

*A Groundhog Day of cultural
heritage communication – on
public metal-detecting in
Sweden*

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A background:

- Up until the 1980's metal-detection was not regulated in detail, but the increase in use on settlements and find sites was met by the so-called "Hoard Project" (mainly on Gotland).
- During the decade, legislation was introduced and a number of spectacular arrests were made.
- In 1991 metal detector use was made subject of permission (which was eventually not granted on Gotland & Öland).
- In 2009 a large, systematic looting of sites on Gotland was exposed. The aftermath sparked heated discussions for years.

- At present **no one** has officially the full mandate to handle issues on metal-detection at the RAÄ.
- This brings that when issues arises, it is normally handled by our legal staff who normally resorts to reciting the legislation, adding to it that it has been democratically decided by the parliament.
- This tend to be received as a hidden allegation of anti-democratic behaviour among critics.
- Sweden has not, as of yet, ratified the Faro Convention.

Official stance

- Non-professional metal-detecting is not illegal but demands a permit from the local County Board (Swe. *Länsstyrelse*). One cannot search for item older than 1850 (was chosen instead of the suggested license-procedure).
- Due to many application a non-refundable fee was introduced in 2018; currently it is 870 SEK/defined land unit. (i.e. 2 areas = 2 fees)
- The Introduction of fees resulted in a dramatic drop in applications, and already beforehand a lot of detectorists signalled that it was a red line

Västra Götalands län



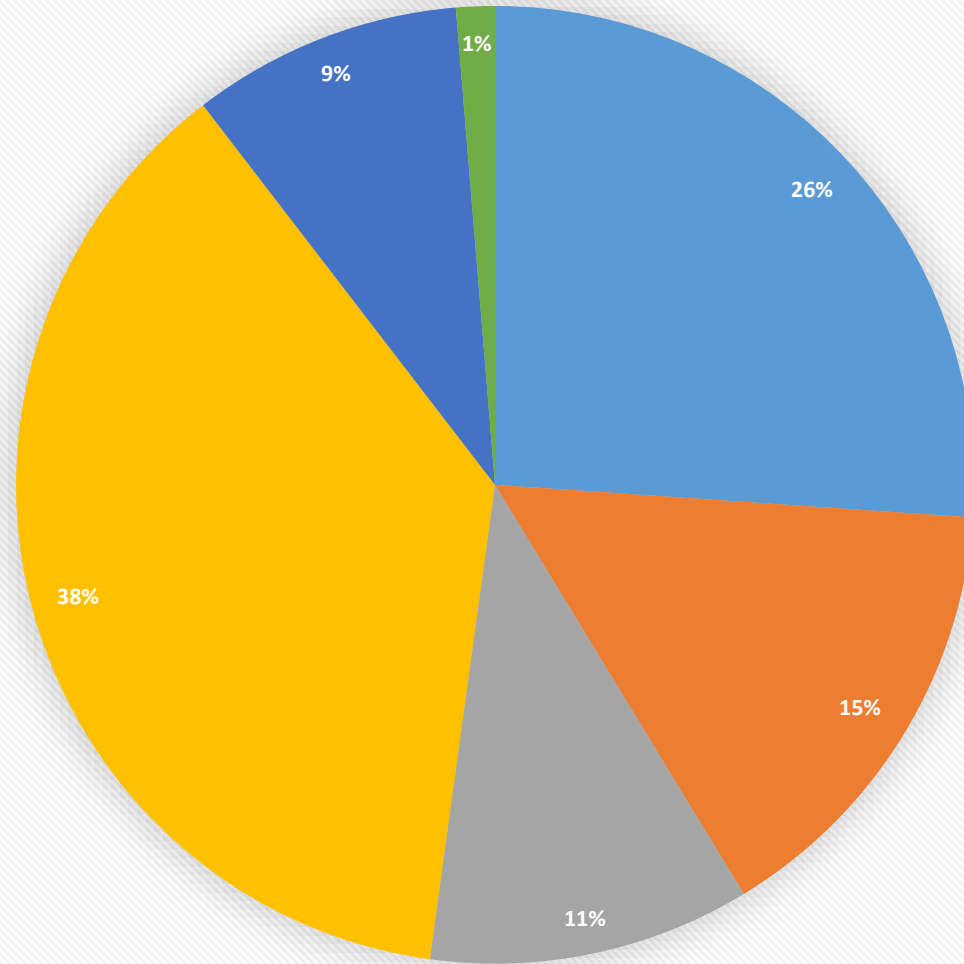
Application
fee

Year	Applications
2014	241
2015	267
2016	299
2017	268
2018	33
2019	37
2020	30
2021	44

