

How to use a trowel: Field school excavations at the University of Helsinki

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Abstract

Teaching excavations are an inextricable part of university teaching in archaeology. Students studying at the University of Helsinki were involved in university-led fieldwork from the very beginning of the establishment of archaeology institution. Students participated in excavations led by the first archaeology professor, Aarne Michaël Tallgren, and thereafter students continued to be part of the fieldwork driven by acting professors and other university staff members. However, such excavations only started to occur on a more regular basis at the time of Professor Ella Kivikoski, especially from the end of the 1950s onwards. Moreover, it was not until 1976 that field school excavations were officially incorporated into the archaeology teaching curriculum. The 1970s also marked a shift to teaching excavations becoming less dependent on the professor's particular research interest, a process leading to university field schools being organized in cooperation with externally funded research projects and contributing to the research driven by a larger variety of scholars. In this article, we provide a historical overview of the field school excavations at the University of Helsinki and reflect on both the pedagogical role of field courses and their practical value to Finnish archaeology, as well as on their academic relevance and impact.

Keywords: archaeological excavations, university teaching, research, fieldwork, education

Introduction

Prior to the start of the University of Helsinki field school excavations in 2020 at Bartsgård, Åland, we asked the participating students what their expectations of teaching excavations were. One aspect was especially noticeable in the answers – students were looking forward to spending time with fellow students. Although the ongoing situation with Covid-19 was clearly reflected in these responses, the social atmosphere of field schools and related aspects has always been and will most probably stay central to the first field experience in archaeology (cf. Croucher *et al.* 2008, 29). Many archaeologists often recall and refer to their first excavations, but seldom from the point of view of the methodologies and/or interpretations used. We tell stories of (ascetic) working conditions and (poor) excavation leaders, whether or how much alcohol was consumed, who we were with, which

pranks were sprung, what the weather was like, we remember animals at the site, and who made the best find. The sum experience of the first field experience is often decisive concerning whether to pursue archaeology professionally (Perry 2004, 236), and excavations today are almost never a single-person endeavour. Thus, explicitly or not, field schools need to target the development of students' social skills through a strong focus on group work and group experience. In producing students that are well equipped to get a job in the archaeology industry – the pedagogical vision of field schools at many universities teaching archaeology – the development of social skills is equally important in improving proficiency in various, more tangible skills related to excavations (Brookes 2008; Cobb & Croucher 2012).

In this paper, we present an overview on the history of archaeological field school teaching at the University of Helsinki. The develop-

ment of fieldwork education mirrors the changes in both the archaeological research environment as well as in pedagogical thinking throughout the decades. The changes that occur in the range of fieldwork courses and in the intended learning outcomes connected to the courses illustrate the skills that have been considered central for practising archaeology at a given time. However, while both practical and social skills are explicit in the intended learning outcomes of the University of Helsinki field school excavation courses today, for the main part of university field teaching in archaeology, the value of social training can only be guessed at.

‘Out there’ with the professor

The first Professor of Finnish and Nordic Archaeology at the University of Helsinki – Aarne Michaël Tallgren (1885–1945) – was appointed at the end of 1923, whereat Tallgren left his invited Professorship in Estonian and Nordic Archaeology (1920–1923) at the University of Tartu. Although Tallgren excavated rather extensively during his relatively short time in Estonia, being involved in no less than 14 different field campaigns (Konsa *et al.* 2013), when back in Finland, excavations were not his main interest and professor-led field campaigns were few. However, there is information available of students being part of his excavation team when these were conducted, for example, in the middle of June in 1926, when a stone cairn was investigated at Säkäreemäki, close to Sauvo Church in south-western Finland (Tallgren 1926). In general, however, archaeological excavations were not a particularly noticeable part of the archaeology teaching at the university during these early days. The situation changed after the Second World War, when a strongly field- and artefact-oriented archaeologist, Ella Kivikoski (1901–1990), became the first female Professor of Archaeology in Finland.

