

# The Viking Farm

## Excavations at Kärrmans

[www.gotland-fieldschool.com](http://www.gotland-fieldschool.com)

### Project Description 2024



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## The scientific problem

The possibilities of elucidating our older history are highly dependent on which traces from different times can be read out of the landscape, or in other words, which traces of a past history can still be seen above ground. This possibility itself is based on how the buildings and other monuments of the time were constructed. It is easy to understand that it is extremely simple to note the magnificent burial monuments of the Bronze Age in form of large stone cairns, while it is quite difficult to discover the small coffins with burnt bones buried in the ground. These last in many cases represent the migration era situation, a period which, on the other hand, has very visible and well-preserved house foundations still visible in the landscape today.

This relationship with what can be called the *invisible cultural landscape* means that our knowledge of the older history, before the time of the written sources, is sporadic, which means that we know the houses and graves of certain periods well while other periods are more or less unknown regarding the building methods and types of construction.

One of these problems with the hidden cultural landscape concerns the *history of the Gotlandic farm*. Roughly speaking, we can pretty well follow this history for about 2,000 years, from the early Roman Iron Age to the 17th century, with continuous continuation up to the present day. However, this is not entirely true, as there are conspicuous gaps of a detailed description during the course of this long settlement period. The point is that there is a clear contrast between certain periods with a good source condition and other periods that only vaguely appear in the source material.

The initial period of good source condition concerning the buildings of the farms consists of the Early Iron Age house foundations and enclosures which are built of stone and which occur abundantly all over Gotland. In total, we estimate that there are approx. 1800 preserved house grounds from this time, a considerable amount of house foundations which in many cases allows to create an image of the extent and spread of the buildings over, for example, a parish. These house foundations are also connected by several kilometers of stone rows which were the enclosures of that time. Because they were also built in stone, they have been preserved to an unusually high degree to this day.



Above, a typical house foundation from the older Iron Age with strong stone ramparts. In this case, overlaid with clearing stone from surrounding fields.

To the right, a stone enclosure surrounding the property of an Iron Age farm.





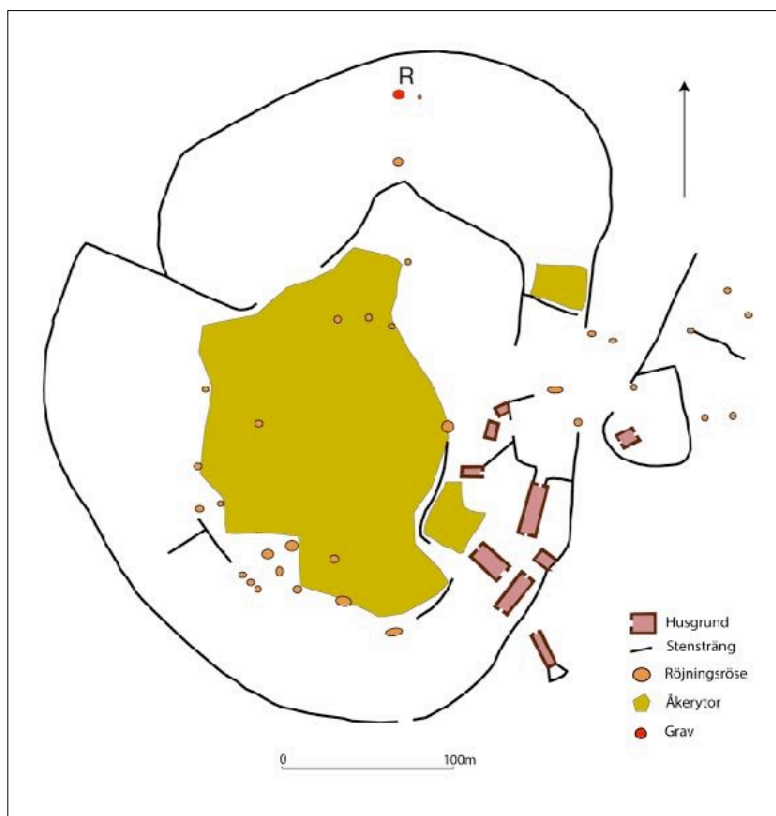
A farm at this time usually consists of two buildings with an infield land, meaning fields and meadows, surrounded by stone enclosures of about 10-25 ha, where the field usually makes up 2-3 ha.

However, these house foundations only correspond to a short period of our prehistory, roughly estimated in the lapse between AD 100 and AD 550-600. What the settlement looked like before and after this period is still partially unclear, especially regarding the time before, although we are starting to get more and more concrete evidence for the later period.

The following period, with a well-documented picture of settlements and landscape, is depicted in the oldest mapping of Gotland, from the decades around the year 1700. The picture of the landscape that these maps shows is, for natural reasons, not the landscape created at the time of the drawing of the map but the reflection of a landscape and built-up situation that points down to the Middle Ages.

Nevertheless, there is a gap in our knowledge regarding the extension and location of the settlement in older times which in principle corresponds to the Late Iron Age, i.e. the Vendel period and the Viking age. If you make a spatial comparison of the landscape and buildings during the 6th century with the situation during the 17th century, it is possible to note clearly that it is likely the same landscape space that is used on both moments and it would hardly be surprising that the intermediate period (Vendel period and Viking Age) can also be found within this landscape picture.

In other words, there is no reason to expect that the period's landscape utilisation and settlement locations are not within the same area. The difficulty, however, is to prove this concretely, as the traces of the remains of that time are largely absent.



*A farm environment from the older Iron Age with associated freehold land surrounded by a stone fence. The location is Fagergatskog on the border between Buttle and Etelhem parishes in central Gotland.*

## Viking Age farm

An assembling of the 6th century landscape and the 17th century landscape, seen in the historical maps, shows that it is the same landscape space that was used for fields and meadows on both periods; a difference in this pattern would be actually remarkable.

However, it should be pointed out that the middle of the 6th century meant a marked devastation of farms, where above all the small and peripherally located farms disappeared.

The stating that the Viking Age farms should be located within the same landscape space as both the 6th century settlement and the medieval settlement raises the question of *whether the settlement during the Viking Age was located in this area.*

In principle, one can point out three possible scenarios here, which certainly occurred to a lesser or greater degree. The first option is that the settlement remains at the site of the Iron Age farms, i.e. next to the clearly visible house

foundations from the 6th century. The fairly extensive archaeological investigations that have taken place at the farms of the time have, however, to a very small extent been able to show that there is a continuous settlement in the Early Iron Age next to the farms of the Late Iron Age.

An illustrative example here is the very extensive archaeological investigations that were carried out at Vallhagar, where a group of 24 house foundations came to be examined with very little impact in the younger period. Only one small house could with some doubt be linked to the Viking Age, but no material found from that period was found at all.

