

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT SPURILA, 1982—1983

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The first site selected for investigations at Spurila was a small hill in the middle of a field sloping down towards the river (Fig. 1). The aims were, on the one hand, to collect prehistorical material for various forms of scientific analysis, and on the other to investigate the prehistoric background of the site, believed to have been a hamlet.

The area studied, 214 m² in all, was divided into a number of excavation areas. At the top of the hill, a burial-ground was found, with the stone setting typical of SW Finland (Fig. 1).

On the north side of the site, the layer of rocks was thin. This north side was dominated by a coffin-shaped stone howe, which, however, in view of its extreme narrowness, could not have been a grave unless following cremation (Fig. 1).

At the summit of the hill, the burial ground appeared to consist of low mounds (three in number) constructed round cores made of several coarse stones. At the SE corner of the burial area, the place for a burial pyre was located.

The strata identified here were: original soil or bedrock, an ash stratum, packed gravel and the charcoal layer from the pyre. The funeral pyre is thus secondary. This interpretation was confirmed by radiocarbon dating (Hel-1969, 1968), which showed that the burial ground proper dates from around the first centuries BC or AD, whereas the funeral pyre only dates from the 8th century AD (Fig. 3).

Lower down on the southern slope of the hill, the stones became more sparse, so that this area could no longer be identified as burial-ground. Nonetheless, excavations embarked on here have revealed one cremation pit (Fig. 1).

The excavation did not reveal many artefacts, and of those found, only a few are of any use in dating (Fig. 4):

AA Sharply-profiled brooch

The brooch dates from Kaliningrad area and Lithuania (Tischler, 1902, Tb. II:12; Michelbertas, 1978, pp. 34—35). The grave at the well-known Dollkeim burial-ground, dates this brooch AD 100—200 (Tischler, 1902, Table II:12; Almgren 1897, pp. 19, 29—32).

AB Triangular-footed brooch

Triangular-footed brooches have been dated around the year 400 (Keskitalo, 1979, p. 185). They have, however, a chronological link with spade-footed brooches, prevalent around 500 AD.

AC End-fragment of a spade-footed brooch

The frequent ascription of a date around AD 500 for this type of brooches is probably a consequence of the Kirimäki find in Estonia (Schmiedehelm, 1926, pp. 14—19).

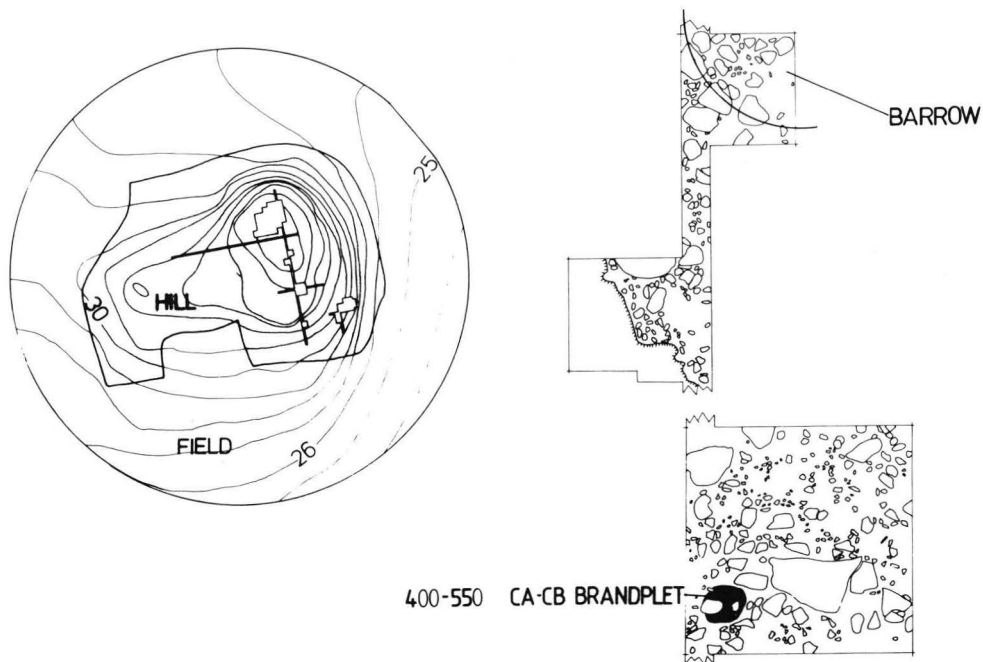


Fig. 1. The cemetery and a schematic plan of the hillock.

