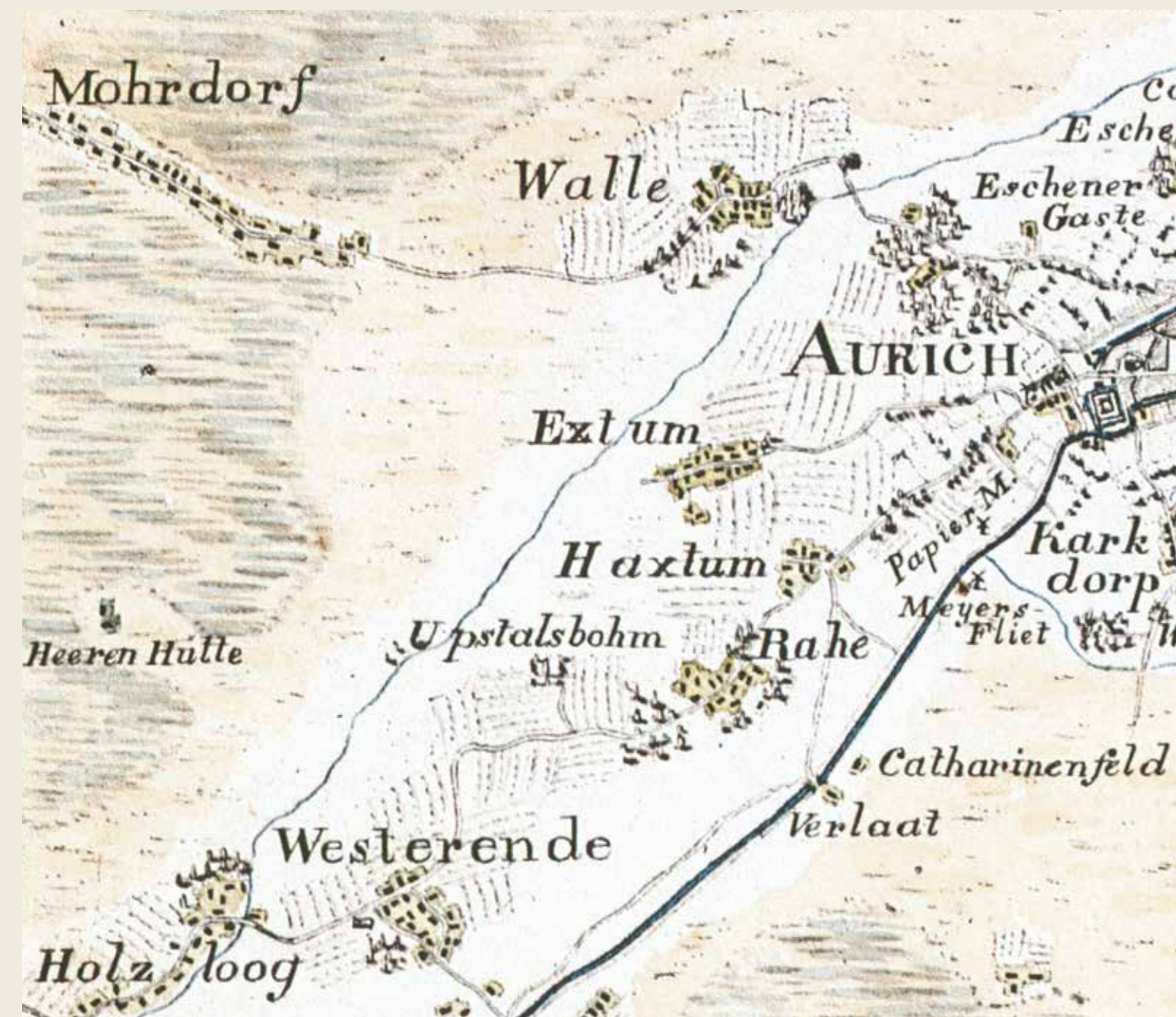


WELCOME TO UPSTALSBOOM

You are at Upstalsboom, a place of exceptional importance for East Frisia and beyond that for the entire former Frisian inhabited lands on the North Sea coast. The Upstalsboom was already celebrated as the “Altar of Freedom” over 400 years ago, and stands today as the symbol of the freedom of the Frisian people.



