

SÖDERKÖPING BENEATH OUR FEET

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN UNDERNEATH THE TOWN



SÖDERKÖPING DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

The map illustrates the layout of Söderköping during the Middle Ages, enclosed by a red line representing the town walls. The town is situated along a river, with various streets and landmarks labeled. Key features include:

- Streets:** Bergsvägen, Magasinsg, Hamngatan, Badstugugränd, Repslagaregr, Bengt E. Nyströms väg, Slussgr, Kanalgr, Tingshusg, Nybrogatan, Skönbergagatan, Bielkegatan, St. Ragnhildsg, Hemsgatan, Margaretagatan, Alviksg, E 22, Prästgatan, S. Lars gatan, Storgatan, Smålg, Smedgr, Apromenaden, Källaregr, Braskens Gr, Munkbrog, Hospitalsg, Drothemsgr, Vintervadsg, Linköpingsg, Kyrkogårdsallen, Kvarnvägen, Pingränd, and Agatan.
- Landmarks:** Rådhus-torget, Sankt Laurentii kyrka, Drothems kyrka, and Folk-skolegr.
- Numbered Areas:** The map is divided into 16 numbered areas (1-16) within the town walls.
- Other Features:** A red line indicates the town walls, and a blue line represents the river. A small inset image in the bottom right corner shows a reconstruction of the town's appearance during the Middle Ages.

The time between the end of the Viking period ca 1050 and 1520 is called the Middle Ages. The medieval Söderköping is literally situated beneath our feet. We walk on top of a thousand years' worth of deposits, four metres deep. They consist of different layers of remains from buildings, waste products and lost things. There is a town underneath the town. The solid clay of Söderköping has preserved organic materials well, which makes the findings of the town unique. The archaeologists can still, 800 years later, feel the smell of manure and fresh wood.

erected. The results from hundreds of excavations are put together with the earliest written sources to make the picture more complete.

What Did the Town Look Like?

In the 12th century Söderköping was only a small market-place, with a few buildings situated in the bend of the river. The town was planned ca 1210 around Rådhusorget (the Town Hall square), with Storgatan, Hamngatan and Vintervadsgatan as the major streets. Streets and plots of land were probably planned according to a regulated cityplan, made by German merchants on behalf of the royal demesne Bosgård, which included the town area. The whole of medieval Söderköping was built by 1250.

The city plan remains basically the same. Lillån runs in a culvert under Ågatan, and Göta Kanal and Hagatorget have been added.

The medieval buildings were built close together, and there were more alleys than today. The yards held dwellings, market stalls, workshops, stables, barns and sheds. In the perimeter of the town were fields and meadows. The buildings were mostly log houses with roofing made of turf. Fires were frequent as the fireplaces inside the houses were open.

There was a brickyard in town in the end of the century, but only a few houses were made of bricks. Thus the four churches and the Town Hall, made of stone and bricks, must have been impressive buildings in comparison.

The population was fairly large, perhaps a couple of thousands. Trade and craft were the main occupations, apart from producing one's own food. They had a cow, a



pig and fowl. The refuse from both man and beast was dumped in the river or in the alleys. The town reeked.

1. Rådhusorget – Trade and Punishment

Rådhusorget (the Town Hall square) was central to the town during the Middle Ages. Trade was made from stalls or small shops and here some of the lesser punishments of that time were executed, such as flogging of thieves. The square was somewhat larger than today and by turns cobbled and paved with wood. Underneath there are eight different layers from fires. Great fires occurred in 1281, 1305, 1380, 1393, 1418 and 1567.

The first Town Hall was made of stone during the 13th century, with stepped gables and a roof of turf. A tower was added during the 15th century. The Town Hall was burned by the Danes in 1567, but was restored and remained standing until the Town Hall of today was initiated in 1773. In the Town Hall the town's government, consisting half of Germans and half of Swedes, assembled. It also held wine and beer cellars and holding cells. The tower was used by the fire guards.



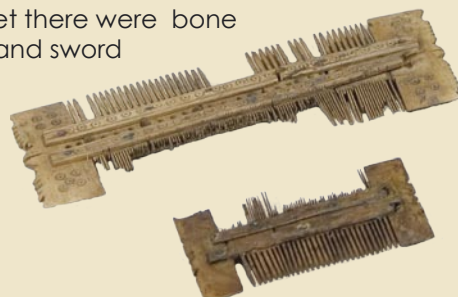


2. Craftsmen by the Square

From the centuries between 1100 and 1400 there are two metres of deposits in 11 different layers. Here remains from buildings in a former alley between Munkbrogatan and Hospitalsgatan have been excavated. The findings consist of large amounts of ceramics and lots of pieces from shoes and leather, hairs and lime.

