

TREASURE HUNTING, ADVENTURE, SCIENCE. COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECTS IN PEST COUNTY

From the publications of the Ferenczy Museum Center¹

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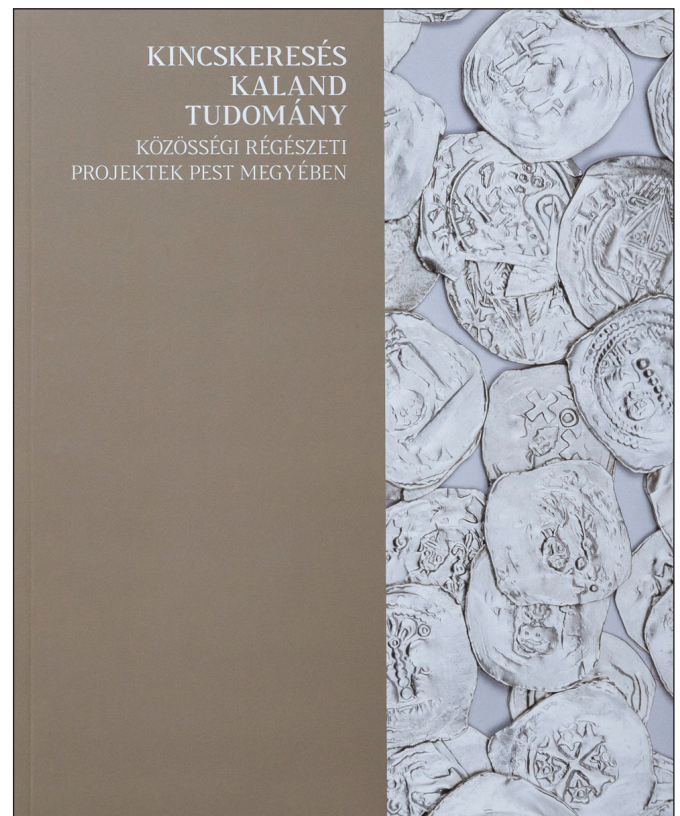
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*The book entitled *Kincskeresés, Kaland, Tudomány. Közösségi régészeti projektek Pest megyében (Treasure Hunting, Adventure, Science. Community Archaeology Projects in Pest County)* was published in the fall of 2021 in connection with an exhibition of the same name at the Ferenczy Museum Center. The nearly 300-page volume richly illustrated with photographs presents the results of community Archaeology projects that have taken place in Pest County over the last decade.*

First, the numbers: 5 main chapters, a large, 11-page bibliography, 25 essays, 22 authors, outstanding quality maps, drawings, and catalogue pictures, more than 100 photographs, covering 10 years in 277 pages. All of this was published in 2021. The book has been developed and shaped by the ideas of each of the contributing institutions, colleagues, community archaeologists, a long list of private individuals, and helpers that sometimes only appear in the footnotes (*fig. 1*).

In the book's **introduction**, the editor of the publication and the chief curator of the exhibition, Tibor Rácz, briefly presents community archaeology, which has been gradually gaining a place and conceptual support in Hungarian archaeology. Within this, he concentrates on the adventure that began in Pest County in 2010, numerous joint projects, and the history of the work. Metal detection and work related to this is still the focus of Hungarian community archaeology, and this has resulted in more than ten-thousand metal objects landing up in museums and collections. However, one of the most important ideas to me can be found at the end of the introduction. According to this, the social utility, the saving of assets, the collective work and activity, and the unselfish assistance that contributes to the social, cultural, and spiritual well-being of every age group is much more significant than the finds and research that can be put in numbers. All of this has meant a great deal in a world that has been defined by the virus over the last nearly two years.

This book and the exhibition that was created is a lasting mark made by this community. It leads the reader into a world that is constantly being discovered through its well-conceived layout and high-quality



Rácz, Tibor Ákos (ed.) (2021).

Kincskeresés, kaland, tudomány. Közösségi régészeti projektek Pest megyében (Treasure Hunting, Adventure, Science. Community Archaeology Projects in Pest County).

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¹ This is an edited version of a book launch heard at the Community Archeology Conference in Szentendre on 12 November 2021.

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text and illustrations. The brief English summaries of the Hungarian essays present this information to an international audience as well.

In the **first chapter**, three essays introduce the relationship between **archaeology and society**. Tibor Rácz reviews the complex, multilayered fabric, system, and present state of community archaeology. Numerous aspects of this could be heard at the conference as well, with common topics being the divisive concept of metal detection, the often unpredictable nature of the life of a museum or archaeologist, and the fact that a living symbiosis between private individuals and archaeologists is essential and can be developed. The illustration on page 16 shows this outstandingly and visually to all through the activities that have been created as well as the result and impact of this work. Borbála Mohácsi provides a glimpse beyond Hungary's borders in the second essay of the chapter. She presents the basic international concepts through examples from Great Britain, Austria, Poland, and Romania. She also views Hungarian developments optimistically. In the third essay, Balázs Polgár summarizes the results and lessons from an exciting survey related to "history that exists in our own yards". Volunteers from three museums filled out a questionnaire containing 12 items in 2020, and based on their responses, community archaeology is a popular type of recreational activity independent of age, gender, or level of education. The Association for Community Archaeology that was formed in 2019 and the organizational forms that have been growing since then can be given an important role in the tasks related to this.

