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L'Association européenne des archéologues; Landscape planning in Latvia

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Landscape planning in Latvia

Archaeology has evolved and maintained a strong tradition of public support and respect. As pointed out by Kristiansen, archaeology was always national in character, forming an important part of national history and ideology.

Analysing data about land use fifty to seventy years ago in areas of archaeological sites in Latvia shows that about half the sites were used for agricultural purposes as arable land or pastures, but the other half were covered with forests as they are today. The use of a large part of the archaeological sites has continued over the centuries up till today. Some of them were built over with new housing, stone castles and, later, manor houses and villages, which were surrounded with parks and where in many cases the archaeological site was included in the park's composition. About 80% of sites show evidence that they were also intensively used for military purposes during the two last world wars, when extensive defence ditches were constructed on hill forts, disturbing layers of archaeological interest and ancient earthworks.

Hill forts, thanks to their dominant location in the area and panoramic views, were and still are used as cultural centres. Meeting places of local and regional significance, they became specially maintained with new, larger entrances, steps built into the steep slopes, symbolic trees such as oak and lime, and recreation facilities with benches and open-air stages. The aesthetic values and the symbolic significance of many trees and shrubs were and are still important. They are often

referred to in traditional Latvian folk songs and poems.

The early years of the 20th century witnessed the birth of the nature conservation movement. This movement adopted the romantic view of nature, which also came to be reaffirmed in connection with the care of archaeological remains. Field studies of archaeological sites made at the end of the 1990s showed certain visual landscape types and the reasons are as follows:

- hill forts' surfaces have different types of vegetation due to topography, orientation, and soil conditions. The first new growth covered northern slopes of the mound and more eastern areas, and later other parts of the hill;
- settlement site areas were used for cultivation or pasture for longer periods and their topography and soil conditions are similar over the whole area;
- burial sites are mostly covered with pine trees, because they tend to be located in drier, less fertile sand or gravel areas;
- places of religious significance are covered with vegetation, because these sites were not specially maintained.

For this reason it is not possible to see the earthworks and appreciate the visual landscape around sites.

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On the left, the hill fort of Tervete covered with grass, on the right, Middle Age castle ruins which were later included in the garden of the manor house. Today it is part of the Tervete Nature Park.

The European Association of Archaeologists (EAA)

The European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) was founded in 1993. The membership has reached just over 1 250 archaeologists from about 50 countries. Of these, around 25% are members from countries in the former eastern bloc.

Mission

The mission of the EAA is, firstly, to integrate European archaeology and to create a forum for the exchange of information, ideas and results of research; to manage the European archaeological resource and promote proper ethical and scientific standards for archaeological work; to develop the profession at a European level and promote the interests of professional archaeologists in Europe.

Secondly, the EAA, as the only democratic organisation of archaeologists at the European level, wants to represent the interests of archaeology in Europe. This is done, for example, by working as an NGO with the Council of Europe, which has granted the EAA consultative status, and with the EU. Other activities include sending representatives to international meetings where heritage management issues are discussed. The EAA promotes the ratification of European treaties such as the Valletta Convention and European Landscape Convention, but also of treaties such as the Unesco and Unidroit conventions on illegal trade and cultural property.

Activities

The EAA publication, the *European Journal of Archaeology* (EJA), is an important forum for international scientific discussion. Three issues are published annually, which are also distributed widely in libraries. As a means for communication between its members, the EAA also publishes a biannual newsletter, *The European Archaeologist*, and maintains a website at <http://www.e-a-a.org>.

Each year, the EAA organises a conference in a different European town. This year it will be in St. Petersburg, Russia, on 10 to 14 September 2003. The meetings are attended by around 650 archaeologists from all over Europe and have

Nature and archaeology hand in hand: the example of the Federsee

tion of Archaeologists

developed into the major annual archaeological event in Europe. The EAA also has committees which are intended to keep work going between meetings on issues which are considered to be of importance. In 1997, it adopted a "Code of practice for European archaeologists", which is the first professional code at a European level. In 1998, this was followed by the adoption of the "Principles of conduct for archaeologists involved in contract archaeological work". Both these codes can be seen as important additional steps from within the profession, to facilitate work under conditions set by the Valletta Convention.

Since 1999, the EAA each year presents the European Archaeological Heritage Prize to an organisation or an individual with outstanding merits and achievements for the study or management of archaeological heritage at the European level. It can be awarded for any contribution that is outstanding and of European scope or importance, it does not have to be a scientific contribution. The prize has so far been awarded to the Portuguese Minister of Culture Dr. M. Carrilho, for his role in the efforts to preserve the Palaeolithic rock carvings of the Côa Valley, to Dr. M. Biörnstad, former State Antiquarian of Sweden for her role in the promotion of archaeological heritage management in Europe, to Dr. O. Baasch from Germany for his achievements in the development of aerial archaeology in Europe, and to Dr. H. Cleere from the UK, for his pioneering contributions to the organisational development and study of archaeological heritage management.

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Landesdenkmalamt



The Federsee in the foreground and the Alps in the background

The Federsee Basin near Bad Buchau (Baden-Württemberg) is the largest lower bog landscape in south-west Germany. As an archaeological finds landscape and nature reserve it possesses European rank. Because the heavily saturated peat covering and the exclusion of oxygen have preserved not only wooden floors and walls of several hundred New Stone Age and Bronze Age houses, but also numerous objects made of decomposable organic materials, pollen, timber and large botanical remains, the bog serves as a unique resource for modern archaeology and for the reconstruction of prehistoric environments using scientific research methods, such as pollen analysis and dendrochronology.

On the grounds of its diversity, from still open lakes and extensive reedbeds and lower bogs to the last remains of moors, the 3 300 hectare wetlands offer a biosphere for numerous animals and plants. Some rare bird species have their largest population density in the state at Federsee. The peculiar climatic situation of the reedbeds offers botanical relics of the last Ice Age conditions that are otherwise only known in northern Arctic Europe.

With progressive drainage of the bog, the still hidden archaeological monuments and plants and animals in the reed meadows are equally seriously threatened. In order to prevent further drying-out, the bog water levels must be raised. The Federsee bog has been a European LIFE-Nature model project for the "preservation and development of nature in the Federsee landscape", with a support sum of 1.6 million euros since 1996. The acquisition of land and restoration of a suitable water balance in the wetlands are its central issue. The District Office for Conservation and Rural Preservation, Tübingen, the NABU-Conservation Centre, Federsee and the Baden-Württemberg Office for the Protection of Ancient Monuments are working hand in hand with other local authorities to bring around 2 900 hectares of wetlands under special protection.

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