



**Stockholm  
University**

**Grave disturbance in early medieval Europe  
International symposium**

**Thursday 12th January 2017**

Department of Archaeology and Classical Studies  
Stockholm University

Wallenberglaboratoriet, Lilla Frescativägen 7, Stockholm  
Seminar room on entrance floor

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Supported by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond

**[reopenedgraves.eu/events](http://reopenedgraves.eu/events)**

## Symposium theme

One of the most intriguing chapters in early medieval archaeology is an outbreak of grave disturbance which stretched from Hungary to England, peaking in the 7th century AD. Thousands of recent burials were reopened and rifled, with grave-goods and human remains removed or scattered. Traditionally labelled as grave-robbery, this early reopening has been recognised since the 19th century, but until recently little comparative work had been carried out between sites or regions, and there was almost no systematic research into its causes.

Now this has changed: substantive empirical research is being carried out in England, Germany, France, the Low Countries, and Austria. Results so far include significant new findings about the date, extent, and nature of the practice. We can now see that this is by no means straightforward robbing for material gain. Understanding reopening can shed new light on burial rituals themselves: new interpretations explore attitudes to death, decay, commemoration, possessions, and ancestors.

This will be the first conference on the fascinating phenomenon of Merovingian-period grave disturbance since 1977. With the support of Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, the symposium will bring together researchers working on reopening evidence in five areas of early medieval Europe, plus an advisory panel of scholars based in Europe and the US.

## Speakers

**Dr Edeltraud Aspöck**, Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria. [edeltraud.aspoeck@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:edeltraud.aspoeck@oeaw.ac.at)

**Dr Alison Klevnäs**, Dept of Archaeology and Classical Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden. [alison.klevnas@ark.su.se](mailto:alison.klevnas@ark.su.se)

**Martine C. van Haperen**, Dept of Provincial Roman and Medieval Archaeology, Leiden University, Netherlands. [m.c.van.haperen@arch.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:m.c.van.haperen@arch.leidenuniv.nl)

**Astrid Noterman**, Centre for Medieval Studies (CESCM), University of Poitiers, France. [a.noterman@orange.fr](mailto:a.noterman@orange.fr)

**Dr Stephanie Zintl**, Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege and Institut für Archäologische Wissenschaften, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg i Br, Germany. [Stephanie.Zintl@blfd.bayern.de](mailto:Stephanie.Zintl@blfd.bayern.de)

## Invited panel

**Dr Fredrik Ekengren**, Lund University, Sweden.

**Professor Dawn Hadley**, University of Sheffield, UK.

**Dr Catherine Hills**, University of Cambridge, UK.

**Dr Nils Müller-Scheeßel**, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, Germany.

**Dr Liv Nilsson Stutz**, Department of Anthropology, Emory University, US.

**Dr Estella Weiss-Krejci**, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria.

# Program

## Thursday 12th January

*Symposium open to audience*

### **0830-0900 Coffee and welcome**

0900-0945 *Introduction. Grave reopening in the early middle ages: research history and state of the art.* Alison Klevnäs & Edeltraud Aspöck

0945-1030 *Langobard-period graves in eastern Austria (6th c. AD)*  
Edeltraud Aspöck

### **1030-1100 Coffee break (30 mins)**

1100-1145 *Grave reopening in Anglo-Saxon England: a new continental import?*  
Alison Klevnäs

1145-1230 *Opening graves in Merovingian-period Bavaria: breaking or establishing rules?* Stephanie Zintl

### **1230-1400 Lunch break (90 mins)**

1400-1445 *Reopened graves from the Low Countries: bridging the gap between data and interpretation?* Martine van Haperen

1445-1530 *Plunder, violation, desecration: grave reopening in the early Middle Ages in France.* Astrid Noterman

### **1530-1600 Coffee break (30 mins)**

1600-1700 Comments from discussion panel and discussion.

## Key background literature

### Previous discussions

Jankuhn, H., H. Nehlsen and H. Roth, Eds. (1978). *Zum Grabfrevel in vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Zeit: Untersuchungen zu Grabraub und 'haugbrot' in Mittel- und Nordeuropa: Bericht über ein Kolloquium der Kommission für die Altertumskunde Mittel- und Nordeuropas vom 14. bis 16. Februar 1977*. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Kümmel, C. (2009) *Ur- und frühgeschichtlicher Grabraub. Archäologische Interpretation und Kulturanthropologische Erklärung*. Tübinger Schriften zur Ur- und Frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie 9. (Review by Zintl (2010) in *Zeitschrift für Archäologie des Mittelalters* 38, 225-246)

### Key site reports with reopening evidence

Codreanu-Windauer, S. (1997). Pliening im Frühmittelalter. Materialhefte zur Bayerischen Vorgeschichte A 74, Lassleben.

Grünewald, C. (1988). Das alamannische Gräberfeld von Unterthürheim, Bayerisch-Schwaben. Materialhefte zur Bayerischen Vorgeschichte A 59. Kallmünz / Opf., Verlag Michael Laßleben.

Perkins, D. R. J. (1991). "The Jutish cemetery at Sarre revisited: A rescue evaluation." *Archaeologia Cantiana* 109: 139-166.

Périn, P. (1980). *La datation des tombes mérovingiennes: historique, méthodes, applications*. Genève, Droz.

Thiedmann, A. and J. Schleifring (1992). "Bemerkungen zur Praxis frühmittelalterlichen Grabraubs." *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 22, 435-439.