The second chapter bears the title "**Treasure Troves in Pest County**". Its opening picture on a very beautifully composed black background is one of the symbols of Pest County community archaeology, the gilded silver sabretache cover found on the outskirts of Bugyi-Felsővány. After reviewing the concept of a treasure trove (Tibor Rácz), Róbert Patay presents a gold treasure trove comprised of 71 items (89.27 g) from the Middle Bronze Age that came from the outskirts of Nagykőrös. Then, together with Balázs Mellár, he reports on a "more weighty" matter, a bronze treasure trove from the Late Bronze Age comprised of 93 items and weighing no less than 15.932 kg, which was found at Kartal. Following this, there are informative **catalogues of objects** related to every article in the book, which provide a taste of the find materials, have precise descriptions of the objects, and indicate the names of the people who found them. It is possible in the brief essays to read stories about their discovery, the circumstances in which they were found, and the significance of the finds.

We have heard many times from Ágnes Füredi about the sabretache cover from the Conquest Period found in Bugyi, but she was still able to provide new information in her essay published here. Although it is not from a treasure trove in the classical sense, the value of its discovery is indicated by the fact that researchers returned to the site to continue their work in 2020 after a break since the spring of 2011.

Treasure troves related to crises are the richest, and this is true for the time of the Mongol Invasion as well. Hella Mag and Tibor Rácz present the caves where people took refuge at Vác-Szarvas-hegy and the research and planned excavation performed through wide-ranging cooperation. Reaching the archaeological site is a genuine adventure, so it must have been a genuine haven at that time. Planned research took place here alongside the discovery of the treasure trove, and this project is a fine example of this kind of cooperation. The evaluation of the two coin finds discovered here (one of 90 items and the other of 12 items) is the work of Balázs Nagy, who also shared that at that time two heads of cattle could have been purchased with the silver coins of the first find and a bucket of beer with the coins of the second.

A coin find of nearly 150 items from 2019 connected to the town of Vátya leads us to the 15th century. On the basis of Balázs Nagy's numismatic analysis, the most recent coin was minted in 1455. The historical reasons for hiding it are not known, but it may have been because of some local event.

The third chapter entitled "**Rescue of Archaeological Finds with the Help of Private Individuals**" reveals another layer of community archaeology through three case studies. Enikő Décsi guides us through the excavation of the Avar cemetery in Tápiószentmárton and Mónika Jászberényi shows us the Avar cemetery of Albertirsa, where volunteers assisted during the work of the excavations that had tight deadlines, thus helping complete the tasks of the museum, which was struggling with a lack of personnel due to several projects taking place at once. This sheds light on the difficulties of performing heritage preservation tasks,

while also being an outstanding opportunity for team building. A similarly special opportunity opened in the territory of the medieval town of Dabas, where houses from the Late Middle Ages with cellars that are rare for this area were uncovered during an excavation. Tibor Rácz presents this project in the book.

This is followed by the fourth chapter, “**Community Archaeology Projects in Pest County**”, which portrays a new level of cooperation and gives information on three major projects. I admit that one of the essays in the book that is closest to my heart is the archaeological inventory of the Ócsa Landscape Preservation Area recorded by Ágnes Füredi and Tibor Rácz. This is the longest chapter of the book and also presents a genuinely exemplary community project. Secrets were revealed from a mostly unknown area, the Ócsa Turjánvidék region, which is in an unusual geographical area along the remains of a former channel of the Danube. The important elements of the area are the rightfully famous Premonstratensian monastery church in Ócsa and the Saint George Church of Inárcs, the site of which is known due to the excavations of Edit Tari despite the fact that it has been destroyed. Research in greater detail began in 2011, which meant the outlining of the area’s history from the Árpád Period and the Late Middle Ages. The analysis of the historiography and documentary sources in the area began rather early, in the 1980s and 1990s, and this provided a great amount of information to aid in the more professional research that has now been performed. Field walks, surveys with metal detectors performed over a long period, source analysis, and aerial photographs have provided the backbone of the examinations. The success of the research with metal detectors has multiplied the list of archaeological sites that has been able to be identified using topographical methods. The history of the area has been uncovered through the aid of the methodological layers that build upon one another.