Research interests often govern the kinds of questions and sites archaeologists bring to their teaching, and, as expected, this is also mirrored in the field campaigns including student participants. When Ella Kivikoski, following a drawn-out and controversial process (see Silver 2021, 300), was

finally appointed Professor of Archaeology at the University of Helsinki in 1948 (she retired in 1968), she brought with her a fondness for the Åland Islands and an interest in the Iron Age. In contrast to her generally matter-of-fact writing, when publishing the investigations conducted on Åland in the early 1940s at a Late Iron Age house complex in Kulla, Finström, Kivikoski (1946, 6) poetically describes the islands as ‘smiling and fair’. Not surprisingly, therefore, most of her excavations during her professorship conducted as research and teaching excavations took place on Åland. Although there is available information of Kivikoski excavating with the help of students sporadically starting from 1951 (see Suhonen & Lavento 2020, 281ff.), from the investigations of the Late Iron Age burial mounds at Sundby Hopbacken, in the Sund municipality in 1956, each year until 1967, Kivikoski returned to Åland with a few students to study Late Iron Age cemeteries. During these 12 years, four summers (1957–1960) were spent at the burial mounds at Kvarnbacken, in the municipality of Saltvik (Kivikoski 1963), and after one season (1961) at Stenhagen, Sund, six summers (1962–1967) were devoted to the study of the Långängsbacken cemetery in Sund (Kivikoski 1980). Both Kvarnbacken and Långängsbacken – monumental sites chosen in dialogue with the Ålandic provincial-government-appointed archaeologist, Matts Dreijer – were totally excavated during these field campaigns, which aimed to obtain maximal information and provide an interesting cross-section of Åland’s Late Iron Age society. Kivikoski’s excavations on Åland were usually conducted in the second half of June and the beginning of July. The length of the excavations was not always the same, but varied from one and a half weeks to three and a half weeks, though the field campaigns at Långängsbacken lasted more consistently for about three weeks each year. The number of participating students never exceeded five and few students took part in the excavations on Åland during several campaigns.

The role of Ella Kivikoski in the archaeology of Finland can hardly be overestimated, particularly in the understanding of the Finnish Iron Age and the Early Medieval period (see Silver & Uino 2020; Silver 2021). Furthermore, concerning the prehistory of Åland, it is her research that is still the most notable with regard to Åland’s Late Iron

Age society (also Núñez 2020). It is also fair to say that from the very beginning of archaeology students' participation in the field campaigns to Åland, students were also involved in the knowledge-creation process. One of the first student presentations regarding the Ålandic material by Gunlög Ahlbäck on Viking Age brooches with animal ornamentation was held after the first excavation summer on Åland. After this, general lectures about the Ålandic Iron Age as well as student presentations, especially about some of the grave mounds investigated at both Kvarnbacken and Långängsbacken cemeteries, became part of the archaeology research seminars at the University of Helsinki (University of Helsinki, archaeology seminars' participant book).

However, although Kivikoski's excavations certainly socialized students into the disciplinary culture of archaeology, the excavations that included student participants before the 1970s were not officially teaching excavations. During these excavations, students can be argued to have obtained their education by just being 'out there'. This more or less passive mode of training was replaced by formalized field schools at the initiative of Professor Carl Fredrik Meinander (1916–2004), who succeeded Kivikoski in the professorship (1971–1982).

Organizing the fieldwork education

Fieldwork education in Helsinki started to become more professionally organized and formalized during the 1970s. At the turn of the decade, students were just expected to have two weeks of fieldwork experience while doing their basic studies, and an additional two months during their advanced studies. Other than this expectation, fieldwork was not included in the curriculum, and no special courses were dedicated to it (University of Helsinki, Department of Archaeology, Departmental board 5.3.1970). In 1970, however, a course devoted to fieldwork methodology was arranged for the first time. The following year, it was decided to make this course mandatory for all students doing their two weeks of fieldwork training (University of Helsinki, Department of Archaeology, Departmental board 3.4.1970; 15.4.1971) in order to further educate students

on the relationship of archaeological methodology to practice. In 1976, the excavation course was officially included in the curriculum; this replaced the previous and non-formalized expectation of fieldwork experience in the curriculum. Although there were now two specific fieldwork-related courses in the archaeology curriculum, the learning goals at this point were quite simple, and the courses were aimed at giving students basic fieldwork skills (University of Helsinki, study guide 1976; 1980). Most importantly, however, within this process, the role that many of the research excavations organized by the university had previously had was now made official and was included explicitly into the teaching, and the movement of university-led excavations towards prioritizing instruction became more evident.

