Early Christian Grave Monuments and the Eleventh-Century Context of the Monument Descriptor hvalf

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Abstract
This paper discusses the use of the term hvalf as a monument descriptor in Swedish runic inscriptions with special focus on its first appearance, connotations and historical context. The main emphasis lies on the word itself and its relationship to early Christian grave monuments (also known as Eskilstuna cists). Evidence for the use of hvalf suggests that the term was employed to denote grave monuments as early as the first part of the eleventh century. Parallels in ornamentation and design link some of the Swedish funerary monuments referred to as hvalf to a small set of stones carved with Ringerike-style ornamentation in England. It is argued that these groups of carved stones indicate reciprocal influence between Scandinavian and English burial and memorial traditions.

Keywords: Early Christian grave monuments, Eskilstuna cists, Anglo-Scandinavian stone carvings, hvalf, burial traditions, Ringerike style

Hvalf in Swedish runic inscriptions

The use of the word hvalf as a monument descriptor in Swedish runic inscriptions was a novelty presumably introduced into Scandinavia with the emergence of new types of Christian funerary monuments in the early Middle Ages (Palm 1992, 235 f.). The word hvalf occurs most commonly in runic inscriptions on medieval grave covers from the province of Västergötland and the island of Gotland. There are five examples from Västergötland, all on coffin-shaped grave slabs with bevelled edges (Vg 81, Vg 88, Vg 95, Vg 146 and Vg 165) that are dated to the late twelfth and early
thirteenth century (SRI, 5: lv; Palm 1992, 234 ff.). Hvalf is found eight times in runic inscriptions from Gotland (G7, G34, G65, G101, G123, G137, G199 and G201), all except one cut on flat grave covers. The Gotlandic slabs belong to the end of the twelfth century or later (Palm 1992, 235). Hvalf also occurs once in the Danish material, on a twelfth-century grave cover from Gesing, Jutland (DR 111).

In addition to the medieval funerary monuments, there are four from the late Viking Age that refer to themselves as hvalf and one where some other memorial is thus termed. These constitute the main focus of the present article. The group comprises two grave covers from Hov church in Östergötland (Ög 240+241 and Ög Hov12;21+Hov32;27), a recumbent grave slab from Heda church (Ög ATA322-3519-2010) that was unearthed during an excavation in 2010 (Källström 2010; Hedvall 2013, 25–29) and a head- or foot-stone from Berezanj in Ukraine (XUaFv1914;47). Additionally, a hvalf is mentioned in an inscription on a runestone from Bogesund in Uppland (U 170).

The Old Swedish word hvalf means either a vault, a vaulted roof, an arch in a church or a burial vault (cf. Fritzner, s.v.; SRI, 5: 139; Hellquist 1948, 1306). It is not totally clear how these meanings relate to the shape or design of carved funerary stones. The runic inscriptions show that in medieval times hvalf referred to coffin-shaped grave covers as well as flat grave slabs. It has been suggested that hvalf was used to signify a stone cist and that the term may be explained by the shape of the construction, referring to some kind of hollowed space, i.e. a Latin tumba ‘tomb, grave vault’ (SRI, 6: 262; SRI, 12: 164). It is therefore of interest to examine the first occurrences of the monument descriptor hvalf and their relationship to the early Christian grave monuments, which are the earliest examples of churchyard monuments known in Central Sweden.

**Hvalf and eleventh-century funerary monuments**

In their most elaborate form, early Christian grave monuments — often called Eskilstuna cists — consisted of a lid slab, two side slabs and two gable slabs forming a stone cist which stood above the ground. Simpler constructions such as single recumbent slabs with or without head- and foot-stones seem, however, to have been more common (Ljung 2009, 155; cf. Neill and Lundberg 1994, 148, fig. 2). The ornamentation of the early Christian grave monuments followed two different artistic styles known as Ringerike and Urnes. Runic inscriptions are most frequently found on the lid slabs and they are similar both in form and content to those
of the late Viking Age runestones, i.e., they use the most frequent commemorative formula of the period, “X raised/laid/made the/this stone in memory of Y” (cf. Palm 1992, 133–35, 152 f.).

