

# Lävikkö (läveri, alder pipe och pipe from Koivisto)

## Structure och History

The Lävikkö is an original clarinet-type instrument that spread to eastern Finland and Karelia from Russia in the Middle Ages, but gradually fell out of use by the early 20s.



Figure 1: Reed in the mouthpiece

The lävikkö has a fixed carved reed in a mouthpiece of cane (reed) or wood. Traditionally, wooden pipes were made by twisting off the outer growth rings from a young alder or pine stem cut at chest height. Shepherd boys managed pieces up to 10 cm, while skilled adults could take lengths of half a meter. Pipes were also made from elder branches by removing the soft pith with a hand drill. Depending on pipe length, the fingerpiece had 3–7 holes carved with a knife or heated iron. In Karelia, a small thumb hole was often added to scare away predators. The resonator was a bell of birch bark, alder bark, or horn. Shepherd boys built and played lävikkös in the forest, often alone, for their own enjoyment. The music was often improvised because the placement of the finger holes varied. Musically talented players tuned their instruments and also played dance melodies. The ancient tone of the lävikkö invites listening and playing, experiencing a connection with nature and tradition.

## Parts and Construction

### Mouthpiece

Practice carving the reed. Cut a  $\varnothing$  8 mm cane into two 10 cm pieces. Carve the reed 5 mm from the joint and clean the tube with a birch twig. Test-blow the pipe: close the end of the tube with your tongue, place it deep in your mouth and blow. Once the pipe gives a steady tone, shape and twist a plug from beeswax to fit the blowing end, or make a small twig plug and secure it with glue.

### Fingerboard

Make a 20 cm-long pipe from a dry branch by splitting, carving, and gluing, or drill ( $\varnothing$ 8 mm). Drill finger holes and carve finger cups at them.

### Splint Stick

Split the stick at one end and thin out the sides of the halves.

### Resonator Bell

Clean the soaked bark strip, trim the edge, if needed, and thin out the starting end. Wrap the bark tightly around the pipe end and lock with the splint stick.



Figure 2: Lävikkö with horn bell



Figures 3–4: Two Lävikkö clarinets with birch bark bell

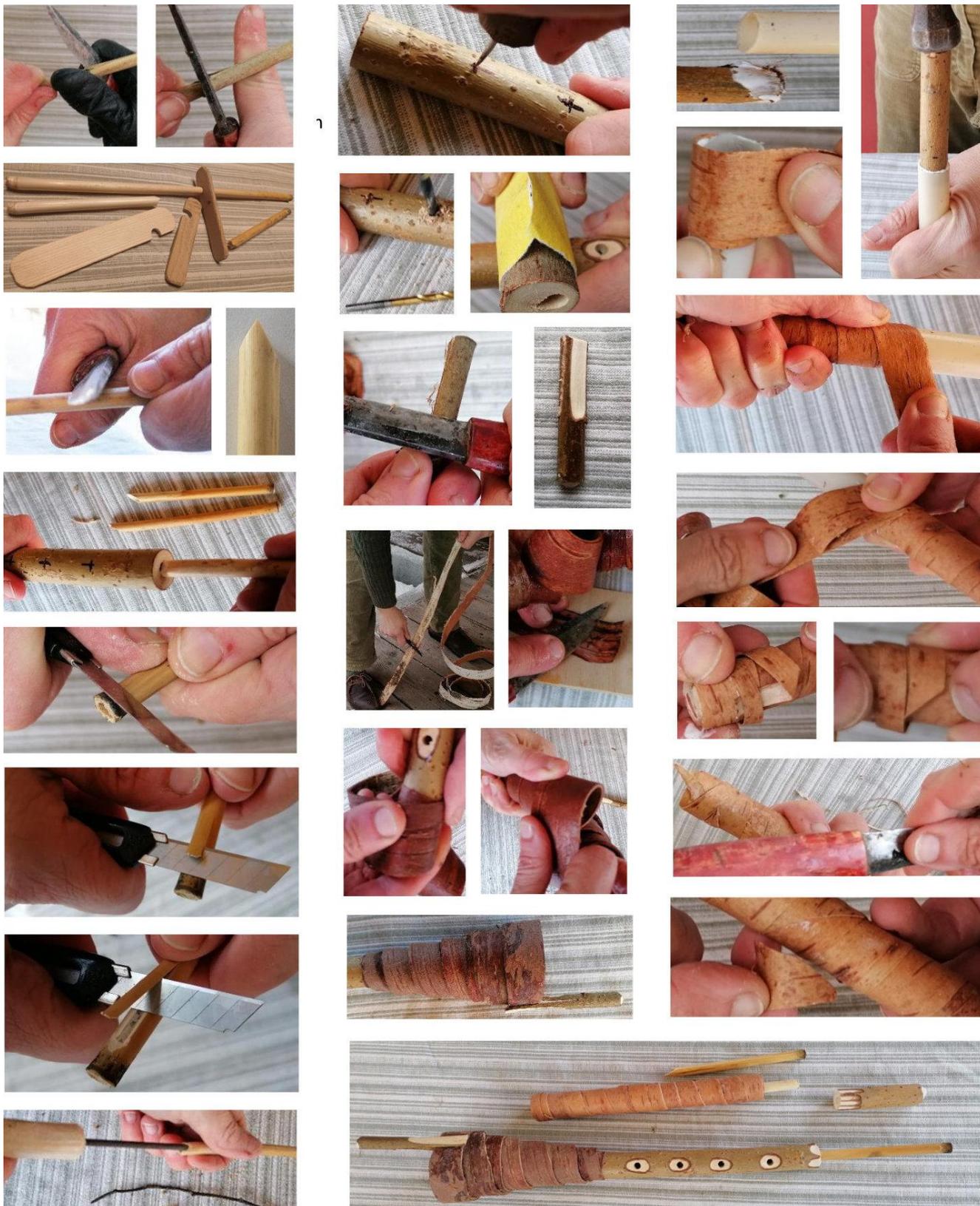
## Lävikkö and Case – Key Construction Steps

**Mouthpiece:** Two ways to cut at the node; select a suitable cane with a measuring stick; cut slantwise to make two pipe blanks; carve the reed; clean the inside; secure the plug.

**Fingerpiece:** Drill 6 mm holes (or start with 3 mm for tuning); carve and sand the finger cups.

**Resonator Bell:** Carve the stem stick; clean the soaked birch bark; thin out the starting end; wrap tightly around the pipe; secure with the stem stick.

**Case:** 5 cm longer than the pipe; glue and cut the plug; stretch the next layer of boiled thin birch bark 2 mm beyond; extend if necessary



*Lävikkös were built at the event “Læven og lokk – Nordic instrument-making seminar” in Oslo, 23–24 October 2025. The seminar was organized by Karstein Grønnesby and Sylvelin Hege Sevilhaug in collaboration with the Norsk lur- og bukkehornlag.*

*Video from the instrument-building seminar:*

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/c-WmTTitUIM>

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