



# **ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE PROPERTY OF THE GREAT GUILD IN TALLINN**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Archaeological investigations took place at the Great Guild Hall, Pikk Street 17 in Tallinn – the former property of the Great Guild of the merchants of Tallinn – during the renovation of the Estonian History Museum in 2009 and 2010. The investigations included the cellars, the courtyard and the passage known as Börsi Passage between properties 15 and 17 at Pikk Street.

## **THE HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY**

The Great Guild Hall, erected during the first decades of the 15th century, along with its courtyard, occupies the entire long narrow plot situated between the streets Pikk and Lai on the north-west – south-east axis. Before 1406–1407, when the building of the Great Guild Hall started, there was a stone house owned by Burgermaster Schotelmund on the Pikk street side and a maintenance building on the Lai street side, both of which have been demolished. In 1413, the Great Guild obtained what is now known as Börsi Passage, which became the main courtyard (Leimus *et al.* 2011, 265). The side of the property on Lai street, which is now the courtyard, was the Guild's garden. The building's cellars were built gradually. The large wine cellar was the first to be finished on the Pikk street side, and the five arched cellars were first mentioned in the 17th century (Leimus *et al.* 2011, 311). During the history of the Great Guild Hall, the cellars have been used for storage and as a wine bar. Since 1955, the cellars have belonged to the Estonian History museum.<sup>1</sup>

The layers of archaeological interest were influenced by numerous construction and repair work. There is information about work done during the 16th and 17th centuries, during which new stairs were built, the stone floor was replaced with wooden flooring, wooden sewage pipes and installed copper pipes were mended (Leimus *et al.* 2011, 311–314). In the final decades of the 19th century, a staircase leading to the courtyard was built in the southern wall of the Great Hall (Leimus *et al.* 2011, 385). The last extensive construction work before 2009 was at the beginning of the 1950s (Leimus *et al.* 2011, 400).

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS**

Even though the Great Guild Hall has a dignified past, it is one of the least studied buildings with a representative purpose in Tallinn. Archaeological investigations before the current one were only carried out in the summer of 1999, when at the request

<sup>1</sup> The first floor of the building belonged to the museum since 1952.

of the museum employees OÜ Agu EMS examined two profiles of the communications trench dug in the Börsi Passage, archaeological finds<sup>2</sup> were also collected. Preliminary archaeological investigations took place in August and September 2009 in the cellars to determine the existence of limestone floors and the preservation of the cultural layer (Sarv 2009). In March 2010, the dredging of the cellar began.<sup>3</sup> From May until October 2010, archaeological work continued in the courtyard and the Börsi Passage near the dredging for the new boiler foundation, the waterproofing of the building's foundations and the installation of new utilities.

Different methods were used due to the variety and different nature of the work. Supervision was carried out during all work in the cellar. Digging using the frontal method and supervision were combined in the courtyard according to the level of damage and the nature of the layers. New pipes were installed in the Börsi Passage in the same trench as the old ones. Therefore, only the material taken from the bottom of the trench was examined.

## THE CELLAR

### *The building before the Great Guild*

In the westernmost room of the cellar on the side near Pikk street, two walls on a north-westerly and south-easterly axis and two walls on a south-westerly and north-easterly axis were excavated from a layer of filling material (Fig. 1: 1). The walls were laid irregularly using large pieces of limestone and lime mortar. The limestone walls had mostly survived only on one level and in some places two or three levels high. Communication channels put there at a later