The church at Hov in Östergötland houses the largest corpus of early Christian grave monuments preserved, with around a hundred slabs and fragments. Additionally, approximately one hundred fragments are thought to be incorporated into the church walls (Jansson 1962, 11). Two grave covers from Hov are referred to as hvalf. Ög 240+241 consists of two large fragments of an almost complete slab (see fig. 1). The inscription reads:

\[
\times \text{keiti}l : \text{lag}þi : \text{hualf} : \text{þ... si- : kúp : hia\ldots-} : [\text{t}]\text{una} : \text{salu} \times
\]

‘Ketill laid this hvalf... his... May God help Tunni’s soul.’

(Note that translations are as a rule taken from the Scandinavian Runic Text Database; proper names are given in their Old Norse nominative form, and usually only one alternative is provided.)

The fragmentary inscription Ög Hov12;21+Hov32;27 similarly states that someone laid a hvalf (\[
\ldots : \text{lag}þi : \text{hual} \ldots \text{uarp} : \text{t...}; \text{see fig. 2). In contrast to the later medieval examples of hvalf from Västergötland and Gotland, where the monument descriptor occurs in combination with the verb gera ‘to make’, both the Hov slabs report that someone laid the hvalf. The verb leggja ‘to lay’ is commonly used on early Christian grave covers.)
monuments together with *steinn*, the most frequent monument descriptor (cf. Palm 1992, 233–38).

The two *hvalf* grave slabs from Hov have so far been considered to belong to the late eleventh century (Jansson 1962, 12). I would prefer on stylistic grounds to date them to the first half of the eleventh century. The ornamentation displays several characteristics of Ringerike style, current in Scandinavia from the late tenth century to the middle or third quarter of the eleventh (Fuglesang 1980, 26 f.; 2001, 173; Wilson 1995, 183). That of Ög 240+241 is carved in relief and features a symmetric pattern consisting of two intertwined stems with offshoots and tendrils developing into a cross-like ornament. The design shows similarities with a memorial stone from Vang in Norway, which according to Signe Horn Fuglesang dates from the classic Ringerike phase (cf. Fuglesang 1980, 176, pl. 36B). The other Hov slab citing a *hvalf* has interesting parallels in design with Ringerike-style stone carvings in the south-east of England. The shape of the cross on Ög Hov12;2+Hov32;27 strongly resembles that on a fragment from All Hallows by the Tower of London, which is decorated on one face with an equal-armed cross with interlace (cf. Fuglesang 1980, 188 f., pl. 52B). Another Ringerike-style cross representation that displays some similarities with the slabs from Hov is found on London City 1 (cf. Fuglesang 1980, 190, pl. 54; Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølby-Biddle 1995, 228 f.).

*Fig. 2. Ög Hov12;21+Hov32;27, fragments of a grave cover from Hov church, Östergötland. Photo by the author.*
Ringerike style in England has been interpreted as belonging to the court and related to the period of Danish supremacy under King Canute [Knut] and his immediate successors (1016–42; Fuglesang 1980, 69; Tweddle 1995b, 88). It has even been suggested that Ringerike style was developed by a Danish workshop under the influence of Ottonian and Anglo-Saxon art (Fuglesang 1980, 123; 2001, 172). This in turn suggests a dating of the two grave slabs from Hov to the first half of the eleventh century.

