

Hoby – a chieftain’s residence from the centuries around the birth of Christ

Susanne Klingenberg

An account is given of the recent years’ excavations at Hoby in Southern Lolland and the plans for future investigations are outlined. Settlement has been demonstrated dating from the Late Pre-Roman, Early Roman and Germanic Iron Age and from Viking times. The settlement from the Early Iron Age attracts particular attention, partly due to the good preservational conditions and partly because of the two rich graves from this period found in the area (Fig. 1). The Hoby area offers a unique opportunity

to investigate the settlement and cultural landscape associated with one of Northern Europe’s richest graves from the Roman Iron Age and, accordingly, the possibility of investigating the cultural landscape context for the supreme power elite of that time.

Since the middle of the 1990s, amateur archaeologist Boje Hansen has carried out metal-detector surveys on the fields of the Hoby area. These surveys have resulted in the recovery of metal artefacts dating from the Late Iron Age and Middle Ages. In 1999,

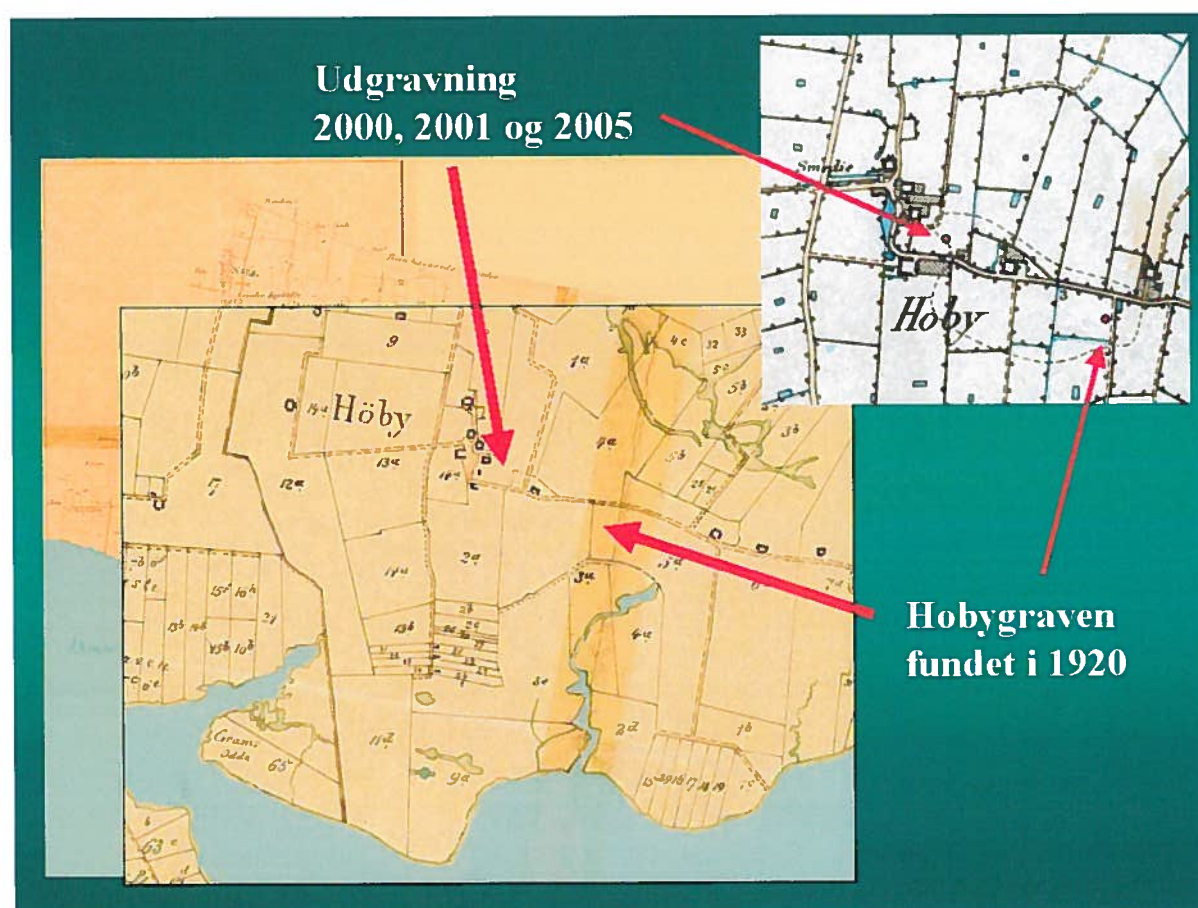


Fig. 1. Large-scale ordnance maps (1842-99) showing the find site for the Hoby grave and settlement. The landscape at Hoby has changed much since then, as a sea wall was later built on the Baltic coast. In the Early Iron Age a small fjord arm probably extended almost all the way in to Hoby; from here it would have been possible to sail out into the Baltic. Copyright: The National Survey and Cadastre.

