

The stories behind the names of Jyväskylä districts and Alexandra meeting rooms

What is Pönttövuori known for? Why did a villa district of Jyväskylä get a nickname? What does the renowned architect Alvar Aalto have to do with the history of Viitaniemi in Jyväskylä?

Answers to these questions and more can be found in the stories behind the names of the meeting rooms at Original Sokos Hotel Alexandra.

VIITANIEMI

In the post-war years, the new suburbs of Jyväskylä were, for the most part, named for features of the land rather than for the characteristics of the buildings themselves. The wetlands and thickets on the shores of Lake Tuomiojärvi, bordered by broad and open fields, is considered to be the source of the name of Viitaniemi. In accordance with the town plan drawn up by Jorma Järvi, the winner of an architectural competition to develop the area, Viitaniemi was built in the 1960s on the lands of Kortesus Manor. The 13-storey Viitatorni, designed by Aalto and Matti Itkonen, became the landmark of the area. Educational institutions were already included among the modern blocks of apartments and terraced houses. As many more dwellings were built at the turn of the millennium, Viitaniemi has become a hub for secondary schools in the city, especially in its southern parts. Nisulan monttu, which was previously home to an ice hockey rink, serves as Viitaniemi's artificial ice rink and is popular with skating enthusiasts.

KORTEPOHJA

Kortepohja takes its name from the horsetail plants growing at the bottom of Lake Tuomiojärvi. The Kortepohja townhouse area was built on the lands of Kortesus Manor on a forested hillside, as planned by architect Bengt Lundsten in the late 1960s. The design of the area won awards, and it consists mainly of residential blocks formed by uniform terraced houses, complemented by a few low-rise apartment buildings. The Kortepohja student village on one side of the district and Laajavuori winter sports centre on the other side are related to the local identity of Kortepohja.

LOHIKOSKI

The suburb of Lohikoski, built on the former Seppälä and Pellonpää farms since the 1960s, borrowed its name from Lohikoski, the largest rapid on the River Tourujoki. In the area bordering Palokkajärvi, there were already some old cottages for employees of the Kangas paper mill. These gave way to the construction of modern detached houses, terraced houses and apartment blocks. The architecturally renowned Lohikoski church, shopping centre, school and daycare centres give the area its distinctive character, as does the adjacent eye-catching tower.

SEPPÄLÄ

The Seppälä industrial area, which was built on the former Seppälä, Eerola and Ahola farmlands in the 1960s, was the first of its kind in Jyväskylä. Taking its cue from foreign innovations, the co-operative Osuusliike Keskimaa Prisma market with ample parking was initially thought to be a risky undertaking. However, it proved to be a great success and a role model for many similar markets across the country. Prisma, which has been renovated several times, has brought other large shops to the Seppälä area, as well as industrial and service companies. The rapid change and development of business life and transport in the Seppälä area is reflected in the dead-end railway track built in the area. Its use was discontinued after only a few years.

ÄLYLÄ

The Seminaarinmäki area was rezoned as a 'villa district' in the early 1900s, and after it became filled in, an area of detached houses was separated to the south. This area became known as Älylä, a reference to intellect and the seminary lecturers who were selected as its residents. There was controversy concerning

the plots of land in the area only being available to seminary lecturers. The nickname became established as the name of the area, which is one of the few residential areas that has preserved its original architectural appearance. The location of the Museum of Central Finland and the Alvar Aalto Museum in the 1960s and 1970s on the northern edge of Älylä continued the cultural tradition of the area.

For a long time, various explanations were put forward about the meaning of the name Keljo, until it was discovered that the earliest map of the region was divided by a stream with the Swedish-language name of *Käll i å*, which meant the source of the river. In subsequent development plans, the name Källio developed into Keljo, which became established as the official name of the area. Keljo received national attention in the 1920s and 1930s when news broke of the Karhumäki brothers' groundbreaking flight activities on the shores of Keljonlahti Bay. The settlement, which was dissected by a road already at the end of the 1800s, has been renewed since the end of the 1900s. Keljo also underwent a major transformation at the same time, as Finnish national road 4, Keuruuntie road and the railway each divided the area in turn. Large markets with ample parking space were also built.

