

COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY IN ZALA COUNTY

ISTVÁN EKE¹ – LÁSZLÓ KLINGER²

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Compared to other museums in the country, community archaeological research and metal detector surveys coordinated by the museum took off somewhat later in Zala County. However, following the initiatives of other cultural institutions, community archaeological programmes were also launched there in 2018, yielding significant results. A study on the community archaeological research of the Pauline monasteries in Zala County has already been published in Hungarian Archaeology; this paper presents further community archaeological programmes and results.

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COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE GÖCSEJ MUSEUM (METAL DETECTOR INVESTIGATIONS)

The relationship between the professionals of the Göcsej Museum and ‘civilian’, non-professional metal detectorists has varied for a long time. Although the museum had a metal detector, and during the excavation in Zalalövő in 2014, volunteer Tamás Kardos helped field research with it, no large-scale metal detector survey campaigns were organised in the county (at least not legal ones). Of course, we have heard from several sources about illegal activity, mainly on sites from the Late Bronze Age and the Roman Period. In 2011, a fatal explosion occurred in Botfa when illegal metal detectorists tried to cut in two a World War II shell they discovered. During the following investigation,³ the police questioned several illegal metal detectorists, but the items seized in the procedure did not end up in the museum.

Following the tightening of the legislation on the use of metal detectors, many museums across the country, including the Göcsej Museum, have received an increasing number of cooperation requests from previously unknown metal detectorists who wished to work with us or at least to enter into a cooperation agreement that enabled them to continue with their hobby. Fortunately, we did not have to deal with the same rush as the museum organisation in Pest County (RÁCZ 2017); however, the number of applicants was enough to launch our metal detector survey programme, and we organised a team of volunteer metal detectorists in 2018 (*Fig. 1*).

In setting up the conditions for cooperation, we have received help and advice from institutions where these programmes were already running. It seemed natural to ask the Ferenczi Museum Centre (FMC) and the Community Archaeology Association (KRE) for help in creating the rules, while the Katona József Museum in Kecskemét and our colleagues in Baranya County (SZABÓ & SZAJCSÁN 2017) also provided us with useful advice. Thus, in consultation with the local heritage protection



Fig. 1. Press conference on the cooperation between the Göcsej Museum and volunteer metal detectorists (March 2019, photo by Petra Pánczél © Zalamedia)

¹ Archaeologist, geoinformatics specialist, Directorate of Museums of Zalaegerszeg, Göcsej Museum; email: eke.istvan@gocsejmuzeum.hu

² Head of Public Relations, Directorate of Zalaegerszeg Museums; email: klinger.laszlo@gocsejmuzeum.hu

³ <https://www.zaol.hu/cimlapon/2011/03/halalos-robbanas-botfan-tobb-mint-ezer-robbanoeskoz-talaltak>

authority, we developed a set of rules that meets both the respective legislation and local demand, thus creating a framework for cooperation with non-professional metal detectorists.

The relatively small number of applicants and their demands did not make it necessary to organise large-scale training in heritage protection, archaeology, and field practice; instead, applicants were introduced to the conditions of cooperation with the museum through a personal interview and taught the necessary procedures of archaeology and artefact management during joint work. This method proved effective, even with minor hiccups, in the case of the initial team of five people, especially as several of our volunteers already had broad archaeological and numismatic knowledge due to their experience in metal detecting. During this period, our archaeologists learned from them how to use a metal detector, while we passed our knowledge of archaeological and heritage protection and the survey area on to them.

