



SALVAGE EXCAVATIONS ON THE EARLY MODERN AGE RURAL CEMETERY OF EASSALU (FORMER VANAKÜLA)

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INTRODUCTION

In June 2013, the National Heritage Board was informed that human remains had been found from a gravel pit in Eassalu village (Pärnu County, Audru parish) that is located on the site of Vanaküla village, effaced in the 1970s (Fig. 1). Inspectors of the National Heritage Board Ulla Kadakas and Nele Rent examined the situation and confirmed that the cemetery was not recent. As the cemetery was in the way of gravel excavation, was already half-damaged and in danger because of continuing excavation work, it was decided to investigate the remaining part of the cemetery archaeologically. The salvage excavations took place on June 13 and 14 under the supervision of Andres Tvauri and Anu Kivirüüt (Kivirüüt & Tvauri 2013).

Burials had come into sight in the western profile of the gravel pit (Figs 2–3). By the start of the salvage excavations, burials 1 and 2 were already partially excavated by the heritage inspectors. Additionally, grave 3 had also been partially cleaned and had been covered with plastic film. In order to find out where the other funerals could be located, the soil was removed with spades until the layer of untouched gravel to discover darker patches – grave pits. All the skeletons found in the grave pits were cleaned and documented. To ascertain that all the remaining burials had been excavated, a metal detecting device was used to find any additional burials.

FUNERARY CUSTOMS AND FINDS

Altogether, the graves of 10 individuals were excavated. The area of the cemetery and the number of burials had definitely been larger. The operator of the excavator

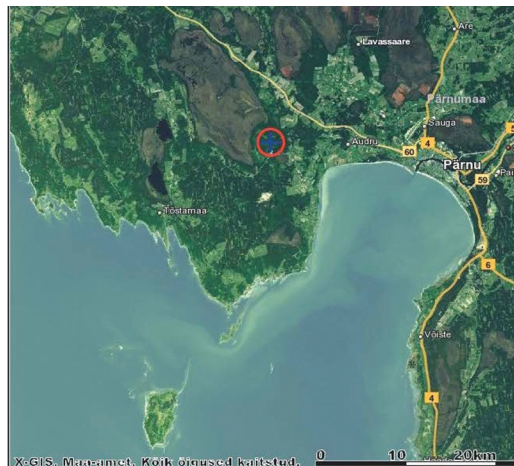


Fig. 1. The location of Eassalu-Vanaküla rural cemetery.

Jn 1. Eassalu-Vanaküla külakalmistu asukoht. Map / Kaart: Estonian Land Board / Maa-amet



Fig. 2. The salvage excavations of Eassalu-Vanaküla rural cemetery. View from the north.

Jn 2. Eassalu-Vanaküla külakalmistu päästekaevamised. Vaade põhja poolt.

Photo / Foto: Andres Tvauri

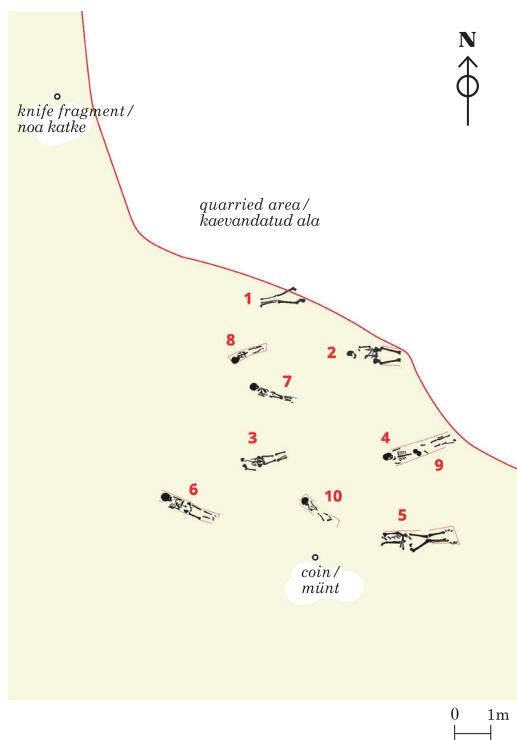


Fig. 3. The general plan of Eassalu-Vanaküla rural cemetery.