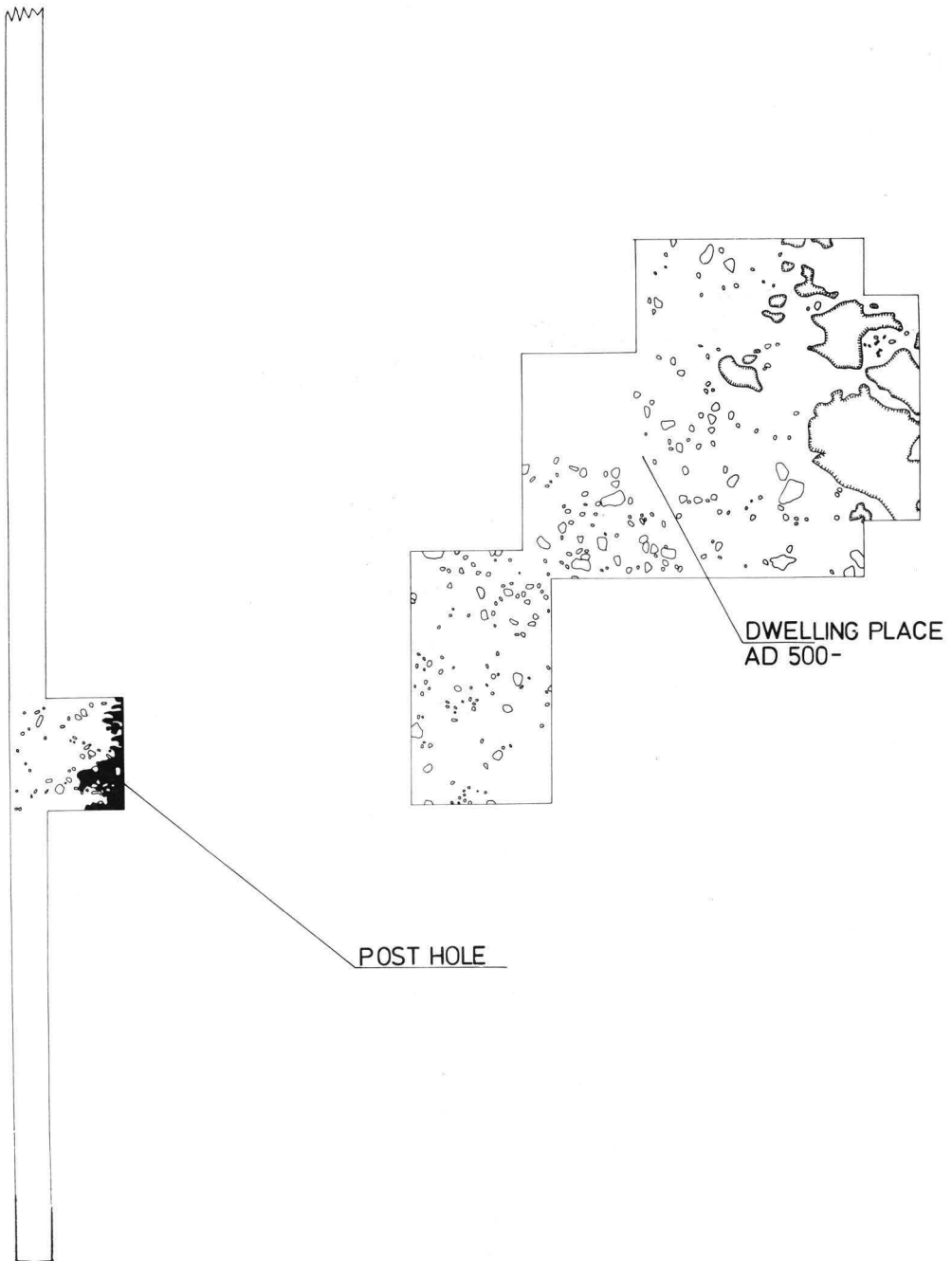


Fig. 2. The dwelling place.