The third example of *hvalf* in the Östergötland corpus is found on a recently discovered, fragmentary grave slab from Heda church (Ög ATA322-3519-2010). The preserved parts of the monument consisted of a recumbent slab and a small head-stone which covered three burials carried out at different times (Källström 2010; Hedvall 2013, 25–29). The inscription reads (see fig. 3):

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... ...ualf : þas... ...r : kuþlug : muþu!r : -...  
`... this *hvalf* over(?) Guðlaug, [his/her] mother ...`
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The grave cover from Heda church can also be dated on stylistic grounds to the first half of the eleventh century. The slab has runestone-like features and lacks ornamentation except for a large cross which closely resembles that of several runestones in the area (for example Ög 77, Ög 81 and Ög 85). Rune types and orthography likewise indicate an early dating, probably to the first part or the middle of the eleventh century (Källström 2010, 3).
The use of *hvalf* as a monument descriptor in the eleventh century is not confined to Östergötland; the term also occurs on a runestone from Bogesund in Uppland (U 170). This was depicted by Johan Peringskiöld in the late seventeenth century, but was lost not long after (see fig. 4). The base of the runestone was however rediscovered in its original position, in an Iron Age burial ground, in 2013 (Källström 2013; see also McLeod 2014). The inscription mentions two memorials commemorating Ǫnd, or alternatively Agni as Henrik Williams has interpreted the name (1996, 60):

\[[: kuni \cdot auk \cdot as]\cdot a \cdot liu \cdot raisa \cdot st\cdot t \cdot \text{pina} \cdot auk \cdot hualf \cdot iftin \cdot akn\text{... ...un sin an]} \text{... taupr \cdot i akru \cdot an [-r \cdot kraf\cdot i \cdot kirikiu\cdot karpi \cdot fastulfr \cdot risti \cdot ru\text{\textbar}nar [- \cdot kuin \cdot raisti \cdot stainhal [pisa -]}

‘Gunni and Ása had this stone and *hvalf* raised in memory of Agni(?), their son. He died in Eikra(?). He is buried in the churchyard. Fastulfr carved the runes. The wife(?)/Gunni(?) raised this stone slab.’

The runestone states that Agni was buried in a churchyard. Elias Wessén argues that this was probably at Ekerö in Lake Mälaren, where according
to him Agni died (*SRI*, 6: 261 f.). The *hvalf* was most likely a funerary monument in the churchyard, under which Agni was laid to rest (Palm 1992, 243; Ljung 2010, 122). The Bogesund stone is one of several examples indicating that churchyard burials beneath funerary monuments co-existed with the erection of runestones in Uppland (Ljung 2010, 122 f.; forthcoming). The two practices were not mutually exclusive, but rather, as suggested by the inscription, complementary and contemporaneous. Peringsköld’s depiction of the Bogesund runestone indicates that the ornamentation belonged to the middle or third quarter of the eleventh century (Pr 3 according to Gräslund’s chronology, 1991; 1992, 183 f.).

The last eleventh-century example of a *hvalf* is the head- or foot-stone from Berezanj in Ukraine (*X UaFv1914;47*; see fig. 5). The inscription reads:


‘Grani made this *hvalf* in memory of Karl, his partner.’

Runes 11–14 are indistinct but the sequence has been taken as a misspelling of *hvalf* (Arne 1914, 47). There is a connection between the Berezanj stone and the early Christian grave monuments in Sweden. Both in shape and

*Fig. 5. Head- or foot-stone from Berezanj, Ukraine. Photo by Pål-Nils Nilsson; © Swedish National Heritage Board, Stockholm.*
design, the stone strongly resembles a group of arched head- and foot-stones with runic inscriptions from Häggesled church in Västergötland (Vg 21, Vg 22, Vg 23, Vg 24, Vg 25, Vg 26, Vg 27 and possibly also Vg 28 and Vg 29; Lindqvist 1915, 80f.; SRI, 5: 39; SRI, 12: 164). Like the find from Bereznaj, the Häggesled group consists of unornamented stones (except for an incised cross on Vg 26 and on Vg 27). The runic inscriptions run along the curved edges in the same way as on Bereznaj. To my knowledge the total corpus of early Christian grave monuments in Sweden contains no parallels to the design of the Häggesled head- and foot-stones, which makes the connection to the Bereznaj find even more interesting. There is, however, a grave marker or upright stone from Skåne, DR 350 Hästveda, with a Latin inscription in runes that resembles the scheme of the stones in the Häggesled group, though dated to the (early) medieval period. Judging from the depiction, the design of the now lost runestone, DR 293, might also have shown similarities with the Häggesled head- and foot-stones, though this is uncertain.

