



# Suomenlinna

NEWSLETTER

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## THE VIAPORI CANNONS

A visit to Vallisaari island

My Suomenlinna – by Lari Mäkijärvi



## Editorial



Jaakko Antti-Poika

DIRECTOR, GOVERNING BODY OF SUOMENLINNA

**Military islands converted for peacemaking**

Over a hundred years ago, the Russian Empire developed her fortresses in the Gulf of Finland in order to fix the weaknesses revealed by the Crimean War. The fortifications on the islands near the Sveaborg (Viapori in Finnish) fortress were improved, and they continue to be used for military purposes to this day. In fortress building, the development of arms technology always affects the usability of the fortress. This is the case today as well: modern, mobile equipment does not require fortified islands for operation. The Defence Forces have announced that they will give up four islands under their control, located in front of Helsinki, by 2012.

Within a few years, the government must decide on the future use of these islands. The decision should go smoothly, as Metsähallitus owns the islands and Senate Properties the buildings on them. The decision mostly concerns issues related to the building culture, and in particular whether the buildings and fortifications on the islands should be renovated, as has been done on Suomenlinna, or just be left to weather. As a state-owned enterprise practicing property business, Senate Properties is unable to maintain and renovate a large-scale building stock that generates little profit.

The Governing Body of Suomenlinna has expressed its desire to manage the islands and include them in Suomenlinna, where they naturally belong, from a historical as well as a technical point of view in terms of the fortress. A close collaboration with Helsinki Open Prison would enable the renovation of the structures in an economically sound manner.

The location of the Vallisaari and Kuninkaansaari islands right in the centre of Helsinki creates pressures for making the islands available for the recreational use of the citizens. Were this to be done, Helsinki and the state could co-finance the renovation.



## TV channels MTV3 and SUB kick-start the autumn at Suomenlinna

Media sales professionals gathered at the Tenaille von Fersen at the beginning of August. MTV3 and Sub organise regular sales meetings, with inspiration previously being sought from the beautiful scenery of the Vanajanlinna estate, for example. Nearly 100 people attended the meeting at Suomenlinna.

Marketing planner Anni Rein praised the functionality of the facilities. "Fersen was atmospheric and spacious. Suitable rooms for group work were also available."

The collaboration with the sales secretary also worked very well. "With the help of the staff, it was easy to organise and plan how we would use the facilities. I received clear

floor plans of the facilities and the available furniture and equipment in advance, which helped me plan the event and instruct the caterers," Rein sums up.

**Open house at the conference and banquet facilities**

At the Pirunkirkko banquet hall on Tuesday, 22 September, from 4 to 6pm and at the Tenaille von Fersen and the Myllysalu hall on Tuesday, 29 September, from 4 to 6pm. For more information, please visit [www.suomenlinna.fi](http://www.suomenlinna.fi)

**The men who built the fortress****Georg Magnus Sprengtporten (1740 - 1819)**

The leading idea of infantry general and count Georg Magnus Sprengtporten was to establish an independent Finnish nation with the support of Russia. As a young cadet, Sprengtporten worked under the designer of the Viapori fortress, Augustin Ehrensvärd. In 1772, Sprengtporten assisted his half-brother Jacob Magnus Sprengtporten in the occupation of Viapori and the persuasion of the Viapori garrison to support the king in the attempt to seize the power from the nobility. In 1786, Sprengtporten entered the Russian service, and in 1808, during the Finnish War, he served as the consultant to the Russians' commander-in-chief, von Buxhoevden, in Finland. The first Russian attack to invade Finland in the February of 1808 was planned by Sprengtporten. It has also been claimed

that the effect of Sprengtporten's thoughts on independence among the officers of Viapori may have been one of the factors that contributed to the surrender of the fortress.



# From Pikku Mustasaari Island to the Parade Field



## My Suomenlinna

“The Finnish Naval Academy is a beautiful place to serve,” says Lari Mäkijärvi. The interview is part of the service for the officer candidate, and instead of the dashing navy uniform, Mäkijärvi is wearing a more prosaic camouflage outfit.

Soldiers have been a part of the history of Suomenlinna since the fortress was built. The army is still present on the islands. The Finnish Naval Academy, operating on Pikku Mustasaari island, offers education to reserve officers as well as cadets.

The conscripts live in Suomenlinna for approximately three months, of which a large chunk is spent elsewhere on camps and drills. For Mäkijärvi, the training at Suomenlinna is coming to an end.