Apparently tanneries

and shoe-makers have clustered here. Hospitalsgatan was in 1388 called Shoemaker's street. Next to Rådhusorget there were bone craftsmen and sword cutlers.



3. Munkbrogatan

Söderköping's position at the wide Storån made the town one of the country's most important harbours. Together with Visby and Kalmar it was the centre of the Swedish Baltic Sea trade. Because of this there are many medieval findings in Söderköping.

There are no references to the harbour and no remains have been found. It was probably situated where Storån and Lillån meet, creating a large basin. An inner harbour with a pier and a conveyance street must have been situated along Munkbrogatan. Salt, cloth, wine and luxury goods were imported and mainly iron, copper, furs, butter, wood and tar were exported. The rise of land made the river less accessible during the 15th century and the harbour ceased to be important.

Braskens Tryckeri at Munkbrogatan is a house with a ground floor made of stone dating from the late Middle Ages. According to the legend the bishop Brask is said to have had a print shop here during the early 16th century.

4. Vintervadsgatan - for Man and Beast

Vintervadsgatan still has its medieval position and there have been found 17 layers of paving in stone or wood (causeways made of logs, pict. p. 6). When the paving was covered in refuse a new paving was put on top. A reconstruction has been made in the corner of Vintervadsgatan and Hospitalsgatan.

The area between Vintervadsgatan and Ågatan was just at the town's boundary. Here pieces of an English long-bow, a better and faster bow than the crossbow, were found. Maybe it belonged to the town's guardsmen, a troop much sought after by warfaring kings.

A big excavation of this block showed three different medieval layers. Stone paved alleys ran from Vintervadsgatan to Lillån and alongside one of these there were **two yards** during the 16th century. The yard next to the alley consisted of a building 15 x 5 m, where one part was a workshop and the other part was a dwelling with wooden floors and a brick fire-place.

The second yard was placed only 75 centimetres away and had a double fronted cottage, stables, sheds and a stone paved yard. The stables housed two horses, and horseshoe nails and parts of stirrups and bridles were found there.

On **the town farmer's yard** from the 15th century there were four buildings squaring a yard with causeways of logs. The building along the street was completely destroyed by



fire, but some clumps of dross hints at a workshop. In the barn there was burned grain and in the cowshed, where a whole wall remains, a cowbell was found.

The silver smith's yard from the 13th century was situated in a small plot with five buildings. The workshop was turned to the street and the dwelling was placed in the middle. The dwelling was typical of its time with two rooms and a gallery on two sides. Among the findings were a mould for buckles, a measurement for rings, a silvergilt iron spoon, tools, dross and refuse.

Closest to Lillån and the square, the **butcher's workshop** and dwelling was situated during the 13th century. In the living room the side of a bench made in Roman style was found, although the rest of the room was burned. In the butcher's shop was a large wooden tub and a butcher's block. Along that there were bows for hanging carcasses, horn and bovine hairs. Underneath the butcher's stool a Morris game was carved. Maybe he played a game when darkness had fallen and he no longer could work.





Church and Society

The spiritual life was very important. The Catholic church played a large part in peoples lives. The Church and the monasteries brought new ideas into the country, became centres of learning and administered several social services.

Hospitalet (the hospital) in Söderköping is referred to in 1277, but existed before that. It was built outside the town since the lepers had to be isolated for life. **Helgeandshuset** (the house of the Holy Ghost) is known since 1330, and was an almshouse for orphans and old people. **The royal demesne Bosgård**, donated large areas of land to this institution. Hospitalet and Helgeandshuset were united in 1534 by order of King Gustav Vasa, and was then located across the river from the monastery. A third charity institution during the 15th century was **Själagården** (Charity house) by the church of St. Laurentius. The church also administered the **public bath houses** by the river and the manastery ran a **school**, which is referred to as early as in 1281.

5. The Greyfriars' Monastery - the First on the Mainland

When the monastery was founded in 1235 land for the Franciscan monastery as well as the small stone church of Drothem was probably donated by the royal demesne. The monastery was walled in along Hospitalsgatan, Drothemsgatan and Linköpingsvägen.

