

ANNUAL REPORT: VASAGÅRD ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT FIELD SCHOOL

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Crew 2019 – Finding sunstone

The Vasagård Archaeological Project Field School was held from June 23th to June 20th at Vasagård on the Danish island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea. The project included 10 IFR students in total, 7 from the USA, 2 from Canada, and 1 from Ireland. The project was joined by a group of local volunteers, some archaeology students, and a medical student (from Lund University, the Saxon Institute of the Netherlands, and the University of Aarhus, respectively). The volunteers and other participants worked in another area (XXXV.1) and were not a part of the students' project.

The main objectives of this season were to continue where last season left off—the excavation of one of the causewayed enclosures and the circular structures within the site where the concentration of archaeological material and conditions for the preservation of organic material seemed promising. Finds and artifacts from last season's excavation included burned pottery, lithics and seeds, which improved the

chance of illustrating how the Neolithic progress at Bornholm corresponded to the Funnel Beaker Culture in other parts of Denmark and Scandinavia. As well as overlapping in time with the Pitted Ware Culture and the Early Battle Axe Culture (Middle Neolithic A-V and Middle Neolithic B-I).

We focused on completing the excavation on Cultural Layer MN A III-V in the opened structure XIII.2 in Vasagård West. We wanted to understand the depositional process of the layers and materials and the differences in content with the other layers.

The IFR students worked in the XIII.2 area, centered on the Middle Neolithic MN A III-V layers. Even though the area included levels, which were difficult to dig even for experienced participants since the layers contained lots of fragile animal bones. This kind of excavation can be difficult with no experience, but the participants quickly understood how to excavate and handle fragile archaeological remains.

In the last week of the project the students worked in area XXXV.1, which appears similar to area XIII.2, but it is believed that the occupations of the two areas are different due to the difference in the number of artifacts. We moved to the new area because the students had completed excavating the main objective: layer MN A V. With only one week of the project left, there wasn't enough time to complete the next layer. So instead of leaving the students with unfinished business, we decided to move them to another area at the site, which was already open.

The new area (XXXV.1) gave the students the possibility of finding some of the smaller decorated slate-stones (aka sunstones), which Vasagård West is known for. It also gave them more practice in drawing and documenting. Given the number of stone tools and sunstones the students found in just one week, the area was a good place to finish off the project.

The participants took part in laboratory activities, which were essential to learning the full process of the excavation. The activities involved washing, labeling, and classifying the found artifacts for future database work. The archaeological material recovered was registered daily, so we could have accurate information about the fieldwork progress. This kind of information is vital for making fieldwork decisions and deciding whether it is necessary to rectify them.

Lectures on Neolithic enclosures, material culture, 3D scanning, and lab work were given and focused on the classification of tools and identification of contexts. Within a few days, students were able to discuss object identification, function, and use. They acquired excavation skills, participated in digging, selecting artifacts while screening, and cleaning material, with database input.

We appreciate the outstanding participation of the IFR students on the field and in the laboratory activities; the VAP had reached its goals.

In the end, some of the participants expressed interest in returning to the project in the future or participating in other research projects.