Jn 3. Eassalu-Vanaküla külakalmistu üldplaan.
Drawing / Joonis: Peeter Tvauri

who discovered the skeletons told us that the bones, which had been collected before the archaeologists arrived, had been located 30–40 metres north of the excavation site. Therefore, it was assumed that most of the cemetery had been destroyed while quarrying.

Based on the timber slat fragments found around the skeletal remains, all the dead had been buried in wooden coffins. Nine of the excavated inhumations had their heads towards the west, only one towards the east. All the dead, except burial no. 10, which was placed on its left side, were in the grave in supine position and stretched. The depth of the burials was not estimable as the top layers had been removed during the quarrying process.

There were 43 finds unearthed during the salvage excavations¹, 41 of which were coins: other types of grave goods were absent. A textile fragment unearthed close to grave 7 was also registered as a find and a knife, which was not connected to any of the burials, was also unearthed from the cemetery area. The coffin nails which were found close to the inhumations and from the areas in between the graves were documented, but not collected for preservation.

Nine out of ten burials had coins as grave goods. The person with the most coins was burial 2. Based on the osteological material, the individual was a woman, aged at least 45 years. 14 schillings that had been minted during the Swedish rule (the youngest dated from the year 1665) were found close to her innominate bones. The coins were mostly placed close to the hips and thighs or head (Fig. 4). As an exception, a 1/6 öre of 1666 had been placed close to the elbow of burial 8 and based on the timber fragments it seemed that the coin had been put between the edge and the lid of the coffin.

¹ PÄMu 26465 / A 2672: 1–43.

Of the 41 coins collected, 40 were found as grave goods of the burials. The oldest of them was a silver coin found close to burial 10. It was rather poorly preserved, but there was no doubt that it was a duke Magnus *ferding* minted in Kuressaare between 1564 and 1565. From the same grave five 1/6 copper *öre*, the youngest of which dates from 1683, were found. While finding the silver coin, a hole in its edge was observable, but the hole had disappeared during the cleaning process. Therefore, it was presumably used as a pendant that was no longer used as money at the time it incurred in the grave.

The same could be said about the second oldest schilling that had been struck in 1598 in the name of Sigismund III Vasa, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. The schilling was found next to burial 8 together with a copper 1/6 Swedish *öre* from 1666.

The most widely spread coin type at Eassalu-Vanaküla – 26 finds – were the schillings struck under the rules of Swedish queen Kristina and kings Karl X Gustav and Karl XI by Polish monetary standard. The youngest of these schillings have been struck in 1665, which was the last year that kind of coins was minted. Twelve of the schillings have been minted by the town of Riga and 11 are Livonian schillings that have been minted in the Swedish Royal Mint in Riga. The rest of the schillings were too damaged to be more specifically determined. Also 1/6 copper *öre* were found, the youngest of which bears the year 1683. In addition to that, a 1/4 copper *öre* minted during the reign of queen Kristina (1632–1654) was unearthed, but its reverse was so badly damaged that the year was not readable. On the obverse, one of the crowns of the state coat of arms is visible, which indicates that it had been minted in 1634 in Nyköping.² The copper coin found near burial 3 was very oxidized, but based on its size it can be said that it was a Swedish copper coin – a 1/4 *öre* that was minted since the time of queen Kristina or a later 1/6 *öre*.

As nine out of ten excavated burials contained coins, the year before which the burial could not have been inhumed can be estimated. The dates are as follows: 1633 (burial no. 3), 1634 (burial no. 1), 1663 (double burial nos. 4 and 9), 1666 (burial no. 8), 1671 (burials no. 5 and 7), 1683 (burial no. 10).

Based on the coins the burials date from the time after 1633 until maybe the beginning of the 18th century. As only one of the burials had been intercut by another, it can be stated that the cemetery was used for a rather short period as the location of the graves had been visible or known during the whole usage period of the cemetery.

HUMAN REMAINS

The inhumations excavated in Eassalu-Vanaküla rural cemetery were recorded and analysed by Anu Kivirüüt. Altogether, the remains of 19 individuals were distinguished³: ten of which were recovered during the salvage excavations and were intact and well



Fig. 4. Burial no. 6 of Eassalu-Vanaküla rural cemetery. View from the south.

