

## Some Grave fields, churches and ancient ruins

**Björketorpsstenen** – is one of the most impressive rune stones in Sweden and one of the world's tallest rune stones measuring 4.2 metres in height. It forms an imposing sight together with two high uninscribed menhirs. The three stones form a triangle and are mentioned for the first time in writing year 1493, at that time as border markers among Edestad, Listerby and Hjortsberga parishes.

Be careful so you don't break the monument. On the Björketorp rune stone the runes say: "I, Master of the runes conceal here runes of power. Incessantly (plagued by) maleficence (doomed to) insidious death (is) he who breaks this (monument): I prophesy destruction."

The runes were made in the late part of the 6<sup>th</sup> or the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Close to the rune stone and the two uninscribed menhirs lies a gravefield dating back to 400-800 A.D.



**How you find your way there?** Drive E22 eastwards from Ronneby, about 7 km. Turn left towards Tving and drive about 200-300 m and you find a parking place on the right side of the road. The stones are 100-200 m walking distance from the parking lot on the same side of the road.



**Förkärla Church and village, Vambåsa, Forstheim cairn** – During prehistoric time Förkärla church area was a central settled country and a wooden church was built during early Christianity days, in Blekinge. The wooden church was replaced ca 1300 by a stone church. Parts of this old stone church are integrated in the present church, which got its current look 1846-1865. In the vicinity of the church there are 314 ancient monuments on 70 different spots registered.

***How you find your way there?*** Drive E22 eastwards from Ronneby about 10 km. Förkärla church lies just beside E22 on the south side.

**Edestad church and holy well** – current church was built around year 1220-1270. North of the church you find a holy well, which has had considerable impact on the church's income. The church was decorated with expensive triptych, altar, crucifix, chandeliers, paintings and saint's images.

***How you find your way there?*** The church lies about 5 km east of Ronneby. Drive through Ronneby harbor and then turn right on Gärestadsvägen. Continue on that road, which passes under E22, until you reach Edestad.

**Hjortsberga grave field and church** – Hjortsberga lies on Johannishus ridge (Johannishusåsen) and has since 1982 been a nature reserve, rich on ancient monuments and sights. The Johannishus ridge extends north and slightly eastwards from the Björketorpsstone. On Hjortsberga grave field, which lies on the left side of the road, by the medieval parish church, there are about 120 visible graves. The grave field is probably from the later Iron Age/ Viking Age, about 700-1050 A.D. The present church in Hjortsberga is considered to be the oldest church in Blekinge – some Romanic features suggest that it is older than from the 13th century.



***How you find your way there?*** The place lies about 7 km from Ronneby. Drive E22 eastwards from Ronneby and turn left towards Tving. Continue that road for about 5 km to Hjortsberga.





**Hjortsberga gravefield from the later Iron Age/ Viking Age**

**Hagbards cellar** – An 11 x 12 m big ruin, a rest from a kastral (= tower-like defence from the Middle Ages). In close vicinity are also remainders of other buildings from the Middle Ages and later times.

***How you find your way there?*** Drive through Ronneby harbor and turn left into Heabyvägen and continue ca 250 m. Here you find a sign, marking historical monument, and room for one parked car. You will have to climb over the fence and walk about 200 m into the pen.

**Hjortahammar gravefield** – One of the largest and most impressive grave fields in Blekinge. Archaeologists in the 1800's assumed, Hjortahammar to have been a battleground in the Viking Age, where the fallen from a naval battle had been buried. Present-day researchers know however that it is a grave field for inhabitants in Vambåsa village. On the narrow cape there are about 120 discernible establishments and many times more underground. In the north part there are circles of stones that came about during the early Iron Age, about 0-400 A.D. Most of the graves belong to the later Iron Age/Viking Age, about 700-1050 A.D.

***How you find your way there?*** The grave field lies about 17 km east of Ronneby. Drive E22, turn right towards Almö-Hasslö. After about 3 km you reach Hjortahammars grave field.

**Gärestad** – In 1889 a bigger silver treasure was discovered in the south part of Gärestad hamlet. The treasure consisted of more than 1000 coins; German, Arabic, English, Danish and Swedish coins. There were also bracelets and parts of a neck ring. The treasure weighed 2 kg and was buried around year 1060, the end of the Viking Age. (If you would like to see the treasure, then I can try to contact the people that are responsible for it. Unfortunately, the treasure is not placed in a public museum.)

**Flisberget** – on the hill there are three mounds of stones (cairns) from the Bronze Age. You also find cremation graves from later Bronze Age/early Iron Age, ca 1000 B.C. – 500 A.D.