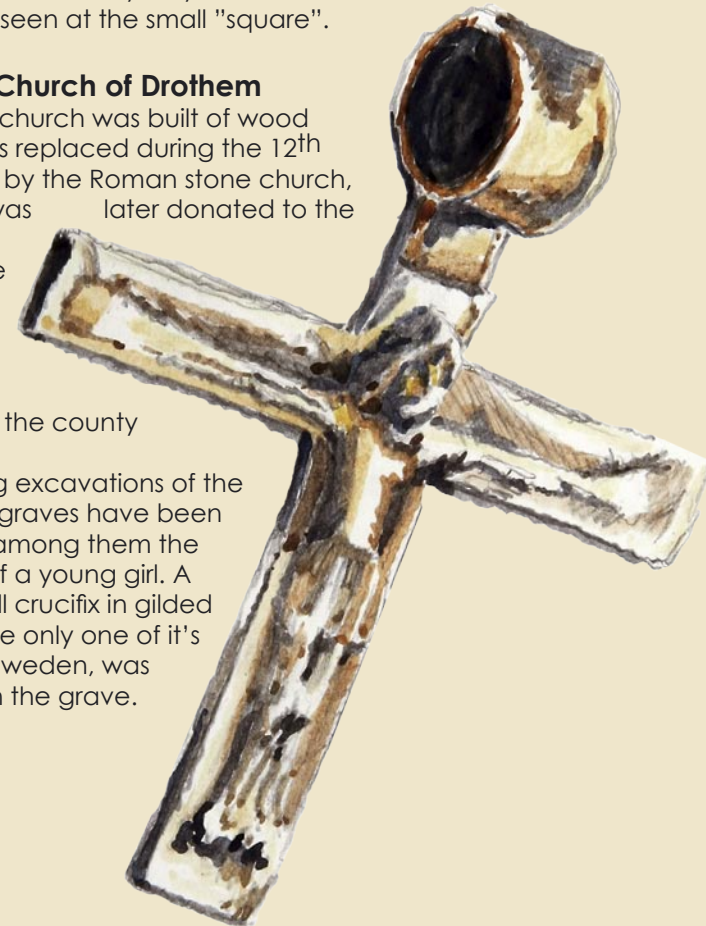
After the Reformation the monastery was closed down in 1529 and was pulled down to be reused as building material for the Castle of Stegeborg. The southwestern part of the monastery became burial grounds for the hospital.

Parts of the monastery church has been excavated. The findings include a large added chancel and a rare stone coffin from the 11th-12th centuries. These graves were used for highly estimated persons, such as bishops. Parts of the monastery, such as the brick floor from the refectory have been found. Today only a medieval cellar can be seen at the small "square".

6. The Church of Drothem

The first church was built of wood and was replaced during the 12th century by the Roman stone church, which was later donated to the monastery. The existing church was built ca 1300 by the county parish.

During excavations of the church graves have been found, among them the grave of a young girl. A 4 cm tall crucifix in gilded silver, the only one of it's kind in Sweden, was found in the grave.





7. The Church of St. Laurentius

The town church was built at the end of the 13th century. The parish is however referred to in 1253, so there must have been an earlier church. In 1281 King Magnus Ladulås' wife Helvig was crowned here as well as their son Birger Magnusson and his wife Märta in 1302. In the church there are medieval artefacts, remains of murals and a knight's grave.

8. The Medieval School

At Gamla Skolgatan, which has five different layers of causeways, the town's Historical Museum is situated. It is a local museum with medieval artefacts. The ground floor might be from the 16th century. Here school was held, maybe from as early as in 1405, until 1861.

On the other side of the block is a house with a brick ground floor and barrelvaulted cellars, probably from the 16th century. Excavations in the block have shown remains from a forge during the 14th or 15th century.

9. The Town's Southern Border

Prästgatan was the end of the town and in the area within, chutes made of closely and deeply set pales have been found. Their function is still unknown. A piece of glass from Syria with painted golden dolphins is an exotic find.

10. The Dump

In the block south of Prästgatan no remains from houses or fires have been found. However, thick layers of refuse from the 14th-17th centuries have been found, with large amounts of animal bones and lots of findings, many of them belonging to the upper classes. Here were manufacturers of crossbows and bone craft, tailors and dyers and forges. Here was also the city dump. After the Black Death, people realised it wasn't healthy to live among their refuse.

Among the findings there are different kinds of keys and locks, painted window glass, drinking glasses, ceramics,

knives, shoes, gloves, pearls, a seal, book clasps and pieces from weapons and armours.



Findings from the dump:
Arrowhead, stirrup, fragments of armour, fittings with S:t Andrew's cross, shards of glass, a piece of a gauntlet, a caltrop.



Storgatan and Skönbergagatan

Storgatan ran a little further to the west in those days. A permanent bridge over the river was probably not built until the latter part of the Middle Ages, as the pier earlier was situated beyond the bridge of today. The street ran across Hagatorget, then with houses on, to Skönbergagatan, which was the main road to the south and ran as it does today. The houses on the riverside reached as far as Söderköpings Brunn in the 13th century, but on the other side of the street there were fields and meadows, until the area was populated in the latter part of the 14th century. The findings here consist of dross, fuses of metal and moulds, showing there were iron works here.