he observed pottery and dark earth on fields at the farm of Skibelund in Hoby. Boje Hansen reported this to the then Lolland-Falsters Stiftsmuseum now Museum Lolland-Falster who, in turn, contacted the National Museum in Copenhagen. At both institutions there was the realisation that this observation was of considerable archaeological significance. In August 1999, the site was visited by archaeologists from the National Museum and Lolland-Falsters Stiftsmuseum, together with the finder. During this visit, it was possible to observe ploughed-up dark cultural layer and numerous potsherds. The ploughed-up pottery could be dated to the Late Pre-Roman and Early Roman Iron Age. It could be concluded that there was a settlement area here dating from the Early Iron Age which was contemporaneous with the famous Hoby grave; (discovered and investigated in 1920 (Friis Johansen 1923). It was clear that there was a need for investigations of the locality and a joint project was initiated between the two institutions. The reason the locality attracted such special attention was, of course, the two rich graves found in the area as well as the good preservational conditions on the settlement site. The latter lies to the NW of the rich inhumation grave; the distance between settlement and grave is about 250 m.

The archaeological investigations in 2000

Four trial trenches were laid out to the north and south of Hobyvej (fig. 2). In the two trenches to the south of the road, preservational conditions were generally poor. Only a few postholes were recorded, of which a small number was sectioned. In the SW trench the presence of a depression containing the remnants of a cultural layer was demonstrated; the latter was c. 15 m in diameter. With the aid of cores and small test pits it could be established that in some places the subsoil was first encountered at a depth of 1.9 m beneath the field surface. This was interpreted by the excavators as showing the presence of possible wells. Pottery and metal finds from the surface suggest a Viking Age date. There was nothing in the deposits that could be dated to the Early Iron Age. To the north of Hobyvej, archaeological deposits were encountered in particular in the NW parts of the trenches. Test pits through this cultural layer revealed it to be up to 36 cm thick. On the surface of the deposits it was possible to observe several clay-rich areas; these were interpreted as the remains of clay floors. The cultural layer and the plough soil both contained pottery and well-preserved animal bones. The deposits could be dated to the Pre-Roman

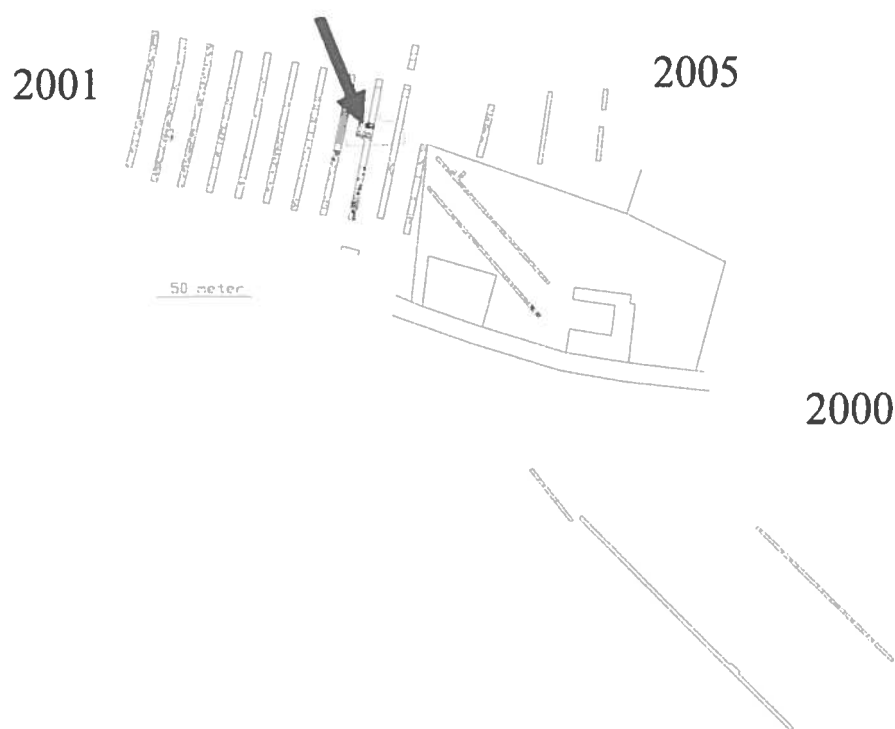


Fig. 2. Plan showing the evaluation and excavation trenches from investigations in 2000, 2001 and 2005. The arrow points to the excavation trench from 2005. Drawing/adaptation: Cille Krause.

Iron Age period III and the Early Roman Iron Age. The finds-rich cultural layer had an extent of 0.5 ha. In the light of the good preservational conditions, and out of consideration for possible subsequent investigations, it was decided not to continue excavation down into the culture layers, but to halt the work without any further detailed investigation of the demonstrated structures.

The investigations in 2000 were carried out by Henrik Schilling of Lolland-Falsters Stiftsmuseum and Per Poulsen of the National Museum. The report was written by Henrik Schilling.

