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METAL-DETECTOR SURVEYS IN HUNGARY
New projects and results

József Laszlovszky

In September 2016, as a part of the European Heritage Days and as an event in the Hungarian Heritage Weekend programme, the Hungarian Association of Archaeologists and the Cultural Heritage Studies Programme of the Central European University organised a round-table discussion. Many people are interested in searching for archaeological treasures, and the metal detector is one of the modern tools that can be used for this purpose. Yet not everyone is permitted to work with metal-detecting instruments. For private individuals, seeking finds at archaeological sites is actually illegal because, as they collect the items they seek, they destroy the sites. Only archaeologists are permitted to move objects at archaeological sites, and even they may only do so with a permit and with appropriate documentation. At the same time, the profession of archaeology has recognised the possible role that metal detectors and their highly-skilled amateur operators can play in modern research. The conversation concerned the new situation created by an amendment to the legislation regulating heritage protection, which has created an opportunity for amateur metal-detector operators to participate in archaeological research, and there are already several good examples of that form of cooperation. We invited to join the discussion archaeologists, museum managers and metal detector operators with experience and results in this field, whose collaboration may serve as an example for similar future initiatives.

New forms of cooperation between amateur metal-detector researchers and museums have taken shape, which, according to some of the participants in the discussion, may contribute toward restraining the destructive treasure hunting that harms our archaeological heritage and often accompanies metal-detector research, along with the illegal trade in archaeological objects that often goes hand in hand with it. At the same time, such cooperation would create opportunities for law-abiding amateur researchers who cooperate with the museums and who adhere to the rules of archaeological research to contribute to scientific progress and the protection of archaeological heritage in a controlled manner.

Just as in the articles previously published on the subject in Hungarian Archaeology, the debate brought a number of contradictions to light, and the participants in the round-table discussion made no effort to hide their opinion that the new regulations still do not represent a solution to this controversial situation. However, all present agreed that presenting the positive examples and disseminating the models that have been fruitful at particular museums can help move the process forward. Accordingly, the periodical Hungarian Archaeology has decided to run a series of articles presenting specific examples and concentrating on archaeological results in order to illustrate the forms of cooperation with amateur researchers using metal detectors that our colleagues have introduced, and the results that they have achieved. In the first article of the series, we present the programme run by the Nagy Gyula Regional Museum at Orosháza through the example of a travelling exhibition and a collection of mediaeval finds. We plan to provide opportunities for other museums to present their own programmes and findings in future editions.

THE 15TH AND 16TH CENTURY HISTORY OF OROSHÁZA
A Travelling and Temporary Exhibition

Gyöngyvér Biró and Zoltán Rózsa

Metal finds take centre stage

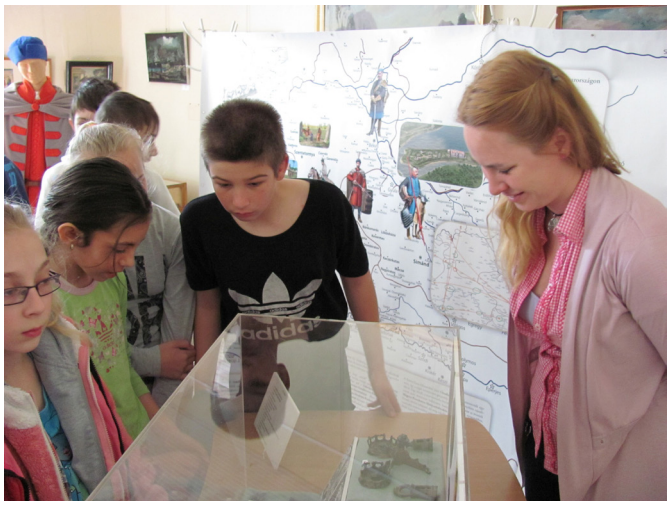
Recently, we have been successful in mapping an increasing number of Late Mediaeval – Early Modern Age settlements in and around Orosháza, several of which have featured quantitatively and qualitatively significant metal finds. Thanks to the metal detector operators cooperating with the museum, we have found more than 12,000 objects, most of which date from the above period. They include both components of clothing and personal items. For example, they feature large numbers of rings, clothing fasteners, thimbles, parts of knives and textile stamps. The objects also include some rarities such as a chess piece in the figure of a German mercenary (Landsknecht) found at Szentetornya and a fragment of a chandelier that was also found there. Another special collection from a 16th century ironware depot excavated in 2015, which was presented for the first time at a temporary exhibition, was also a product of the work of our colleagues with metal detectors. A number of metal objects that were probably manufactured in Nuremburg or other German cities were placed in the museum's collection, providing further evidence of the importance of the trade network outlined above.

