

RELATIONS BETWEEN BURIALS AND BUILDINGS IN THE IRON AGE OF SOUTHWEST NORWAY

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ABSTRACT

Recent archaeological excavations in Rogaland have revealed several cases of Late Iron Age (LIA) burials overlying Early Iron Age (EIA) buildings. In spite of a growing interest in the transition between the EIA and the LIA, there has been a tendency to treat burials and buildings separately, limiting discussions of the relationship between the two. The superimposition of burials over older buildings, understood as references to the past, can be seen as a characteristic pattern in the Scandinavian Viking Period. Presenting new sites, alongside a few well-known older excavations, and discussing common traits amongst them, I hope to develop new insights into Iron Age society. The most frequent burial-building combination is Viking burials associated with buildings from the Late Roman Iron Age/Migration Period. This may indicate that expansion in the period AD 150–550 played a special role in the Viking Period, and that the placing of Viking burials on Late Roman/Migration Period houses reflects disputes over land rights, more precisely the ownership of the farmyards from the Early Iron Age.

BUILDINGS AND BURIALS

This chapter deals with the past in the past. In the same way as today's archaeologists work on the past in our present (Shanks 2007: 591; Olsen 2010: 126), it is safe to presume that prehistoric people interacted with the past in their present. The important role material culture plays in enabling, remembering and upholding the past has, until recently, been underrated (Williams 2006: 3; Olsen 2010: 110). Asking how subsequent societies dealt with the relics of previous times, informed by their collective

understanding of the past (Connerton 1989), leads us to the topic of social memory and how it supplies the members of a society with an identity and a historical consciousness (Holtorf 1998: 24). Social memory is considered to refer to the selective preservation, construction, and obliteration of ideas about the way things were in the past, in service of some interest in the present. Social memory is often used to legitimate power by creating an idealized, naturalized, seamless connection with the past. Another ideological use of memory involves the creation

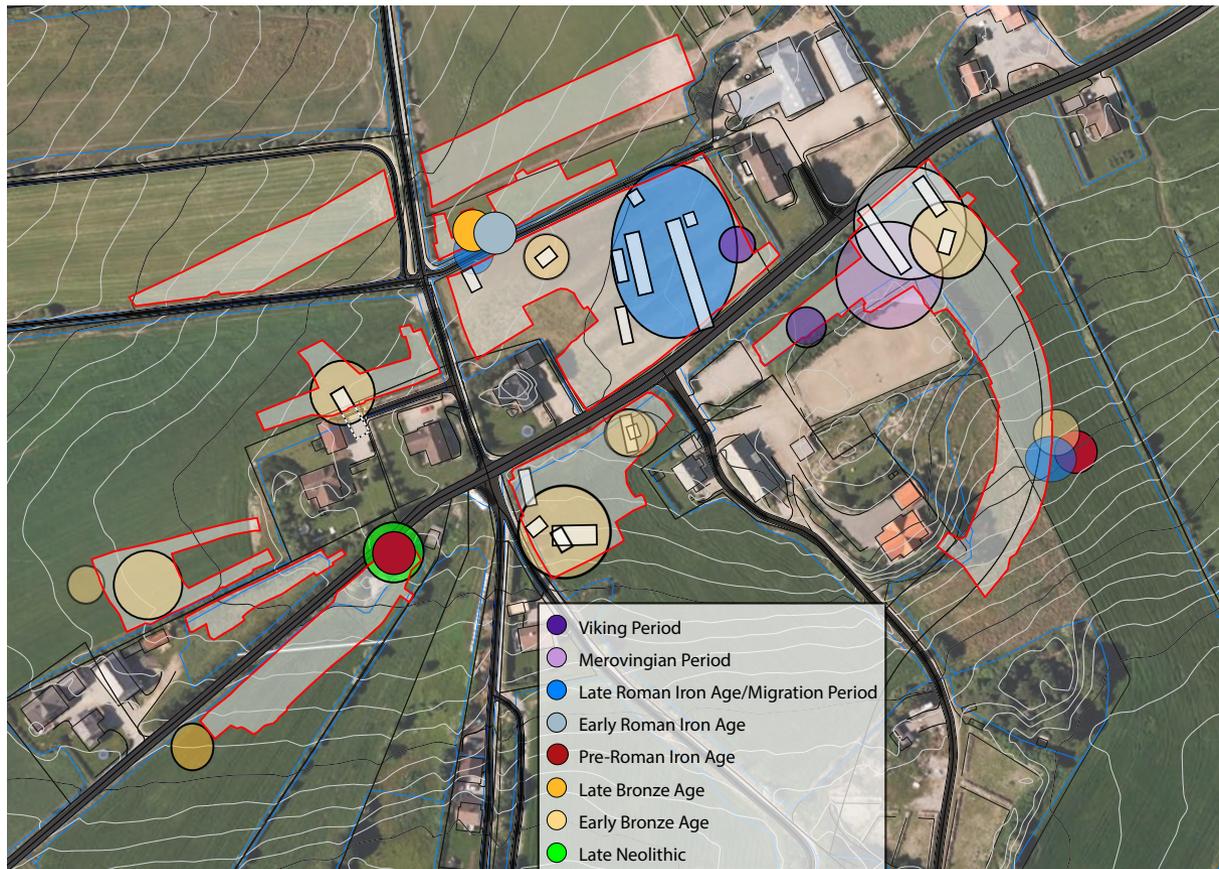


Figure 1. The different phases at Myklebust.

of social identities, drawing together groups of people with real or imagined common pasts (Van Dyke 2011: 237). Sometimes these relationships are grounded in genealogies or histories and, as argued in this paper, reuse is interpreted as reflecting an awareness of the past and a strategy for constructing memory in the Viking Period. The material culture surrounding people in the Iron Age was actively used to establish relationships with the past as an expression of continuity in times of massive social transformations.

The point of departure for this examination of the relationships between burials and buildings is a series

of observations made while excavating a settlement site at Myklebust in Sola municipality (Dahl 2014). Change and continuity during the transition from the EIA to the LIA thus became a central theme in the post-excitation analysis. While several larger buildings dominating the landscape represent the EIA, the LIA is only represented by burials (see fig. 1). The locations of these burials, over and around buildings from the EIA, represent a fascinating pattern in themselves. The superimposed burials stand out as intentional references to the past, and this particular way of reuse can be seen as a characteristic pattern in the Scandinavian Viking Period (Stenholm 2012: 10,

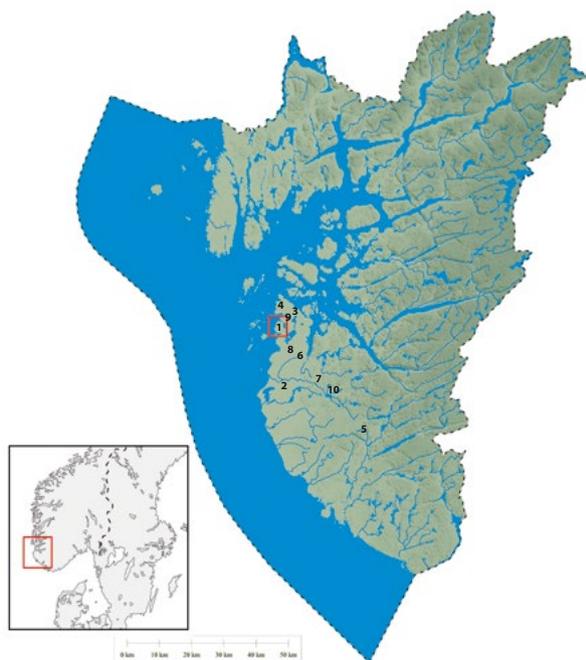


Figure 2. Map showing the sites used as examples in the paper: 1. Myklebust 2. Nedre Øksnavad 3. Gausel 4. Ullandhaug 5. Storrsheia 6. Rossaland 7. Espeland 8. Skadberg 9. Søra Bråde 10. Frøyland. Ill. Theo Gil Bell/Barbro Dahl.

226). Exploring the coincidence of older buildings and younger burials may provide new insights into the transition between the two periods.

When reporting the results of large excavation projects, it is quite common to discuss settlement remains and burials separately. In this paper, I will integrate the two in order to consider the relationships between them and raise questions regarding the possible motives behind the superimposition of LIA burials over EIA buildings. The traditional separation of settlement and burial evidence may be connected to the latter being viewed as an expression of ritual and religious dimensions, as opposed to the

everyday life made material in the buildings (see Stenholm 2012: 103). If one defines settlement solely through the presence of building traces, the lack of LIA buildings at Myklebust may be interpreted as a sign of a break in a seemingly continuous settlement from 1800 BC to AD 550. While the relationship between the burials and the buildings is an issue which springs quickly to mind, it does so primarily in the context of attempting to locate the missing LIA buildings. Late Iron Age burials are often found close to modern farmyards that have not been subject to investigation (Børsheim and Soltvedt 2002; Dahl 2014). Assessments of possible prehistoric settlement outside of excavation areas will remain hypothetical as long as we continue the practice of only investigating the farmed fields surrounding today's settlements (see Grønnesby in this publication). Analyzing the relationships between buildings and burials may offer a constructive alternative to speculation on the possible locations of missing LIA buildings. This type of study can also be regarded as an alternative to macro studies based on visibility, estimated age and associations with historical terms such as “farm” and “boundary”.

