


# The Golden Trowel: New Annual Award from the Swedish Archaeological Society Highlights the Value of Excavation Reports

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This year saw the first award of the Swedish Archaeological Society's new 'Golden Trowel' prize, presented to Johan Runer of *Uppdrag Arkeologi* for the excavation report *Oppeby Gård*. The aim of the prize is to recognize the effort put into the production of knowledge in Swedish archaeological fieldwork every year and to highlight the information and research value of the resulting reports. The award was established at the Society's Annual General Meeting in May 2020 and will be presented on an annual basis. The prize consists of a golden (but sadly not gold) trowel, a certificate and publicity through the Society's channels.

All reports which have been published and registered in the National Heritage Board's (*Riksantikvarieämbetets*) database FornDok in the past year are eligible for nomination – from initial reconnaissance surveys to final reports from major excavations. Authors themselves or other nominators can send in their suggestions to the Society on an ongoing basis throughout the year, supported by a brief motivation. Nominations for each annual period are accepted until 1 February of the following year. A panel from the Society's board selects the winning report according to criteria which highlight both the technical and communicative qualities of the report. These include the presentation of the archaeological results in a wider research context.

A total of seven nominations from six different actors in Swedish commercial archaeology were received for the 2020 award round. Of these five fulfilled the eligibility for further assessment. After the panel review, the report *Oppeby Gård. Arkeologisk undersökning. Södermanlands län*,



Figure 1. Johan Runer of Uppdrag Arkeologi with the Golden Trowel and his award-winning report. Photograph: Richard Grönwall.

*Nyköpings kommun. Fastighet Oppeby gård 1:5, gravfältet RAÄ Nyköping 1:1. Stockholms läns museum rapport 2019:02 / Uppdrag arkeologi rapport 2019/04* by Johan Runer of Uppdrag Arkeologi i Sverige AB was announced as the 2020 Report of the Year and winner of the Golden Trowel.

The report covers the pre-development excavation of a small grave field in Södermanland, south of Stockholm, in 2017. Some 20 grave features

were investigated, including both inhumation and cremation graves, in varying degrees of preservation. On two previous occasions, in 1939 and 2016, a total of 10 burials earlier come to light. A typical late Viking-age burial ground, the site came into use during the tenth century or somewhat earlier and was used through the eleventh to twelfth centuries. Radio-carbon analysis indicates that one grave was placed there as late as the mid-thirteenth century. Somewhat out of the ordinary is the presence of Baltic Sea ware among the grave goods as well as individual artefacts which could point to regular contacts eastwards to Gotland. Successive changes in burial forms are indicative of the shift from pagan to Christian mortuary rituals through this period, which seems to have taken place harmoniously. The late addition of a final grave is interpreted as a response to changes which threatened traditional land inheritance rights, of which ancestral burial grounds were part. Here, the background might possibly be traced to a conflict between the political opposition of the Folkungs and loyalists to papal ecclesiastical power.

The Swedish Archaeological Society motivated its decision as follows: ‘The winning report concerns an excavation of a typical Södermanland burial ground from the Viking Age and early Middle Ages. The report is well written and well-structured with clear sections where documentation, finds and analysis as well as attached specialist studies are presented logical order with clear connections and links between them. The archaeological analyses and expert studies are exemplary. In this way, the report manages show the relevance of its findings in a broader research context. Its clear format also makes the material readily accessible to future researchers who wish to draw on the findings for studies of funerary customs during this transformative and complex period’.

The Swedish Archaeological Society congratulates the recipient for his efforts for Swedish archaeology and hopes for an even wider participation in the competition for the next Golden Trowel.