The archaeological investigations in 2001

In all, 12 trial trenches were laid out across the areas to the north of Hobyvej (fig. 2). The preservational conditions were very varied, and in the area furthest to the west, cultural layers were not preserved. Furthermore, there were major recent disturbances in the westernmost trench. In the eastern part of the investigated area the preservational conditions were good, and the presence of a cultural layer and clay floors was established. A series of minor sections was cut through the cultural layer, and it could be seen that the thickness of the latter varied between 40 and 60 cm. On the basis of the investigations it was concluded that cultural layer was preserved over an area of c. 2 ha. The Iron Age settlement in this area has, according to the excavators, not been significantly disturbed by structures from later periods. In the trial trenches in the western part, where cultural layer is absent, the remains of a possible house and some pits were demonstrated. On the basis of finds on the surface of some of the pits, together with those from one of the postholes belonging to the possible house structure, these features were dated to the Early Roman Iron Age. The other structures located were dated by the excavators to the Germanic Iron Age and Viking times. There is apparently settlement dating from several periods in this part of the area. Cooking pits occurred primarily in the northern parts of the trenches; these have not been dated. The terrain slopes down towards the north and the area was so wet here that it was not possible to continue the trial excavations further in this direction. During the excavation, the cultural layer was left intact, such that the removal of earth ceased as soon as the top of the culture layer appeared. The excavators believe they can demonstrate the remains of 10 houses, of which three or four have preserved clay floors. The other house sites were distinguished on the basis of

pairs of postholes in the trenches. There were a few lengths of ditch which could possibly represent the remains of fences. However, it was not possible, on the basis of the investigations, to demonstrate definite remains of fences that could be related to the Early Iron Age settlement. Trench 7 was found to contain part of a pit-house. A section was cut through the structure and a clay loom weight was recovered. On the basis of typological criteria the pit-house was dated to the Late Iron Age or Viking times. It was linked to the Viking Age settlement as there were no finds from the Germanic Iron Age. Metal-detector surveys were carried out and finds were collected from the surface of the culture layer. Very few metal artefacts were recovered, and no metal finds could be securely assigned to the Early Roman Iron Age, with the possible exception of some rusty iron artefacts which turned up around house I. The other metal finds can be dated to the Middle Ages. In addition to these, the finds comprise large quantities of pottery from the Late Pre-Roman and Early Roman Iron Age, pottery from Viking times and a large and well-preserved bone assemblage. The pottery from the Early Iron Age was recovered primarily in connection with the culture layer and the clay floors demonstrated here. A single posthole relating to the presumed remains of a house in the western part of the area yielded potsherds dating from the Early Roman Iron Age.

The investigations in 2001 were carried out by Henrik Schilling and Henrik Høier, Lolland-Falsters Stiftsmuseum, and Per Poulsen, the National Museum. The report was written by Henrik Høier and Henrik Schilling.

The archaeological investigations in 2005

The aim of the investigations was to establish the extent of the settlement to the east and to expose the well-preserved house remains demonstrated in 2001 (house I). House I was exposed in its entirety and it was clear that the remains represented several phases positioned immediately on top of one another with only a minor displacement (cf. fig. 3). The remains represented a well-preserved long-house. In order to gain an insight into how complicated and time-consuming an excavation of these house remains would be, a trench was cut in the SE quarter. It was not possible to excavate in thin layers or spits by machine so the trench was cut manually. The layers were very compact and yielded numerous finds of animal bone and pottery. In addition,