### A military campus

Garrisons are often closed communities, situated at a distance from population centres. At Suomenlinna, the soldiers live close to the rest of the world. Mäkijärvi, who has previously served at the naval base in Upinniemi, thinks that Suomenlinna is an exceptional place to serve.

“Suomenlinna is not so much a garrison, but more like a military school. However, the Naval Academy mostly trains cadets.

There are no gates or barriers, and the atmosphere is a bit like on a university campus. Another special trait of the place is that only officers are educated here. The crew is small, tight and carefully selected.”

### Exercise and lectures

“I was trying to change my camouflage outfit that had been torn in combat train-

**“Suomenlinna is not so much a garrison, but more like a military school. The atmosphere is a bit like on a university campus.”**

ing. The stock clerk just laughed and said that there is no combat training in Suomenlinna.” According to Mäkijärvi, Suomenlinna mostly offers exercise training and lectures. The future officers are also allowed out to play rough: the Suomenlinna conscripts do a great deal of training in Santahamina, for example.

The conscripts rarely have time to see all of the sea fortress during their service. “We usually stay on Pikku Mustasaari island. Drills and exercises are held on the parade field next to the church, but jogging can be done anywhere. We also do plenty of exercise in our free time, and we go to Kustaanmiekka, for example. Yeah, and to

the Siwa grocery store, too.”

In addition, the Naval Academy’s stock clerk, Eero Lampinen, has organised various tours for the conscripts, introducing them to the main sights in the area as well as the Suomenlinna Museum. Mäkijärvi says that, combined with a bit of independent research, the tours give a fairly comprehensive picture of the historic fortress, even though Suomenlinna is not covered to such a great extent during the service.

### Photo requests

How do people in Suomenlinna relate to the conscripts? Have the residents and tourists grown accustomed to the camouflage and sailor outfits?

“On May Day, we had a cross-country run, and then we got to hear some cracks about our remaining service days. Of course, the residents are used to us, but for the tourists, our Donald Duck suits are always a curiosity. At the ferry marina, we get quite a few requests to pose for photos. The drills on the parade field always seem to attract an audience as well.”

The unique history of Suomenlinna adds its special character to the service. “The traditions and the long military history from the rule of three nations are visible everywhere – on the islands, in their sandbanks and in their buildings,” Mäkijärvi concludes.



# The Viapori cannons

“Viapori was designed as an artillery fortress,” Jyri Paulaharju says. “The artillery had a central role in the fortification plan made by Ehrensvärd.”

Paulaharju has been studying cannons and artillery for decades. His most recent project has been to edit the biography of the most remarkable developer of Finnish artillery, artillery general Vilho Nenonen.

The retired artillery colonel narrates the changes in artillery from the middle of the 1700s to the Second World War. The developments in weapons technology and tactics of artillery have also played a central role

in many of the phases and situations in the Viapori fortress

## The Gibraltar of the North

“The firepower of Viapori as a sea fortress was very strong; we are talking hundreds of cannons. For instance, many of the famous fortresses of the British Empire had fewer cannons. This was the situation in the beginning of the 19th century.”

“The cannons at the time were muzzle loaders, and black powder was used as the propellant. In addition to solid lead balls

and ball grenades, the ammunition selection included grape shots and incendiary grenades, for example. The cannon launchers were made of wood and had two or four wheels. The launcher structures did not allow for big increases in elevation, which made the ranges relatively short. When firing a muzzle loader, the whole weapon shifted backwards, creating quite a recoil on the launcher. Therefore firing the cannon required a sturdy and suitable launcher pad.”

According to Paulaharju, after the construction phase the fortress artillery became, for various reasons, rather diverse.



At the end of the 1700s, there were nearly 30 cannon models in Viapori according to the inventory. Old cannons from the time of Swedish rule can still be seen on Kustaanmiekka.

### Fire tests for the artillery

The Viapori fortress was put to the first real test in the Finnish War, when the Russian army surrounded the fortress at the beginning of 1808. The Russian heavy artillery, with emplacements on the rocks of Kaivopuisto, for example, fired at the fortress several times. The fortress returned fire every now and again.

“At the beginning of the war, the Viapori artillery was in bad shape. The weapons had not been maintained and many of the launching pads had mouldered beyond repair. Measured in numbers, the Viapori artillery more than matched that of the besiegers, but use of the heavy, wide-ranging artillery in particular remained rather passive. In addition, a sort of educational apathy prevailed in the fortress.”

