

Ancient monuments in Finland

Aune RUMMUKAINEN, Finland

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SUMMARY

Antiquities and ancient relics are the traces and remains of past generations that have been preserved in the earth or under water. The Antiquities Act protects automatically without separate measures antiquities as reminders of Finland's past settlements and history. According to the Antiquities Act, antiquities are artefacts that are at least 100 years old and that do not have a known owner. It can be coin, weapon, tool, ornament, vessel or transport equipment.

According to the Act, an ancient monument also includes the area that is essential for the preservation of the monument. This area around the ancient monument is called the protected area. Without permission granted under this act it is prohibited to dig, cover, modify, damage, remove or physically interfere with antiquities. If an ancient monument is discovered during earth excavation, the Act prescribes that work be immediately suspended and the find be reported to the National Board of Antiquities or the provincial museum.

Basic data of ancient monuments in the mainland of Finland are in the Ancient Sites register. At Ahvenanmaa county government keeps on data of ancient monuments on their area. The information in the Ancient Sites Registry is available through the cultural environment registry portal and the Paikkatietoikkuna geographic information service. Lot of ancient monuments in Finland are not mapped and researched and many of them are marked only as a dot to the Ancient Sites Registry. With modern measuring systems mapping of monuments would be more effective. Nowadays ancient monument can be adopted by associations, groups, hobbyists and clubs, which looks after monument, collects garbage away and makes little maintenance at monument area.

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1. ANTIQUITIES

Antiquities are the traces and remains of past generations that have been preserved in the earth or under water. These relics and monuments tell about life, habitation, mobility, trades and occupations, and religious and burial practices. Ancient relics can be coins, weapons, decorations, containers, vehicles or other objects whose owner is unknown and which can be presumed to be at least one hundred years old.

Monuments are protected areas due to the insight they give into the early habitation and history of Finland. Ancient monuments include earth and rock mounds and cairns made by ancient humans; pagan-era graves and cemeteries; rocks and rock surfaces with ancient writings, drawings, tool marks or sacrificial pits; places of worship and ancient court venues; remnants of ancient dwellings and homes and workplaces (figure 1); ancient abandoned fortresses (figure 2), fortifications, moats and ruins of churches, chapels, monasteries and other significant buildings; remnants of important ancient routes (figure 3), road signs and bridges and remnants of signal fire equipment. Old boundary markers, measurement places and measurement towers may also be considered antiquities.

Stone Age homes are most common ancient monuments in Finland. In Lapland hunting pits are very common. In the Southern part of Finland there are ancient fortresses and ruins of buildings. Sacrificial stones are located especially in Western and Southern part of Finland. About 29 000 ancient monuments are registered to the Ancient Sites Registry. In additionally about 500 – 1000 ancient monuments are registered every year.

Some monuments, such as cairns, sacrificial stones and hillforts are still visible in the landscape, while others are completely beneath the surface of the ground, such as dwelling sites and former places of work and graves. There is no age limit for ancient monuments. The law applies to both prehistoric objects and sites and those from historically documented times.

Some of the youngest items covered by the protection in Finland are defensive devices from World War II.



Figure 1. Ancient deer-hunting pit.

Protected underwater antiquities covered by the Antiquities Act are wrecks or parts thereof discovered in the sea or inland waterways, which sunk over one hundred years ago. Underwater antiquities also include other manmade structures that are under water. The Ancient Sites Registry includes information of over 1,600 underwater finds, most of which are wrecks of ships or boats. Not all underwater antiquities have been discovered yet; only a fraction of Finnish waterways have been thoroughly examined.



Figure 2. Linnaluoto Island on Kokemäenjoki River is an ancient monument because a castle once stood there.

2. PROTECTION OF ANTIQUITIES

Without permission stipulated in the Antiquities Act, it is forbidden to excavate, cover, alter, damage or remove ancient monuments, or to disturb them in any other way. An ancient monument includes an area of land necessary for the preservation of the monument and for providing sufficient space around it in view of its nature and significance. If ancient monuments and their protective areas are laid down in official surveys or condemned through eminent domain, their boundaries as laid down must be recognised and observed. Unless the boundaries of the ancient monument concerned have been laid down, the boundaries must be defined so as to leave a protective area two metres wide from the visible perimeter of the monument.



Figure 3. New duckboards have been constructed on the old plank road in Teuravuoma.

If an ancient monument is discovered during earth excavation, the Act prescribes that work be immediately suspended and the find be reported to the National Board of Antiquities or the provincial museum. Regular terrain inventories of monuments and marking sites on plans of various levels is aimed at avoiding this type of situations that are detrimental for builders and landowners.

If an ancient monument is an undue encumbrance or impediment in relation to its significance, an application with a detailed description of the monument can be submitted to the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment which, after hearing the National Board of Antiquities, may permit action to be taken thereon which is otherwise forbidden (figure 4). Such permission can be subject to conditions deemed necessary.



Figure 4. A public road goes over Kajaani Castle.

The boundaries of ancient monuments and their protective areas have only been agreed or decreed by a decision of a Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment for approximately 30 monuments. Thus, town planning is the most important method for protecting the surroundings of monuments.