Theuws, F. and M. van Haperen (2012). *The Merovingian cemetery of Bergeijk-Fazantlaan*. Bonn, Habelt-Verlag.

## Selected publications by speakers

### Major regional reviews

Aspöck, E. (2003). "Graböffnungen im Frühmittelalter und das Beispiel der langobardenzeitlichen Gräber von Brunn am Gebirge, Flur Wolfholz, Niederösterreich." *Archaeologia Austriaca* 87: 225-265.

Klevnäs, A. M. (2013). *Whodunnit? Grave Robbery in Anglo-Saxon England and the Merovingian Kingdoms*. BAR International Series 2582. Oxford, Archaeopress.

Zintl, S. (2012). *Frühmittelalterliche Grabräuber? Wiedergeöffnete Gräber der Merowingerzeit*, Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der Philosophischen Fakultät der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg i. Br.

*Van Haperen and Noterman's forthcoming theses on the evidence from the Low Countries and northern France respectively are due in 2017.*

## Articles

Aspöck, E. (2015), 'Funerary and post-depositional body treatments at the middle Anglo-Saxon cemetery Winnall II: norm, variety and forms of deviance?', in Zoë L. Devlin and Emma-Jayne Graham (eds.), *Death embodied (Studies in Funerary Archaeology; Oxford: Oxbow Books)*, 86-108.

Aspöck, E. (2011). "Past "disturbances" of graves as a source: taphonomy and interpretation of reopened early medieval inhumation graves at Brunn am Gebirge (Austria) and Winnall II (England)." *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 30(3): 299-324.

Klevnäs, A. (2016). Overkill: reopening graves to maim the dead in Anglo-Saxon England. In: L. Gardęła and K. Kajkowski (ed.s) *Limbs, bones and reopened graves in past societies*. Bytów, Muzeum Zachodniokaszubskie w Bytowie.

Klevnäs, A. (2015). Give and take: grave-goods and grave robbery in the early middle ages. In: Klevnäs, A. and Hedenstierna-Jonson, C. (ed.s). *Own and be owned: archaeological approaches to the concept of possession*. *Stockholm Studies in Archaeology* 62 (157-188).

van Haperen, M. (2016). Merovingian reopened graves: a scenario-based approach to interpretation. In: L. Gardęła and K. Kajkowski (ed.s) *Limbs, bones and reopened graves in past societies*. Bytów, Muzeum Zachodniokaszubskie w Bytowie.

van Haperen, M. (2013). "The distributed dead: personhood from the perspective of reopened graves". In: Ludowici, B. (ed.) *Individual or Individuality? Approaches towards an Archaeology of Personhood in the First Millenium AD*. *Neue Studien zur Sachsenforschung Band 4*: 89-94.

van Haperen, M. (2010). "Rest in pieces: an interpretative model of early medieval 'grave robbery'." *Medieval and Modern Matters* 1: 1-35.

Noterman, A. (2016). Early medieval grave robbery. The French case. In: L. Gardęła and K. Kajkowski (ed.s) *Limbs, bones and reopened graves in past societies*. Bytów, Muzeum Zachodniokaszubskie w Bytowie.

Zintl, S. (2012). "Frühmittelalterliche Grabräuber? Wiedergeöffnete Gräber der Merowingerzeit im Raum Regensburg." In: Chytráček, M. et al (eds.) *Fines Transire*. 21. Treffen der Archäologischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ostbayern/West- und Südböhmen/Oberösterreich, 22.6. – 25.6. 2011 in Stríbro: 189-197.

## On grave disturbance in other periods and places

Aspöck, E. and R. Y. Banerjea (2016) "Formation processes of a reopened early Bronze Age inhumation grave in Austria: The soil thin section analyses." *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*.

Aspöck, E. (2016). Cross-cultural interpretations and archaeological context: a reopened early Bronze Age grave in Weiden am See, Austria. In: L. Gardęła and K. Kajkowski (ed.s) *Limbs, bones and reopened graves in past societies*. Bytów, Muzeum Zachodniokaszubskie w Bytowie.

Aspöck, Edeltraud and Fera, Martin (2015), '3D-GIS für die taphonomische Auswertung eines wiedergeöffneten Körpergrabes', *AGIT – Journal für Angewandte Geoinformatik*, 1, 2-9.

Klevnäs, A.M. (2016). 'Imbued with the essence of the owner': personhood and possessions in the reopening and reworking of Viking Age burials. *European Journal of Archaeology*. (19:3) 456-476.

Klevnäs, A.M. (2015). Abandon Ship! Digging out the Dead from the Vendel Boat-Graves. *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, (48.1) 1-20.

## Practical information

### Food and drink

Tea, coffee, and light refreshments will be served during the morning and afternoon breaks, but lunch is not provided.

A range of cafés and restaurants are listed here:

<http://www.su.se/english/about/campus/lunch-venues>

There is also a student kitchen in the department (on the same floor as the conference room) where you can eat sandwiches or warm food in microwaves.

### Directions to the department



Take the subway (underground) red line, direction 'Mörby centrum'. Get off at Universitetet. When you exit the station, turn immediately left around the corner of Pressbyrån, follow the sidewalk under the highway. You will pass some allotment gardens on your left and the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences on your right. Proceed over the bridge that crosses the railway, then turn right up the hill, past a big greenhouse and the Department of Botany. Wallenberglaboratoriet is situated at the end of the small road, with a turning circle in front of it. It is less than 500 metres from the underground to the department. Buses 40, 70, 540 and 670 also stop at Universitetet next to the subway.