2016 saw the introduction of a new programme based on metal-detector research, which placed the finds from that area into a wider context as well. Between February and June 2016, we took our travelling exhibition, Orosháza and Its Surroundings in the 15th and 16th Centuries, to a number of towns in Békés County, and to a number of different institutions within Orosháza. Our temporary exhibition, 1596 – on the Trail of Lost Treasure, which was opened on 25 June 2016, was also partially based on that work. The primary objective of the initiative was to allow people living in the towns within the catchment area of the Nagy Gyula Regional Museum to learn about the past of their home region, and to introduce them to the museum's collection. The archaeological finds on display were selected from the archaeological collection of the Orosháza museum, supplemented in the case of the temporary exhibition with some ethnographical material. A significant proportion of the Late Mediaeval – Early Modern Age metal objects could not have been presented were it not for the efforts of the metal detector operators cooperating with the museum. The finds are from the mediaeval towns of Apáca, Batonya, Csorvás, Fecskés, Földvár, Gerendás, Komlós, Kovácsháza, Mezőhegyes, Pereg, Sámson, Szénás, Szentetornya and Szőlős. The travelling exhibition consisted of a large, colourful banner with explanations and a map, two display cases containing archaeological objects, and a museum mannequin dressed in the period costume of a Haiduk. At each venue, a lecture was delivered—or, depending on the number of people interested, lectures—about the region's history in the period of the Late Mediaeval – Early Modern Age, about the importance of cattle trading and the archaeological finds characteristic of the period. At schools, we also offered a craft activity (candle-making).

The travelling exhibition and the accompanying lecture were delivered in fourteen towns within the museum's catchment areas, to eight schools in Orosháza itself, as well as to a meeting of the representatives of the Municipality of the Town of Orosháza and the Csongrád Museum. In addition to the venues planned in advance, we visited two towns in Békés County and Csongrád by special request. At the last of those venues, the lecture, advertised as an afternoon event, was largely attended by adults who, in addition to the subjects detailed above, also asked many questions about the metal-detector research that had yielded the metal objects on which the exhibitions were based. During the entire circuit in 2016, more than 3000 people viewed the archaeological finds from this region, and listened to their stories. The material from the travelling exhibition—in addition to some additional objects—were also included in the temporary

exhibition on display between 25 June and 23 September 2016, so those who had missed the travelling show also had an opportunity to view the collection.

We may conclude that citizens—in this instance, the majority of those using metal detectors—are open to cooperation with museums, we simply need to find or establish a shared language and an appropriate professional and legislative background to be able to work together fruitfully.[1]



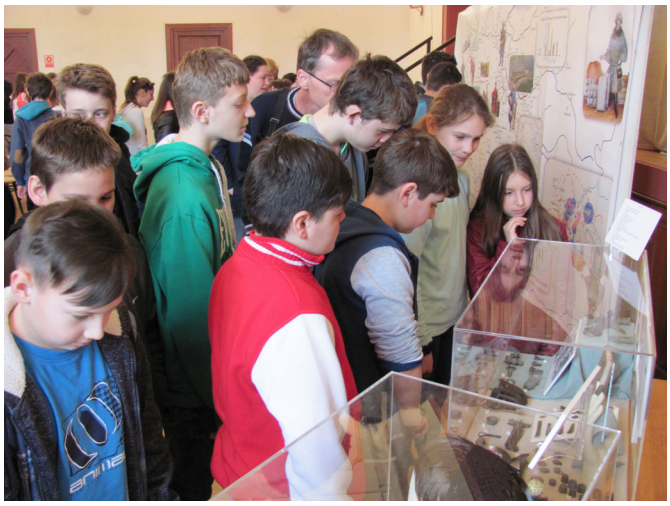
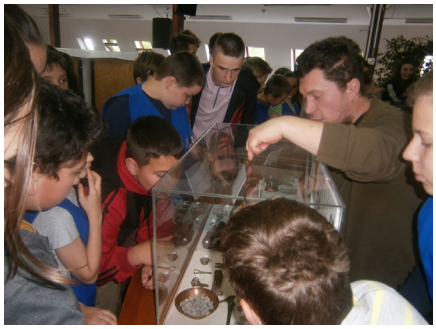