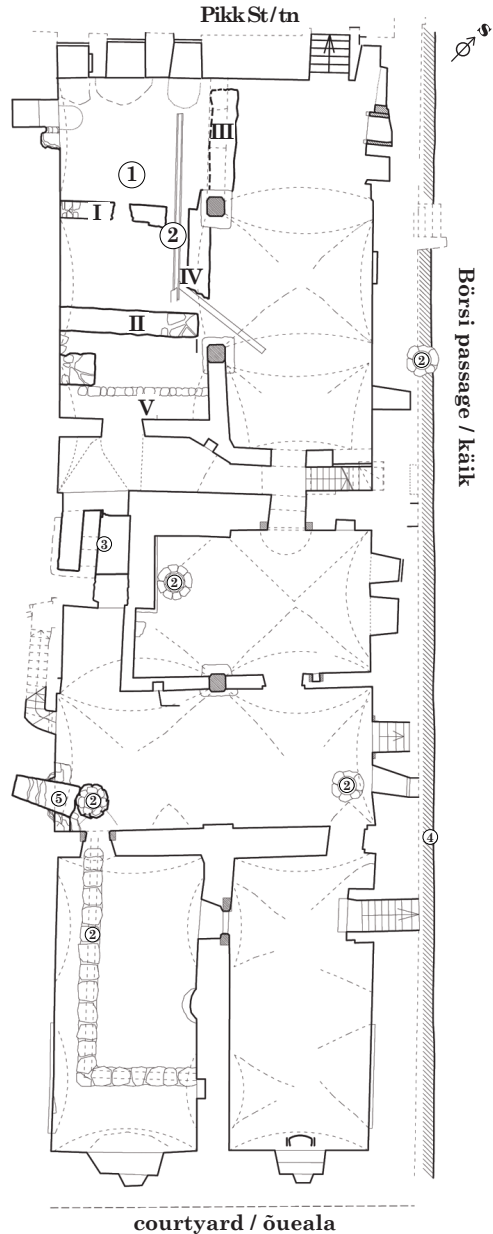


Fig. 1. The Great Guild Hall. 1 (I–V) – walls of the Schotelmund building, 2 – drainage wells and drains, 3 – hypocaust stove, 4 – a trench in Börsi Passage, 5 – medieval cultural layer.

Jn 1. Suurgildi hoone. 1 (I–V) – Schotelmundi hoone müürid, 2 – kuivenduskaevud ning kanalid, 3 – hüpokaustahi, 4 – tranšee Börsi käigus, 5 – keskaegne kultuurkiht.

Drawing / Joonis: Aime Andersson

<sup>2</sup> AM 900.

<sup>3</sup> A separate architectural study of the building was not conducted. Architectural identification in the cellar and upper floors was conducted by AS Restor.

date had damaged each wall. The width (0.8 – 0.9 m), the mortar used, the parallelism of the first and second wall and the fact that the lowest layer of rock had been laid at the same level (absolute height 15.95 m a.s.l.), provides evidence that the walls belonged to one and the same construction. Considering the level at which the wall had been laid, it is possible to add a 1.1 × 1.5 m floor-like limestone paving to the construction, which is straight behind the second wall (Fig. 1: V). From the positioning of the walls, it seems that the layout corresponds to a *diele* (hallway) of approximately 38 m<sup>2</sup> and a *dornse* of 22 m<sup>2</sup> at its rear. The limestone floor, which was exposed from the back of the building, marks the toilet of a *diele-dornse* type building. As one of the ends of walls I and IV reached under the base of one of the pillars of the Great Guild Hall building, it can be linked to the house belonging to Schotelmund, which had been situated on the property. The south-east-

erly wall of the earlier building was integrated into the wall of the new building to the height of three stone rows. The three cellar windows, which were side-by-side, one of them clearly wider, suggest how the building's previous façade may have looked like. The main entrance to the house had been above the larger central window. This supports the arguments that in 1406 the building was retreated from the street line during construction (Männisalu 1972, 7).

### ***The cultural layer***

A thin layer (approximately a square metre in size) containing a stave vessels with one or two hoops and shards of Siegburg stoneware<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 2), had been preserved in the centre of the building along the wooden drain which had run under the arch (Figs 3; 5) of the third cellar's western wall. The main layer of the cellar was 15–30 cm high made up mostly of pieces of bottle, fine glass dust and animal bones, and in places pieces of roof tiles and bricks and a layer of soil containing mortar that was all stratified on sandstone. Russian and Swedish copper and silver coins from the 17th and 18th century<sup>5</sup> were found in the foundations of the western part of the cellar on the Pikk street side – the Schotelmund building. On top of the aforementioned layer, the floors were tiled or concreted. Limestone tiles, which had covered the whole room, were extant in only three cellars on the Lai street side.



