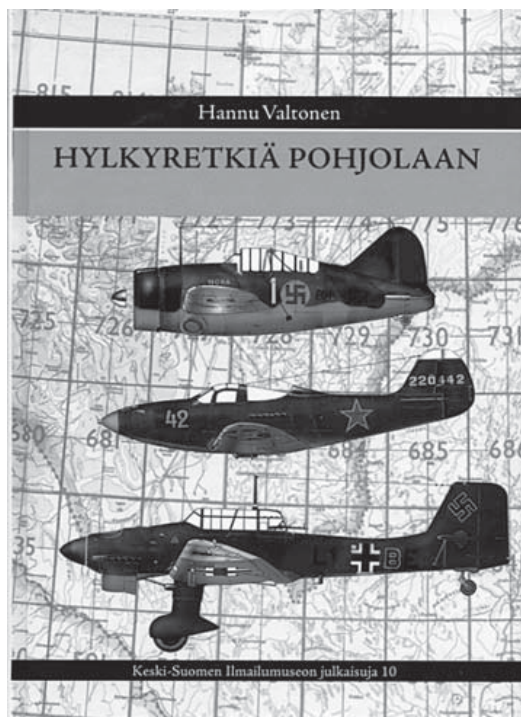


Hannu Valtonen: Hylkyretkiä Pohjolaan [Wreck trips to the North]. Keski-Suomen Ilmailumuseon julkaisuja 10. Gummerus, Jyväskylä. 2009.



It has been 15 years since Richard A. Gould reviewed in *Fennoscandia Archaeologica* (Gould 1994) lieutenant colonel Hannu Valtonen's book *Lapin lentokoneenhylyt – Yli 20 vuotta pohjoista lentokonearkeologiaa* [Aircraft Wrecks of Lapland, over 20 years of Aviation Archaeology from the North] (1993), about Valtonen's travels hunting for the Second World War aircraft wrecks (see also Vilkuna 1993). The current book is an updated remake of the 1993 monograph, largely with the same weaknesses and strengths that Gould recognised in his review.

Valtonen is the former director of the the Aviation Museum of Central Finland, and has published several studies of Luftwaffe in Finland (e.g., 1997; 1998) as well as more specifically of the Messerschmitt Bf 109 fighter plane as part of the German war economy (1999). In 2006 he also presented the first doctoral dissertation in museology in Finland: *Tavallisesta kuriositeetiksi - Kahden Keski-Suomen Ilmailumuseon Messerschmitt Bf 109 – lentokoneen museoarvo* [From Commonplace to Curiosity - The Museum

Value of two Messerschmitt Bf 109 – Aircraft at the Central Finland Aviation Museum] (Valtonen 2006). The 1993 'Aviation Archaeology' book was one of the 'articles', which formed his dissertation alongside two other monographs (Valtonen 1997; 1999).

Valtonen's 1993 monograph was the first one connected to the aviation archaeology and also one of the first anyhow concerned with conflict archaeology in Finland. In his review Gould (1994) particularly criticised Valtonen's book about its structure and character: more than half of it consists of humorous travel stories and remembrances, and the rest is a catalogue-like description of the visited wrecks. However, as Valtonen notes in the foreword of his new book (2009: 9) that it was never meant to be a scientific study, but instead an informal, intermediate work between research oriented publications – thus the ambitious name of the earlier volume is somewhat misleading. Gould suggested that it would have been better to drop 'archaeology' from the book title, and Valtonen admits, that he received plenty of critique about the methodological flaws of his book when defending his doctoral dissertation (2009: 10). This might explain, why the updated version is named simply 'wreck trips', which is only fair, since none of the involved wreck hunters has been trained in archaeology, and there has been no archaeological documentation of the sites. Then again, the choice of name for the earlier volume might actually mirror how archaeology was (is?) perceived by the outsiders – this is more the concern and product of archaeologists themselves than the others.

The book now at hand is an extended version of the 1993 monograph (Valtonen 1993), with added travel stories by other people and some 100 more wreck sites that have been visited. As a remake of the 1993 monograph, the structure of book is similar: out of about 300 pages, altogether 139 are informal travel stories of Valtonen and other wreck hunters, one appearing only with an alias 'Jänkhä-Joonas' ['Swamp-Joonas']. I can imagine that these anecdotes have an appeal for the laymen interested in Second World War aircrafts, but one might wonder why e.g. some of the most obviously racist comments about the indigenous inhabitants of our North have not been tidied from the new version (e.g., Valtonen 2009: 8, 45), after all it is a museum publication. From an archaeologist's viewpoint some of the anecdotes