BA Boat-shaped sword-hilt

The closest finds corresponding to this bronze, smallish hilt are from Uppland and Gotland from the period AD 350—500 (Nerman, 1935, Fig. 234, p. 17; Behmer 1939, Tb. XVII: 5 a, pp. 86, 110).

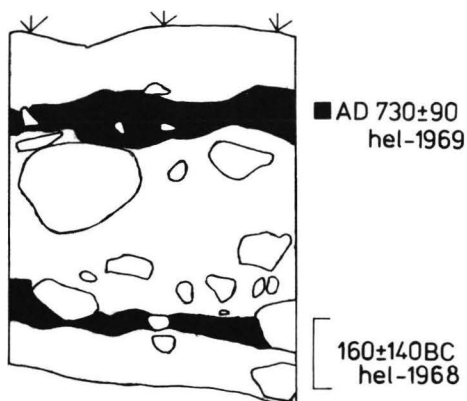


Fig. 3. The two layers of charcoal in the stake-area.

BB Pyramid-shaped sword-hilt

Small-sized hilts of this type originate in southern Scandinavia around AD 450—500 (Behmer, 1939, pp. 160—161, Table XXXIII).

CA Straight-rimmed buckles with fixed prongs appear to date from no earlier than AD 400—550 (Almgren—Nerman, 1923, p. 103; Nerman 1935, p. 9).

CB Bronze ring and bronze mountings

These furnishings, presumably from the same belt as the preceding entry, are undated, apart from the grooving on the ring, which appears to have been introduced ca AD 350 (Almgren—Nerman 1923, p. 105; Nerman 1935) and to have remained in use until around AD 600 (Behmer 1939, Tb. XXXVII:6a, XXXVIII: 2b-3, XLI:7, pp. 166—167).

DA The most noticeable material among the ceramical products here is the technically advanced, high-quality pottery with indented decorations made with cord, etc. The distribution of these over the site is shown in Fig. 5.

They are not found in the northern part of the site, which the objects found there indicate a Roman dating for.

In the mounds the pottery was not found, as most artefacts were, underneath the packed gravel, but in the upper strata. Further confusion is created by the late radiocarbon dating obtained for the funeral pyre remains in the upper stratum, perhaps suggesting that the surface strata of the mounds are secondary to a greater extent. This hypothesis has not been followed, however, and the pottery material has been assigned a date conformant with the mounds themselves.

On the basis of the evidence set out above, a dating for the burial ground is set out in Fig. 1. The northern side of the site excavated belongs to the Roman period (AD 0—400). Moundshaped structures were mainly in use throughout the Age of Migrations (AD 400—550) and the cremation grave pit found on the south side of the site is presumably later than the burial mounds.

The latest stratum at the mound is the funeral pyre on top of the earlier burial stones, dated to AD 710.

Only at the extreme lower ridge of the slope were signs found of prehistoric settlement (Fig. 2). The cultural stratum here was however extremely shallow, about 10—20 cm thick and entirely unstructured. The only objects found from the dwelling area are fragments of ceramics with cord-impressions (Fig. 5). These are parallel to the pottery