Results

- Sveriges Metallsökarförening, headed an on-line petition – “Bring fair metal detecting laws to Sweden”. To date signed by 12.338 “individuals”.
- An overall increase in distrust towards RAÄ and “Authorities”.
- “Maveriks” testing the system, resulting in lawsuits & convictions.
- An increase in political interest – several proposing motions on liberalization, across party boundaries.

Anonymous questionnaire answered by 230 respondents (2019)



■ With permit (60) ■ With permit, occasionally without (35) ■ Without permit, occasionally with (25) ■ Without permit (86) ■ Not active (21) ■ Pass (3)

A Swedish metal-detectorist group on Facebook

- Hangarounds – archaeologists, observers
- Interested – comments occasionally
- Keen users – experienced and disillusioned
- "Jihadists" – few but loud

Reaching out between the trenches...

- Negotiations and meetings has occurred, the latest 2019 in Örebro; the general discussions were quite promising. Then came Covid...
- Meanwhile misunderstandings has sparked rage, e.g. that more important archaeological finds are destructed due to conservation costs.
- That particular “fact” travelled the globe for years and is still seen in argument against the Swe legislation.

A few good exceptions

- Örebro Läns Museum, mainly organised by Martin Rundkvist
- Vänermuseet, Lidköping
- Kulturlandskapet, Bohuslän
- Uniwersytet Łódzki, via Martin Rundkvist



Photo: M. Rundkvist

...and a large, yet unknown number of illegal detector surveys









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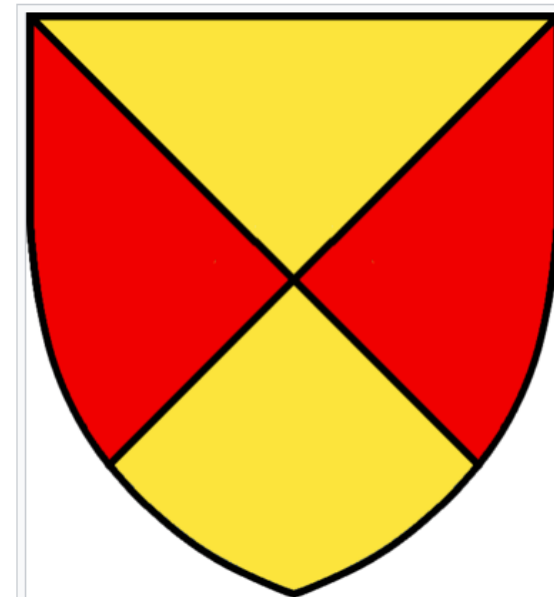
Ivar Nilsson (Ivar Nilssons ätt) [redigera |

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Ivar Nilsson ([Ivar Nilssons ätt](#)), född 1300-talet, död 18 april 1417, var en svensk [lagman](#) och riksråd. Son till Nils Magnusson och Kristina Ivarsdotter Rova, en dotter till [fähirden](#) i [Tønsberg](#) som hette *Ivar Nilsson*. Det är sannolikt hans sigill som blev funnet år 2020 vid [Svaneholms borgruin](#), [Östergötland](#).

Han var lagman i [Östergötlands lagsaga](#) från 1392 intill sin död 1417.^[1] Blev riksråd någon tid i perioden 1389 till 1396.

Han var gift med Margareta Tordsdotter [Bonde](#), död 1401 i en



Fyrstyckad vapensköld för [Ivar Nilssons ätt](#)

And there we stand in our trenches...

...seemingly stuck

- Conservation costs is often brought up as a reason against liberalisation/change – as is lacking museum resources.
- Rapid destruction of cultural heritage in industrially farmed soils is a known fact – but is mostly ignored. Like in Norway you can go on ploughing a protected site but not metal-detect it.
- Meanwhile, fieldwalking is allowed on all unprotected sites, without an official permit (beyond the landowners).

THANK YOU!