Jn 4. Eassalu-Vanaküla külakalmistu matus nr 6.
Photo / Foto: Andres Tvaari

² <http://kopparmynt.com/k.php>.

³ For the determination of age, sex and pathologies, standard methods were used (Trotter 1970; Ferembach *et al.* 1980; Lovejoy 1985; Ubelaker 1989; Brooks & Suchey 1990; Schaefer *et al.* 2009).

preserved and nine individuals were identified from the commingled remains that had been found before from the cemetery area.⁴ Four of the uncovered skeletons belonged to adults: two men and two women. One of the men had died at the age of 24–30; the other was 40–50 years old. The age of one of the women was not determined, but the other was at least 45 years old. The children found in the graves were aged 1–3 (burial no. 9), 2–3 (burials no. 8 and 10), 3–5 (burial no. 7), 3–6 (burial no. 3), 6–8 (burial no. 6) years. Comprising the excavated skeletal remains and the ones found before, there were at least six men, five women and eight children buried in the cemetery. The age and sex composition is characteristic to Early Modern Age rural cemeteries and rural churchyards – the number of men and women was similar and mortality among children was high (e.g. Allmäe 1998; Heapost 1993; Malve *et al.* 2012; Roog & Malve 2013).

The body height could be determined for four more fully preserved adult individuals, based on their long bone measurements, the average height for women was 157 and for men 167 cm (Trotter 1970). Several skeletal elements showed signs of periostitis, which refers indirectly to nutritional, activity- or trauma-related stress (Ortner & Putschar 1985, 132). Three of the children showed *cribra orbitalia* and three individuals displayed linear dental enamel hypoplasia, which both also indicate nutritional stress. At least three individuals had dental caries and five individuals, including children, had dental calculus. The adult bones showed signs of physical work-related stress (e.g. Schmorl's nodes) (Waldron 2009, 45). This, too, is characteristic to Early Modern Age rural cemeteries and rural churchyards (Allmäe & Limbo 2010).

EASSALU-VANAKÜLA CEMETERY ON LANDSCAPE

There are records of ten rural cemeteries on the historical parish of Audru (Haav 2011, 11). Eassalu-Vanaküla cemetery was not among them. The Eassalu quarry is situated in a forest between two bogs. Marking the location of the cemetery on the historical map application of the Estonian Land Board⁵, it appears that the cemetery was located on



Fig. 5. Location of Eassalu-Vanaküla rural cemetery on a map from the second half of the 17th century.

Jn 5. Eassalu-Vanaküla külakalmistu asukoht 17. saj teise poole kaardil.

(EAA 308-2-15, p. 1)

the eastern side of the former Vanaküla village that was liquidated in the 1970s. A preserved 17th century map, contemporary to the cemetery, of the northern area of the Pärnu County (Fig. 5) does not depict the cemetery, but comparing the map with more recent ones, the cemetery can be positioned in the forest east of the village. The clustered village is depicted on the *verst* scale (1:42000) map of the Russian Empire from the beginning of the 20th century and all the households with fields surrounded by stone fences are well visible. The cemetery was located only a few hundred metres away from the closest households. Today, the area of the former village centre is covered with forest and in 2010 a gravel pit was opened east of the site.

⁴The bones of the individuals found from their original graves are stored in the bone depot of the Institute of History and Archaeology of the University of Tartu.

All of the formerly known ten rural cemeteries in Audru parish are connected to a certain village, located up to a kilometre from the cemetery (Haav 2011, 11, fig. 1). The same can be said about the whole Läänemaa County, where most of the rural cemeteries are located 400–1000 metres from the settlement (Haav 2011, 35). The distance between the village and the cemetery in southern Estonia is around 100–500 metres; it rarely exceeds 1000 metres (Valk 2001, 29). Therefore, considering the age and sex composition, funerary customs and location, Eassalu-Vanaküla burial place can be classified as a typical Western Estonian Early Modern Era rural cemetery.

