

Gotland Archaeological Field School

Summer courses 2012



Viking Discovery Programme



GOTLAND VIKING ISLAND

The world's biggest silver hoard showed up some years ago in a cultivated field in the North-East part of Gotland. It weighted some 67 kilos, and consisted of two parts, deposited in the ground some 3 meters apart.



The hoard consisted of the astonishing amount of more than 14.200 coins, together with almost 500 massive silver arm rings and other objects, all of pure silver. The hoard that can be dated to the end of the 9th century had been placed in wooden boxes, and probably under the floor of a Viking Age house.

In close connection to the silver hoard, there was also another deposit, this time of 20 kilos of bronze objects. Also this hoard was placed in a wooden box, where the iron lock was still well preserved.



The background for this extra ordinary wealth on Gotland in the Viking Age should be seen in its position in the Baltic Sea, being a kind of a meeting place between East and West, and its role as a kind of a middle man in the East-West trade. The very even distribution of the hoards on the island, gives a clear picture of a society were more or less all farms took part in a very lucrative trade. There are no sign of any king on Gotland in prehistoric times, instead there seems to be ample evidence that the society was built on farms.

THE GOTLANDIC FARM

In spite of the tremendous rich heritage from Viking Age, like the finding of about 700 silver hoards, there is still a very scanty knowledge of how houses and farms in general looked like and were constructed. Only a handful of places have been investigated so far, and much of the



knowledge is coming from just two places; Fjäle farm in the parish of Ala and Burge farm in the parish of Lummelunda. The ***Viking Discovery Programme*** aim at changing this situation. With the start in summer 2007, there have been extensive excavations of Viking Age houses and farms in different locations around the island.

Each year, excavations were carried out at a new location, and by this way, we got information from different places on the island, and by that we are now able to draw some conclusions about house constructions and farmsteads in general.

Summer 2012, we will excavate the deserted farmstead Fjäle in the eastern part of Gotland. We know that it was abandoned around AD 1350, and we have in earlier excavations been able to show that the site has been continuously occupied from around AD 100 until around AD 1350-60. The main aim of summer's excavation will be to get a better understanding of the Viking period at the site. In this connection, our main goal is to excavate what is supposed to be a living house, and if the time will be on our side, also a barn.



VIKING DISCOVERY PROGRAMME

This international field course gives an introduction to the Viking Age period on Gotland and provides practical and circumstantial knowledge of archaeological and human geographical methodology in investigating a prehistoric site. The field course combine lectures with practical field investigations of a Viking Age early Middle farmstead.

As a part of the field course, there will be work with the actual artefacts from the excavation. The archaeological field course runs for 3-6 weeks, from the 2nd of July to the 11th of August.

These courses will be open to students and amateurs from all over the world, and here is the chance to participate in a fascinating excavation programme. The excavation site is situated some 25 km from the municipality Hemse, about 35 kilometres east of Visby close to the east coast.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is interdisciplinary and comparable with university studies in archaeology. Most of the lectures, as well as teaching of investigation techniques, are carried out by personal from Gotland University and Stockholm University. The courses are equivalent to 9-4,5 ECTS credit, depending on the length of the field course.

The aim of the courses is to give the participants:

- A general knowledge of archaeological and human geographical methodology and documentation of prehistoric sites.
- A practical and circumstantial cognisance of archaeological excavation field methods, artefacts analyses as well as documentation by GPS, GIS, and other field methods, via an investigation of a Viking Age farmstead.
- A basic knowledge about Viking Age and Early Middle Ages artefacts and the handling of them
- Knowledge about Viking Age Gotland.
- Making a short paper of a matter chosen together with the supervisor.

The course runs eight hours a day, five days a week, broken into two parts, one hands-on excavation, and another daily session of registration work, exercises, classes, conferences and excursions. Some of the weekends will be devoted to excursion on the island.

Students will receive an introduction on basic aspects of field excavation techniques, which will be applied during excavation. In the field, students will process, classify, register and study excavated material. In addition to the daily excavations, students will further learn about the history of Gotland by way of organised excursions to cultural sites on the island. Courses will be taught in English.

The courses consists of introductory lectures, as well as a field course containing surveying, excavation, documentation and interpretation of artefacts. Before arriving to Gotland, some basic literature studies should be carried out concerning Viking history in general, and about Gotland Viking Age in specific.

The main part of the field course will take place at the site of the Viking farmstead, both in the form of site lectures and dealing with excavation technique and includes themes as; archaeological field methods, documentation and visualisation, Osteology and a survey of Viking Age artefacts. The fieldwork will be carried out with great emphasis on giving the participants an introduction to archaeological field methodology, digital techniques, and handling of finds and survey documentation.

The course ends, for those who plan to use it for credits at home universities with the accomplishment of a report, containing a description and an interpretation of a selected part of the investigation at Fjåle. The accomplishment of the report will take place at the end of the course.

DIRECTED AT

Directed at students, professors, teachers, and anyone that would like to increase their knowledge of archaeology and Viking Age history. Previous experience in archaeology or excavation is not required. The course will be limited to 30 participants per turn. Spaces will be

reserved when SEK 700 application fee for the course is received at the school. The remainder of the programme cost will be due about 25 days before the start of the course.

CERTIFICATE

At the end of the course, students will receive a certificate of participation that will summarise their performance in the course. Students will also receive a letter stating that they were part of the Viking Discovery Programme project participating in archaeological research.

APPLICATION

Application to the field courses should be done before the 7th of May 2012. In connection to the application, the registration fee of SEK 700 should be paid to Gotland Residential School for adult education. Full payment must be made 3 weeks before the course start. For further details about accommodation, costs etc, see the homepage, www.gotland-fieldschool.com.

STAFF

Project responsible is Associate professor Dan Carlsson. Assistant project supervisor is M.A. Olle Hoffman. Supervisor of the field work is Archaeologist M.A. Zenobia Homan and Archaeologist M.A. Amanda Karn. Depending on the number of participants, there could be more supervisors.