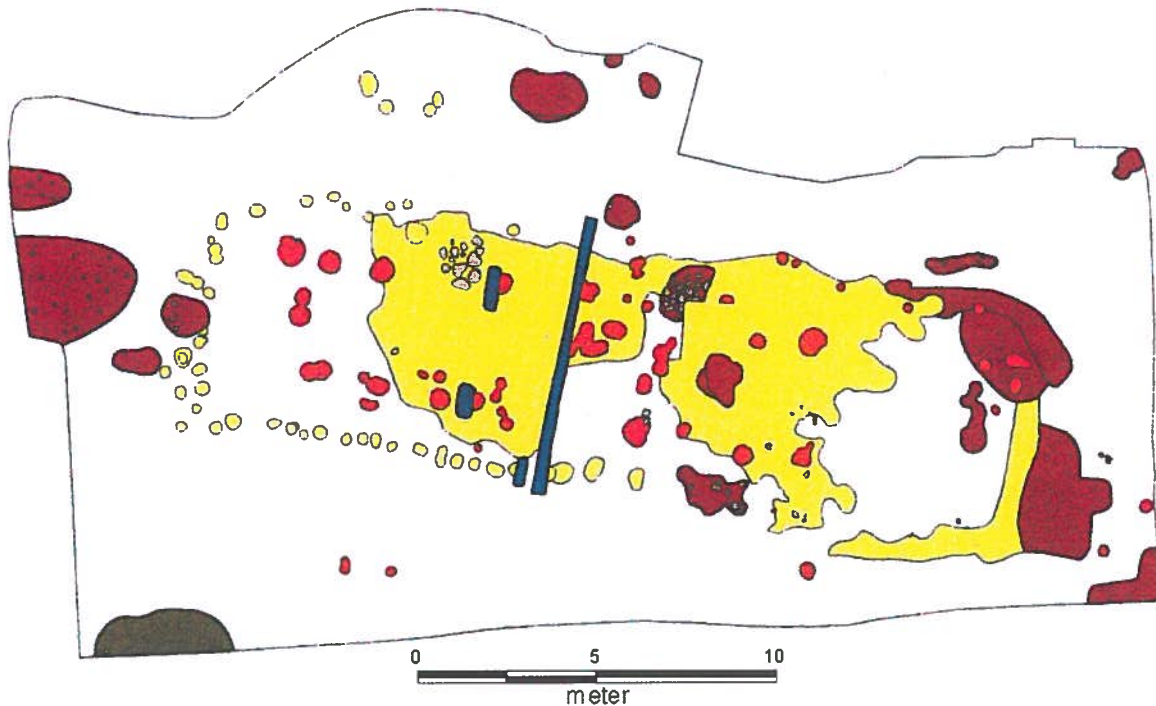


Fig. 3. The house site revealed in 2005. The structures represent several phases/buildings at the same site. Inside the house were several traces of roof-bearing posts, showing that there had been more than one building at the spot. The westernmost part of the paved area visible inside the house is the entrance paving from another building. Drawing/adaptation: Cille Krause. Symbols: Yellow: Clay and clay-filled postholes; Brown: Pits; Blue: Excavations in the house from 2001; Orange: Other postholes; Green: The pit-house; Grey: Paved area.

there were large quantities of burnt material which suggests that one of the house phases could have been destroyed by fire. In the course of the excavation a metal-detector survey was carried out, but the only find from the house was a fragment of a bronze pin. No metal artefacts were located in the trench outside the house. Soil samples were also taken as part of the investigation. Analysis of these by Sabine Karg of the National Museum's Department of Environmental Archaeology revealed that charred plant remains were preserved in the form of cereals and weeds. There was charred grain of barley and rye and seeds of associated arable weeds such as fat hen and black bindweed. The analysis reveals that plant macro-remains are preserved at the site and that the taking of samples from defined archaeological features such as hearths and postholes will potentially be able to illuminate special functions. The trench was not excavated down to the sub-soil and it was back-filled on completion of the excavation. In a smaller trench cut around the house, the remains a few pits could be observed and a pit-house was located in the SW corner of the trench. The fill of the pit-house yielded an equal-armed fibula of bronze dating from the Early Germanic Iron Age. In the eastern part of the investigation area traces

were found of a settlement from the Middle Ages. No earlier features, in the form either of cultural layers or structures, were detected below the medieval remains. The investigation showed that clay floors and other structures lay at the level of the plough soil or just beneath it and would therefore be destroyed in the course of ordinary agricultural exploitation. The settlement area has been held out of cultivation since 2000 and the investigations also show that this is a necessity if the culture layers are to be preserved at the site and the possibility of carrying out a further investigation is to be retained.

Preliminary conclusions on the basis of the investigations to date

At Hoby, settlement traces have been demonstrated across an area measuring c. 250 × 100 m. Of this, cultural layers from the Early Iron Age cover an area of c. 150 × 100 m. On the settlement area lacking cultural layers there are settlement traces dating from several periods. In the eastern trial trenches there were no

features or finds which can be dated to the Early Iron Age. In the trial trenches to the south of Hobyvej there were no features or finds from the Early Iron Age. In the western trial trenches there were a few features in the form of postholes and pits from the Early Roman Iron Age. In the northern part of the trial trenches no features were demonstrated which could definitely be dated to the Early Iron Age. The investigations so far suggest, therefore, that the settlement from the Early Iron Age has been delimited to the south and east, while its extent to the north and west has not been established. Many features were demonstrated in the trial trenches, but the majority is not dated due to the excavation method and the strategy adopted. The investigation in 2005 showed that there are also later features in the area with cultural layer, cf. the pit-house from the Germanic Iron Age. The area with cultural layer covers 15,000 m² and if settlement from the Early Iron Age is also present on the areas lacking cultural layer this could have occupied an area of up to 25,000 m². In comparison, the Hodde village covers an area of 15,000 m² (Hvass 1985), and the chieftain's farmstead from the Late Pre-Roman/Early Roman Iron Age at Hammelev Nørremark (Ethelberg 2003, 212) covers an area of around 800 m². The investigations to date suggest that there was a major settlement in the Hoby area, beginning in the Late Pre-Roman and Early Roman Iron Age. On the basis of these investigations it is not possible, however, to establish the size and structure of this settlement from the Early Iron Age. The partially investigated long-house from the Early Roman Iron Age is slightly larger than the norm, being 25 m in length, and this could suggest a certain degree of wealth and power. In comparison, the long-house at the chieftain's farm in Hodde is 22.5 m long in its youngest phase (Hvass 1985). However, in order to understand the character of the structure it is, for example, necessary to take account of the number of associated buildings and their function in any interpretation of the structure. Remains of several houses have been demonstrated through the investigations in the trial trenches, of which some are interpreted as long-houses. This, together with the fact that several houses were built overlying each other, could suggest that there were several farmsteads present at the site at any one time.

