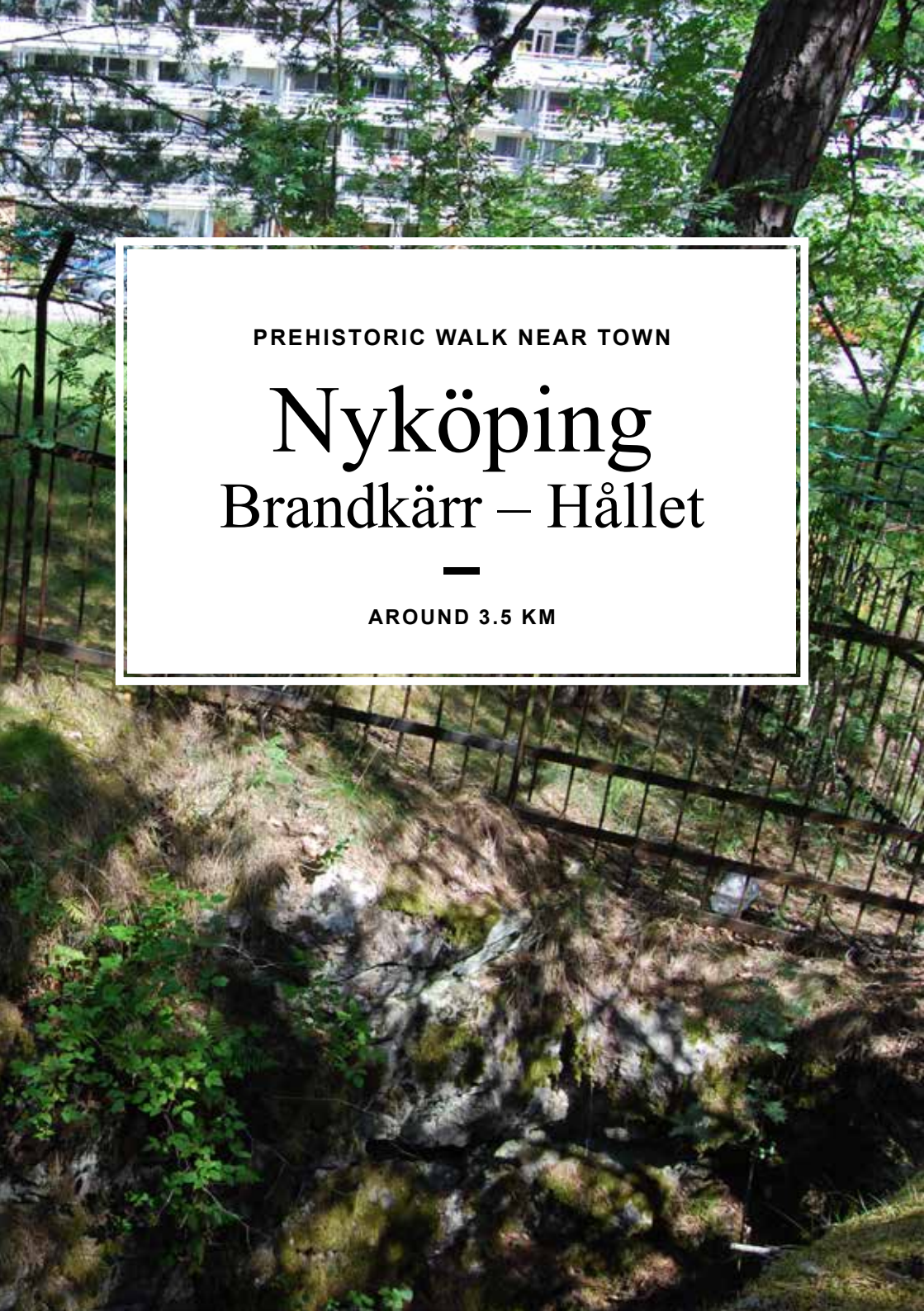
