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FOSSIL FIELDS AND STONE GRAVE II AT UUSKÜLA, NORTH ESTONIA

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ANTIQUITIES OF UUSKÜLA

In connection with settlement archaeological studies going on in the area between the villages of Vihasoo and Palmse (Kadrina parish, North Estonia), the investigations of 1998 were carried out at Uusküla (Fig. 1). There were only two stone graves registered in this place earlier. One of these graves (I) contains *tarands* (i.e. rectangular enclosures) and, on the basis of an iron shepherd's crook pin (AI 4521), it was dated to the Late Pre-Roman period. The other grave (II) was regarded as a Late Iron Age grave-field, with cremations, but without inner constructions.

In 1996, a large complex of fossil field remains was discovered in the surroundings of these graves, north of the modern village. First trial excavations were carried out on these fields next spring and they yielded a radiocarbon date from the Late Iron Age. At the same time, the cultural layer of a settlement site was discovered between the houses of the modern village. According to finds collected during field-walking, from the surface of the cultural layer (AI 6195), the settlement site had to belong to the 13th–15th centuries, but the earlier centuries were not excluded either. Some iron smelting refuse found from the settlement layer indicated that there had also been an iron-smelting site nearby. Thus, the sequence and the character of finds of the Uusküla settlement closely resembled the Ilumäe

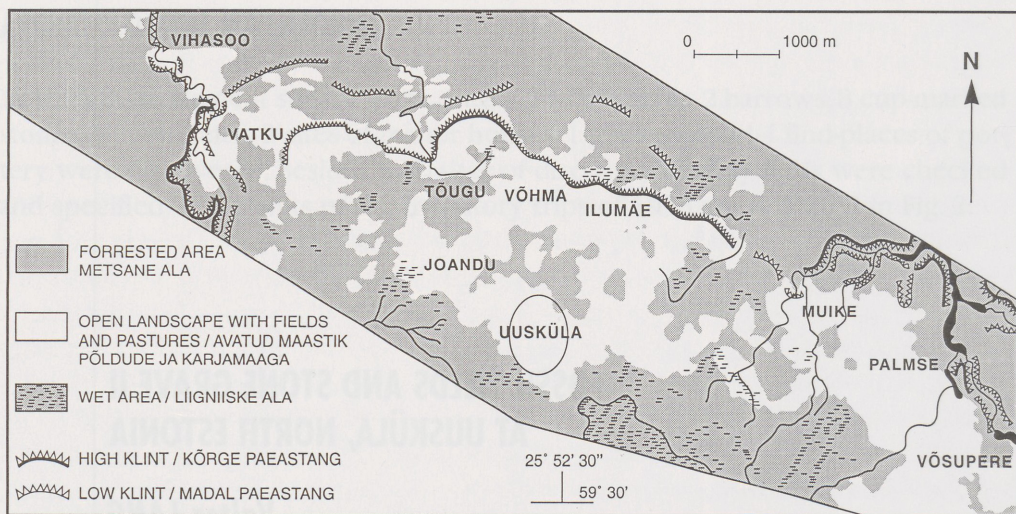


Fig. 1. Location of Uusküla. The ellipse surrounds the mapped area on Fig. 2.
 Joon. 1. Uusküla asend. Ellipsiga on ümbritsetud plaanistatud ala joonisel 2.



Photo 1. Stone baulk of Uusküla. Excavation No. 2.
 Foto 1. Kividest põllupeenar Uuskülas, 2. kaevand.

I settlement site located a few kilometres away and excavated in 1996 (Lang 1997).

In result of these inventories we had discovered a remarkable Late Iron Age – Early Medieval complex at Uusküla consisting of the settlement site, iron-smelting site, field system and probably even the grave-field. Therefore, the more detailed investigations of this locality looked very promising. In 1998, the field works were carried out in three stages: (1) the mapping of the whole complex, (2) additional excavations on the field remains to obtain wider and firmer basis for the dating, and (3) the excavation of one part of stone grave II.

THE FOSSIL FIELDS

The map of the antiquities at Uusküla is presented on Fig. 2. The majority of the mapped area (c. 40 ha) is covered with remains of fossil fields. There are five types of field remains: *clearance cairns*, long stony baulks (mostly covered with turf), stone walls (with uncovered stones), terrace edges and so-called negative lynchets. The number of clearance cairns in the mapped area is 745; they are located irregularly, very close to each other in some places (30–35 cairns per hectare) and more sparsely in others (5–10 cairns per hectare). Since the cairns usually consist of granite stones, they are rather big in size: 3–6 m in the diameter and 0.3–0.5 m in height. Due to extensive stone clearing in the 1950's (to get stones for building a Soviet military base), many cairns, as well as stone walls, lost most of their stones. Such cairns are only indicated by a few bigger bottom-stones sitting deep in the ground.

