

PREHISTORIC WALK IN TOWN

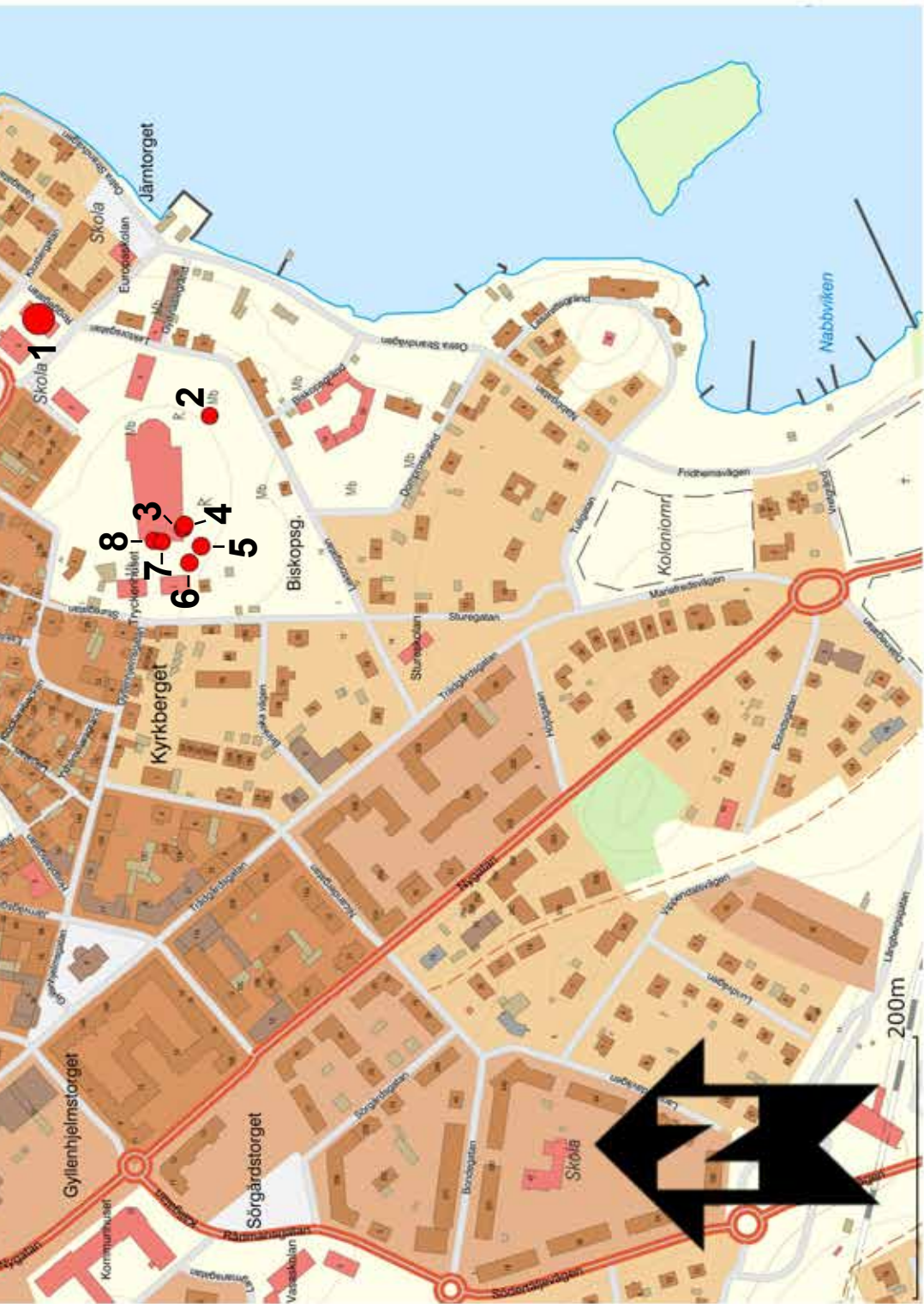
Strängnäs

—
AROUND 2.5 KM



Sites 1 – 12, areas with prehistoric or historic remains





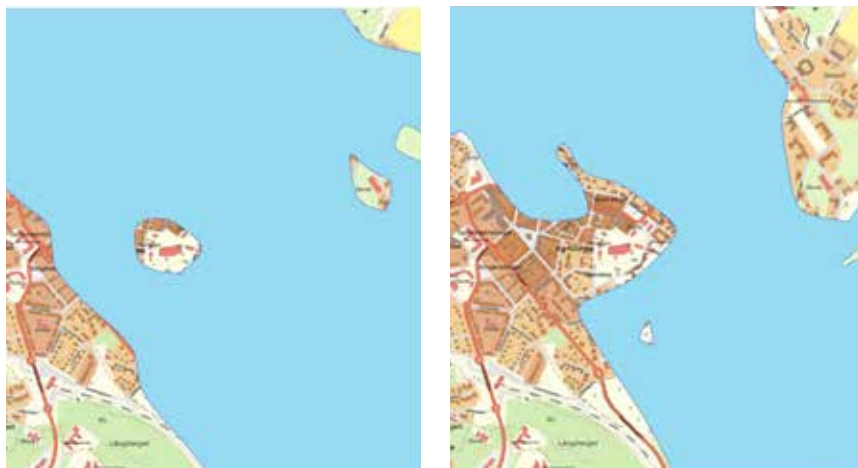
SITE 1

The town

There are relatively few traces left in the ground in Strängnäs which can tell us about its ancient history. The reason is that the town is built on sandy soil where archaeological finds are poorly preserved. Early remains are better preserved in towns and cities built on clay soil.