Excavation reports generated over the past two decades at the Museum of Archaeology, UiS, allow for the discussion of these relationships in a regional perspective. The examples used in this study are burials associated with settlement evidence uncovered using the mechanical top-soil stripping method. Seen in a national and international perspective, Rogaland has an exceptionally rich archaeological record, represented by numerous preserved farm complexes under modern grazing areas. The excavations of a number of such farm complexes, undertaken during the first half of the 20th century, can offer important insights into the relationships between buildings and burials and function as a broader context for the more fragmented sites found in farmed land (see Fig. 2).

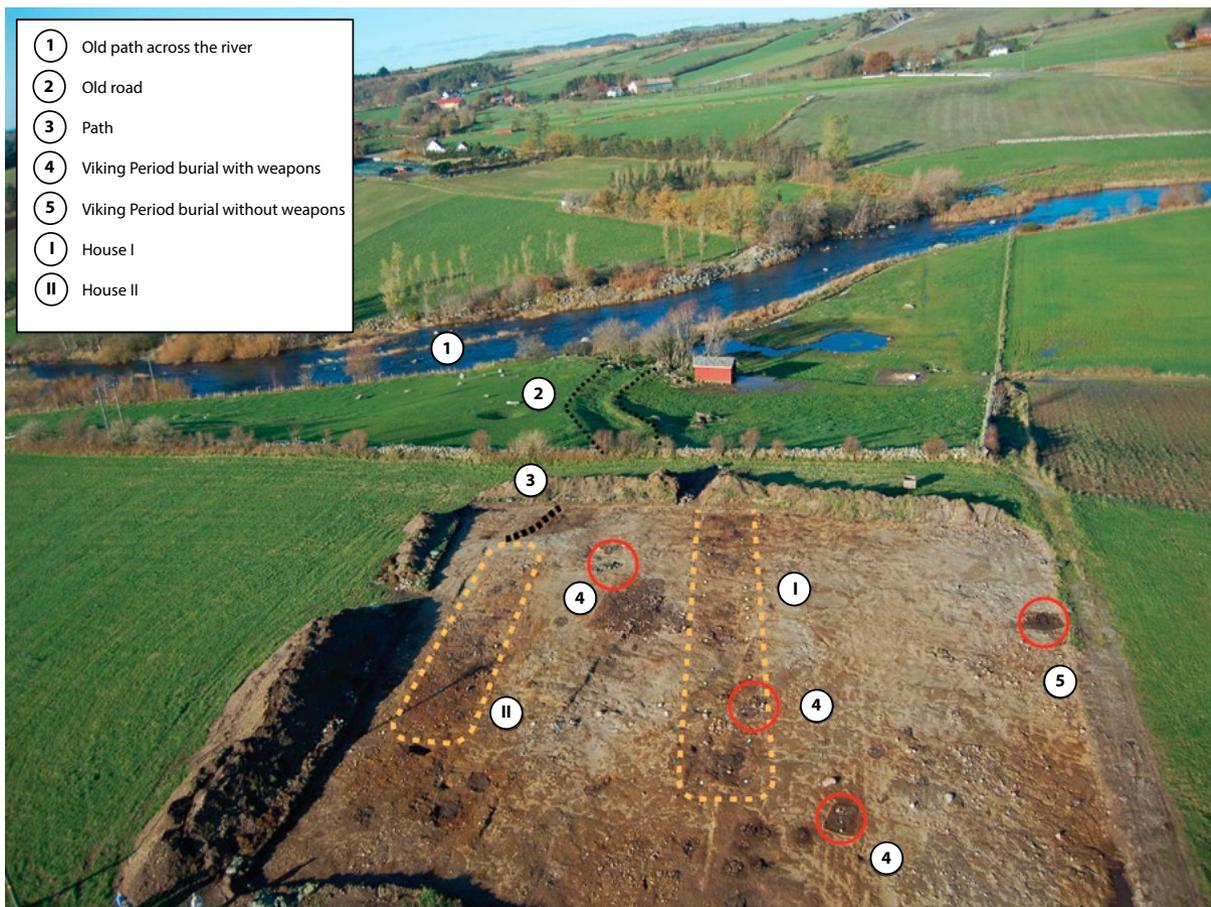


Figure 3. The excavation site at Nedre Øksnevad seen from the air (Theo Gil Bell).

SITES WITH BURIALS SUPERIMPOSED ON BUILDINGS

A review of burials related to older buildings, in this context, shows that the burials are from AD 550–1050 while the buildings can be dated all the way back to c. 2000 BC (see table 1 and 2). However, burials from AD 550–1050 appear most frequently in combination with buildings from AD 200–550.

A single Viking burial was found outside a cattle lane leading out of a 42 meter long building dating to AD 150–550 at Myklebust, Sola municipality. 50 meters to the east, a Merovingian Period burial

field was constructed over and around two buildings from AD 1–150 and one building from the Early Bronze Age (EBA) (see fig. 1 and table 1). Several burials were superimposed over the the longer of the two AD 1–150 buildings., across the central aisle, along the aisle and by the wall. Burnt bones from the cremation burials have given dates in the 7th and the first half of the 8th centuries AD. The single inhumation burial, with a deep rectangular chamber, can be typologically dated to the 10th century (Dahl 2014).

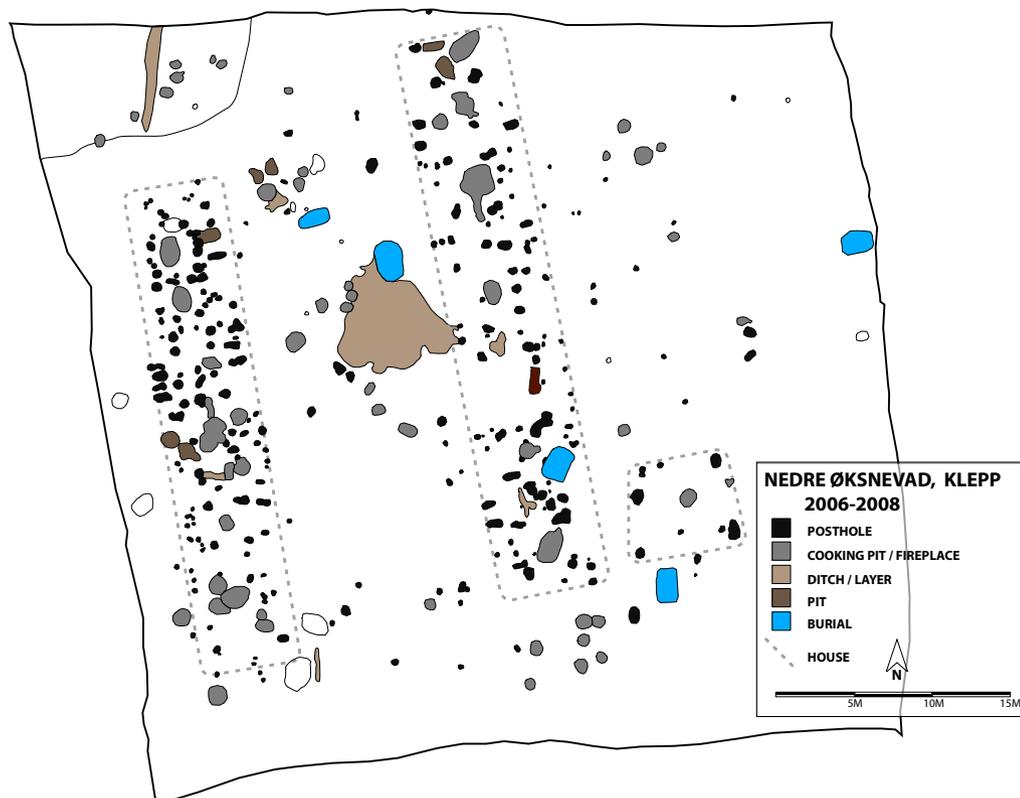


Figure 4. Buildings and burials at Nedre Øksnevad marked in blue.

A farm complex and five burials from Nedre Øksnevad in Klepp municipality represent a close parallel to Myklebust. An inhumation burial dating to AD 800–900 was located between the entrances of two earlier (AD 150–550), parallel long houses (Bjørndal 2006, appendix 11). A Viking burial was found in the central living area of the longest house, with two additional Viking burials located outside the building. In the yard between the two long houses, in an area paved with horizontal slabs, a feature interpreted as a possible Viking burial was found (Figs. 3 and 4). Both the feature and its location

have a close parallel in a shallow waste pit covered by irregularly placed slabs in Myklebust (Dahl 2014). The feature also bears a strong resemblance with the two wells at Ullandhaug, Stavanger municipality (Myhre 1980a). The possible superimposition of a burial over an earlier waste pit or a well is interesting, but beyond the scope of this paper.

