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Metal Detecting in Finland - An Ongoing Debate

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Abstract: This outline article presents and critiques legislation as it affects the metal detecting hobby and the archaeological profession. It considers some of the ways in which metal detectorists themselves have caused controversy but also positive news in relation to archaeological heritage in Finland. A selection of examples of collaboration based on the authors own experiences is presented, also the impact of metal detecting on material culture and archaeological research. The continuing object-oriented focus of both metal detectorists and the media is identified. New collection and engagement strategies could enhance archaeological research, while engaging this particular section of the wider public.

Keywords: metal detectorists; collaboration; collections; find location; legislation

1 Introduction

Metal detecting is not a new hobby in Finland. The first metal detectorists were already collecting finds and reporting them to the National Board of Antiquities (NBA) in the 1980s (Immonen & Kinnunen 2014, 111; Thomas et al. 2015, 188) and it has been mentioned in field reports that some archaeologists have collaborated with metal detectorists from the 1980s onwards (Erä-Esko 1982; 1984). Furthermore, archaeologists were already testing early metal detectors for fieldwork in the 1950s (Erä-Esko 1954, 5). Since around 2010 metal detecting has grown in popularity significantly, and an increasing number of finds are reported to the authorities. This trend has not changed and the number of objects reported annually is still growing. In 2015, 3000 objects were delivered to the Collections of the National Museum of Finland and additionally 1772 coins were recorded (Kuitunen, personal communication; Ehrnsten, personal communication). At the same time as find reporting has increased, the Unit for Archives and Archaeological Collections at the NBA is under-resourced and understaffed. This has resulted in delays in processing reported finds, redemption decisions and fees, cataloguing and conservation. This is not a problem unique to the NBA; increased metal detecting activities and resultant find reporting has been noted in other countries too (e.g. Norway - Rasmussen 2014, 99). The pressure which is placed on the responsible authorities is nonetheless a major concern.

Finnish archaeologists have responded to the metal detecting hobby in different ways. Some archaeologists find metal detecting challenging but inevitable, while others condemn it and want nothing to do with detectorists.

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or their hobby. Since one of the focuses in Finnish archaeological research lies in Stone Age studies (for Finland this is 8850-1700 BC), metal detecting is not even relevant to the interests of many archaeologists. During recent years, a growing number of professionals have however begun to collaborate with Finnish detectorists. In this paper we argue that more could be done in order to regulate the hobby more effectively. One of the biggest challenges is with legislation, the most relevant of which is over 50 years old and thus not in concordance with the challenges that metal detecting presents for archaeological heritage. New detectorists also emerge constantly; even children are getting involved (Siltainsuu, personal communication). This makes the hobbyist community heterogeneous, consisting of detectorists with little or no previous experience and of detectorists with a long experience. This is a challenge to museum staff who try to provide services to the hobbyists.

2 The Policy and Practice of Dealing with Metal Detected Finds in Finland

In Finland, the use of a metal detector is usually allowed without a separate permit provided that the detectorist does not interfere with a scheduled (protected) archaeological site or monument. It is regulated primarily by the Antiquities Act (1963), but also the Lost Property Act (1988) and the Nature Conservation Act (1996). As long as the detectorists have permission from the landowner they can detect on private land such as forests and fields. With the public right of access (Ministry of Environment 2013) in Finland, one is allowed to walk on private land but in order to actually dig one needs a permit from the landowner and where applicable also the tenant farmer.

The Antiquities Act protects ancient monuments including also a buffer zone of 2 meters, which is essential for this protection. According to this same Act, all finds over 100 years old which have no known owner must be delivered immediately to the NBA or a Provincial Museum.

“If metal detecting reveals a previously unknown ancient monument or antiquity, or something assumed to be one, the Antiquities Act states that all digging and other activities must be stopped. The National Board of Antiquities must also be immediately notified of the find” (NBA, n.d.).