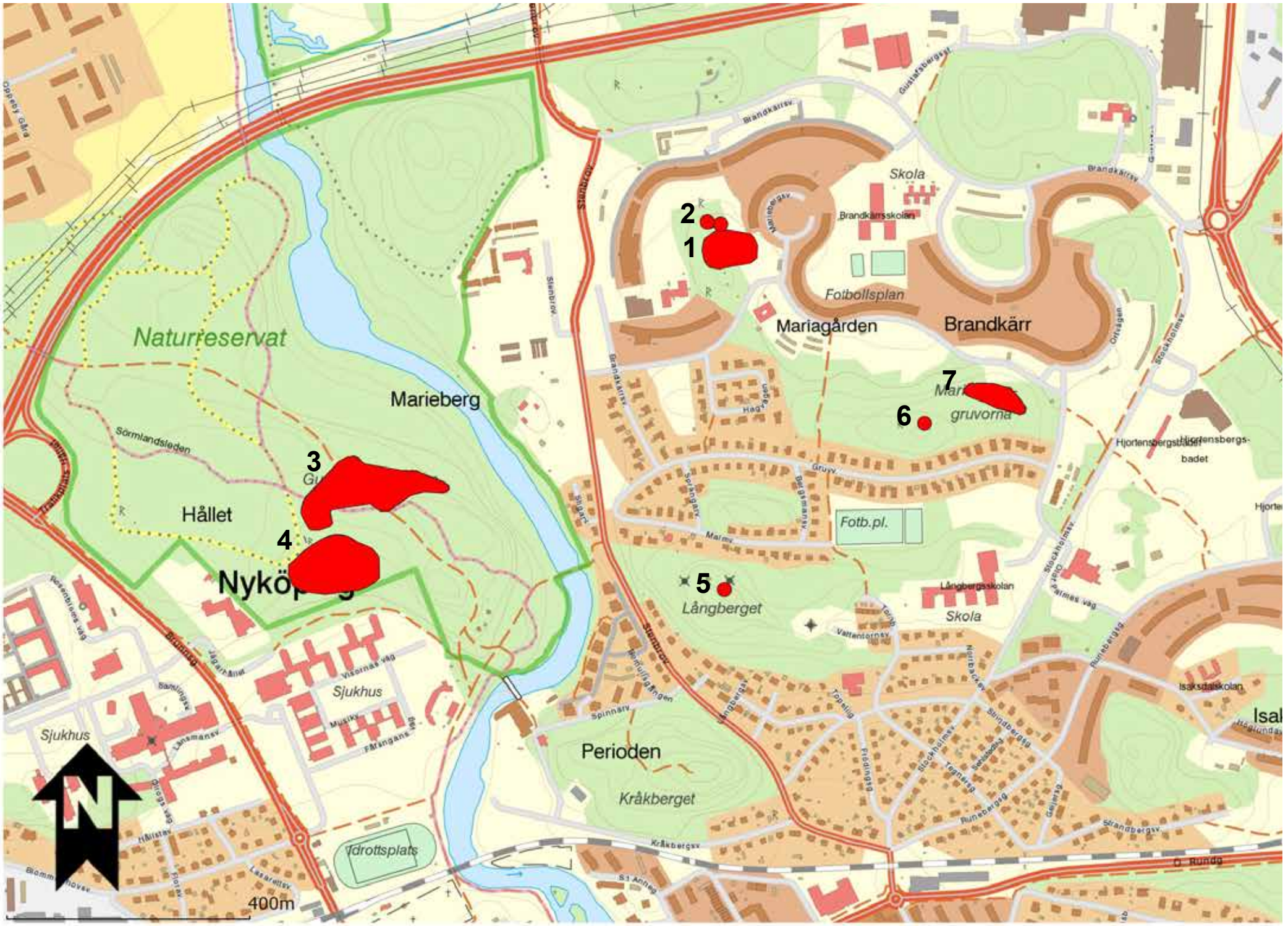