The arched stones in Häggesled probably formed parts of composite monuments, consisting of a recumbent slab between a head- and a foot-stone. This assumption is supported by the runic inscriptions, which state that someone laid the stone (lagði staín; Vg 21, Vg 24 and Vg 25) as well as references to stones in plural (satti staína; Vg 23 and Vg 27). Furthermore the inscriptions of Vg 21 and Vg 22 suggest that they belonged to the same monument (SRI, 5: 38).

The design and workmanship of the Häggesled stones demonstrate rune stone-like features, and Harald Wideen has argued that these monuments belonged to the “proper” runestone period of Västergötland (Wideen 1955, 178; for a different opinion, see Lindqvist 1915, 61; Gardell 1937, 85f.). However, it is questionable whether the runestone tradition can be separated from that of the early Christian grave monuments; rather both types of runic monument belong to the same memorial tradition. As we have already seen, the inscription on the Bogesund runestone (U 170) indicates contemporaneity between churchyard burials beneath funerary monuments and the erection of runestones in the surrounding countryside. A brief period of coexistence between runestones and early Christian grave monuments can also be established in other areas of Central Sweden (Ljung, forthcoming). Thus the closeness in design between the Häggesled slabs and the runestones of Västergötland points to an early dating of the former group, as well as of the Bereznaj slab, since in Västergötland runestones ceased to be erected during the first half of the eleventh century (Wideen 1955, 251; Lager 2002, 91).
The investigation of hvalf as a monument descriptor in Viking Age runic inscriptions shows that the term was already in use in different regions in the beginning of the eleventh century— in the provinces of Östergötland and Uppland, as well as in Ukraine. The similarities of the Berezanji stone with the head- and foot-stones from Häggesled also point towards a connection with Västergötland. It is clear that the word hvalf refers to a funerary monument and the correlation with the early Christian grave monuments indicates that the descriptor was introduced simultaneously with this kind of churchyard memorial. However, hvalf occurs rarely. Early Christian grave monuments are normally referred to as steinn or kuml. On the basis of the five eleventh-century examples of hvalf, it is difficult to determine what shape or feature the term actually denoted. One recumbent slab together with a head-stone, two grave covers, and one head- or foot-stone as well as a monument of unknown shape are described as hvalf. The two grave covers from Hov (Ög 240+241 and Ög Hov12;21+Hov32;27) may indeed have formed part of cist-monuments, but that cannot be determined for sure. If it were the case, hvalf may have referred to the hollowed room formed by the box-shaped tomb standing above the ground. Another conceivable explanation is that hvalf denoted the arched shape of head- and foot-stones, which formed vaults at each end of a recumbent grave slab. However, the diversity in the shape of funerary monuments referred to as hvalf makes it clear that initially the monument descriptor was not used exclusively to describe cists or a tumba, as suggested by Elias Wessén (SRI, 6: 262). Even if the term hvalf originated from some special shape or feature of the monument, it must already at an early stage have come to denote the memorial as a whole (cf. SRI, 5: 139; for a different opinion see Gardell 1937, 106).