Stony *baulks* vary in their length and width. The majority of these baulks run parallel to each other in a NE–SW direction and divide the cultivated land into strips. One can see that the longest (470–640 m) and widest baulks in the middle portion of the common field divide it into three main strips that have a more or less similar width (80–85 m). Three more strips are located south-east of the former ones, but their fences are much shorter, only c. 250–300 m. These six main strips have been divided into narrower and smaller sub-strips and plots with additional (and shorter) baulks, terrace edges and negative lynchets. In the north-western part of this field complex, one can follow two more strips; yet, these are not fenced with complete baulks. One may suppose that the central three strips are the oldest units, the south-eastern ones are slightly later in origin and the two north-western strips still younger. It is known that at the beginning of the 20th century, there were eight hereditary farms in the village of Uusküla; thus, the final number of field strips corresponds to the number of farms.

The entire field complex is crossed by a 810 m long stone wall / baulk, which possibly has a rather late date. In the south-eastern corner of the complex, this wall is connected with an old road or cattle path fenced with two parallel stone walls. One may suppose that the function of this long stone wall was to keep cattle in or out of some certain areas.

Altogether *four excavations* have been carried out on the field remains up to now: the first of them was in 1997, two in the spring of 1998 and one in the summer of 1998. Three former excavations were made before the complex was mapped, and it occurred that they do not concern the main baulks but only addi-