In the 1970s, when fieldwork was planned in the departmental meetings, both educational as well as research aspects were considered. During his professorship, Meinander wanted to shift the focus from studying Iron Age graves to the investigation of Iron Age settlement sites in Finland. To achieve this, among other things, he initiated the project *The Iron Age Society in Finland* with the explicit aim of examining the society of that period through the excavation of settlement sites and the remains of dwellings. Although Meinander as a professor did not lead any of the teaching excavations himself, the shift initiated by him was also in line with his research and his reasoning concerning settlement continuity in Finnish prehistory (see Immonen & Taavitsainen 2011, 153–154). Starting with the four seasons of excavations at Myllymäki in Retulansaari, Hattula, in 1972–1973 and 1975–1976, and followed by the five field seasons in Isokylä, Salo in 1978–1982 (Figures 1 and 2), teaching excavations were connected to the project, although the excavations in Isokylä were also known as the separate *Salo* project. Over the years, dozens of students and staff members participated in these excavations, and many of them continued to study further the recovered material. The project and related excavations contributed significantly to research on the Finnish Iron Age. In particular, the investigations and results from the Isokylä site became essential for Finnish Iron Age archaeology, partly due to the unusually large area that was

investigated, but mainly following the detailed research on the recovered material (Uino 1983; Linturi 1986; Schauman-Lönnqvist 1988).

It is clear that similarly to the 1970s development of field archaeology worldwide (cf. Flatman 2015), there was a heightened interest at this time at the University of Helsinki in how to develop field school teaching from a long-term perspective. Even if the positivist approach of that time did not specifically encourage reflection, much thought was put into what and why to excavate within the framework of field school excava-

tions and there was much hope that field schools would contribute to the understanding of the past (see also Marila 2018). Therefore, although the teaching excavations course officially entered the University of Helsinki teaching curriculum in 1976, we would like to consider the year 1972 to mark the more formalized beginning of the University of Helsinki teaching in archaeological fieldwork. Moreover, this year also marks the beginning of the consistent and annual organization of teaching excavations (Table 1).



Figure 1. Excavations at Myllymäki in Retulansaari in 1975. Photo: Anja Sarvas (1975).



Figure 2. Documentation during excavations in Iso-kylä, Salo in 1980. Photo: Eero Muurimäki (1980).

Table 1. List of the field school excavations at the University of Helsinki. The teaching excavations course officially entered the curriculum in 1976. Although students studying at University of Helsinki were involved in university-led fieldwork from the very beginning of the establishment of archaeology institution, the year 1972 marks the more formalized beginning of the University of Helsinki teaching in archaeological fieldwork.

Year	Site	Municipality	Excavation leader
2023	Bartsgårda	Finström	Kristin Ilves
2022	Bartsgårda	Finström	Kristin Ilves
2021	Bartsgårda	Finström	Kristin Ilves
2020	Bartsgårda	Finström	Kristin Ilves
2019	Tursiannotko	Pirkkala	Sami Raninen
2018	Tursiannotko	Pirkkala	Sami Raninen
2017	Tursiannotko	Pirkkala	Sami Raninen
2016	Tursiannotko	Pirkkala	Sami Raninen
2015	Meskäärty	Virolahti	Teemu Mökkönen
2014	Meskäärty	Virolahti	Teemu Mökkönen
2013	Meskäärty	Virolahti	Teemu Mökkönen
2012	Brunaberget	Vantaa	Petri Halinen
2011	Brunaberget	Vantaa	Petri Halinen
2010	Meskäärty	Virolahti	Teemu Mökkönen
2009	Lapsen puisto	Hanko	Henrik Jansson
2008	Orslandet	Inkoo	Henrik Jansson
2007	Nukkumajoki 5	Inari	Petri Halinen
2006	Orijärvi	Mikkeli	Esa Mikkola
2005	Gunnarsängen	Hanko	Henrik Jansson
2005	Orijärvi	Mikkeli	Esa Mikkola
2004	Gunnarsängen	Hanko	Henrik Jansson
2003	Gunnarsängen	Hanko	Henrik Jansson
2002	Juoksemajärvi	Räisälä Karelialan Isthmus	Petri Halinen
2001	Karoniemi	Ruokolahti	Sirkka-Liisa Seppälä
2000	Karoniemi	Ruokolahti	Tuija Kirkinen
1999	Martinniemi	Kerimäki Raikuu	Mika Lavento
1998	Martinniemi	Kerimäki Raikuu	Petri Halinen
1997	Multavieru	Polvijärvi Kinahmo	Mika Lavento
1996	Multavieru	Polvijärvi Kinahmo	Mika Lavento
1995	Kitulansuo d	Mikkeli Ristiina	Mika Lavento
1994	Kitulansuo d	Mikkeli Ristiina	Mika Lavento
1993	Pörrinmökki	Räikkylä Jaamankangas	Petro Pesonen
1992	Pörrinmökki	Räikkylä Jaamankangas	Petro Pesonen
1991	Pörrinmökki	Räikkylä Jaamankangas	Mika Lavento
1990	Taurula	Janakkala Virala	Hans-Peter Schulz
1989	Hamppula	Janakkala Virala	Marianne Schauman-Lönnqvist