The finder must also provide information regarding the location of the find or finds, preferably with Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) coordinates. After this the NBA can decide if they want to redeem the find to their collections or not. These objects are catalogued in the collections of the National Museum of Finland and eventually placed under conservation. At present there is no extra funding available at the NBA for the conservation of these finds and there are only resources for one full time conservationist working with finds excavated from the ground, with the result that fragile metal objects need to wait for a long time before they undergo conservation (Kuitunen, personal communication).

3 Thorns in the Flesh: Controversies and Issues of Trust

Notwithstanding debates concerning what ‘responsible’ means in the context of metal detecting (Thomas 2013), we use ‘responsible’ in this article to indicate metal detecting that takes place with the correct permissions, does not disturb known archaeological sites, and in which hobbyists report finds of archaeological interest promptly and refrain from further digging should a new site (or a possible new site) be discovered. However, since the Antiquities Act was enacted in the beginning of the 1960s, the legislation is somewhat outdated and there are various loopholes. When the Act was legislated, metal detecting was not yet a hobby in Finland, and thus the hobby and its impact are not directly addressed within the Act. It is also important to note that the law and regulations can be difficult to interpret for both archaeologists and metal detectorists.

There are also issues concerning the protection of more recent material culture, as the Antiquities Act covers only artefacts that are at least 100 years old. In recent years, some archaeologists have begun to take an interest in 20th-century archaeology, especially military remains connected with the Second World War (e.g. Lagerstedt 2012, Seitsonen & Herva 2011). However, as noted elsewhere, although such material is not covered by the Antiquities Act, it is afforded (in principle at least) some protection (e.g. Herva et al. 2016). Military material
in and on the ground is owned by the Defence Forces, and as with all other cases, digging is only allowed with permission of the landowner. In practice however, there is little to prevent the removal of Second World War military objects, for example from the many sites to be found in Finnish Lapland (Thomas et al. 2016).

There have been reports of illegal metal detecting or ‘night-hawking’ in the Finnish media (Yle 2014a), but from our own experiences and from conversations with colleagues, we would suggest that the majority of hobbyists most likely want to detect in a responsible manner. Night-hawking is of course unacceptable, but does not appear to be a major problem in Finland at present. One way to reduce what looting there is could be to raise greater public awareness about the Antiquities Act and other laws, especially among those new to the metal detecting hobby. In Finland there are no Finds Liaison Officers as is the case in England and Wales, but several Provincial Museums have trained archaeologists on their staff, even if they do not always engage with archaeological material in their day to day work. It is important that all archaeologists are comfortable engaging with the public concerning legal requirements, and that the information shared by different archaeologists is consistent in order to prevent misunderstandings. At the same time, this sort of coverage can be time-consuming, putting strains on the archaeologists, most of whom are already struggling with their workloads. We still argue that such engagement could have a positive impact on the hobby, as the examples from Espoo in particular (discussed later in this article) indicate. Another way to influence metal detectorists positively is through the detectorist clubs themselves. There is one national metal detectorist club in Finland (Suomen metallinetsijät ry/Finnish Metal Detectorist Association) with five regional divisions and in total 98 members. There are also three regional clubs which are located in Tavastia Proper (with 6 members), Finland Proper (with 5-10 members) and Kymenlaakso with (less than 10 members). Altogether there are approximately 150 detectorists who are organized into clubs (Nyman, personal communication). These clubs organize different activities, ranging from meetings and museum visits to rallies. It’s very difficult to estimate the total number of metal detectorists in Finland because not every detectorist is a member of a club. According to the chairman of Suomen metallinetsijät ry there are probably less than 500 active detectorists in Finland (Nyman, personal communication).

It is typical of the find assemblages that detectorists bring to the NBA that they consist of several finds from the same find location. The assemblages might also be from different time periods. Approximately 11% of all detectorist finds consist of over 10 finds. This is despite the law being clear on the fact that one must stop further digging at the site after finding one object over 100 years old, and when it is likely that the finds belong to an ancient site, such as a cemetery or settlement site. There are also several examples of when a detectorist has returned to a site and continued to search for more metal before reporting the finds onwards to the NBA (Rohiola 2014, 23).