Photo 1-2: Students visiting the exhibition in Battonya and Csorvas

Photo 3: Lecture for the students



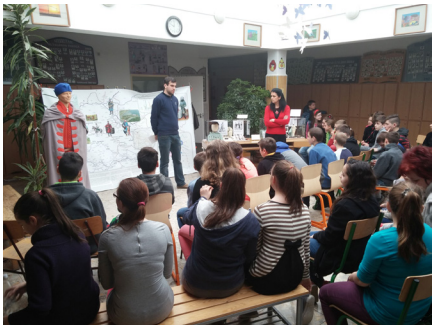


Photo 4-5-6: The exhibition in Orosháza, Pusztaföldvár and Székkutas

[1] We would like to take this opportunity to thank the metal-detector researchers András Bene, Gábor Biró, György Kerekes, Róbert Kvak, Gábor Tóth, Péter Zsikai and Krisztina Náfrádi-Zsikai for enriching the collection of the Nagy Gyula Regional Museum.

AN ENSEMBLE OF ÁRPÁD AGE COINS FROM THE OUTSKIRTS OF TÓTKOMLÓS

Among the museum's latest research results, the exceptionally significant identification and exploration of a collection of finds is also related to the new metal-detector programme. The first part of the Kopáncs-puszta coin hoard was found by two farmers in the spring of 1919, while ploughing in the fields around Tótkomlós. According to later estimates, at the time of discovery there may have been at least 400-450 coins in the overturned soil, but the finders only collected some of these, which they then shared out between themselves. One of the farmers soon sold his share, the 235 coins that were preserved and the circumstances in which the collection of coins was discovered were published by Kálmán Eperjesy. The coins he described were all from the Árpád Age, including 120 12th-century Hungarian coins and 115 Friesach dinars.[2]

The research into the Kopáncs-puszta treasure gained new impetus in the autumn of 2016, when György Kerekes, a colleague from the Orosháza Museum used a metal detector with the guidance of the literature and old maps, and succeeded in identifying the original site of the hoard of coins.

In the spring of 2017, several colleagues surveyed the site thus identified with metal detectors and, in justified cases, research trenches to find the remainder of the coins. As the site is currently a nature conservation area, nature conservation inspector Gábor Balogh also supervised the work. After a short time, the search began to yield results, and in the course of a few hours, several hundred coins were collected by our colleagues operating the metal detectors. The coins were distributed over an area of 50 by 34 metres. In the south of that area, the metal detectors signalled the presence of a deeper cache containing several coins in the same place. A small ditch was excavated at that spot, and some 30 to 40 cm below the current surface we found the core of the treasure of coins, marked by fragments of the pot that had contained the coins and a group of several tens of coins as well.

A total of 644 silver coins were unearthed, most of them so-called Friesach dinars, but there were also some coins from German mints and the dinars of the Hungarian Kings Géza II and István III. In relation to that we should note that the 1919 finds also included the dinars of István II and Béla III. As a truly special feature, among the Friesach dinars, an English penny was also found among the fragments of the pot's bottom, dated to King John (John Lackland). Including the coins found at that time, the Kopáncs-puszta hoard features a total of 879 coins—excluding those that were sold in the last century.

Further research is needed to determine when the cache of coins was originally hidden, but results so far do not exclude the possibility that the large quantity of silver was hidden in the ground as a result of the Mongol invasion. The roughly 100-year period marked out by the manufacture of the coins, their good condition and their significant silver content indicate that the Kopáncs-puszta treasure was probably amassed over an extended period, primarily on account of its silver content. The latter claim may be reinforced by a small piece of jewellery made of silver wire (originally presumably an earring) that was also found near the treasure and within the area in which the coins were distributed, which may have been hidden in the pot along with the coins.[3]

[2] Eperjesy, Kálmán: A Kopáncs-pusztai éremlelet [The Kopáncs-puszta hoard of coins]. Dolgozatok a Magyar Királyi Ferencz József Tudományegyetem Archaeologiai Intézetéből [Papers from the Institute of Archaeology of the Hungarian Royal Franz Joseph University of Science] II/1-2. (1926) 158-168.

