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
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

Dr Alison Klevnäs, Dept of Archaeology and Classical Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden. 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

Astrid Noterman, Centre for Medieval Studies (CESCM), University of Poitiers, France. 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

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


Key site reports with reopening evidence


Selected publications by speakers

Major regional reviews


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


**On grave disturbance in other periods and places**


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 ‘Möby 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.