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|—|

Fig. 2. Siegburg stoneware.  
Jn 2. Siegburgi kivikeraamiline kann.  
(AM 1111: 5.)  
Photo / Foto: Krista Sarv

<sup>4</sup> Identified by Erki Russow (AI).

<sup>5</sup> AM 1111: 20.

### ***Draining systems***

Three wells for the collection of moisture with limestone formwork were found under the floor under the middle cellar (Fig. 1: 2).<sup>6</sup> Several fragments of stave vessels were found in two of the wells. The third well was filled with bottles from the 19th century and fragments of dishes. The north-western part of the guild hall revealed a major limestone drain leading into the south-eastern side room. In the side room the original drain together with later additions had been destroyed. Only the cut-out in the south-eastern end wall and a section of drain that led to the well in the inner courtyard had been preserved. The drain with limestone walls and floor was dredged into sandstone and covered tightly with large limestone slabs. A drain carved from a round log had partially survived. Since there was no stratigraphy available, it was not possible to tell when the wells and limestone drains were built. The finds suggested that at least one of them was closed sometime during the second half of the 19th century. Unfortunately the wooden drain was not sufficient to carry out dendrochronology.



*Fig. 3. The cellar of the Great Guild Hall. A medieval cultural layer had only survived under this arch.*

*Jn 3. Suurgildi hoone kelder. Selle võlvi all oli ainsana säilinud keskaegne kultuurikiht.*

*Photo / Foto: Vahur Lõhmus*

### ***The hypocaust***

A hypocaust stove (Figs 1: 3; 4) located in a separate stoker's room at the back of the wine cellar was unearthed. Only a single firebox with a brick arch and stones on top of it were left of the roughly 2.9 m high limestone stove. Archives proved the existence of a stove like that next to the existing construction. Therefore, it can be said that at first there was a 2.75 × 2.46 m hypocaust stove with two fireboxes, and a passage was knocked through its eastern side in 1950 (MKA, P-10, N 6904).

### ***The courtyard***

During the work, the entire surface of the courtyard (Fig. 5) was reduced by a metre. Three large holes were dug along the end wall of the Great Guild Hall and alongside the north-east wall of the side building (Fig. 5: 2). A massive limestone well (Fig. 5: 1) was found from the dig on the eastern side, and a limestone drain, which ran through a hole that had been made in the back wall, flowed into the well.

<sup>6</sup> Two of them are also exposed.