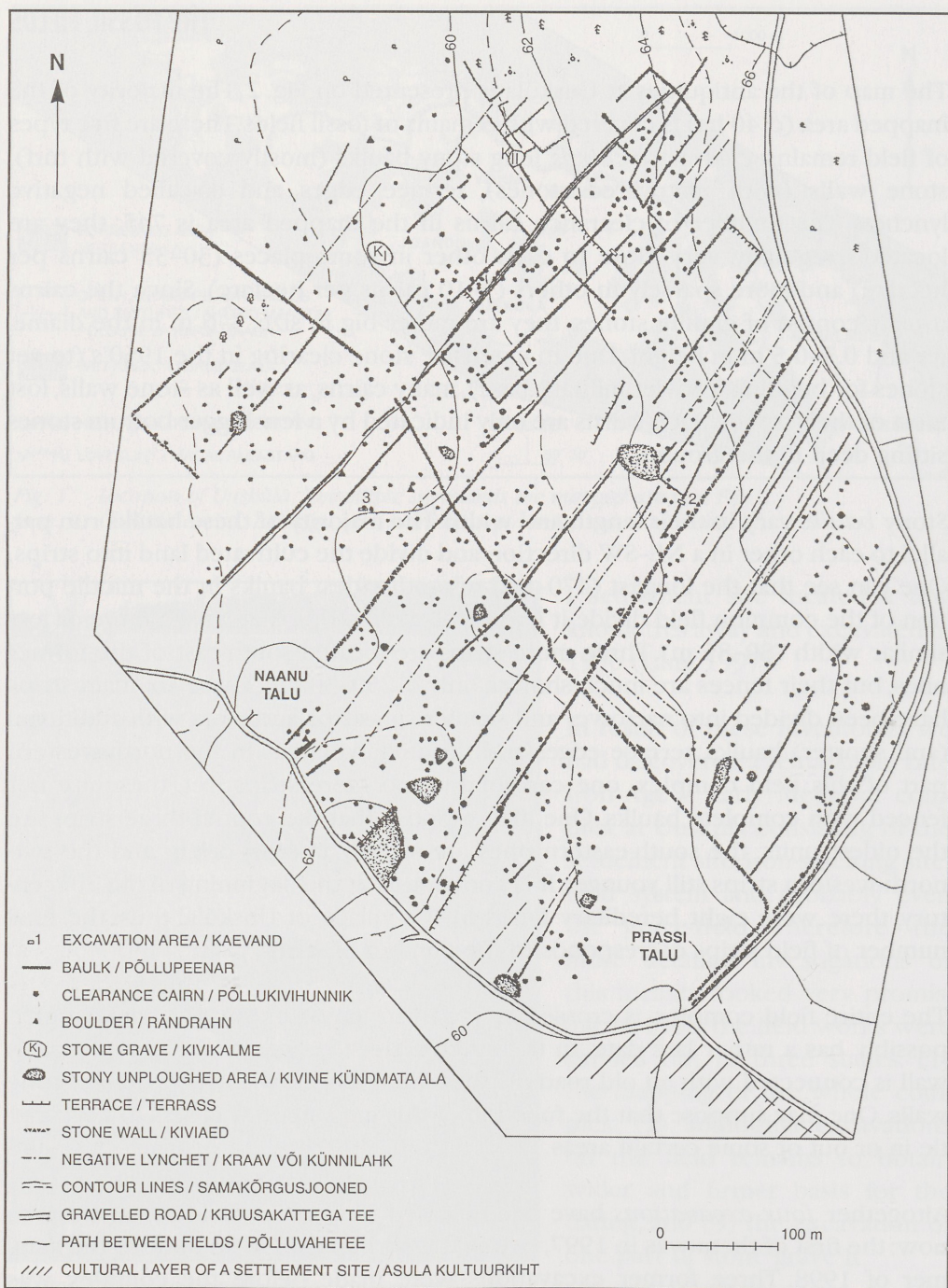


Fig. 2. Location of antiquities at Uusküla.

Joon. 2. Uusküla muististe asend.



Photo 2. Clearance cairn of Uusküla. Excavation No. 3.

Foto 2. Põllukivibunnik Uuskülas, 3. kaevand.

tional ones and a cairn. The fourth excavation was carried through during the excavation of stone grave II when two baulks, linked to the grave, were examined. The location of the excavations is presented on Fig. 2.

Two baulks were investigated by digging one-metre-wide trenches across them. Both baulks mostly consisted of granite stones; only a few limestone slabs were visible (Photo 1). Pieces of charcoal were found either between the central stones (No. 1) or beneath the lowermost stones (No. 2) of these baulks. This charcoal possibly originated either from burnbeating or initial slash-and-burn, and was dated to the Late Iron Age (samples Nos. 1 and 2, see table 1). The clearance cairn, c. 3 m in diameter, was only partly excavated (Photo 2). The uncovered area mostly consisted of granite stones, whereas the bigger stones were found in the lowermost and smaller stones in the uppermost layers. Pieces of charcoal occurred both between the lowermost stones and underneath them, and the collected sample was dated to the Medieval times (No. 3, table 1). Two baulks, the ends of which were uncovered when excavating the stone grave, were formed after the grave, as it became evident during the excavations. The pattern of field remains north of this grave has a different look – the baulks are very low (because they consist here mainly of limestone slabs) and the field plots small. Yet, the radiocarbon sam-

ple (No. 4, table 1) collected from one of these baulks proved that they do not differ from the others in the sequence.

One may conclude that the strip fields of Uusküla were established in the Late Iron Age, i.e. during the 10th–12th centuries at the latest. Cultivation was continued here through the Medieval and Modern times up to the beginning of the 20th century. Nowadays, this area is mainly used as a pasture for cattle and sheep.

Table 1. Radiocarbon dates from the strip fields of Uusküla.

Tabel 1. Uusküla ribapõldude C¹⁴ analüüside tulemused.

Sample	Lab. No.	Conventional C ¹⁴ years BP	Calibration (1 sigma) cal AD	Field remains
1	Tln-2218	1024±65	898-910 965-1050 1086-1118 1138-1158	baulk, excavation 1
2	Tln-2305	901±49	1044-1092 1114-1142 1156-1212	baulk, excavation 1
3	Tln-2307	500±59	1398-1466	baulk, excavation 1
4	Tln-2323	872±93	1042-1096 1114-1142 1154-1253	baulk, linked to grave II

THE STONE GRAVE

Stone grave II located in the northern corner of the field complex (Fig. 2) had a rather irregular shape and measured 16 x 13–14 x 0.2–0.6 m. The grave was covered with turf, yet the bigger granite stones were partly visible from the surface. Only the western and northern portion of the grave (c. 140 sq. m, i.e. 2/3 of the grave) was excavated in 1998.



Photo 3. Stone grave II of Uusküla. The uppermost layer of stones.

Foto 3. Uusküla II kivikalme, pealmine kivilade.

