

How old are the names of islets and rocks in Ängsö parish in Lake Mälaren?

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Summary

Comparatively little is known about the names of small islands in the major lakes of Sweden. Names of uninhabited islets and rocks were rarely recorded before the end of the 17th century. Questions that can be asked include: How old are the names we come across today? And how common is it for small islands to change names? In the case of Ängsö in Lake Mälaren, we have a unique written source: an inventory of the farms and amenities belonging to the Ängsö estate, compiled in 1547. At the end of this inventory is a list headed 'Islets adjoining Engxö and the Engxö estate', containing just over 30 names. We may assume that these names were well established in the 1540s, and presumably therefore go back at least to the late Middle Ages.

A few changes of name may be noted, but of the 33 islands referred to in the 1547 document, 25 have retained their names to the present day. This demonstrates place-name continuity over a period of at least 500 years, even in the case of uninhabited islets.

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