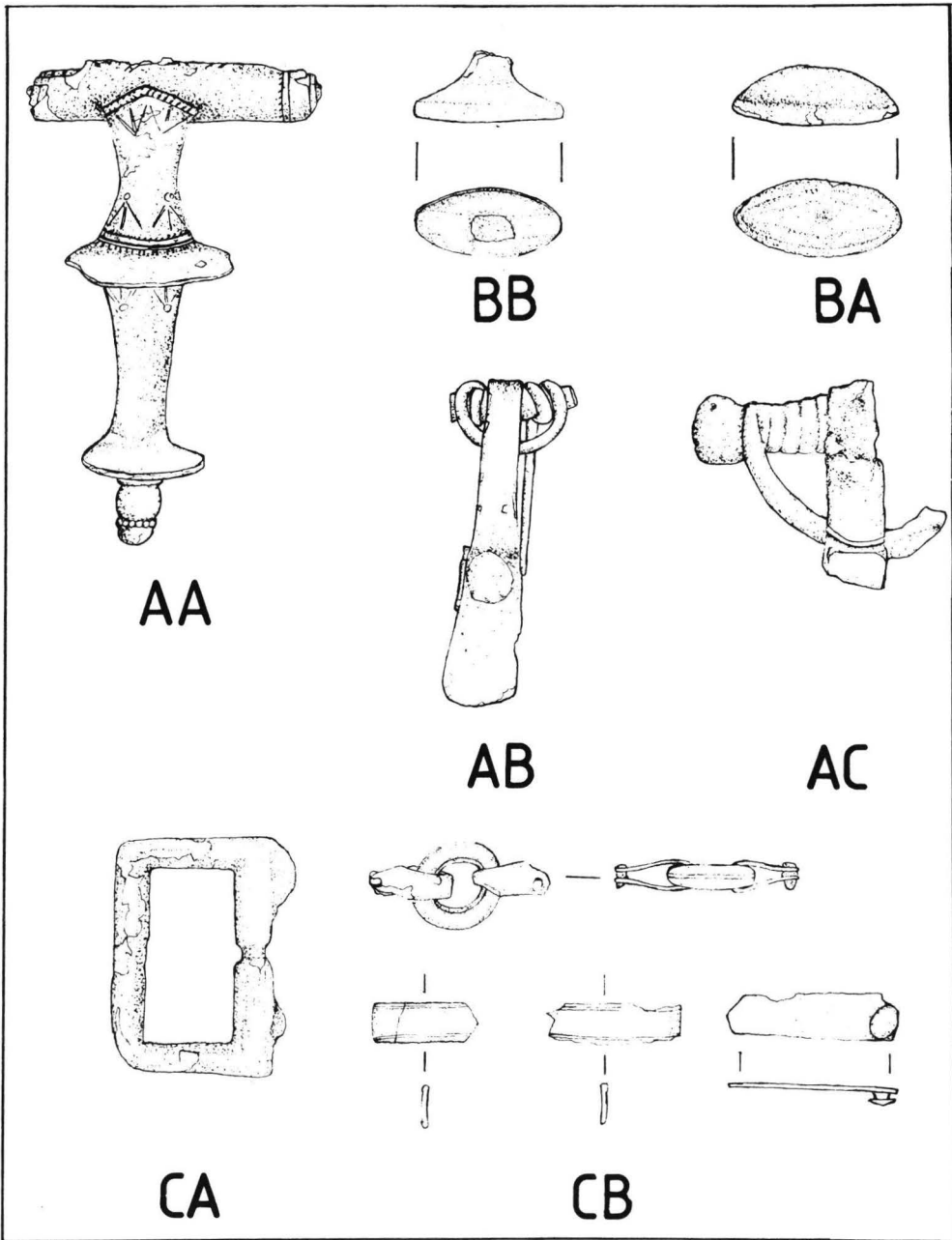


Fig. 4. Artefacts from the cemetery. For a description see the text.

found at the mounds part of the burial ground site and can be therefore dated to the Age of Migrations (AD 400—550).

The problems posed by the prehistoric remains in this area were also investigated by means of two series of phosphate samples (Fig. 6).

The first series showed a significantly higher phosphor level at the site of the coffin

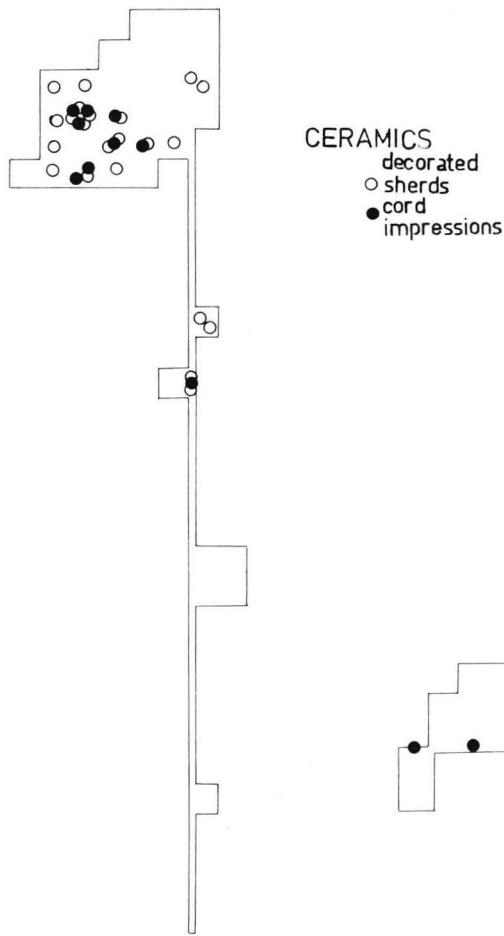


Fig. 5. Distribution of ceramics in the excavation area.

in the burial ground. There was an anomalous finding for a spot just outside the mounds, a location from which large numbers of fragments of burnt bone and of metal objects were found; this must without doubt have been a grave.