On the basis of the investigations so far it is, however, not possible to establish whether this farmstead was significantly larger than the other contemporary farmsteads on the site. Or whether it had many larger and smaller buildings associated with it. During the investigations in 2001, a series of postholes was demonstrated which was interpreted as representing a length of fence. However, on the basis of the

investigations so far it is not possible to establish whether the settlement was enclosed within a continuous fence or possibly a palisade. On the basis of the pottery recovered, the settlement can be dated to the Late Pre-Roman and Early Roman Iron Age. The settlement was founded in the centuries just prior to the birth of Christ, and it seems to have continued uninterrupted until around AD 100. Subsequent to this there are no dated finds or structures before the Early Germanic Iron Age. From this latter period, and continuing up until Viking times and the Middle Ages, settlement traces can again be detected in the area. The finds from the Early Iron Age comprise pottery, animal bones and parts of a single metal artefact. The amount of metal from the settlement is, accordingly, very limited. It is rare to find metal artefacts on settlements from the Early Iron Age. When these are located, they most commonly take the form of fragments, i.e. artefacts which were broken and possibly lost. Large quantities of metal or larger metal artefacts are found primarily in burnt house remains from the period, for example in the cellar at Overbygård (Lund 1984). Other finds of metal artefacts include the unique find of a coin hoard from the Ginnerup settlement in Thy (Hatt 1935). Apart from these special finds, the quantity of metal artefacts from the settlements is very limited, especially seen in the light of the many investigations that have been carried out into Early Iron Age settlements. In the case of the very well preserved settlements of long duration in Northern Jutland, with accumulated cultural layers up to 2 m in depth, the quantity of metal artefacts is also very limited. Accordingly, Hoby is no different in this respect from all other settlements of the time. At settlements from the Early Iron Age we do not find metal artefacts scattered around on the settlement area as seen in the case of many settlements from the Late Iron Age. This is not necessarily an expression of a lack of metal artefacts, but it probably reflects the fact that these were of great value and were taken care of and employed, for example, in graves to demonstrate the status of the deceased in contemporary society.

The graves at Hoby

The Hoby grave from the Early Roman Iron Age

Site and parish number 070505-1 (fig 1).

The grave was discovered in 1920 in the course of the laying of a drain in connection with a newly-built property (Friis Johansen 1923; Lund Hansen

1987; Klingenberg 2005). At a depth of 2 m in the gravelly subsoil two large silver beakers were encountered, standing on a bronze tray. The interest of the finders was aroused and they continued to dig until they thought there were no further finds on the spot. The National Museum was informed and two days later T. Thomsen visited the site. The grave still stood open and it proved possible to obtain significant information about the discovery. During the subsequent examination, a further few bronze fragments and skeletal parts were recovered. Due to the entry of water into the grave, and to frost, no further investigations could be made. Later that same year, H.C. Broholm carried out a further excavation. On the day prior to Broholm's arrival, the owner of the land had back-filled the grave and in the course of this a silver fibula was recovered from the fill of the grave. Broholm arranged for the grave fill to be sieved and as a result, a number of potsherds, bronze fragments, a bronze fibula and a piece of a drinking horn were recovered. Several of the deceased's bones were also located, including parts of the jaw. The bones were also found to include remains from two young pigs, identified as hams by H. Winge, as well as pieces from sheep or goat. The grave was 2 m deep and all the finds recovered had been laid in it. The deceased could be identified as a 40-50 year old man with a height of 186-187 cm. Parts of his legs lay *in situ* in the grave at the time of Thomsen's investigation. These revealed that he had lain with his head to the NE. Beneath his legs, a wooden layer could be observed which represented the remains of the base of the coffin. The Hoby grave is the richest grave from the 1st century AD found in Northern Europe. In 1922, a further excavation was carried out around the find site by H. Kjær. A 1.9 m wide trench was dug extending from the previously located grave towards the south. This was cut to a depth of c. 1 m. The report does not state the length of the trench. No finds or features were encountered in this trench. There had been extensive gravel extraction in the immediate area, and it was thought that this had been responsible for destroying other graves on the site. The fact that the rich Hoby grave was preserved was explained as being due to it having been cut so deep into the earth that it was not affected by gravel extraction.

In connection with the investigations of the Hoby grave in 1920 and 1922, several local people mentioned that other finds had been discovered in the area. Some of the local inhabitants were able to reveal that several bronze vessels were said to have been kept at the farm from which the plot had been sold off. In 1920, nobody knew the whereabouts of these vessels, and they had presumably been lost many

years previous. From a newspaper article containing an interview with the finder's son in 1978, it appears that when he and a friend played or dug in the gravel pit, black, fired clay pots often turned up. They used these urns for target practice – they considered them worthless, and according to his information there were many of them.

The Hoby grave from the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age

Site no. 070504.