The Upstalsboom near Rahe marked on the Campsche Map of 1806

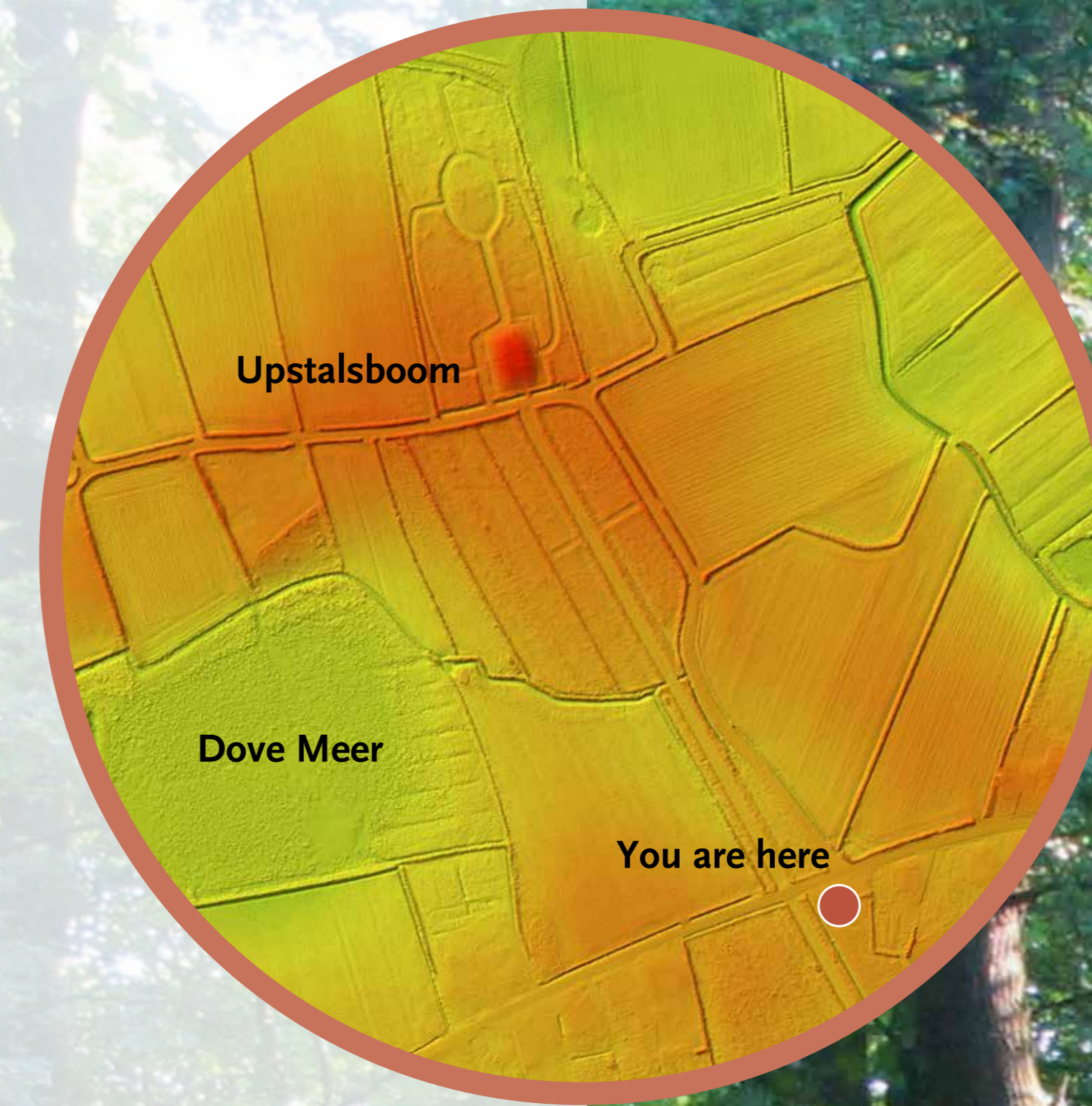
The Upstalsboom was a well-chosen burial site. It stands on the highest point of the sandy East Frisian moorlands near Rahe, created in the Ice Age.

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz



A romanticising portrayal of the Upstalsboom Assembly by Ludwig Kittel (1921)

At the height of the Middle Ages the representatives of all the free Frisian counties met at the Upstalsboom, to negotiate treaties and laws together. They were subject to no outside rule. The free Frisians had the right to political participation and personal freedom. They were no other rural region with comparable individual rights in the entire Holy Roman Empire.



If you follow the avenue beginning here for about 800 metres in a northerly direction, you will arrive at the stone pyramid built in 1833, which marks the Upstalsboom. This is a reference to the original low burial mound of the early Middle Ages, around 800 AD. Along this avenue there are twelve boards with information about the history of the Upstalsboom and Frisian Freedom.



FRISIAN FREEDOM – A LIVING TRADITION

The remembrance of the phenomenon “Frisian Freedom” and the meeting place at Upstalsboom today still play a great role in the historic consciousness of the coastal region. Here in 2009 the towns of Aurich and Appingedam (Province of Groningen) renewed their partnership as twin towns.

In 2018 the site was renovated, it was made more accessible and information boards were set up explaining its historic importance. That was made possible by the town council of Aurich, which obtained a development grant from the ZILE programme and itself granted the same amount to finance the project.



The Upstalsboom has been owned by the Ostfriesische Landschaft. It continues the direct tradition of the representatives of the medieval feudal order established over 550 years ago. As their successor the Ostfriesische Landschaft provides a modern regional service in the areas of culture, scientific research and education. It guards the traditions of Frisian Freedom.

In 1327 Appingedam received its town charter at the Upstalsboom, recorded in the Buurbrief.

Archiv der Gemeinde Appingedam

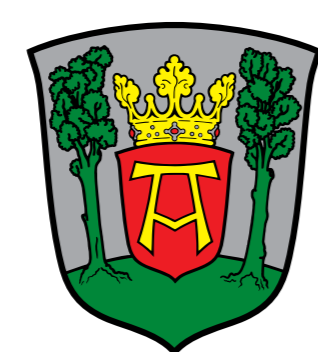


The Totius-Frisiae-Seal of the Upstalsboom Assembly of 1338.

Centre historique des Archives Nationales, Paris; Kasten J. 526, Nr. 4



- Übersetzung Adrian Mills
- Translation Katrin Herzberg
- Vertaling Ilse Gerdes / Anita Willers
- Oversetten Ytsje Steen-Buwalda
- Oersetting



**OSTFRIESISCHE
LANDSCHAFT**



EUROPÄISCHE UNION
Europäischer Landwirtschafts-
fonds für die Entwicklung des
ländlichen Raums



Bundesministerium
für Ernährung
und Landwirtschaft

The Federal Government and the State of Lower Saxony are financially involved as part of their joint project "Improvement of Rural Structures and protection of the Coast".