Non-professional metal detectorists working with the Gőcsej Museum have several opportunities to participate in archaeological research as they can join diverse research programmes started by the archaeologists of the institution. The number of these is constantly growing, and some more are in the planning phase. The research programmes are as follows:

1. *Archaeological research of the Pauline monasteries in Zala County.* The programme involves the topographic research and excavation of the four known Pauline monasteries and their surroundings in Zala County. Livia Simmer and Bálint Havasi already provided a detailed account of this programme and the results of the related community archaeology work in a previous issue of *Hungarian Archaeology* (SIMMER & HAVASI 2023).
2. *Roman settlements and villa estates along the Zala River.* The programme includes instrument-aided surveys of Roman sites, mainly *villa* farms and estates, along the Zala River, known from previous archaeological topographic surveys and excavations. Sites between Zalalövő and Zalaszentgrót have been investigated by our team, while the ones between Zalaszentgrót and Lake Kis-Balaton in cooperation with the Balaton Museum in Keszthely.
3. *Research of the site of the Battle of Kacorlak.* The programme aims to investigate the site of the raid near Kacorlak in 1587. In this battle, the combined armies of Captain György Zrínyi of Kanizsa defeated the Ottoman army returning from a plunder campaign in the area of Lenti and Lendva (ÁKOSFY 1940). It also includes the survey of 16th-century forts in the area (Kacorlak, Kilimán, Sárkánysziget, and Zalaszentbalázs).
4. *Investigation of the archaeological sites of the settlement of Túrje.* Metal detector-aided prospection of archaeological sites in the administrative area of the settlement.
5. *Research of Árpád Age forts in Zala County.* The programme includes surveys of the small forts in the county to specify the time of their construction based on coin finds.

Besides, the museum has site reconnaissance and topographic projects unrelated to these programmes, where, due to our volunteers' help, surface find collecting and metal detector survey campaigns can be conducted. The site reconnaissance survey campaign in the area of the Benedictine monastery in Csatár was such a project: a team of Várkapitányság ePLC carried out a geophysical survey of the former monastery that was complemented by a metal detector survey that yielded a pilgrim badge depicting Saint Ursula (EKE 2020).

In recent years, volunteer metal detectorists have also been involved in large-scale development-led excavations. It has become common practice today to survey the excavation area with metal detectors before digging starts so that finds that would end up in the soil deposits created during the mechanical removal of the topsoil layers can be saved. Where possible, mechanical soil removal is also monitored by metal detectorist volunteers, who—although it slows down the process—also survey the layers not disturbed by agricultural activity. Artefacts found in phenomena with soil stains appearing on the artificial excavation floor level are only removed when the features are excavated so as not to compromise their find context. Thanks to the work of the volunteers, the museum's collection has been enriched with a number of metal artefacts.

Volunteers who have been working with the museum for several years are allowed to carry out research independently—in accordance with the current heritage legislation, in areas with no registered archaeological site where the land owner permits research. The conditions for unsupervised metal detector activ-



Fig. 2. Metal detector surveys in Zala County, a chamber exhibition at the town hall of Zalaegerszeg (October 2020, photo by József Bicskei, Göcsej Museum)



Fig. 3. Group photo of archaeological volunteers from Zala County. Archaeology Day, Community Archaeological Meeting (2022)

event series ‘*Week of Communities*’ (Fig. 2), where they could attend presentations about the achievements of the past years and invited volunteers could share their thoughts with the community. The most active volunteers were awarded a *Pro Archaeologia* certificate, while the ones who worked at least ten days in the past year on excavations received a volunteer card from the Zalaegerszeg Museums Directorate, with which they could visit all of their permanent exhibitions free of charge.

Some valuable artefacts found with the help of our metal detector volunteers were put on display in a small chamber exhibition organised in the framework of the programme series ‘*Artefact of the Month*’ at the Mayor’s Office in Zalaegerszeg (Fig. 3). However, the objects presented there were only a small part of the find collected by them. An exhibition presenting the finds recovered by our metal detectorist volunteers is planned for the following year as a tribute to their work.

COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION IN BAGOD

The starting point for our research in Bagod was a local history publication from 2019. *Bagod, The Centuries of a Village by the Zala River* by Katalin Béres covers the history of the village from prehistoric times to the end of the 20th century. Archaeological periods are not elaborated in the book, as its aims did not include describing the archaeological heritage of the area of the village. Part of the archive photographs on which the book is based were collected from the Data Archive and Photo Collection of the Göcsej Museum; besides, a lot of new information, family photos, and stories were submitted in response to the request made

ity, the obligations of the metal detectorist, and the obligatory guidelines of field practice are elaborated in the cooperation agreement between them and the Göcsej Museum. The agreement is valid for one year and only applies to the areas specified in the Annex. If the volunteer finds a new archaeological site or a find of archaeological interest, they are obliged to inform the contact person. If the discovery proves to be more than a stray find, the archaeologist of the museum reports it to the respective authority after field inspection and determining its extent.

