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REPORT ON THE THIRD NATIONAL COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE

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Community archaeology initiatives in Hungary have a decade-and-a-half-long history. Since 2019, national events have been organised within the frame of the movement, the flagship of which is the National Community Archaeological Conference series. More and more institutions have been involved in this event throughout its history, and numerous museum programmes, civil communities, and associations established all over the country debut or promote themselves there. To the great joy of the organisers and participants, the recent conference – the third in the series – witnessed a change of focus from controversial issues of methodology and organisation to the presentation of good practices.

The conference was held by the National Institute of Archaeology of HNM PCC and the Community Archaeology Association, with the participation of the Hungarian Archaeological Association and the Hungarian Society for Archaeology and Art History, in the Central Library of the Hungarian National Museum on 11–12 October 2024.

Organisers tried to select lectures involving a country-wide perspective, methodological, theoretical and developmental possibilities, and comprehensive, large-scale research programmes for the event. The opening session featured presentations on community archaeology programmes and volunteering models developed by museums all over the country. The long-established, exemplary community archaeology programme of the King St Stephen Museum (SZIKM) in Székesfehérvár goes far beyond metal detecting, with volunteers having the opportunity to attend training and join a wide range of works, proving their devotion. A limited number of suitably informed volunteers capable of and willing to follow field protocols have been allowed to enter into a contract with the museum to explore archaeological phenomena outside of known archaeological sites, that is, carry out fieldwork unsupervised within certain constraints. An important positive element of this programme is that SZIKM can ensure at the institutional level an archaeologist dedicated to this task, even if only part-time. This way, volunteers can also participate in large-scale research programmes, such as active collaborators in the National Archaeological Topography, which has also been discussed in separate presentations (*Frigyes Szücsi, Alexandra Kiss & Veronika Bereková*). The Laczkó Dezső Museum in Veszprém County also runs its own community archaeology programme, the outstanding element of which, in addition to field surveys and planned excavations, is the educational programme launched in 2022 (Ágota *S. Perémi*). The Göcsej Museum in Zala County explicitly defines itself as a community museum – thus, community archaeology activities appear as part of a broader, complex system based on active volunteering and the participation of interested outsiders. They involved the community of museum volunteers and interested parties from the beginning in performing all traditional museum tasks (collecting, preserving, researching, mediating, and exhibiting the cultural heritage).

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Besides outsiders interested in archaeology, volunteers and supporters motivated by other aspects, e.g., localism or culture, are also successfully channelled into these projects. Metal detectorists are integrated according to a set of rules developed jointly with the respective authorities and motivated with museum volunteer cards and a reward system (*István Eke, Bálint Havasi & Lívia Simmer*). The presentation on the community archaeology programme of the Kuny Domokos Museum in Tata focused on work beyond field research. Preliminary data collecting, processing documentation and find material, organising exhibitions, and researching repositories are all tasks where well-organised, regular volunteer programmes can provide huge contributions (*Anna Győri-Pórszász*). A pioneering example of civil initiatives is the well-functioning partnership of experts and outsiders to save the Szádvár Castle in Szögliget. The series of planned excavations only comprise a tiny part of their activity. They regularly carry out cleaning and preservation tasks on the site, process scientific results, and organise educational programmes in and related to the castle (*János Dobos & Viktor Gál*).

The second session was dedicated to the possibilities of development. It was evident in the whole conference that the concept of community archaeology has been understood much more broadly than metal detecting for quite some time now. Nevertheless, the role of instrumental research and hobby metal detectorists will continue to be an undeniably important segment of museum-related volunteer activities and community archaeology-based scientific research. In this context, it was instructive to gain a more detailed insight into different practices of metal detector use and the legal environments in Scandinavian countries. Learning about existing and working models, their possibilities and influences, are important for formulating state-level regulation (a current issue in our country), and developing civil and professional practices and protocols (*Tibor* Ákos *Rácz*). As civil volunteering has an undeniable impact on archaeology, including the phenomenon in archaeology education seems inevitable. New graduates are increasingly likely to encounter community archaeology tasks and the organisation of volunteers and face the negative effects of illegal metal detecting. One of the four semesters of the MA in Archaeological Heritage training at ELTE is dedicated to this topic, following a well-designed curriculum. In addition to issues of the profession, future archaeologists are introduced to general concepts, possibilities, and methods related to volunteering, community/citizen science, and popularising science (*Alexandra Anders & Katalin Wollák*). The community archaeology programme of the Sopron Museum, a small regional institution, focuses mainly on on-site metal detector surveys carried out by a small but effective team. While the project has numerous positive professional and human aspects, difficulties related to organising activities, handling finds and data, and lacking professional-institutional capacity are recurring (*Attila Mrenka*).

