



## Foreword

When the idea of a Nordic Conference for Maritime Archaeology was first coined in 2006, it was based on a need for a forum for professional practitioners of maritime and underwater archaeology in the already closely-knit Nordic countries that have so much in common.

Since the first conference in Rudkøbing, Denmark, in 2013, the conference has visited Oslo (2015) and Stockholm (2018). The conference reported in the present volume was scheduled for 2020 but had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, most contributors were willing to resubmit their articles or contribute with new and even more exciting ones. When travel restrictions were finally lifted, no less than 63 participants representing Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Greece, and Israel gathered to exchange the latest news. Not only professional archaeologists had found their way to Roskilde; also, individuals from the avocational underwater archaeology scene in Denmark attended – perhaps attesting to a renewed interest in the field among the general public.

From the outset, the idea behind the conference has been to discuss relevant themes – methodologically, theoretically, legislatively, and politically – affecting the profession, whether research-driven or management-driven. Therefore, the present volume is largely reflective and methodology-rich, but – inevitably – a score of interesting cases and archaeological sites are presented, not just as vehicles for addressing the themes but also in their own right. Chronologically, we move from the Mesolithic to the Early Modern times, from settlement and geoarchaeology to nautical archaeology – the latter with a focus on naval conflict so typical of Scandinavian history.

Not all presentations given at the 2022 conference in Roskilde have made it to this volume. Some were just short addresses to the assembled community, neither intended nor carrying enough weight for publication; some were destined for other publication channels, such as the authors' academic dissertations. Conversely, and in light of the long time that had passed since the previous conference, it was decided to invite additional contributions within the conference theme, making this volume not just the conference proceedings but an anthology presenting the current state of affairs in Nordic maritime archaeology. However, until

now, the conference has had its centre of gravity in the Scandinavian countries. It is our hope that future conferences will see greater attendance from Finland and the North Atlantic.

At the time of writing, there is no confirmed bid for the next conference, and the looming question inevitably presents itself: are conferences – particularly with physical attendance – a thing of the past?

While it may be argued that today there are better ways of presenting one's research outcomes to a wide audience than meeting in person at considerable cost and (maybe) publishing at an unknown time thereafter, the discussion always returns to the strong common denominator between the Nordic countries noted when the conference was first conceived in what we can now begin to call the beginning of the century. As countries and institutions share a free-flowing workforce, language, method and theory, and to a large extent also similar demands from the outside world, there is ample reason to continue and expand relation-building. The discipline is faced with a number of challenges – shared across borders – that warrant all the communication and discussion we can afford to allocate in the coming years.

The training, academic and vocational, of underwater archaeologists has met with an obstacle in this part of the world with the closure of the Maritime Archaeology Programme at the University of Southern Denmark's Esbjerg campus. Prospective students of the field now have to not only seek their specialised academic training further from home, but also separate it from their professional diver training, as they will need to attend a commercial diving school that has no association with the academic institutions and is much more expensive. The loss of this unique combination of academic skills and the omnipotent maritime skills necessary for successful performance in the discipline is greatly mourned throughout the profession, and severe recruitment and onboarding difficulties are envisaged in the very near future.

This problem is compounded by an increased demand for practitioners of the profession. Technological advances, environmental concerns, and, not least, the green energy movement have accelerated the move of critical and commercial infrastructure from land to seabed. Paradoxically, at the same time as education in

the field is being cut, the labour force needed to address near and offshore development-led archaeology projects is growing exponentially, and the competition for these specialists will likely be international, as is the market they are serving. The clients responsible for today's major offshore developments are international players. There is every reason for the archaeological community to also build and maintain regional and international fora for the recurring exchange of methods, theory, and best practise. It is our hope that the Nordic Conference for Maritime Archaeology can continue to contribute to this.

The thirteen contributions you are about to read testify to the maritime archaeology community being both willing and able to meet future challenges by continually evolving and adapting, seeking new methodological solutions to a changing market, streamlining their workflow, while maintaining a high scholarly output. Together, we are – after all – ready for the future.

The conference hosts and editors wish to thank the Focus Group, comprised of former hosts of the conference; the participants and speakers who patiently awaited the passing-over of the pandemic; the authors, some of whom joined after the conference and kindly chose us for publication of their research; and the anonymous peer reviewers who generously volunteered their time in order to expedite the production of this volume. We thank the editors of *Acta Archaeologica*, our colleagues who facilitated the conference with great professionalism, and last but not least Letterstedtska Föreningen for financial support.

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