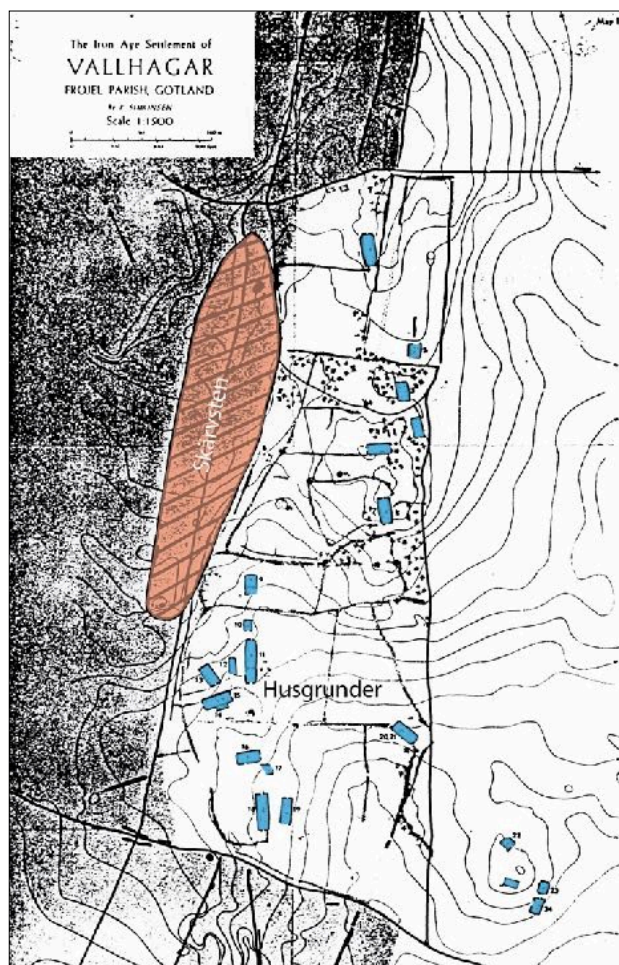
The same can be said to be the situation regarding the archaeological investigations of Iron Age farms that took place at Änge farm in But-

tle parish during a few years. Here, a number of house foundations from the Early Iron Age and even the surrounding land have been examined, both towards east and west of Änge farm, without any more tangible traces of Viking Age settlements.

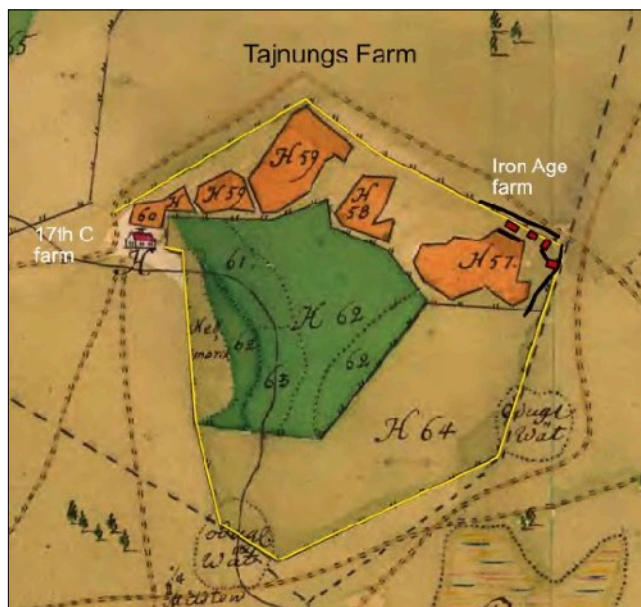
No certain Viking-era farm buildings have thus been found directly adjacent to any of the approx. 80-100 investigated house foundations from the older Iron Age. The old farm site is generally abandoned and a continuation of the farm's history, in the form of another type of house built in wood, takes place in another location.

A third example can be taken from the investigations of an Iron Age farm at Tajnungs in Hangvar parish. Here, parts of houses as well the surrounding areas were investigated without any traces whatsoever of remains of a Late Iron Age settlement adjacent to the Iron Age farm. In addition to the Early Iron Age remains, a medieval house from about 1200 was nevertheless found.

In the case of Tajnungs, the settlement clearly moves from one side of the property to the other side, in this case a distance of about