The series of samples from the dwelling site also showed striking variation in phosphor content, despite the lack of distinguishing features at the site.

The first point established by the phosphor tests was that significant variations in phosphor levels may indeed occur within a known prehistoric site; 40 % of the samples contained less than 25 mg P/100 g of soil, which is taken as the anomalous level in phosphor mappings (cf. above).

Secondly, the phosphor levels appear to be higher at the burial ground than at the dwelling site.

One of the main objectives of the investigation was the collection of paleo-ethnobotanic material, and a total of 95 earth samples were taken from the area for this purpose. The distribution of the samples over the overall site is shown in the map in Fig. 7. The following Table sets out the dating for each sample.

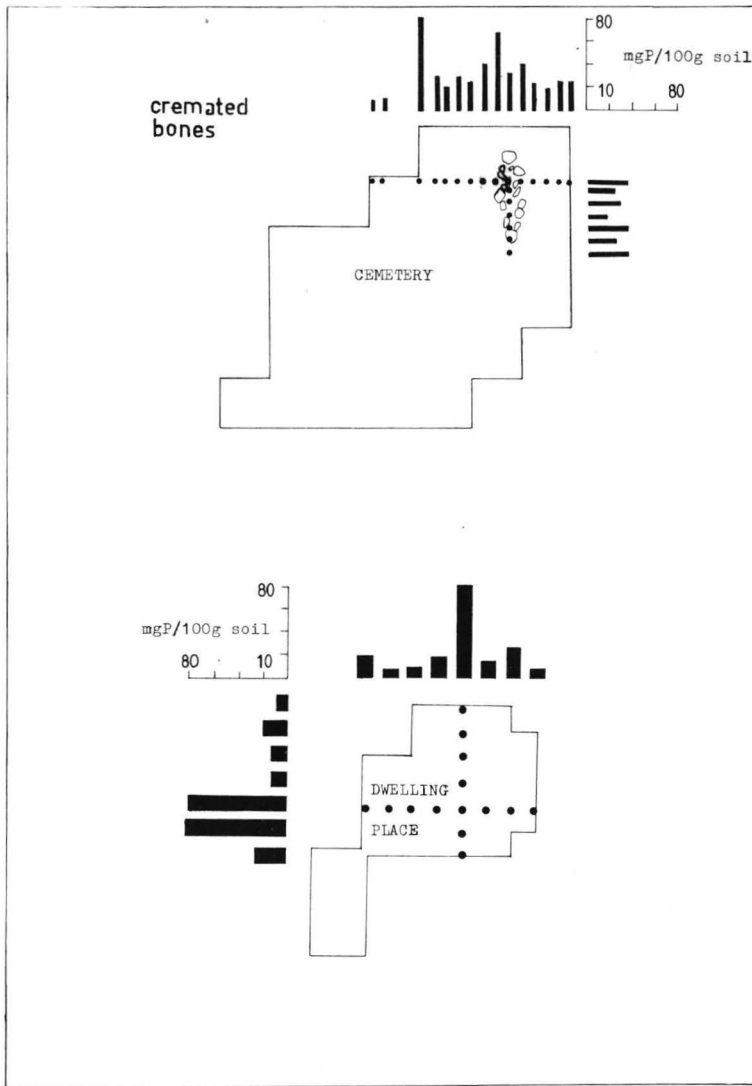


Fig. 6. Determinations of soil phosphorus in the excavation area.

Table 1. List of paleo- ethnobotanical samples dated by different methods.