The commandant of the fortress, C. O.

**“The firepower of Viapori as a sea fortress was very strong; we are talking hundreds of cannons. For instance, many of the famous fortresses of the British Empire had fewer cannons.”**

Cronstedt, decided to surrender when the motherland, Sweden, had not provided the required assistance within a certain time limit. The fortress was transferred to the Russians. There has been much debate concerning the commandant’s solution, but he himself justified the decision by lack of gunpowder, for example.

Paulaharju does not believe this explanation. “According to old documents, there was still plenty of gunpowder in the powder cellars; only 10% of the supply had been used. As regards fire power, the fortress had the ability to mount highly efficient attacks.”

### The watershed of the Crimean War

As the fortress was taken over by the Russians and the period of autonomy began, the new masters of the fortress did not renew the artillery inherited from the Swedish to any great extent.

By the middle of the 1800s, the international situation had become tense and the Crimean War began. In the August of 1855, the Anglo-French fleet sailed in front of Viapori and began a bombardment that badly damaged the fortress.

The situation was very different to that of the Finnish War: this time, the fortress had



no realistic chances of mounting an effective resistance. “The range of the Viapori cannons was nowhere near enough in comparison with the technically superior artillery equipment of the allied fleets. The surrounding fleet was able to form mobile emplacements, and the enemy used rockets to weaken the morale of the defenders.”

“The Crimean War was definitely a watershed for the artillery of the fortress. During the bombardments, the entire artillery of the

suitable for great gas pressures instead of cast-iron bores in the cannons.”

“After the Crimean War, the modernisation of the nearby islands of the Viapori central fortress was started, enlarging the defence line of the heavy artillery. At this stage, it was once again justified to talk about the new Gibraltar,” Paulaharju says.

### The birthplace of Finnish anti-aircraft defence

The general development of artillery also meant a revolution in the Viapori artillery. The first new cannons arrived at the fortress at the end of the 1860s. The latter half of the century saw Kustaanmiekka become what it is today.

Large fortification works began in Finland during the First World War. As the artillery developed and the outer islands were fortified as well, the Viapori defence line moved even further. A large line of defence was also constructed on the mainland side.

After the war, the development of the defence forces of independent Finland began. In this task, Suomenlinna was in many respects a central place. It was, for instance, the birthplace of anti-aircraft weapons.

During the Winter War, there were two fixed anti-aircraft batteries in Suomenlinna: one on Kustaanmiekka and the other on Länsi-Mustasaari island, both a part of the Helsinki anti-aircraft defence system. During the Interim Peace, the fixed batteries were unmanned, but during the Continuation War, they were manned again.

“The batteries were an important link in the anti-aircraft system of the capital. Raija, one of the two early warning radars acquired in 1943 from the Germans, was located on Susisaari island. During the wars, Suomenlinna was therefore the military base for the coastal artillery as well as the anti-aircraft defence,” Jyri Paulaharju concludes.

fortress was of the old muzzle-loader type. Immediately after the Crimean War, three significant changes took place in the artillery equipment in general. Rifled bores improved the stability of the trajectory of the shells and therefore decreased the dispersion of the firing, in other words, making the weapons more accurate. New smokeless gunpowder was introduced, which increased the propelling force and range. Breech-loading cannons improved the rate of firing. All this was made possible by starting to use steel bores



# First visit to Vallisaari island for 50 years

What will happen to Vallisaari island? The Defence Forces have announced that they will give up the island by 2010 at the earliest, and have started the clearing of the ordnance spread by the great accidental explosion in 1937. The routes are safe, but there are some risks in moving about freely on the island.

Ove Enqvist and Juha Alanen know the island like the back of their hands. Enqvist, who has defended his doctoral thesis on the regional issues concerning coastal defence, worked on the island for the Defence Forces in the 1980s. Alanen worked as a substitute teacher at Vallisaari school from 1960–63. Enqvist has brought Alanen to visit the island he has not seen in nearly 50 years.



Juha Alanen at Vallisaari school

“5 litres of milk, 44 pats of butter”

“There were some advantages in having the school on a military island. The school inspector had to acquire the inspection permit in advance, which meant that I had time to clean up. I had 16 students, and I still remember all of their names. It so quiet here now, as if all had died of the plague,” Alanen says.