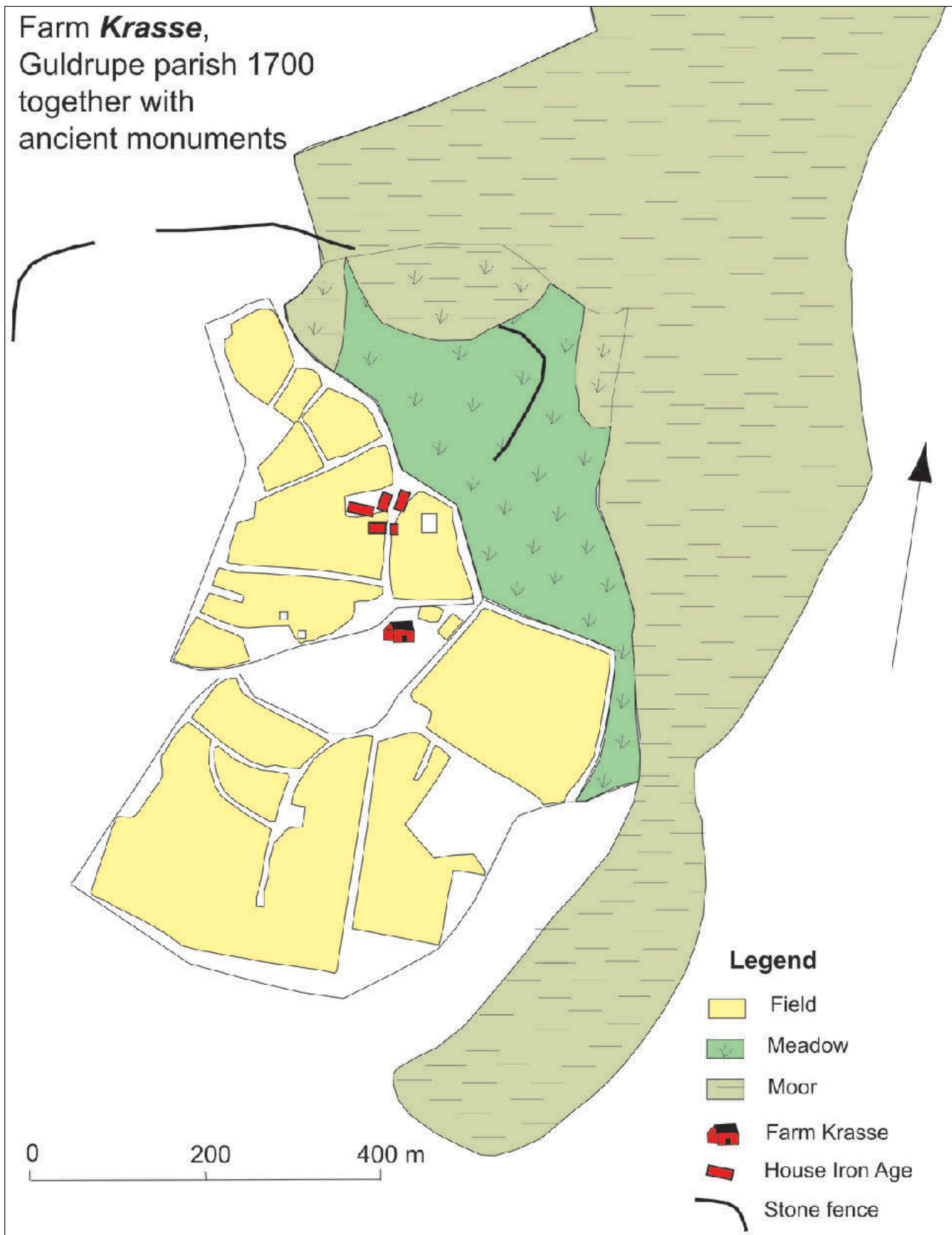


The investigated house grounds in Vallhagar are marked in blue. On the western edge, an area of charred stone, marked in red, shows previous settlements.



Tajnungs farm at the end of the 17th century with the buildings in the western part of the holdings. In the eastern part of the property there are traces of the Iron Age houses.

Farm **Krasse**,  
Guldrupe parish 1700  
together with  
ancient monuments



*Krasse farm with its landscape combined with Iron Age house foundations and enclosures.*



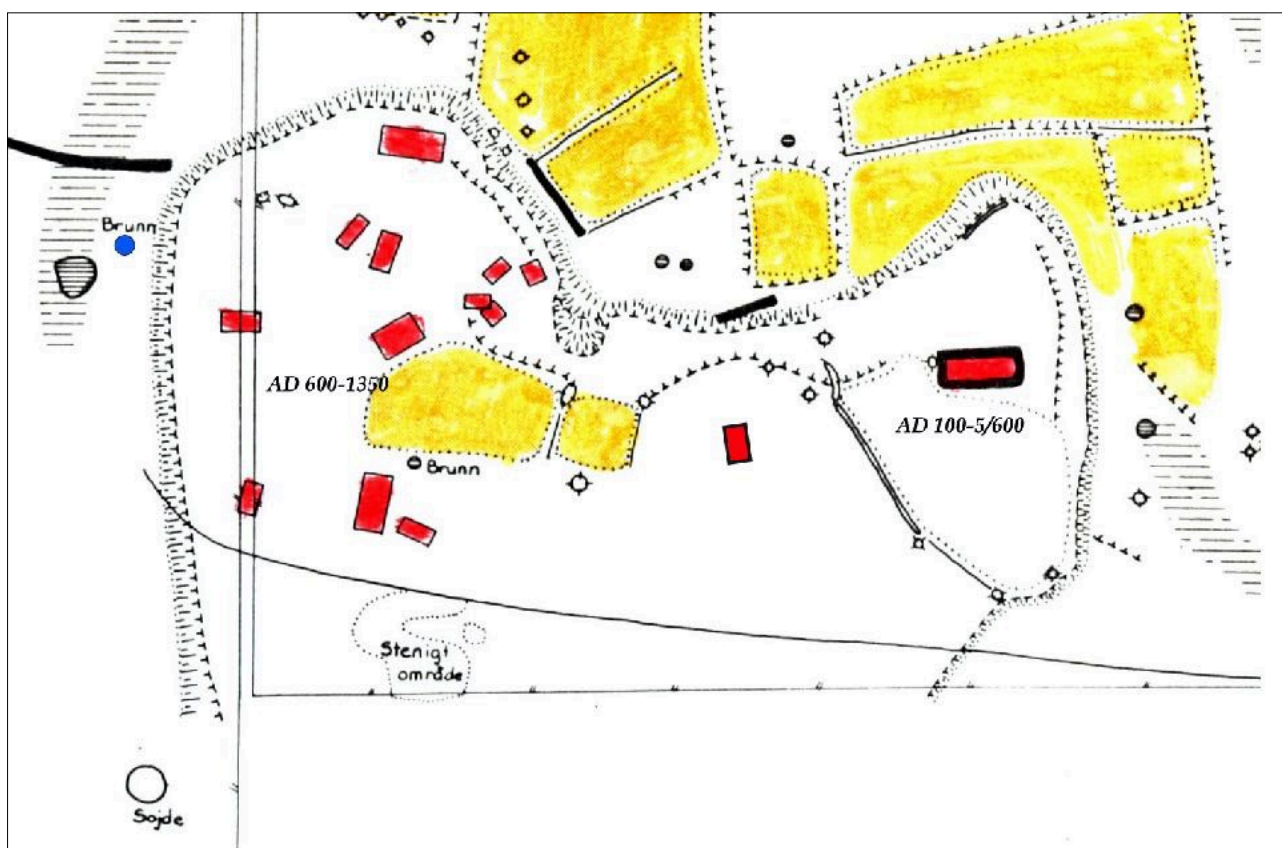
4-500 meters. In other situations, the distance is shorter.

An illustrative example here is the situation at the farm Krasse in Guldrupe parish in central Gotland (map on the previous page). Here, both the Iron Age farm and the historical time farm are found centrally within the land and located only a few hundred meters from each other. There is hardly any reason to believe that the farm's buildings were located anywhere else during the Late Iron Age than directly adjacent to the farm's location in 1700.

In general, it can be stated that there is clearly a relocation of the settlement around the middle of the 6th century, at the same time as the large stone houses are abandoned and the new houses are built in wood. The examples of this procedure are several all over the island. In other words, it is a general rearrangement of settlement location and partly also of the proprietaries, a relationship that is not only about Gotland but that affects large parts of

Scandinavia during the transition between the Early and Late Iron Age.

The observation above leads to the second main alternative regarding the movement of the settlement between the Early and Late Iron Age, which can be seen as two variants. In one case, the settlement is moved in the middle of the 6th century to the location of the farms in 1700 or, in the other case, the settlement moves in two or more stages before being established on the site of the modern farm. The basis for the interpretation that the settlement could be relocated in several stages has primarily been built on the idea that Viking Age silver depots are located in contemporary courtyards, even so that they are deposited in the dwelling houses (Östergren 1989). An ongoing work on the location of the silver depots shows, however, that Viking Age silver depots are almost never found on contemporary farmsteads or in contemporary residential buildings (Carlsson 2024 manuscript).