Sample	Dating	Sample	Dating
1, 4	AD 700— ¹	15—16, 22, 30—31	AD 400—550 ⁴
3	AD 700 ¹	36—39, 79	AD 400—550 ⁴
2	AD —700 ¹	27—29	AD 400—550 ⁵
5—8, 17—21, 23—29, 32—35	AD 400—550 ²	42—78	AD 100—400 ⁵
9—10	100 BC ¹	80—81	AD 400—550 ⁶
11—14, 40—41	100 BC—AD 500 ³	82—87	AD 400—550 ⁷
		88—90	— ⁸
		91—95	— ⁹

¹ C-14, ² Overall dating for burial ground, ³ Datings used as references were not obtained from the vicinity of the samples, ⁴ Decorated pottery in the same stratum, ⁵ Dating derived from dating of artefacts, ⁶ From the vicinity of the funeral pyre, ⁷ Dwelling site, ⁸ Location uncertain, ⁹ Not yet analyzed.

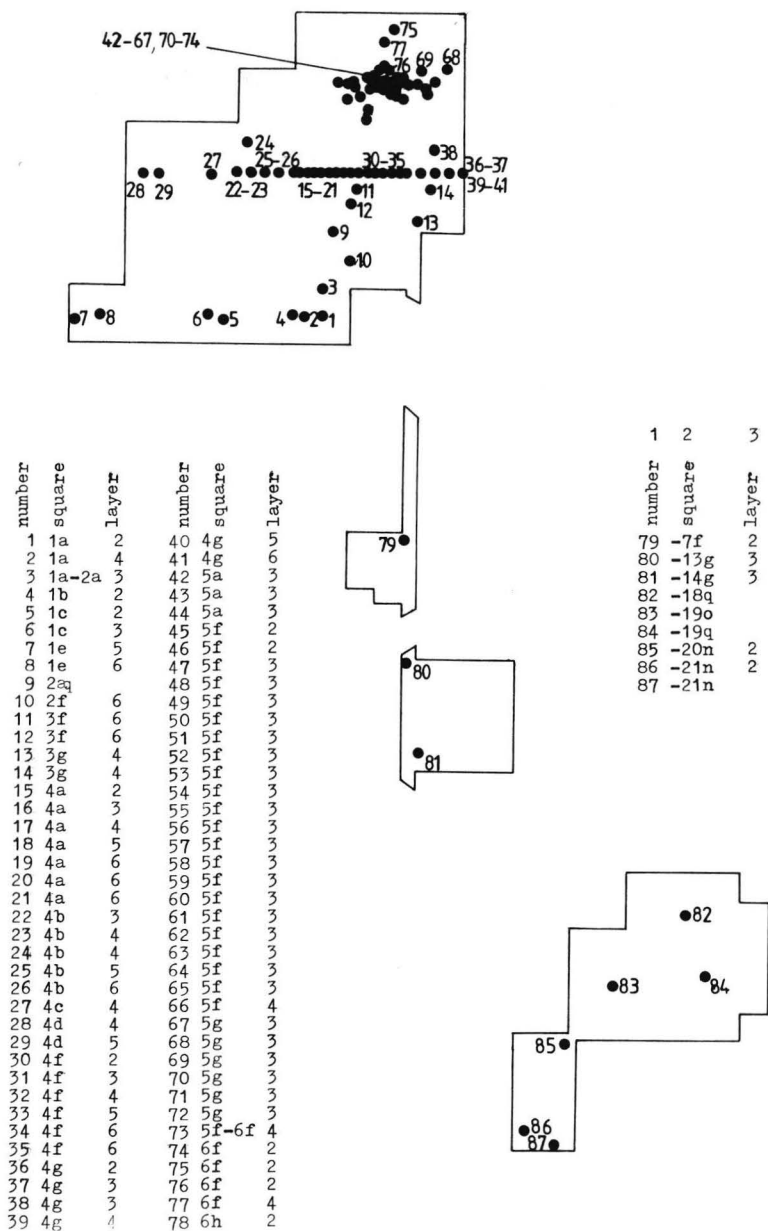


Fig. 7. The paleo-botanical samples.

The macrofossils have been handed over to Merja Seppä-Heikka for botanical analysis (see article below).

The excavation thus uncovered an Iron Age burial ground and dwelling site. It is of importance that the settlement on this site cannot be linked either chronologically or locationally to the historical period settlements in the area. The reasons for the termination of the settlement are as yet undetermined.

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