**On each side of E22 there are some of the biggest mounds of stones, dating from early Bronze Age, which you can find in Blekinge:**

**Hamrabackarna** – The mound of stones is 4-5 m high and about 30 m in diameter. In the vicinity there are also some smaller mounds.

**Målarberget** – A mound of stones of the same size as the one at Hamrabackarna. The isolated and over the surrounding landscape dominating location is typical for these large mounds of stones. They were placed in this way, probably aiming to mark the ground belonging to a group or a family.

***How you find your way there?*** Drive through Gärestad hamlet on Gärestadsvägen, after ca 800 m turn right and park the car by the roadside just before the passage under E22. Follow the orange painted poles for 250 m to the big mound of stones on Hamrabacken. On the other side of the passage under E22 at the left hand of the road there is a path with orange painted poles as well. After 300 m you reach Målarberget.



**Ship carvings in Väby** – Väby and Torp are probably the first villages in this district and they arose presumably around 800-900 A.D. You can find ship carvings from the Bronze Age, 15-20 m to the right of the little road that goes through the field, just as the road goes into an enclosed pasture-land. On a big sloped rock-face, in a concentrated area, you can see two ship carvings, made more easily seen by red paint. Among the two ships, there are about fifty cup marks. These are the only ship carvings found in the Hoby area.



**How you find your way there?** When coming from Ängholma, you turn left by the STOP sign and follow Väbyvägen for 3 km. On the right side of the road you find a sign describing the location of the ship carvings (unfortunately only in Swedish, but you gasp the meaning, and it is the only sign here). To reach the carvings turn right onto this small road and follow it over the field (fine with a bike, but not for a car – then walking is better) until you reach a gate. Behind the gate (PLEASE, close the gate after you!) on the right hand you find the rock-face with the red painted ships and cup marks.

**Jättegrytor (giant's kettles) in Bräkne-Hoby** – These two giant's kettles are glacial, which means that they were formed during the Great Ice Age and during the deglaciation. The deepest of them is 3 meter deep and has a slightly screwed shape. Water could have tumbled forth through a crack in the ice or through a tunnel under the ice. You can also imagine a flood of water, from ice and from deglacial lakes northwards, that could have gushed over the granite rock. How fast a kettle was created depended on several parameters: The speed and the amount of water that for a certain time gushed over the same spot; the hardness of the bedrock; the amount of solid material e. g. "running stones" that spin in whirls.



**How you find your way there?** Drive off E22 at Exit 55 towards Bräkne-Hoby. Drive northwards towards Bräkne-Hoby and turn right onto road 620 (Gamla Riksvägen). You see a sign for Ronneby by this turn-off. Then turn directly to the left towards the church. By the curve about 500 m from the church you find the signs that will take you to the giant's kettles.

**Kalvakullen i Hakarp** – A monumental stone rock on three legs is placed in an enclosed pasture field. The whole valley from Tokaryd in the north to Svinavallen in the south is surrounded of as many as 25 stone rocks on three legs. The legs are small stones and one of the legs is made of two stones on top of each other. Near to some of these blocks on legs it can be found a thin circle of stones and carbon remnants. This kind of ancient monument is generally considered to be 2500 years old.

These stone rocks are almost always situated on solid rock-face and in close proximity to cultivated grounds. They seem to indicate territory and they are located on grounds, where you easily can imagine, that people have been travelling. Some of them are placed at apparent heights.

The stone rocks are placed in the proximity of cultivated grounds, journey routes and burial grounds with fire and thin circles of stones. Why do you think the people during the Iron Age bothered that much with putting big stone rocks on small stone legs?



**How you find your way there?** When coming from Ängholm, you turn left by the STOP sign and follow Väbyvägen for 4 km. Before the road crosses Bräkneån turn right onto Hakarpsvägen towards Hakarp. Along Hakarpsvägen you can for example stop and lionize two stone rocks on legs. A small one is situated on the right side of the road (there is a sign in Swedish, but you gasp the meaning, and it is the only sign here), in an enclosed pasture-land, when you have driven 5.8 km from the mentioned STOP sign. The other one, the bigger 'Kalvakullen' you find on the left side of the road after 7.1 km. You walk along the small road through the field and come up into the enclosed pasture-land. The stone rock is on the right side of the small road on a rock-face. You know that you choose the right small road as there is a sign (in Swedish) by Hakarpsvägen that describes Kalvakullen.



**Molly and a small stone rock on three legs**

**A beautiful juniper along the small road to Kalvakullen**