

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS FOR NON-VISUAL PEOPLE?

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In the spring of 2022, a series of educational archaeological short films entitled Museum treasures with audio narration was launched on the most popular video-sharing channel and social platform.

Over two years, the few minute-long, accessible and informative episodes were released sometimes at regular intervals, sometimes with small or large breaks. The first series concluded with Episode 75 in the summer of 2024. All short films are slide-shows with audio narration, where archaeologists present their most precious finds from the Neolithic to the Hungarian Conquest Period in collections in Hungarian museums. The aim of the series was to present and explain artefacts (or, as they are called by the profession, ‘movable cultural heritage elements’) that are mainly known only to specialists. I decided to start this series after losing my sight six years earlier. I was motivated mainly by an experience: in archaeological workshops held for my fellow sufferers, I had often found that visually impaired people were also highly interested in the past, asking very good questions that they could not find answers to elsewhere or with great difficulty. So the series is essentially an answer to a public demand and was made primarily for them.



Fig. 1. To my joy, I have had several opportunities to hold presentations on archaeological topics to my fellow sufferers (photo by László György, NIA HNM)

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Fig. 2. The first ever episode revolves around one of my favourite finds, a small, horse-shaped brooch from Fenékpusztá. The find is part of the collection of the Balaton Museum in Keszthely, where I worked for years (photo by József Bicskei, Göcsej Museum, source: Balaton Museum)

The series could not have evolved to its current form without, with time, gradually more people joining the initial team of friends behind it. After completing their pledged tasks, the authors of particular episodes recommended the project to their colleagues; it was a praise of our work and hugely facilitated its continuation as it relieved me of the burden of looking for new authors—people volunteered by themselves. To my great joy, nineteen people collaborated in this endeavour. I would like to use this opportunity to thank them for their contribution: they are Mária Bondár, Zita Hrabák, Gábor Ilon, Eszter Istvánovits, Klára Kővári, Valéria Kulcsár, Gábor Lőrinczy, Ákos Mengyán, Zsolt Mráv, Attila Mrenka, Katalin Ottományi, Adrienn Pásztor, Zsófia Rácz, Ferenc

Redő, Judit Tárnoki, Attila Türk, Ágnes Somogyvári, Géza Szabó and Gabriella Vörös. Another group of contributors were audio narrators devoted to culture and the case of impaired people, who made the series

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Fig. 3. Logo of the See with us! Association of audio narrators. Experts from the equal opportunities organisation checked our writings with great attention and, after repeated consultations, read them out

accessible to the target audience. They are Erzsébet Kelemen, Fanni Mayer, and Margit Virányi Kovács, led by Csilla Andrea Fekete, as well as Krisztina Főzy and István Szathmáry, who participated in the project as guests. In each episode, a slideshow of the images of the archaeological finds in focus are accompanied by audio-narrated educational texts prepared with the help and guidance of the *See with us! Society of Audio Narrators*. This work included several rounds of checking and harmonisation and a final ‘proofreading’ of the narrated film preceding its release on the Internet. I believe I express the opinion of every archaeologist who worked with us when I say we have learned a great deal about how to rephrase our common descriptions in a way that makes them easy to follow for people who can see little or nothing at all of the images of the described artefacts.

Including more than a series of dull basic data and facts was pivotal; accordingly, many texts have a humorous tone. The texts revolve around the history of the artefacts in the first place, also including some fun and interesting facts related to them, but do not lack metric data or major academic references either. Not because of the ‘scientific significance’ of the respective find but purely to excite interest in the project, let me highlight a few titles: [A nearly 8,000-year-old container](#), [The voice of the Adriatic Sea?](#), [A millennia-old vessel with a cattle head](#), [Does pottery decoration have a meaning?](#), [A pitcher of giants](#), [A decorated pottery vessel from a Late Bronze Age grave](#), [Blue glass beads from Maklár](#), [Underwater meeting with the goddess Fortuna](#), [The Seuso treasure](#), [A late Roman fruit bowl](#), [Gold jewellery of Jazygian women](#), [Ornamental buckle of a noble Gepid woman](#), [Paraphernalia or a tool to call to arms?](#), [In search of the *turul*](#).

The series was created as a passion project, without a financial background, grant, or subsidy, with every participant devoting a part of their free time to completing the promised manuscripts. Obviously, this was far from ideal, but everyone—the audio narrators, the archaeologists, and the consultants—gave their best.

Based on the feedback, the series also attracted significant attention from the non-impaired audience. As a recognition of my work as editor and author, last year, I was awarded the Henszlmann Imre Prize of the Hungarian Association of Archaeology and Art History for making the archaeological heritage accessible to the visually impaired community. A year earlier, the Hungarian National Museum honoured our work by posting our series on its homepage on World Sight Day.

As many authors are open to continuing and several members of our audience have also expressed their demand for more, the audio narrators and we have decided to start working in autumn on the second ‘season’, focusing on medieval relics in Hungary. So, the endeavour did not end, and we will continue with a larger team of authors than ever before. I also hope that young archaeologists will also join the project, and with time, we can pass the baton to the next generation.