In 1897, a bronze vessel was submitted to the National Museum which came from the same property and title cadastral number as that containing the Hoby grave from the Early Roman Iron Age (Müller 1900, 148-153; Lund Hansen 1987; Klingenberg 2005). It turned up during gravel extraction. The exact find site on the property is unfortunately not recorded in the National Museum's archives. However, the museum's archives do record the fact that in August 1898 a further investigation was carried out by S. Olsen from the museum in Maribo, at the request of the National Museum. It is apparent from his brief report that, by this time, more gravel had been removed from the find site. Two men dug for a day in the area, concentrating on the highest points around the find site for the bronze vessel, but only some black patches were observed. One of these yielded some potsherds and a tooth – otherwise there were no finds. This report also mentions that three bronze vessels were said to have been found during previous gravel extraction activities, but nobody knew at that time what had happened to these. Inside the bronze vessel found in 1897 lay burnt bone together with parts of a sword sheath of iron. The latter was formed of two thin iron plates, held together by narrow bands. According to the finder, the vessel originally had some form of lid with a kind of handle. This could have been a shield boss. This had, however, been lost at the time of submission to the museum. The vessel had originally stood on three feet; remains can be seen of the soldering for these under the base. However, the feet were probably lost when the vessel was taken up. The handle terminates in two bird's heads.

The bronze vessel is a situla of Eggers type 19 (Eggers 1951). No similar vessels are known from the Danish area, but there are several examples from Germany and one from Sweden. They were imported from the Roman Empire and are dated to the final part of the Pre-Roman Iron Age.

Figure 4 shows the find site for the Hoby grave from the Early Roman Iron Age (*sb.* 1) and the settlement area (*sb.* 15). The exact find site for the Pre-



Fig. 4. Contour map showing the locations of the Hoby grave (number 1) and the settlement area (number 15). Numbers 16 and 22 show the find sites for single finds dating primarily from the Late Iron Age, Middle Ages and recent times. Produced by N.C. Clemmensen. Copyright: The National Survey and Cadastre.

Roman Iron Age grave containing the situla, and the other graves said to have been found in the area, is not known precisely, but information on the cadastral number and the descriptions suggest that they were found in the vicinity of the Hoby grave. There are, therefore, grounds to assume that there was originally a cemetery in the area around the find site for the Hoby grave from the Early Roman Iron Age, which contained graves from the Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Age. On the contour map it is possible to observe a gravel bank around the find site which extends from the Hoby grave in the west and to the NW over towards the settlement area. Immediately to the east of the find site, in the wetland area, there is said to have been a marl pit. On the basis of the descriptions and information in the National Museum's archives, there is nothing to suggest that any of the graves should have been found in this place, but this possibility cannot, however, be excluded as this area constitutes the eastern part of the gravel bank. In the area immediately to the south and east of the property it is, however, also possible to observe that

gravel has been extracted over a larger area. On the basis of map studies, archive evidence and studies of the other areas in close vicinity, it is very likely, in my view, that the above-mentioned graves were encountered during gravel extraction in the areas to the south and east of the property and that it is here the cemetery lay for the settlement which has been demonstrated. Parts of the gravel bank appear from the map not to have been affected by gravel extraction, and if the cemetery extended further to the west, over towards the settlement, it should be possible to find intact graves in this area.

Other prehistoric localities in the Hoby area

The entire Hoby area has been identified as a cultural heritage site and many finds dating from prehistory have been recorded within this. The finds are concentrated in the area around Hoby on the small hill

(cf. fig. 1 with contour map) and on the eastern part of the area which is termed Hobyskov. At Hoby, in addition to the finds from the Early Iron Age, metal-detector finds have been recorded from the Germanic Iron Age, Viking times and the Middle Ages. In the Hobyskov area, a dense concentration can be seen of prehistoric localities.

The many localities represent several rich graves from Viking times, including two which are not included in the record for the parish as it has not been possible to locate them more precisely within the area. Settlement from the Viking Age has been established at *sb.* 19 and, finally, the points on the map represent metal-detector finds from Germanic Iron Age, Viking times and Middle Ages (figs. 5 and 6). There are also a few finds from the Early Iron Age in the Hobyskov area. These comprise the following:

1: *Sb.* 4. Skeletons were found during gravel extraction in the 1920s and 1930s. A trial excavation in 1987 carried out by Inge Bodilsen, Lolland-Falsters Stiftsmuseum, uncovered three pits, postholes and a cremation. Pottery from one of the pits could be dated to the Late Bronze Age period VI, while the cremation probably dates from the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age.

2: *Sb.* 5. The Hoby Skov cemetery. In connection with the investigation in Hoby in 1920, a site in Hoby Skov was inspected by H. Kjær. In all, about 50 graves were uncovered. No skeletons were accompanied by artefacts, at least none were found, so this was surely a poor man's cemetery, as termed by H. Kjær. This appears now to have been removed by a very large open gravel pit. Subsequently in the area there was the stray find of a glass bead from the Late Roman Iron Age. Information concerning finds of skeletons from, among other places, the field to the west of Højgård makes it seem probable that there could also be Iron Age graves to the east. No investigations have been carried out here.