1988	Veräjängsuu	Janakkala Virala	Marianne Schauman-Lönnqvist
1987	Bosmalm	Espoo	Päivi Kankkunen
1986	Makasiinimäki	Loppi Salo	Marianne Schauman-Lönnqvist
1985	Makasiinimäki	Loppi Salo	Marianne Schauman-Lönnqvist
1984	Nukkumajoki 2	Inari	Christian Carpelan
1983	Nukkumajoki 2	Inari	Christian Carpelan
1982	Isokylä	Salo	Christian Carpelan
1981	Isokylä	Salo	Christian Carpelan
1980	Isokylä	Salo	Christian Carpelan
1979	Isokylä	Salo	Christian Carpelan
1978	Isokylä	Salo	Christian Carpelan
1977	Luistari	Eura	Pirkko-Liisa Lehtosalo-Hilander
1976	Myllymäki	Hattula (Tyrväntö) Retulansaari	Anja Sarvas
1975	Myllymäki	Hattula (Tyrväntö) Retulansaari	Anja Sarvas
1974	Dåvits Gläntan	Espoo	Marianne Schauman-Lönnqvist
1973	Myllymäki	Hattula (Tyrväntö) Retulansaari	Aimo Kehusmaa
1972	Myllymäki	Hattula (Tyrväntö) Retulansaari	Aimo Kehusmaa

Broadening the horizons to the north and east

When Ari Siiriäinen (1939–2004) became the new Professor of Archaeology in Helsinki in 1983, holding the chair until 2003, the clear focus on Iron Age settlement sites that had marked the profile of teaching excavations in the 1970s was changed. During Siiriäinen's professorship, teaching excavations covered a wider span of sites both geographically as well as chronologically. This can perhaps be partially connected to the fact that Siiriäinen himself, although mainly interested in the Stone Age, had a diverse field profile. He took part in several fieldwork projects abroad and, among other things, cultivated an interest in African and South American archaeologies (Immonen & Taavitsainen 2011, 154). However, the Iron Age was not abandoned completely. A new project focusing on the interaction of coastal and inland societies during the Iron Age (the so-called *RASI* project) was organized in the late 1980s as a continuation of the research implemented in Isokylä. During the project, Marianne Schauman-Lönnqvist and Tuija Rankama led teaching excavations in Makasiinimäki, Loppi,

in 1985–1986, and at several sites in Janakkala municipality during 1988–1990 (Figure 3). The aim of the *RASI* project was to concentrate on the economy and spatial aspects of Iron Age settlement and land use, thus building upon and widening the focus of previous Iron Age studies and excavations (Lavento 1993). In this context, it is also good to emphasize that university-led teaching excavations have always included a much greater number of practising archaeologists who have had a teaching role than is reflected in the names of official excavation or project leaders.