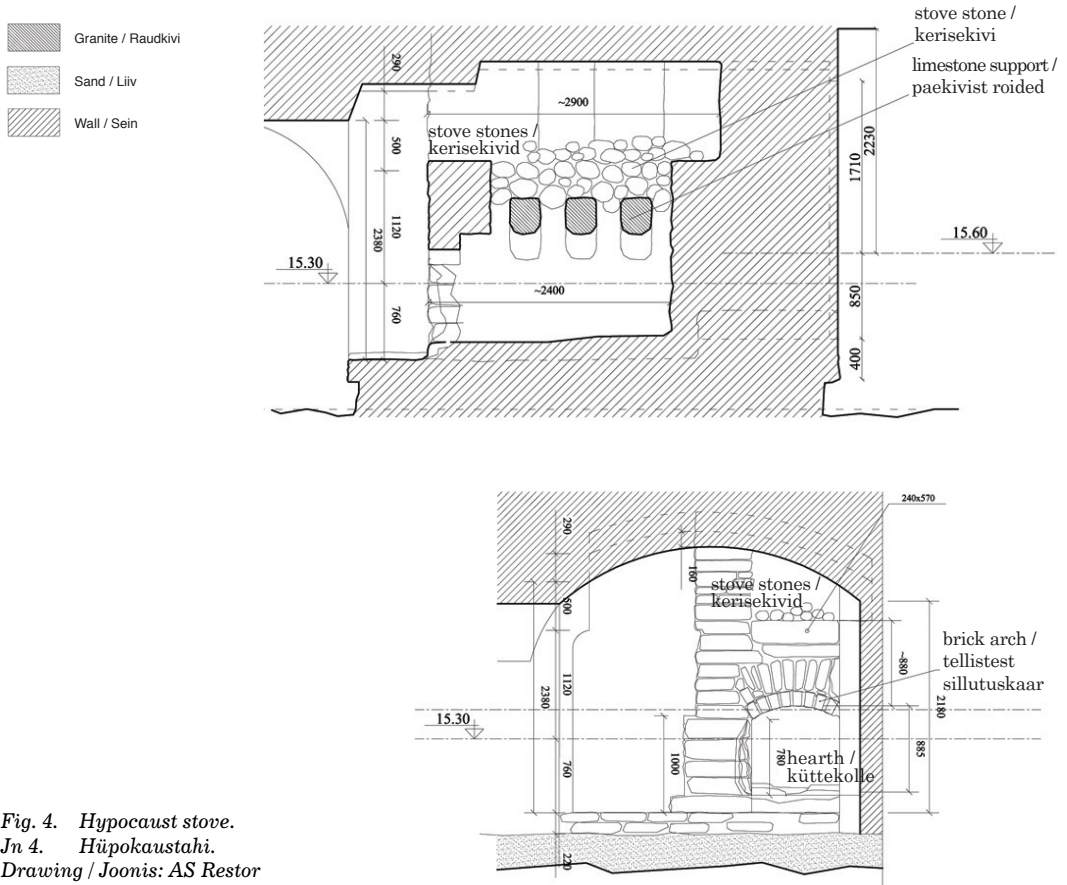


Fig. 4. Hypocaust stove.  
 Jn 4. Hüpokaustahi.  
 Drawing / Joonis: AS Restor

A more substantial 0.7 m wide limestone wall with a footing was found from the third dig from the foundation hole of the present boiler, along the wall of the side building (Fig. 5: 3). Both ends of the wall had been demolished. The highest part of the wall had survived at 1.6 m and it was built on a layer of humus, which was stratified on sandstone and buried under a filling layer of modern material.

1.5 m<sup>2</sup> of paving was found 0.5 m inside of the present-day garden wall. Pieces of imported ceramics from the 15th – 16th century and a piece of locally made wheel-thrown pottery<sup>7</sup> were found in the upper layers of the paving. There was a 50 cm thick layer of sand under the paving.

The whole area of the courtyard was covered by an even layer of soil approximately 1.3–1.5 m deep (Fig. 6), which included pieces of bricks and roof tiles, animal bones and ceramics. Most of the finds were from the Early Modern and the Modern period – pieces of a trivet with greenish brown and reddish brown glaze, and pieces of clay pipes

<sup>7</sup> AM 1111: 21.

<sup>8</sup> AM 1111: 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, 24.

as well as shards of 19th century porcelain.<sup>8</sup> There were solitary 5 cm wide strips of sand, and on the Great Guild Hall side, also strips of mortar that had fallen off the wall. Between the sandstone, which made up the bottom layer, and the layer described above, there was a layer of humus approximately 20 cm wide with no finds. It must be stressed that the layers on top of the sandstone were against the back wall of the Great Guild Hall.

### DISCUSSION

The wall and paving, which were found in the courtyard, are the most intriguing. The paving has been interpreted as the former footpath, which showed that before 1747, when the present wall was erected, the courtyard was smaller (Leimus *et al.* 2011, 321). The fragmentation of the square shaped limestone pile, the thick layer of sand underneath it and the positioning of the stones in many layers brought the aforementioned interpretation into question. The development of a historical street line and the fact that no more pieces of paving were found, suggest a different interpretation. It is likely that it was a building or another construction situated in the courtyard, which no longer existed after the 15th to the 16th century. It is not possible to tell the time when the building was erected because the sand layers under the construction were alternated with layers of humus with no finds. The capital wall evokes the same kind of questions. Specialists inspecting the site thought that the wall was a foundation for a shed. However, this is questionable because of the footing of the wall and its capital structure. The fact is that the wall was built sometime after the Great Guild Hall was built, because it stands on a layer of humus, which is along the side of the back wall of the Guild Hall. Unfortunately, it is not possible to date it more