The question arises: How can we reward the work of our volunteers?

For the last three years, meetings were held with the volunteers of the Göcsej Museum as part of the



Fig. 4. The Roman gravestone from Bagod
(photo by Norbert Tóth)

by the mayor of and the author of the book to the residents of the village. In other words, the book is the result of community collecting.

Page 22 includes a picture of a Roman gravestone (Fig. 4) found in two fragments on the outskirts of the village by János Németh in 1973 and 1976, respectively. The first fragment was published by András Mócsy (MÓCSY 1976), while the complete tombstone by Irén Bilkei and László Horváth (BILKEI & HORVÁTH 1980–1981). At the book launch event, we talked with the mayor of the village, Ferenc Sipos, and suggested a campaign to find and possibly excavate the grave or cemetery related to the gravestone. Fortunately, he was open to the idea and assured us of his support.

As the result of the research in the Data Archive of the Göcsej Museum, the site where the fragments were found was identified. However, the location marked on the map found in the archive did not match the description in the paper by András Mócsy. Fortunately, we could ask Éva Czudar (the widow of János Németh) where her husband had found the gravestone fragments, and, as the position of the small marble fragments found during inspection attests, she gave us the correct location precisely.

The next stage of our research was a series of geophysical surveys at the site of the Roman gravestone, carried out with the support of the municipality of Bagod on 20 February 2020. The survey, led by László Nagy, included a magnetometer survey of 20,230 m² and a ground penetrating radar survey of 917 m². As a result, a metre-wide trench enclosing an area of 19 × 19 m was identified. The archaeological analogies of this phenomenon suggest that the feature may have surrounded a Roman cemetery. The square ditch is interrupted on the south side, which could be the entrance to the tomb. A ground-penetrating radar survey of the area around the trench revealed no trace of a stone building.

To our surprise, other archaeological features could be identified on the magnetometer survey image. Based on their distinct anomalies, archaeological remains of a large settlement dating to the Middle Neolithic (6th millennium BC) were identified outside the registered boundary of the site. Altogether, 43 Middle Neolithic house complexes could be discerned (Fig. 5).

Preliminary research provided a suitable basis for applying to the Heritage Protection College of the National Cultural Fund for the funds necessary for an excavation. Thanks to the success of our proposal⁴ and the financial support of the municipality, the excavation could be realised. Before its start, a call was made to the inhabitants of the municipality to participate in the excavation, either as guests or active contributors.

The area surrounded by the square ditch in the geophysical image was excavated in two weeks in August 2020 by volunteers from the municipality, museum-friendly metal detectorists, and university students, who worked under the supervision of Dr Ferenc Redő.

Unfortunately, despite the careful preparation, the results did not fully meet our expectations. No burials or further fragments of the gravestone were found in the area within the ditch rich in Roman finds. Small marble fragments, which could belong to the tomb, were found in the fill of the trench and the ash pit of the

⁴ Grant ID 207134/379.