Two LIA burials were associated with walls of older buildings in Gausel, Stavanger municipality (Børsheim and Soltvedt 2002). Burial 1006 was incorporated into the stone wall of House 7, which dated to AD 150–550. The burial was located near

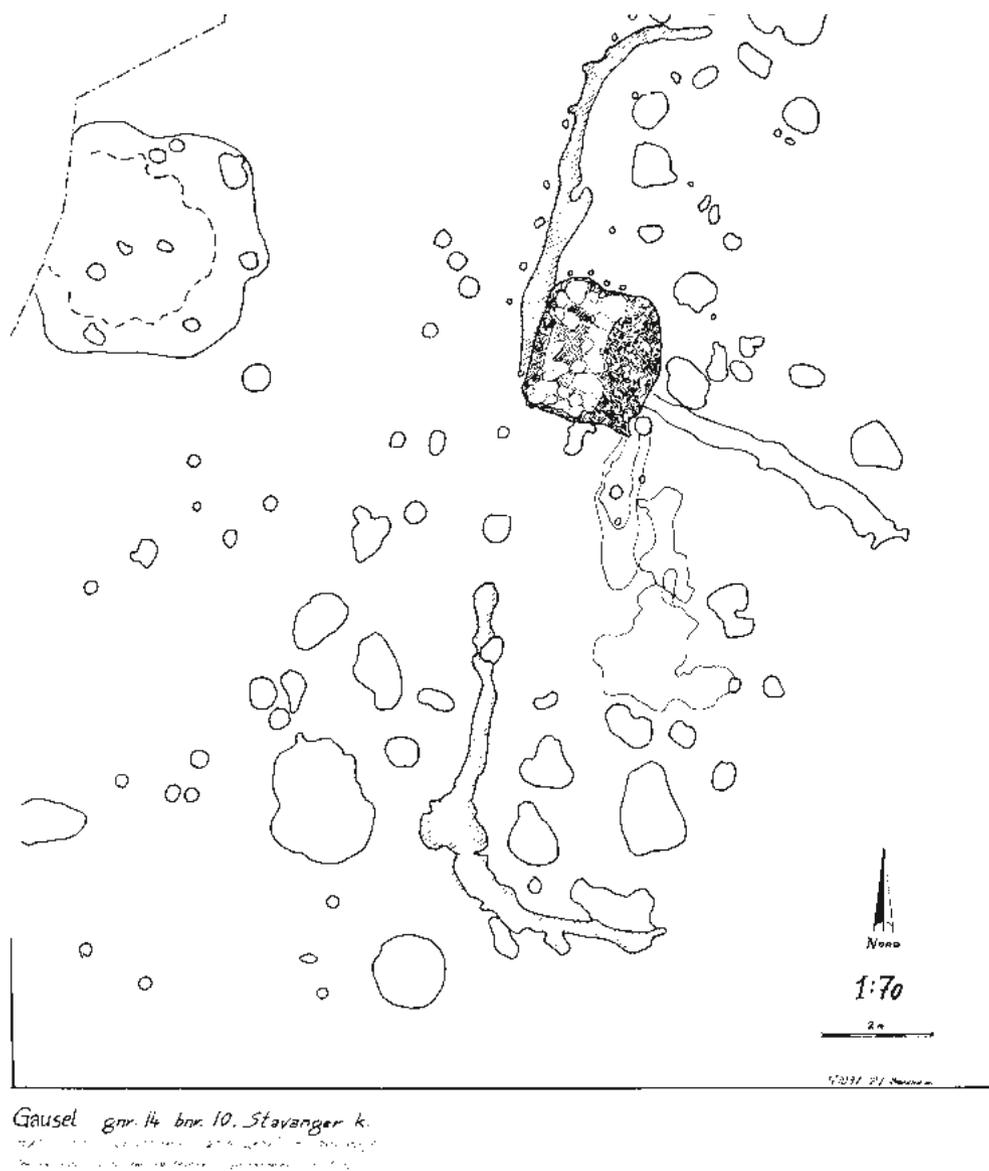


Figure 5. The burial of the Gausel queen, placed between the wall and the line of the roof bearing posts. Ragnar Børsheim, topographic archive of AM, UiS.

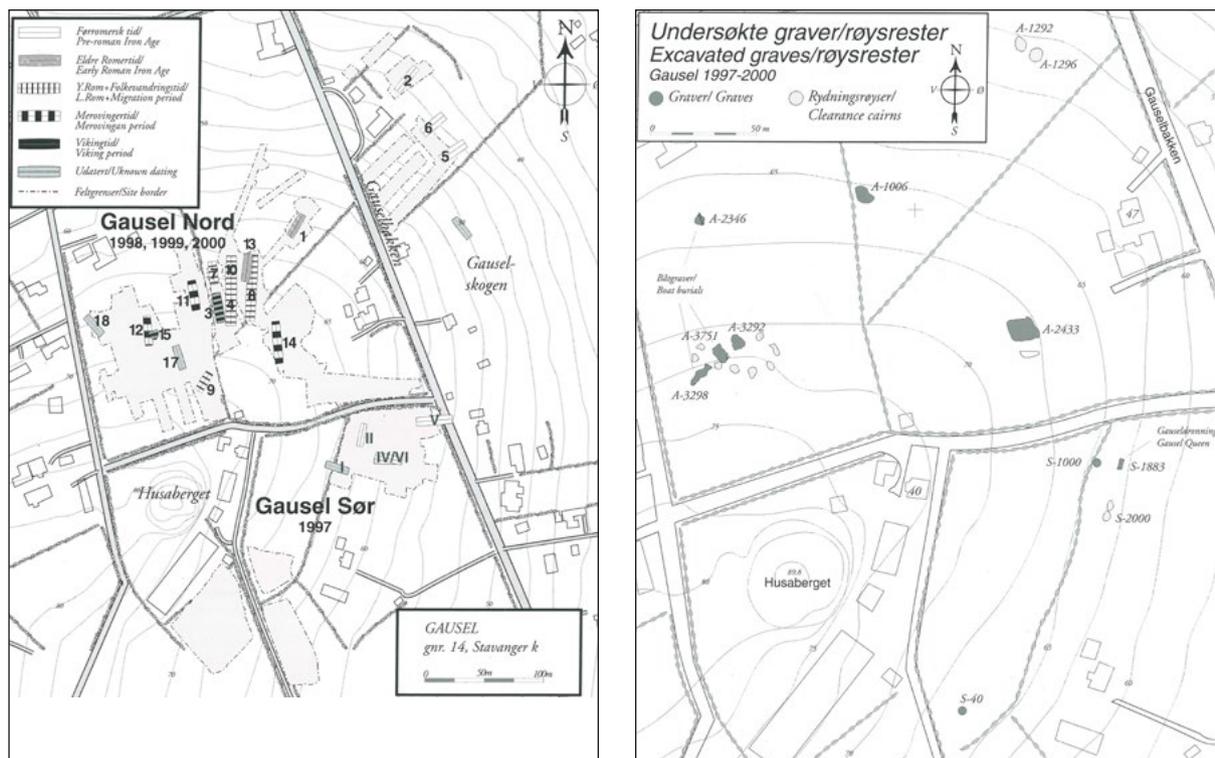


Figure 6. Buildings found at Gausel to the left and burials to the right. Børshiem and Soltvedt 2002.

the corner of the central domestic area of a main building. Burial 1883, known as the Gausel Queen (see table 1), was discovered in a building interpreted as a Pre-Roman Iron Age smithy. It was found in a rectangular pit which had been placed exactly between the building's outer wall and a line of roof bearing posts, on the northern side of the entrance (Fig. 5).

Ragnar Børshiem compares the burials overlying the walls of older buildings in Gausel with the superimposed burials found on the AD 150–550 farm complex at Ullandhaug (Børshiem and Soltvedt 2002: 228). After the collapse of the walls of house 1 at Ullandhaug, two long barrows were constructed, neatly adjusted to the shape of the building (Myhre 1967; 1980a; 1992, see Figs. 7 and 8). Three Viking burials were found in house 3. The building's central

domestic area, characterized by a large number of fireplaces, also contained one cremation burial and one inhumation burial. While the cremation burial, which dates to the LIA, was built into what was left of the building's stonewall, a coffin had been placed directly on the floor layer and covered by a mound in the period AD 800–900 (Myhre 1992: 58). Outside the eastern wall, a layer of pebbles covered an early Viking inhumation burial. This burial had the same position and orientation relative to the house as the late Viking burial at Myklebust.

One or two cremation burials dating to AD 800–900 were found in a Migration Period house (house 1) on the large farm complex at Storrsheia, Bjerkreim municipality (Petersen 1933: 38–54, see Fig. 9). The burial, oriented in the same direction

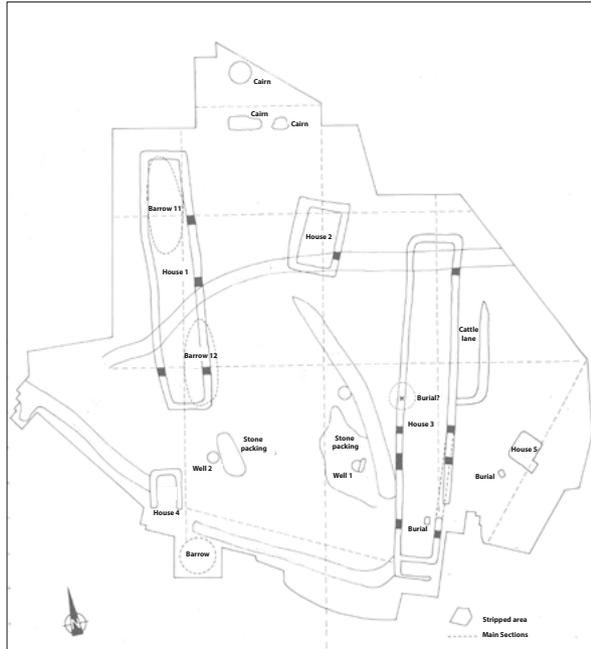


Figure 7. The burials related to house 1 and 3 at Ullandhaug. Myhre 1980a.