The NBA maintains a database, which is accessible online, where all protected sites are marked on maps. While many sites in the database are marked adequately as rastered areas (with a buffer zone of 2 meters), many other sites are still marked only by a dot on the map. Around these find spots the NBA recommends a detectorist-free buffer zone of 200 meters (Maaranen 2015, 17). However not all detectorists accept or follow this recommendation, not least because it is not a legal requirement. This is currently one of the biggest disputes between the NBA and metal detectorists. The 200-meter buffer zone only applies to metal detecting activity, and not for example to agriculture, which raises different questions amongst the metal detecting community. While this recommended buffer is not currently enforceable by law, it appears in a guide book made by the NBA and intended for metal detectorists.

However, there are also examples of collaboration between archaeologists and metal detectorists, and it is to a selection of such examples that we now turn.

4 Collaboration with Metal Detecting Amateurs at the Espoo City Museum 2012-2015

Espoo City Museum, located to the west of the Greater Helsinki Area in Uusimaa, Southern Finland, has been the forerunner in collaboration with metal detectorists. The co-operation started by accident at the end of 2011, when a detectorist contacted one of the museum’s two archaeologists (Wessman) concerning a
find and soon after came to the museum to meet both of them. After this meeting several other detectorists started to email pictures of their finds to the museum. The museum quickly developed a policy through which detectorist were invited to come to the museum with their finds. This resulted in fruitful discussions between the detectorists and Espoo City Museum archaeologists, and also functioned as an important foundation in order to build up trust. Engaging with the detectorists face to face was seen as important by the museum staff during a time when dichotomy between archaeologists and the public was still a key concern (Siltainsuu & Wessman 2014; see also Immonen & Kinnunen 2014, 110).

By the time that the hobby became very popular, archaeologists still did not know much about metal detecting. No guidelines on engaging with finders were yet available for archaeologists, which meant that the same detectorists could get different feedback from different archaeologists regarding how to deal with their finds. Many archaeologists were unsure how to protect the sites and how to inform the detectorists correctly about their rights and responsibilities. This led to a situation in which some archaeologists prevented metal detectorists from returning to fields after one find, while others gave them permission to continue searching. Alongside such inconsistencies, opinions about archaeologists collaborating with metal detectorist also at times indicated resentment, especially among other professionals.

At the beginning of 2012, Espoo City Museum launched a series of projects in order to get metal detectorists engaged in learning more about cultural heritage and archaeology. Small metal detector surveys were organized by the museum in 2014 and 2015, first in order to obtain information for a planned exhibition about the metal detecting hobby at Glims Farmstead Museum, but also for scientific purposes. The museum’s own archaeologists supervised and directed these surveys, and all finds were documented with a total station and donated to the museum. During the surveys, the museum staff also tried to educate the detectorists about looking also for finds made of materials other than metal while they are detecting, for example on ploughed fields.

Before the exhibition Mysteries from the ground: Metal detecting as a hobby (28.10.2014-29.3.2015) at Glims Farmstead Museum (see Fig. 1), a questionnaire was sent out to the metal detecting online forum Aarre maan alla and also on the National Finnish metal detectorist Associations webpage, where the Museum wanted to learn more about the motivations surrounding the hobby. Seven hobbyists were also interviewed at the museum in order to get more in-depth information about the hobby. This information was then implemented in the exhibition texts and also partly published (Siltainsuu & Wessman 2014; Thomas et al. 2015).

![Fig. 1. A view from the exhibition Mysteries from the ground: Metal detecting as a hobby at Glims Farmstead Museum in Espoo, Finland. Photograph by Anna Wessman, Espoo City Museum.](image)
During 2015, a written agreement of collaboration was concluded between the detectorists and Espoo City Museum and finally signed by 5 detectorists in December of the same year (Siltainsuu, personal communication). The core idea with the agreement is to set an example and inspire other museums to co-operate with detectorists, and also to show detectorists how fruitful it can be to work more closely with archaeologists. In the agreement the detectorist promises to follow certain ethical guidelines and the museum promises to guide and help the detectorist in different ways for example by organizing small, supervised events or surveys. In the agreement it is also outlined that the Museum Educator, a trained archaeologist, will undertake to identify the detectorists’ finds, will receive the finds and will fill in the find forms together with the detectorist. These are then transported by the Museum Educator to the NBA, where they are catalogued and conserved. In order to encourage all participants to follow the agreement, the terms of the agreement were resolved collaboratively. Prior to sending the find onwards to the NBA, the museum photographs all finds and keeps a record of their find spots in order have a better understanding of what has been found where, and how the find situation is developing in the area.