The earliest traces of people living here permanently are from the latest part of the Viking Age, approximately 1,000 years ago. The Vikings may have settled in Strängnäs for its good location alongside the major waterways of the time.

The largest archaeological excavation ever carried out in Strängnäs was in 2004 and took place in the Bodarne quarter when new housing was being planned. There were many finds which showed, among other things, that a blacksmith and a comb-maker had lived and worked in this place. Fragments of ceramics indicate that the inhabitants of Strängnäs exchanged goods with people around the Baltic Sea. Glass beads show contacts with the Middle East. An ivory needle that was found indicates even more distant contacts.



Strängnäs 2,000 years ago and 1,000 years ago. The water level was approximately 10 metres and 5 metres respectively higher than it is now.



Archaeological excavation in the Bodarne quarter, 2004.

PHOTO: BJÖRN PETTERSSON, SÖRMLANDS MUSEUM



Combs of bone and horn from Bodarne.

PHOTO: ANKI LÜTZ 2006, SÖRMLANDS MUSEUM

SITE 2

Rune stones

There are seven rune stones by the cathedral on Kyrkberget. They have all been moved here from other places. The rune stone in the photo was previously part of the floor in the cathedral but was moved out in 1874. It has probably never been raised in a standing up position, as rune stones usually are, but has been lying as a cover on a Christian tomb.

Rune stones are usually memorials for a person who died in another place. They were not raised on burial sites. They were instead placed where many people would see them, such as alongside the roads of that era. The writing on them often describes good deeds; for example, someone built a road or a bridge over wetlands so that people could walk to church. Many people had become Christians towards the end of the Viking Age. One sign of this is rune stones that are decorated with a cross.



On the stone it says “...Björn and Underlög, mother and son, had this stone cut in memory of Ulvrik and ... father and son, and in memory of ... Underlög's son”.

SITE 3

Runes

The oldest known runes in Sweden are about 1,800 years old. At that time runes were seen as magic symbols. Later in the Iron Age, texts in runes became more common. Most of the rune stones are roughly 1,000 years old and are thus from the Viking Age.

There are about 300 rune stones in Södermanland County, about 70 of which are in Strängnäs municipality. Runes were probably carved in wood and bones for the most part, but it's mainly those cut in stone that have been preserved. Most researchers believe that the Romans' Latin alphabet was the model for Scandinavian runes.



The Viking Age row of runes with 16 characters.

PHOTO: RIKSANTIKVARIEÄMBETET



It says, "Sigvid and Sven and Vihjalm and Gylla had the stone raised in memory of Olev".

SITES 4, 5, 7 AND 8

Viking expeditions

In the west wing of the cathedral there are two rune stones embedded in the wall (sites 7 and 8). They describe the Viking expedition led by “Ingvar the well-travelled” (Ingvar den vittfarne). Around 1040 Ingvar, who was then 21 years old, travelled east toward Särkland in the Middle East, with 30 ships and about 2,000 to 3,000 men. During the journey he and his crew traded, fought with pirates, took part in wars and suffered various diseases. Almost all the men in Ingvar’s Viking expedition died during the journey and were mourned by those who had stayed behind at home. Ingvar’s journey to Särkland is described on at least 25 rune stones around Mälardalen.



On the smaller fragment (site 7) it says “...had a memorial made in memory of... Ulv's brother. They ... towards the east ... with Ingvar in Särkland” and on the larger stone (site 8) it says “...Ingeborg had the ... raised... will not be any of Ingvar's men ...”.

Embedded in the wall of the southern long side of the cathedral is a broken, maroon coloured stone (site 4) on which it says: *"Gunnbjörn had this stone raised ... son of Emund (?) ..."*. The name Emund is also found on a rune stone on the lawn (site 5). It is a rather unusual Viking name, so it is probably the same person. One known person of that name was the grandchild of the Uppsala king, Erik Segersäll, and his wife Sigríd Storråda. This Emund was married to a woman whose name was Ingeborg, and they were parents of Ingvar.

There are two more rune stones in the Strängnäs surroundings that describe Ingvar and his family. Therefore, some archaeologists believe that Emund, Ingeborg and Ingvar were nobles who lived here in the vicinity of Strängnäs.



On the stone (site 5) it says "E... cut the stone ... Emund's sons ... southward in Särkland".

PHOTO: BENGT A LUNDBERG

SITE 6

Hospitality

The other rune stone on the lawn (site 6) provides an insight into human ideas and values about 1,000 years ago. It says “... *he was the most hospitable of all men in the world ...*”. A similar notion is written on the rib-bone of a cow found at an excavation in Sigtuna. There someone had carved: “*Marre donated the ribs. He owns most property*”. On the other side it says “*The King is the best man. He owns most property. He is generous*”. The bone, which dates back to the 12th century, is perhaps part of the remains from a great feast.