*The deserted farm Fjäle, Ala parish. The house remains are divided into two parts. In the eastern part is the Early Iron house, and some 150 meters to the west are the houses from around AD 600-1350/60.*

A few exceptions to this point are connected to the fact that some silver depots are linked to workshops/forges and where the silver has functioned as a raw material in the manufacture of jewellery and tools. In other words, it is extremely uncertain to use the location of silver depots as an indicator of Viking Age farmsteads.

The combined picture thus shows that the most clear event is that the relocation of the farms which took place around AD 500-600 means that the buildings are moved to a higher and drier position in the landscape as a result of the climate change occurred with the now well-known volcanic eruptions in 537. This natural disaster created a significant negative climate impact which led to extensive devastation of farms and major problems for cultivation and livestock management for a long time.

To recap, the hypothesis is that the settlement was moved at this time to the place where the farm can be found in the oldest map and still today. As a rule, it's not about any longer distance, mostly about a number of hundred meters. An illustrative example of this move is the farm Fjåle in Ala parish. The farm was abandoned in the middle of the 14th century and traces of the farm laid untouched in meadows until the present day. Extensive archaeological investigations of the farm have provided a clear picture of its history. The farm was established around AD 100 on the eastern edge of a hill (map on previous page). Over the course of the 6th and 7th centuries, the settlement was moved approx. 150 meters further to the west, where it remained until the farm was abandoned in the middle of the 14th century.

*Ihre farm with its holdings in 1695. At the left edge of the holdings is the Iron Age farm.*

Another archaeologically investigated example of a relocation of a farm's buildings can be found in the partially excavated farm Ihre in Hangvar parish in northern Gotland.

The 1696 map overlapped with the ancient remains illustrates a farm with its holdings well clustered around the farmstead in 1696 and where at the south-west edge of the holdings are the remains of an Iron Age farm (map below). From a purely spatial point of view, there is hardly any reason to believe that the Viking Age settlement would be anywhere else than adjacent to this well-defined property landscape. Archaeological investigations carried out on the farm plot from 1695 (the settlement was moved in the early 19th century to a position closer to the road) also showed clear remains from the Viking Age and the early Middle Ages, both as coins and other artefacts as well as <sup>14</sup>C datings of construction details.

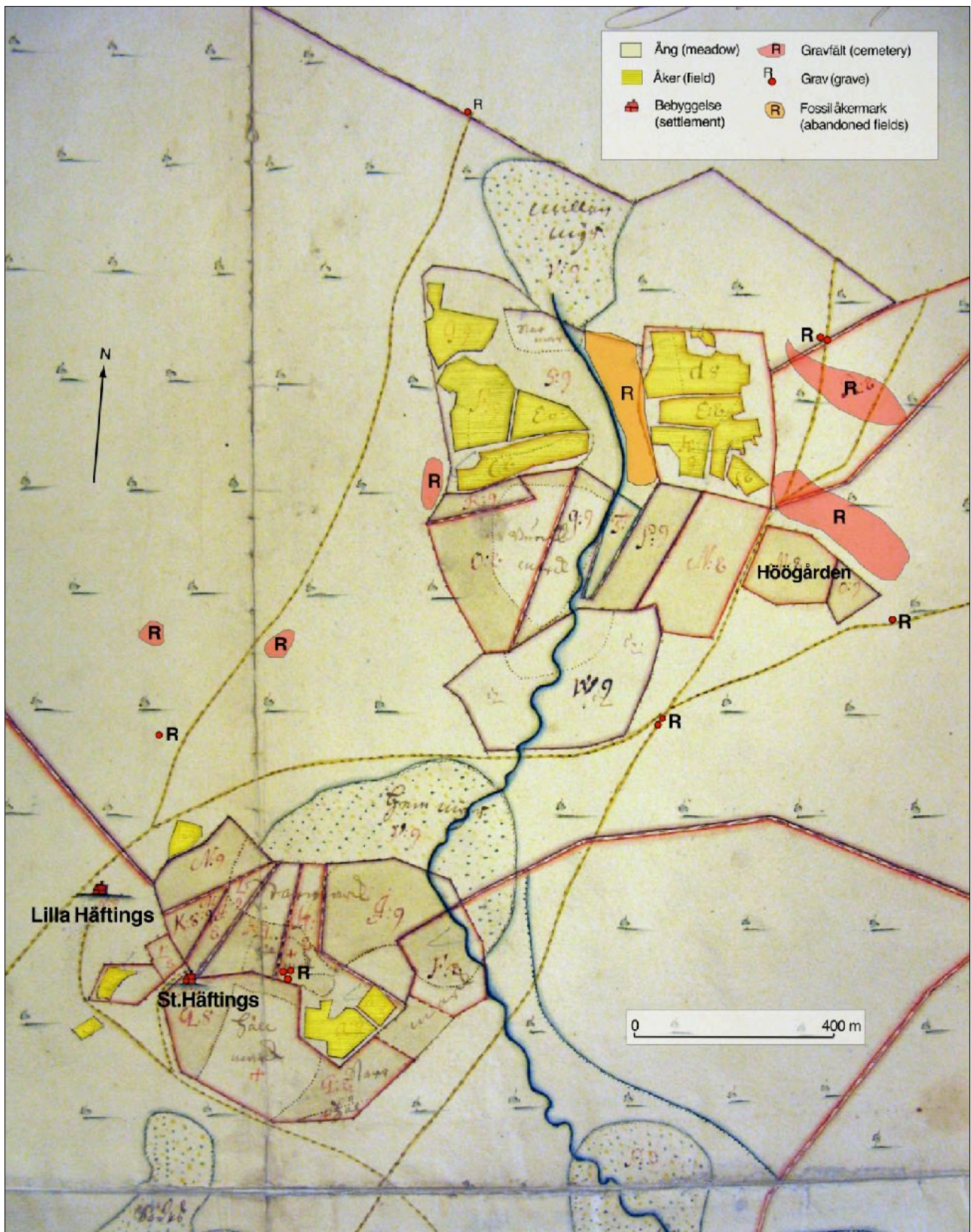
Among other things, a rune-carved spindle whorl in lead was found (picture above).



Fjåle and Ihre are two examples of archaeologically partially investigated farms which clearly show that the 6th century relocation of the settlement took place in the position of the farmsteads visible in the oldest map of Gotland from around the year 1700.







Stora and Lilla Häftings's farms in Fleringe parish in 1696. The main part of the farm's land plus extensive burial grounds and older (fossil) arable land is in the north, while the houses are located in the south without contact with the northern area.



But there are apparently also times when the settlement has been moved for various reasons even later than the transition between the Early and Late Iron Age, above all during the Middle Ages, especially in connection with the plague periods and general decline of the 14th and 15th centuries. Many farms were abandoned at this time, but some of them were taken up after a certain time and in some cases may have established a new settlement in a different place than the original site of the farm.