Due to the fruitful but also at times very laborious collaboration with the detectorists, a range of new finds from the Iron Age and the Medieval period have come to light. Most of these finds derive from the topsoil of farmed land, which seems to be typical for this area. Some of these finds have been displayed in the Espoo City Museum’s permanent exhibition, which opened in October 2013. In Espoo the most significant outcome of this collaboration has been a series of new finds from all periods of the Iron Age. Before the collaboration began in 2012, only a few Iron Age sites and finds were known from Espoo. Previous research hypotheses even claimed that this area of Finland (Uusimaa) was unsettled or had only sparse settlement during the Iron Age. Thanks to the detectorists the situation has improved significantly since then and there are now objects from all time periods of the Iron Age, also outside Espoo. Many of these finds have a significant scientific value and have after recovery been both studied and published (Immonen 2013; Raninen & Wessman 2015; Wessman 2016).

5 Experiences of Metal Detecting in the Satakunta Region since 2012

Satakunta Museum is a Provincial Museum situated in Pori, South West Finland. The Museum has a collaboration agreement with the NBA. Thus Satakunta Museum is the authority in the Satakunta region. After a several year break the Museum has since the end of year 2011 employed a full time archaeologist taking care of the archaeological heritage in the region.

As is the case more generally across Finland, in the Satakunta region the metal detecting hobby became more popular in the beginning of the 2010s. Detectorists first contacted the museum usually by sending pictures of finds through e-mail, but also by bringing them straight to the museum archaeologist. As noted earlier, at that time there were no general guidelines for handling detecting finds or advising detectorists. However, detectorists were given instructions to fill in the find forms and to check the NBA’s online database for protected sites, to keep to the recommended 200-meter buffer zone around these sites, and note properly and precisely the find locations. The finds were then identified and sent to the NBA for cataloguing and conservation. Since then the process has been clarified a bit and today the museum always photographs the finds before delivering them to the NBA. The museum also keeps copies of the find forms. Additionally, some detectorists in the region never contact the Satakunta Museum but prefer to discuss with the NBA only.

Satakunta Museum organizes lectures and excursions to archaeological sites which are open for all. During the past few years the museum has even offered opportunities to take part in archaeological excavations. Metal detectorists however have not been interested in these activities, even despite personal invitations – they clearly want to concentrate on metal detecting and to “find old things” is the purpose of the hobby. Yet many of them argue that they are interested in the history of the region and some have borrowed books from the museum archaeologist. This possibly suggests a tension between the different ways in which professionals and non-professionals wish to experience and understand the past, as others
have noted elsewhere (e.g. Flatman et al. 2011). A few detectorists in the region have a special field of interest such as coins and numismatics or militaria.

As mentioned earlier in the case of Espoo, in Satakunta building up the trust between archaeologists and detectorists has been very important. The museum archaeologist tries to answer email questions quickly, and if present at the museum at the time that detectorists bring their objects in, finds time to identify and discuss them with the detectorist and offers to help with filling in the forms. In return, the archaeologist expects detectorists to make contact soon after a discovery, and to provide accurate information about the find locations. In several cases the trust has been challenged. In one example some years ago the museum was purposely given incorrect information about the discovery location of a medieval seal holder. This was because only some weeks earlier another medieval object was discovered from the same field. The finder was worried that the field would be registered as a protected site, thus preventing future metal detecting there. It is also noticeable that find locations are often visited more than once before handing in the finds and reporting the site.

