



# Upstalsboom

Frisian Freedom



## A Frisian Myth as a Symbol of Freedom

The Upstalsboom, a medieval assembly place, is located in Rahe, just south of Aurich. This site near the Frisian coast is of great historical and symbolic significance. The Upstalsboom is a unique symbol of Frisian Freedom.

*“Upstal” referred to a fenced area of communal pasture, where roaming cattle which had been caught were taken and tied to a post - “Boom”. An Upstalsboom served as a landmark.*

### DIRECTIONS FROM GRONINGEN / NL

Follow A7, then take A31 until exit Riepe. Right onto L1, follow Friesenstraße (Aurich direction) about 12 km until Rahe.



### DIRECTIONS FROM BREMEN

Follow A28 until exit Filsum, take B72 about 27km to Aurich. In Aurich take B72 (direction Emden), the Von-Jhering-Straße. Left turn to Gerichte/Behörden, then immediately right into Oldersumer Straße (L1). Follow Oldersumer Straße about 3km until Rahe.



Totius – Frisiae – Seal of the Upstalsboom Assembly of 1338

### IMPRINT

**Publisher:**  
Ostfriesische Landschaft  
(owner of the Upstalsboom)  
- Cultural Agency -  
Georgswall 1-5, 26603 Aurich  
Tel. 04941 1799 57  
E-Mail: [kultur@ostfriesischelandschaft.de](mailto:kultur@ostfriesischelandschaft.de)  
[www.ostfriesischelandschaft.de](http://www.ostfriesischelandschaft.de)

**Editor:** Katrin Rodrian  
**Content & Text:** Hanke Tammen  
**Translation:** Dr. Marron C. Fort, Adrian Mills  
**Advice & Support:** Dörpverein Rahe e.V.  
[www.dörpverein-rahe.de](http://www.dörpverein-rahe.de)  
**Sponsored by:** Aurich Town Council  
**Design & Layout:** BeBold, Aurich 2018  
**Printed by:** Druckerei Meyer, Aurich

### Picture credits

**Page 1:** Pyramide von 1833 auf dem Upstalsboom, Foto: Sabine Gronewold 2007 © Ostfriesische Landschaft; Wappen der Stadt Aurich; Logo Ostfriesische Landschaft; **Page 2:** Millefiore-Perle, Foto: Gerhard Kronsweide © Ostfriesische Landschaft; Schwertfund vom Upstalsboom, Foto: Peter Marx © Historisches Museum Aurich; Replik des Upstalsboom-Schwertes von Bernhard Nitz, Bockhorn 2003, Foto: Peter Marx; Karte der Sieben Seelände, Grafik: Gerhard Kronsweide; Installation von Monika Kühling 2003 (heute bei der Klosterstätte Ihlow), Foto: Sabine Gronewold 2007 © Ostfriesische Landschaft; **Page 3:** Schild des Wappens der Ostfriesischen Landschaft; Friesentreffen 1955 am Upstalsboom, Foto: Landschaftsbibliothek; Unterzeichnung der Urkunde am Upstalsboom 2009, Foto: Brigitte Weber, Kulturamt Aurich, von links nach rechts: Rika Pot, Bürgermeisterin der niederländischen Stadt Appingedam, Antje Harms, stellv. Bürgermeisterin der Stadt Aurich, Helmut Collmann, Präsident der Ostfriesischen Landschaft, Henk Dijkstra, Ratsvorsitzender Stadt Appingedam, Jochen Schmidt, Stadt Aurich, Gerda Klug, Stadt Aurich; Buurbrief, Foto: Landschaftsbibliothek; **Page 4:** Autobahnschild und Aufkleber „Ostfriesland – Friesische Freiheit“, Grafik: BeBold 2007 © Ostfriesische Landschaft; **Page 5:** Upstalsboom-Stich von C. B. Meyer, 1796; Quelle: Johann Conrad Freese, „Ostfries- und Harlingerland nach geographischen, topographischen, physischen und geschichtlichen Verhältnissen“, 1. Band, Aurich 1796; Siegel des Upstalsboom-Bundes, Foto: Centre historique des Archives nationales (CHAN), Paris; **Page 6:** Karte: Lisa Wolters, Atelier LWS Mediengestaltung, Aurich



OSTFRIESISCHE  
LANDSCHAFT

## 8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries



### How it all began

Archaeological finds confirm that the Upstalsboom is much older than the Frisian Freedom which made it famous. The gatherings of the free Frisians took place in the high Middle Ages on a burial mound of a distinguished family dating from the late 8th to the 9th century.