[3] The metal detector operators and archaeologists who participated in the excavation and processing of the hoard at the Nagy Gyula Regional Museum in Orosháza were as follows: András Bene, József Benkő, Gábor Biró, Gyöngyvér Bíró, Antal Mihály Gyenge, György Kerekes, Róbert Kvak, Zoltán Rózsa, Gábor Tóth, Krisztina Náfrádi-Zsikai and Rajmund Péter Zsikai. The complete ceramic pot was reconstructed by Natália Feldmann-Rózsa.

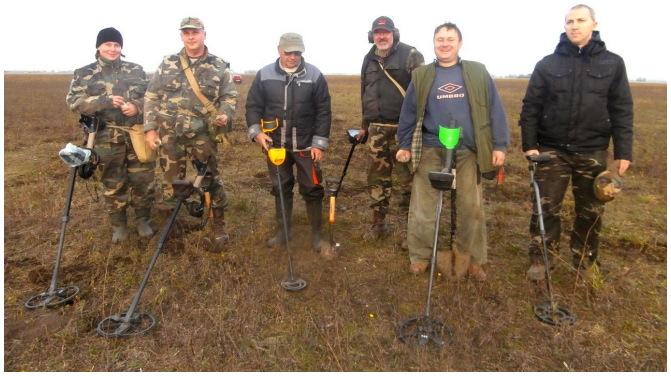


Photo 1: Some of the team, after finding a few hundred coins

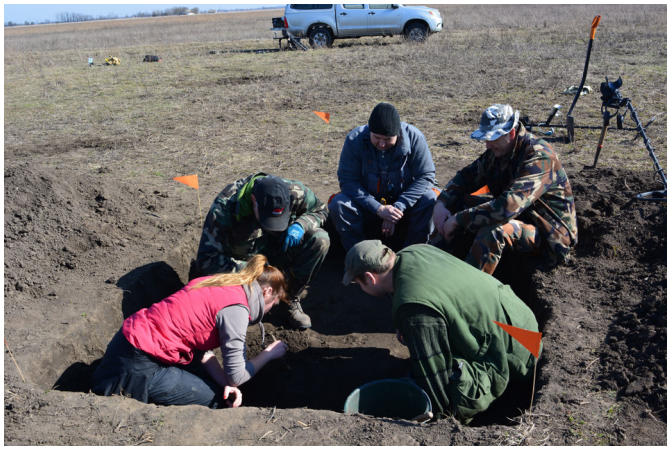


Photo 2: The discovery of the remainder of the treasure was the object of intense attention