Satakunta Museum has not so far organized open rallies for detector uses. One get-together evening was arranged to engage and discuss with detectorists in the autumn of 2014. In the spring of 2015, Ulvila Upper Secondary School invited the museum archaeologist to give two lectures about archaeology and metal detecting, to coincide with a special participatory course that the school’s history and science teachers had planned. During the course, metal detecting was discussed also as a physical phenomenon, and after the lectures students went out on the field with detectors (see Fig. 2). They were under an archaeologist’s supervision and all the finds were documented properly. The co-operation was useful - although it seemed that the teachers were more interested in metal detecting than the students were!

![Fig. 2. Students from Ulvila testing a metal detector in practice. Photograph by Leena Koivisto, Satakunta Museum.](image)

The main challenges around metal detecting in the Satakunta region are the lack of time and staff resources both in the Satakunta Museum and in the NBA. Detectorists get frustrated, as it takes months to receive information about their finds, not to mention the possible redemption fees from the NBA. In addition, the museum archaeologist finds one particular aspect of the engagements distressing, in that there are no possibilities to do full survey work on all the new find locations in the region that the detectorists report. At the same time, the archaeologist is expected to make a quick decision whether or not the reported find spot indicates a site that under law should be protected. Such a decision would end detecting but also have effects on many other possible land use plans that the landowner might have.
6 Collecting Second World War Material Culture in the Far North

As briefly mentioned earlier, an emerging issue - not only in Finland but in many countries which participated in the conflict and so have twentieth-century military remains on their territory - is how to manage the material heritage from the Second World War. Notwithstanding the ethical challenges of preserving, interpreting or otherwise noting the physical remains derived from times of conflict (e.g. Carr & Corbishley 2015, 2), there is a particularly pragmatic challenge in northern Finland in particular, which is posed by the sheer amount of military material left in the landscape. A current research project with which one of the authors (Thomas) is involved, which investigates the ways in which people interact with and respond to the material remains of the Second World War in Finnish Lapland (cf. Herva 2014), has noted in particular the activities of artefact hunters, particularly (but not only) those who use metal detectors.

Through interviews with both hobbyists and museum professionals in the region, researchers have found that there is a fairly active range of agents choosing to research, collect and otherwise experience the Second World War material of the region. Among these different, and broadly named, ‘history hobbyists’, metal detectorists form a distinct group (Koskinen-Koivisto & Thomas 2016). Many of the project’s research questions revolve around the personal worldviews and ontologies of individuals engaging with Lapland’s wartime heritage, and these though important are beyond the scope of the current article. However, it is relevant that project researchers have noticed physical evidence of artefact-hunting activities on Second World War sites such as Prisoner-of-War camps (see Fig. 3 and see also Seitsonen & Herva 2011). Some interviewees have indicated that they extract militaria from the landscape for personal collections, and occasionally also trade these objects. Informants also suggested that detectorists and collectors may in some cases come from further afield - southern Finland or even from abroad - in order to search for materiel in the Lapland wilderness. In one example recounted to the researchers, an informant explained how he and his associates had ‘rescued’ (by removing and hiding elsewhere) large, well-preserved military objects from being extracted and taken abroad by ‘Central Europeans’ who had learned of the materiel’s whereabouts (see also Herva et al. 2016). Yet other Lapland residents have expressed concern to researchers that removal of this material from the wilderness will ultimately result in there being none left - removing forever what some see as a “testament” to Lapland’s war experience.