NATURAL LANDSCAPE

The Upstalsboom stands on a flat stretch of ice-age sediment about seven metres above sea-level. Human activity in the locality has been established as far back as the Stone Age. The Dove Meer at Upstalsboom is a particular geological phenomenon: the almost circular lake is a “pingo”, which appeared in the final phase of the Ice Ages about 11,000 years ago. Mounds with a core of ice grew on permafrost ground to up to 100 metres in height and a diameter of several hundred metres. Later a so-called “pingo ruin” remained, a dip about six metres deep filled with water, with a two metre high surrounding bank. The lake dried up and eventually became moorland.

The Upstalsboom burial mound stands on this surrounding bank. The site was high, dry and well-suited to use as a meeting place. It could also be accessed by water using the River Sandhorster Ehe.



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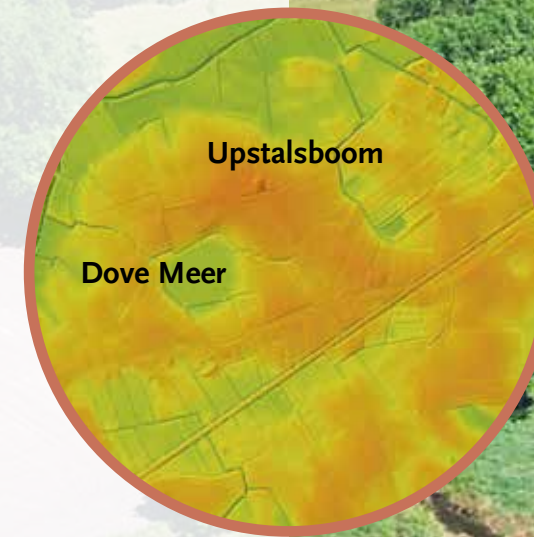
EUROPÄISCHE UNION
Europäischer Landwirtschafts-
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Bundesministerium
für Ernährung
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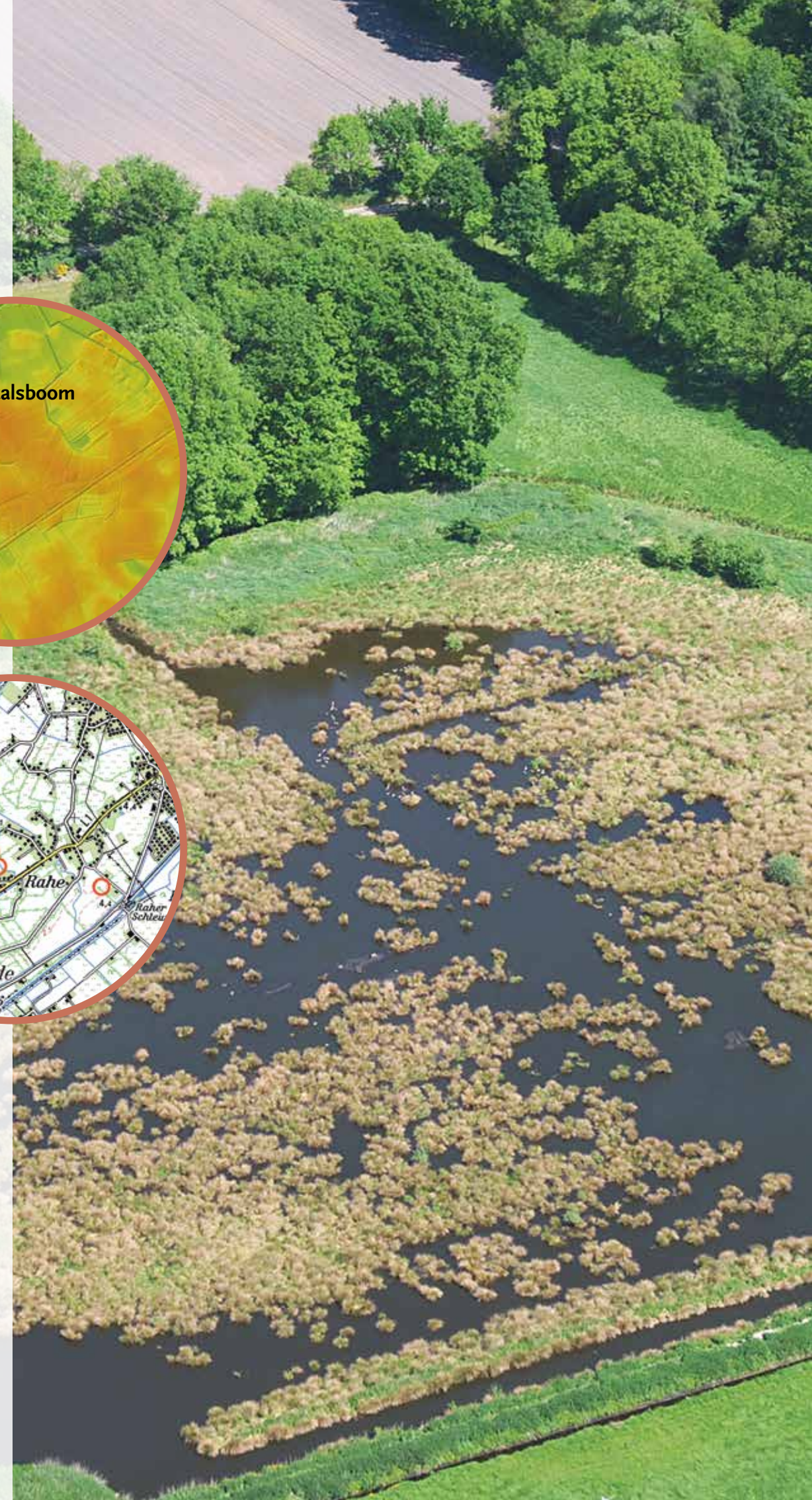
The Federal Government and the State of Lower Saxony are financially involved as part of their joint project “Improvement of Rural Structures and protection of the Coast”.