PREHISTORIC WALK NEAR TOWN

Nyköping
Brandkärr – Hållet

AROUND 3.5 KM

Sites 1-7. Areas with prehistoric or historic remains



SITE 1

Brandkärr

In the middle of the Brandkärr residential area, on a small hill, a farm called Brandakaer was once situated. There are records of it dating back to the Medieval times, and it was marked on maps from the 17th century up to the early 19th century. The farm no longer appears on maps from around 1900.

Since the Bronze Age at least (almost 4 000 years ago) farmers in Sweden used ards, a type of light plough, to loosen the soil before sowing. In the Viking Age farmers began using a heavier plough that also turned the soil, but this type of plough spread very slowly in the country. It was only towards the end of the 19th century that it became a common tool in Swedish agriculture.

Historical map from 1670. Brandkärr is marked at the top centre, by a woodland.
IMAGE: LANTMÄTERIVERKET

A farmer in Egypt around 3 200 BP.
IMAGE: ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Rock carving with a farmer from the Bronze Age.
IMAGE: VÄRLDENS BILDER

SITE 2

Iron Age graves

In Nyköping municipality there are around 4 500 known prehistoric graves and burial sites from the Iron Age. On the same hill where Brandkärr farm once was situated, a few Iron Age grave mounds are still hidden beneath grass and shrubs. These are around a 1 000 years old, from the period we call the Viking Age. These graves are probably part of a larger burial site which was partly ruined when the farm was built on the same place.

Graves often look like this when archaeologists have carefully removed all the soil and grass that has covered them over the years, before an excavation.
PHOTO: JONAS WIKBORG, SOCIETAS ARCHAEOLOGICA UPSALIENSIS

One of the graves on the Brandkärr site.

Site 2: Iron Age graves | PREHISTORIC WALK NEAR TOWN

Fragments of a Viking Age comb made of bone or antler.
PHOTO: CAMILLA EKBLOM, STIFTELSEN KULTURMILJÖVÅRD

During the Iron Age it was the normal custom that the dead were cremated before burial. Towards the end of the Viking Age, which was the last part of the Iron Age, the burial procedure changed and the dead were buried in coffins, without cremation. This change was probably due to people converting to Christianity from their earlier belief in Nordic gods.

Throughout the Iron Age the dead were accompanied by various burial gifts in their graves. These might be food in a ceramic pot, meat or fish, but also personal objects such as a comb, a pair of tweezers or a razor, a neck ring, beads or other jewellery.

Common finds in graves of Viking Age men include neck rings of iron with Thor's hammer pendants. Women might be buried with glass beads of different colours. The beads were often imported from the Middle East.

The Viking Age is known for the Viking expeditions by ship. The most important aim of the expeditions was to trade goods, but the Vikings also attacked and plundered villages and monasteries when they could. They travelled west to Britain as well as east to "Miklagård" (Constantinople, today Istanbul in Turkey). They brought furs, honey and slaves that they traded for silver and glass beads.

A Thor's hammer neck ring from the Viking Age.
PHOTO: HISTORISKA MUSEET

A Viking Age silver hoard.
PHOTO: GABRIEL HILDEBRAND, KUNGLIGA MYNTKABINETTET

Viking Age beads found at Birka.
PHOTO: STATENS HISTORISKA MUSEER

SITE 3

The Gustav Adolf mine

There are traces of many old mines in the hills close to Nyköping. In Hållet, near the hospital, is a seven-metre-deep pit known as the Gustav Adolf mine. There used to be several other mineshafts nearby, but they have all been filled in. Iron, lead and silver was extracted in the mines, from the 16th century and possibly earlier.

In the old days mining was done by fire-setting. This involved lighting a fire on the rock surface or in the pit. When the rock cooled it was fragile and cracked more easily. That allowed miners to get at the valuable ore.

The Gustav Adolf mine.

Geological map of Nyköping from 1867.

© SVERIGES GEOLOGISKA UNDERSÖKNING

SITE 4

The Stone Age

About 5 000 years ago a fishing community lived on the sandy south-facing slope above todays hospital. In those days the sea level was around 25 metres higher than today in the Nyköping area. Archaeologists classify this community as being a part of the so-called Pitted Ware culture, after the large clay pots that they made and decorated by pitting the clay.

The Pitted Ware people used their shoreline settlements mostly in the springtime, but they returned there year after year to fish and to hunt seal. Archaeologists have found lots of traces of food as well as potsherds, remains from these Stone Age people.

The sea level 5 000 years ago.

Potsherds from the Sittesta settlement.

PHOTO: HANNA LARSSON, UV-MITT/ARKEOLOGERNA

A Pitted Ware pot.