Fig. 3. Recent evidence of unauthorized digging at a Second World War site close to Inari, Finnish Lapland. Photograph by Suzie Thomas.
From a policy perspective, as mentioned earlier, current cultural heritage legislation is problematic in that it does not provide legal protection in most cases for cultural heritage sites of a more recent age. An argument can be made, in light of the reality of limited resources, that if not all of Finland’s archaeological heritage can be preserved and protected, it is perhaps the older material cultures that should take priority - as has been the case with regard to Stone Age studies, mentioned in the Introduction of this article. However, the NBA have recently added a new category to its national register described as ‘other cultural heritage site’: “The category of ‘other cultural heritage site’ is defined as: ‘a place or structure that is not protected by the Antiquities Act, but that holds such historical significance and cultural heritage values (Fi. kulttuuriperintöarvot) that its preservation is justifiable”’ (NBA 2013, cited and translated in Enqvist 2014, 113). This is a deliberately broad and vague definition, but does allow the potential for protecting Second World War sites, as has happened already with the Salpa Line, an eastern military defence line against the Soviet Union which was constructed between the Winter War (1939-40) and so-called Continuation War (1941-44). Nonetheless, there remains little protection for individual, portable objects from this period. They are not old enough for it to be mandatory to report them under the Antiquities Act, and several museum representatives have indicated in interview that they have neither the capacity nor in some cases the interest to take so-called ‘war junk’ into their collections. Furthermore, although in theory the remains come under state ownership, in practice the debates surrounding who truly owns military material found decaying in the landscape often remain vague. That for the most part it is non-professionals who are taking an interest in the materiality of the Second World War in Finland (there are plenty of academic historians with an interest), perhaps sheds some light on the sometimes conflicting perspectives between heritage professionals, academics, and the wider public concerning what types of material culture are worthy of research and which categories and periods are ‘valued’.

7 Metal Detecting and its Impact on Material Culture

As a hobby, metal detecting is very object-oriented. According to different online surveys and questionnaires executed in Finland (Immonen & Kinnunen 2014, 112; Maaranen 2016, 277; Siltainsuu & Wessman 2014, 36), the motivations for detecting lie in the interest in history but also in objects and in the joy of finding and handling old things. This corresponds broadly with studies of detectorists elsewhere (e.g. Dobat 2013, 705).

In the media representations, the hobby is also depicted mainly through the finds, the finders and through the financial value of certain objects. The news stories are often written in a somewhat humorous style. The media is thus focusing mainly on the hunt for ‘treasures’, and not giving any wider angles on the hobby or on its impact on cultural heritage. A recent and illustrative example of this is a medieval gold ring that was found in Espoo in the autumn of 2013 (see Fig. 4). After a detectorist discovered it, it received international media coverage. Yet the focus of the media was merely on its ‘priceless’ value and the later debate surrounding its redemption fee (Thomas et al. 2015, 191-192). Why is the cultural historical significance not relevant, as far as the media is concerned? This can perhaps be explained by the journalist’s own perceptions of the hobby, and on pure entertainment value. Finds made by the public might be more interesting to the media than when discovered by a professional. However, there might also be other reasons. Archaeologist in Finland sometimes lack public relations skills, and universities do not currently provide training on this in their archaeology programs. This is no trivial matter; American archaeologist Meg Watters has discussed the skills she developed through her involvement with television series *Time Team America*: “We are ‘directed’ upon occasion, helping us— the archaeologists, academics, scientists— learn the skills we need to communicate with the public through the camera” (Watters 2015, 22). Without such experience or training, archaeologists might not naturally be ‘good’ interview objects, and responses might be either too difficult or too fuzzy to be understood clearly by non-specialists. This can lead to different misunderstandings, or to the media preferring more ‘exciting’ input from other sources (e.g. Pagán 2015, see also Lavento 2006). By stressing more upon the meaning of metal detecting as a whole process (rather than focusing on the ‘precious things’), archaeologists could perhaps steer the focus away from ‘treasure’-related news stories.
While it has been reported in the media that the Collections Unit at the NBA are ‘drowning’ in detectorist finds (YLE 2014b; Lehtinen 2014) it is also important to note that not all finds with an age exceeding 100 years are reported or even taken into museum collections. These finds are mostly refuse, such as melted pieces of bronze and lead, which are often left unidentified. However there are also coins and fragments of finds that derive from post-medieval and early modern periods, which finders perhaps do not perceive as being ‘interesting enough’ to report because they are so common. It has been estimated that only 10% of coins deriving from AD 1523 onwards are reported onwards to the authorities (Kankaanpää 2016, 26). While some of the finds are not recognized due to lack of specialist expertise on these periods among NBA and museum staff, the majority of finds are excluded from the collections because they are considered either too young or as mass finds or bulk, which are often found in the topsoil of fields. Fortunately also these finds are now being documented by the NBA even if ultimately not accessioned into the collections. For example the Numismatic department at the National Museum has started to do so with coins since 2013 (Ehrnsten 2015, 46).