Physical map
LGLN, Regionaldirektion
Aurich



**Map showing dis-
tribution of pingos
around Rahe**
LGLN, Regional-
direktion Aurich,
Axel Heinze

**Aerial photograph:
Dove Meer**
Martin Stromann,
SKN Norden



BANKED HEDGES

The area surrounding the Upstalsboom conjures up the impression of an area of untouched natural countryside. It is however man-made. The most significant element are the banked hedges.

Banked hedges dominate the appearance of a large part of the East Frisian countryside. They offer a refuge for many rare plants and animals. Because of their vast biological diversity banked hedges count as cultural and natural monuments and deserving of special protection.

The banked countryside at Upstalsboom shows in part the layout of the land in the Middle Ages with its curved contours. They originally fulfilled a simple function. The banks planted with bushes and trees prevented the animals grazing on communal lands from getting into fields and damaging crops. All around the Upstalsboom near Rahe it is possible to realize the development of the countryside. The old, curving banked hedges surround historical settlement areas. The younger hedges, mostly established at right-angles, are evidence of the redistribution of land at later dates. The area of the Dove Meer, immediately to the south-west, was not portioned out until between 1803 and 1807, when banked hedges and drainage ditches were established.



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Scene with
banked hedges
at Upstalsboom

Susanne
Sander-Seyfert

Aerial photograph:
Upstalsboom

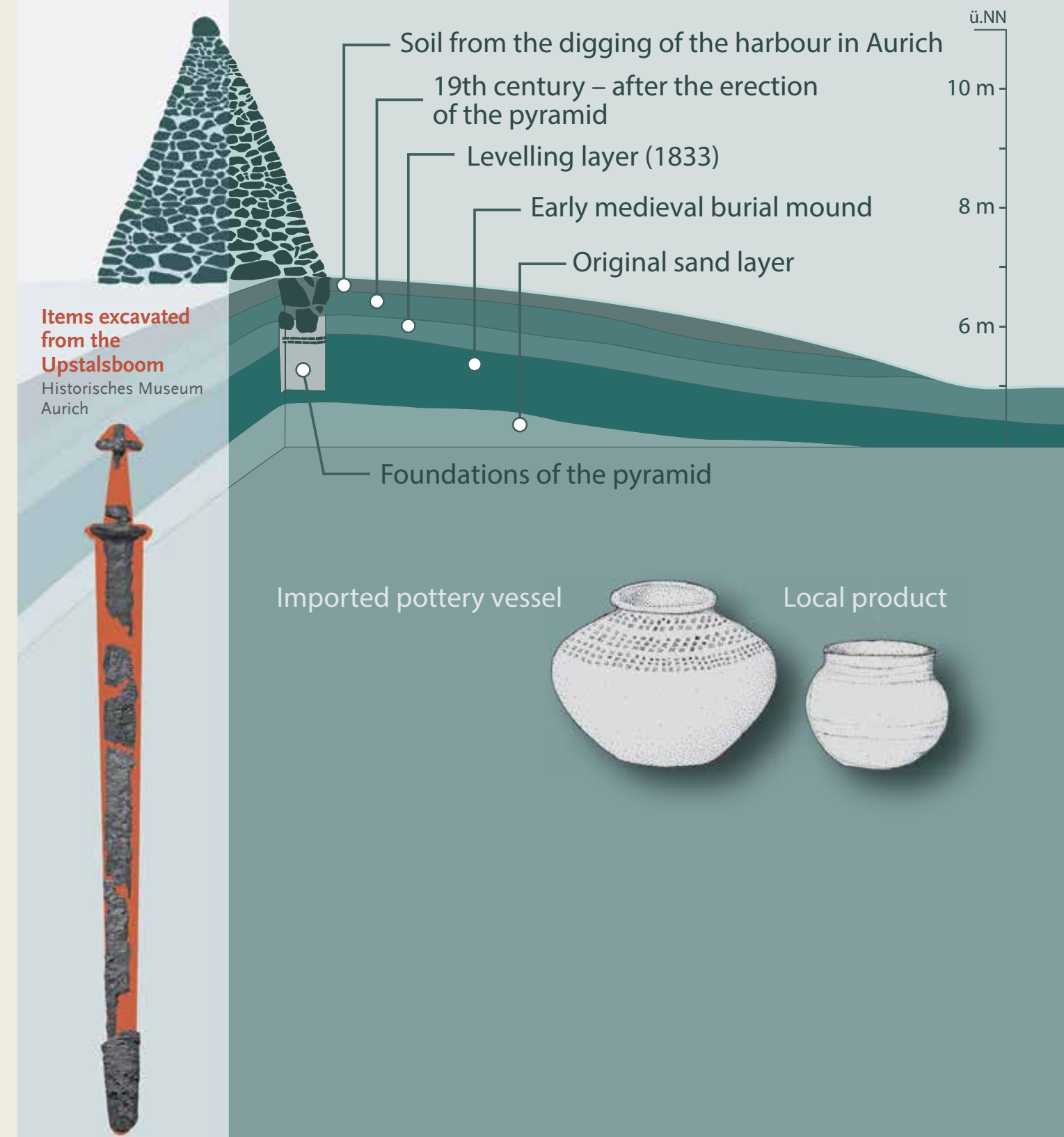
LGLN, Regional-
direktion Aurich



A BURIAL MOUND FROM THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Beneath the stone pyramid is a low burial mound, the real Upstalsboom. This first mound is basically a burial site from the early Middle Ages of a regionally important family. Later in the Middle Ages it became the assembly place of the free Frisians.

