

TREASURE HUNTING, ADVENTURE AND SCIENCE. COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECTS IN PEST COUNTY. AN EXHIBITION REVIEW

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New cultural trends and the advances of citizen science have influenced archaeology as well. The term “community archaeology”, signifying archaeological research conducted together with the broad public, first appeared amongst museum professionals and the general public a few years ago in Hungary. A complex relationship is being developed with civilians interested in archaeology, and it is becoming more and more prominent in everyday practice. As a result of this collaboration, new impulses and participants have come into archaeology, bringing about entirely new research criteria and results. Joint field research, the spread of metal detecting and the sheer amount of archaeological material, that thus came into academic view, caused a veritable information boom for scientific research: artifacts of outstanding significance that in many aspects have rewritten our notions concerning the material culture of past ages, have thus been transferred to heritage protection institutions.

Our temporary exhibition sets the community archaeology programme of the Ferenczy Museum Centre on display while reflecting its inherent complexity (Fig. 1). Alongside rescue excavations and instrumental archaeological prospection conducted in the past ten years, we present professional results from the increasing number of research excavations as well as finds recovered during these projects. New acquisitions of outstanding significance constitute the backbone of the exhibition. Artifacts are displayed in their proper historical and archaeological contexts, with detailed textual guides. Approximately 25 archaeologist colleagues have contributed to creating the scientific background material (Figs 2–3).

The finds are on display in six halls of the Pajor manor at Szentendre, each hall focusing on a different topic. A separate room deals with the interpretation of the term “treasure” in an archaeological sense. Mostly golden and silver artifacts are on display there, alongside treasure and coin hoards from different periods. For more than a decade, systematic rescue excavations have been conducted in highly endangered cemeteries from the Hungarian Conquest period. Some of these results are still unknown in academia and for the broad public.

Another planned research project providing spectacular results focuses on discovering and identifying coin and treasure hoards from the time of the Mongol invasion of Europe. Our volunteers were present at rescue excavations and preliminary excavations in large numbers. Archaeological material recovered through res-

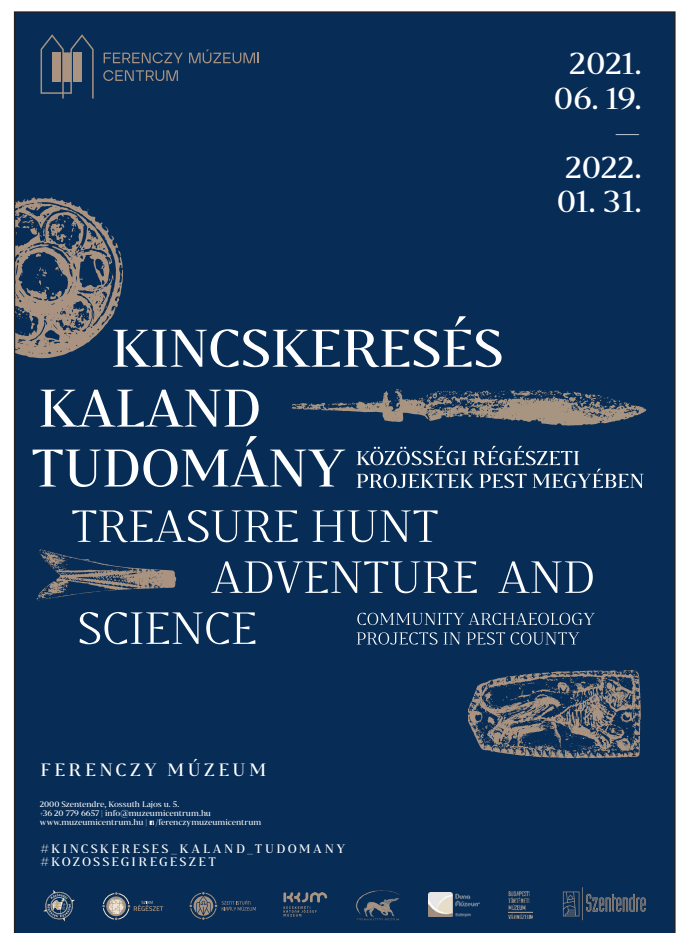


Fig. 1. The exhibition's poster

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Fig. 2. Placing artefacts into the showcase