Anglo-Scandinavian funerary monuments

Having surveyed the early evidence for hvalf in Swedish runic inscriptions, I shall now move on to consider similarities in ornamentation and design between the early Christian grave monuments and a group of Ringerike-style carved stones in England. (For Ringerike-style sculpture in England see Rochester Cathedral 2 and 3, Great Canfield 1, London All Hallows 3, London St Paul’s 1, London City 1a–b [Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1995, 165 f., 209 f., 223–29], a grave stone from Bilbury [Kendrick 1974, 102, pl. lxx], a fragment from All Saints’ church, Somerford Keynes [Bryant and Viner 1999], as well as Otley 12A in Yorkshire [Coatsworth 2008, 226 f.]). As already discussed, the grave covers from Hov

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church mentioning a hvalf (Ög 240+Ög 241 and Ög Hov12;21+Hov32;27) show similarities with carved stones from London, but there are further indications of mutual influence between Anglo-Saxon and Swedish funerary monuments.

The most famous Ringerike-style stone carving in England is found on a grave marker from St Paul’s in London (see fig. 6). The decoration on the front face is executed in relief and depicts a four-legged animal (the “great beast” motif) with its head facing backwards and its body interwined with tendrils (Fuglesang 1980, 189). The slab originally had a roughly dressed lower portion for insertion into the ground (Tweddle, Biddle and Kjolbye-Biddle 1995, 227). A runic inscription is incised on the narrow left side of the stone, which reads (E 2):

\[\text{k-na : let : legia : stjöz : þensi : auk : tuki :}\]

‘Ginna(?)/Gina(?) had this stone laid and (i.e. with) Tóki.’

The fact that the verb leggja is used of an upright stone, together with the
absence of information about the person commemorated, imply that the St Paul’s slab formed part of a composite monument. It probably served as a head- or foot-stone and was accompanied by a recumbent grave slab that contained the continuation of the memorial inscription (Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1995, 227; Holman 1998, 632 f.; Barnes and Page 2006, 288).

The St Paul’s stone, as well as the two other Ringerike-style carvings from London (London City 1a–b, London All Hallows 3), exhibit stylistic features closely related to Scandinavian ornamentation, a circumstance strongly suggestive of a Scandinavian environment (Fuglesang 1980, 63 f.). Indeed, the similarities in technique and ornamental design of the small number of Ringerike carvings in southern England (Rochester 2 and 3, London St Paul’s 1, London City 1a–b, London All Hallows 3, Great Canfield 1) suggest that they were produced by the same workshop (Tweddle 1995b, 87 f.). The ornamentation together with the personal names and runic forms of the St Paul’s stone indicate Danish or Swedish workmanship (Fuglesang, 1980, 64; Barnes 1995; Barnes and Page 2006, 288). Altogether this makes it virtually certain that the person commemorated on the St Paul’s grave marker was of Scandinavian birth (Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1995, 227).

Even though the ornamentation and, where they occur, the runic inscriptions of the group of Ringerike-style carved stones in England indicate a Scandinavian background, monuments of this particular shape are not commonly found in Scandinavia (cf. Holman 1996, 37; 1998, 635, where it is claimed that Scandinavian parallels are lacking). It is thus, as Katherine Holman states, worth considering whether the shaping of this group of carved stones was influenced by contemporary English funerary monuments. The square figure of the St Paul’s slab as well as the semicircular form of the head- or foot-stone with Ringerike-style carvings from Rochester cathedral (no. 3) are also found in other funerary sculpture of the period. Grave markers with semicircular tops were in use particularly during the tenth and the eleventh centuries (see for example Stedham 7, 8, 10, 11, and Winchester New Minster 2 in Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1995, 194–97, 324 f.). Parallel-sided, square-headed grave markers also belong to the same period (Tweddle 1995a, 22; Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1995, 196 f.; see for example Stedham 9 and Winchester Old Minster 2 in Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1995, 196, 274 f.). Consequently, the Ringerike-style stone carvings cannot simply be viewed as Scandinavian but rather as a mix, or hybrid, of Scandinavian ornamentation and Anglo-Saxon monument forms. The group of Ringerike stones in England thus
signifies interaction between Scandinavian and English burial and monument traditions.

