

Summary

(Alvastra Pile Dwelling. The 1909–1930 Excavations.) The Alvastra pile dwelling is located in a spring-fed mire close to Mount Omberg in south-west Östergötland. Structurally it consists primarily of horizontal logs, vertical piles, longish stone constructions and hearths. The various types of artefacts are those occurring in the early Middle Neolithic Funnel Beaker culture and Pitted Ware culture. The ecofacts represent domestic and wild animals, as well as cultivated and wild plants. The dwelling has been dated radiometrically to 4470 b.p. Dendrochronological dating of its oak piles indicates that the construction covers a period of 42 years.

The pile dwelling was discovered in 1908 and excavated by the Museum of National Antiquities on behalf of the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities. The excavations were directed by Otto Frödin and took place in the years 1909–1917, 1919, and 1928–1930. The subsequent analysis of the finds did not lead to the planned publication of the results. After performing a small-scale excavation in the pile dwelling in 1956, Mats P. Malmer organized a research project on the Alvastra pile dwelling at Stockholm University in 1976. The plan was that a test dig and a couple of seasons' supplementary excavations would be followed as soon as possible by a complete publication of the results. The fieldwork, however, was continued every season up to and including 1980. Although the participants published many works, at the start of the twenty-first century there was still no complete publication of the excavation.

The Academy then gave the author, who was involved in the project, the opportunity to compile a publication of the results of the 1909–1930 excavations as part of a high-priority project. This work was done full-time from spring 2002 to the end of 2007. The manuscript has since then been revised in parts after review by the Academy, which requested an addition in the form of a summary of the 1976–1980 excavations (chapter 12).

The author is convinced that the Alvastra pile dwelling will be of crucial significance for archaeological research for a long time to come. Few Stone Age sites in Sweden have such a large amount of richly differentiated finds as the pile dwelling – not least as regards organic material. It is also important source material for studies of the relationship between the Funnel Beaker culture and the Pitted Ware culture. Research findings presented hitherto presumably represent just a small proportion of the possibilities that the pile dwelling can offer. But if it is to be possible to use this as a source, one must understand the character of the pile dwelling, how the excavations were performed, what documentation there is and how it was compiled, what finds and samples were collected and how they were registered. This is the focus of the author's work. The book is intended to serve as a guide to the documentation and as a reference work for Neolithic research in southern Scandinavia.

The book follows largely the same arrangement as Otto Frödin's planned publication, as it has been deemed appropriate to follow that order. Accounts of the discovery, the course of the excavation, the workforce, and the analysis are followed by descriptions and analyses of stratigraphy, timber and stone structures, the finds, and a chapter about the general interpretations that were made of the pile dwelling and its cultural context. The source material from the 1909–1930 excavations of the roughly 1,100 square metre trench include 300 field drawings, about 400 excavation photographs, a dozen diaries, masses of correspondence with a dozen specialists, approximately 30,000 finds and over 500 scientific samples. During the work with this material the author has made new observations of the construction and use of the building and has analysed several types of artefacts which were previously unknown. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to present the results of the osteological investigations except for parts of the artefact material.

After the account of Frödin's excavation there is a survey of Neolithic pile dwellings in Europe, chiefly concentrating on wetland buildings located north of the Alps. The survey focuses on the find contexts of the sites and how they have been interpreted in functional terms. The book ends with a summary of the 1976–1980 excavations. The chapter has a brief account of the organization and work of the project, the excavated structures and finds, and the datings obtained. A great deal of the chapter is devoted to general in-

terpretations suggested by participants in the project. The summary ends with the author's current stance on interpretation issues.

The accompanying CD at the back of the book includes all the tables, a newly written catalogue of finds, a list of the numbered finds on the find plans with levels, and two DWG files with plans of all the structures. It is recommended that this material be studied parallel to the reading of the book.