If the interested parties agree, the monument and its protective area are separated in a land

survey into an area owned jointly by the stakeholders. Where needed, the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment gives special decrees to safeguard the value of monuments. The decrees can also be extended to cover an area outside the protective area unless this causes significant encumbrance to the landowner or another party. When required by public need, the state has the right to expropriate ancient monuments and their protective areas or parts thereof in accordance with the statutory right on redemption of immovable property for public need.

Whoever neglects to forward a historical relic to the proper authorities can be convicted of antiquities violations. The same applies to anyone who neglects to report a relic or otherwise conceals, transfers, acquires or exports such relics which, under the provisions of the Act, are to be forwarded to the National Board of Antiquities, or damages or alters such objects. Such acts also lead to loss of rights to the find.

3. DETERMINING IMPACT ON ANCIENT MONUMENTS IN LAND USE PROJECTS

The Antiquities Act stipulates that planners drawing up land use plans or town plans must determine the impact of the plan to ancient monuments. According to the Act, the party responsible for constructing public or considerable private works must defray the costs arising from the investigation due to the project. It is important to include a natural protective area dictated by the terrain or historical connection around the monument in planning.

Protection of ancient monuments and forestry can usually be reconciled with fairly little effort. Even if the ancient monument itself is protected, use of the land around its location, such as forestry, is permitted. However, the ancient monument must be taken into account in the planning of forest management work. This requirement is also included in forest certification criteria. It is advisable to do any logging work in areas with ancient monuments in wintertime. It is forbidden to drive over the structures of ancient monuments even when the ground is frozen or covered with snow. Sometimes horses are used to work in this kind of areas.

Underwater cultural heritage, such as ship wrecks, must be taken into account in the planning of waterway construction projects. Such project can include harbour construction, waterway

improvement, dredging and water backfilling work. The party responsible for the construction must determine in advance whether the work will damage underwater antiquities. Because information on the locations underwater antiquities is not comprehensive, the preparatory phase of the construction project must include an inventory of the bottom of the waterway.

The Ancient Sites Registry contains basic information about the ancient monuments in continental Finland. The register includes the location of each ancient monument, either as a marked point or regional location on the map (figure 5), and possibly photographs of the monument. The information in the Ancient Sites Registry is available through the cultural environment registry portal and the Paikkatietoikkuna geographic information service. Known ancient monuments are marked with points on topographical maps (Figure 6). Where an ancient monument is in an area pending land survey and parcelling, the monument and its protective area must be mapped and marked on the survey map and in the Land Register.

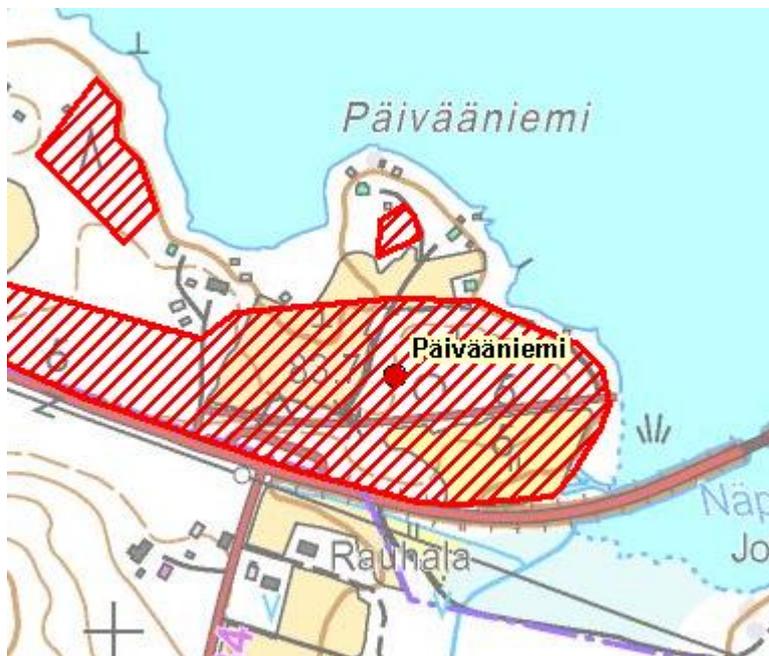


Figure 5. Map information from the Ancient Sites Registry with a marked area.

