Summary

Järlåsa, Järla and Järle

By Lennart Elmevik

The emphasis in this short study is on clarifying the origins of the parish name Järlåsa in Uppland, first recorded, in 1291, as (in) Jarlasum. The name may be assumed originally to have denoted the centrally situated village now known as Kyrkbyn ‘the church village’. Järlåsa has most commonly been interpreted as a compound of the Old Swedish man’s name Jarle, later Jærle, and the plural of the word ås (OSw. ās) ‘ridge’, referring to an esker – a ridge laid down by glacial meltwater – running through the parish and past the church village. The author argues against this interpretation of the first element. Instead, he suggests that the name contains a common noun OSw. *jarlās ‘gravel ridge, esker’, the first part of which he assumes to be an Old Swedish word *jarl m. or *jarle m. ‘gravel’. The second element, despite its plural form, could refer to a single ridge, the one just mentioned, or alternatively to several; the area in question is rich in eskers.

Regarding the two other names mentioned in the title, of which Järla refers to a manor house in Nacka, near Stockholm, and Järle a village in Ervalla parish in Västmanland, the author suggests that they contain OSw. *jarle ‘gravel’, one of the alternatives proposed as the first element of Järlåsa. He is not, though, able to provide concrete topographical support for such an interpretation.