The school, founded in 1960, is located in a sheltered spot. Time seems to stand still in its small gymnasium. The gymnastics apparatus has been left in the middle of the room, as if the students had left right in the middle of doing gymnastics. The old school

library has been emptied of books. Ove Enqvist finds an old advance order slip for a local grocery store from the 1970s: “5 litres of milk, 44 pats of butter”.

In addition to education, to school had other purposes of use as well. “For the residents of Vallisaari island, this was a popular meeting place, provided by the city.”

## The Valley of Death and the headless colonel

The journey continues past a discarded car wreck to the Valley of Death. The spine-chilling name comes from the explosion accident of 1937, in which 12 people were killed. The source of the explosion was the weapons laboratory, where careless handling of old Russian powder charges led to the disaster. The red-brick building has been rebuilt with a simple memorial plate attached to its wall.

“We will soon arrive at the Aleksanterinpatteri battery. The view of the sea is terrific from there. But beware

**“There were some advantages in having the school on a military island. The school inspector had to acquire the inspection permit in advance, which meant that I had time to clean up.”**

the headless colonel!” Alanen warns with a wink.

The view is truly grand. The Aleksanterinpatteri battery is said to be as tall as the Taivaskallio hill in Käpylä.

There are Russian-built batteries on this side of the island. Enqvist says that many of the batteries have been modernised several times. “The first phase was the embankments. Then the batteries were built with bricks or stones, and finally with concrete.”

The versatility of nature has developed and been maintained during the time of the Defence Forces. A lane lined by ashes leads to a field in the middle of the rocks, and there are typical meadow plants near the water lily pond. The flora on Vallisaari island is exceptionally rich.

“There should be guided tours here, too. Absolutely. No matter by which agency. If the island is made a general recreational area for the public, the nature will suffer,” Alanen says.

## Presenting Suomenlinna’s tourist operators

Hostel Suomenlinna was transferred to the Finnish Youth Centre Association in the beginning of 2009. Ten national youth centres opened up a joint office in Helsinki. At the same time, a new executive director was appointed for the association, and the office was relocated from Nurmes to Suomenlinna. “The first days of work at Suomenlinna were very exciting. As an outdoorsy person, I have enjoyed the ferry ride in every weather. I still have to learn the ferry schedules, though,” says Kaisa Pyhälä, who started as the new executive director in January.

Hostel Suomenlinna serves tourists and various groups. Annually nearly 6,000 people are accommodated at the hostel. Of these, 20 % are groups of students and young people, 40 % other groups and 40 % individual travellers. “We welcome all customers,” Kaisa Pyhälä says.

“Student groups take over the hostel during the four months right before and after the summer holidays. School trips are part of the curriculum, which is why we offer school groups organised programme focussing on for example history and nature. With school groups, good planning and execution is the key.”

Outside the school trip season, the hostel offers plenty of room for other groups and backpackers. Affordable pricing brings for instance meetings of various organisations to the hostel. “We want to develop the hostel’s services in the spirit of the youth centre while respecting the history of the house. It feels good to know that people are interested in the hostel and that is also known among the residents in Suomenlinna.” Kaisa Pyhälä concludes.

Contact information for Hostel Suomenlinna  
09 6847471, [hostel@snk.fi](mailto:hostel@snk.fi)  
[www.snk.fi/suomenlinna](http://www.snk.fi/suomenlinna)



Kaisa Pyhälä, the executive director of the Finnish Youth Centre Association (up) and Sinivuokko Koivula-Mbenba, the caretaker at Hostel Suomenlinna.



# What's on in Suomenlinna

## 23.–25.10. Väkevä Viapori

The festival of the residents of Suomenlinna features versatile and colourful performances, including music, arts, films – and sauna bathing in Finland's largest wooden sauna at the Naval Academy. The musicians, artists and artisans of Suomenlinna show off their skills. [www.vakevaviapori.net](http://www.vakevaviapori.net)

## 7.11. At Home with the Grand Duke

A hundred years of the history of the Grand Duke's music in one day. Polonaises and minuets of the Suomenlinna gentry and melodies and dances of common people from different countries. Some dozen research musicians from the Sibelius Academy's Department of Folk Music are looking for musical answers to tricky questions. Both students and teachers are involved. Tenaille von Fersen, Saturday from 2 to 9pm.