It should be noted that even if a farm fell into abandonment, i.e. the owner could not pay taxes, this does not mean that the farm itself ceases to exist. Its lands came to be farmed by other farms in return for paying taxes on those lands. The state's purpose was to have, as far as possible, users on each farm who could pay taxes to the state, which concretely meant that the lands were to be kept intact over long periods of time in terms of borders.

An illustrative example of a late migration can be seen in the farms Lilla and Stora Häftings in Hangvar parish in northern Gotland (the map on the previous page). In the position where the settlement is located when the map was drawn up in 1696, there is hardly any fields. Lilla Häftings is also quite peripheral from the property and next to an older road. The farms' main arable land can be found a little over 1 km further to the north in the form of extensive and large areas of the farms' arable land gathered here around a depression with a stream.

In this context is relevant the presence of a large number of ancient remains in the area in the form of both burial fields, traces of settlements and ancient fields from prehistoric times next to cultivated fields of the 17th century, which clearly mark a prehistoric origin for the farm in this area. When this late move of the settlement took place is unclear, but given that almost no arable land had yet been taken up at the new settlement location when the map was drawn up in the late 17th century, the move

should have taken place during the same century.

The situation as it is reflected in Fjäle, with a movement of the settlement during the course of the 6th century and the transition to a house building tradition based on building in wood is very likely the general picture of the settlement changes on Gotland during the current period, even if there are exceptions to this rule.

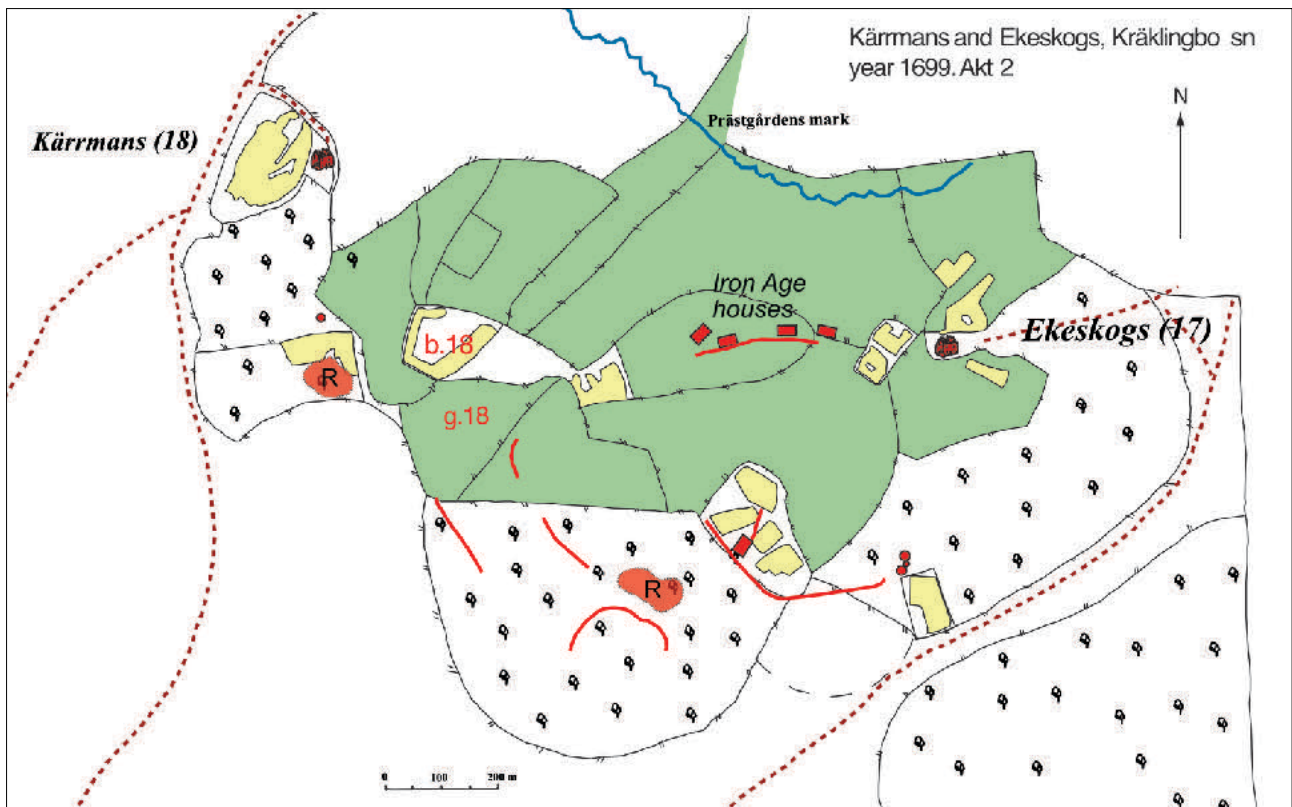
## Kärrmans farm in Kräklingbo parish

Overall, it is clear from the archaeological investigations of recent years that there is a marked relocation of the settlement over the course of the 6th century paired with extensive abandoning of farms as a result of climate impact. There are also clear indications that this movement of the buildings has concretely meant that the constructions have come to be located in the place where the farms are still found today. However, the real evidence for this is still relatively few, with the deserted farm Fjäle in Ala being an illustrative example.

As part of creating a more certain and clearer basis for interpretation and as a support for a monograph on the Gotland farm, the intention for summer 2024 is to carry out in-depth archaeological investigations of the farm Kärrmans in Kräklingbo parish, already partially investigated in 1992-93.

The farm is located in the western part of the parish and according to the oldest taxation sources from the 15th and 17th centuries, it seems to be a fairly normal-sized farm for the time and should be a good representative to shed light on the issue of continuity in the settlement's location, with particular focus on the situation during the Late Iron Age (Vendel Age-Viking Age).

The map on the next page illustrates the landscape around two historically connected farms *Kärrmans* and *Ekeskogs* together with registered ancient remains. The holdings of the farms



The farms of Kärrman and Ekeskog in 1696. The color green indicates a meadow, the yellow a field, the other areas with trees are fenced pasture. The field b.18 (Tomtåker) is marked. Red shaded areas with the letter R are graveyards. The blue dot indicates a well.

(fields and meadows) form a very well-coherent landscape space where the buildings for the farms are located at each end of these contiguous holdings. However, one should note a certain significant difference between the location of the buildings for Ekeskogs farm seen in relation to the location of Kärrman's farm. Ekeskogs (number 17 in the map above) is fairly close to the farm's meadows and fields, while Kärrmans is without direct contact with the central holdings, separated by pastures. Admittedly, there is a larger arable area (*Hemåkern*) next to the farm, but several arable areas and the farm's meadows are concentrated in the central part of the holding area. The image gives a hint that Kärrman's farm, where it is located when the map is drawn up, has been moved from an earlier location, probably more central in the estate landscape.

