

BOOK REVIEW

Hannu Valtonen, *Lapin lentokonehylyt. Yli 20 vuotta pohjoista lentokonearkeologiaa*, Keski-Suomen Ilmailumuseon julkaisuja 4, Jyväskylä (Gummerus) 1993, 301 p.

There is probably no other comparable geographic area of the world that can rival Fennoscandia for the variety of historic aircraft types found as wrecks in this region. Owing to the wide variety of combatants involved there during the World War II-era and also to Finland's unique military procurement policies which led to the use of aircraft produced by many different nations, aviation enthusiasts and historians have shown a keen interest in the military aviation history of Fennoscandia. With this point in mind, we can recognize Valtonen's book as the first serious, comprehensive attempt to discover and describe the wrecked military aircraft of this region.

The area encompassed by the author's investigations includes nearly all of Finnish Lapland along with adjacent areas of Norway and Russia. The first half of the book chronicles the author's trips into remote areas of this region with volunteers and aided by local informants beginning in 1970 and continuing virtually every year until 1992. The second half of the book concentrates on descriptions of the wrecks found in these explorations – a total of 114 whole or partial aircraft with nations of origin that include England, the United States, Russia, Holland, and Germany. The final chapters focus on descriptions of aircraft that were write-offs due to damage but not actually wrecked and to oral histories provided by knowledgeable informants. The map at the end of the book provides the approximate locations of the wrecks described.

Although it represents a "first" for this part of the world, Valtonen's book is not the first to be identi-

fied as an example of *aviation archaeology*. Perhaps the best known publications are Robertson's 1977 and 1978 volumes, which explicitly identify the location and recovery of wrecked aircraft as a form of archaeology. Another example is Ramsey's 1980 account of Battle of Britain wrecks. More commonly, however, such finds are presented as aircraft wrecks, often with excellent historical documentation but without any claim as archaeology. Many good examples of this genre exist worldwide. Among the best of these are Collier's two-volume (1982, 1990) description of the wrecks of the Dark Peak District near Sheffield, England; Darby's extraordinary book (1979) about wrecked World War II aircraft in the Southwest Pacific; and the appendix on aircraft wrecks in Bailey's (1989) book on World War II wrecks on Kwajalein and Truk Lagoons in Micronesia. As one can see from the dates of these publications, the interest in locating and sometimes recovering aircraft wrecks, especially of World War II vintage, is relatively new and is growing rapidly. Valtonen's book must be considered in the context of this rapidly expanding literature and the growing awareness of aircraft wrecks as potential cultural resources, along with prehistoric archaeological sites, historic buildings, and shipwrecks.

Aviation historians will appreciate the detailed documentation provided by Valtonen on the wrecks he describes. With few exceptions, these are positively identified according to nationality of origin, nationality of use, type and subtype, and service unit. The author presents a wealth of historical detail, including photographs, about many of the wrecks. The level historical documentation here compares favorably with the volumes mentioned above along with others of this kind. The range of aircraft types is astonishing. I counted a total of 30 different major aircraft types repre-

sented in this study, including some unique and extremely rare types like the Fokker C.X, the Arado 66 and 232, and the Tupolev TB-3. Some of the historic photographs are nothing short of amazing, too, such as the British "Hampden" bomber after a wheels-down forced landing near Varanger (p. 100), or the German Messerschmitt Me-110 shown after a forced landing on the ice next to a bridge on the Kemi River (p. 217).

While aviation enthusiasts and historians are likely to find this book of real interest, the same might not be true for the archaeologists. By presenting this as archaeology, the author invites comparison and evaluation with general standards of archaeological scholarship and practice, especially in relation to field recording. In all fairness, Robertson's and Bailey's much-cited books on aviation archaeology differ little from Valtonen's in this regard, so the problem is a more general one: namely, is there yet such a thing as aviation archaeology? In the area of field recording and documentation, the first requirement in all credible archaeological research is mapping and/or excavation that records the exact physical association of all wreck materials and relevant surrounding features in the soil or on the landscape. Without such recording, it is virtually impossible to explain the sequence of events involved in the wrecking (especially when the archaeological evidence points to a sequence of events that was different from what appears in historic documents or oral histories). This requirement is well known to prehistorians and to historical archaeologists, including maritime archaeologists. Nowhere in this book do we find a single site plan or any systematic effort to control for post-depositional factors that could account for the patterning of the physical remains on these sites. Perhaps the author would have been better off to leave out the word "archaeology" from his title.

In fact, archaeological opportunities abound in the study of wrecked aircraft from every period. As already demonstrated in the field of maritime archaeology, a controlled, systematic study of wrecks can provide startling and important inferences about the past human behavior that produced these wrecks. Many of the wrecks described by the author appear to have this kind of archaeological potential. His exhaustive searches throughout Fennoscandia should serve to alert archaeologists to the existence of a valuable cultural resource, with all that this implies about the need detailed archaeological recording and preservation. This book should also serve as an "early warning" to archaeologists and military historians that this resource is vulnerable to destruction from relic collectors and

anyone else who might remove materials from any wreck site without adequate field recording. Once the physical associations of these wrecks are disturbed, their historical value is seriously diminished. Finland has an enviable record in the domain of archaeological site recording and preservation, and it may be time now to consider how to incorporate historic aircraft wrecks into a comprehensive plan for managing this resource in a manner comparable to other historic and prehistoric antiquities.

Finally, this reader found it difficult to evaluate the first half of Valtonen's book, which differs markedly from any other example of this kind of writing in the existing literature on the subject. The "homespun", anecdotal nature of the author's chronicle of his expeditions and discoveries in the first 125 pages may appeal to some readers, but I found it distracting and less useful than a more straightforward account of these expeditions might have been. There was too much emphasis on the thrill of the chase where a more factual account would have been better. Other writers on the subject of historic aircraft wrecks have generally avoided this kind of style, and, on the whole, it seems appropriate to maintain that tradition. But the peculiarities of the author's style in the first part of this book should not be allowed to obscure the fact that it represents an important contribution to Finland's (and the world's) aviation history. The book should serve to alert archaeologists and culture-historians to the existence of an important cultural resource that deserves careful study and protection.

Richard A. Gould
Brown University
Department of Archaeology
Box 1921
Providence
Rhode Island 02912
USA

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