3: *Sb.* 6. 'Tangmosen', Hobyskov. In 1987, a number of finds were submitted to Lolland-Falsters Stiftsmuseum which had, over a number of years, been picked up from the now reclaimed bed of the fjord, at the site of the old landing site at Hobyskov prior to reclamation. Among the finds were potsherds from the Early Roman Iron Age in the form of rim sherds and parts of a sherd with a handle. The other finds collected from the site are from the Middle Ages or recent times. On a visit to the site in 1987 by Karen Løkkegård Poulsen, Lolland-Falsters Stiftsmuseum, it only proved possible to observe a couple of animal bones and a small amount of tile at the site.

There are, accordingly, a few localities with potential finds from the Early Iron Age and it would be obvious to look more closely at these areas in

connection with a future project. A large part of the Hobyskov area has, in archaeological terms, been destroyed by extensive gravel extraction, especially to the east (see fig. 5). There are, however, parts of the latter which have not completely been dug away. And to the west, where there are few records presumably because gravel extraction has not been so intensive here, it could perhaps be possible to locate settlement areas with the aid of phosphate mapping. These areas could then, by way of subsequent small investigations, be dated and contribute to extending our knowledge of settlement in the area. There are very few records of finds from outside the area of the cultural heritage site (cf. fig. 6), and these can be dated primarily to the Stone Age or the Middle Ages. The topography around the cultural heritage site also reveals that the settlements were concentrated on the two slight elevations which to the north, east and south border onto water and wetland areas (see fig. 5). The nearest locality from the Early Iron Age recorded in the Sites and Monuments database is at Landet, where the presence of possible graves and pits has been demonstrated. This locality is more than 2 km distant from Hoby.

In April 2009, in connection with a metal-detector rally, a survey was carried out in the Hoby area – primarily to the south, north and SE of the Hoby settlement. The finds encountered in the course of this have not yet been entered into the Sites and Monuments database and the final mapping has not been completed. A preliminary appraisal of the finds does, however, support the picture of that we previously have seen in outline. No finds from the Early Iron Age were located during the survey. On the area to the south of the road, where the trial excavation took place in 2000, artefacts from the Viking Age were recovered, and this contributes to underpinning the

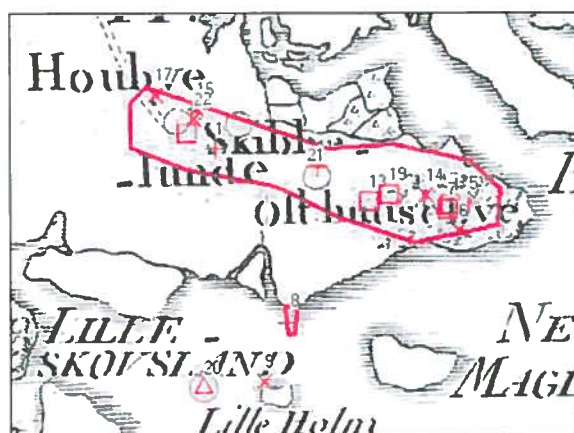


Fig. 5. Section of map from the Sites and Monuments database showing the localities recorded in the Hoby area. Copyright: The National Survey and Cadastre.

