

Skogsnamnet *Nåsten* vid Uppsala. Och var låg nu Läby vad? s. 79–106

Summary

The forest name *Nåsten* near Uppsala. And where was Läby ford?

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Stretching just to the west of Uppsala is an extensive area of forest called *Nåsten*. Prior to drainage works in the 19th century near the church in Läby parish, the Hågaån valley along the steep northern edge of the forest consisted of waterlogged ground. A pair of prehistoric road embankments across the valley floor bear witness to the area's importance for communications. At the southern end of one of them there were once two rune stones referring to the bank; one of these stones is still in its original location. At the south end of the other embankment, a small hill surmounted by a barrow occupies a similar position. The settlement name *Vadbacka* 'the slope (or sloping stretch of road) by the ford', found close to this hill, is of interest here, and the author argues that, a long time ago, the hill was compared to a *\*noste* 'chubby, rounded object' etc., a word that is attested in Norwegian dialects. This designation was later applied to the stretch of road passing this place and its surroundings, and subsequently to the whole of the large forest.

To be able to link the name *Nåsten* to this particular road embankment, it was important to find a connection between the name *Läby vad* 'the ford in Läby parish' or 'the ford by the farm/village of Läby' and the embankment at *Vadbacka*. *Läby vad* is known from the 16th century: in a historical chronicle from around 1560, we are told how the future king Gustav Vasa, fleeing from his enemies in June 1521, almost ended up in their hands when his horse fell in the ford in question. It is reasonable to assume that the use of this significant ford, on one of the country's most important highways from Uppsala, goes back to prehistoric times. Hollow ways on the slope down to the embankment are historical vestiges of this communication route.