A clear indication that the building of the farm was previously located further into the property landscape is that the field *b.18* goes in the description to the map under the designation

of "Tomtåker", meaning the field where the farmhouses were. It can hardly be expressed more clearly. To this can be added that just to the east of this field and on the hill there is an old well that should be connected to the farmyard. Overall, the taxation documents illustrate that Kärrmans farm settlement was previously located adjacent to field *b18*, either on the height that is in the middle of the field, or on the corresponding height immediately south of the field, which is shown on the map as a larger area that is not classified as meadow or field and where also the well is marked. It can also be noted that the corresponding field and meadow at Ekeskogs farm in the east, here named *Stufenges twär* (field *b17*) and *Stufenge* (*117*) directly border the farm's buildings, which indicates that Ekeskogs has been on this site since the Late Iron Age (the word *Styf* or *Stufe* should be understood as "house/cottage").

The question is when this moving of the building to the new location is thought to have taken place and of course also the question of



why the building was moved. It should be noted that farms were rarely moved without particularly compelling reasons given the work and costs involved in establishing a farm. It is much of an archaeological myth that the settlement during the Iron Age rotated around the landscape as the arable land became depleted.

There is an interesting taxation data that gives a fairly certain answer as to exactly when the settlement was moved from the area at field b18 to its current location, or rather when the settlement was built on the new site. In the wasteland list from 1585, Kärrmans is listed as a wasteland and here it is mentioned that the land is farmed by the farms of *Sutarve* and *Histille* who pay taxes for this.

What is interesting in this context is that it appears that the farm had been deserted for 60 years in 1618, which means that it had been deserted since 1558. When the farm was taken up after being abandoned, the houses that previously existed on the farm were hardly accessible to move into, which led to the new owners building a new farm and then on the site of today's Kärrmans.

Synthesising the reasoning above, it is clear that Kärrman's farm was originally located further into its property landscape and that the farm during periods that can be occupied came to lie abandoned for longer and shorter periods in order to be rebuilt in a new place after a longer period of abandonment. This time peripheral in the estate landscape but more central in relation to the country road through Kräklingbo and to the location illustrated by the map in 1696. It is also the place where the farm is located today.

We have so far only talked about the farm's history as seen in the taxation source material and basically covered the time period from the Middle Ages to the present. It is now time to put on the picture the landscape of the 6th century in the form of house foundations of the time, stone enclosures and possible burial fields in the immediate area.

## Iron Age landscape

Within the property landscape of the farms Kärrmans and Ekeskogs there are remains of three Iron Age farms, reported in the map earlier, and in addition extensive traces of stone enclosures that illustrate the division of land within the area, plus two burial fields visible above ground. The spread of the stone enclosures and the foundations of the houses form the visible traces of the Iron Age estate landscape, which largely coincides with the 17th century estate landscape. The picture of Kärrmans and Ekeskogs is completely in line with the general picture of constancy in the agrarian landscape during the Iron Age and the Middle Ages.

The preserved remains apparently represent three farms from the Early Iron Age, where the two farms within the northern part should form the origin of Kärrmans and Ekeskogs farms. It can be noted that the western of these farms lies within land belonging to Kärrmans and that the eastern farm with two house grounds is on the border with and partly within land belonging to Ekeskogs. The further development outlined above is that the Younger Iron Age and the Middle Ages at Kärrmans are located in the area a couple of hundred meters west of the Iron Age farm and adjacent to *Tomtåkern* (b18 in the map on the previous page), the horseshoe-shaped field in the center of the area.

The third Iron Age farm in the south can be interpreted in two ways. Either it is a farm that belongs to those that disappear during the course of the 6th century as a result of the extensive abandoning at that time; alternatively, there may have been settlement until the Middle Ages and the farm at that time disappeared as a result of the marked abandonment of the 14th century. Unfortunately, the information in the oldest map or any other traces do not give any clear indication of the farm's history. The small fields and the meadow bordering the Iron Age farm are designated by the words *Gränsängesåker* and *Gränsänge*, designa-

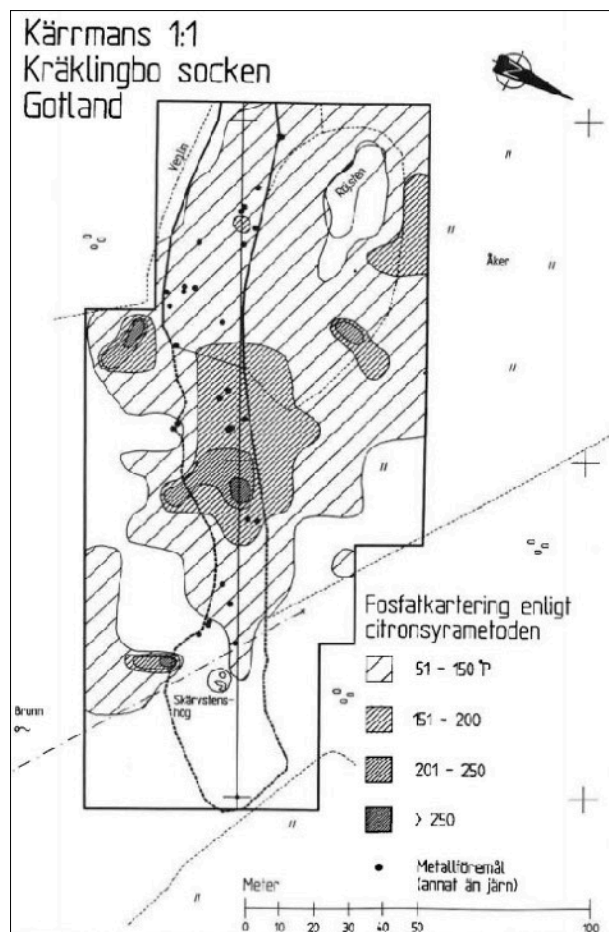
tions that are difficult to decipher in a chronological horizon.

## The archaeological trial survey 1992-93

In connection with a devastating forest fire that ravaged around Torsburgen in Kräklingbo parish in 1992, a number of fire barriers around the parish were excavated with a machine to prevent the further spread of the fire. One of these fire barriers came to pass fairly straight through the grounds to Kärroman's farm. The fire barrier, approx. 30 meters wide, was drawn across the southern part of *Tomtåkern* in an east-west direction. During an archaeological follow-up of excavated fire barriers in the same year, it was established that the fire barrier in this case had in part touched a settlement from the Late Iron Age and the early Middle Ages. In a first stage, the area was searched with a metal detector, during which about 20 objects were found. Among the objects can be mentioned a square fitting with rune stone ornaments, a spindle whorl made of lead and an animal head-shaped buckle, all objects that should be counted from the later part of the Viking Age. A Roman denarius from the early Roman Iron Age was also found (Carlsson 1992).

