

# CURRENT SWEDISH ARCHAEOLOGY

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The Swedish Archaeological Society



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# The Swedish Archaeological Society<sup>1</sup>

## THE FORMATION OF THE SWEDISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

In 1947 the then Director-general of the Central Board of National Antiquities, Martin Olsson, received a letter signed by some well-known archaeologists. They proposed the formation of a Swedish archaeological society. Their motives were that Sweden lacked a scientific organisation in the archaeological field, in contrast to the situation in other comparable countries. The various archaeological branches of knowledge thus easily became isolated. An archaeological society, consisting solely of scientific scholars, could bridge the gaps between the research branches.

A meeting in February 1947 took place with the Director-general. At the meeting it was decided to create a scientific association consisting of the archaeologists in Sweden who represented the research branches of Nordic and comparative archaeology, classical and oriental archaeology, East Asian archaeology, medieval research, numismatics, and possibly American archaeology. The membership would be restricted. Only archaeologists well known for very important scientific results in the various archaeological research branches would be members of the proposed society. The fee for joining the society was suggested to be low.

During the spring of 1947 various meetings were held to discuss the name and statutes of the society, which eventually was named the Swedish Archaeological Society. A statutory meeting took place 5<sup>th</sup> May 1947 in the National Museum of History. Professor Bernhard Karlgren was elected the first Chairman of the Society. At the start the Society had about 60 members.

## THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY

In the beginning the Society arranged qualified scientific lectures by, among others, many guest scholars, some of them from abroad. The annual meetings were combined with excursions to well-known ancient monuments. As time passed there were fewer and fewer lectures. Instead the Society began to arrange discussions and seminars on different archaeological topics of interest to archaeologists. The Society intends to continue with this. Every second year the Society holds a thematic meeting for Swedish archaeologists.

The first years of the Society were marked by discussions on how to get financial means to carry on the work. Support from various funds enabled the Society to issue an archaeological bibliography, *Swedish Archaeological Biblio-*

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<sup>1</sup> This is a summary of an investigation of the history of the Swedish Archaeological Society from its start in 1947; Ringstedt, N., 2002. *Historik om Svenska Arkeologiska Samfundet. Utredning om verksamheten 1947-2001*. (History of the Swedish Archaeological Society. Investigation of its activities 1947-2001). Published at the Society's homepage [www.arkeologiskasamfundet.nu](http://www.arkeologiskasamfundet.nu)

graphy, which comprises the years 1939-1948, 1949-1952, 1953-1957, 1960-1965, 1966-1970, 1970-1975. It was followed by *Swedish Archaeology*, issued 1976-1980 and 1981-1985. In 2001 the Society issued *Swedish Archaeological Bibliography 1882-1938*.

Furthermore the Society produced three volumes in honour of King Gustav VI Adolf. These volumes are titled *Arkeologiska forskningar och fynd* (Archaeological research and finds), 1952, *Proxima Thule*, 1962, and *Forntid för framtid* (Prehistoric times for the future), 1972. A medal for the King was also produced, partly because of the King's birthday, and partly because the King was an honorary member of the Society. In 1981 *Gjallarhornet* began to be issued – the newsletter of the Society. A great change occurred in 1993, when the annual journal *Current Swedish Archaeology (CSA)* was issued. The journal has since then annually contained articles mirroring the current archaeological research and theoretical trends. The journal is an important part of the Society's work.

### THE SOCIETY'S FUNDS

Over the years various funds have been created through, among other things, donations. *The Rosa Tengborg scholarship fund* - later *Rosa and Valter Tengborg's scholarship fund* - has its origin in a donation in 1976. Over the years Mrs Tengborg donated 299 000 Swedish crowns. It was the donor's wish that the yield and a necessary part of the capital primarily should be distributed as grants to young archaeologists wishing to participate in investigations abroad or to carry out archaeological studies abroad. Grants should also be given to young foreign archaeologists who wanted to participate in investigations and conduct studies in Sweden. The fund's present statutes were decided 19<sup>th</sup> April 2001. The Board of the Society chooses the recipients of the scholarship and decides the sum to be granted. The donations have enabled the Society to grant the scholarship to 100 recipients during 1976-2002.

The Liber publishing company and the Committee for Stockholm Research agreed in 1982 that the royalties from the publication "*Helgeandsholmen. 1000 år i Stockholms ström*" (Helgeandsholmen. 1000 years in the Stockholm river) would be given to and used by the research fund *Stockholmsstipendiet* (the Stockholm scholarship fund) to be administered by the Society. The Board of the Society awarded four archaeologists grants for research regarding the early building history of Stockholm with special emphasis on medieval conditions.

*Folke Hallbergs fond* (the fund of Folke Hallberg) was instituted in 1991. The fund was created following a collection of money in memory of Folke Hallberg. The intention was that archaeologists, who came in contact with research material or scientific problems requiring further work, would be offered contributions to carry out such work both for their own benefit and for that of science. The Society administered the fund. No scholarships have hitherto been granted.

When *Dendrokronologiska sällskapet* (the Dendrochronological Society) was dissolved and in 1986 merged with the Swedish Archaeological Society, the

financial means of the former society were transferred to the Society. *Dendrokronologiska fonden* (the Dendrochronological fund) was created. No scholarships have hitherto been granted.

The archaeologist *Jan Norrman*, specialising in aerial archaeology, was in 1994 allowed resources for aerial research in Latvia. The Society decided, by request of Norrman, to administer the means given to him.

In 2002 the Society decided to create a *Swedish Archaeological Society's memorial fund* to be administered by the Society. The money remaining from Stockholmsstipendiet, Folke Hallbergs fond, Dendrokronologiska fonden and the means administered by the Society for Jan Norrman will comprise the basis of the memorial fund.