As early as 1815 and 1833 archaeological evidence from the early Middle Ages was discovered: a decorated pot from the Rhine, a locally- made spherical pot and a valuable sword. Later research digs uncovered the burial site of three urns, as well as the remains of a man and two women buried in the late 8th and early 9th centuries. The graves contained signs of wealth. At least 60 coloured glass beads, a key and a knife were found in one woman's grave. The man's grave probably contained the sword found in 1833, and also parts of a belt and a knife. The remembrance of the burial site was kept alive until the time of the political council meetings at Upstalsboom began in the 12th century.



THE FREE FRISIANS

Special legal arrangements, unique in the empire, developed from about 900 AD in the prosperous Frisian regions on the North Sea. East Frisia managed to repel all outside claims to power by different counts, dukes and bishops. At the same time the situation in the area was characterized by the possibility of political participation and the rights of each individual to his personal liberty and possessions. From the 11th century on, about 30 small states developed in the Frisian areas on the North Sea coast. They were organized similarly to the urban council administrations of the Middle Ages. At the head of these autonomous “states” were so-called advisers or consuls, elected for a certain period. Equality before the law regardless of possessions was a fundamental right. Misuse of power and economic mismanagement could be rectified.

From about 1100 individual constitutions were recorded in writing and often kept in monasteries. The 17 Statutes – the first legal constitution of the Frisian peoples – were followed by a large number of Frisian legal texts until into the 14th century, for example the Brokmerbrief (Brokmer Edict) from the last quarter of the 13th century. Power and wealth could be demonstrated, for example in Marienhafe, by the building of large churches, which only occurred otherwise in towns.



 OSTFRIESISCHE
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Brokmer Edict
Gottfried Wilhelm
Leibniz Bibliothek –
Niedersächsische
Landesbibliothek
Hannover

Frisian warriors,
Wall painting in
Woldendorp
Church, Gronin-
gen, c. 1350
Hans Vermeulen,
Groningen



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THE SEVEN SEA PROVINCES



Frisian liberty is still today considered an exceptional historical feature. Representatives of the communities, symbolically named “The Seven Sea Provinces”, met at Upstalsboom around Whitsuntide to strengthen the peaceful ties between the different provinces and to jointly ward off danger from outside. Such meetings, which took place at irregular intervals, are documented between 1100 and 1327.

In the 17 Statutes of the Frisian lands it says: “The seven representatives of the peoples of the Seven Sea Provinces shall meet at the state assembly at Upstalsboom on the Tuesday after Whitsun, according to the constitution of all Frisian people.”



CHIEFTAIN RULE

In about 1320 the forbidding of building castles in the Brokmer Edict signalled a turning point on the Frisian constitutional scene. An economic crisis, natural catastrophes and finally an epidemic of plague in about 1350 led to the collapse of the old order. Many farmers were forced to give up their homes and farms. This led to a concentration of ownership and power in the hands of exponential families, who assumed a privileged aristocratic status as chieftains. They secured their rule over their lands by building fortified stone houses and castles. Frisian Liberty – the right to individual independence and ownership – remained unaffected by this development.

The chieftains gained their income from their lands, trade and also piracy. The chieftain era was characterized by constant feuds between the various families, for example the tom Broks, Wiemkens, Ukenas, Allenas or Idzingas. From about 1400 the Vitaly brothers were involved in these conflicts. The East Frisian chieftains granted these pirates shelter and thus made enemies in the Hansa ports of Bremen and Hamburg.



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The Stone House
in Bunderhee

Eppo von
Rinsumageest
Fries Museum,
Leeuwarden



THE COUNTY OF EAST FRISIA

In East Frisia there were attempts by the tom Brok family and later by Focko Ukena from the year 1400 on to restrict the liberty of the free farmers and force them to pay excises and to render services. This led to an uprising in 1420 in the wider estuary region of the River Weser. In 1430 an “Alliance for Freedom” against the threat to liberty from within was formed in the western part of East Frisia under the leadership of chieftain Edzard Cirksena.

This process culminated in the rise of the Cirksena family to the status of counts. They took over control of the town of Emden from 1439, with an interruption of a few years, and Edzard’s son Ulrich Cirksena succeeded in gaining control of most of the East Frisian lands. In 1464 he was made a “Reichsgraf”, an Imperial Count, by Emperor Friedrich III and granted East Frisia as his Imperial County. That was only possible as Ulrich was recognized by the East Frisian aristocracy because he left the civil liberties and ownership rights of the East Frisian farmers untouched and accepted the feudal order of the state. In the 16th century the free farmers attained feudal power, instead of the clergy – an absolute exception in the Holy Roman Empire.