MATTILA

Mattila, which was part of the main properties of the Jyväskylä dependent parish, was located in the area. It was zoned in 1837 around the eastern end of the current Vaasankatu street. For this reason, Mattila's financial centre was moved to the south of the urban area, to which it later gave its name. After farming in the area came to an end, the Mattilanpelto district of detached houses and the apartment building area on Keskussairaalan tie road were zoned nearby after the war. Immediately after the war, a maternity hospital belonging to the City of Jyväskylä was located in the main building. This building was built in the Mattila area in the 1870s.

TOURULA

Tourula, an original estate built in the area in the 1500s, was named after the Tavastian birthplace of its earliest inhabitants. The impact of the name of the estate on its surroundings is evident in several ways, for example by the fact that the adjacent Jyväsjoki river was renamed Tourujoki and a mountain in the hinterland of the farm was named Touruvuori. The working-class district of Tourula, which was built for employees of the Schauman plywood factory and later for railway employees, developed without an actual town plan. This was largely because it was located beyond the border of the town in Tourujoki, in the Jyväskylä parish. The construction of the state rifle factory in Tourula in 1928, with its hundreds of employees, changed the nature and industrial structure of the area. Tourula was further developed since the end of the 1900s, with apartment buildings and large speciality shops being built in the demolished working-class district. With the building of the Vaajakoski motorway and the Itä-Päijänte road, Tourula became a transport hub. The construction of a prison on the former site of the main building of the Tourula estate in 2020 is the latest change in the character of the area.

NISULA

The areas behind Harju, bordering the oldest urban area, became known as Nisula. At the end of the 1800s, the Nisula farm, whose name referred to the growing of wheat in the area, became a large farm when area owner and district doctor Wolmar Schildt purchased several smaller farms in the area. At the beginning of the 1900s, Nisula became an unofficial district of Jyväskylä, as it was located outside the town limits in the Jyväskylä parish area. Owing to its history, the area developed new characteristics during the prohibition years of 1931 and 1932, when town police were unable to intervene in the smuggling of spirits in the area. After the wars, the zoned Nisilä area of detached houses, the Viitaniemi terraced housing and apartment building area, and Kortepohja's large educational institutions put an end to agriculture on the lands of the Nisilä farm.

KUOKKALA

The house of Ihanus Jyväsjoki, a peasant known to be the earliest taxpayer in Jyväskylä, was located on the Äijälänjoki river, near the Kuokkala farm that would later be built. Kuokkala became a well-known name after the construction of the sawmills of Jyväskylän Höyrysaha Oy during the 1870s, which were boom years for the lumber trade. When the sawmill operations ended in 1914, the building nowadays known as Kuokkala Manor remained in the area. The building was designed by Wivi Lönn in 1904. Since the 1990s, the renovated Kuokkala Manor has become an oasis for nationally significant high-quality concerts, art exhibitions and literary cultural events. These are made possible by the arts patron Kauko Sorjonen. Top-quality black granite from local large stone quarries gave its name to the Koukkala civil defence shelter that was built by excavation of the bedrock. In 1989, almost the entire Kuokkala district, which includes the area between Jyväsjärvi and Päijänte, was connected to the town by a bridge.

TAULUMÄKI

Taulumäki takes its name from a road sign at the intersection of Saarijärvintie and Laukaantie roads. The construction of the Jyväskylä parish church in 1885 near the intersection made Taulumäki the centre of the parish – that is, the centre of the rural municipality. The parish cottage, municipal office, savings bank, primary school and shops were located mainly in the area built for the workers of the Kangas paper mill. The burning of Taulumäki Church on the first day of the independence war of 1918 was claimed to be a signal for the beginning of the rebellion. However, this is not the case. The new Taulumäki church, designed by Elsi Borg and completed a decade after the fire, is considered one of the most architecturally significant church buildings of its time. The Church of the Holy Resurrection, completed in the vicinity in the early 1950s, became recognised as the country's first Orthodox church built after the war. Taulumäki winter sports centre – with its ski jumps and beach, swimming baths and campsite – have added to the distinctive character of Taulumäki since the 1930s. The handful of building monuments preserved in the middle of the completely renewed building stock are a reminder of the area's long history.

