



Leverage from
the EU
2014–2020



PREHISTORY

Main story: Relay between hill forts

Young men guard the Häme Castle and the hill forts. Time drags on when nothing happens. Young men crave for adventure, competition, victory. This is what young knights are made for. Ilmari, son of Kustaa, comes up with the idea of a relay. The teams are formed, and it is time to see which is the fastest team.

Finding good judges is a tough task: they must be impartial, respected and reliable clergymen and village elders. They must also be outsiders, so that everyone can trust them. The route of the relay goes from one hill fort to the next, and each competitor runs one leg. The next runner dashes off as soon as the one before reaches the goal.

Finally, after the messengers have grown weary from running back and forth, it feels like everything is ready. Young, strong men have been selected to run the legs, and older men have shared all their experience and information about the routes and the dangers along the way.

The race will start soon from the Hakoinen Hill Fort.

Hakoinen Hill Fort: Safety

The Hakoinen Hill Fort was buzzing with preparations forward the relay that was the idea of Ilmari, son of Kustaa. Suddenly, the guard signalled a warning. Tapio, son of Untamoinen, who was the head of the guards, ran to the gates and saw that a crowd was advancing. A young man was running ahead of the others.

"Open the gates, soon! Raiders are approaching our village!" the young man yelled in alarm.

For a brief moment, Tapio wondered if this could be a trick, but he could see a number of women with children among the crowd.

"Open the gate!" Tapio commanded, and the crowd stormed in.

Tapio spoke to the young man.

"Were there many? Did you fight them?"

"The men hid in the forest and waited to fight. Here are the women, children and the old people. We did not see the raiders, only a scout, but we failed to catch him. We did make a terrible noise, so that he would think we were numerous. We complained about hunger and ailments so that they would leave us alone."

"We will send out our own scout. You are now safe. This hill fort is difficult to conquer", Tapio exuded with confidence.

Tenhola Hill Fort: Warning beacons or a forest fire?



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It was peaceful on the Tenhola Hill Fort. Joutti, the watchman, was peeking through the gaps of a sturdy log fence and admiring the peaceful Vanajavesi Lake landscape. He had heard that a relay had taken off from the Häme Castle. He was not fit for a running team after his leg had been injured in a tourney. But he could keep watch and he was eagerly looking forward to spotting the first contestants on the paths in the woods. No such luck – all was quiet, and he was not able to detect any movement. The August sun was blazing down on his head and the delicious smell of stewing meat wafted to his nose.

There were many dwellings on the hill fort, and several dozen men. Life was not too bad, but sometimes you really longed for a chance to measure your strengths against Novgorod raiders. It was getting dark, and the end of his watch turn was near. Joutti decided to stretch his legs and walk around the log fence, stopping every now and then to look out. What was that? Smoke was rising somewhere behind the forest. Were they burning warning fires? Was there an enemy threat or was it a forest fire? Joutti had to hurry for help.

Aulanko Fort: Out with the old

"There is a story in my family of the ancient Aulanko Fort", said an old man over a fire to his younger companions. They were all weary after a hard day's work at the building site of the Häme Castle, and happy to listen to his stories.

"The ancient fort was located on that hilltop. It was protected by a steep cliff, and there were good views over the lake. Westwards, the hill sloped gently, and that was where the earthwork and log fences had been built. There was a spacious castle yard between the earthworks and the cliff, where permanent settlement has been located from the beginning of time. Sometimes noble guests visited, and feasts were held. Traders came in to sell their products. Sometimes raiders attacked and they were fought, and people from the nearby areas sought shelter in the fort. In one of the more peaceful periods, there was a relay between the hill forts. No-one knows who won it anymore, there are so many versions depending on who is telling the story".

"How come there is no longer a fort there?" someone asked.

"It was not that long ago that it was demolished, during the Second Crusade, as they called it. And what would we need it for now that they are building a mighty castle?"

Mantere Hill Fort: After the battle

The battle was over. The raiders had been defeated, and no-one had gotten in through the South or North Gate. The fort was surrounded by earthwork that was a good shelter for shooting arrows. They had poured boiling hot water on the raiders from western stone embankments. Vilja had been keeping a fire under the massive pots, and the young boys had carried the water to the embankment.

Vilja would have preferred to shoot arrows against the enemy, but women could not do that, even though she was a better shooter than many of the men. Vilja thought this an injustice, but she did not say anything about it. She could have been expelled from the hill fort that was such a safe place, in other respects, for her to live with her mother and elderly father. Her father was a blacksmith and they were allowed to live on the hill, because a blacksmith was always needed to forge arrowheads and swords.



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Vilja wanted to run in the hill fort relay, she had overheard the men talking about it. What if she dressed as a man? She was quick on her feet and could obtain a man's clothes somewhere, when they were sleeping after having too much beer after a battle. "Such a great plan!" Vilja thought before disappearing into the dusk.

The main story continues...

Who won the relay and took the champion's pennant to their hill fortress? The start at the Hakoinen Hill Fort was delayed, and the runners discovered the beer barrels. First, they had to defend the hill fort for a bit, but the band of robbers was so weak that they were easily defeated. Still, a victory is always a victory and calls for a celebration.

Beacon lights were detected at Tenhola. But it turned out to be a thunder storm and then a forest fire on the horizon, nothing more. Still, an alarm was given and the runners had trouble getting into forts along the route, as they were mistaken for scouts. It is possible that some heads fell off during the clashes, too.

However, more runners finished the relay than the original competitors, because so many men had run off from their mean wives on the pretext of running in the relay, even though they never made it to the finish — no-one knows to where they ran off.

But it sure was a fun summer, so many adventures and so much to talk about, both for the young and the old. Many claimed themselves as the winners, at least after having a few tankards of beer.