Even though it is understandable that younger finds are not considered as important enough to be taken into the collections, it is also worrying because by excluding more modern finds from the collections a lot of vital information is lost. It fails also to acknowledge the needs of emerging researchers who may benefit from a national collection that reflects also the material culture of more recent periods of interest. It has for example, been noted elsewhere that with proper documentation, recovery and study of musket balls and other militaria (e.g. buttons and badges) one is able to draw a better understanding on the nature of different battles. As Natasha Ferguson appropriately puts it, battlefields should be labelled as “heritage at risk” instead of being ignored (Ferguson 2013). One of the authors (Wessman) has observed that musket balls are a popular collector items amongst detectorists. Despite this they are seldom documented or recorded with proper survey methods by the detectorists. This is due to a lack of understanding of their potential significance (see also Pollard 2009). Because the NBA does not take musket balls into their collections they are rarely reported or even considered as particularly valuable (in an informational sense) amongst the detectorists. Hence they are removed from fields in a growing number while important information is being lost.

We would strongly urge that the NBA and/or Provincial Museums should develop a wider set of criteria for collecting archaeological objects. A new policy with clear strategies regarding which find categories should be prioritized, tied into a comprehensive research framework, could also add much new information to our understanding of phenomena such as consumption, trade, warfare or everyday life during historical times. Because a lot of the mass finds are not reported to the NBA, we also need to start to encourage detectorists to record and report these finds.
8 Conclusions

In this article we have discussed the current policy and practice towards metal detecting, including the challenges that it presents. These include the age of the current legislation: enacted in the 1960s, there are valid questions as to whether the Antiquities Act adequately accommodates the challenges posed by contemporary metal detecting. In addition, we have noted that there is still a gap between the legal requirements concerning stray finds and artefact hunting in Finland, and wider public awareness of them. Furthermore, we have noted that there are issues concerning the ways in which the media represents the ‘treasure’ aspects of metal detecting, and about how archaeology more broadly is represented and discussed.

The question regarding which items should be recorded and taken into the collections is not easy to solve without exceeding the collection budgets but some kind of new policy regarding what is collectable and what is not should be done soon on a national level. It would perhaps be timely to revise national and regional collection strategies in light of both metal detectorist find reporting, but also of the research potential of material culture from more recent periods of history. We are among many in the Finnish cultural heritage sector who feel that a nation-wide digital archaeological database for metal detected objects would be crucial in order to make the most of this increasing resource (see also e.g. Maaranen 2016, 282, Koivisto & Heikkurinen-Montell 2015). Such a development would be timely not only for responding to the scale of the hobby in Finland and its impact on the number of artefacts being discovered, but would also complement comparable developments in other parts of Europe as more and more countries develop their own finds recording systems (see e.g. examples from England and Wales, Flanders and Denmark in this Topical Issue).

Metal detectorists’ interests in Finland remain primarily object-oriented. Therefore, it is important that we continue to work further on trying to shift the hobby towards a broader, more context-based archaeology. According to the questionnaire results, Finnish detectorists are not interested in getting more training about archaeology *per se*, even though several museums are now providing different kinds of public educational events including lectures, courses and even smaller rallies. It is to be hoped that plans to develop a digital finds database can come to fruition in Finland, and that detectorists will understand how the material they produce can be used in research, as we have seen with PAS data in England and Wales for example (e.g. Brindle 2013, Robbins 2013, Daubney 2015). Seeing the application of their finds data in larger, possibly transnational, research projects, may entice finders to produce even better quality data (for example with more accurate find spots). In order to understand further what possible motivations might work, more research is needed in Finland on the metal detecting community in general, especially concerning how they interact with the cultural heritage and what motivates them.

We believe that all trained archaeologist should try to follow the same guidelines and policy when working with detectorists to ensure continuity. Personal attitudes and opinions towards metal detecting should be left to the side, and amateurs treated professionally and objectively, as should happen in interactions with any member of the public. It is also important to note that engaging with metal detectorists is a two-way street, and that it is an ongoing, evolving process. Mutual trust is a key issue when collaborating with metal detectorists.

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