The uppermost stone cover beneath the turf consisted of both granite stones and limestone slabs, and was rather compact in its character (Photo 3). After the removal of this uppermost stone layer, it occurred that – opposite to our suppositions – this grave, too, contains rectangular enclosures, *tarands*. Hence, this could not be a Late Iron Age grave-field but a *tarand*-grave of the Pre-Roman or Roman Iron Age. The grave consisted of (at least) two *tarands*: a large quadratic enclosure A in the central part and a narrow enclosure B located south-west of the former (Photo 4). Since the main portions of *tarand* A stayed uncovered, it is not clear, whether there are any other *tarand*-like structures or not; presumably there are not. *Tarand* A was built first, it was orientated in a NW-SE direction and measured 8.7 x 9.1 m. The foundations of its walls consisted of granite stones put in three rows; such foundations were covered with limestone slabs. It is important to mention that these limestone slabs had fallen both outward and inward of the *tarand*; thus, the enclosure was not totally filled in with stones (as it usually has been the case in Estonia). *Tarand* B, measuring 9 x 2.2–2.7 m was built some time after *tarand* A. The walls of this enclosure consisted of stones put only in two rows; the north-western end-wall was not completed.

In the north-western part of *tarand* A, there was a small heap consisting of gravel

and earth, measuring c. 2 x 1.2 x 0.3 m. The entire heap was burned, and it contained much charcoal and some burned bones and stones. According to the radiocarbon date (No. 3, see table 2), this heap belonged to the Pre-Viking period. This is a very late date for this grave, but it was confirmed by several other radiocarbon dates achieved from this part of the grave (Nos. 1, 4-5, table 2). Thus, there has been some remarkable disturbance in this early grave during the period between the 7th and 12th centuries.

Table 2. Radiocarbon dates from stone grave II.

Tabel 2. II kivikalme C¹⁴ analüüside tulemused.

Sample	Lab. No.	Conventional C ¹⁴ years BP	Calibration (1 sigma) cal AD	Location
1	Tln-2325	1177±52	790-808 810-892 920-951	between the lower-most stones, NW part of tarand A
2	Tln-2326	502±48	1400-1448	NW part of tarand B
3	Tln-2324	1294±58	666-782	heap of burned gravel
4	Tln-2362	1149±71	796-798 816-844 854-980	NW part of tarand A
5	Tln-2363	982±63	1008-1062 1076-1126 1132-1160	NW part of tarand A

The majority of *burials* were cremated (there were 23.7 kg of burned bones), the amount of unburned bones was rather small (0.6 kg). According to Jonathan Kalman's analysis, at least 15 individuals were buried as cremations, and 3 individuals as inhumations. Both sexes and all age groups were represented, but clear-



Photo 4. Stone grave II of Uusküla. The constructions.
Foto 4. Uusküla II kalme konstruktsioonid.

ly identifying individuals (with sex and age) was impossible. Concerning the cremation burials, nests of bones and scattered fragments were both found, but most fragments were found in nests. Matching mandible pieces show that pieces of the same individual could be found as much as two metres away. Within large nests of bones several individuals were discernible, perhaps indicating that multiple bodies were either cremated or at least deposited together (Kalman, in print). Twenty grams of unburned animal bones were also found; they belonged to small birds, hare and cattle (determined by Liina Maldre).

Grave goods were rather poor. There were fragments from at least seven shepherd's crook pins of iron found from the excavated area (Fig. 3: 1-4). Such decorative pins were very popular in Estonia during the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age, but, in smaller numbers, they also occurred in later times (Lang 1996, 55; Lõugas 1971). Some of the Uusküla pins are extremely small in size. To the same period, probably, belongs a fragment of an iron knife (Fig. 3: 5). Such knives with curved blade are very rare in Estonia. There are only three knives of this type reported so far from our country, and they belong to the early Roman Iron Age (Schmiedehelm 1955, 82). The knives under question were mostly distributed during the Pre-Roman and Early Roman Iron Age in previous East Prussia and

