

# TWO RUNE STONES BY THE RIVER KROPPÅN

Being able to travel through the landscape has always been important, and the Viking era was no exception. There are many places that evoke the routes of the Vikings. One of them is by the river Kroppån, 10 kilometres to the west of Vetlanda. On either side of the river, which here forms the boundary between the parishes Nävlsjö and Myresjö, stands a rune stone. Both of them are memorial stones over dead relatives and tell us of the people who built the bridge more than a thousand years ago.

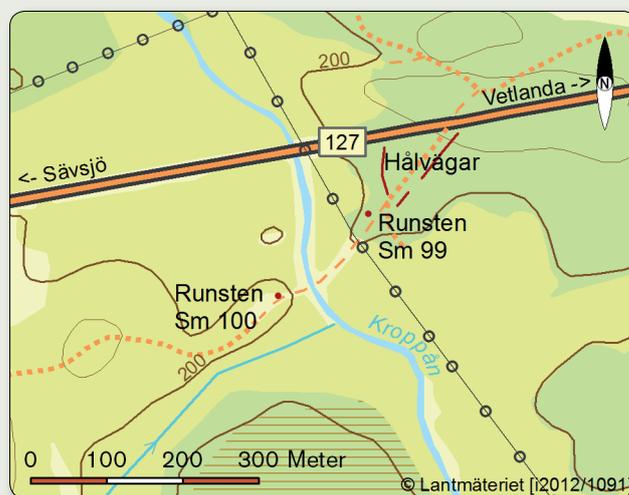
Initiating and financing bridge buildings rendered respect and status among Viking men. Therefore, stones were erected at the abutments, and runic meanders were carved to immortalise the names of the bridge builders and stone-erectors. This is also the case of the rune stone in Nederby on the eastern side of the river. The stone tells about the brothers Tord and Torbjörn and their having the bridge built in memory of their father Verskulv. The text is interesting, since it suggests that the father came from Varend. Normally, such information was not included in runic inscriptions – perhaps it was seen as too insignificant. Runic texts were public matters and formulated accordingly. Popularity was not part of the concept.

The bridge that the brothers built was probably either constructed as a causeway made of timber and rocks or as a free-standing bridge across the water. The bridge enabled the passage through the marshy areas around the river Kroppån. The nearby ancient bridle paths, also called sunken lanes or holloways, show that people have used these routes regularly through the ages.

The rune stone on the western side of the river has a history of its own. Not just because of the inscription, but because the stone has had an adventurous existence. It is mentioned in the 17th century, when it was standing in its original place. Sometime in the 18th or 19th century, it was demolished and the pieces were put in the marshy ground. Later, they ended up as road aggregate, until they were finally excavated, joined back together, and re-erected in the present location in 1913.



The rune stone on the eastern side of the river Kroppån. Inscription: "Tord and Torbjörn built this bridge to the memory of Verskulv, their father" (Sm 99). Photo: Jönköping County Museum.



## HIDDEN GEM 43



### HOW TO GET HERE

Take Road 127 between Vetlanda and Sävsjö, and turn south approx. 9 km west of Vetlanda (approx. 15 km east of Sävsjö), at Kroppån. Around 200 m east of the river is a small blue "Runestone" sign. Drive around 150 m along the forest road.

Coordinates:  
N 6361937 / E 495328  
(SWEREF 99 TM) // N 57°  
24' 0.66", E 14° 55' 20.10"  
(WGS84)



View over Kroppån with a rune stone on either side of the river. One of the stones is seen bottom left. Photo: Leif Gustavsson/L.G.foto.

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## HIDDEN GEMS

There are so many things to discover in the countryside! Here, Jönköping County Museum presents some of the cultural environment and heritage attractions in the county.

They include well-known cultural monuments such as Habo Church and the Smålandsstenar Stone Circles, but also lesser known gems such as log-driving remains in the river Valån and Stengårdshult Church. Around the county you can find evidence of how people lived and worked in the past, everything from castles and manors to abandoned embankments and clearance cairns in forest areas.

The idea with Hidden Gems is to tempt you to make excursions in the cultural landscape – here you find our history, revealed in different ways in the physical environment. This heritage is worth experiencing and protecting. Bit by bit, we will be adding more sights under the heading Hidden Gems, both for people living in the county and visitors from further away. The more people who discover these gems, the better chance that they will be preserved for the future.

### FACTS

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In Jönköping County there are more than 4 000 registered ancient remains, 87 cultural environments of national interest, close to 130 listed buildings, around 150 churches, some 100 rural community centres with old settlements, a large number of industrial heritage sites, and two cultural reserves. There are also a large number of cultural environments with buildings worthy of conservation. More information about the sites can be found on the websites of the County Administrative Board, the municipalities and the local heritage societies.

### GOOD TO KNOW

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Access to the Hidden Gems varies. Some sites are well signposted, with easy access and proper parking facilities, etc. Others are more challenging to reach. Visitors may have to walk some distance, sometimes through scrubby forest, only to be met by a broken sign (if there ever was one) when they reach the site. All the sites, however, have an exciting and interesting history.

Please note that many of the cultural heritage buildings are privately owned and can only be viewed from the outside. Also, please respect private land. Many churches are open in the summer. During other times of the year, the churchwarden may be able to open the church for you.