Figure 8. Long barrow 12 over the wall of house 1. After Myhre 1980a.

as the axis of the house, was built into the remains of the wall of what had been a central living area dominated by several fireplaces. While house 1 is the longest building in the complex, the smaller house 2

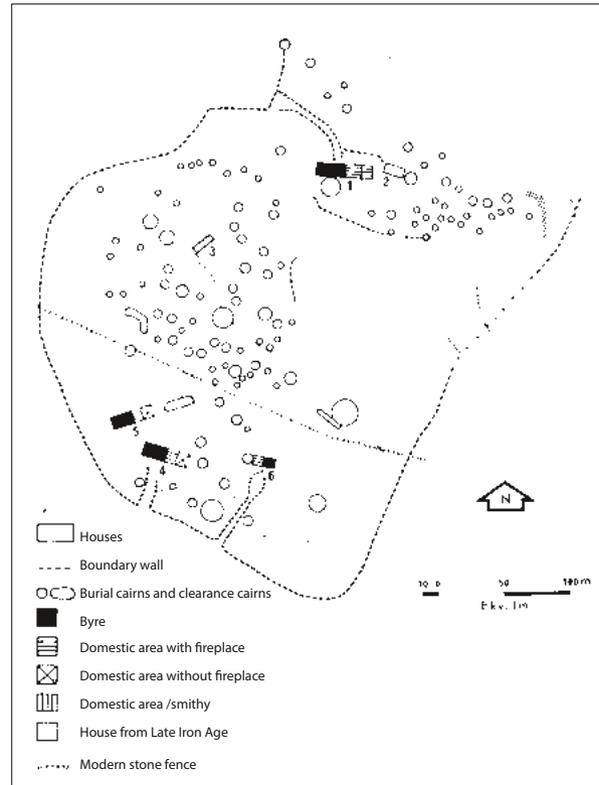


Figure 9. The buildings at Storrsheia. After Myhre 1980a: 282.

had a long, stone built entrance where a cremation burial from AD 800–1050 was incorporated into the wall. House 2 is thought to be from the LIA, although EIA pottery sherds recovered from the structure may indicate older phases. Outside the wall of house 2 lay a long barrow with the same orientation as the building. The barrow contained no preserved traces of burials. A circular mound covered one end of house 6, which dates to AD 200–400. In the same way as at Ullandhaug, the mound must have been constructed after the collapse of the stone walls. Parts of a soapstone vessel indicate that the mound was built in the LIA.

Two LIA burials were found in the corners of a building dating to AD 400–550 at Rossaland, Sandnes municipality (Myhre 1966). One of the

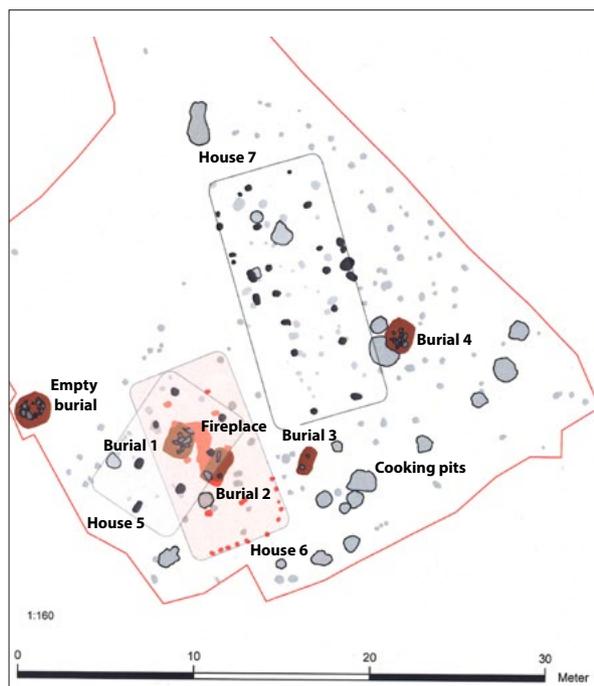


Figure 10. Buildings and burials at Skadberg. Ater Bjørlo 2011.

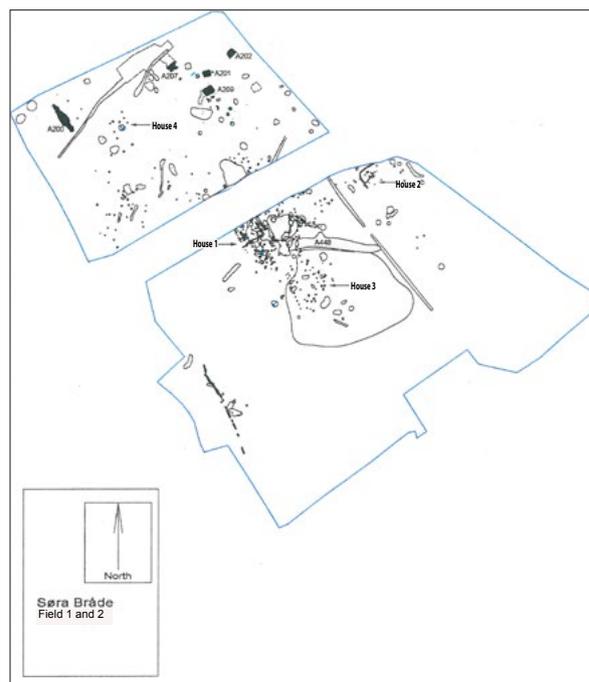


Figure 11. Buildings and burials at Sørå Bråde. After Bertheussen 2008.

burials bears a great resemblance to the coffin burial in Ullandhaug, placed on top of the floor before the collapse of the stonewalls. The time gap between the abandonment of the building and the burial must have been short. Outside the building, a Viking Period boat burial had the same orientation as the building and the other burials.

An 8th century burial was found outside the largest building in the farm complex at Espeland, Sandnes municipality (Espedal 1966). The 42 meter long building from the Migration Period (MiP) had some sort of annex along the wall. The wall of the annex served as one of the sides in the rectangular inhumation burial (Thäte 2007: 103). While the excavator interpreted the many finds in the floor layer as an indication of the whole building being used as living area, Bjørn Myhre interprets this part of the building with the annex as the byre (Myhre 1980a: 310).

Five Viking burials were found in and around three smaller buildings at Skadberg, Sola municipality (Bjørlo 2011a). Two of the overlapping buildings had burials placed on top of the central aisle, a situation similar to that in house XIII from Myklebust. Burial 2099 (burial 1 in fig. 10), in house 6, was placed exactly where one would expect to find the building's central fireplace. Postholes in the corners of the deep, rectangular pit indicates some sort of wooden superstructure. Both burial 2099 and the adjacent burial 2144 (burial 2 in Fig. 10) cut through an older fireplace belonging to house 5, which dates to 500–1 BC. This burial had visible traces of a coffin. A third burial was parallel to the other two, all with the same orientation as house 6 (Fig. 10). Most of the datings from this building fall within the period 500–1 BC, however, features dating to AD 400–550 were also present. The fourth burial