The presentation on the Iron Age Danube Route (IADR), a cultural route of the Council of Europe, gave an overview of how many ways – including the simplest ones and community archaeology – there are to involve people in the interpretation, preservation, presentation, and modern utilisation of cultural and archaeological heritage, provided that the necessary professional and financial background is available (*Szilvia Fábián, Szabolcs Czifra & Adrienn Pálinkás*). Social media is an important networking channel; its role, benefits, and tools were also covered at the conference. It is important to recognise that the forums they represent not only convey information but also provide a space for dialogue and collective reflection, fostering interest and scientific credibility (*Gabriella Nikoletta Kertész*).

Proper documentation, the basis of methodology, is an extremely important element of fieldwork in archaeology, where easy-to-learn, efficient, and informative data-collecting methods are key. The application of modern IT methods to the satisfaction of volunteers contributing to fieldwork, archaeologists, and institutions is a topic constantly on the table. The application developed under the professional guidance of the Jász Museum can integrate complex data collected on the field into museum databases in real-time, thus providing an alternative or model for that (*András Zoltán Gulyás & Viktor Hegyesi*). Anyone can understand the efficient and suitable use of generally available basic tools (GPS devices, GPS-based smartphone applications) in archaeology. In metal detector-aided topographic fieldwork sessions of the National Archaeological Institute of HNM PCC involving volunteers, these tools are the basis of the protocol for recording data on sites and artefacts for further processing. The documentation of surface metal finds and

GIS-based data processing only differ slightly from traditional survey documentation; an important element of efficient work is the integration of geospatial metadata into the documentation at the beginning (*Vivien Szabó*).

Metal detector surveys have also become part of the National Archaeological Topography Programme, where the scale of the endeavour makes volunteers indispensable. After a report on some metal detector-aided surveys within the programme in northeastern Hungary, the audience could learn in a separate presentation about the related work in Fejér County. The well-illustrated presentations showed examples of how recording the distribution of surface metal finds can provide additional information on the spatial extent of multi-period sites and the patterns of land use in each historical period concerned (*László Reményi & Gábor Bakos* and *Veronika Bereková & Márk Simonyi*).

Reports on the results of regional research initiatives followed the ones revolving around the national topography programme. Although only representing a small part, diverse community archaeology programmes have been integrated into the relatively small-scale, sequential archaeological topography projects (*Szilvia Guba, Károly Tankó, Nicklas Larsson & Anna Sz. Anderko*). The presentation on the research of the church network around Lake Balaton included a brief overview of the tools and possibilities beyond traditional archaeological fieldwork, which, besides strengthening the cooperation demonstrated by presentation having been delivered jointly by professional archaeologists and volunteers, can be an important tool for maintaining an active connection with local communities (*Attila Papp & Zsolt Kaszás*). As a result of the evaluation of surface finds from a topographic survey in Tolna County, new types of medieval and early modern sites could be identified: Some metal finds proved to be suitable for identifying venues of human activities other than settlements and cemeteries (e.g., marketplaces, fishermen's lodges, vineyards, hideaways, etc.) which would not be detected based on pottery alone, thus remaining invisible for heritage protection (*András K. Németh*). The deserted village site of Szentmihály on Csepel Island has been the subject of systematic research for several years. The related work was carried out the professional supervision of the Árpád Museum in Ráckeve and the Community Archaeology Association, which used complex methods introduced by a volunteer working with the Association. The ongoing survey aims to map the site, uncover written evidence, and rescue as much archaeological information as possible, as ploughing disturbs the site constantly (*Tibor Győry*). The research of the Kinizsi tomb in Nagyvázsony, initiated by localist

enthusiasts, goes back over a century. Today, a complex research programme, guided by the Dezső Laczkó Museum and involving volunteers from the Black Army Youth Association in Hungary and worldwide, is carried out on the site (Ádám *Sándor Pátkai, Zsombor Győrffy-Villám & Csanád Kandikó*).

