

HISTORICAL MONUMENTS AT ERLAND

The many historical monuments located at Erland in Skjoldastraumen tell of an active cultural focal point existing from time immemorial.

The area is home to several ancient memorial stones, arched flagstones and hillocks and eskers bearing the names of mighty Norse gods.

Exciting archaeological discoveries have revealed that Erland was most probably a centre of religious activity from the early Iron Age, dating back to about 500 BC.

STOCKHOLM BURIAL GROUND:

This burial ground consists of five or six burial mounds featuring small circular mounds and one long mound. A stone casket is visible in one of the mounds that was opened in earlier times. Small mounds that have been constructed on natural knolls or crags have made a significant visual impact on the landscape. Names such as Ullåsen and Torshaug are to be found on the nearby farms.

These names are derived from ancient Norse gods.

MONUMENTAL STONES:

The seven monumental stones at Erland stand in a plough formation.

This is quite a rare archaeological occurrence since only one or two such stones normally mark ancient burial mounds.

Most of the known monumental stones in the area date from the early Iron Age (approx. 500 BC to 500 AD). Because of their phallic form, the monumental stones were believed to be associated with fertility cult worship. The local place name Freiåsen (pronounced Fray-o-sen) was believed to refer to Frøy, the god of fertility. Another theory holds that the monumental stones were used to identify the seasons through the shadow cast by the sun. The stones are otherwise located strategically close to the small inlet at Skjoldastraumen. Possibly they can be compared with the other sites featuring monumental stones that are located beside inlets and sounds such as Karmsund and Grinde.

These sites can have been adjacent to slipways where, in ancient times, boats were slipped up onto land and dragged to the next body of water.

BÅSHIDLEREN:

Båshidleren is a large stone slab that faces eastwards and which provided good shelter against the wind and rain. An archaeological excavation in 1940 revealed 29 ceramic pieces, some slag, charcoal and a fireplace made from stone. The fireplace was unusually large and painstakingly made. The slab is believed to have been used for religious ceremonies or rituals and also for cult worship with fixed dates.

FREIÅSEN AND BJOLANDSKJERRINGA:

From Freiåsen or Freåsen (152 metres above sea level), it is possible to view the whole of the surrounding fjord, from Skjold in the north to Borgøy in the south. Haraldseidvågen is located north-west of Skjold.



Legend has it that on his way to battle, Harald Fairhair dragged his boat across the narrow isthmus and sailed further south along the fjord past Skjoldastraumen. It is easy to look upon Haraldseid, Freiåsen and Borgøy as an interconnected communications and control system that covered a strategically important maritime conduit.

Freiåsen is located on the Bjoland farm where a huge boulder named "Bjolandskjerringa" (the Old Lady of Bjoland) marks the summit. Many legends are associated with this boulder and one such legend tells of the Old Lady dancing every time she hears butter being churned down on the farm. Another saga tells of the Old Lady of Bjoland waiting on this spot for her supper to be brought to her by the Stone Matron.

Alas, the Stone Matron failed to arrive before sunset thus turning the Old Lady of Bjoland into stone.