Photo 3: The ploughed-in bottom of the cache of coins

Photo 4: Fragment of the bottom of the pot with a Friesach dinar stuck in it

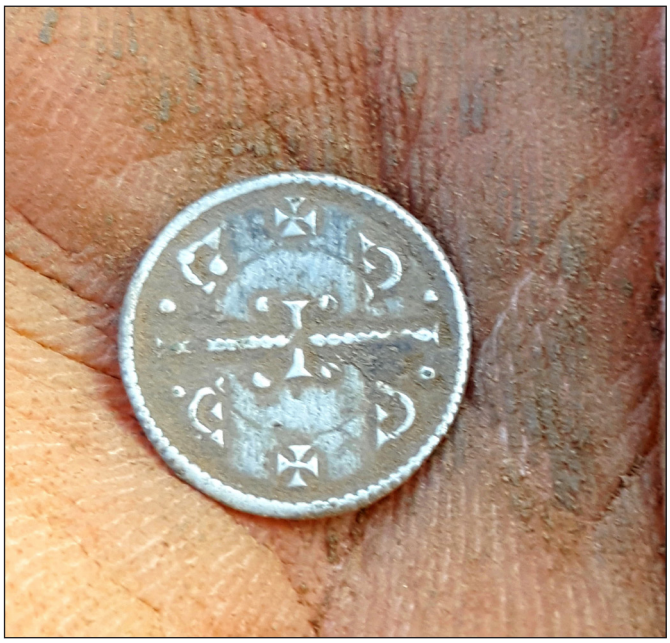


Photo 5: A dinar of Géza II at the moment of discovery

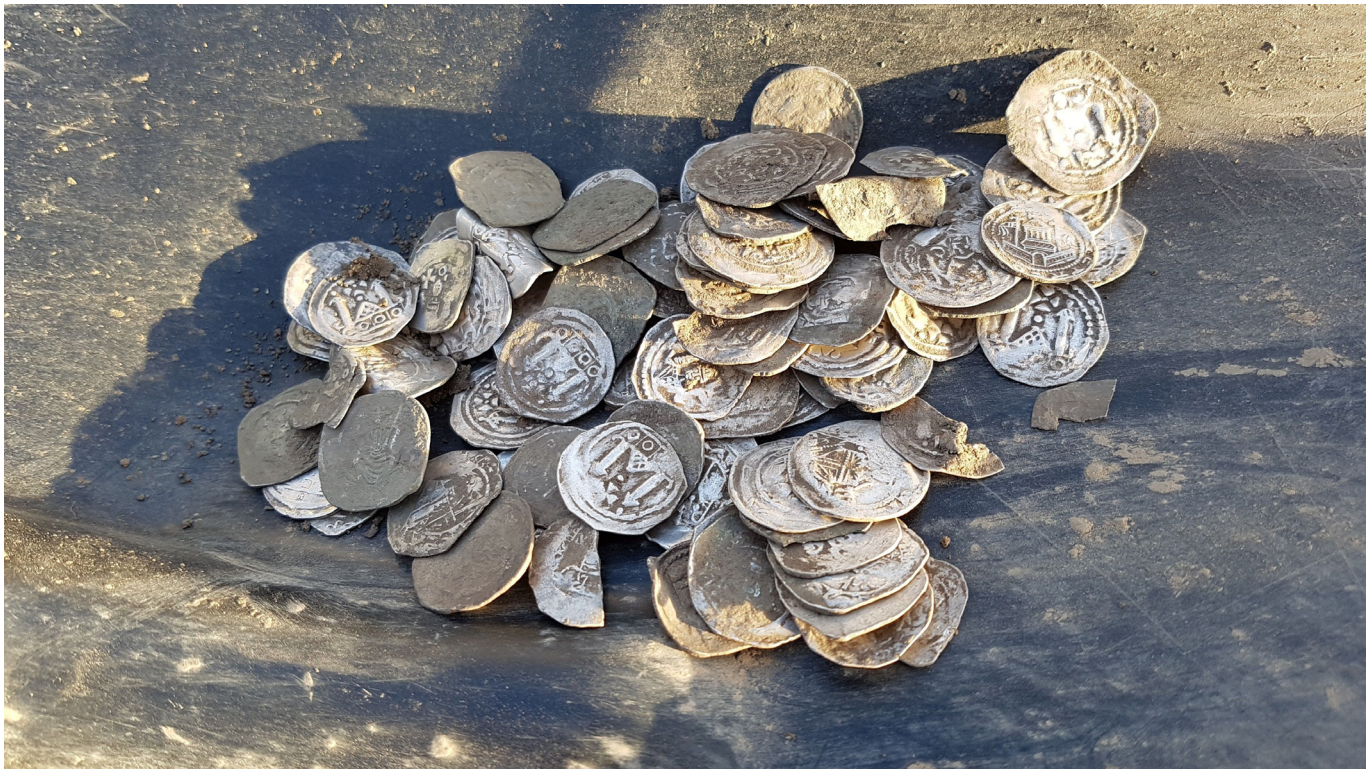


Photo 6: Still muddy Friesach dinars

Photo 7: The cleaned coins

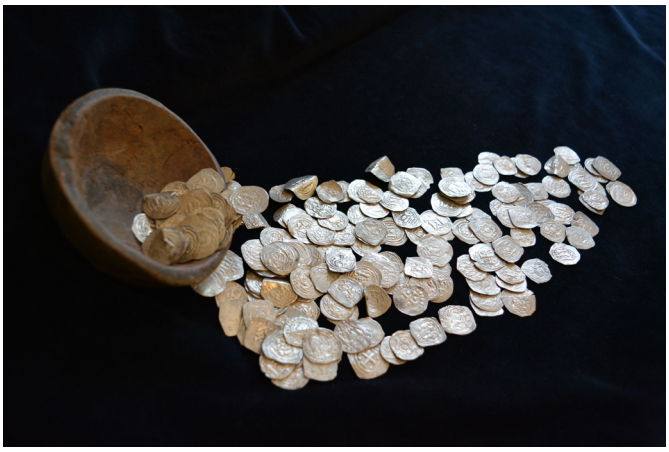


Photo 8: A fragment from the bottom of the pot, and some of the coins hidden in it