

ANEBY GÅRD – IRON AND GRAVES

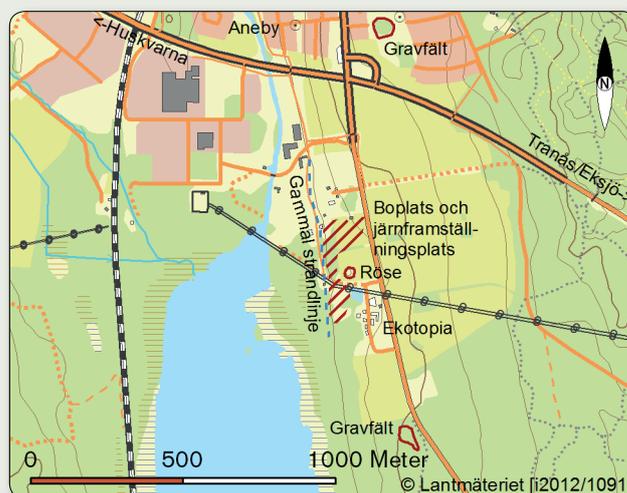
At Ekotopia, south of Aneby gård, archaeologists have found one of the most exciting places in the county, where iron was produced in prehistoric times. The discovery was made in 1996, during investigations before the building of Ekotopia. The site had already caught our attention earlier on, since it is surrounded by several ancient remains. The closest is a Bronze Age cairn, around 35 metres in diameter, and to the north and south are a couple of grave fields from the Iron Age. The iron production site and the grave fields were probably connected, i.e. people from the farm were buried here during the period 200–600 A.D. The large cairn is more than 1 000 years older.

A gold medallion from the 4th century was found in a nearby field in the 1930s. The medallion features the profile of a Roman emperor on one side and a spearman on a horse on the other. The picture of the emperor is encircled by a border of signs. This shows that it is not a “true” Roman gold medallion. Those medallions had Latin text and were decorations given by the emperor to outstanding military representatives. The Aneby medallion was made in Scandinavia around 1 500 years ago and must have belonged to a prominent person.

Before the building of Ekotopia commenced in 1996, we used an excavator to dig a number of trial pits and search trenches. Quite soon, these revealed preserved cultural layers with the occurrence of iron-slag, furnace linings of burnt clay, ceramics, whetstones, fire-damaged stones, etc. These finds were almost all located along the old shoreline of Lake Aneby sjön, which was drained in the mid-1800s. Settlement remains, such as hearths and post holes, have also been found. We noted that the slag was linked both to the actual iron production process and to the stages of working the iron. Perhaps it was iron production that created affluence and status for the owner of the gold medallion? No traces of a settlement or iron production are today visible above ground; they are hidden in and below the topsoil.



View from the Bronze Age cairn, one of the largest in the county with a diameter of around 35 metres. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.



HIDDEN GEM 47



HOW TO GET HERE

From Aneby: Drive southwards on Storgatan, passing over the bridge across Road 132. Continue a few hundred metres to Ekotopia. The large Bronze Age cairn is a stone's throw from Ekotopia.

Coordinates:

Bronze Age cairn:
N 6408955 / E 489182
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N 57°
49' 20.72", E 14° 49' 4.36"
(WGS84)



The grave field, approx. 400 metres south of Ekotopia, comprises several burial mounds and a stone circle. The sunken lane suggests that there was a stretch of road here as long as a thousand years ago. Photo: Jönköping County Museum.

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HIDDEN GEMS

There are so many things to discover in the countryside! Here, Jönköping County Museum presents some of the cultural environment and heritage attractions in the county.

They include well-known cultural monuments such as Habo Church and the Smålandsstenar Stone Circles, but also lesser known gems such as log-driving remains in the river Valån and Stengårdshult Church. Around the county you can find evidence of how people lived and worked in the past, everything from castles and manors to abandoned embankments and clearance cairns in forest areas.

The idea with Hidden Gems is to tempt you to make excursions in the cultural landscape – here you find our history, revealed in different ways in the physical environment. This heritage is worth experiencing and protecting. Bit by bit, we will be adding more sights under the heading Hidden Gems, both for people living in the county and visitors from further away. The more people who discover these gems, the better chance that they will be preserved for the future.

FACTS

In Jönköping County there are more than 4 000 registered ancient remains, 87 cultural environments of national interest, close to 130 listed buildings, around 150 churches, some 100 rural community centres with old settlements, a large number of industrial heritage sites, and two cultural reserves. There are also a large number of cultural environments with buildings worthy of conservation. More information about the sites can be found on the websites of the County Administrative Board, the municipalities and the local heritage societies.

GOOD TO KNOW

Access to the Hidden Gems varies. Some sites are well signposted, with easy access and proper parking facilities, etc. Others are more challenging to reach. Visitors may have to walk some distance, sometimes through scrubby forest, only to be met by a broken sign (if there ever was one) when they reach the site. All the sites, however, have an exciting and interesting history.

Please note that many of the cultural heritage buildings are privately owned and can only be viewed from the outside. Also, please respect private land. Many churches are open in the summer. During other times of the year, the churchwarden may be able to open the church for you.