In a subsequent supplementary investigation of the site in 1993 (Carlsson 1993), a phosphate mapping of the area was initially carried out, through the use of the spot test method as well the citric acid method. It turned out that there were greatly elevated values of phosphates along a larger part of the fire barrier and the result of an additional metal detection yielded a significant number of findings, above all linked to

*Some of the findings from the initial metal detecting of the fire barrier. To the left decorative pin, then to the right a belt attachment, a button with rune ornamentation and a strap attachment in gripping beast-style. At the bottom a double button. Everything dated to the Viking Age. Photo: Dan Carlsson.*



*Map showing the phosphate levels along the fire road. Note that north is to the right. Map: Stefan Jonasson.*

the central part of the area with high phosphate values. The finds were, as before, mainly from two time horizons, partly from the older Roman Iron Age in the form of two Roman coins, a hammer stone and large quantities of ceramic and burnt stone. These finds came mainly from the easternmost part of the de-tracked area. The focus of the find material, however, showed objects from the Viking Age







The fire barrier through the "Tomtåker" and examined trenches. Objects found with a metal detector are marked with a red dot.

and the early Middle Ages. Among them were 3 coins (in addition to the two Roman coins) in the form of an Arab coin, a German coin from the late Viking Age and a Modern age coin from 1684. In addition, several decorative pins from the Viking Age as well as parts of spurs from the Middle Ages were found.

The archaeological excavation was limited to 5 trenches one meter wide that varied in length between 2 and 15 meters laid out across the fire barrier (figure above). The total surveyed area amounted to 109 m<sup>2</sup>. Farthest to the east, on a slight elevation, the above-mentioned pile of burnt stones with probable dating to the early Iron Age was found. In addition, a pair of well-preserved stone-shod post holes of a shape that points to them being posts for houses emerged. In the western part, in Trench 4, the remains of a forge hearth with large amounts of slag were found. The area adjacent to the hearth contained quite a lot of objects and it was assumed that there had been some kind of building here, probably the forge.

The focus of the material encountered, both from the metal detection and from the trenches

examined, came from the central part of the settlement area, which coincided well with the elevated phosphate values. The results clearly indicate that the site houses a settlement from the Viking Age-Early Middle Ages. However, the limited investigations meant that, for understandable reasons, no clear picture of a courtyard with buildings could be reconstructed. This requires more comprehensive investigations. The absence of well-taken <sup>14</sup>C samples also makes the precise dating of the age of the remains unclear. It is well known that <sup>14</sup>C dating often tends to show an older layer than the objects give, partly due to the fact that the oldest traces of a continuously used settlement are few and consist only of fragments.

### The scientific question

The overview above has, with some clear examples, dealt with the question of the continuous use of the cultural landscape during the Iron Age, where the central hypothesis is that, generally speaking, there is only one clear relocation of the settlement up to the landscape



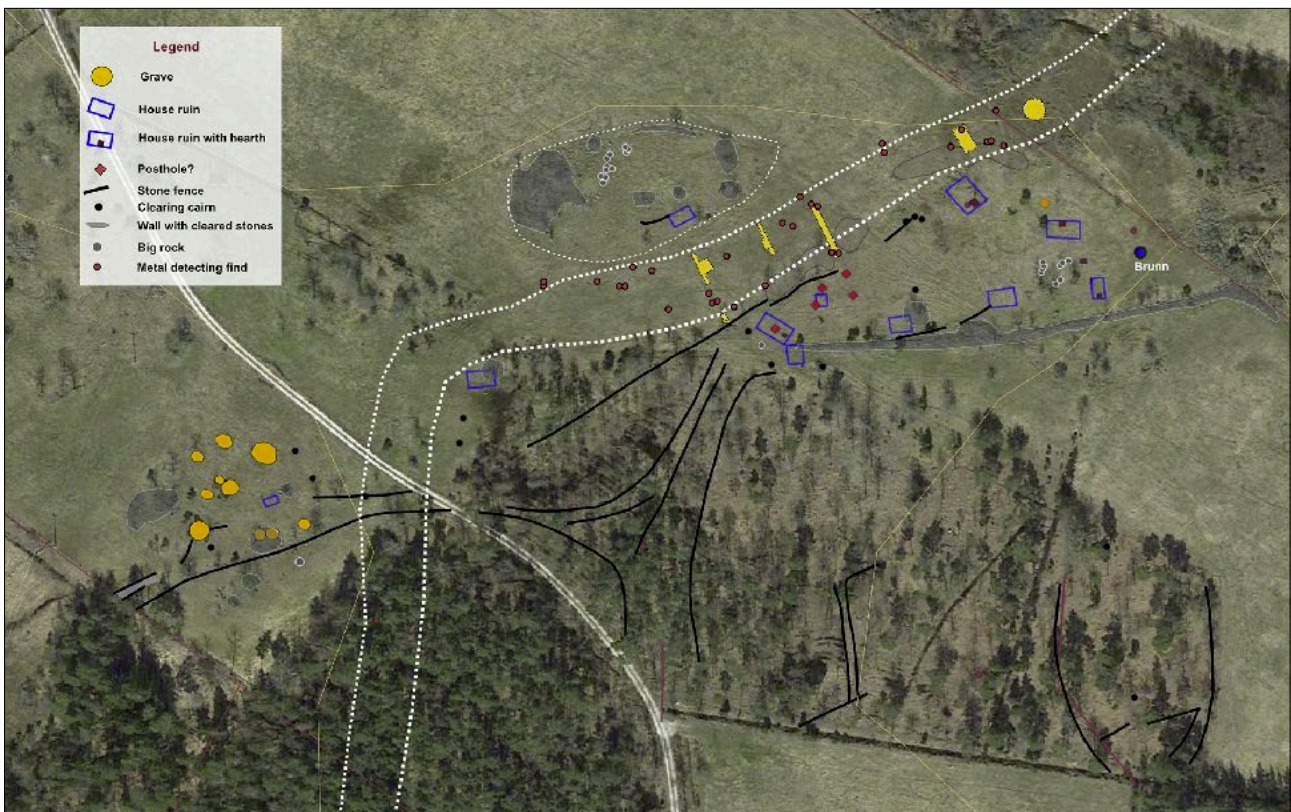
we encounter in the oldest maps of Gotland drawn up around the year 1700. The relocation of the houses is in connection with the marked climate change that was the result of a couple of intense volcanic eruptions in the middle of the 6th century and the subsequent abandonment.