## 28.–29.11. The Christmas Event

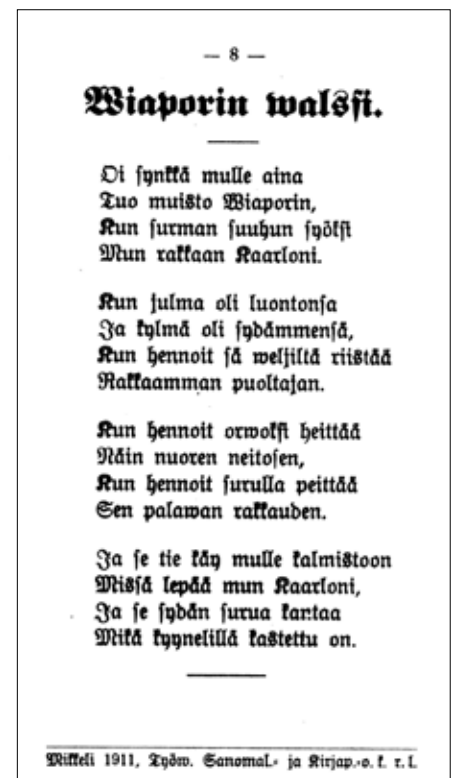
King Gustav III and Ye Olde Militia of Helsinki will open the Christmas season on Saturday with a cannon salute at the ferry quay. In the family event, visitors can shop at the Jetty Barracks Arts & Crafts exhibition, which sells modern

art and handicrafts made by local artisans. The restaurants offer Christmas treats, and the museums and artisans' studios are open to visitors. Concerts and a manger exhibit are organised at the church. Children will enjoy the elves of the fortification in the Suomenlinna Museum. For more information, please visit [www.suomenlinna.fi](http://www.suomenlinna.fi)

## 28.12.–6.1. Turn of the year at the fortress

The Suomenlinna Museum offers things to do and stories to hear for the whole family. The museum guides tell about Christmas in Viapori in the old days, and children can get to know the fortress elves. The Toy Museum is open daily from 11am to 4pm. Guided walking tours are organised daily in Russian and in English on the weekends. The tours start at the Visitor Centre at 1.30pm. On 1 January, the museums and the centre are closed and there are no tours.

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Wiapori waltz can be heard in the At Home with the Grand Duke -event 7th of November

## Exhibitions

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Until 31.12.09 | "The surrender – A difficult spring for C. O. Cronstedt in 1808", Suomenlinna Museum  |
| 24.7.–30.9.    | "Hill mustard, bindweed and hoary alyssum", Suomenlinna Museum  |
| 20.11.–6.12.   | Bird sculptures by silversmith Pekka Koponen MA, Bastion Hårleman   |
| 24.9.–18.10.   | Light and darkness: Kristiina Parviainen, Minja Revonkorpi, Aino Ulmanen, Anniina Vainionpää. Paintings and monotypes, the Jetty Barracks Gallery |
| 22.10.–22.11.  | Jouni Airaksinen, Marja Kolu. Sculptures and installations, the Jetty Barracks Gallery  |
| 28.–29.11.     | Suomenlinna Arts & Crafts, the Jetty Barracks Gallery   |
| 3.12.09–3.1.10 | "11/111" – Jyväskylä Artists' Association exhibition, The Jetty Barracks Gallery  |



## Events

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 5.9.–30.5.   | Winter tours in English                            |
| 22. and 29.9 | Open doors at the banquet facilities from 4 to 6pm |
| 23.–25.10    | Väkevä Viapori – the residents' festival           |
| 7.11.        | At Home with the Grand Duke                        |
| 28.–29.11.   | The Christmas Event                                |
| 28.12.–6.1   | Turn of the year at the fortress                   |
| 28.12.–6.1.  | Winter tours in Russian (not on 1 January)         |

### Guided tours

During the winter, guided tours in English are organised on weekends from 5.9.2009 until 30.5.2010 and daily in Russian from 28.12.2009 until 6.1.2010 (except on 1 January).

The tours last an hour and start at the Visitor Centre at 1:30pm.

Tickets are sold at the Visitor Centre: adults € 7, children € 3. The tours are free with the Helsinki Card.



28.–29.11. The Suomenlinna Christmas Event



### SUOMENLINNA VISITOR CENTRE

Open daily from 1 October–30 April  
10 am–4 pm  
Governing Board of Suomenlinna,  
Suomenlinna C 74,  
FI 00190 Helsinki

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