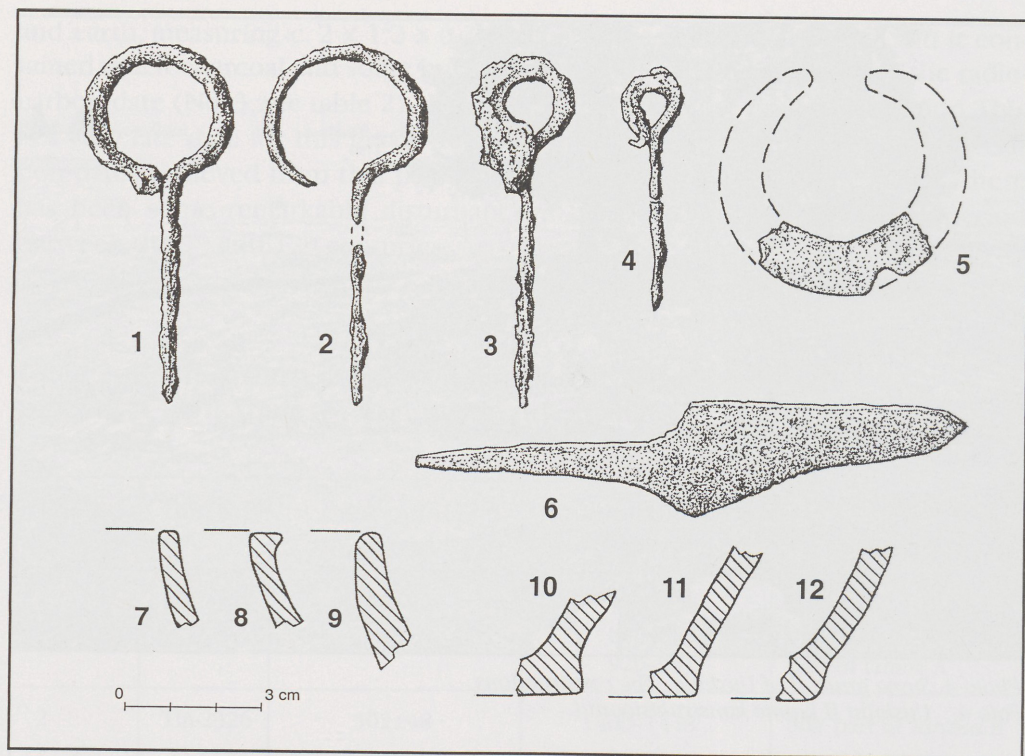


Fig. 3. Some finds from grave II of Uusküla.

1-4 shepherd's crook pins, 5-6 knives, 7-12 profiles of potsherds.

(AI 6342: 5, 38, 46, 31, 43, 20, 12a, 18, 47, 28, 39, 30.)

Joon. 3. Leide Uusküla II kalmest.

1-4 karjasekeppnõelad, 5-6 noad, 7-12 savinõukildude profilid.

North Germany, and they also occurred in Scandinavia (Kostrzewski 1919, 149-152, Fig. 143-147; Engel 1935, plate 141: d, 139: e; Salo 1968, 158, plate 26: 5). The knife from Uusküla seems to be a little smaller than the published counterparts. Another knife with a straight back (Fig. 3: 6) is of an ordinary type, yet, it should belong to the later times. This knife was found outside the grave structures, from the ruins of the grave.

Altogether 356 potsherds were gathered during the excavations. Whereas the majority of them came to light from behind the southern corner of *tarand* B, no pottery was found in the vicinity of burials. It seemed that all this pottery was originally located on the *tarand* wall or close to the wall, and fell outward together with this wall. The potsherds are very small in size and it was impossible to reconstruct the whole shape of any vessel. On the basis of rim sherds, temper and surface finish, one can still distinguish at least four vessels. One of these vessels

had textile-impressed surfaces, while both smoothed and slightly striated surfaces were characteristic features for the others. The shape of these vessels seems to be the same: a bellied body and reducing upper and lower parts (Fig. 3: 7-12). The ceramics of this kind were distributed in North Estonia during the (late) Pre-Roman and (early) Roman Iron Age (Lang 1996, Fig. 9: 1, 12: 1-2).

In addition to the finds just described, 67 pieces of quartz were collected from the excavation area. Clear traces of working are visible on many of these pieces, and there are even some quartz cores (nucleuses). The fragments of quartz were mostly found underneath the gravestones, from the original surface, and they can be interpreted as remains of a Stone Age (Mesolithic) site. Many quartz pieces and artefacts were also found from beneath the Võhma Tandemägi stone grave, located 1.3 km north of the Uusküla grave (Moora 1998, 16).

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of grave goods and pottery, the building of stone grave II of Uusküla can be dated to the later half of the Pre-Roman Iron Age. The oldest feature is textile-impressed pottery, which in North Estonia was in use during the period of stone-cist graves (Late Bronze Age - Early Pre-Roman Iron Age), but was already very rare in the early *tarand* graves of the Late Pre-Roman period. Such pottery was missing in the *tarand* graves both at Tõugu and Võhma located in the neighbouring villages. The comparisons with Võhma grave are particularly important because it also contained iron shepherd's crook pins in large numbers. In the period between the 7th and 12th centuries there was a remarkable disturbance in the grave, probably some new cremation burials without grave goods were put into the grave. Maybe the Uusküla grave offers a kind of solution to the problem of why we have so few graves from the second part of the first millennium in Estonia - cremations of that period were buried, perhaps, into older graves without noticeable grave goods.

