

CONTRACT MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGY IN SWEDEN

July 24, 2015 Delia Ni Chiobhain Enqvist Commercial Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, Excavation, Explore Posts, Historical Archaeology, Maritime Archaeology, Museum Archaeology, Osteology, Prehistory, Public Archaeology, Publishing, Survey Sweden, Underwater archaeology

Hello and greetings from Sweden's west coast! My name is Delia Ní Chíobháin Enqvist and I am an archaeologist working in the Contract Archaeology department at [Bohusläns museum, Uddevalla](#).



#FieldworkFace. Photo: Niklas Ytterberg, Bohusläns museum.

At the contract archaeology department we work mostly with projects that are development-led and mainly within [Västra Götaland county](#), but at times travel to other parts of the country. I could explain in detail the bureaucratic process behind project contracts and the laws involved but this post is supposed to be fun to read! Basically, if someone is developing an area of land or water the County Administrative Board decides on whether there is a need for archaeological work, they then decide on a company carry out the archaeological work (there are a number of competitive companies in Sweden), and in general it is the contractor who pays for the work. That was the nutshell explanation, [here](#) is a more detailed explanation.

In total we are 20 archaeologists at the department, including maritime archaeologists. We have a [blog](#) and we [tweet](#), the majority of the content is in Swedish so don't worry about trying to pronounce any of the words, it took me a few years. I am Irish and am originally from the [Dingle peninsula](#). Right after beginning my studies in archaeology I took up scuba diving with the plan of becoming a maritime

archaeologist. And my plan worked! Today I am one of four maritime archaeologists at the department and we work on archaeological projects along the coast, in rivers and in lakes all over Sweden. We dive according to the Swedish Work Environment Authority's regulations but in essence the archaeological work we conduct is similar to that on land. Save for occasionally not being able to see things. Below is an image showing good visibility underwater:



An archaeologist working on a wreck site off Resö island, Sweden. Photo: Delia Ni Chiobhain Enqvist, Bohusläns museum.

Here is an image of from an area with less visibility:

 This image has been resized. Click this bar to view the full image. The original image is sized 615x615px.



Delia on an archaeological investigation at Lindholmen, lake Vänern, Sweden. Photo: Staffan von Arbin, Bohusläns museum.

While all of the archaeologists at the department partake in fieldwork, we also work as project managers for the department's archaeological investigations and excavations. This involves taking projects from the initial enquiry, researching the archaeology of the area, posing research questions, developing a project and fieldwork plan, creating a budget, arranging logistics, participating in the fieldwork, documentation and analysis and finally report writing. The majority of this work is desk based and likely not the first image of an archaeologist that comes to mind, but it is what I find both interesting and important about our work. No day is really ever the same and we work closely with developers on a professional level to ensure that archaeological interests are considered during developments.



Ongoing excavations at Gothenburg's Old Town, [Staden Nya Lödöse](#). Photo: Markus Andersson.

On this Day of Archaeology I happen to be in the office. In July many companies and industries take holiday so there are not many archaeologists in the office right now. As the Swedish summer typically happens on one day, which was in late June, it is quite ok to be indoors. My colleague Clara and I are spending our time writing reports from previous excavations in the field. Clara is writing a report on an excavation of a settlement site not far from Gothenburg and that dates from the Stone Age to the Vendel Period, here's the initial investigation [report](#). I am working on a report from a maritime archaeology investigation that we carried out in May prior to development of a lake shore near [Alingsås](#). Reporting our investigations and excavations is not only a requirement from the County Administrative Board but is also our duty as archaeologists, otherwise by keeping the information to ourselves we do not fulfil one of our main goals which is to present the past to society. Our department's reports can be found [here](#) (shameless plugging).

Many of us have a number of projects of varying sizes ongoing at any time. Apart from writing a report I am also making maps for a report of an excavation of a late Iron Age burial ground on Tjörn island. Clara, an osteologist, spent last week analysing bone finds from various parts of Sweden. Some archaeologists in the unit are currently working on the largest urban excavation to ever have been carried out in western Sweden, the city of [Nya Lödöse](#) and where I have borrowed a number of images from:



Ongoing excavations at Gothenburg's Old Town, [Staden Nya Lödöse](#). Photo: Markus Andersson.

As a final note, Clara and I will soon embark on an exciting new path as PhD students, exciting not just for us but for contract archaeology as a whole. While still working as contract archaeologists we will study as part of the [Graduate School of Contract Archaeology](#) at Linnaeus University. Our department has embarked on this unique cooperation between contract museum archaeology and academia to investigate and develop archaeology's contemporary societal relevance. We plan to study and develop methods which will further engage the public with their past, and by the time Day of Archaeology 2016 arrives we will have much more to write on the subject.



Delia and Clara taking time for a selfie during fieldwork at [Jörlanda Berg](#).

Until then thanks for taking the time to read about our work!