Two grave covers from Winchester (Winchester Old Minster 6 and Winchester St Maurice 1) show another interesting connection between Anglo-Saxon sculpture and Scandinavian burials. Winchester Old Minster 6 consists of a coped grave cover that was found in situ with a square-shaped upright stone at the foot-end depicting a hand holding a cross (Okasha 1971, pl. 138; Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1995, 279). The cover is inscribed in Anglo-Saxon capitals and the text reads: +HER LIĐ GV[N]N[I] [:] EOR[L]ES FEOLAGA (‘Here lies Gunni, Jarl’s companion’). The names are of Old Norse origin and the term *feolaga* is an Anglicisation of the Old Norse *félagi* (Okasha 1971, 126 f.; Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1995, 278; Barnes and Page 2006, 89). Holman points out that the Winchester monument offers a close parallel to the St Paul’s slab because the upright head- or foot-stones are of similar shape and size (1996, 37 f.; 1998, 635). The other example, Winchester St Maurice 1, consists of a rune-carved fragment that originally belonged to a grave cover with a convex upper side (Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1995, 327 f., fig. 42). The runic inscription has no certain interpretation. Probably it is of commemorative character and it may contain a personal name or perhaps the title *húskarl* (Barnes and Page 2006, 322 f.). The Winchester carvings thus seem to bear witness to Scandinavians who were buried beneath monuments with Anglo-Saxon form.

The oft-cited runestone from Nävelsjö in Småland (Sm 101) should also be mentioned in this context. The stone was raised by Helgi in memory of his brother Gunnarr who was laid in a stone coffin (*stæinþró*) in Bath in England. Taken together the Ringerike-style carved stones, the Winchester grave covers and the Nävelsjö runestone are evidence for the familiarity of Scandinavian individuals with English funerary sculpture. At the same time, the group of Ringerike stone carvings in south-east England also attest to the ability of such people to imbue Anglo-Saxon monument forms with characteristics from the Scandinavian runic memorial tradition.

### Early Christian grave monuments and Anglo-Saxon influences

It is interesting to consider how the hybrid Anglo-Scandinavian monuments relate to the runic memorials of the Scandinavian homelands and whether the encounter with English traditions in any way affected the
design at home. As far as the early Christian grave monuments in Sweden are concerned, Ringerike-style ornamentation is rather infrequent and is found at only a few sites. Urnes-style ornamentation with Ringerike-style elements or designs in pure Urnes style are, on the other hand, more common. The grave covers from Hov in Östergötland featuring the term *hvalf* (Ög 240+241 and Ög Hov12;21+Hov32;27) belong to a small Swedish collection of Ringerike-style grave monuments. Not only does the ornamental design of some of these monuments show similarities with the English Ringerike group, but the actual shape of some of the slabs is also reminiscent of Anglo-Saxon funerary monuments. The outline of a few rectangular slabs with ornamentation or incised crosses from Hov (Ög Hov5;18, Ög Hov7;19 and Ög Hov18;24), probably head- or foot-stones, resembles that of parallel-sided and square-headed grave markers in the south-east of England. Within the entire corpus of Swedish early Christian grave monuments, head- and foot-stones of square or rectangular form are very uncommon. The most frequent type of gable-slab is a cross-ornamented stone, decorated on two faces, often with shaped edges following the outline of the cross-arms. Rectangular head- and foot-stones are also found at Väversunda church (see for example Ög 54 and Ög N291) situated c. 13 km west of Hov, on the other side of Lake Tåkern. Semicircular grave markers do not occur at Hov, but one is found at St Martin’s in Skänninge (Ög N278), situated c. 10 km to the north-east. One face of the head- or foot-stone from St Martin’s is decorated with a cross with tendrils, offshoots and pear-shaped lobes; the ornamentation has been classed as Ringerike style (cf. Fuglesang 1980, 98–118, pl. 54; Bergengren 2005, 17–19). A rounded shape, as previously discussed, is also characteristic of the head- and foot-stones from Häggesled in Västergötland and the Berezanj stone referred to as a *hvalf*.