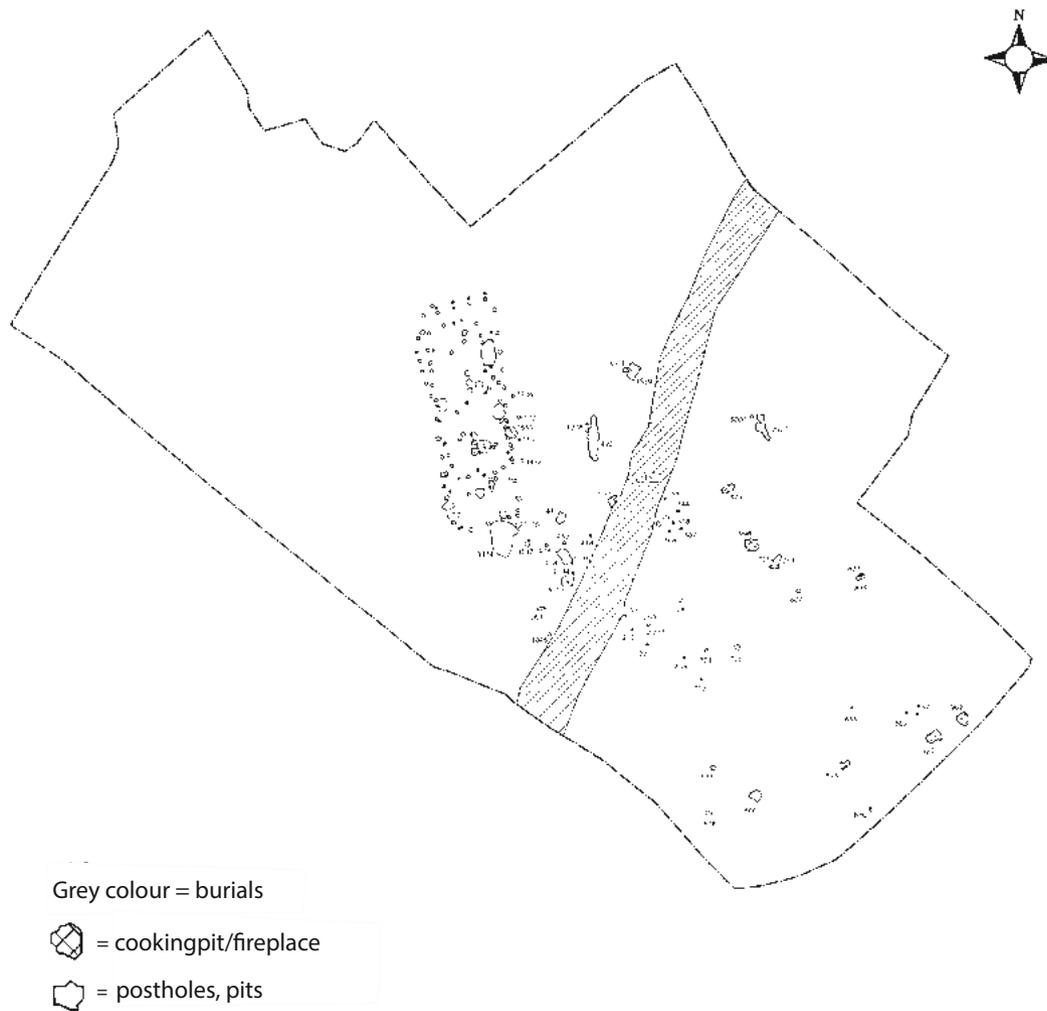


Figure 12. The site at Frøyland. Bjørdal 2009.

was located outside the wall of the Late Bronze Age (LBA) house 7, while a possible burial west of the buildings stands out with a circular shape and no finds (Bjørlo 2011a: 18–19).

As a parallel to Skadberg, Viking burials were also found next to Pre-Roman Iron Age buildings at Søra Bråde, Stavanger municipality (Fig. 11). The five burials are most likely all 9th century (Bertheussen 2008). An inhumation burial in a boat, with the

same orientation as house 4, was located to the western part of the site. House 4 has not been dated, but it resembles the smaller, 500–1 BC buildings at Skadberg. Two buildings further south are dated to the transition between the LBA and PRIA. The rest of the burials were gathered on the eastern side of house 4, north of the buildings dated broadly to 1100–1 BC. Three burials are interpreted as inhumations in coffins, while one inhumation burial had a

stone built chamber. One of the burials had postholes in every corner, similar to burial 2099 at Skadberg.

Four burials from the LIA were found next to two overlapping buildings from the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age at Frøyland, Time municipality (Bjørddal 2009). Two Viking Period boat burials have the same orientation as the two-aisled houses found at the site (fig. 12). One of the boat inhumation burials is particularly rich, interpreted as a female burial and dating to AD 800–900 (see table 1). Two of the burials from LIA have been interpreted as children's burials. The two smaller burials might have been located within a three-aisled house cut by a broad, modern ditch. Unfortunately, the excavation at Frøyland was carried out in the middle of the winter, and due to the harsh weather conditions and lack of time the four burials and the two-aisled buildings were the only features that could be excavated. The long distance between the small, circular roof bearing postholes can imply a Bronze Age dating. However, since the postholes are neither excavated nor dated, we can only pinpoint a relation between burials from LIA and buildings from Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age at Frøyland.

PATTERNS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURIALS AND BUILDINGS

An overview of the relationships between burials and buildings is presented in the table below. The Merovingian Period grave field in Myklebust contains the only burials dated to the start of the LIA (Fig. 13). Among the burials with more precise datings within the Viking Period, twelve are dated to AD 900 and just three to AD 900–1050. Cremation burials also stand out as less common than inhumation graves. The radiometrically dated cremation burials dating to AD 550–800 give the impression of a short span of time between the burials. Similarly, the furnished inhumation burials at Sørå Bråde, typologically dated to the 800s, seem to have been produced over a short time.

The single Viking burial from Myklebust, typologically dated to the AD 900–1050 represents an anomaly in an otherwise consistent body of material, characterized by small concentrations of 4 to 5 burials each. However, the grave at Myklebust was located on the edge of the survey area and it cannot be ruled out that it was part of a burial field stretching towards the east and the Merovingian Period burials. In spite of these differences, the Late Viking Period grave goods from Myklebust have a parallel in the similarly dated burial at Espeland. Another parallel is this burial's location, right outside a 42 meter long main building from AD 150–550.

Regarding construction, one of the burials at Sørå Bråde closely resembles the Viking grave in Myklebust. Both consisted of large and deep pits that must have rapidly filled up with soil and stones as soon as their wooden coffins or chambers decayed and collapsed. The large, round stones mixed in with the fill indicate that the grave would have had an outer covering of mixed stones and soil, probably in the form of a mound, later removed by agricultural activities.

In some instances, the recovery of nails from a grave gives a clear indication that a coffin was used. In cases with good preservation conditions, it has been observed that burials in coffins were placed on top of the floor of an abandoned building. In other circumstances, dark organic layers documented in the bottom of pits reveal the presence of the decayed coffin. Occasionally, postholes situated in the corners of a grave, interpreted as the remains of a wooden superstructure, remind us that a variety of wooden containers may have been in use. Some wooden structures may have been temporary, being used for a funeral ritual and removed prior to the closing of the burial.

Highly fragmented rivets and nails, considered as possibly belonging to a boat were found in the Viking burials at Myklebust and Sørå Bråde. It is possible that boats, or at least parts of a boat, were

used to cover these burials. Boat burials are common in burials related to older buildings. Rivets and nails have been found in most of the burials (see table 1). The shallow dug features would have only provided support for the keel of a boat, a reminder that we are generally only left with the remains and traces of the graves. Since most of the recently discovered burials are found in farmed fields, any mound or cairn covering the burials could easily have been removed during farming activities. Hence, one must be careful against automatically categorizing burials found under such circumstances as flat graves. In a more simplistic sense, the boat can be regarded as a wooden coffin, a very frequent feature in the material. In all of the examples where the outlines of a boat are clearly visible, their orientations are the same as those of nearby buildings. Even more common than wooden coffins are inhumation burials in rectangular pits, lying on the same orientation as the buildings they are related to.

The grave goods from burials related to older houses, particularly the elaborate jewellery, suggest a high frequency of female burials, with female burials being more than twice as common as male burials. We do, however, need to exercise caution here and acknowledge the problems related to identifying the sex of an individual based solely on grave goods. The burial record is, however, strongly dominated by inhumations, and as it is extremely rare to find unburned bones preserved in the acidic soil of Rogaland, osteological determination of sex is usually not an option. Grave goods are therefore still being grouped into typically female or typically male with some difficult objects in between. In this context, it is important to note that three quarters of all known LIA burials are assumed to be male burials. This makes the high frequency of female burials related to older buildings even more significant. In Vindafjord, in northern Rogaland, 90% of the burials have been interpreted as male (Høigård

Hofseth 1988: 7), while at Klepp, in mid-Rogaland, a more even representation of the sexes is seen. This suggests a large regional variation.

One burial strongly stands out in this material. The burial of the so-called “Gausel Queen” is one of the richest burials in Norway (Børsheim and Soltvedt 2002). The fact that this burial was found along the aisle of an older building suggests that the individuals being buried in association with older buildings may have had a high status in LIA society. This can also be seen in the highly furnished female burials at Søra Bråde and Frøyland, and is mirrored in superimposed burials from Mälardalen in Sweden (Renck 2008, Stenholm 2012). In these cases both the burials and the buildings can usually be ascribed to the high ranking members of society. As in Rogaland, the most common pattern at Mälardalen is LIA burials found on top of buildings dated to AD 150–550 (Stenholm 2012: 197). This form of reuse can be understood as a material expression of connection to, and continuity with, ancestry and the past, as a reference to the past and a way of constructing memory. The reuse of places is such a striking pattern that it can be seen as a deliberate strategy in the LIA (Stenholm 2012: 10). In the same way, the quality and the quantity of the evidence for monument reuse as burial sites in Early-Saxon England, between the 5th and early 8th centuries AD, suggests that this reuse was not fortuitous, accidental or practical, but the deliberate appropriation of ancient structures within the ritual context of mortuary practices (Williams 1998: 1).

