

Dear Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship Committee,

I was very fortunate to participate in the Gotland Archaeological Field School during July and August of 2018. Situated in the middle of the Baltic, the large island of Gotland acted as a stepping stone for trade and travel between Sweden and continental Europe. As a result Gotland is home to a rich archaeological past which spans several millennia and contains a vast amount of foreign goods from as far as Rome and the Middle East.

The site that we excavated over the course of four weeks was certainly representative of Gotland's complex history. Gudings slott ("Guding's castle") is tucked back in the rural countryside of southern Gotland. It is one of the island's many hillforts from the Roman Iron Age (1st through 4th centuries AD). However, what makes Gudings slott unique is its later use as a Viking Age burial site (late 8th through 11th centuries AD). The objective of our excavation was precisely to discover this relationship between the hillfort's earlier usage and its appropriation as a ritual site centuries later.

I worked with a team of 17 international students under the leadership of Swedish archaeologists. My trench group was tasked with several projects during these four weeks. Our first trench was situated at the supposed "entrance" of Gudings slott, which the site director believed would be important both for dating the hillfort and understanding its initial purpose. We were able to uncover evidence of traffic, possibly confirming the director's hypothesis, and carbonized plant remains might allow us to provide a more exact date. The next project was to excavate a burial marked by a stone cairn that was built into the wall of the fort itself. It was immediately evident that the grave had been tampered with after the initial interment and our first thoughts were that it had been looted. However, as more and more was excavated we found grave goods but no body, which suggests reinterment rather than robbing. Although the body was missing, our site director was able to confirm that the burial had been that of a Viking Age female due to its orientation and artifacts.

This opportunity also gave me experience with the basics of archaeological processes at every stage of an excavation, both in the field and in the lab. Each of us was deeply involved in surveying, preparing, digging, journaling, photographing, and cataloging during our four weeks on Gotland. We spent a total of four days in the field and one in the lab every week. There were regular lectures by archaeologists and professors from various Swedish universities on topics ranging from history, numismatics, and place-name studies. The field course also included several excursions to important archaeological sites around Gotland. At the end of the four weeks our trench groups prepared detailed reports for presentation which are to be translated and published in the field director's final report on Gudings slott as a whole.

I am forever grateful to the Archaeological Institute of America for awarding me with the Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship. Their generosity and support made my experience this summer a possibility, which in turn has given me an immense amount of confidence as an archaeologist and has undoubtedly given me a head-start in my future career as a scholar.

Very truly yours,
Sean Cantrell