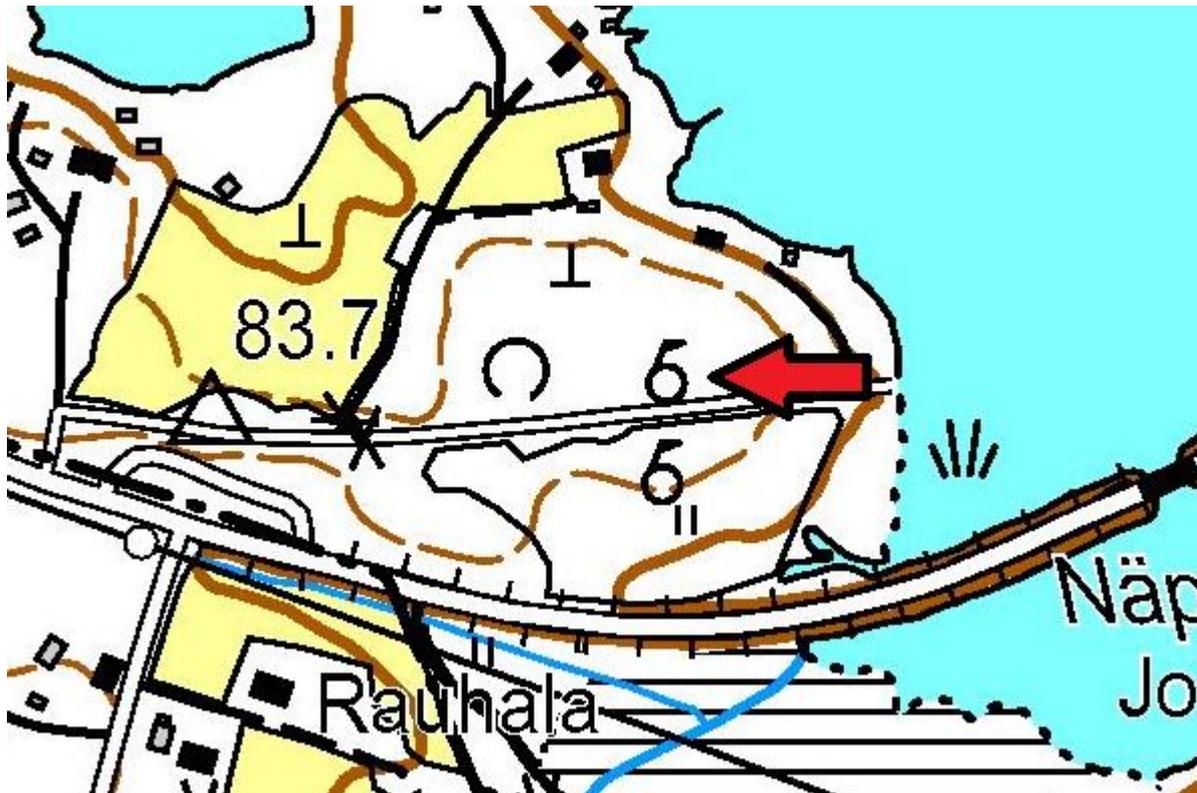


Figure 6. Ancient monument marked on a topographical map.

4. POSSIBILITIES OF AND THREATS TO ANTIQUITIES

The Antiquities Act protects underwater relics that sunk over 100 years ago. However, recreational dives to old sites protected by the Antiquities Act are allowed, but the relics must not be harmed in any way. The idea of an underwater park is to present an underwater cultural history site, such as a ship wreck. The site is marked with buoys to which boats can be safely attached. An underwater cultural path marked with a guide rope has been built for the site with information signs that tell about the structure and history of the relic. Visitors can buy a brochure about the park and wreck and a waterproof dive map for the dive.

The National Board of Antiquities can assign the local care of a national monument to the municipality, parish or joint authority. Some years ago, the Region of Pirkanmaa introduced an “Adopt a Monument” scheme for this purpose. In the scheme, cultural monuments that are

located on state land and need care can be adopted by associations, groups, hobbyists and clubs. The adoption may involve supervision of a cultural site, collecting rubbish or other small-scale maintenance measures. There are currently 14 adopted monuments, and fewer than 10 monuments are still available.

Metal detecting enthusiasts pose a threat to ancient relics and monuments. They search the areas of ancient monuments without permission and dig up metal objects. Some of them keep their finds, which is against the law, while others forward their finds to the National Board of Antiquities. However, the National Board of Antiquities has already received so many finds that the staff do not have time to examine them. Objects that have been buried underground start to deteriorate when they come into contact with air; it would be better to leave them in the ground where they would be better preserved while awaiting examination.

5. SURVEY OF ANTIQUITIES

Finland's ancient monuments already include many sites that require closer examination and survey. The National Board of Antiquities has limited resources, and the summer season available for terrain investigations is short. Modern survey technology enables fast survey of ancient sites, which makes it possible to study and interpret the measurement results and generated images indoors and also in the winter. This would conserve the labour input of museum professionals for tasks that most require their professional expertise.

Scanning with unmanned drones or helicopters would be especially useful for preliminary surveys of large sites. The scope of a cemetery or deer hunting ground could be determined from the forms of the terrain made visible by scanning. Various cairns and other structures could also be scanned to ensure that information about them would be preserved even if the monument was destroyed. In and along driving routes, mobile scanning from a moving car could be carried out. Multi-beam scanning can be used to survey underwater sites. Satellite positioning and tacheometry can be used to efficiently survey individual and clearly outlined sites and determine their exact coordinates.

CONTACTS

Dr Aune Rummukainen Given name and family name
Lapland University of Applied Sciences
Jokiväylä 11
96300 ROVANIEMI
FINLAND
Email: aune.rummukainen@lapinamk.fi
Web site: www.lapinamk.fi