Burying the dead in or over the remains of 400-year-old buildings implies that these are considered to be significant ruins (see Herschend 2009). This idea may be particularly fruitful when considering farm complexes from AD 150–550, where the outer stonewalls are still visible in modern grazing fields. Indeed a clear pattern is for the burials to

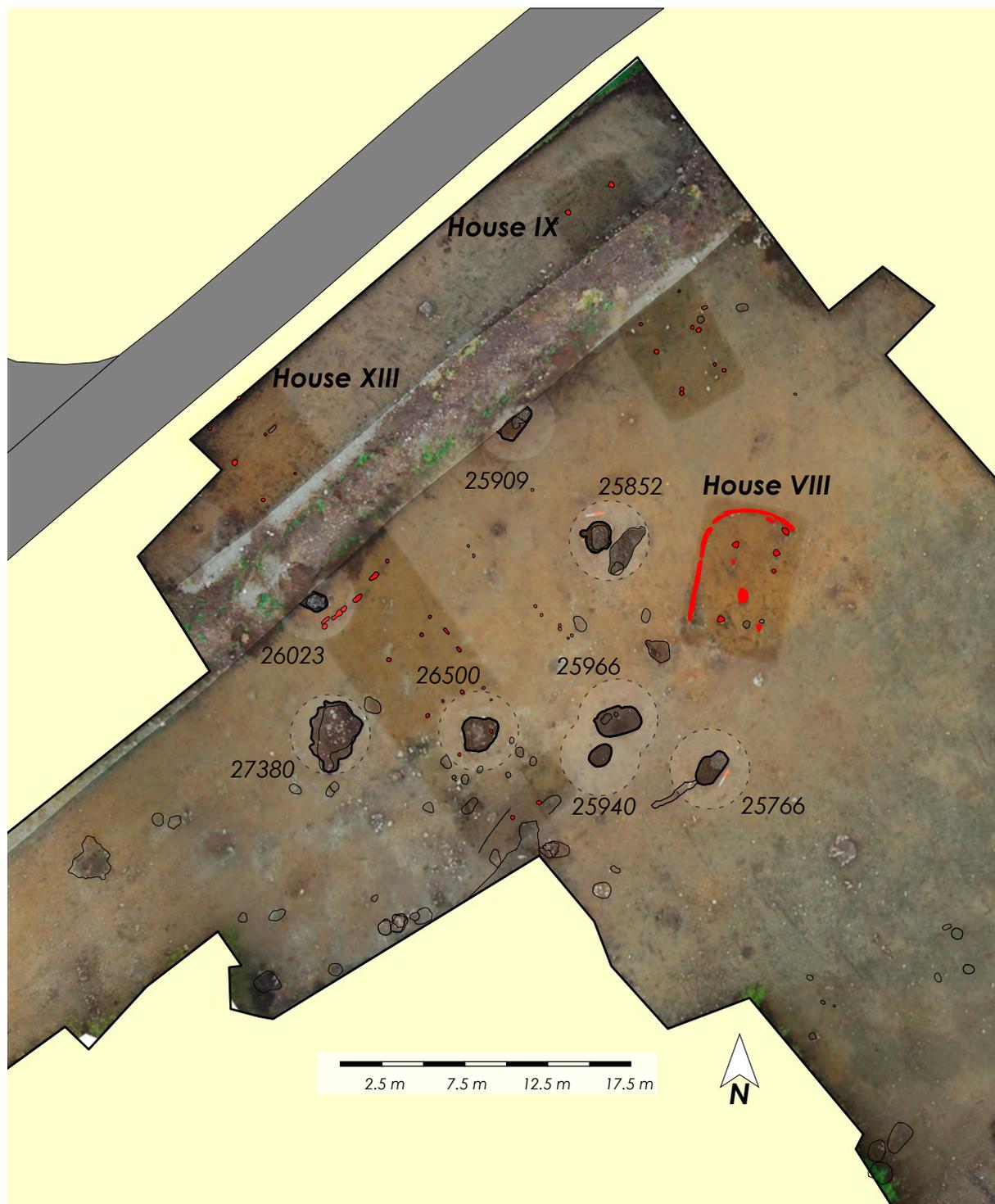


Figure 13. The Merovingian Period burial field at Myklebust.

be found in the stone walls of the older buildings. In some of the examples, the burials are placed over collapsed walls covering the floor. In these instances, buildings must have been abandoned for a considerable period of time prior to reuse for burial purposes. In other instances, when the burials are found directly on top of the floor, prior to wall collapse, the excavators have suggested that the interval between the abandonment of the building and the burial may have been short.

Burials are frequently found in association with the central aisle of buildings. They can be situated parallel to the building's main axis (like a fireplace), at right angles to it, or offset obliquely (see table 1 and 2). Several burials are placed along the building, between the wall and the row of roof bearing posts. Superimposed burials also seem to occur frequently at the corners of buildings. Several of the burials are also related to entrances (see Hem-Eriksen 2015). The material from Rogaland shows that some locations within the building are preferred over others, such as the central aisle and the fireplace, walls and entrances. This suggests that these areas played a special role in the LIA mind-set.

The significance of certain areas of the building can be seen in historical sources. When buying land in the Early Medieval Period, Gulating law requires the gathering of soil from certain locations on the farm in order for the farm to be "rightfully taken" (Robberstad 1969: 262, *Gulatinglovens Odelsløyning* chapter 28). First, soil needs to be taken from the four corners of the fireplace. Soil is then gathered from the middle of the long wall of the hall, where the seat of the leader had been located. It is also important to take soil from two boundary areas outside the buildings, where the grazing field and the farmed field meet and where the garden and the forest meet.

If we take a closer look at the buildings reused as burial places in the LIA, the majority of these

stand out as large constructions. Where several buildings are clustered together, it is the largest building that is chosen for reuse. This is especially the case for farm complexes from AD 150–550, both those preserved and visible in modern grazing fields and those found by topsoil stripping of farmed fields. The burials tend to be placed over or next to the main building of the farm, specifically the central domestic area of the main building or, in cases where the entire building appears to have been used as domestic area, over the entire building. Burials associated with areas of buildings interpreted as byres, as at Ullandhaug, are less frequent. Some of the buildings with overlying burials show multiple phases and use over an extended period of time, as at Myklebust, Ullandhaug and Storrsheia. The Pre-Roman Iron Age smithy underlying the Gausel Queen burial itself seems to have been built over an earlier Bronze Age building. At Frøyland, there is evidence of a three-aisled building in the same area as a multi-phase two-aisled building. The burials at Skadberg were found associated with two overlapping, and thus non-contemporaneous, buildings themselves located near an earlier, Late Bronze Age building.

In the cases where we have detailed knowledge of the buildings later reused for burials, it is highly interesting that many of the burials are placed in or near rooms with a great number of fireplaces. While the fireplaces may indicate a long period of use and a broad range of activities, a central aisle packed with fireplaces can also indicate rooms used for gatherings of larger groups of people. Thus the LIA burials frequently appear in and around buildings and rooms that may have had a central role as focal points in the past. This pattern is in line with the material from Mälardalen, Sweden, where rich Viking burials are associated with large buildings in use over a long period and with many fireplaces. According to Stenholm, both the buildings and the

burials could have played central roles in their societies (Stenholm 2012). Having considered possible patterns in the relationships between buildings and burials, the significance of, or motivation behind this phenomenon should be discussed.

AN ODAL FARMER DWELLING IN THE MOUND?

Burials placed on top of older houses can be interpreted as demonstrations of connections to earlier inhabitants and as a legitimization of affiliation. The house combines domestic and sacral elements in the sense that the affiliation can be perceived as both explicit and juridical, as ownership of land, and as a more symbolic connection to ancestors. This leads to the question: who would have had a strong need for such legitimization of ownership? Burials are not seen as directly mirroring the society, more as material arguments. The dead can be portrayed as something other than they were in life (Lillehammer 1996; Williams 2006: 5). This is not only the case when it comes to grave goods, but also in regards to the choice of burial location. It may be that burials placed on top of older houses reflect disputes concerning land rights during the LIA, specifically the ownership of old farmyards dating back to the EIA?

When discussing the connection to ancestors, we often emphasize genealogy. At the same time, it should be considered that new settlers in an area could have experienced a stronger need for legitimization of membership in the society and affiliation to the locale. Anna Maria Renck argues that superimposed burials in eastern Mälardalen were a means creating ancestry that legitimized claims over land owned by others (Renck 2008: 104; Löwenborg 2012: 19). The superimposed Merovingian Period burials at Mälardalen are different from the rest of the contemporary burials and are interpreted as indications of new people in the area. The opposite can be seen in Rogaland where inhumations in deep, rectangular pits rich in jewellery, tools and

weapons are common patterns in the local Viking burial customs (Dahl forthcoming).

It can be argued that AD 150–550 is a period of massive expansion which left heavy material traces in the landscape (Myhre 1980b). In Rogaland, the archaeological record of the period gives an impression of densely spaced settlements in good agricultural areas. At the same time, new farms are established in higher, more marginal areas. This indicates an inner wave of settlement, an inner *landnam*. The Viking Period, on the other hand, had an outer wave of settlement. This outer *landnam* also involved huge transformations, both for the ones left behind and the ones who returned.