11. Sensational Findings

In the block closest to Hagatorget on the riverside there



were closely built dwellings and workshops during the 13th-15th centuries, among them a forge and a bakery, from which were left ovens and a baker's stone hearth. An exciting find is the wooden sheath for a butcher's knife with the inscription "Olof the evil". The text might allude to the butcher, but who knows, maybe he also was the hangman and cut the ears off thieves?

The most sensational find is a tunic. It is a frocklike garment, worn by both men and women. The tunic is preserved except for a sleeve and part of the collar. It is in full length with a full skirt, made of fine woollen cloth and sewn in ten gores in two different kinds of material. Half is red and the other half is blue. By analyzing the wood found on top of the tunic it has been possible to date the garment back to 1242-43, at the latest. It is the oldest medieval garment in Scandinavia and the only one in two colours.

12. The Oldest House

The house by the corner of Storgatan and Åpromenaden was built by King Johan III in the 1570's on top of a cellar from the 15th century. The building has had stepped gables, but they can only be seen in the attic today. The ground is one metre higher today, but then you had to climb a couple of steps to the ground floor.

Hamngatan and the Church of St. Iljan

In the "Merchants' Quarter", as the area was called in 1458, trade was the main occupation. The stone paved main street, Hamngatan, ran to the church of St. Iljan. The church is first mentioned in 1307 and was probably built by the German merchants. King Gustav Vasa merged the two parishes of the town and the church fell into disrepair.

Half of the area disappeared when Göta Kanal was built in the 1820's. The sacral objects and the grave finds from St. Iljan that were found then have been dispersed.

13. Bergsvägen - Ecclesiastical Life

During later excavations here the remains of a well built stonehouse have been found. The remains cannot be the church of St. Iljan, but the findings indicate that the house has had some kind of ecclesiastical use. Among other things were found golden pins for a shroud, gilded book clasps and brass candlesticks.

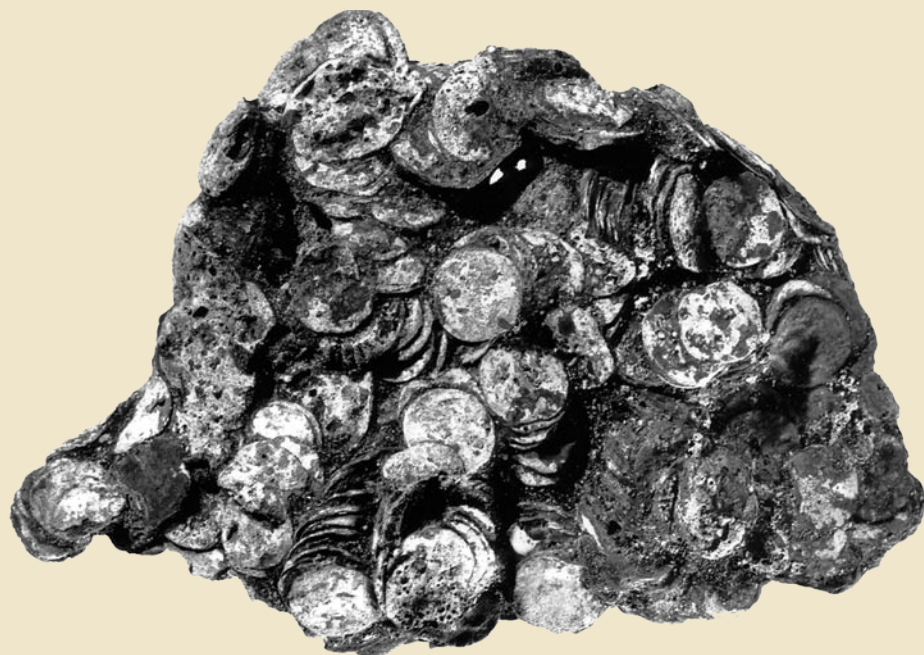


14. A Treasure of Coins

The Norrtull block was the northwest boundary at the time. Here only one layer of remains from buildings from the 14th century has been found. The area was neither populated before or after this time. The log house was 5 x 10 metres with a wooden floor in one part of the house and a floor made of clay in the other. The findings; hooks-and-eyes and lead seals from Flandria, used to validate cloth, indicates that here was a cloth manufacturer. A gold ring with a blue stone, crossbow arrowheads and shards of glass have also been found here.