EASSALU-VANAKÜLA CEMETERY ON THE CONTEXT OF WESTERN ESTONIAN RURAL CEMETERIES

Rural cemeteries are a rare phenomenon in medieval and Early Modern Europe: the tradition was to bury the dead in a churchyard. Cemeteries which are located separately from the church lands, in the villages and illegal in the eyes of the Church are mostly known from the area of medieval Old Livonia (i.e. Early Modern Estonian and Livonian provinces). Rural cemeteries are especially spread in southern Estonia where altogether 1159 of such burial places are known from the historical Tartu, Viljandi and Võru Counties (Valk 2001, 18). Most of these archaeologically investigated cemeteries are also situated in southern Estonia. In northern Estonia (Harju, Järva and Viru Counties), as of the early 1970s, there were 433 known rural cemeteries (Lavi 1974, 21).

Allar Haav (2011) has written his BA dissertation about the rural cemeteries of historical Läänemaa and three northwestern parishes of Pärnumaa (Tõstamaa, Audru and Pärnu-Jaagupi). According to his data, there were archaeological or folkloric evidence about 229 rural cemeteries before the discovery of Eassalu-Vanaküla burial place. Merely six of these cemeteries, three of which are situated in northern Pärnumaa, have been archaeologically excavated (Haav 2011, 5). As western Estonian rural cemeteries have not been much studied, the addition of the ten investigated Eassalu-Vanaküla burials is an important addition to the dataset.

The cemetery of the western neighbouring village of Eassalu, Soomra was investigated when human remains were unearthed on the edge of a sand pit in 1989. Heiki Valk conducted the excavations and altogether nine inhumation burials were cleaned and documented. Only two of the burials had grave goods⁶: one had a glass bead necklace and the other burial had two coins. Additionally, 29 glass beads and a sewing needle of iron were found from the mixed soil. All of the five found coins were schillings that were minted under the Swedish rule in Riga (Valk 2005).

Aita Kustin unearthed eight burials from the rural cemetery in the market town of Tõstamaa in 1955 (Kustin 1956). According to the locals, at least a few dozen skeletons had been vandalized in the process of extracting gravel. There were few finds⁷: a bronze penannular brooch with rolled ends, yellow seed beads, tin beads and a silver sheet pendant. Among the finds there were 49 coins, whereas only four of the coins were found close to the inhumations: two burials had been given two 16th-century coins each. A remarkable find, not associated with any of the burials, was a cluster of 45 coins 40 cm deep in the soil. There were solitary medieval scherfs of the Bishopric of Dorpat, most of the coins were minted in the second half of 16th century, and 29 of these were schillings of the Free City of Riga (1561–1581).

⁶ Location of the finds is unknown.

⁷ AI 4121.

The rural cemetery of Mõisaküla Margu in Pärnu-Jaagupi parish was excavated by the members of the Pärnu Society for Antiquities (*Altertumforschende Gesellschaft zu Pernau*) in 1897. Late Iron Age cremation burials and inhumation burials from the historical era were discovered (SB Pernau 1899, 15–89). The finds that definitely reached the Pärnu Museum were lost during WWII; merely descriptions of the Iron Age finds have survived (Schmiedehelm 1927⁸). Other excavations on the site were conducted by Anton Pärn in 1986, when 49 inhumation burials were unearthed. The burials were at the depth of 0.5–1 metres from the topsoil. The remains of coffins were found around seven burials; the dead had been placed in the graves supine and stretched with their hands on chest or stomach. The burials were mostly placed with their heads towards west; only three inhumations had their heads towards north (Pyarn 1988, 357–359). The material collected in 1986 comprised only a few Early Modern Age finger-rings and knives in addition to the Iron Age finds. There were 34 coins dating from the later usage period of the cemetery, 21 of those can be associated with certain burials. The earliest coins were minted in the first half of the 16th century and as from Eassalu-Vanaküla, the majority of the coins from Mõisaküla Margu was small change: 18 schillings struck under the Swedish rule in the 17th century in Riga, 3 1/4 öre struck during the reign of queen Kristina of Sweden and 5 1/6 öre minted during the reign of king Karl XI of Sweden.

The Eassalu-Vanaküla cemetery is very similar to other western Estonian rural cemeteries both by its location and funerary customs. The lack of artefact finds, even of items that were used to fasten clothes is observable. The only and abundant type of finds was coins that are the most common finds from the cemeteries of the mainland western Estonia. Medieval coins are rare, most of the monetary finds date from the 16th – 17th centuries (Haav 2011, 51). Jewellery, fragments of garments and other items are rarely found from the western Estonian rural cemeteries. The scantiness of finds can be considered as a local particularity, which clearly distinguished the area from south-eastern Estonia where most of the graves contained brooches, finger-rings, beads, knives, and in fewer numbers clothes' clasps, pipes, sewing needles, needle cases, etc.