RECONSTRUCTION DRAWING: BRITTA KIHLSTEDT

Sites 5 and 6: Graves on hilltops | PREHISTORIC WALK NEAR TOWN

SITES 5 AND 6

Graves on hilltops

With a vast view of its surroundings, a simple grave, a so called stone setting, was made some 2 500 years ago, directly on the rock face of Långberget. Not much is left of the grave today, but it was probably never much bigger than it is now. Beneath a pine tree at the top of the hill, by the tobogganing slope (”Sankt Moritz”), is a similar small stone setting. These types of small stone settings are fairly common in Swedish coastal areas. They are often located at the top of a hill. Perhaps they served not just as burials but also as markers of boundaries between different areas where the population lived.

Another type of grave that people built on the tops of hills or mountains are the big cairns from the early Bronze Age. They were raised around 3 500 years ago.

A stone setting covered by turf on Långberget.

A cairn in the woods north of Ekensberg, Nyköping.

This is what a small prehistoric grave such as the one at Långberget, might look like when cleared from grass and earth covering it.

PHOTO: ARKEOLOGIKONSULT

Site 7: The Marieberg mines | PREHISTORIC WALK NEAR TOWN

SITE 7

The Marieberg mines

On the hill south of the Brandkärr residential area are some deep, water-filled pits. They are remains of the old Marieberg mines, where iron was mined from the 17th century until the 1920s.

Entire families took part in the heavy work of mining. They would often work for 11 to 12 hours per day. The men worked mostly down in the pits or in the mine galleries, mining the rock and hauling it up to the surface. It was often the women who sorted the heavy stones into different piles. The area around the Marieberg mines still has several large heaps of "waste" stones.

The children also had to help out. A boy might begin by carrying coal, for example, as early as when he was twelve years old.

Down in the galleries the rock would often have to be supported by thick logs in order not to collapse.
PHOTO: LOTTA LUND

Today the Marieberg mines are surrounded by sturdy fences.

Reflections

1. What might everyday life have been like 500 years ago, and 100 years ago, on Brandkärr and other farms around Nyköping?
2. Why did more and more people, from the Medieval times on, choose to live in towns and cities rather than as farmers off what the soil could provide?
3. What does it suggest to offer burial gifts alongside the dead in the grave?
4. Why were some people buried with rich burial gifts while other graves have none at all?
5. What does it suggest when archaeologists find coins from the Byzantine Empire, the Islamic Caliphate and other places in Viking Age graves?
6. Why did more and more people in the Stone Age choose to live off what the soil could provide instead of living like nomads, from gathering, fishing and hunting?
7. What happens if you divide work tasks into male and female tasks, and what happens if you don't?

Where are there heritage sites?

You can use the Swedish National Heritage Board's search function **"Fornsök"** to get information about all known and registered prehistoric remains and other heritage sites in Sweden, on land and in the water. The register is updated regularly, **www.fornsok.se**

Glossary

Ancient remain	Traces of human activity in the past
Ard	A light plough for making furrows in the soil
Settlement	A place where people have lived or live
Bronze Age	The period between 3 800 and 2 500 BP
BP	Before present
Burial site	A group of graves; a cemetery
Cairn	A burial site covered with a large pile of stones
Ceramics	Fired clay, e g for pots
Iron Age	The period between 2 500 and 950 BP
Medieval times	The period between 950 and 500 BP
Mine	A place where people work mining ore, often in deep pits dug into the rock
Nomad	A person who does not live permanently in one place and does not practice agriculture
Nordic mythology	The religion or cult in pre-Christian Sweden, with several different gods
Ore	Rock containing metals which it is profitable to mine
Potsherds	Small pieces of broken ceramics
Plough	A tool for cutting and turning the soil
Rock carving	Pictures or symbols carved into the rock face
Stone setting	A grave marked by a formation of stones in the ground
Stone Age	The period until 3 800 BP
Shoreline settlement	A place by the sea where people have lived or live
Thor's hammer	A symbol for the god Thor in Nordic mythology
Viking	A person who lived between 1 200 and 950 years ago
Viking Age	The period between 1 200 and 950 BP– the last part of the Iron Age

All ancient remains and heritage sites in Sweden are protected under the Heritage Conservation Act. This means that it is illegal to alter or ruin an ancient remain or a heritage site, for example by digging on it. The reason why ancient remains and heritage sites are protected is so that everyone will have access to the story that each one of them tells, now and in the future.

LÄNSSTYRELSEN
Södermanlands län

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