The churchyard at Hov, as well as those at Väversunda and St Martin’s in Skänninge, were established at the beginning of the eleventh century and belong to the earliest phase of Christian graveyards with funerary monuments in Östergötland. The majority of the churchyards in the province that contain early Christian grave monuments seem to have come into existence in the mid-eleventh century (Ljung 2009). Thus early Christian grave monuments with Ringerike-style ornamentation and slabs with the same kind of geometrical shape as found in the south-east of England originate from a limited number of graveyards that can be dated to the early eleventh century. These circumstances show contemporaneity between the Swedish grave monuments and the group of Anglo-Scandinavian carved stones in England.
The reciprocal influence of funerary stone sculpture between England and Sweden would not have occurred without social contact. In southern England, Ringerike style has, as already mentioned, been related to the period of Danish supremacy (Fuglesang 1980, 69; Tweddle 1995b, 88). The funerary monuments in London St Paul’s, Rochester and Winchester were probably all made in memory of people of Scandinavian descent. Those recovered from St Paul’s, though small in number, are notable as coming from a single site in southern England, and must according to John Schofield have resulted from some form of Scandinavian patronage of the cathedral in the eleventh century. Schofield argues that the grave cover London City 1 may originate from the cathedral site and that this would mean that two out of the four pieces of grave furniture preserved from St Paul’s for the period have Ringerike-style ornamentation (Schofield 2011, 48f.), linking them to a Scandinavian milieu. The location of Anglo-Scandinavian memorials in the vicinity of the St Paul’s Cathedral and assembly site, as well as at the cathedrals in Winchester and Rochester, centres of both ecclesiastical and political power, indicates that the persons buried belonged to the social elite. Most likely they were high ranking individuals connected to the Danish rulers (Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1995, 225, 280). In this context it is also worth pointing out that King Canute himself was buried at the Old Minster in Winchester (Lawson 1993, 113).

In Sweden the shape of individual slabs as well as the presence of early Christian grave monuments with Ringerike-style ornamentation may provide information about the people erecting or being commemorated by these memorials. The square or semicircular shape of the head- and foot-stones indicates familiarity with Anglo-Saxon funerary monuments and it is not at all unlikely that the individuals concerned had extensive contact with England during the early eleventh century. They may have belonged to the circle around King Canute, served in the þingalið ‘body-guard’, or been relatives of people with English connections. Runestones in Östergötland also bear witness to contacts with England during this period. Two were raised in memory of men killed in England (Ög 104 and Ög Fv1950:341) and a third mentions a certain Þjalfi who was with King Canute (Ög 111).

The context of the two grave slabs from Hov with Ringerike-style ornamentation and sporting the word hvalf is extremely interesting in terms of their social setting. The extensive collection of carved stones from the site shows that Hov was a churchyard with numerous elite burials beneath recumbent slabs or employing stone coffins, and thus a place of both religious and political importance. The place name Hov,
usually construed as representing Old Norse *hof* ‘tempel’, suggests the presence of a pre-Christian cult site, though the etymology of the name is debated (Brink 1990, 45; Vikstrand 2001, 253–72). In Götaland, place names containing the element *hov* do, however, often coincide with “central places”, magnate farms and church sites (Vikstrand 2001, 269 f.). In medieval times, at least around 1400, Hov served as the royal administrative manor in charge of the western part of the province of Östergötland. Furthermore, at the end of the Middle Ages, Hov was the largest fiscal unit in the whole region, consisting entirely of crown lands (Tollin 2002, 224). The first stone church at the site was probably built as a private church in the twelfth century and was presumably connected to the royal Sverker dynasty (Lovén 1990; Tollin 2002, 225). The collection of early Christian grave monuments confirms that by the eleventh century Hov was a place of particular importance at the highest social level. Thus both the early Christian grave monuments with Ringerike-style ornamentation in Sweden and the group of Anglo-Scandinavian carved stones discussed above seem to belong to the same high social stratum.

