



the

searcher

NO 405 MAY 2019 £4.20

Exclusives:
New TV Series:
River Hunters

**Detecting + archaeology
in the Nordic countries**

Medieval coin hoard

Treasures of our past





DETECTING + ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

JOHN KVANLI CHAIRMAN OF RYGENE METAL DETECTING CLUB

Over the past 10-15 years, we have seen a formidable increase in metal detecting in Denmark and Norway. Detectorists with a great amateur archaeological interest and a healthy attitude contribute every year with the large amount of finds they unearth. Providing new knowledge and material for further research on our ancient history in the Nordic countries.

How does the law in Norway/Denmark differ from, for example, to Britain as to which objects are considered cultural-historical objects and thus protected by law? And what does the ownership rights in Nordic countries say about these cultural-historical objects? This article examines the differences and similarities with our countries and shares some of our finds made.



Rygene Metal Detecting Club

Our club is one of the oldest amateur archaeological clubs in Norway and was founded in 2006. The club's headquarters are in Stavanger, on the west coast of Norway and has 50 members from all over Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

Through its active experienced members, the club has a close relationship and cooperation with many Norwegian, Danish museums, county archaeologists, and regularly contributes with detector assistance on archaeological surveys and excavations in Norway and abroad.

Unlike the Treasure Act in the UK, Norway and Denmark have laws which respects the archaeological significance over the monetary value. Common for our two countries though is that we have very strong cultural heritage laws in order to protect archaeological sites and all loose objects of archaeological interest.

By loose objects of archaeological interest I mean all types of objects and materials of cultural-historical value which are older than the Reformation (1537 AD). For coins, the rules are slightly different between Norway and Denmark.

There is a required obligation to report all coins older than 1650 AD found in Norway, and in Denmark all coins older than 1537. The exception is newer larger silver or gold coins found as either a hoard or as single coins. A single Iron Age find like a lead weight, a single bronze fibula or a single coin in these Nordic countries, will automatically be classified as protected objects of cultural value by law.

The ownership of the artefacts in the Nordic countries differs also to that of the UK. If an artefact comes under the Cultural Heritage Act in Norway or Denmark, then the object is the property of the state.

In Norway, you may be granted a finder's fee for the discovery, but there is no law that states that you are entitled to one. In Denmark on the other hand, the finder's fee is part of the 'Danefæ' assessment and happens automatically, but in Norway the finder's fee reflects more the archaeological value rather than a market value of the artefact. More specifically, you are entitled to a finder's fee if you have acted lawfully and adhered to guidelines of good practice.

LEFT PAGE John Kvanli; a snake shaped fibula with intricate patterns, 550-750 AD, found in Østfold, Norway by Jørn Skaarberg; an oval plate fibula 550-750 AD found in Østfold, Norway by Anders Lippert (photo, Thisted Museum); a very rare pendant of a warrior with helmet, made of silver and found in south of Denmark by Steen Agersø (photo, Poul Andersen); an oval disc fibula from the Viking era found by Morten Eek in Jylland, Denmark; **LEFT BELOW** Kugle fibula, a lovely fibula dated around 150-50 B.C found south in Denmark by John Kvanli **RIGHT FROM TOP** a rare gold pendant, Viking age, found in Østfold, Norway by Hugo Falck; Medieval lead cross with runic letters found by Hans Heinrich Marxen in Rogaland, Norway; Jørn Skaarberg in Ryгене Metaldetecting Club, Norway, with a newly discovered find (photo, Allan Fauruskov) **BELOW** gold ring, searcher Steen Agersø, (photo, Poul Andersen); Roger Torgersen and Thor Eirik Gilje (photo, Allan Fauruskov)



What's considered lawful and good detecting practice in Norway and Denmark?

Permission must be in order from the landowner, no detecting on scheduled protected sites and detectorists must show good diligence for both the site and the handling of the object i.e. not digging below the plough soil, no hard cleaning of the artefact and additionally GPS coordinates and good documentation included for the record.

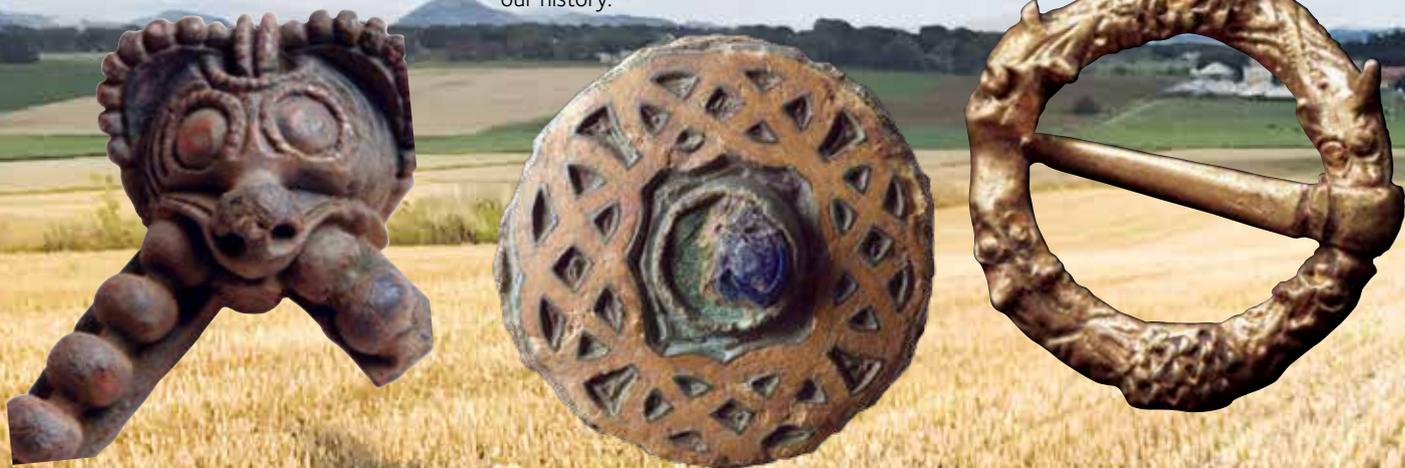
With these strict laws in Nordic countries and a strong ownership of these objects by the state one would probably think that a lot of illegal detecting happens and that no finds are reported. But that is not the case.