Fig. 3. Selecting objects for the exhibition

cue excavations conducted with help from civilians are presented in a separate room. Volunteers from Pest county participated in community archaeology projects all over the country and our institution cooperated successfully with several other museums. The outcome of countrywide collaboration is illustrated by finds from iconic sites, such as the Battlefield at Muhi. The late medieval and early modern coin hoard discovered at Érd containing multiple thousands of coins, is presented within the frame of a scenic installation. The exhibition does not shy away from addressing the problems of the ambiguously judged metal detectorist activities, but tries to approach the subject of this complex social phenomenon in a subtle manner. Metal finds discovered by detectorists working together with museum staff in the course of museum-friendly, law-abiding metal detecting as well as related stories provide ample options for interpretation. Metal finds turned in to the museum are presented in an arrangement in the likeness of a “storage room of sights”.

Our museum education staff prepared complex programme offers and adventure games related to treasures and archaeological fieldwork, aimed at children and school groups. An exhibition catalogue presenting the most significant finds helps the further orientation of visitors (Fig. 4). Our aim is to provide a forum for discussing new results and challenges of community archaeology, and for this reason we host a national conference on 11–13 November 2021 for professionals and lay audiences alike. The event is co-organized by the Hungarian Association of Archaeologists and the Hungarian Society for Archaeology and Art History. The upcoming event aims to provide a platform for elaborating methodological challenges of community archaeology, presenting research conducted together with volunteers, professional evaluation, dialogue with non-professionals interested in archaeology, presenting international good practices, as well as forwarding joint work between laypersons and archaeologists.

The broad public communicates various cultural needs in different manners, one of these is the need for direct involvement in archaeological fieldwork. The finds on display came into the custody of our institution with the help of dedicated non-professionals. Their explicitly expressed personal goals were presenting these finds to the public, by making them available for everyone to admire. This is the condition on which we were granted their confidence on which our collaboration is based. This is

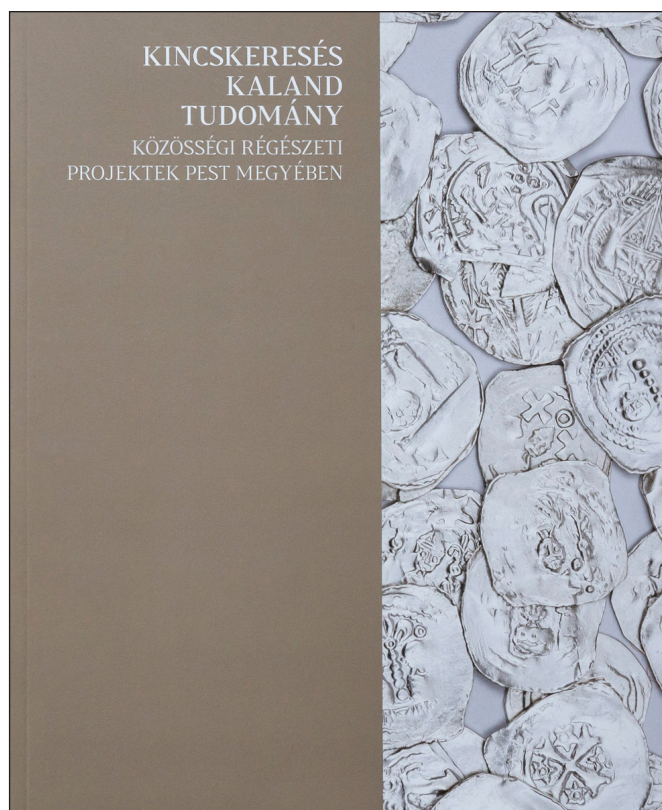


Fig. 4. The *archaeological catalogue* of the Ferenczy Museum Centre, published in connection with the exhibition

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the reason why finds discovered by amateur metal detectors do not end up in drawers or wither away in private collections. While development-led preliminary excavations and archaeological fieldwork conducted during watching briefs are obligatory tasks for museums, the community archaeology programme meets the needs of a broad audience and is a real response to the needs of the non-professional community. The Ferenczy Museum Centre has undertaken this challenge and with the help of volunteers our collection has been enriched with countless invaluable objects. Through this exhibition, we strive to call attention to the significance and efficiency of community archaeological programmes all over the country.

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