Concluding remarks

The eleventh-century funerary monuments that refer to themselves as *hvalf* consist of memorials as diverse as a recumbent slab with a headstone, two grave covers possibly belonging to cist-monuments, and a semicircular shaped head- or foot-stone. All four are dated to the first half of the eleventh century. Additionally, a *hvalf* is mentioned on the the Bogesund runestone, U 170, that is dated slightly later, probably to the middle or third quarter of the eleventh century; there, however, the term refers to some other monument of unknown shape. Hence the *hvalf* memorials belong to the oldest phase of churchyard monuments in Central Sweden. Similarities in ornamentation and design link some of the early Christian grave monuments from the initial part of the eleventh century to a small set of contemporary carved stones in the south-east of England, suggesting influence from Anglo-Saxon, or Anglo-Scandinavian, funerary monuments. Two of the grave covers with Ringerike-style ornamentation from Hov church in Östergötland that display similarities with the funerary carved stones from London are referred to as *hvalf*. The diversity in the design of funerary monuments so described makes it difficult, however, to determine the particular shape or feature denoted by the term. Rather it seems as though right from the start, when the term *hvalf* was introduced in the early eleventh century, it referred more generally to churchyard
memorials. Nevertheless it is worth considering why *hvalf* was used to describe some of these early churchyard monuments. Even if it is highly speculative, one may wonder whether the term initially denoted a particular kind of monument seen abroad. In this context it is interesting to note that both grave covers from Winchester (Winchester Old Minster 6 and Winchester St Maurice 1), probably made in memory of persons of Scandinavian decent, have a convex upper face, and thus a vaulted form.

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DR + number = inscription published in *Danmarks runeindskrifter*, by Lis Jacobsen and Erik Moltke. 3 vols. København, 1941–42.


G + number = inscription published in *Gotlands runinskrifter*, i.e. SRI, 11–12.


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Scandinavian Runic Text Database (version 2008). Department of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University. (Samnordisk runtextdatabas, Institutionen för nordiska språk, Uppsala universitet.) Available for downloading (version 2014) at: http://www.nordiska.uu.se/forskn/samnord.htm


Sm + number = inscription published in Smålands runinskrifter, i.e. SRI, 4.

SRI = Sveriges runinskrifter. Various authors; published by Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien. 14 vols. to date. Stockholm, 1900–.

SRI, 2 = Östergötlands runinskrifter, by Erik Brate. 1911–18.

SRI, 4 = Smålands runinskrifter, by Ragnar Kinander. 1935–60.

SRI, 5 = Västergötlands runinskrifter, by Hugo Jungner and Elisabeth Svärdström. 1940–70.

SRI, 6–9 = Upplands runinskrifter, by Sven B. F. Jansson and Elias Wessén. 1940–58.


U + number = inscription published in Upplands runinskrifter, i.e. SRI, 6–9.

Vg + number = inscription published in Västergötlands runinskrifter, i.e. SRI, 5.


X UaFv1914:47 = inscription from Berezanj, Ukraine. Published in Arne 1914.


Ög Hov5:18 = stone with ornamentation from Hov church, Östergötland. Published in Jansson 1962, 18.

Ög Hov7:19 = stone with ornamentation from Hov church, Östergötland. Published in Jansson 1962, 19.

Ög Hov12:21+Hov32:27 = inscription from Hov church, Östergötland. Published in Jansson 1962, 21 and 27.

Ög Hov18:24 = stone with ornamentation from Hov church, Östergötland. Published in Jansson 1962, 24.


Ög + number = inscription in *Östergötlands runinskrifter*, i.e. *SRI*, 2.
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