This new usage of the grave was probably connected with the circumstance that the strip field system was established nearby. The radiocarbon dates from the field remains (table 1) are slightly later than the dates from the secondary usage of the grave (table 2). Yet, one has to keep in mind that the available dates from the fields originate from the fences, which were probably formed some time after the main baulks (see above); hence, the field system itself could be slightly (but not much) earlier. When exactly the settlement site (village) was established, is still unclear. However, it should belong to the same time period as the fields.

Thus, the surroundings of Uusküla were first inhabited in the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age, but no finds indicate the continuation of settlement during the Roman Iron Age and Migration period. It was only in the Pre-Viking and Viking period that Uusküla was settled again. The name *Uusküla* (i.e. New Village) itself originates, perhaps, from this second stage of inhabitation – it was “new” in comparison with earlier settlement around.

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MUISTSED PÖLLUD JA II KIVIKALME UUSKÜLAS

Valter LANG

1997. ja 1998. a. õpiti lähemalt tundma muististekompleksi Uuskülas (Kadrina khk., joon. 1). Varem oli siin teada kaks kivikalmet, millest ühte (I) peeti tarandkalmeks ja teist noorema rauaaja põletusmatustega kivivarekalmeks (II). 1996. a. avastati nende kalmete läheduses ulatuslik (40 ha) ribapõldude süsteem, mida uuriti 1997. ja 1998. a. Samuti leiti tänapäevase küla majade vahelt muistse asula kultuurkihti, mille künatud pinnalt koguti varakeskaegset keraamikat ning rauasulatamise jäänuseid.

Uusküla põllujäänustel (joon. 2) tehti proovikaevamisi neljas kohas: kahel peenral kompleksi keskosas (nr. 1 ja 2; foto 1), põllukivihunnikul (nr. 3; foto 2) ning II kalmega liitunud kahel hästi madalal peenral. Kõikides kaevandites esines kivide vahel ja all aletamisest või kütisest jäänud söetükikesi, mille radioaktiivse süsiniku dateeringud on esitatud tabelis 1. Uusküla ribapõllud on rajatud hiljemalt 10.–12. sajandil ning neid on kasutatud läbi kogu kesk- ja uusaaja.

1998. aastal kaevati läbi ka kaks kolmandikku (140 m²) Uusküla II kalmest (fotod 3–4). Selgus, et tegu ei ole noorema rauaaja kivivarekalmega, vaid juba eelrooma rauaaja teisel poolel rajatud varase tarandkalmega. Kalmes avastati kaks tarandit: suur ruudukujuline (8,7 x 9,1 m) tarand A ning selle edelaküljele ehitatud 2,2–2,7 m laiune tarand B. Surnud olid kalmesse maetud enamasti põletatult, J. Kalmani analüüsi kohaselt kokku 15 erinevas vanuses inimest. Laibamatuseid oli kolm. A-tarandi loodenurgas avastati u. 2 m pikkune, 1,2 m laiune ja kuni 0,3 m kõrgune kruusast ja paerähast koosnev kungas, mis oli tugevasti põlenud. Nii sellest künkast kui ka lähiümbrusest võetud söeproovid kuulusid ajavahemikku 7.–12. sajandini. Arvatavasti oli tollal kalmesse taas maetud, kuid ilma hauapanusteta. Kalme rajamise aegsed leiud (joon. 3) olid suhteliselt vaesed: leiti 7 rauast karjasekepp-nõela, haruldase rõngasnoa katke, üks ilmselt hilisema päritoluga nuga ning 356 savinõukildu vähemalt neljast eri nõust. Viimastest üks on välispinnalt kaetud tekstiilikoe vajutustega, teised on tasan-datud ja riibitud pindadega.

Niisiis on Uusküla piirkond olnud asustatud juba hiljemalt nooremal eelrooma rauaajal, kuid seni puuduvad tõendid selle asustuse jätkuvusest üle rooma rauaaja ja rahvasterännuaja. Nähtavasti asustati koht uuesti alles eelviikingi- või viikingiajal, kui kasutati mingil määral II kalmet ja rajati ribapõllusüsteem. Asula kultuurikihi vanuse alumist piiri me praegu ei tea, kuid nähtavasti ei ole see palju hilisem nimetatud ajast. Pole võimatu, et just selle teistkordse asustamise käigus saigi koht endale nimeks Uusküla.