The set of coins from Eassalu-Vanaküla is also expressive: most of the coins were schillings that had been minted in Riga in the name of the Swedish rulers, but on the Polish monetary standard. Another frequent coin type was the copper 1/6 öre from the years 1666, 1667, 1671 that had been struck in Avesta, Sweden.

Based on the coin hoards from the years 1660–1680 of Estonia and Latvia it is known that the schillings that had been minted in Riga were in circulation in the province of Livonia that comprised the nowadays Võrumaa, southern Tartumaa, southern Viljandimaa, southern and north-western Pärnumaa, southern Läänemaa and Saaremaa. North to the aforementioned areas only 1/4 and 1/6 öre that had been struck on the Swedish monetary standard were in circulation, whereas the copper öre were not in use in the south (Kiudsoo 2000, fig. 3; 2002, 37–38). As no coin hoards dating from 1660–1690 or the period of the Great Northern War in the beginning of the 18th century are known from north-western Pärnumaa, it remains unknown whether the Swedish copper coins were in circulation in the area at that time. Therefore, the monetary finds from Eassalu-Vanaküla as well as Mõisaküla-Margu give important information about the currency usage in the area of Audru parish: the coins from both cemeteries indicate that after 1666 the Swedish 1/6 öre came into circulation in northern Pärnumaa.

⁸ The exact year is not known.

In the material unearthed from Eassalu, there is no answer to the question whether the small change struck on the Swedish and Polish monetary standards was in circulation concurrently. Taking the two pendant coins of earlier periods not into account, four of the Eassalu-Vanaküla graves (burials 2, 4/9, 5, 7) contained only schillings from Riga and four burials (1, 3, 8, 10) were accompanied by only Swedish copper *öre*. Only burial 5 had two Livonian schillings from 1664 and 1665 and a 1/6 *öre* coin from the year 1671. Therefore it seems that until 1665, when the production of small change in Riga was terminated, the Swedish *öre* were not in circulation in northern Pärnumaa. After the year 1665 the coins struck on the Swedish monetary standard replaced the previously popular Livonian / Riga schillings. This process could have been accelerated by the fact that the mass production of the Livonian/Riga schillings and the beginning of the production of copper schillings in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth reduced the price of the aforementioned small change below the value of the used metal (Platbärzdis 1968, 233f).

Based on hoard finds, it is known that in the Estonian part of Livonia both the schillings of Livonia/Riga and of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth played an important role in the currency flow even during the Great Northern War (Kiudsoo 2002; 41; 2007, 29). Therefore, it is possible that the studied inhumations have been buried in the beginning of the 18th century.

SUMMARY

The remains of Eassalu-Vanaküla Early Modern Age rural cemetery were excavated and studied in 2013. The excavation was necessary as the burial place was on the grounds of a modern gravel quarry. Altogether, the remains of 19 individuals were unearthed. Ten of these individuals were excavated by archaeologists and nine were identified from the commingled remains. The age and sex composition was characteristic to rural cemeteries: six men, five women and eight juvenile individuals. Several of the buried showed signs of malnutrition, dental calculus and caries and changes on the bones referring to hard physical labour.

Based on the remains of timber and iron nails in the soil, the individuals were buried in coffins. Nine of the individuals were headed west and only one to the east. The only recorded goods were coins: Livonian schillings, Swedish *öre* and two earlier pendant coins. Based on these finds, the graves can be dated to the second half of 17th century or the beginning of the 18th century.

Of the 41 coins underneath from the cemetery of Eassalu-Vanaküla, 40 were found as grave goods. Most of the coins were schillings that had been minted in Riga in the name of the Swedish rulers, but on the Polish monetary standard. Another frequent coin type was the copper 1/6 *öre* from the years 1666, 1667, 1671 that had been struck in Avesta, Sweden. The analysis of the found coins and comparison with the finds from other excavated rural cemeteries from northern Pärnumaa helped to elaborate and specify the usage and distribution range of small coins that have been struck in Polish or Swedish monetary standard. The coins from the cemeteries Eassalu-Vanaküla as well as Mõisaküla-Margu indicate that after 1666 the Swedish 1/6 *öre* came into circulation in northern Pärnumaa.