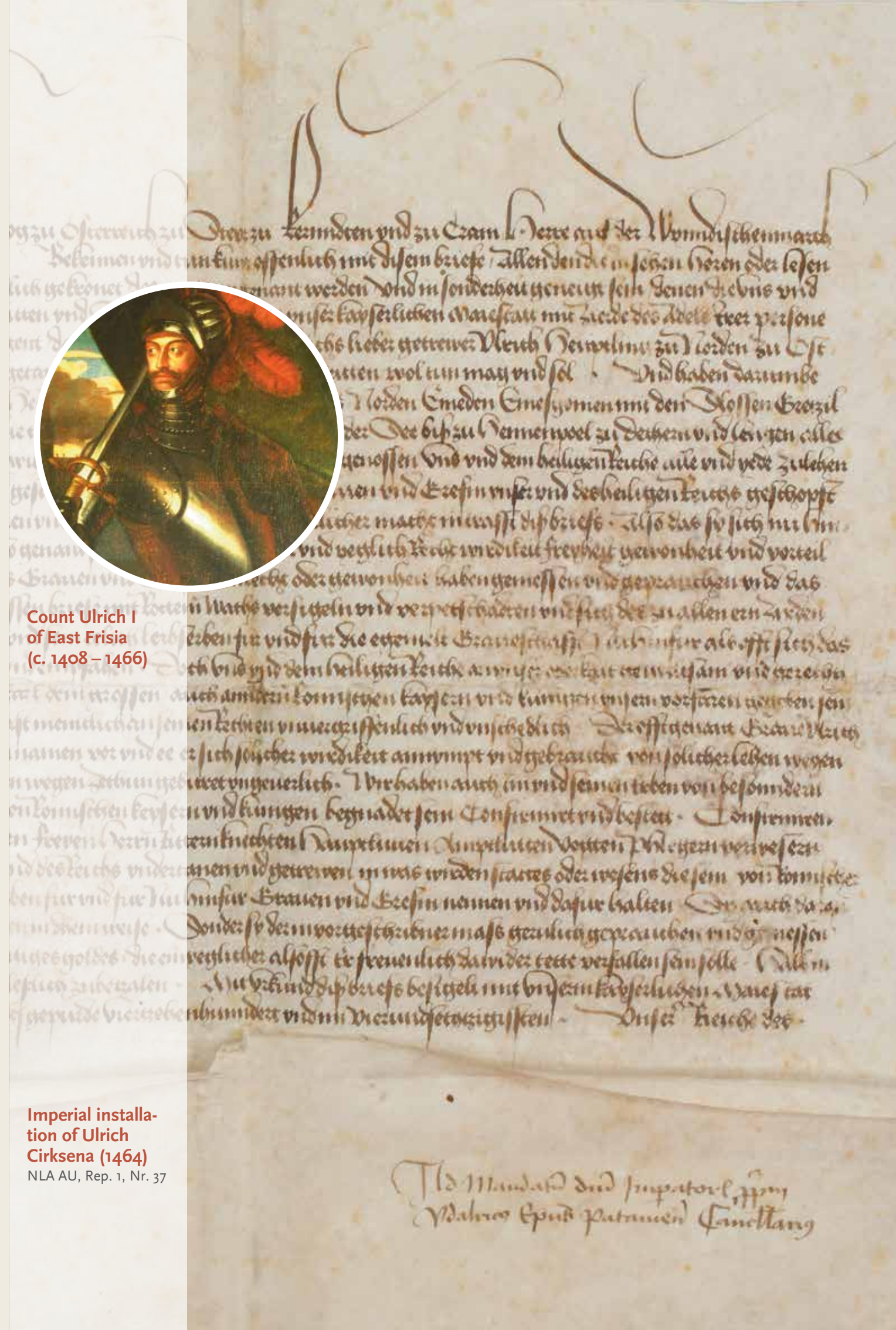


Count Ulrich I of East Frisia (c. 1408 – 1466)



OSTFRIESISCHE LANDSCHAFT

Imperial installation of Ulrich Cirksena (1464)
NLA AU, Rep. 1, Nr. 37



Illd Mandat dnd Imperatoris
Wahres Epus Patruum Cantuar

THE CONCEPT OF FRISIAN FREEDOM

The Upstalsboom had lost its political function at the latest by the middle of the 14th century. The civil liberties of the Frisian people were an established socially and politically unquestionable fact. But towards the end of the 16th century they became the focus of the disputes between the ruling Cirksenas on the one hand and the town of Emden and the representatives of the people on the other. Therefore, following the revolution in Emden in 1595 and the expulsion of the Count's family (Cirksena), the historian Ubbo Emmius transfigured the Upstalsboom into the symbol of the resistance of the people and citizenry to aristocratic claims to power. As the symbol of Frisian Freedom the Upstalsboom served as the legitimation of political claims and the legal claims of the people against the ruling house of Cirksena.

Ubbo Emmius reported – mistakenly – that in the Middle Ages the independent Frisian lands had a tree and a man in armour holding a lance in their common seal. Emmius thus provided Emden's resistance movement with the model for the seal of their war council, showing an Upstalsbaum (an oak tree) and a Free Frisian, armed and prepared to defend himself.



 OSTFRIESISCHE
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Ubbo Emmius
(1547 – 1625)



The Upstalsboom
Seal of the Emden
War Council,
c. 1600

Ostfriesisches Landes-
museum Emden

UBBO EMMIUS
Grethanus Frisius,
Historiarum et Linguae Graecae in Academia Grœ-
ningana et Omlandica Professor optime moritus,
eiusdemque Rector primus.
Natus A. 1547. d. 5. Dec. Mori. A. 1625. d. 7. Dec.