In the burial mound the archaeologists found, among other relicts, a Damascene sword and a so-called Millefiori glass bead from the Near East. The bead is evidence of the widespread trading activities of the Frisians in the early Middle Ages. The finds from the Upstalsboom are now in the Aurich Historical Museum.

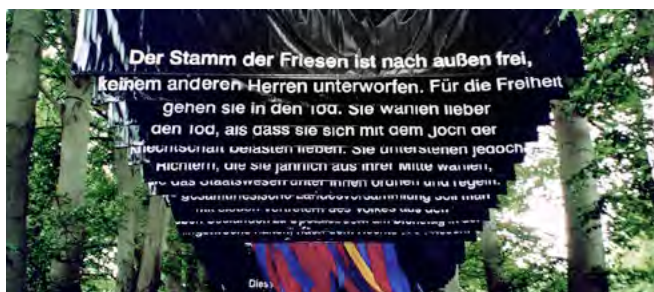
### Mare Frisicum



1240

**„The Frisian people are outwardly free and owe allegiance to no overlord“**

This quotation dating from the year 1240 describes the particularities of Frisian Freedom: no commitment to take arms in defense of a feudal lord, the right of ownership, political co-determination and personal freedom.



Artistic realization of the quotation of Bartolomeus Anglicus by Monika Kühling, 2003

## 11<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries

### Frisian Freedom in the Middle Ages

Frisian Freedom was an exceptional historic feature. In the Middle Ages the Frisian coastal region - "tota Frisia" - from the Dutch IJsselmeer to the Weser estuary was free, in contrast to the rest of feudal Europe. It was made up of autonomous rural communities, which together formed a loose alliance – the so-called "Seven Sea Provinces". Their representatives met at the Upstalsboom, to guarantee justice and freedom for all Frisians.

### Eala frya Fresena *Hail Ye Free Frisians*



Coat of arms of the Ostfriesische Landschaft (1678)

1464

### The East Frisian estates since 1464

The East Frisian Cultural Council (Ostfriesische Landschaft) represents the concept of Frisian Freedom as a relevant cultural symbol of the region as the legal successor of the original estates. The coat of arms granted by the Emperor in 1678 shows a free Frisian in armour at the Upstalsboom.



Frisian Assembly after the war: In 1955 the "Oll' Mai" took place at the Upstalsboom

1327

### A place of identity transcending borders

In 1327 the Dutch town of Appingedam, on the other side of the River Ems, received its document of foundation, the so-called Buurbrief, a specifically Frisian town charter, at the Upstalsboom. The present town partnership between Aurich and Appingedam is based on this document.



In 2009 the mayoress of Appingedam, Rika Pot, and the vice-mayoress of Aurich, Antje Harms, renewed the partnership of the towns by signing a new document in imitation of the Buurbrief of 1327 (right)



## 16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries

### The significance of the site remained in the collective consciousness

Even after the end of Frisian Freedom the highly symbolic site remained in the common remembrance of the Frisian people for over 700 years. The disputes between the traditional estates and the Counts of East Frisia resulted in a transfiguration of the site from the end of the 16th century and the myth of Frisian Freedom was born.

21<sup>st</sup> Century

### A region enhances its identity

Since 2009 signs for tourists on the motorway A28 near Filsum and on the A31 near Neermoor point out Frisian Freedom as a unique phenomenon. Postcards, magnets and stickers with the ancient historic symbol can now be found world-wide.



1833

### The monument on the burial mound

In 1833 the Ostfriesische Landschaft erected the Upstalsboom monument on the medieval grave mound in the form of a pyramid.

1894

Over 60 years later in 1894 there followed a plaque with the inscription: "Erected on the site of the congregation of their forefathers, the Upstalsboom, by the East Frisian people in the year 1833".

20<sup>th</sup> Century

### The place which never was a thingstead

The National Socialists had plans to transform the Upstalsboom into a Germanic centre of cult worship, where nationalistic ceremonies and parades were to be held. It never came to this because the Ostfriesische Landschaft, as the owner of the site, did not implement these plans.