Did the expansive period AD 150–550 play a special role in the Viking Period? In a time of intense social transformation, were the dead purposely placed in association with the houses and graves of the EIA settlers? Stenholm argues for a common interest in the past in Scandinavia and Western Europe during the period AD 800–1050. Massive transformations in the settlement structure throughout Scandinavia led to an interest in the past directed towards houses and burials. The transformations culminate, in AD 800–1050, in an agenda of creating a genealogy, an origin and memory anchored in the period AD 150–550 (Stenholm 2012: 226). The older farmsteads, as visible expressions of historical depth, can have played an increasingly important role in the LIA mind-set as the society underwent huge transformations. The burials can be seen as a strategy to demonstrate rights – to property, to earlier inhabitants at the same place, and to older monuments (Zachrisson 1994; Holtorf 1998; Renck 2008; Löwenborg 2012; Stenholm 2012). Indeed, the buildings from AD 150–550 stand out as monumental when it comes to size and seeming permanence. The buildings could have been conceived of as monuments of an outstanding past, revitalized by being incorporated into burial customs during the LIA.

While both the buildings and the graves preserved in modern grazing fields can be considered as monuments, it is problematic to focus on the visible memory in the same way when it comes to the graves found in farmed fields. Since it is normally only the burial we find preserved in these fields, it might be more fruitful to use the burial itself as the starting point. Burial customs in the VP were heavily focused on the afterlife and, in particular, the journey to the realm of the dead (see Dommasnes 2001: 36–38, 131). Hence, grave goods are primarily considered as valuable tools for the journey to the other side. The placement of elaborately furnished chambers next to older buildings may also be a burial custom that intentionally hearkens back in time. The chambers stand out as well-equipped rooms for the dead (Birkeli 1943: 114), in this case as dwellings built in connection to older houses. Instead of focusing on the burials as well-equipped journeys away from the realm of the living, placement and burial customs might just as well represent a furnished dwelling closely related to the ruins of lived lives. In other words, the burials take on a growing resemblance to the house remains (see Herschend 2009), and dead buildings are transformed into monuments. Through the burial, a permanent room is created, a place in a previous social order from the EIA that had its centre precisely within the farmyard.

An inner wave of settlement in the period AD 150–400 implies that many of the farms must have been recently settled. The graves placed around the recently settled farmyards may have played an important role regarding the *odal*, and this materialization of *odal* rights may have continued into the LIA (Zachrisson 1994). In the EIA, it seems to be the first one who died in the newly settled farm that was buried close by the building. In the phase of establishment, or re-establishment, there might have been special needs to stress the close relationship between the inhabitants and the land.

Burying a family member brings together and seals the relationship between the land and the family (Kristoffersen in Bakka et al 1993: 201). As described in Gulating law, mentioned above, several locations on the farm had a legal role as representatives of the farm, and some of these are repeatedly used for burials.

While the term “deserted farms” has been used to describe the preserved farmsteads in grazing fields, the burials placed over the abandoned buildings actually suggests that that the farms were still in use (see Gerritsen 2003: 95). The Merovingian Period grave field at Myklebust was located in the upper part of a ploughed field in use between the settlement in AD 1–250 and the establishment of the graves c. 600 AD (Dahl 2014). The botanical analysis from Sørå Bråde shows that the grave field dating to AD 800–900 was established in a grazing field (Bertheussen 2008). It is also reasonable to assume that many of the abandoned houses from the period AD 150–550 were in use as grazing fields when the LIA burials were built. It is worth considering whether or not burials placed on top of older buildings in grazing fields were intended to highlight not only the previous settlers, but also the importance of grazing fields in the LIA. If this is the case, we can imagine an increasing emphasis on pastoralism, as a form of specialized adaptation to the local environment within a European trading network, a change in economy that could help explaining the transverse movement of the buildings in LIA (see Dahl 2014). In contrast to the Gamla Uppsala area in the period after AD 550–800 where the dominance of pastoralism has been established (Löwenborg 2012: 17), more focus needs to be directed towards sampling and analyses of the latest prehistoric agricultural traces in future rescue excavations in Rogaland to provide a better understanding of LIA agricultural practices. A plague (Löwenborg 2012) or several volcanic eruptions at the end of the

Migration Period (Büntgen et al 2016) could have created an abundance of land together with a shortage of labour that might have stimulated extensive farming such as animal husbandry. Such a crisis may have been a catalyst for social stratification where the superimposed graves are an expression of renewed or changed property rights (Löwenborg 2012: 19).

The material in this paper gives an impression of wealthy women as owners of the farmsteads established in the previous periods. Here the archaeological material seems to contradict the written medieval sources. The Law of Magnus Lagabøte from 1274 states that daughters should inherit goods and property not included in the *odal* rights, while the Gulating Law states that women under certain

circumstances could inherit *odal* land (Zachrisson 1994: 220). It is possible that it was felt necessary to strengthen these exceptions to rights of inheritance through material expressions (i.e. graves). However, the female burials in these contexts are not the exception in the archaeological record, they are the rule. If we choose to consider these burials as marking the *odal* right, the archaeological material draws a completely different picture of women's rights of inheritance in Viking Rogaland than the one provided by written medieval sources. The awareness of the past in the Viking Period as described by Stenholm in the case of Mälardalen, stands out as a strategic use and entanglement of old and new monuments.

	GRAVES	HOUSES
Myklebust	Inhumation burial VP (1), cremation burials MeP (8)	Farm complex LRIA/MiP and ERA
	1. Inhumation burial (LVP):	Outside 42 meter long house from LRIA/MiP with many fireplaces
	Rectangular, deep pit with slabs along the edges and inner wooden construction	Outside the cattle-lane from the house
	Ring-headed pin, axe, sickle, knives, button, bone comb, nails, cup mark stone, unburned bones	Obliquely oriented compared to the building
	2. Cremation burial (MeP) (8):	House from ERIA
	Cairn 26500 (MeP)	Central aisle in ERIA house
	Burned bones, whetstone, black-burnished sherds	Across central aisle in the house
	Cairn 27380 (prob MeP)	Outside wall of ERIA house
	Black-burnished sherds	Obliquely oriented compared to the building
	Rectangular pit with stone packing in one end 26023 (prob MeP)	In the aisle of ERIA house
	Burned bones	Same orientation as the building
	Rectangular pit with stone packing in one end 25909 (prob MeP)	In between two houses from ERIA and house from EBA
	Flintflakes	Opposite orientation compared to the ERIA houses
	Rectangular pit with stone packing in one end 25766 (MeP)	Outside houses from ERIA and EBA
	Burned bones	Opposite orientation compared to the ERIA houses
	Cremation burial 25966 (MeP)	Outside, towards SE-corner of house from ERIA
	Burned bones, sherds	Obliquely oriented compared to the houses

	Cremation burial 25940 (MeP)	Outside, towards SE-corner of house from ERIA
	Bead, burned bones, sherds	Opposite orientation compared to the long houses
	Stone packing with surrounding charcoal layer 25852 (prob MeP)	Between two houses from ERIA and a house from EBA
	Fragments of iron, flintflakes, quartz	Same orientation as the EBA house, obliquely compared to the ERIA houses
Øksnavad	Inhumation burials VP (4-5)	Farm complex LRIA/MiP
	Inhumation burial (EVP) (2006)	In the farm yard
	Rectangular pit. Inner wooden construction within cist	Between two entrances in the two long houses
	Sword, ring-headed pin, belt buckle, knife, nails, human teeth	Opposite orientation compared to the long houses
	Inhumation burial (VP) (2009)	In living room with several fire places, south in the long house
	Rectangular pit. Weapons (sword). Not cataloged yet.	Obliquely oriented compared to the long house
	Inhumation burial (VP) (2009)	Outside living room in the long house, by SE-corner
	Rectangular pit. Weapons (sword). Not cataloged yet.	Same orientation as the long houses
	Inhumation burial (VP) (2009)	Outside eastern wall of long house
	Rectangular pit. Finds, but no sword. Not cataloged yet.	Opposite orientation compared to the long houses
	Possible inhumation burial (VP) (2009)	In the farm yard between the long houses. Garbage pit with slabs or well
	Rectangular pit. No finds.	Same orientation as the long houses
Gausel	Inhumation burials VP/LIA (2)	House LRIA/MiP and PRIA
	Grave 1006 (LIA)	House 7 from LRIA/MiP
	Placed in the older stone wall. A cairn covered the burial	In outer stone wall, close to corner
	9 glass beads, arrowhead, spindle whorl, sickle, heckles, knives, belt-hook, ring of iron, nails,	Main building, only partially preserved
	pottery sherds, slag, horse teeth, burned bones, oval stone	SE-corner of living room with fireplaces. Several building phases.
	Grave 1883 (EVP)	House II from PRIA
	Cist post excavated in 1997. Originally covered by a mound	In the aisle, between wall and fireplace and forge
	Gilded mounts, mounts for reliquary casket, bridle, strap buckle, oval brooches, equal-armed	On the northern side of an entrance
	brooch, bronze pin, silver armlets, jet ring, glass beads, bronzemounts for drinking horn, rivets	Smithy. Possible older building under the smithy
	spit, pan, bronze vessel, knives, shield boss, scissors, weaving sword, horse teeth and cranium	Same orientation as the building
Ullandhaug	Long barrows LIA (2), inhumation burials EVP (2), cremation burial LIA (1)	Farm complex LRIA/MiP
	Long barrow 11 (LIA)	House 1 (LRIA/MiP)
	Inner, boat shaped stone setting. Rectangular chamber. No finds	The shape of the barrow fits the walls of the house in the northern room (barn)
	Long barrow 12 (LIA)	House 1 (LRIA/MiP)
	Boat shaped. No finds. Charcoal layer in the bottom (Helliesen 1900)	On top of SE-entrance to the main living room (part of two opposite entrances)