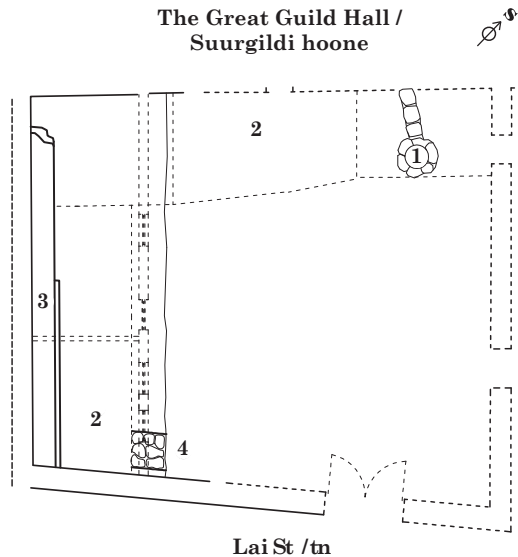


Fig. 5. The courtyard of the Great Guild Hall. 1 – well, 2 – borders of pits, 3 – wall, 4 – pavement.

Jn 5. Suurgildi hoone sisehoov. 1 – kaev, 2 – sissekaevete piirid, 3 – müür, 4 – sillutis.

Drawing / Joonis: Aime Andersson



Fig. 6. Cultural layer in the courtyard.

Jn 6. Kultuurkiht sisehoovis.

Photo / Foto: Vahur Lõhmus

exactly because the later building of the boiler has ruined some of the layers. Only the layer containing modern ceramics has survived.

It is remarkable that there are so few finds in the courtyard and that there is no cultural layer in the internal spaces. The latter can be explained by the building strategy – the planned foundation of the building was strong sandstone. When excavating it, all the former deposits were destroyed. The cultural layer of the courtyard corresponded to the function of the whole area – a courtyard for a public building. The building was a place for ceremonies and parties. Therefore, the courtyard was not used for active vital functions and it was exploited minimally, maybe as a small vegetable garden. For example, from what we know from the archives, they brought soil into the garden repeatedly in the 16th century (Leimus *et al.* 2011, 321).

### CONCLUSION

The research work at the Great Guild Hall in Tallinn was a unique opportunity to take a look at the archaeology of one public building and to create a comparison for the study of similar buildings in the future. The existence of buildings that predated the Great Guild Hall came to light in the form of the foundations of the Schotelmund merchant's house and the very small cultural layer in the centre of the current cellar. The substrate of the Great Guild Hall, commonly considered to be medieval through and through, completely lacked a medieval cultural layer. Of the architectural details, the best preserved was the medieval stoker's room with remains of the hypocaust stove. Descriptions of the other medieval architectural details do not fit within the scope of this article. The courtyard corresponded with the function of a public building. The courtyard lacked an intensive cultural layer and the structures that would suggest the existence of outbuildings. Among other things a toilet described in archival material remained undiscovered. Questions also remain regarding a section of the wall unearthed in the courtyard.

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**ARHEOLOOGILISED UURINGUD TALLINNA SUURGILDI KINNISTUL**

Krista Sarv

Eesti Ajaloomuuseumi remondi ja renoveerimistöde ajal toimusid 2009–2010 Pikk 17 endise Tallinna kaupmeeste Suurgildi kinnistul arheoloogilised välitööd, mis hõlmasid hoone keldreid, sisehoovi ning Pika 15 ja 17 vahel asuvat Börsi käiku. 15. saj alguskümnenditel püstitatud Tallinna Suurgildi hoone koos sisehooviga hõlmab kogu Pika ja Laia tänava vahelise kinnistu ning on üks vähem uuritud ühiskondlikke hooneid Tallinnas.

