

COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY WORKSHOP AT THE KUNY DOMOKOS MUSEUM IN TATA

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The Kuny Domokos Museum in Tata has set increasing its scientific activity as a main goal for 2025. As a city museum with a collection area covering a county, its scope covers various disciplines, including art history, history, natural history, and archaeology; accordingly, we looked for events related to these to hold. The Community Archaeology Association (organisers of the 3rd National Conference on Community Archaeology) and the National Institute of Archaeology of the Hungarian National Museum welcomed our proposal. A result of our joint effort was a workshop on community archaeology, held on 22 October 2024 at Tata Castle.

Keywords: community archaeology, workshop, metal detector, law amendment

The bulk of tasks related to archaeology in the Kuny Domokos Museum, as in many institutions across the country, are fieldwork. With the increasing demand from volunteers to work with museums, it has become clear that there is a need to bring together institutions, associations, and renowned researchers who are experienced in dealing with scientific tasks and engaging volunteers and can offer guidance on working together effectively.

Volunteers are keen to be involved in the life of the museum. Providing archaeological services, including metal detecting surveys, has become prominent in our work. Experience in recent years has shown that without the help of volunteers, rural institutions, with their limited capacity, find it difficult and are slower to carry out their tasks. The fast-paced world, where the public and investors demand results quickly, does not allow us to work for years on a site, especially as the legal framework also imposes time limits. However, the attitude of volunteers when dealing with tasks is completely different, pointing in new directions. Their assistance can often be a ‘lifesaver’, especially when fieldwork must be done at an increased pace.

Community archaeological workshops have already been organised in late 2019 (RÓZSA 2020) and autumn 2020 (RÁCZ & MAG 2020); the meeting in Tata was the third. In previous events, besides pooling views on metal detecting, colleagues have specifically called for the adoption of good practices; however, a national protocol has remained to be developed.

The meeting in Tata was originally planned as a two-day event: a first day with some presentations followed by a discussion with invited guests on the proposed changes in legislation and an opportunity for the audience to ask questions to the authorities, and a second day with more exciting programme for volunteers, where they could exchange ideas and experiences in an informal discussion with archaeologists. We also planned to give volunteers an opportunity to present their needs and ideas.

Unfortunately, due to time constraints and other anomalies, the programme of the second day could not be realised. Colleagues from all over the country, from Zala to Békés County, joined the workshop, and several institutions, although unable to attend, indicated that they found the programme interesting and useful and would like to attend online. The audience included nearly fifty volunteers and archaeologists, which, given the short time available for organising, counts as large in the country. Archaeologists from museums and heritage departments of government agencies were invited to participate in the afternoon round table discussion and cover as many issues as possible.

Presentations on community archaeology made up the first half of the day (*Fig. 1*). First, Attila Czövek presented the situation in Tolna County, showing how diverse and multifaceted the relationship between

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archaeology and community archaeology is. Lajos Juhász reported on a metal detecting conference in Brussels and the current state of metal detecting research in Belgium. Katalin Wollák highlighted some elements of international and national legislation and gave an overview (with co-presenter Jan Marik) of the framework for metal detector use in the Czech Republic. Attila Papp spoke about the results of intensive cooperation with volunteers, and Tibor Ákos Rácz made suggestions on the operational framework for metal detector research.

The afternoon started with a discussion with invited guests: Kornél Könye, Head of the Archaeology Department of the Deputy State Secretariat for the Protection of Historical Monuments of the Ministry of Construction and Transport, István Elekes, Head of the Artifacts Protection Division of the National Investigation Office of the Hungarian Police, and Gábor Virágos, Deputy Director General of the National Institute for Archaeology of the Hungarian National Museum at the time. Several questions were raised about the expected new amendments to the legislative framework, which clearly shows that both authorities and institutions dealing with archaeology lack information. Without harmonisation, the interpretation of the law varies from area to area; thus, changes are needed.

Although our original intent was to outline a professional protocol for using metal detectors, the expected changes in legislation and local problems have attracted more interest and attention. The audience of the round table discussion asked several questions to the invited guests, and the organisers did not interrupt the discussion (*Fig. 2*). Although we only scratched the surface, the most important issues were covered. This afternoon brought clear evidence of the need and demand for such discussions, and this is perhaps the most important lesson of the meeting.

Colleagues engaged in community archaeology have presented several good practices that should be harmonised and put into practice in compliance with the law. One must also remember that without the volunteers, sites may become destroyed, and that archaeologists can barely complete their tasks today without them. Some of our so-called invisible work (a term also used in archaeology) is also done by volunteers.

Hopefully, the institutions that did not start a community archaeology programme yet will become interested in preventing illegal activities by working with volunteers passionate about protecting history and cultural heritage. The existing good practices should be transformed into a national standard parallel to the legal framework; the workshop showed that all parties are open to that. We hope to realise our original plans soon and welcome such discussions in the Kuny Domokos Museum in Tata. We appreciate the trust and the opportunity to host such an important event.



Fig. 1. A presentation in the morning session at the conference



Fig. 2. Round table discussion in the afternoon

In a sense, this event was also a debut for the Tata Museum, as we would like to create a universal platform (not limited to community archaeology) where all players in archaeology can consult on scientific problems and possibilities. In contrast to scientific conferences, our museum wishes to provide a forum for discussing theoretical and practical issues, difficulties, and newly developed systems related to data storage, inventories, revision, excavation methods, IT, and geodesy.

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Feedback on your experience on the workshop, suggestions for further development, and constructive remarks are welcome. We hope our current grant application succeeds and will enable us to invite colleagues to another event to discuss important professional issues.

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