On the second day of the conference, the focus shifted to case studies. The first section was devoted to remarkable artefact types and/or sites from various historical periods. The collecting and processing of ecclesiastical remains have long been a priority in Bács-Kiskun County, and the first results of the related project are expected to be published in a corpus in 2025. The rescue and interpretation of surface metal finds have been done with particular care. Metal detector-aided research carried out with volunteers in the past twelve years had a prominent role in this work, which, besides collecting surface finds, included intensive geoinformatical and geoscientific research and extensive data collecting. The ecclesiastical objects recovered and mapped have significantly altered previous knowledge about the equipment of medieval churches in the Danube-Tisza Interfluve (*István Pánya & Bernát Rácz*). Last year, the treasures found on Somló Hill hit the headlines in the news about community archaeology. The discovery of the gold and bronze deposits is the result of a well-designed, complex research programme that relies heavily on coordinated, regular community archaeological research, mainly in the form of instrumental site reconnaissance, metal detector surveys, and targeted, small-scale excavations. Thanks to regular fieldwork, the body of data on the spatial and chronological extent and former importance of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age highland settlements on Somló Hill is getting more and more precise (*Bence Soós, Gábor Tarbay & Tamás Péterváry*). The Damjanich János Museum in Szolnok started a metal detector survey programme in 2015, which resulted in the discovery of artefact types previously unknown in the area, improving our understanding of the Late Iron Age connections of the Central Tisza Region. The material included both metal detector finds and ones that caught the naked eye of a dedicated participant paying due attention, such as some Iron Age glass bracelet fragments (*Péter F. Kovács*). A team from the Ferenczy Museum Centre and volunteers from the Community Archaeology Association carried out systematic research in several sessions on a multi-period site in Pest County. Due to their work processing the finds and interpreting the data, they could present results beyond the topographical data related to this site (*Mónika Jászberényi & Balázs Nagy*). The project born from a civil interest and initiative in Pest County is remarkable among community archaeology projects focusing on special sites. It focuses on sites associated with medieval iron ore processing and ironworking on the outskirts of Nagykovácsi, linked to the name of the settlement, investigating them using complex surface survey methods; a report on the first results has been published in this journal (*Zoltán Kovács*).

A separate section was devoted to reports on Roman and Sarmatian sites. The outstanding fort of Roman origin on Sibrik Hill in Visegrád was also important in the 9th–11th centuries. It has been the subject of planned archaeological research for more than a decade, involving a large number of volunteers, including locals, students, and secondary school pupils in the excavations (*Katalin Boruzs*). The investigation of the surroundings of the Roman *villa* farm at Bodajk has been an important element of the community archaeological programme in Fejér County for years. The results of the planned excavation of the cemetery area were presented at the conference. Like many projects in the county, this one enjoyed the support of the local municipalities and volunteers working with the museum (*Alexandra Kiss*). Metal detector surveys in the one-time dwelling area of Sarmatians gleaned a wealth of interesting data on local money circulation, currency use, provincial coinage, and even counterfeiting. Local volunteers are active not only in collecting artefacts but also in their scientific processing. The new sites and coin finds were presented by an archaeology student and an archaeology technician who started as museum volunteers (*Dániel Antoni* & *István Steuer*).

The final part of the conference was devoted to case studies related to conflict archaeology and castle research. The research of the Árpád Castle in Dömös was a complex task, in the completion of which, besides museums, the work of volunteers played an important role in all phases. One of the co-presenters was also a ‘veteran’ volunteer. Systematic fieldwork, geodetic and geophysical surveys, and authentication excavations were carried out in the Bronze Age and the medieval fortress (*Keve Jámbor & Gábor Viski*).