THE UPSTALSBOOM COAT OF ARMS

Following the massive political struggle for power, the Osterhuser Akkord of 1611 – the East Frisian constitution – laid down two sovereignties bearing ruling powers in the East Frisian state: the Counts and the people. They were henceforth constantly in bitter conflict. In 1654 the East Frisian Counts rose to the status of Princes of the Empire, after the appropriate payment. Therefore the people's council – also known as the Ostfriesische Landschaft – sought for recognition of their especial honourable position as a sovereignty. They were successful in 1678, when Emperor Leopold I granted them their own seal and coat of arms – a unique occurrence in the empire.

The seal of the Emden war council of 1595, showing a warrior in armour with lance and sword under an oak tree, served as the model for the coat of arms of the Ostfriesische Landschaft. The Ostfriesische Landschaft still uses it today as the legal successor of the people's council and as the democratic parliamentary body in public law.



 OSTFRIESISCHE
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Decorative page
for the granting of
the coat of arms to
the Ostfriesische
Landschaft (1678)
NLA Au, Dep. 1, 5421



Seal stamp of
the Ostfriesische
Landschaft with
the Landschaft's
coat of arms



GROWING AWARENESS OF THE SITE OF FRISIAN FREEDOM

The site of the Upstalsboom had always been charged with a strong symbolism. However, the actual site near Rahe was simply a neglected mound covered by trees, standing on public land, until well into the 19th century. This is how it appears in the first pictorial representation, an engraving dated 1796 by the Aurich architect and businessman Conrad Bernhard Meyer (1755 – 1830).

After 1777 awareness changed, when it was first suggested to erect a monument on the Upstalsboom mound, because this place symbolized Frisian Freedom in the sense of a democratic people's state. In 1814 several representatives of Aurich's citizenry again suggested the erection of a monument in the consciousness of the importance of this place. An obelisk was to stand as a memorial to the East Frisians who had fallen in the wars against Napoleon. A wooden model was constructed, a pamphlet printed and money was collected. However, the project could not be realized, because not enough support was forthcoming. But the Upstalsboom was now firmly established in the public consciousness as the site of Frisian Liberty.



Design of the monument by C. B. Meyer, Aurich (1814)

Engraving by C. B. Meyer (1796)



UPSTALSBOOM

THE UPSTALSBOOM MONUMENT OF 1833

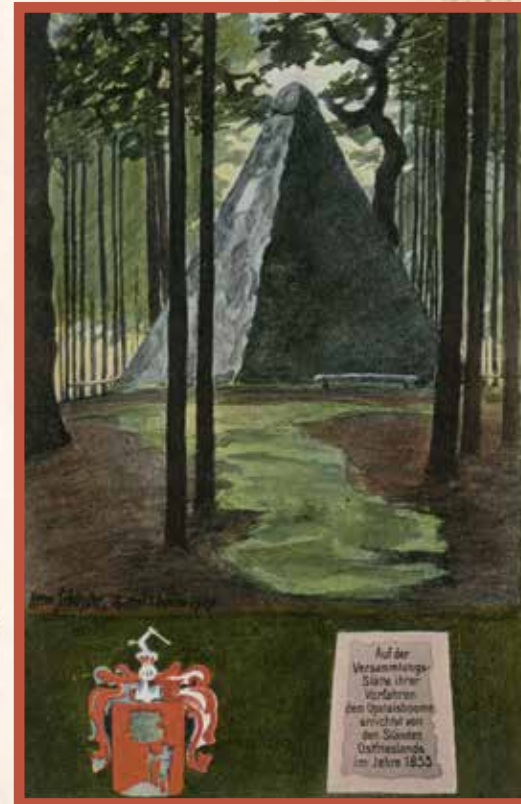
At the beginning of the 19th century it was feared that the Upstalsboom would disappear because of ploughing by neighbouring farmers. In 1833 the Ostfriesische Landschaft built a pyramid of boulders in the fashion of the time. Some of these stones came from the old St Lambert's church in Aurich, which had been demolished. However, they decided against an inscription for the pyramid.

The monument is a symbol of the Ostfriesische Landschaft's claim to freedom and independence for the local population, particularly at the time of the fight for the political rights of the people's assembly against the absolutist ambitions of the crown of Hanover. The pyramid is an initial expression of a new self-definition of the people's assembly in the face of their dwindling political responsibilities in the 19th century.

With the acquisition of further land at Upstalsboom after 1870 a park and a beech avenue were established. The Upstalsboom became a part of local heritage. Not until 1884 did the Ostfriesische Landschaft place a plaque on the monument: "Erected on the site of the congregation of their forefathers, the Upstalsboom, by the East Frisian people in the year 1833".