On the floor were thousands of coins made of silver. It is not possible to count them as they have melted together in a fire. Most of the coins were minted 1320-1340, during the reign of King Magnus Eriksson. The latest coin was an "örtug" from the reign of Albrecht of Mecklenburg, 1364-1389.

Why was this treasure left behind?



5. Northwest of the Bend in the River – Everyday Life

Three alleys ran between and parallel to Hamngatan and Breda Gränd down to Lillån. On the narrow plots were log houses built from the middle of the 13th century to the end of the 14th century. The findings are typical of everyday life: ceramic shards, parts of shoes, sheaths, a bag, a baker's peel, a whistle, spoons, casks, needles, knife, whetstone, hinges, arrowhead, barrel padlock, horse shoes, pieces of blankets, and "arse sticks", a piece of stick used to clean your bottom after "using the lavatory", usually squatting in a corner of the alley.

In Repslagaregränd was a water pipe made of wood, four halved logs, which led the water down from the mountain of Ramunder to a well in Ågatan. It was still in working order when it was found in 1996.

In Bastugränd a logbuilt well has been found and in the adjacent block are remains from a house from the 14th century. One of the findings was a belt buckle with clasping hands.





Objects from everyday life which have been found at many excavations: threelegged pot, jug, fishing hook, wooden plate, "arse sticks", bottom of a cask, round and oval floats, horse shoe, whetstone, knife, keys, padlock .

16. East of the Bend in the River – Early Middle Ages

Along Ågatan, close to the river, are remains from the early Middle Ages, for example a stone paved pier and fishing gear from 11th – 12th centuries.

During the 13th and 14th centuries yards were built along Kanalgatan. The findings indicate some kind of textile manufacturing here; loam weights, needles, pins, scissors and a lot of fragments from fabrics. In these blocks there are still houses with medieval cellars, such as Ågatan 27 and 29.



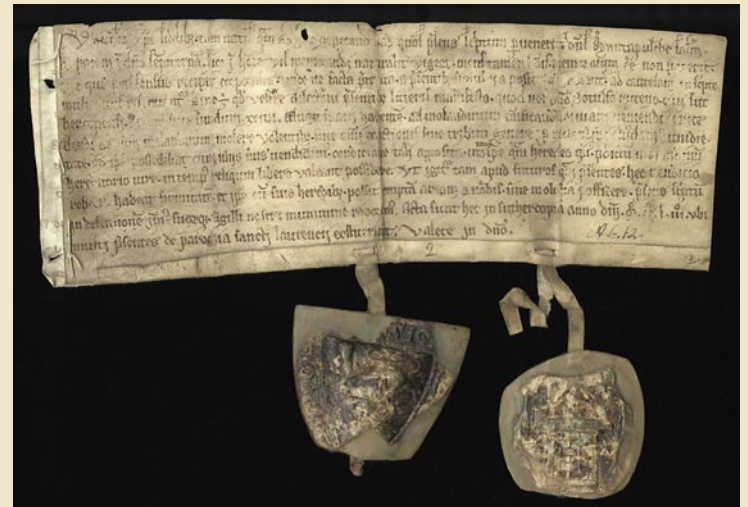
Shears, coarse needle, spindle whorl, pins.

Söderköping in the Original Sources

The Middle Ages is the first period of time that has left us documents. Söderköping is mentioned in circa 750 medieval documents, and 450 of these are written here. The first time Söderköping is referred to is in a will of 1250, when the widow of King Erik Eriksson, Queen Katarina, bequeaths Söderköping to her sister Benedikta.

The oldest manuscript of Magnus Eriksson's City Code derives from Söderköping, "Sutherköpings lagboch". Before this law, Söderköping had its own code, established around 1300, which is known through fragments of copies.

Many important political meetings were held in Söderköping; the first "Parliament" 1359 when Magnus Eriksson was established as king, the election of the Danish queen Margareta as sovereign 1389, the peace treaty of Engelbrekt and King Erik of Pommern 1436 and the Ecclesiastical Meeting 1441 when it was decided to found the University of Uppsala. Despite this the town never became an important centre of administration.



Medieval charter from 1253, where Master Svantepolk Knutsson (married to Benedikta, who inherited Söderköping), announces that he has traded a plot for a mill for half a mill with the burgher Götulf Ryss in Söderköping. The seals belong to Söderköping and Svantepolk Knutsson. (Riksarkivets pergamentsbrev 680 1253 u d, Söderköping)

More brochures about the medieval Söderköping:

Söderköpings kyrkor - en dörr till medeltiden
Eriksgatan, The Royal Route in Östergötland

Tourist office 0121-181 60, www.soderkoping.se

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