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PÄÄSTEKAEVAMISED PÄRNUMAAL EASSALU (ENDISE VANAKÜLA) VARAUUSAEGSEL KÜLAKALMISTUL

Andres Tvauri ja Anu Kivirüüt

2013. a avastati Pärnu maakonnas Audru vallas (Audru khk) Eassalu külas asuvas kruusakarjääris, mis paikneb 1970. aastatel likvideeritud Vanaküla küla alal, seni teadmata külakalmistu (jn 1). Kalmistu säilinud osal korraldatud uuringuid juhatasid Andres Tvauri ja Anu Kivirüüt. Puhastati välja ja dokumenteeriti kümne inimese hauad (jn 2–3). Algselt on kalmistu ala ja seega ka maetute hulk olnud siiski palju suurem.

Puidujäänuste ja kirstunaelte põhjal otsustades olid kõik surnud maetud kirstus. Uuritud matustest olid üheksa suunatud peaga läänekaartesse, vaid üks ida poole. Kõik luustikud, v.a nr 10, mis paiknes hauas külili, asetsesid selili väljasirutatud asendis. Matmissügavuse kohta käesolevate uuringutega andmeid ei saadud, kuna maapinna pealmised kihid olid karjääri kasutamiselevõtu käigus eemaldatud.

Eassalu külakalmistu päästekaevamiste käigus koguti 43 leidu, neist 41 matusepanusteks olnud mündid; muud panused maetute juures puudusid. Leiuna võeti üles ka matuse nr 7 juures säilinud tekstiilikatted. Kalmistu alalt saadi juhuleiuna vaid ühe noa katke. Matuste juurest ja haudade vaheliselt alalt leitud rauast kirstunaelad dokumenteeriti, kuid neid üles ei võetud.

Münste leidis kümnest matusest üheksa juures. Matuse nr 2 (luude põhjal üle 45-aastane naine) puusade juurest saadi 14 Riias Rootsi võimu ajal löödud killingit, millest noorimad kannavad aastaarvu 1665. Haudades asetsevad rahad enamasti surnute reie- ja vaagnaluude või pea piirkonnas. Erandiks oli maetu nr 8 vasaku küünarnuki juures avastatud 1666. a 1/6-öörine Rootsi vaskraha, mis seda ümbritsenud puidujäänuste põhjal otsustades on paiknenud kirstu serva ja kaane vahel.

Leitud 41 mündist asusid 40 panustena matuste juures. Müntidest vanim on matus nr 10 reieluu juurest leitud hõbedast ripatsmünt: aastatel 1564–1565 Kuressaares löödud hertsog Magnuse veering. Samast hauast leiti panustena viis vasest Rootsi 1/6 öörist, millest noorim kannab aastaarvu 1683. Ka matuse nr 8 juurest leiti koos 1666. aastal löödud vasest Rootsi 1/6-öörise ja Riias Poola kuninga ja Leedu suurvürsti Sigismund III Vasa nimel löödud killing aastast 1598. Arvatavasti polnud need varased vermingud hauda sattumise ajal enam mündina käibel.

Münditüüpidest kõige arvukamalt – 26 – leiti kalmistult Riias Rootsi valitsejate võimu all Poola mündialusel löödud killingeid (hiliseimad aastast 1665). Killingitest 12 on löödud Riia linna rahapajas ja 11 Riias paiknenud kroonu müntlas. Rootsis Avesta müntlas löödud 1/6-ööriseid vaskrahasid leiti kokku 10, need pärinesid aastatest 1666–1683. Lisaks leiti üks kuninganna Kristiina valitsusajal (1632–1654) Rootsis vermitud 1/4-öörine vaskraha, mis ilmselt on löödud 1634. aastal Nyköpingis. Matuse nr 3 juurest leiti oksüdeerunud vaskmünt, mõõtmete põhjal Rootsi 1/4 või 1/6 öörine.