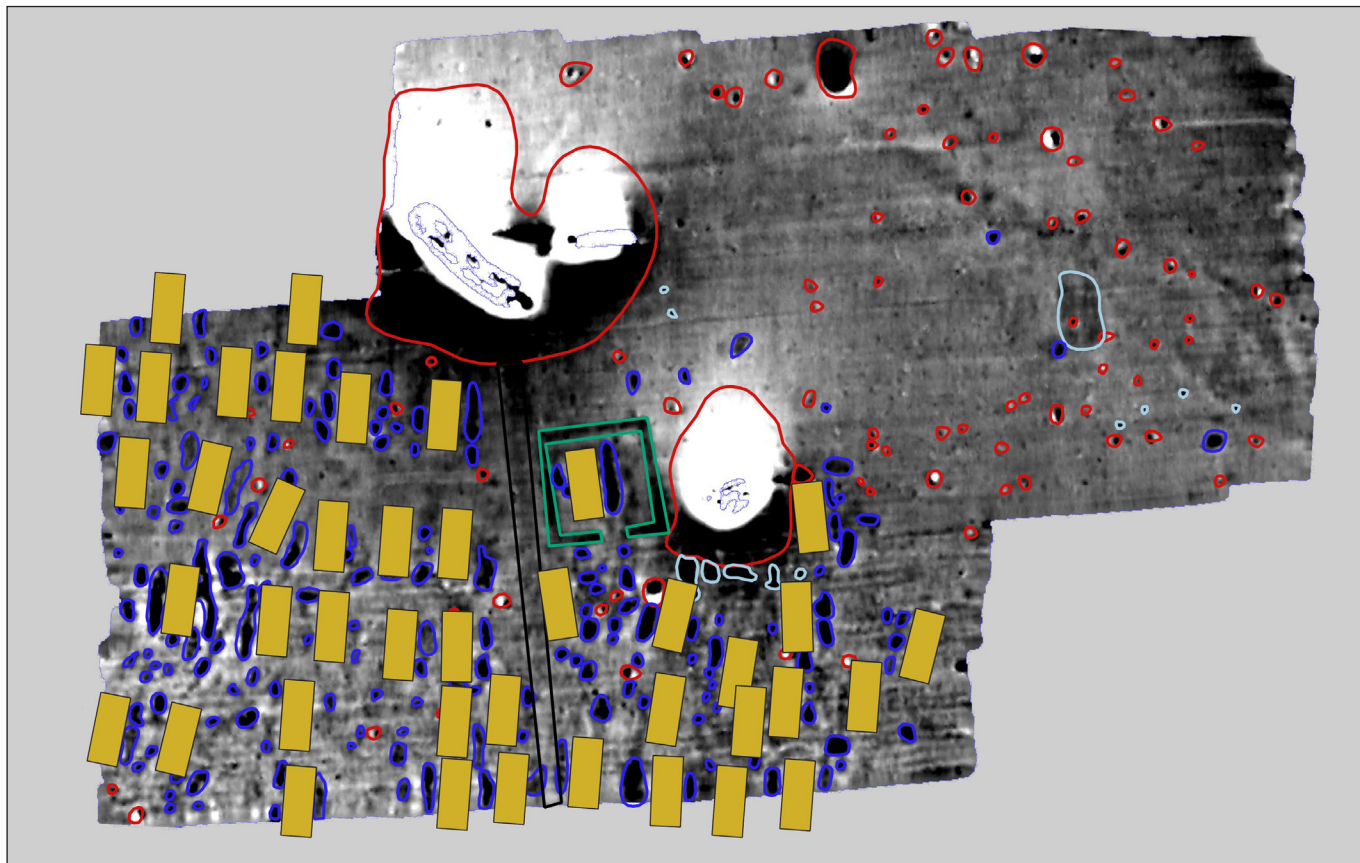


Fig. 5. Magnetometer survey image of the Bagod site with the interpretation of the anomalies (survey by László Nagy)

Late Avar ovens cutting it, but their context remained unclear. Most finds were Middle Neolithic (Transdanubian Linear Pottery Culture). The pit complexes running alongside the one-time surface longhouses (*Langsgrube*) could clearly be identified, and their fill contained a rich assemblage of artefacts (Fig. 6).

The biggest achievement of the excavation was that the inhabitants of the village who visited the excavation could get a glimpse of daily life on an archaeological excavation. Those who joined the excavation work could gain first-hand experience of the joys and difficulties of excavating in the 32–35°C heat.

Excavation results and the afterlife of the archaeological research programme were presented in a presentation held on 4 March 2021 in the *Museum Encounters ONLINE* programme series of the Göcsej



Fig. 6. Orthophoto of the Bagod excavation in 2020 (drone photo by István Eke)



Fig. 7. Inauguration of the Bagod Roman Monument Park in 2022 (photo by Petra Pánczél © Zalamedia)

Museum. A recording of the presentation entitled *In the Footsteps of a Roman Gravestone, Community Archaeological Excavation on the outskirts of Bagod* is [available](#) on the YouTube channel of the Museum.