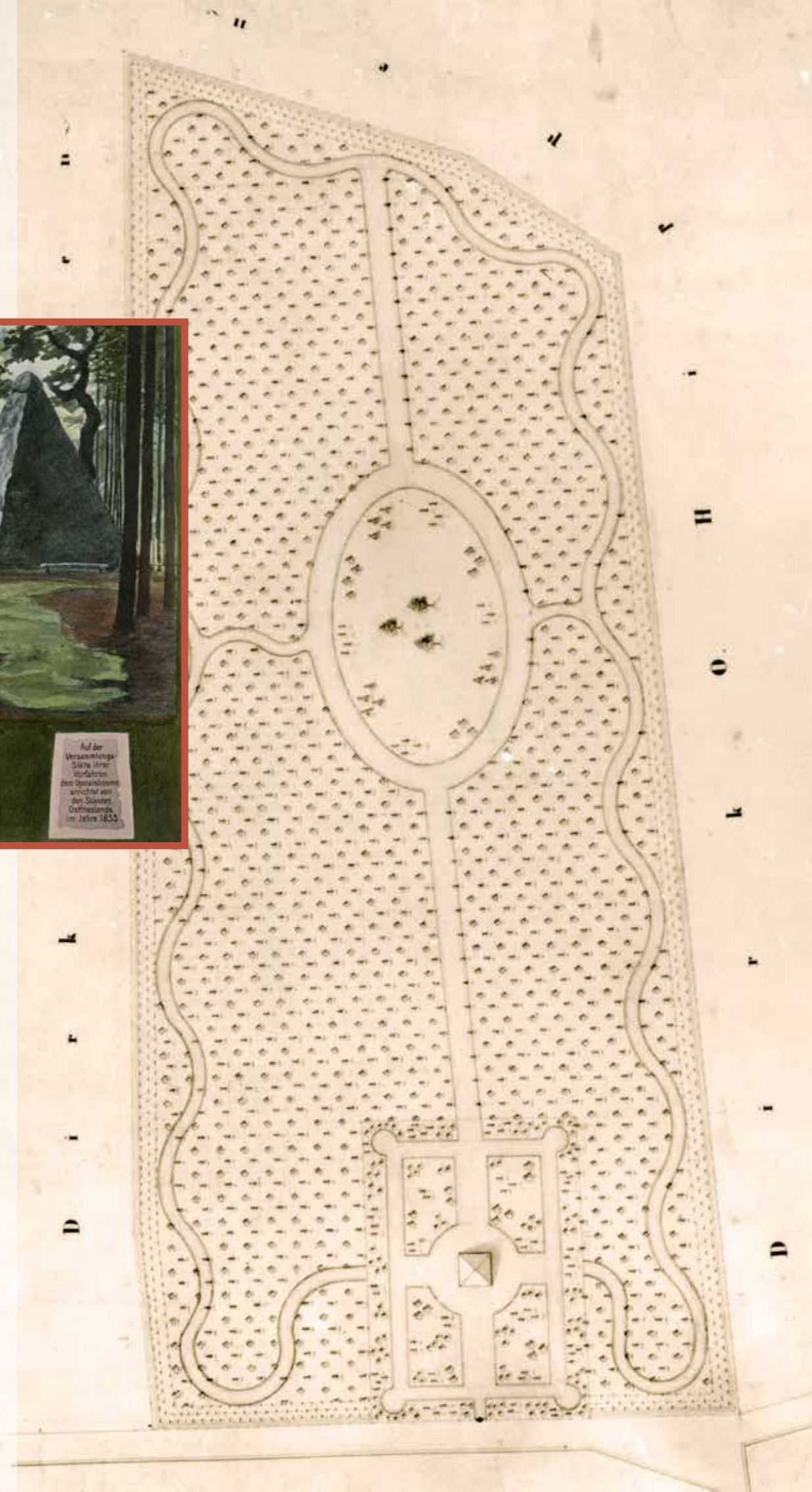


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Postcard
by Hermann
Schüssler
(1909)

Plan of the park
(1870)



THE 20TH CENTURY

Patriotic enthusiasm and mass deaths in World War One led to a decision of the Ostfriesische Landschaft in 1916 to acquire further land at the Upstalsboom and to plant an oak tree for each East Frisian who had fallen in the war as a heroes' memorial. This idea was dropped in 1918.

After 1933 the National Socialists incorrectly interpreted the Upstalsboom as a meeting place of a Germanic parliament and court. Nazi celebrations and parades took place here, but in spite of plans in this direction no serious ideological changes to the monument were undertaken.

After the end of the war in 1945 the Upstalsboom provided the historical legitimation for inter-Frisian cooperation, in particular with the Netherlands. From 1950 on the Ostfriesische Landschaft organized the annual East Frisian Day here. In 1955 the area provided the backdrop for an international meeting of representatives of the 6th Frisian Congress.

The Upstalsboom and the surrounding land are in the possession of the Ostfriesische Landschaft. Objects found in archaeological digs on the site are exhibited in the museum in Aurich. The Ostfriesische Landschaft's website offers further information.



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EAALA PREYA PRESENA!

1. Upstalsboom – wo deine Blätter rauschten
Einst in alter, längst entschwund'ner Zeit,
Als die Väter ernste Zwiesprach tauschten,
Für des Volkes Freiheit stets bereit.
2. Wo in stolzen, hohen, grüner, Kronen,
Die Ostfrieslands Leid und Freud gesehn,
Rauher Wind aus Nordlands eis'gen Zonen
Und im Sommer lichte Lüfte wehn.
3. Steh ich träumend hier in Deutschlands Norden,
In der Heimat nach so manchem Jahr,
Ist auch vieles, vieles anders worden
Und der alte Baum nicht wo er war.
4. Rauschen doch in jungen Wipfeln wieder,
Wie von Glück und Ruh im alten Fort,
Noch dieselben schönen, alten Lieder,
Aber ach – den Wanderer ruft es fort.

Alko Janßen.

Romanticising
postcard by
Gottlieb
Kistenmacher
(c.1910)

Celebrating
East Frisian Day
1954

