

The excavation is finished!

During the excavation this summer, we examined some 10 graves. Most of them were in the form of stone framed graves below the surface. The stone packing normally covered the skeletons. Most of the skeletons were rather good preserved. Besides what seems to be the normal way to bury people, there was one grave of a totally another construction. It was in the form of a round stone packing, surrounded by a ring of very big stones, up to 1 metre long. The grave, when it was constructed, had been placed on the surface, in contrast to all the other graves that were buried below the surface.

The divergent form, together with the size of the grave as well as of the stones, suggested that the person buried in the grave was of some significant importance. Another sign that it might have been a more important person was the fact that all the graves around this stone grave seemed to have been placed intentionally around the grave, in a way suggestion that the stone circle grave was prior to all the other.

The last grave this summer was a circular grave, some 5 metres in diameter, consisting of a heavy stone packing surrounded by massive stone boulders, up to one metre in length. The southern part of the grave was investigated in 1990, without being recognised as a grave, mostly because that part of the grave was disturbed by later settlement (the upper part of the



photo to the right).

When the stone packing had been removed, there was a stone framed depression in the ground, holding a skeleton of a person with the head in the north and the feet in the south. The person buried had no jewellery, except for a "ball" of amber. The probable date of the grave is the 9th century. Photo D. Carlsson.



It was not without great expectations that we started to investigate the grave. The work was carried out by Tove and Carina, with the help of some of the students from the Gotland University College. They could, after some hard work, conclude that the grave contained a skeleton of a grown up person without any artefacts

what so ever, except for a strange "ball" of amber, some 3 cm in diameter. The person was buried with the feet in the south and the head in the north. So far, there is no osteological investigation carried out, but it might be a woman. This is in line with many of the other graves, where most of the persons seems to be women.

At the moment, the registration of the work from the summer and the preparation of a report, is carried out by Tove Eriksson and Carina Dahlström, and in the beginning of next year their report will be finished.

Parallel to the their work, we have started a co-operation with the University of South Florida and Asst. professor Robert Tykot and Steve Kosiba (who was taking part in the excavation last summer at Fröjel) in examining some of the skeletons from Fröjel in making stable isotope analyses. Briefly, stable carbon and nitrogen isotope ratio analysis of bone collagen and bone apatite (the protein and mineral components of bone, respectively) can be used to reconstruct ancient dietary patterns.

There are also some students at Gotland University College working on different material from the excavation. Åsa Edberg is going to study the ceramics from the site. It consists of some 2000 sherds, many of them obviously of a kind that we use to call Baltic Sea ceramic, while it is very common in many places around the Baltic Sea. It seems as if this ceramic has been a kind of container for goods.

Another student, Marlene Arnell, will make a compilation of all the graves investigated between 1987 and 1990, and the ones we have excavated in 1998 and 1999, and from that compilation make a comparison with some other cemeteries on Gotland from the Late Iron Age.

Next year's excavation

Time is really running, and it is time to plan for the next season of excavation. Sometime in December, I will come back with full details of next years excavation and a form for register to the excavation. We will change the arrangement next year, and have two different kind of courses. The first one will be open for anybody, amateurs as well as professionals. It will be carried out by the Residential college for adult education at Hemse. It will take place between the 28th of June to the middle of July, and be carried out in either in 2 or 3 weeks.

The second course will be an international course, where the working languages will be English. It will be a four weeks course, and carried out between the middle of July and the middle of August. This course is opened for archaeologists and archaeology students from all over the world. The course will be in the form of a package, where housing, food, local transportation, equipment and fee for the course will be included. All together, this course will have 30 places.



Carina (in the background) and Tove are registering all the artefacts found last summer.

As I said, I will come back in December with full information of the two courses, and also information of how to make an application for the courses.

The archaeological Heritage and the public

One of the aims of the project Fröjel Discovery Programme is to inform the public as far as possible about our work and the results from our excavation. To do this, we have a small exhibition about the harbour every summer, displayed in the local school house, and also guided tours to the excavation. The last summer, we calculate there were some 4000 persons visiting the excavation, and of them some 2000 saw the exhibition and joined the guided tours. In my opinion, we as researchers have a moral responsibility to share our knowledge with the public, and to meet the immense interest for our ancient past. The picture of Sture Carlsson, showing some young "coming" archaeologist, is a good illustration of the interest of archaeology. For further reading, I invite you to a [speech](#) (you will need Acrobat Reader) I held in Cibiu in Romania at a meeting with the Council of Europe some months ago.



The next generation of archaeologist are looking carefully when Sture is examining some piece of artefacts. Photo D. Carlsson.