Amongst other methods, metal detecting proved to be useful during the excavations carried out with volunteers on the site of Sátoraljaújhely Castle. The participating volunteers grew more and more closely linked to the museum over the years, so the new exhibition presenting the results of their work did not include only the finds they recovered but the local team also partook in planning and realisation (*István Ringer)*. The surface survey of the surroundings of Csővár in Pest County is another good example demonstrating how to get the most out of field survey and metal detecting methods in steep forest terrain, even with only a small team (*László Fekete & István Kóka*). The various community archaeology activities and the work of volunteers are also indispensable in the research, based on written sources, contemporary depictions, and archaeological excavations, of the 16th-17th-century history of the sieges of Visegrád (*István Kováts*). We have been following since 2020 the progress of a complex community research project focusing on the hermitage chapel of Nagy-Eged-hegy in Eger. Thanks to the excavations carried out with the help of volunteers, the community, forged into a dedicated working group by now, could set a new goal: the conservation and restoration of the monument (*Gergely Rákóczi & Enikő Valasek*).

Besides archaeological sites, discussing the research on modern and contemporary military history sites was essential. Military heritage started to become an increasingly prominent element of the protection of cultural heritage in 2014. In recent years, the MoD Museum and Institute of Military History was able to contribute to community archaeological programmes on modern period and contemporary issues, followed by interest from all parts of the country (*Balázs Polgár*). As an interesting detour, the audience was offered a glimpse of the forensic archaeology training course at the University of Pécs (*Krisztina Hudák*).

The presentations at the 3rd National Conference on Community Archaeology illustrated how community archaeology defines the activities of colleagues working in different fields of archaeology. Besides talks about practices and methods, many projects and comprehensive regional research programmes have been introduced that involve more than some occasional inclusion of volunteers or metal detector surveys. The community archaeology models applied by several museums demonstrated that heritage institutions work in partnership with the community for the community. The cooperation is not limited to fieldwork, enthusiast outsiders are increasingly involved in tasks related to the operation of the museum and scientific processing. It was great to learn about the growing cooperation, of which community archaeology has also become a catalyst, between volunteer communities, museums, and different professional institutions. No critical or sceptical opinions could be heard on museum-friendly metal detecting or community archaeology, which are often expressed in other forums, but mostly without the possibility of a fair professional debate or response.

The rich programme was not only remarkable for its diversity but also for the large number of volunteers among the speakers. The fifteen-minute presentations were the essence of a huge amount of work and effort by volunteers and, not infrequently, archaeologists, much of whom sentenced their spare time to research. This required a commitment from both sides: willingness to self-educate from outsiders, openness from the archaeological community, and active cooperation between the two groups. Inclusiveness, openness, and reciprocity are key features of community archaeology and the foundations of citizen science.

Community archaeology is part of citizen science. It has been developing throughout Europe over the last decade under the banners ‘With citizens for science’ and ‘With science for society‘. The idea of a knowledge-based society is also central to EU education policy. Community archaeology is an opportunity for archaeology to develop a living relationship with society and contribute to creating a knowledge-based society. Working with civil society builds on innovation, strengthens faith in science, has a social impact, and creates value.

It is worth mentioning the keywords that recurred in several presentations. Archaeologists are now aware that community archaeology acts as a *bridge* between scientific research and civil society. It cannot be done without a clear *vision of mission*. *Transparency*, good *scientific communication*, the diversity of archaeology, and *unboxing archaeology* are fundamental requirements. There was a reference to formulating a somewhat abstract ideal of a more open and informed society. In light of all that, one can draw a very positive balance: Community archaeology has found its role and its place within archaeology. Finally, the most

important contribution of community archaeology cannot be overlooked: the two days of the conference were characterised by the same attentiveness and supportive, friendly atmosphere that has been the greatest inspiration for volunteers and the colleagues working with them from the very beginning.

Recommended sources

Abstract booklet and programme

Report on the First National Community Archaeology Conference

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