	Inhumation burial I (EVP)	House 3 (LRIA/MiP)
	Coffin placed on top of the charcoal layer in the burned down house. Covered by a mound	In collapsed wall, inside two opposite entrances in living room
	Axe and 42 nails	In living room with many fireplaces
	Cremation burial II (LIA)	House 3 (LRIA/MiP)
	Covered by a small, round cairn	In western wall, in the middle of the house. Living room
	Burned bones	In living room with many fireplaces
	Inhumation burial III (EVP)	House 3 (LRIA/MiP)
	A layer of pebbles covered a wooden coffin	Outside wall, outside living room with the two other graves
	Oval brooch, bronze armlet, belt-hook, round stone, nails, iron fragments	
Storrsheia	Cremation burials VP (2-3), mounds (2)	Farm complex LRIA/MiP and VP
	Cremation burial (EVP) (1-2)	House 1 (MiP)
	On top of a big stone in the wall: Weaving sword, oval brooch, spindle whorl	Cut down in the outer wall. Same orientation as the building
	Behind a big stone in the wall, 24 cm deeper: Knife, parts of heckle, burned bones	In living room with many fireplaces. Longest house in the complex
	Cremation burial (VP)	House 2 (LIA)
	In the wall, cut down to the same level as the natural subsoil	Into wall in long, stone built entrance. House with one room, several phases
	Two whetstones of slate, burned bones	Obliquely oriented compared to the houses
	Long barrow (LRIA?)	House 2 (LIA)
	Two fireplaces under the barrow can be interpreted as traces of cremations	Outside the wall of the house. House with one room, several phases
	Spread in the barrow: 586 pottery sherds, burned bones, charcoal and slag	Same orientation as the building
	Mound (LIA)	House 6 (LRIA)
	Spread in the mound: 12 pottery sherds, part of a cooking pot of soapstone, nails, slag, barch	On top of collapsed wall to the living room. Many, big fireplaces
Rossaland	Inhumation burials VP (2)/LIA (1)	House MiP
	Inhumation burial (EVP)	On top of house from MiP
	Rectangular chamber with slabs along the edges, on top of big stone in the floor	In the corner of the house
	Oval brooch, bronze pin, spindle whorl	
	Inhumation burial in coffin (LIA)	On top of house from MiP
	Coffin placed on top of the floor in the house	In the corner of the house
	Sword, sickle, file, nails	Same orientation as rectangular chamber, house and boat burial
	Inhumation burial in boat (VP)	Outside house from MiP
	Glass bead, hammer, whetstones, flint, flywheel, strap buckle, arrowhead of iron	Same orientation as house and graves within the house
Espeland	Inhumation burials VP (1), MiP (1)	House LRIA/MiP

	Inhumation burial (LVP)	Outside wall in house from MiP
	Stone built, rectangular chamber covered by stones from the walls of the house	
	Ring-headed pin, axe, knife	Same orientation as the house
	Mound (MiP)	Outside house from MiP, in the wall of smaller house older than MiP
Skadberg	Inhumation burials VP (5)	Houses LBA, PRIA/MiP
	Inhumation burial 2099 (EVP)	House 6 (PRIA/MiP)
	Rectangular pit. Postholes in the corners	Along the central aisle of the house. Same location and orientation as a fireplace
	Oval brooches, spindle whorl, knife, handles and hooks, mounts, nails, iron rod, round stone, burned bones	Same orientation as the house and burial 2144 close by
	Inhumation burial 2144 (EVP/LVP)	Cuts a fireplace from PRIA belonging to house 5
	Inhumation burial 2144 (EVP/LVP)	House 5 (PRIA)
	Rectangular pit. Visible traces of a wooden coffin	Across the central aisle in house 5. Same orientation as house 6 and the burials
	4 glass beads, soapstone bead, spindle whorl, mounts, nails, small iron rod	Cuts a fireplace from PRIA belonging to house 5. In living room in house 5
	Inhumation burial 1889 (VP)	Outside of house 5 (PRIA)
	Rectangular pit	Outside the wall, towards the SE-corner.
	Knife, round stone, nails, iron fragments and wire	Obliquely oriented compared to house 5, but same as house 6 and the graves
	Inhumation burial 6182 (LVP)	House 7 (LBA)
	Rectangular to oval, deep pit. The finds were under a stone packing	By the wall. Outside room without fireplace
	2 glass beads, amber bead, bronze pin, head of a weaving sword, sickle, knife, key, nails, mounts, round stone, traces of textiles and wood, human teeth	Obliquely oriented compared to house 7, but same as house 6 and the graves
	Possible inhumation burial 11670	Outside house 6 (PRIA/MiP)
	Sircular, three layers of stones. No finds	In line with three rectangular burials
Søra Bråde	Inhumation burials EVP (5-6)	Houses PRIA
	Inhumation burial in boat A200 (EVP)	Outside house 4 (undated)
	Boatshaped. Originally covered by a mound plowed away	Same orientation as house 4 and house 1
	Amber beads, mounts, arrowheads, knife, fragmented shield bosses, iron fragments, slag	
	Inhumation burial in coffin A201 (EVP)	Outside house 4 and house 1 (PRIA)
	Rectangular, inner wooden construction or coffin	Opposite orientation compared to the houses
	Oval brooches, plate fibula of silver, amber bead, weaving sword, spindle whorl, nails, burned bones, fur, iron-, textile- and woodfragments	
	Inhumation burial A202 (VP)	Outside house 4 and house 1 (PRIA)
	Rectangular. Postholes in the corners. Disturbed.	Opposite orientation compared to the houses

	Carnelian bead, amber bead, iron mounts, nails, traces of textiles	
	Possible inhumation burial A207	Outside house 4 and house 1 (PRIA)
	Almost rectangular. Modern fill. No finds	Opposite orientation compared to the houses
	Possible inhumation burial in coffin A208 (LIA)	Outside house 4 and house 1 (PRIA)
	Very disturbed and uneven	Between the other burials
	Iron fragments, nails, fur/hair	
	Inhumation burial in cist A209 (LIA)	Outside house 4 and house 1 (PRIA)
	Rectangular. Stone walls. Disturbed	Opposite orientation compared to the houses
	Gilded bronzebutton, amber bead, silver-, bronze- and ironfragments, iron ring, nails, burned bones	
Froyland	Inhumation burials LIA (4)	Houses LN
	Inhumation burial in boat (VP)	Outside houses from LN
	Boatshaped pit	Same orientation as houses and the other boat burial
	Spearhead, knife, whetstone, rivets, nails, iron fragments	
	Inhumation burial in boat (EVP)	Outside houses from LN
	Oblong	Same orientation as houses and the other boat burial
	Equal-armed brooch, oval brooches, 18 glass beads, amber bead, strap buckle, spindle whorls, sickle, scissors, knife, whetstone, key, button, pottery sherds, nails, iron fragments, slag, burned bones, human tooth	
	Inhumation burial (LIA)	Outside houses from LN
	Rectangular stone packing. Interpreted as child burial	Outside SE-corner of LN house
	Arrowhead, sickle, knife, nails, iron fragments	On top of a three-aisled building?
	Inhumation burial (LIA)	Outside houses from LN
	Small. Interpreted as child burial	Outside SE-corner of LN house
	Small sickle, nails, iron rods	On top of a three-aisled building?

Abbreviations:

EBA	Early Bronze Age	IA	Iron Age	LRIA	Late Roman Iron Age	RIA	Roman Iron Age
EIA	Early Iron Age	LBA	Late Bronze Age	LVP	Late Viking Period	PRIA	Pre-Roman Iron Age
ERIA	Early Roman Iron Age	LIA	Late Iron Age	MeP	Merovingian Period	VP	Viking Period
EVP	Early Viking Period	LN	Late Neolithic	MiP	Migration Period		

Table 1. Relations between burials and buildings.

	Burials	Houses	Relation
Myklebust	MeP (8)	ERIA	Central aisle, aisle, by the wall, outside
	VP (1)	LRIA/MiP	Outside
Nedre Øksnavad	VP (4-5)	LRIA/MiP	In living room, outside entrances, outside
Gausel	LIA ¹	LRIA/MiP ¹	In the wall
	VP ¹	PRIA ¹	Along the aisle
Ullandhaug	LIA (3)/VP (2) ²	LRIA/MiP	In the wall, by entrance, outside
Rossaland	VP (2)/LIA (1)	LRIA/MiP	Over house, outside
Espeland	VP (1) ²	LRIA/MiP	By the wall, by the annex
Storrsheia	VP (2) ²	LRIA/MiP, LIA	In the wall
Skadberg	VP (5)	PRIA/MiP	Central aisle, by the wall, outside
Søra Bråde	VP (5)	PRIA	Outside
Frøyland	VP/LIA (4)	LN/EBA	Outside

1 More burials and houses from the period PRIA-MeP were found, but the mentioned burials are the ones that were placed directly on top of identified houses.

2 The burials mentioned in numbers are the ones found on top of and beside houses.

Table 2. A summary of the relationships between burials and buildings.

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