It is also clear that this rearrangement also meant a radical shift in terms of the construction of the houses. The stone-built large foundations that were in use during the Roman Iron Age and Migration Period were replaced by smaller wooden houses built in the *pièce-sur-pièce à coulisse* technique, where the functions of the farm were divided into several smaller houses. These coincident changes in time, the move of the settlement to new locations higher up in the landscape and on drier lands and the transition to a completely new way of building houses, are certainly connected.

If it was for purely practical/functional reasons, where the big stone houses turned out to be far too humid and cold to live in, or if the transition from stone houses to wooden houses was connected with some kind of religious belief that the abandoning had to do with the houses itself, is unclear, but well worth investigating.

The now resumed project *The Gotlandic Farm*, with the planned supplementary investigations at Kärrmans in Kräklingbo, aims to clarify in more detail the historical picture of the place, but also to be a part of an interpreted and balanced picture of the history of the Viking Age farm built on several previous year's archaeological investigations of farms. The aim is to achieve these investigations at Kärrmans over a period of two years.

As a basis for renewed archaeological investigations at Kärrmans, a careful field analysis of the environment around the site of the previous investigation was performed during the



The field inventory shows several traces of house remains south of the fire barrier in a line that follows an open pasture landscape bounded in the south by a marked stone embankment and in the north by the former field Tomtåkern. Yellow areas in the fire barrier show the search shaft in 1993.



past year. These field analyses have shown a significantly more complex picture of the relationship around the site of the Viking Age farm than formerly noted (map on the previous page). Not least, several foundations for houses have been identified located on the slight elevation south of the fire barrier. In several of them there are traces of a stove. The foundations are divided into two areas, which, judging by the shapes, probably indicates an internal relocation of the houses over time (ancient remain L1977:1927). The traces of the houses in the farthest east give an impression of a medieval dating according to the form of the house foundations with sill frames and with stoves inside the building. In the western part, the tracks are more uncertain, but here also there are one or two clear house foundations. In addition, there is a hint of several post holes faintly visible in the ground surface. This area appears to represent the older phase of the farm's history at this site, which would imply the Late Iron Age.

Just to the west of the settlement area, there used to be a grave registered in the ancient monuments register, but it is apparently a minor burial ground consisting of 10 more or less graves (mounds of stones). In the forest area to the south of the residential area, a number of stone enclosures apparently divide the area into smaller fields. Most of them probably belong to the time of the farm.

Coming summer's archaeological field investigations will initially be concentrated in the western part of the settlement area. The purpose of these investigations is above all to document the initial stage of the activity in the area as part of the understanding of the history of the farm. Depending on time and possibilities, it is also planned to have a part of the settlement site in the eastern part examined in order to confirm or reject the hypothesis of an internal relocation of the houses during the course of the early Middle Ages. The questions that, above all, at this stage are deemed urgent to answer can be summarised as follows:

- When is the farm established on the site?
- When does the activity at the site end?
- What types of buildings can be distinguished and how were they constructed?
- What were the living conditions like in the farm?
- The central question to answer is: is the investigated settlement to be seen as a chronological part in the history of the farm Kärrens?

Direct ways to answer questions about the time frame for the settlement are based to a large extent on the use of C14 analyses of significant constructions such as postholes, hearths, waste pits and the like, paired with an analysis of found materials, for example coins.

Excavations of buildings should be carried out to such an extent that one can safely assess their construction and period. In order to find out about the farm's production, an osteological analysis of the found bone material is essential, concerning the composition of the livestock in the relationship between sheep, cattle, pigs, etc. It is also important to get a grasp of what role fishing may have had in the farm's production.

At this time, no surveys are planned for adjacent traces of farmland that could conceivably be linked to the farm, which will have to be done in the coming year. Nevertheless, there may be reasons to collect material for macrofossil analyses. Not least if buildings or materials are found that point to a place for storing grain, hay or the like. Even soil samples from stoves or their immediate vicinity can be suitable places to analyse the soil from these aspects.

A not unimportant detail concerns which tree species were used for different types of construction such as posts, sills, wall planks etc. for houses. From previous investigations, for example at Fjåle in Ala parish, it turned out that of 38 analysed wooden remains from posts all consisted of pine. The same was the case regarding two prominent and well-pre-

served posts in a forge at Klints in Othem, dated to about the year 1040. These were also pine, as were the posts in the Viking Age-early medieval farm that was investigated in Vallstena a few years ago. It is clear that pine is the dominant type of tree when it comes to the construction of houses of the period.

## Finds strategy

An investigation of a Viking Age - Medieval farm tends to generate a very large amount of find material. This applies to fragments or parts of rivets, nails, tines and other smaller pieces of iron. Also slag in different forms, as well as flint and burnt clay can become quite large materials and it is deemed reasonable in this case to only save suitable selections and to re-deposit the remaining material. The basis for the documentation of found material means that all material is initially registered as a digital database with the aim to create a basis for statistical calculations. The exception to this is charcoal, which is regularly found over almost all settlement areas of this type and which will not be used generally but only in connection with constructions of various kinds.

Only finds of significant scientific importance and which will clarify the knowledge of the site will be taken into account, above all such material which can shed light on the question of the function of remains found on the farm site (forge, residential building, farm building, cellar), time position and provenance (manufactured on the farm or procured from elsewhere). Finds that are taken into use and are in need of conservation will be handed over to Stiftelsen Föremålsvård in Kiruna or to an independent conservator in Kalmar. During the time before the findings are distributed by the National Antiquities Office, the findings will be stored in specially designated cabinets at Arendus.

## The execution of the excavation

The archaeological investigations are carried out as an archaeology field course in collaboration with Hemse Folkhögskola, in line with the collaboration that it's been going on for more than 25 years. The field investigations will last for a total of four weeks, three weeks with participants via Folkhögskolan in Hemse and a supplementary week with participants from the trial course.

The focus of the initial three weeks will be on the western part of the settlement area, while the trial group will investigate parts of the presumed medieval settlement site. The course will consist also of lectures and excursions during the initial weeks, while during the third week the participants from Hemse will mainly sort the material as a basis for the final report.

The field work will initially be concentrated on clear traces on the ground surface of house foundations, which must be examined in their entirety as far as possible in order to get a comprehension of the type of house, traces of construction details, possible division into rooms, time position, etc. Examined surfaces are measured with GPS while remains within surveyed areas are documented in detail with theodolite, vertical photography and clean drawings by hand, which in a subsequent phase are digitised for the report.

## Publication

The results of the archaeological investigation will be published in the form of an official report in line with the regulations of the National Antiquities Office and the County Administrative Board. The results of the investigations will form part of the basis for a monograph on the Gotland farm during the Late Iron Age at a later stage. In a shorter time perspective, this year's results form the starting point for the project's second and final year to create a well-founded elucidation of the farm's history.