The 1980s also saw the first teaching excavations conducted outside the traditional Finnish agrarian settlement areas. In 1983 and 1984, Christian Carpelan excavated the site called Nukkumajoki 2 in Inari, Lapland. The excavations were connected to the *Early Sámi Society* project, which aimed at surveying and excavating Sámi winter villages. This was the first time teaching excavations were organized in the far north, as well as being the first time a historical site was chosen for the purpose; Nukkumajoki 2 is dated to the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern period (Carpelan 1998). The *Early Sámi Society* formed the basis for further studies that the University



Figure 3. Excavations at Veräjänсуу in Janakkala in 1988. Photo: Tiina Naukkarinen (1988).

of Helsinki conducted in Lapland. The collected material and research implemented during the first campaigns was used in the 1990s within the *Early in the North* project, and in 2007, when the teaching excavations returned to the north for a season as part of Petri Halinen's project *Home, Hearth and Household in the Circumpolar North* (Halinen 2019).

At the beginning of the 1990s, the focus of research at the University of Helsinki was shifted to Eastern Finland. In the *Habitation and Contacts in the Ancient Lake Saimaa Area* project (1992–1996), several Stone Age and Early Metal Period sites were excavated during field school excavations in the Lake Saimaa region. The set aim was to move towards interdisciplinary investigations and to study a wide range of subjects, from Neolithic and Early Metal Period ceramics (e.g. Pesonen 1995) to natural scientific aspects like shore displacement, environment, and palaeoecology (Kirkinen 1996b; see also Figure 4). In addition, the project aimed to experiment and develop new excavation and survey methods, with students actively involved in this process. For example, instead of focusing on the previously known sites when planning surveys, the project aspired to create predictive GIS models for potential activity areas. Consequently, a no-

table amount of new data on geographical factors affecting the choice of settlement sites in the Early Metal Period (Maaranen 1996) and during the Iron Age (Kirkinen 1996a) was generated while the project lasted. Resulting from the central role that the archaeological surveys had in the *Ancient Saimaa* project, a field survey course was added to the curriculum in 1996. The sum of experiences obtained during the project's surveys clearly pointed out that the act of conducting archaeological surveys required a different set of skills that were not part of fieldwork teaching so far. The survey course started to provide archaeology students with these skills and also engaged them in the different stages of planning, executing, and reporting archaeological surveys (Lavento 2008a, 30–31). From the pedagogical point of view, the survey course is a good example of a student-focused approach, as within this type of teaching students play an active role in their learning process.

Even after the *Ancient Saimaa* project had officially ended, excavations were still continued in the area, the sites excavated in the late 1990s being dated to the Iron Age and to the following historical periods (Lavento 2008a). The fieldwork in Eastern Finland was followed by the collaborative *Saimaa-Ladoga* project (1998–2003), conducted together with Russian



Figure 4. Geoarchaeological sampling at Kitulansuo in Ristiina in 1995. Photo: Sari Saastamoinen (1995).

archaeologists and focusing on Karelia (Lavento 2008b). In 2002, as part of the project, university-led field school excavations moved even further to the east than before, namely to Räisälä on the Karelian Isthmus on the Russian side of the eastern border. The excavations conducted at a Stone Age site in Juoksemajärvi were the first large-scale excavations by Finnish archaeologists in the area lost to the Soviet Union during the Second World War, and this was thus, the first and only time the University of Helsinki organized their field school abroad (Halinen *et al.* 2008). The focus on Eastern Finland led to several publications and generated a great deal of research, including a number of MA theses, two licentiate theses, and a PhD thesis by Mika Lavento, who became the Professor of Archaeology at the University of Helsinki after Ari Siiriäinen, in 2004.

Expanding the variety of sites and fieldwork courses

From the 2000s onwards, the fieldwork-related teaching at the University of Helsinki became more varied and streamlined. In addition to the interrelated methodology and field school courses offered at the BA level, a specific course on archaeological documentation methods was added to complement these. These undergraduate courses were intended to be completed in succession: from methodology and excavation to documentation. At the MA level, the course dedicated to archaeological survey methods was now complemented with an excavation course aiming to familiarize students with the process of setting up and managing their own excavations. Obviously, the expansion and streamlining of fieldwork-related courses offered students a wider set of skills and confidence related to the profession. But it also reflects a more pedagogical approach to planning and executing hands-on teaching and learning. We see how archaeological fieldwork emerges as one of the strong areas of expertise and one of the clear focus points of teaching archaeology at the University of Helsinki.

