just some of the works we do all year round to keep the business running and to make your stay unforgettable.



## Where does the name *Holmvik Brygge* come from?

We call our main building *Holmvik Brygge* in memory to Ole Martin Holmvik (1855 – 1934).

When we started to restore this building we weren't sure if other people would follow us and restore other houses or if our building will be the only one getting restored. Therefore, we kept the name Holmvik in order to remember one of the most important architects in Nyksund.

In fact, Ole Martin was not an architect. He came to Nyksund in 1887 as a carpenter. But during the time in Nyksund he built many houses. One of his first buildings was our *Bedehus Zoar*. This is the building in Nyksund which looks like a church. He built also the house next to *Holmvik Brygge*. There he had a fish company. He married Christine Marie Eide and moved with her to Bjørnskin (nowadays a part of the municipality Andøy). Today, you can still see many of the houses he built in Nyksund. Holmvik was not the only architect in Nyksund. Randolf Rødsand for instance is still known for stone buildings he has built in Nyksund. But for us, Holmvik was a person we didn't want to forget.

Our historical guesthouse today:









## Nyksund Spa & Hiking Club



Next to *Holmvik Brygge* there is another building that we decided to buy in 2017. For a long time, nobody used this house and it was a shame to see how it was fallen into ruin.

We started to restore this house in winter 2017 and the idea was to create a modern and comfortable guesthouse with more privacy than in *Holmvik Brygge* but still with a communal area so that guests can get in touch. There are five guest rooms with private bathrooms and a communal area that includes a fully equipped kitchen, a

cozy living room, dining room and a relax area.

Another idea was to build a spa area so that guests have the opportunity to relax, for instance after a long and exhausting hiking day or a Northern Lights chase in the cold winter nights.



## About Ssemjon Gerlitz



Ssemjon Gerlitz was born in 1972 in Mettmann, Germany. He grew up in a small town called Hilden, close to Düsseldorf. He finished school in the age of 19 and studied then engineering. After six years of studying and working at the university, Ssemjon decided to do an apprenticeship as an electrician.

Since Ssemjon was a child he and his family spent a lot of time in the Nordic countries. When Ssemjon was 16 years old, he did his first long distance cycling tour from Rovaniemi in Finland to the North Cape and back. Other trekking and cycling tours followed in the next years. During this time, the dream came up to move to Norway



some day. In 1995, Ssemjon began to learn Swedish (in that time it was difficult to find Norwegian classes – but since Swedish and Norwegian are pretty similar that was a good start to learn Norwegian as well).

In his engineering studies, Ssemjon had a fellow student from Reine in Lofoten islands. Thanks to her, Ssemjon traveled to Lofoten and there he heard about Nyksund in Vesterålen. 1997, he came in contact with Karl Heinz Nickel. In the same year, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December, Ssemjon traveled to Nyksund the first time. He immediately knew that Nyksund is the place where he wants to live. And so he moved to Nyksund right after the end of his apprenticeship in the beginning of 2000. In the first years of living in Nyksund, Ssemjon had to get along with a quite low level of living: He first slept in a tent that was placed in the house because the roof was leaking. In the first year, there was no water supply at all in the house. In the second year, Ssemjon got cold water and in the third year of living in Nyksund, he finally got also warm water.



In the first two years, Ssemjon was working in the fish industry during the winter and in the restaurant and in his shop *Landhandel* during the summer. Just one year after Ssemjon moved to Nyksund, he absorbed *Holmviik Brygge* from Karl Heinz Nickel. In 2007, he started running his guide service *Discover Vesterålen* and opened the restaurant *Holmviik Stua*.

Nowadays, Ssemjon Gerlitz takes an active part in the development of tourism in Vesterålen islands.



## About Nyksund

### The old Nyksund

Nyksund was in former times one of the richest and the second largest fishing village in Vesterålen islands.

The settlement in Nyksund began already before the fishermen came: The Vikings built one of their biggest longhouses just in front of Nyksund.

Nyksund started as a place where fishermen came in winter, went out fishing and left after it again. There were some people who tried to settle down but it did not work first.



The government decided in 1850 to build up this place. First they built houses on the main island (Nyksundøya), then on the island where Holmvik Brygge is standing (Ungsmaløya).

In 1870, they started to build the pier between the two islands (1960 the pier to the mainland).

In 1885, people began to build the church (*Bedehus Zoar*).

There was a big fire in 1933 and all the harbor line at Nyksundøya burned down. The houses were rebuilt with stone houses. They are still today the most important stone houses in Northern Norway. The knowledge how to produce the stones came from Texas (USA).



Ca. 1970, people left Nyksund. They got money from the government to start a new life in Myre. Myre should become the new center of the area. Nyksund became a ghost town.

Ca. 1980, students found Nyksund and started an international project where people from different countries should try to live and work together. In this way they took care of the houses in Nyksund and made sure that Nyksund still exists today.



Ca. 1995 all projects were finished. One man stayed in Nyksund when all the others had left and he wanted to restore Nyksund and its culture.

## Nyksund today

[May 2018]



Facts:

Of about 26 people are living in Nyksund in summer and winter

2 children under 4 years

Of about 20 people which have a holiday house

We have our own private supply of water

2 restaurants (Nyksund Ekspedisjon and Holmvik Brygge) + 1 café (Naustvika)

1 bar/ pub (Arthur Brygga)

11 different places to stay for overnight (guesthouse, apartments, holiday houses)



2 shops (Landhandel souvenir shop and Second Hand Shop)

1 museum (beside Holmvik Brygge)

Guided tours (Discover Vesterålen)

3 galleries

1 church (*Bedehus Zoar*)

1 sculpture from *sculpture landscape Nordland*



## Dronningruta – The Queens' Route

Dronningruta is one of the best known hiking trails in Vesterålen but still far away enough from being overcrowded.

In older times, children had to walk this trail from Nyksund to get to their dormitory in Langenes.

Since 1996, we are calling the trail the Queens' Route because the Norwegian Queen Sonja was hiking there. Due to her visit, a path over the mountain was developed which made the hiking trail to a round trip.

The whole tour takes between five and eight hours depending on personal conditions and current weather conditions. The highest point is 450 m and there is an amazing view on the way.





It is very important to have good hiking shoes and one should be provided with enough water and snacks. Usually it is possible to walk on this trail from the end of may when the snow and the ice have melted until late in the autumn.

More information are available at the reception of *Holmvik Brygge*.



## Nyksund in Vesterålen



## Some impressions of Vesterålen islands













## Useful addresses

Holmvik Brygge:

[www.nyksund.com](http://www.nyksund.com)



holmvikbrygge/



holmvik\_brygge/

Holmvik Spa & Hiking Club:

[www.nyksund-spa.com](http://www.nyksund-spa.com)



nyksundspa/

Discover Vesterålen:

[www.discover-vesteraalen.com](http://www.discover-vesteraalen.com)



Discover Vesterålen

Visit Vesterålen – Regional tourist information:

[www.visitvesteralen.com](http://www.visitvesteralen.com)



visitvesteralen/



visitvesteralen/

Nobody knows where we will end.

When we started, people called us “trash collectors”. Today, we own a museum building. We began with nothing and had to use old doors as tables in the restaurant. And nowadays, people offer a lot of money for them. But nobody can buy history. Nobody can buy our experiences we got during the years. But we hope that you as our guest can feel something of the spirit, manpower and of the dreams of the old fishermen and all the helpers of the past years who were living and working in *Holmvik Brygge*. We would like to give this feeling to our guests to remember.

I wish you a comfortable and pleasant stay!

Ssenyon Gerlitz