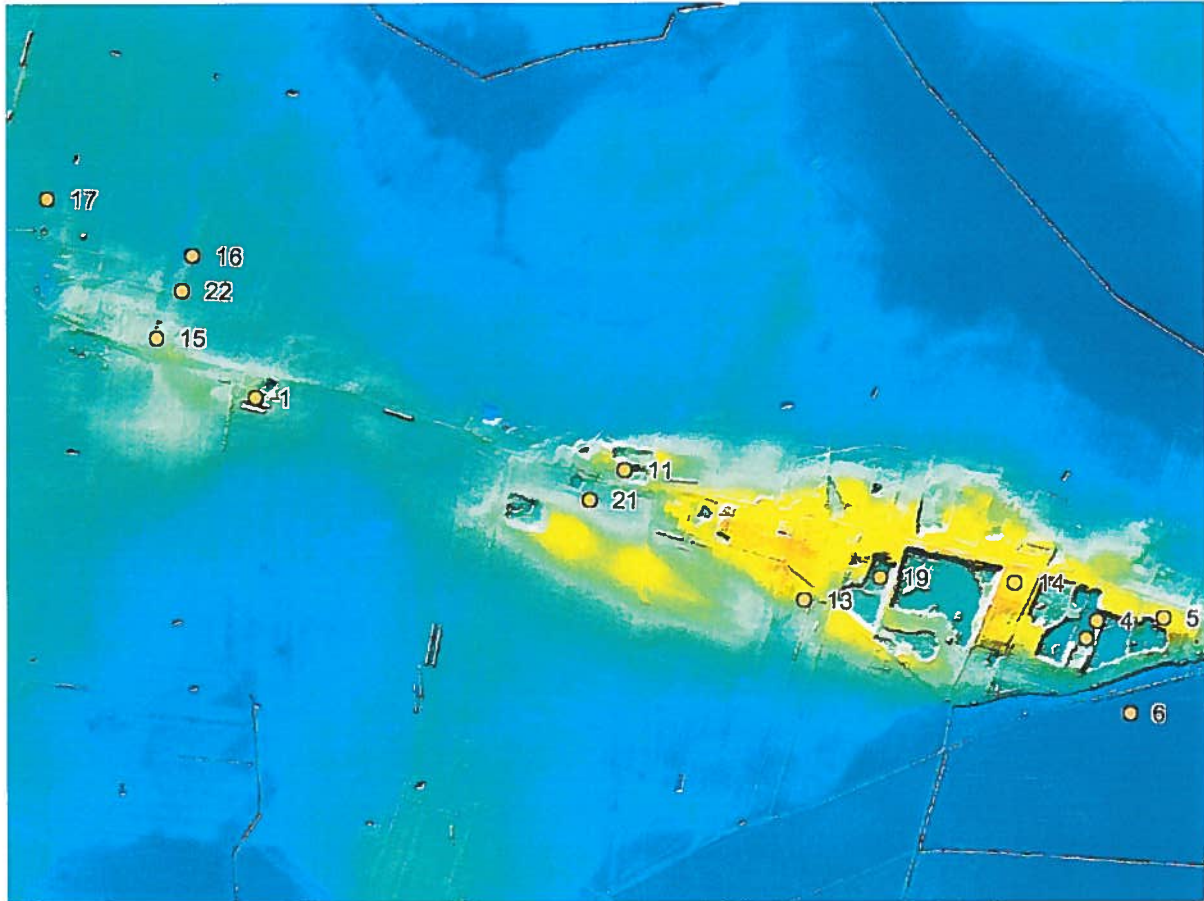


Fig. 6. Contour map showing the location of the find sites in the Hoby area. Produced by N.C. Clemmensen. Copyright: The National Survey and Cadastre.

conclusions reached by the excavators of this area following their investigations. In the area to the north of the Hoby settlement a few metal artefacts turned up from the Late Iron Age and the Middle Ages. The areas to the SE were, in contrast, largely lacking in finds.

Future investigations and further perspectives

Museum Lolland-Falster and the National Museum hope that it will be possible in the coming years to have the opportunity to initiate an actual research project. This will include a full (i.e. total) excavation of the settlement area from the Early Iron Age. The social, economic and possibly cultic perspectives which an investigation of the settlement would be able to provide are, in our opinion, very considerable. An excavation of the Hoby settlement would

be able to give us with an insight into the physical and spatial framework for a chieftain's environment from the time around the birth of Christ.

Excavation finds in the form of pottery, possibly metal artefacts, food waste and plant macro-remains reveal both qualitative and quantitative differences between elite residences and ordinary settlements. Museum Lolland-Falster focuses generally on the cultural-historical development on Lolland and Falster against the background of the islands' location as a bridgehead into the Baltic. It is therefore the museum's wish, as part of the project, to compare and contrast the exploitation of the cultural landscape within the Baltic area during the Roman Iron Age and, specifically, to investigate the exploitation of the cultural landscape and the settlement development on Lolland and Falster. The Hoby area offers a unique opportunity to investigate the settlement and cultural landscape in association with one of Northern Europe's richest graves from the Roman Iron Age and, accordingly, the possibility of investigating the

cultural landscape context for the absolute power elite of that time. The settlement structure at Hoby will, following the excavations, be compared with and analysed relative to contemporaneous settlements from the region and also rich settlements of the same date from across Northern Europe. In connection with excavations in Hoby, further graves will be sought in the area by the gravel bank. This search could involve a magnetometer survey coupled with the trial excavations. As already mentioned above, investigations will also be carried out in the area in search of contemporaneous settlements and activities; this will involve the use of phosphate analysis and possibly subsequent minor excavations.

The Hoby settlement had a good strategic location – slightly set back from the coast but still close to it. At Tangmosen, there was a landing site in the Middle Ages and later times. Here, potsherds from the Early Iron Age have also been picked up – and perhaps there was already a landing site here at this time. From this site it is not far by sea to the Elbe area. It was in the latter area, up until AD 16 and following their defeat in the Teutoburg Forest in AD 9, that the Romans carried out a number of punitive expeditions

before, subsequently, withdrawing to the Rhine border. The Romans then changed policy and instead of the not very successful punitive expeditions, they attempted to employ political and diplomatic means. B. Storgaard (2003, 112) sees the Hoby grave as being the result of Tiberius' diplomatic expeditions, in that the Lolland chieftain, together with his housecarls, presumably earned the valuable tableware by assisting in Silius' mopping-up and punitive expeditions. It is also conceivable that a political exchange of gifts took place in order to secure supporters and allies in the Germanic area. The rich grave from the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age suggests that, already at that time, a man of a certain rank and significance lived at Hoby. Part of the explanation for the importance and wealth of the place should perhaps also be seen in the light of the settlement's location; it would have provided an excellent point of departure for the export of, for example, skins/hides to the Roman army. The future investigations at Hoby will, in our opinion, be able to make a significant contribution to the illumination of many aspects of Early Iron Age society. Hopefully, this potential has been successfully outlined in the present article.