The King's bone from Sigtuna.

PHOTO: SIGTUNA MUSEUM

SITE 9

The Klostret quarter

In the middle of the 11th century the English monk Eskil preached in Strängnäs. The Vikings, who were heathens, stoned him to death and after this tragedy Eskil became the patron saint of Södermanland. In the 13th century a convent was built on the spot where Eskil died. The Dominican Order's brothers and sisters who lived there were allowed no personal belongings; they studied and were learned.

During excavations carried out in the 1970s walls from a Dominican Church were found, as well as a brick with runes and a stylus, among other things. The runes have been interpreted as the magic formula "*abracadabra*", which had been known since the 3rd century.



A stylus of bone from the Vreta abbey in Östergötland.

PHOTO: HISTORISKA MUSEET



Part of a medieval brick from the Klostret quarter.

PHOTO: GABRIEL HILDEBRAND, HISTORISKA MUSEET

SITES 10 AND 11

Västerviken

On the lake floor, next to the dock in Västerviken, marine archaeologists have found the remains of two boats. Most likely the two of them are from the period before 1850 and thus classified as protected ancient remains.

The remains of the boats were found between two and three metres below the surface of the water. One is approximately six metres long and has clinker-built sides and a flat, carvel-built bottom. Wood from the boat has been dated using the ¹⁴C method. It may have been a small sail boat. Only two pieces of wood were found from the other boat. The wood was dated to 1819 using dendrochronology – counting growth rings.



Part of one of the boats of Västerviken.

PHOTO: TREVOR DRAESEKE, STATENS MARITIMA OCH TRANSPORTHISTORISKA MUSEER



The sunken boats may have looked like this.

PHOTO: HANS EKLING

SITE 12

Work

Three major tannery vats, dated to the end of the 19th century, were found in an archaeological excavation in the Garveriet 3 quarter. The last known tanner there was P W Wästerberg, who purchased the plot in 1889. It was probably his tannery that was excavated.

Tanning is an old profession. Ever since the Stone Age, hides have been important for making clothes and other products. Tanning hides prevented them from rotting. During Iron Age the Swedes were famous for their fine, well-tanned leather, which they sold to the Roman Empire.



Traditional leather tanning in Morocco.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



A tannery in Jönköping, around 100 years ago.

PHOTO: JÖNKÖPINGS LÄNS MUSEUM

Questions

1. What is the significance of people starting to use characters such as runes and letters?
2. What do Viking names on the rune stones tell us about the people from the past?
3. How do we give names to our children today in different parts of the world?
4. Could heathens and the Christians get along during the Viking Age, when more and more people were becoming Christians?
5. What was everyday life like for the brothers and sisters in the convent of Strängnäs?
6. Boats have changed shape from the Viking Age to our time; what is the significance of this?
7. What did women and men work with in times past? And what did they do when they weren't working?

Where are ancient remains located?

You can find information about all known registered ancient remains and other cultural and historical remains in Sweden, both on land and in water, by using the Swedish National Heritage Board's search engine "Fornsök", which is updated regularly: www.fornsok.se

Your own notes:

Glossary

Ancient remains	Traces of human activity in the past
Carvel-built	A boat built with boards that are fixed edge-to-edge
Ceramics	Fired clay, e.g. for pots
Chief	Powerful and prominent person in the Viking Age and later
Clay	Fine-grained type of soil
Clinker-built	A boat built with boards that are fixed with an overlapping technique
Dendrochronology	Method of determining the age of wooden objects by counting and comparing annual growth rings in wood
Heathen	Here: A person who is not Christian.
Iron Age	Time period from about 2,500 to 1,000 years ago
Monk	A man living in a monastery
Patron saint	A holy person appointed to protect a special place, profession or group of people after his or her death
Runes	Characters mainly used during the Viking Age
Ship	Large boat
Tanner	An occupation, a person who works with various kinds of animal hides, preparing them for use as clothes and in furniture, for example
Tannery vats	Large containers in which the tanner put the hides in various liquids
The ¹⁴C method	A scientific method of determining the age of old objects
Stylus	Pen used to write in wax
Viking	Person who lived in the Viking Age, from about 1,200 to 1,000 years ago
Viking Age	The period from about 1,200 to 1,000 years ago; the last part of the Iron Age
Viking expedition	Journeys to trade with or plunder other people

All Prehistoric remains and heritage sites in Sweden are protected through the Heritage Conservation Act. It is forbidden to alter, damage or destroy Prehistoric remains, for example by digging into them. The reason why Prehistoric remains are protected is for everyone to have access to the history that Prehistoric remains describe, both now and in the future.



LÄNSSTYRELSEN
Södermanlands län

The following applies to all maps (unless otherwise stated):
County Administrative Board in Södermanland: primary information
Lantmäteriet – GSD Real Estate Map, Basic Map
Photo: County Administrative Board (unless otherwise stated)
Form & production: You Are Here

2020