After the projects in Eastern Finland ended in the early 2000s, the sites chosen for university-led field schools have been varied in nature, and have not really followed any set agenda. Except for Petri Halinen's 2007 excavations in Lapland, teaching excavations were geographically arranged in Southern Finland until the 2020s, when field school excavations were once again organized on the Åland Islands. Most of the investigated sites during the period in question have been dated either to the Stone Age or the Middle Ages. From 2016 onwards, however, the Late Iron Age has once again become a central period for University of Helsinki teaching excavations, first in Tursiannotko, in the municipality of Pirkkala, and currently on Åland.

The variety of sites investigated within the framework of field schools can be explained by the varied interests and ongoing projects that the researchers affiliated to the University have had. During the first decade of the 2000s, teaching excavations were connected to the number of projects, such as *Settlement and Economies*

around the Sea and Our Maritime Heritage (cf. Haggrén & Lavento 2011), focusing on questions concerning medieval settlement continuity in Western Uusimaa, on the southern coast of Finland, led by Georg Haggrén and Henrik Jansson. Before these projects, Uusimaa had been seen as an uninhabited outland prior to medieval times, but the large amount of material collected in the course of the projects proved settlement continuity in the region throughout the Iron Age to the Middle Ages and beyond (Haggrén & Lavento 2011). The research conducted within the framework of these projects also focused on developing survey and excavation methods (Figure 5) that were best suited to the period in question. Resulting from the work that combined written sources, maps, scientific methods, and archaeological fieldwork, the number of archaeological sites in the area grew notably (Haggrén 2008, 15–17). Besides their significant contribution to the study of settlement history in Uusimaa (Lavento 2011), the projects also encouraged several students to specialize in medieval and historical archaeology.



Figure 5. Practicing aerial photography with a zeppelin in Hanko in 2009. Photo: Tuuli Heinonen (2009).

Until the 2010s, teaching excavations were dependent on the different fieldwork projects organized by researchers affiliated to the university. However, at the beginning of the 2010s, the university granted a special funding for teaching fieldwork, thereby officially recognizing fieldwork as a central part of archaeological education. This enabled greater flexibility in planning and organizing field school excavations which, following the earmarked funding, did not necessarily need to have a university-affiliated researcher as an excavation leader, who could now be hired from outside. The funding granted by the university facilitated the opportunity to be less restricted in the choice of sites. This allowed more flexibly to concentrate and to continue working at a chosen site for several field seasons, which was preferable for the teaching excavations' framework, not only for pedagogical, but also for research ethical and practical reasons (Figure 6). Despite the existing possibility following the new funding basis, the excavation leaders for field schools were mostly still affiliated to the University of Helsinki up until 2016, when field schools were organized together with Pirkanmaa Regional Museum and connected to excavations led by Sami Raninen in Tursiannotko in the municipality of Pirkkala. Tursiannotko belongs among the most notable sites in the Finnish Viking Age as previous excavations conducted at the site had yielded, among other things, exceptionally well-preserved organic material (Raninen 2017). Connecting teaching excavations to the investigations at Tursiannotko provided a rare opportunity for students to familiarize themselves with a great variety of find categories and to gain an empirically anchored insight into the array of different activities at the site representing life lived during the Viking Age. The vast material collected during the four field seasons of teaching excavations is currently being analysed, while private companies are continuing the excavations in the area.

Since 2020, field school excavations have been conducted at Bartsgårda, in the municipality of Finström, on the Åland Islands (Figure 7). These excavations are connected to an Academy of Finland project, *Survivors of Ragnarök* (grant number 332396), led by Kristin Ilves, focusing on settlement and social dynamics, as well as land



Figure 6. University of Helsinki alumni excursion visiting teaching excavations at Meskäärty in Virolahti in 2015. The field school excavations were organised at Meskäärty during four seasons (2010, 2013–2015). Photo: Antti Lahelma.

use following environmental perturbations in the 6th century AD. Although emanating from a different position (cf. Ilves & Perttola 2020) than Ella Kivikoski's investigations on Åland more than half a century earlier, in many ways, this research picks up and builds upon the knowledge from Kivikoski's research. This is because the Åland Islands, being geographically marginal, have not enjoyed much research-driven fieldwork attention on Iron Age sites since Kivikoski's time.