The vast majority of detectorists in Norway and Denmark have a genuine great interest in history and archaeology, and it's not the monetary value, or the dream of treasure, that drive them in their search on the fields.

Of course, there are some 'rotten apples' here in this hobby like in everything in the world. It would be foolish to believe otherwise. However, the actual cases of sale, and failure to report cultural-historical objects found with detectors in Norway and Denmark are, to date, very small.

The detecting communities in Norway and Denmark are largely characterised by organised clubs and associations that play a part in cultural heritage protection and in adding new pieces of information about our history.

Most people use GPS both in relation to find plotting, but also in relation to GPS tracking. And the unique thing in Norway and Denmark, is that ALL objects of ALL kinds of material, even fragments of cultural-historical objects are registered and handed in to the museums. It's usually objects in gold and silver – typically 'bling-bling' that gets the most attention in both the press and in people in general. And yes, there is something special about these amazing items, but one shouldn't forget the important items made of iron, lead, bronze/copper alloy that one normally finds.



INTERNATIONAL DETECTING



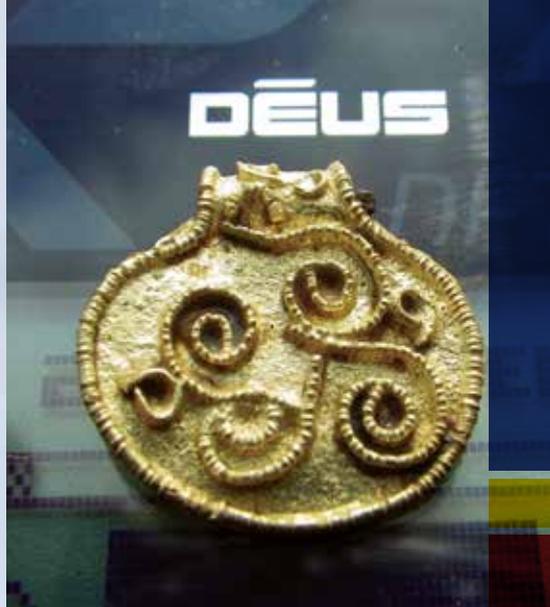
ABOVE Scenic group photograph; Steen Agersø, Johannes Sundberg, Tobias Bondesson and Tommy Olesen; Anders Lippert, Renate Karlsen and Hugo Falck; (photos, Allan Fauriskov) **RIGHT** Jørn Skaarberg (photo, Hugo Falck)

Each individual artefact isn't as important by itself, but the sum of all these artefacts over time, will provide tremendously important research material – if this material is analysed.

In the UK, many of the items that fall outside the Treasure Act are voluntarily recorded with PAS. In Norway and Denmark there is a reporting obligation on these objects, but the problem lies in the fact that this flow of new detector finds is difficult to access, and researched by others outside the major museums.

Denmark is now in a position of a user-driven, more efficient reporting-platform, through the DIME project. I would assume that Norway is looking at similar opportunities within the same solutions in the long term.

Rygene Metal Detecting Club, like other organisations in the North, actively and greatly support this important contribution to the very highest degree. Our passion in amateur archaeology and through the collaboration with the cultural heritage management in Norway and Denmark, is in my opinion, unique on the world scale. ●



INTERNATIONAL DETECTING



TOP LEFT TO RIGHT Found in a floor layer in a Viking Age house, in Jutland, Denmark. Called 'The Viking Bear', it's made of silver and found by Christopher Jarvis (photo, Viborg Museum). Copper alloy mount with yellow enamel and blue stone or glass in the centre, 6-800 AD, found in Rogaland, Norway, by Tobias Bondesson. References to be found from Britain (photo, Museum of Archaeology/ Terje Tveit). A medieval ring brooch of gold with four animal heads, found in Hedmark, Norway, by Terje Roger Olsen **ABOVE** The Loke pendant from Rogaland, Norway, Viking Age, found by John Kvanli (photo, Museum of Archaeology/Terje Tveit) Iohannes Sundberg with a newly discovered find (photo, Allan Faurskov); GPS tracks – Rygene **RIGHT** Jørn Skaarberg (photo, Hugo Falck)

Rygene Metal Detecting Club
www.rygenedetektorklubb.com