The research into the aforementioned church and cemetery from the Late Middle Ages in Dabas has a similarly complex history in the region. Tibor Rácz and Veronika Németh provide an outstanding overview of the multilayered, extraordinarily intensive cemetery. The research here was supported by the Dabas municipal government and the National Cultural Fund, in addition to private individuals. It became clear through research on Templom Hill as well as other locations that Dabas and its surroundings may have been an important regional center in the Árpád Period and in the Middle Ages. The unusual wealth of the cemetery based on the burials with head ornaments, aristocratic elements of apparel, jewelry made of precious metals, and gold coins stands out from the burials known to this point from the period, and this indicates a community linked to the upper classes of medieval society.

Following this, we turn to the northern, less well-known regions of the county. Zoltán Batizi, István Kóka, Hella Mag and Tibor Rácz examined the medieval mining relics from the Börzsöny Mountains with many helpers as a first step in a research project with a large scope aimed at filling in gaps in our knowledge. Written sources indicate mining for precious metals in the area of Nagybörzsöny. Taking into account the information from the written sources, intensive examinations took place in two locations, Rózsa Mountain and Kecske Crag in Nagybörzsöny. Alongside geological research, the intensive field walks, metal detection, and surveys have now contributed to the probable indication of mining for precious metal ores at Kecske Crag as early as the Árpád Period. Depressions suggesting mining have been successfully identified, and the activities became more intensive at Rózsa Mountain in the Middle Ages.

The fifth chapter brings nine essays specifically on **object types and material identification** from the Roman Period through the Árpád Period and all the way to the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period. This chapter clearly reflects the opportunity to make a leap ahead in the detailed analysis of a given object type through increasing data from metal detection activities.

Thirty-three new Roman-era fibulas discovered during metal detecting research are presented by Attila Marsi from the territories of the Gödöllő and Aszód districts that was also examined using MRT, providing important new survey information on these objects. Csilla Sáró presents 10 new fibulas from the territory of the Budakeszi district. Anikó Bózsa then analyzes special Roman-era finds from metal detection research in more detail, including equestrian harness mountings, rings, and a bronze lamp.

Péter Langó has been examining pectoral crosses from the Árpád Period for a long time. Ten new pectoral crosses have become known through research over the last ten years. Only eight had been previously

known in Pest County, so this brought a significant change, and it was shown that pectoral crosses are more common around settlements, not in cemeteries. In the next essay, Langó reviews an interesting type of object, rings decorated with 11th century markings, and their broader context in connection with two new finds. Previously, five of these rings decorated with these types of markings were known from the territory of the county. The analysis and interpretation of the set of symbols is not yet clear, and it is possible that instead of being written symbols with actual meaning, they may be marks imitating written symbols.

Dániel Giedl has collected representative examples of star-shaped maces, whose discovery is also connected to research with metal detectors. These bludgeoning weapons appear in a great variety of shapes in the area of Pest County, with variants having four or twelve spikes primarily appearing in the southern areas of the county. Based on this, the author touches upon the historical context in connection with Cuman and Pecheneg settlers.

Anna Herbst presents a so-called virtue bowl from Pusztavacs that was found in a settlement inhabited in the Árpád Period. Knowledge of the site is thanks to the removal of a tree stump, which brings numerous archaeological sites to light in this area, but we often arrive on the scene too late. This case also shows how important private individuals are in indicating finds while monitoring this kind of earth-moving work.

The essay of Zoltán Rózsa and Judit Szigeti presents a careful interpretation of depictions animal figures portrayed turning back on rings (four in this case) and pendants/seals (two in this case) from the Árpád Period from a broad perspective.

Finally, Maxim Mordovin reviews 77 new lead cloth seals, relics of textile production and trade from the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period and an exciting group of sources for the extent of the textile trade in the area. These reflect a wide system of contacts to England, Flanders, northern Italy, southern Germany, Lusatia, Silesia, Lower Austria, and Bohemia/Moravia with numerous very rare pieces in the collections. He draws attention to the mapping of finds and their geographical distribution as factors holding back scholarly research. This also shows that these finds are almost completely absent from the Transdanubian region and the area of Pilis/Szentendre, as well as in Budapest and the areas of Gödöllő and Vác. Previous use of metal detectors may have caused serious damage, which should be taken into account during historical analyses and is a factor that also effects the distribution of finds from other periods.

Treasure Hunting, Adventure, Science – discovery, feeling alive, relationships... the connections continue. It is good to see photographs of the communities and the extraordinary objects and read the thorough analyses.

The curator of the exhibition and the editor of the book was Tibor Ákos Rácz. The authors of the essays were Zoltán Batizi, Anikó Bózsza, Enikő Décsi, Ágnes Füredi, Dániel Giedl, Anna Herbst, Mónika Jászberényi, István Kóka, Péter Langó, Hella Mag, Attila Marsi, Balázs Mellár, Borbála Mohácsi, Maxim Morodovin, Balázs Nagy, Veronika Németh, Dr. Balázs Polgár, Róbert Patay, Tibor Ákos Rácz, Zoltán Rózsa, Csilla Sáró and Judit Szigeti.