The aspect of university-led excavations being an urgent necessity for furthering knowledge about the past in regions that do not fall under the scope of developer-funded archaeology that most archaeology conducted around the world today is related to (Sutton 2018, 16–17), is something that will increasingly affect the practice of teaching archaeological fieldwork. On one hand, there is an academic, curiosity-driven agenda that facilitates research on archaeological sites and monuments seldom discovered and studied in developer-funded archaeological projects. On the other hand, however, it is not in academia but

in contract archaeology, where the majority of archaeologists today are employed. The learning goals of field school excavations are very general and aim to provide students with the basic knowledge and relevant skills needed to work on an archaeological excavation under the leadership of experienced archaeologists. But in addition to the types of sites, the methods and techniques employed during developer-funded excavations are also often markedly different from the academic sphere. The greatest challenge for teaching excavations lies in supporting and furthering research while at the same time training students for the realities that await in the profession.

Concluding remarks

In line with the developments in teaching archaeological fieldwork worldwide (cf. Baxter 2016, 17), field school excavations at the University of Helsinki evolved from informal field experiences into formal courses. The sites chosen for



Figure 7. The preparation of the excavation area at Bartsgårda in Finström in 2020 being observed by a group of very curious calves. Photo: Kristin Ilves (2020).

the University of Helsinki's teaching excavations have historically had a strong connection to the research interests of faculty members, for whom field school excavations have provided an opportunity to collect empirical data of various kinds and more easily facilitate archaeological research within a university system that is primarily focused on teaching. As a result, there is also much research generated and published based on the material collected during university-led teaching excavations. However, archaeology as a vocation is also changing, especially in response to cultural resource management. Today, a large number of Finnish archaeologists work in developer-funded and/or government-led archaeology, but the transition to these spheres from university-led fieldwork teaching and learning has often been felt to be rather shaky. The difference between these types of archaeology is just too large. During field school excavations, students are anchored in research-driven objectives for the excavations, and although they will learn how to use a trowel, i.e. they gain an insight into the craft of archaeology, they are seldom faced with topics that are highly relevant during developer- and government-led excavations, such as how to prioritize in the field under time pressure and how to

balance the budget. At the same time, employers who have been educated in the universities often inevitably lose connection with developments in the academic sphere, being unaware of theoretical movements and changing research trends that influence research-driven excavations. This can further amplify the discrepancy between these different types of field practices.

The challenges posed by the current career setting for archaeology graduates, and the greater need of specific practical experience relevant for today's largely developer-led archaeology, have been increasingly met by adapting and extending the intended learning objectives of the fieldwork education at the university. Today, the curriculum has been planned to follow the principles of aligned education, so that students can use their previous experiences when they are learning new skills. While teaching excavations provide undergraduate students with the basic skills needed for working on an archaeological excavation, the following course on fieldwork methodology elaborates on these skills and places them in a wider context. The course on archaeological documentation introduces a wide range of documentation methods, which the students also learn how to operate and apply during prac-

tical exercises. On an advanced level, these basic practical skills are further strengthened, and the students learn how to select, apply, and develop them in different stages of planning, executing, and reporting fieldwork. During the survey course, the students learn and actively work with different methods and techniques that range from GIS-based analysis to place-name studies, for example, in order to locate and contextualize archaeological sites, as well as evaluate their suitability for answering a variety of research questions. The final stage of the fieldwork-related teaching and learning process is a course during which the students design, formulate, and execute their own excavation project, gaining a comprehensive insight into the different stages of the excavation process, and putting the skills they have learned throughout their archaeology education to practical use.

At the University of Helsinki, teaching is based on research, because it activates and motivates students to learn, while at the same time it also allows teachers to maintain and improve their teaching. We can only rejoice in the fact that field school excavations have met that goal throughout the history of archaeology teaching in Helsinki. There are many benefits of research-based teaching (cf. Brew 2010; Mytum 2012; Cobb & Croucher 2014), and therefore we hope for a developing continuity for the well-established practice of fieldwork teaching. Although, this practice may also mean that the field school excavations of the University of Helsinki may well involve learning experiences that might not have a direct and immediate relevance for the practical requirements of archaeological practices beyond the academic sphere.

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