HEOROT: THE MEAD-HALL



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<u>Mead halls</u>, like Heorot, were communal places where kings, like Hrothgar, met with their warriors (among other things). This image depicts a reconstructed mead hall—from the ring castle Fyrkat near Hobro, Denmark—as it appeared on September 14, 2002. Photo by Malene Thyssen; online via Wikimedia Commons. License: <u>CC BY SA-3.0</u>

Hrothgar, according to the *Beowulf* story, had <u>a great hall</u> which he called "Heorot." The king and his warriors would gather in the hall to eat, plan battles, hear entertainers and <u>drink mead</u> (an alcoholic beverage made from fermented honey and water). Sometimes they would also sleep there.

Danish archaeologists have uncovered such <u>long halls</u> in the Lejre area of Zealand, the island on which the country's capital - Copenhagen - is located.

Excavation layers at one site reveal <u>two different</u> long halls, built over each other, likely used between the years 660 to 890. Not far away is athird long hall - from about the time in which the *Beowulf* epic takes place.

If we were able to step back in time, and could inspect a Danish long hall, what would we see? Reconstructions, based on archaeological findings, help us to visualize them. <u>Fyrkat</u> (near Hobro, Denmark) is such a place.

Although its <u>re-creation</u> is based on a building post-dating Heorot by more than four hundred years, Fyrkat gives us a sense of what these gathering places were like. So does <u>Yeavering</u> and its <u>reconstructed long hall</u>.

Once the location of a Saxon <u>royal palace</u> in <u>Northumbria</u>, which scholars believe post-dates the events in <u>Beowulf</u> by just a century, Yeavering is one of Britain's most important archaeological sites.

Thanks to Northumberland's County Council, we can also take a <u>virtual tour</u> inside Yeavering's great hall as Anglo-Saxon thegns ("thanes") and <u>their king</u> relax around a fire. (Be patient with the slow-loading video link.)

Might this have been the type of scene, envisioned by the *Beowulf* storyteller, when Grendel the monster entered Heorot to attack his victims?

And ... parenthetically ... was Grendel a Scandinavian troll?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HEOROT-THE-MEAD-HALL-Beowulf

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HEOROT-THE-MEAD-HALL-Beowulf

Media Stream



Great Hall - Heorot

Image online, courtesy Heorot.

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Great-Hall-Heorot



Drinking Horns - Sutton Hoo

Image online, courtesy <u>Heorot</u>.

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Fyrkat - Map Locator

Map image by Casiopeia; online, via Wikimedia Commons.

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View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Fyrkat-Map-Locator



Great Hall at Fyrkat

Image, described above, online courtesy The Pingry School.

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Long Hall - Constructed at Yeavering

Image online, courtesy Northumberland County Council.

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King Edwin - Anglo-Saxon at Yeavering

Image online, courtesy <u>Past Perfect.org</u>, a UK-based website.

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Yeavering Palace - View of Area Where it Was Located

Image online, courtesy Northumberland County Council.

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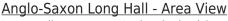


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Beowulf - Long Halls

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