### THE SWEDISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF TODAY

The Society is the common body for all professional Swedish archaeologists. At the end of 2002 there were about 670 members. Over the years the Society has put the finishing touches to its statutes. The review of the statutes, undertaken 2000-2001, implies a modernization and clarification of the Society's tasks and mirrors the fact that the Society really does have a social-minded view of its work. The preamble states that the purpose of the Society is to further Swedish archaeological research by bringing together representatives from its various branches of knowledge in recurring meetings. The preamble also clearly specifies that another purpose is to support archaeological research by granting scholarships, and that the Society shall especially take care of the vocational interest of the archaeologists. This task shall be carried out by taking part in the public debate, by influencing the public opinion and by being a body to which proposed measures are submitted for consideration.

Of additional importance is the statement that the Society shall follow and inform about the development within primarily Swedish archaeology. This is to be carried out through *Current Swedish Archaeology* and by four times a year issuing the newsletter *Gjallarhornet*.

The most recent rules for accepting members are specified in the present statutes. The rules imply that people of great merit within the archaeological sciences may be accepted as members. For approval the candidate shall either be admitted to postgraduate studies and have published at least one paper in an acknowledged scientific journal (preferably with referee-system) or have well-documented, professional experiences from museums and/or culture-environmental care.

At the annual meeting in 2000 the Society accepted "*Principer för god arkeologisk praxis*" (Principles for good archaeological practice). The principles derive partly from the Code of Practice of EAA. In the preamble it is stated that it has been found necessary to elaborate guidelines for archaeological practice. They concern the public responsibility of the archaeologists with regard to the cultural heritage and the care of the culture-environment. The guidelines are valid

for all categories of archaeologists in the country – professional as well as amateurs – and also Swedish archaeologists active abroad. The document shall be seen as a point of departure for an ongoing debate to keep the ethical and scientific standard among the archaeologists in Sweden at a high level.

The first section – about archaeologists and the society – deals, for example, with issues regarding the preservation of the cultural heritage and the mediation of knowledge to the public using a high pedagogic standard and with modern information technology. Archaeologists shall not contribute in work involving negative effects on the cultural heritage. Authorities must be informed of possible threats to the cultural heritage. Attention shall be given to the ecological and social consequences of an investigation. Research on the origin of a country's population requires special concern.

The second section contains rules to ensure that a high scientific standard is maintained. Of particular importance is the principle that no one within the archaeological sciences shall be discriminated on account of his/her sex, religion, age, colour of skin, nationality, sexual disposition or handicap.

#### SOME CONCLUSIONS

Through the present statutes and the ethical principles the Society has laid a good foundation for its future work. The work of the Society has in recent years been “modernized” by moving from a mainly recording and informing role to a more active role. The Society has taken the initiative to an open debate on archaeological problems, and it issues a journal with current research. Work is in progress to form the basis for discussions and standpoints for, among other things, the thematic meetings for the archaeologists.

In the long run it is important that the Society continues to actively follow the public debate and trends in archaeological research and create good preconditions for assembling archaeologists from the various archaeological branches of knowledge. It is also crucial for the Society to continue to create a good economy by an effective use of its capital, in order to carry on the work in the future and to be able to support young scholars through grants.

*Nils Ringstedt*



# Editors' Preface

This year's volume of *Current Swedish Archaeology* has the theme of water: *Water – Resource, Regenerator, Communicator*. It marks the start of a series dealing with the four primary elements in the ancient and medieval natural philosophy – earth, water, fire and air. In ancient Greece as well as in the Christian Middle Ages, these elements were believed to compose the world, and they also played an important role in the cosmology of prehistoric Scandinavia.

Water is not only necessary for man's survival. Throughout history there are also countless examples of the significance of water in beliefs and rituals. In bogs and lakes, offerings were made to the higher powers; tools, weapons, animals and humans were sacrificed. During the Bronze Age, cairns were built and rock carvings were created near water. Water has many different forms. It is a source of life, but sometimes also of death; it is salty or fresh, rushing or calm. Water can compose a boundary, as illustrated by a castle moat designed to deter enemies, but it also forms important communication routes between people. Water can freeze to ice or dissolve into mist.

In this year's volume of *CSA* we can read about water in various perspectives, with examples from widely different cultures and time periods. Olof Brandt discusses the meaning of water in the Christian baptism in fourth- and fifth-century Rome, where water in fact has a double role and symbolizes both life and death. The Apollo Grannus vase was found where the stream of Sagån met the sea, and this forms the starting-point for Lotta Fernstål's interpretation of the find. Åsa Fredell's article treats water as well as another of the primary elements – fire – and she argues that water and fire have a cosmological function in the Bronze Age world. Susanne Thedéen's article also deals with the Bronze Age; among other things, she discusses the localization of cairns to different types of water and how the human life course can be "read" in the landscape. Eva Myrdal treats a subject that is largely unknown to most of us: artificial irrigation in Sri Lanka and its importance for society and centralization. That water can be meaningful in various other forms than liquid is evident from Torun Zachrisson's article on the folklore of the Omberg area and the "Queen of the Mist".

As usual, we also include articles unrelated to the main theme. Kristina Jennbert discusses the relationship between animals and people in a long time perspective, a study that has its point of departure in animal burials. Åsa M. Larsson examines the Neolithic burial tradition; she argues that it is much more varied than previously thought, and she focuses especially on secondary burials. This year's volume begins with a somewhat longer presentation of the Swedish Archaeological Society and its history, written by Nils Ringstedt.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Björn Varenius, who has left his position as *CSA* editor and whose work has been greatly appreciated.

*Kerstin Cassel & Anders Gustafsson*