VASIKKAVUORI

The reference to calves in the name of Vasikkavuori, located west of the urban area, is a reminder of the situation in the 1800s and early 1900s, when largely self-sufficient urban residents kept livestock. Led by the city shepherd, the townspeople's livestock were put out to pasture during the grazing season in the Vasikkavuori and its surroundings.

Vasikkavuori gained new significance after the state artillery factory was moved to Jyväskylä in 1937. The facilities of the military equipment factory next to the mountain were located in huge caves excavated under Vasikkavuori in response to the threat of bombing. During the war years, war ordnance was manufactured inside the mountain through uninterrupted three-shift work for the needs of the front.

KANAVUORI

Kanavuori, which rises from its surroundings in Louhikko with its romantic landscapes, was popular in the 1800s as a hiking destination. However, the building of an observation tower at the summit of the mountain at the beginning of the 1900s century did not take place. Due to the threat of bombing, large rock shelters began to be excavated in Kanavuori in the early 1940s, in the same manner as Vasikkavuori and Jyskänvuori. In addition to the Rautpohja artillery factory, important parts of the military equipment industry in the Jyväskylä region were the Tourula rifle factory, Jyskänvuori detonator factory, Tikkakoski submachine gun factory and the Vihtavuori gunpowder factory. One of the region's anti-aircraft batteries was located on the summit of Kanavuori during the war. After the war years, the cave system was used as a supply depot and a facility for secret army activities. Since the transfer to private ownership, the cave system has become a warehouse.

PÖNTTÖVUORI

Construction of a railway link in the late 1910s from Jyväskylä to Savo faced its most difficult obstacles near Jyväskylä in the Leppälahti and Koskenvuori excavations, the Leppävesi earth bank, the bridge over Haapakoski and the tunnel through Pönttövuori mountain. The tunnel was especially difficult to excavate, and took four years. The completion of the longest railway tunnel in Finland (1,223 metres) shortly before the outbreak of the War of Independence in the summer of 1917 was a decisive factor in the course of the war. The Finnish lion coat of arms that was engraved in the granite above the tunnel opening to mark its completion is the only public lion coat of arms in Jyväskylä. With the electrification of the railway line, the original Pönttövuori tunnel was replaced by a new tunnel in 1995, which was 200 metres longer.

IHANTOLA

In honour of Ihanti Jyväsjoki, who is believed to be the first tax-paying resident of the region, the village of Jyväskoski, or Jyväsjoki, was also called Ihantila at the end of the 1500s. With the establishment of the Jyväskylä dependent parish and later the town itself, that name remained the name of Ihantolanharju, which is officially known as Syrjänharju. It borders the urban area. The Ihantola observatory built on the top of the ridge in 1887 became a popular destination for walks and also had a summer restaurant. At the end of the 1800s, the summer restaurant was granted the right to serve alcohol. This provoked opposition from some of the teetotal locals. Restaurateur A. Kaartinen defended himself by writing to the newspaper, and his response became famous: "The Ihantola restaurant cannot be called a bar because of the alcohol licences granted to it, because the esteemed public who frequent it are not alcohol-crazed." The Ihantola ridge has been a popular destination for May Day celebrations since the beginning of the 1900s, with choral singing and the serving of mead and May Day fritters. Nowadays it is also a destination for May Day picnics. The Ihantola tower was part of the townscape until the beginning of the Winter War in 1939, when the tower was destroyed and the crest was cleared for air defence purposes. The Harju steps and sports field, completed in the 1920s, still attract visitors, as does Vesilinna, which was built in 1953. They are located along Ihantolantie road.