Kuna kalmistul uuritud kümnest matusest üheksa juures oli münste, võib nende põhjal öelda aasta, millest varem konkreetne matus maasse jääda ei saanud. Sellisteks datumiteks on: 1633 (nr 3), 1634 (nr 1), 1663 (nr 4 või 9), 1665 (nr 2 ja 7), 1666 (nr 8), 1671 (nr 5 ja 7) ja 1683 (nr 10). Kuna uuema matustega oli varasemat lõhutud vaid ühel juhul, võib oletada, et kalmistu oli kasutusel lühikest aega.

Eassalu-Vanaküla kalmistult avastatud luustikud dokumenteeris ja luustikke määras Anu Kivirüüt. Kindlalt võis eristada 19 inimese säilmeid, neist kümme leiti päästekaevamistel ja üheksa tuvastati kalmealalt leitud segatud luude põhjal. Oma asukohal dokumenteeritud skelettidest kuulusid neli täiskasvanutele, kellest kaks olid olnud mehed (vanus surmaaajal 24–30 ja 40–50 a) ja kaks naised (üks üle 45 a, teine määramatu). Uuritud lapseluustike vanused olid vahemikus ühest kaheksa aastani. Kokku oli kalmistul tuvastatud inimeste hulgas mehi 6, naisi 5 ning lapsi 8. Maetute selline vanuseline jaotus oli varauusaegsetel maakirikute ja külakalmistutel tavaline – surnute seas oli võrdselt mehi ja naisi, enim lapsi ning vähem täiskasvanuid.

Kehapikkust sai määrata vaid üksikutel maetutel, kuid selle põhjal oli naiste keskmine pikkus u 157 cm, meestel u 167 cm. Suurel osal maetutest esines luuümbrise põletikku. Samuti oli kolmel lapsel avastati *cribra orbitalia* ning kolmel indiviidil oli hammaste peal märgata horisontaalseid stressijooni, samuti esines Schmorli sõlmi.

Ajaloolise Audru kihelkonna alal oli varem andmeid kümne külakalmistu kohta. Eassalu-Vanaküla kalmistu nende hulgas polnud. Pärnumaa põhjaosas 17. sajandi II poole kaardile (jn 5), kalmistut märgitud pole, kuid kõrvutades seda hilisemate kaartidega võib selle ligikaudselt paigutada 1970. aastatel likvideeritud Vanaküla külaväljast ida poole metsa. Seega võib Eassalu kalmistut matuste ealise ja soolise jaotuse, matmiskombestiku ja asukoha poolest lugeda Lääne-Eestile tüüpiliseks varauusaegseks külakalmistuks.

Külakalmistud on Euroopa kesk- ja varauusaegses kultuurikontekstis erandlik nähtus: reegliks oli sur-nud matta kirikute juurde kirikuaedadesse. Ajaloolise Läänemaa mandriosa ja Pärnumaa kolme põhjapool-sema kihelkonna (Tõstamaa, Audru ja Pärnu-Jaagupi) alal oli enne Eassalu-Vanaküla kalmistu leidmist arheoloogilisi või pärimuslikke teateid 229 külakalmistu kohta. Vähegi arvestatavas mahus ja teaduslikul tasemel oli kaevamisi tehtud neist vaid kuuel kalmistul, neist asuvad Pärnumaa põhjaosas Soomra (1989. a, 9 luustikku), Tõstamaa alevi paiknev kalmistu (1955. a, 8 luustikku) ning Mõisaküla Margu külakalmistu (1897. a. avastati nii hilisrauaaegseid põletusmatuseid kui ka ajaloolise aja laibamatuseid; 1986. a 49 laiba-matust). Seega on ka Eassalu kalmistu oma kümne uuritud matusega oluline lisa senistele andmetele.

Eassalu-Vanaküla külakalmistu on oma asukoha ja matmiskombestiku poolest sarnane teiste uuritud Lääne-Eesti külakalmistutega. Iseloomulik on esemeleidude, isegi rõivakinnitusvahendite, puudumine, ainsana esineb arvukamalt varauusaegseid münte. Eassalu-Vanaküla ja Mõisaküla Margu kalmete mündi-leiud kinnitavad, et pärast 1666. aastat tulid ka Põhja-Pärnumaal käibesse Rootsi 1/6 öörised. Kuna nime-tatud mündid käibisid veel ka Põhjasõja ajal, ei saa välistada ka võimalust, et Eassalu külakalmistu uuritud matused on pärit alles 18. sajandi algusest.