An example of collaboration between volunteers (metal detectorists) and professionals (archaeologists)

Webinar Atlantikwall Europe – ‘Data Library’
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Background

- Metal-detecting in Flanders (Belgium) allowed since 2016
- Prior to 2016: grey area and mistrust
- Motivations for MEDEA
  - Many detectorist collections with great scientific potential
  - Lack of reporting and accessibility

Everbeek Roman silver hoard (found in 2010)
A participatory approach: the virtuous cycle of citizen science
The MEDEA Project

Interdisciplinary project, 2014-17

• Archaeology (HARP-VUB) – PI prof. dr. D.Tys; coordinator P. Deckers
• User research, human-centered design (Imec-SMIT, VUB)
• Data standards > data model (PACKED vzw)
• Development (WeConnectData)
• International advisory board

Activities:

• Research infrastructure
• Outreach activities
Online Platform

- Scientific tool: persistent online publication of qualitative basic finds data
- Collaborative: self-recording by detectorists, additional data from experts

Current status:
- 2870 finds
- > 400 registered users
Workflow

Public user roles:

- Detectorist
- Finds expert
- Researcher
- Registratror
- (Validator)
Vondst bijl, Bronstijd, koperlegering (ID-28931)
Gevonden op 10 april 2016 in de buurt van Maarkedal
Status: Geпублиeerd

Object:
- Gewicht: 374g
- Breedte: 60mm
- Lengte: 155mm

Materiaal: Koperlegering
Categorie: Bijl
Period: Bronstijd

Details:
- Toegevoegd: 15 augustus 2017
- Gevalideerd op: 17 augustus 2017
- Status: Geпублиeerd
The MEDEA Project

Since 2019: coordinated by Histories vzw

- Funding by Flanders Heritage Agency
- Primary goal: outreach and education
Current Projects

• Medieval excavated metalwork: ‘Middeleeuws Metaal’, with a.o. PAN, 2020-2021
• WWII public history: ‘Onder de Radar’
• Exhibition ‘Bruges around AD 1000’
• ...

www.facebook.com/MiddeleeuwsMetaal
www.onderderadar.be
Challenges

- Obstacles to self-recording
- Remaining trust gap between heritage professionals and detecting community
- Promote database as key tool in citizen science feedback cycle
- **Limited funding**
European context

- European Public Finds Recording Network
- Exchanging experiences > developing vision and best practice
- Facebook: @publicfinds

Towards a Cooperative Approach to Hobby Metal Detecting: The European Public Finds Recording Network (EPFRN) Vision Statement

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Hobby metal detecting is a controversial subject. Legal and policy approaches differ widely across national and regional contexts, and the attitudes of archaeologists and heritage professionals towards detectorists are often polarised and based on ethical or emotive arguments. We, the European Public Finds Recording Network (EPFRN), have implemented collaborative approaches towards detectorist communities in our respective countries (Denmark, England and Wales, Finland, Flanders, and the Netherlands). Although our motivations are affected by our national circumstances, we base our work on an agreed set of goals, practices, and visions. This article presents the EPFRN’s vision statement and provides insight into its underlying thoughts. We hope to create a debate on how to develop best practice approaches that acknowledge the inherent challenges of hobby metal detecting while realising its potential.
Lessons learned

• sustainability
• online/offline: the virtuous cycle works on different scales
• create narratives, not data
• data quality vs quantity
• principles vs practice
• contribution vs co-creation