## Report on the Research Conducted at the Human Remains Field School at Nessebar, Bulgaria for The British Institute at Ankara By Marie Nicole Coscolluela

The SPHS Fieldwork Award through the British Institute at Ankara was sought to fund the majority of the costs (accommodations and subsistence totaled £450) to attend the Human Remains Field School at Nessebar, Bulgaria led by Dr. Kathleen McSweeney from the University of Edinburgh, which ran from May 6 to May 27. Those returning to Edinburgh arrived back into the city on May 28 after an overnight stay at Luton as there was no connecting flight on the same day. After getting settled at the Kirios Hotel on May 6 and 7 to run errands and shop for necessities, work commenced on May 8 at the courtyard of the Ethnographic Museum (and occasionally in the apartment attached to the museum during bad weather) where we worked for the duration of the field school. After removing boxes that contained Byzantine, Medieval, and Hellenistic skeletons from storage, participants split up and began to work



through the boxes of material from the time period that pertained to their dissertation research.

The Hellenistic remains were of a more fragmentary nature than their Medieval and Byzantine counterparts, making cleaning more time consuming and demographic analysis more difficult. The skeletons had been excavated in 2009 or 2010 then bagged for future analysis. The procedure of the field school was to first clean the bones (mostly dry brushing but with the occasional wet brushing), lay them out, do metric and non-metric analysis, noting down any pathologies, traumas, or unusual qualities to the individual(s), such as copper staining and occupational modifications to teeth, and to photograph the laid out skeleton and notable characteristics. The museum will later rebury them in the necropolis from where they were retrieved from. My group finished approximately 24 skeletons, less than what was expected because of my computer charger having died on the first day of work. The loss of my computer was a big cost to efficiency because it holds a long charge and working outside did not enable our computers to be charged as we worked.

Therefore, if I had my computer, we would have gone through more skeletons than were actually completed. Much time was lost waiting for my partner's computer to be charged enough to be taken outside and used to input information on the master database.

Despite the loss of valuable time and the fragmentation and delicacy of many of the Hellenistic skeletons, a few preliminary trends could be seen. The Hellenistic individuals were generally healthier than the Medieval and Byzantine individuals. There was a marked difference in the severity of the maladies experienced by the later populations. Furthermore, most of the Hellenistic individuals studied had died between the ages of 25 and 35, the average life span during this time period. They did not exhibit as many caries, calculus, or abscesses typically expected in an ancient population. There were a few fractures and occasional cases of cribra orbitalia, osteoarthritis, and vertebral osteophytosis. What did occur with the most frequency was linear enamel hypoplasia, which was measured from the cemento-enamel junction to ascertain when nutritional stress occurred in childhood. Statistical analysis will be conducted in the next few weeks to determine the exact frequencies of these pathologies and to observe any sexual differences. Furthermore, bone and dental samples were taken back to Edinburgh for reference and for eventual isotope analysis. The updated database includes the information on several hundred Hellenistic burials from a number of seasons of the field school, which will provide a large enough dataset from which to complete the dissertation, an endeavor that looks promising owing to the patterns observed from practical work on the skeletons.



Laying out the skeleton





Cleaning the skeletons



The photography table



Work tables and boxes of human remains



Example of copper staining from a copper necklace



Example of a healed infection on the humerus



Demonstration of the extent of fragmentation of some of the skeletons



In action



The courtyard of the Ethnographic Museum