As a result of the programme, the community developed a love for archaeology and Roman history. In 2022, a Roman memorial park with a replica of the tombstone was inaugurated as part of the Bagod Historical Games (Fig. 7).

COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE BALATON MUSEUM BETWEEN 2019 AND 2022

The Balaton Museum launched its first community archaeological project in 2018. It was led by Bálint Havasi, the museum director at the time, and connected to the excavation of the Pauline monastery of Várlus. During fieldwork, the participants were given an insight into traditional archaeological work. Towards the end of the year, the first team of metal detectorists was also organised, and they carried out a short but successful survey at Vindornyafok, a previously unknown site.

Since 2019, metal detector-aided research has become a more prominent part of community archaeology activity in the museum. This year, our volunteers have been involved in an increasing number of archaeological projects, such as the archaeological monitoring project in Hévíz, the preliminary excavation of the Kis-Balaton Research Centre, and the archaeological monitoring of the replacing of power cables at Balatonberény and Fenékpusztá.

An important result of the cooperation with metal detectorist volunteers is the significant increase in the number of artefacts collected; thanks to their contribution, finds otherwise lost were included in the museum's collection. We provide our volunteers with regular training on various topics related to museum work, archaeology as a profession, fieldwork, and the conservation process according to our possibilities. Several presentations were held on archaeological topography, geoinformatical methods, and archaeological site registers. We strive to provide them with insight into museum work; a good example from 2020 is the Saturday morning we spent with volunteers inventorying conserved coin finds from Vindornyafok. Planned goals of joint work in the future include revisioning registered archaeological sites identified decades ago and updating data on their extent and condition (Fig. 8).

We strive to cooperate with other counties and museums, maintaining excellent collaboration between the Directorate and the Göcsej Museum. We have also established contacts with the Laczkó Dezső and Rippl-Rónai Museums. We wish to present our volunteers with the possibility of collaborating with their teams on community archaeology projects (Fig. 9).

A 'recruitment day' was held at the beginning of 2019, where our archaeological projects and the legal background on metal detecting were presented to the public. In the autumn of the same year, one of our volunteers found a deposit of bronze artefacts, which, after conservation, became Artefact of the Month in the Balaton Museum in August 2021. The total weight of the bronze artefacts discovered is 3,200 g, and the



Fig. 8. Metal detector survey at Keszthely, Fenékpusztá-Vámház



Fig. 9. Volunteers in Keszthely-Fenékpusztá

assemblage included 92 bronze finds in a ceramic vessel (mostly fragmentary ingots of diverse sizes and relatively few tools and tool fragments). This was not the first time that the results of our volunteers' fieldwork were presented to the public: a selection of the most beautiful finds was put on display in August 2020, and a small exhibition was organised at the *Night of Museums* in 2021; besides, the metal detector survey expeditions organised for families were also conducted with the help of our volunteers.

From 2020 on, community archaeology and metal detector-aided fieldwork have become more visible, appearing in numerous reports in the local media and on national news channels. A core team had also formed by that time. Our volunteers have very diverse backgrounds and careers; the community includes engineers, former teachers, carpenters, restaurant managers, and retired citizens. We try to involve them in as much fieldwork as possible, and they have already proven their worth in several archaeological observation campaigns and planned excavations (Fig. 10).

Although the community archaeology programmes of the two museums are presented separately, they are linked in many ways. Everyone is keen to have volunteers from the Göcsej Museum and the Balaton Museum participate in excavations in Zala County. Besides, we are present in projects outside the county: volunteers from Zala County participated in several programmes organised by other institutions, including the research of the battlefield of Mohács, led by the Janus Pannonius Museum and the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, and the Somló Hill research project, coordinated by the Hungarian National Museum, enriching the cultural heritage of Hungary with numerous finds.



Fig. 10. Volunteers of the Balaton Museum in 2022

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