

HELSINKI SYMPOSIUM ON AERIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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Background and objectives

Aerial survey and air photography have as yet hardly been used for archaeological or landscape studies in Finland, and their application in the other Scandinavian and Nordic states has been sporadic. The aim of the Helsinki event was to promote the use of aerial archaeology in the Nordic and Baltic countries. The Symposium was organised by the University of Helsinki, the Helsinki University of Technology and the National Board of Antiquities as the first major event in the Culture 2000 project *European Landscapes: past, present and future*. Assistance was also given by the Finnish Ministry for Education, Sito oy and the Aerial Archaeology Research Group.

Progress to the end of 2005

The Symposium was a well-attended and lively event, introducing a relatively new archaeological technique to the region. A sub-group was formed to encourage further cooperation between the Baltic and Nordic states in the fields of culture and aerial archaeology, through Ars Baltica and the Aerial Archaeology Research Group.

HESAA 2004

The Symposium

During the first two days of the meeting a public Seminar was held in the auditorium of the National Museum of Finland. A total of 83 professionals and students from varied fields, ranging from land surveying to archaeology and architecture, took part in the presentations and discussions, which were led by experts from Culture 2000 co-partners in Austria, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and the UK as well as speakers from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia and Slovenia.

The presentations and discussions covered a wide range of subjects: the principles, practice and potential of aerial survey in landscape and archaeological studies; varying kinds of remote sensing, from traditional aerial reconnaissance to satellite imaging; the uses of aerial archaeology in various countries of Europe; and aerial work in the Baltic and Nordic states. A final discussion looked to the future and resolved to form a regional grouping of interested specialists to promote the advance of aerial archaeology and landscape studies in the Baltic and Scandinavian states.

The Workshop

The Seminar was followed by a four-day Workshop, held in a classroom and a well-equipped computer laboratory at the Aleksandria Learning Centre in the University of Helsinki. Altogether 28 professionals and graduate students, all of whom had attended the introductory Seminar, stayed on for more intensive study and practical exercises at the Workshop. The participants came from Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Poland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland. They were instructed and encouraged by six tutors from Slovenia and Culture 2000 co-partners in Austria and the UK.

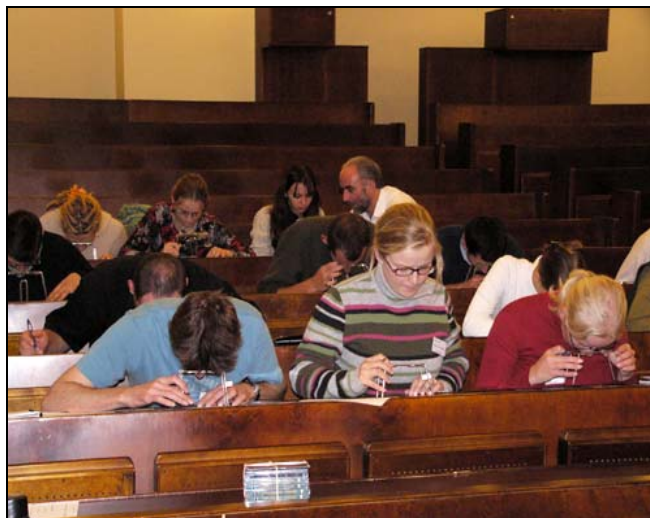
During the Workshop, the participants studied aerial photographs and maps from their own countries. Through descriptions of basic principles and practical exercises they were taught how to read information from the photographs, how to relate it to the maps, how to interpret the data in archaeological terms and how to transcribe the information onto the map-base. There was a lively final discussion of the content and output of the meeting, which was felt by all to have been a success, in particular in the way that a wide variety of archaeological and

landscape information had been treated by the participants according to the needs and circumstances of their own countries.

The future

The organisers were satisfied with the events during the Symposium. In particular, the formal and informal contacts that were created during the week will serve as the basis of a valuable contact network in the future. As the Symposium was organised with minimal funds, the organising committee expressed their special thanks to the HESAA volunteer whose tireless work had made the event possible and to the Aerial Archaeology Research Group and Culture 2000 co-partners who provided most of the lecturers and tutors through their growing network of specialists across Europe.

After the Seminar there has been a growing awareness of the value of aerial archaeology and its methods in Finland and in the neighbouring countries. For instance, a Finnish-Russian team took aerial photographs of an archaeological site at Lake Valg, Estonia, in the summer of 2005. In 2006, too, a Finnish engineering student who participated the HESAA workshop will complete his thesis on the Lake Valg project at the EVTEK University of Applied Sciences. Furthermore in Estonia, the National Heritage Board is planning to expand the use of aerial images in archaeological research. In Denmark, too, archaeologists who attended the Helsinki event are beginning to plan their own aerial archaeology Training School in 2007.



Students and visiting tutors at the Helsinki workshop.