

## The Royal Halls

To the north of the present day parish church at Gamla Uppsala, on two large plateaus built of clay, lie the Royal Demesne, today still called Kungsgården. The southern plateau was excavated by Nordahl, Hedlund and others from 1988 to 1992 (Nordahl 1993, 59-63). This revealed a number of late iron age post holes, amongst other findings, arranged in such a manner that indicate that a hall stood here of about 40 meters in length and 12 meters wide. Dating also showed that this hall built during in the 700s was burnt down sometime in the 800s. There is also a deeper trace, and hence older, of another hall. Hence it could be contemporary with the three large royal mounds nearby. However analysis of the clay substratum on the southern plateau has found that this great hall was not rebuilt again on this plateau. Out in the field nearby has been found what could be the remains of a rampart and hence possible the boundary of the Kings Estate during the Iron Age.

The southern plateau Royal Hall excavations of 1988 to 1992 also showed in detail how this hall was built. The northern most half of the plateau, which has still to be excavated, so far has the dimensions 25 meters long and 12 meters wide (Duckzo 1996, 41). All postholes as mentioned above were found to contain heavily burnt wood or charcoal remnants (Figure 2). A double row of postholes were found along both sides of the halls between which was a charcoal-clay mix of soil. Small stones were packed along the outer line of the smaller posts. The southern end of the hall had a 3 meter wide entrance which led possibly into another room separated from the main hall. Some of the postholes were of large proportions. Posthole F from the entrance to the main part of the hall (see Figure 2) was 1.15m in diameter on the surface. The three central postholes A, J and B had diameters of 1 meter, 1.2 meters and about 0.8 meters respectively (Hedlund 1996, 67).

How did this structure appear in the 800s? Firstly the posts held up the walls and roof (Figure 3). The walls between the posts would have been made of wattle-and-daub, that is wickerwork plastered with mud. Smoke from a central fire was channelled out through a hole in the roof. Small windows admitted daylight. The inside of the walls were clad with hangings and illustrated tapestries. The outside of the Royal Hall was likely also colourfully adorned.

During this time large halls were likely used as royal courts or banqueting halls. The hall was the most important building in the community. It was the residence of the king and his family as well as the place where the people assembled to make political decisions, to perform cultic acts and to have sacrificial feasts. The king sat in his high seat at one end of the hall and distributed precious gifts in the form of gold rings and other precious jewellery to his kinsmen and subjects.

In the Viking Age Uppsala was already a legendary place. The kings of Uppsala had resided here possibly since the birth of Christ and their royal ancestors were buried in the mounds there as well. For the people of the Sveas in the surrounding countryside Uppsala was the main place to gather for various