Pika tänava poolse keldri läänepoolsemast ruumist paljandusid täitekihi alt müürid (jn 1:V). Et müürid kuuluvad ühte konstruktsiooni, näitavad nende kokkulangev laius, kasutatud sideaine ja müüride paralleelsus. Samuti oli kõikide müüride alumine kivikiht laotud ühele tasapinnale. Müüri ladumistasapinna alusel saab konstruktsiooniga liita ka vahetult müür II taga asuva 1,1 × 1,5 m ulatuses säilinud paesillutisega põranda (jn 1: V). Müüride asetust vastab u 38 m<sup>2</sup> eeskoja – *diele* – ning selle taga asuva u 22 m<sup>2</sup> suuruse *dornse* – ruumijaotusele. Hoone taga leitud paepõrand markeerib *diele-dornse*-tüüpi hoonetele omast kemmergut. Kuna müüri I ja IV üks ots ulatus Suurgildi piilari baasi alla, siis saab neid seostada kinnistul asunud bürgermeister Schotelmundi elamuga.

Keldri keskosas, lääneseina läbiva võlvkäigu alt jooksva puitkanali (jn 3) ääres oli ainsana säilinud u 1 m<sup>2</sup> laiguna õhuke keskaegne kultuurkiht. Kihist leiti Sieburgi kivikeraamiliste veinikannude katkeid (jn 2) ning vitsiknõusid. Keldri peamise kihistuse moodustas liivakivile ladestunud 15–30 cm paksune enamasti pudelikatkeid, peent klaasipuru, loomaluid ning kohati katusekivide ja telliste tükke ning mörti sisaldav täitekiht.

Keskmise keldri põrandaaluse kihi alt paljandus kolm niiskusekogumiseks ehitatud paeraketisega kaevu (jn 1: 2). Kahest neist saadi hulgaliselt vitsiknõude katkeid. Kolmas kaev oli täidetud 19. saj pudelite ning üksikute nõude ja

küünlajalgade katketega. Gildihoone lõunapoolsemas osas paljandus kapitaalne paekanal, mis juhtis vee sisehoovis asunud kaevu. Gildihoone keldri Pika tänava poolses osas oli põranda all osaliselt säilinud ümarast palgist välja tahatud kanali jäänused.

Tööde käigus täpsustus veinikeldri taga eraldi kütteruumis asuva hüpokaustahju konstruktsioon (jn 4). Algselt oli see 2,75 × 2,46 m suurune paariskerishüpokaustahi, mille idapoolsemast osast murti 1950. aastal läbi käik.

Hooviala (jn 5) idapoolsemast sissekaevest paljandus massiivne paekivist kaev, kuhu suubus otsaseinast läbimurtud hoone sisene paekanal. Praeguse katlamaja vundamendiaugust leiti vahetult kõrvalhoone seina äärest kapitaalsem 0,7 m laiune sokliga paemüür (jn 5: 4; 6). Kolmanda objektina paljandus hoovi kaguosas, 0,5 m praegusest aiämüürist seespool 1,5 m<sup>2</sup> ulatuses kivi-sillutist (jn 5: 4). Sillutise pealsest kihist saadi 15.–16. saj keskpaika dateeritavat importkeraamikat ning kohaliku kedrakeraamika seinatükk. Tõenäoliselt on tegemist ühe õueaias asunud hoone või muu konstruktsiooni jäänusega. Kogu sisehoovi ala kattis suhteliselt ühtlane 1,3–1,5 m paksune mullakiht, mis sisaldas tellise ja katusekivide tükke ning loomaluid ja keraamikat (jn 7). Valdavalt oli tegu varauusaegsete ning uusaegsete graapeni katkete, üksikute importkeraamika ja savipiibu katketega ning 19. saj portselannõude kildudega.

Silmatorikav oli kultuurkihi leiuvaeus hoovis ja selle puudumine siseruumides. Viimane seletub ehitusstrateegiaga, kus rajatava hoone vundamentideks planeeriti ülitugev liivakivikiht, mille väljakaevamisel ladestunud kihtide alt hävitati varasemad ladestused. Sisehoovi kultuurkiht peegeldas kogu ala funktsiooni – ühiskondliku hoone õueaed. Kuna hoone oli pidude ja tseremooniate läbiviimise kohaks, siis puudus sisehoovis aktiivne elutegevus ning õueala ekspluateeriti minimaalselt, v-o juurviljaaiana.