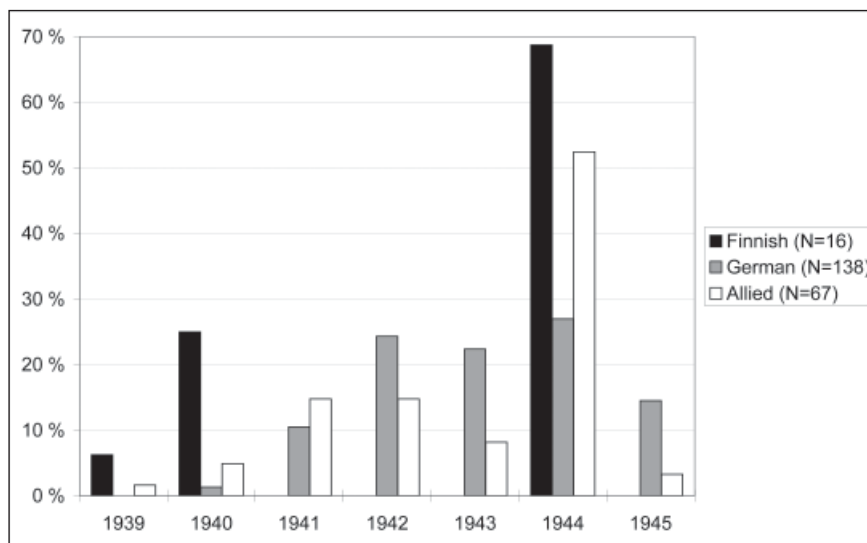


Fig. 1. Timing of the 'kaput' cases presented in the book.

are downright disturbing, such as the story of hacking off a tactical sign from a Junkers Ju-52 wreck with an axe by one of the expedition participants, to be taken home as a memento. Valtonen himself was rather astonished at the time, and later donated this piece to the Aviation Museum of Central Finland (Valtonen 2009: 26–7). Some of the original texts from 1993 are also somewhat artificially vivacious, as Valtonen himself admits (Valtonen 2009: 10), and excessively manly in a military slang style.

Since the early 1990s archaeologies of contemporary or recent past have moved world widely away from the margin, and also the aviation archaeology has matured as an archaeological science (Holyoak 2002). As Gould hoped for in his review on Valtonen's 1993 book, nowadays aviation archaeology is research question oriented, and for example the diverse site formation processes are taken into account (see e.g., Ford 2004; 2006; Holyoak 2001; 2002; Smith 2003; Spennemann 1995; 1998), instead of simply cataloguing the located wrecks. Several associations exist now for the professionals interested in aviation archaeology in different countries (especially in Great Britain and USA), and even a specialist magazine *Aviation Archaeologist* is published. Still, little has happened in Finland. Gould hoped that Valtonen's 1993 book could have worked as a wake up call for the professional archaeologists to recognise this unique and vanishing archaeological resource. However, this has hardly realised, even though the archaeologies of recent past are

otherwise becoming more and more common also in Finland. Thus the same wake up call could be shouted out once more.

Finland has a really unique heritage of Second World War aircraft wrecks, especially in Lapland due to the area's diverse military history which involved Allied, German, Finnish, and even Swedish troops. Valtonen delimited his study to cover the range of German *Fliegerführer Nord(Ost)*, covering the northern Finland and Norway from the level of Lake Oulu and Bardufoss up to the Arctic Ocean. Various combatants taking part in the Continuation and Lapland Wars are mirrored by the exceptional range of wrecks of different origins: book catalogues some 220 wreck cases connected to about 45 different plane types. These include aircraft of American, Dutch, English, Finnish, German and Russian origin. In the Figure 1 are portrayed the years from which the cases originate. These reflect the general progress of fighting: for example the allied wrecks in the area date mostly late in the war, to the period when the tide of war had turned against the Germans and the Soviet troops were advancing. Also all the wrecks of American origin (leased to Soviet Union) date from 1943–1945. Most of the (admittedly few) Finnish cases originate from the Finno-German Lapland War, reflecting the extent to which the German troops were responsible of Finland's whole northern front throughout the Continuation War.

It is a pity that the index and map of 'kaput' cases published in Valtonen's 1993 book is not

included. However, this index has been later published in his Northern Flank of Luftwaffe monograph (Valtonen 1997), and several good listings are found nowadays in the internet (e.g., Ainasoja n.d.; Sørensen 2003). From an archaeological standpoint it is bothering that there are no closer descriptions about most of the wreck locations, about specific observations at the sites, or of the actions taken at the sites for example when moving aircraft parts to various museums or to be sold as scrap metal. Still, Valtonen's book offers a good starting point for a more methodological, research oriented approach to aviation archaeology in Finland.

It has to be admitted, that aviation archaeology is again one field where enthusiastic amateurs have done a great deal more than the professional archaeologists altogether. It is thanks to Valtonen and the other 'wreck hunters' that we have even base level data about this unique part of our cultural heritage. Therefore, despite all the muttering about methodological shortcomings and anecdotal nature, both Valtonen's new monograph and his 1993 book are landmark volumes presenting clearly the current state of aviation archaeological research in Finland. Without him and the others loads of knowledge connected to these sites would already have been lost forever. Now it will be the archaeologists' responsibility to pick up the gauntlet and start acting accordingly.

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