

BSA REPORT for SPHS

British School at Athens 46th Annual Course for Undergraduates The Archaeology and Topography of Greece 26th August – 15th September 2018

The BSA Summer School continues to be a popular course for undergraduates wanting to learn more about the landscape and remains of Greece with the number of applicants increasing every year. In 2018, 28 students were chosen from 17 universities across the UK pursuing a range of degrees in Hellenic subjects. The three-week course began in Athens with lectures on Greek religion and sanctuaries, the types of sources employed in interpretations of the past, and archaeological science sessions in the Fitch Laboratory. After site and museum tours in Athens and Attica, we boarded the bus for a nine-day journey around the Peloponnese performing Aristophanes in the theatre in Epidaurus, visiting the new Corinth and Messenia Museums, exploring the great Mycenaean palaces of Mycenae, Tiryns and Pylos, discussing the principles of Byzantine art in Mystras and finishing at the Panhellenic Sanctuary at Olympia with re-enactments of the Heraia and the Olympic games. The victors in the games were crowned with olive wreaths. Additional highlights of this course included visits to the interiors of the Parthenon, the temple of Apollo Epikourios at Bassai and the temple of Zeus at Olympia.

The course was taught by Dr. Chryssanthi Papadopoulou (BSA), Dr. Estelle Strazdins (BSA, Cambridge) and Dr. Matthew Skuse (BSA, St. Andrews), with guest talks by Vasso Manidaki (the restoration of the Parthenon) and Ioannis Fappas (Museum of Cycladic Art). The course manager, Cilia Fasianou, looked after the health and well-being of the group.

Our students acquired experiential knowledge of the most important sites in central and southern mainland Greece, familiarised themselves with the BSA library, conversed with academics outside the university departmental setting, and exchanged ideas and teaching experiences with peers from numerous UK universities.

We are most grateful for the continuing support of several institutions and societies which provide much needed financial assistance to keep the course fees low as well as offering 18 bursaries to help those students who would otherwise not have been able to accept their places: The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, The Craven Committee Oxford, The Classics Faculty at Cambridge, The Classical Association and The Gilbert Murray Trust.

Student Testimonials

The British School at Athens Undergraduate Course was a challenging, engaging course, which was taught around different sites and by lecturers that were leading academics in their fields of study. By attending the course I was able to develop and increase my understanding of the Ancient Greek World. As a history student, I found that the course gave me not only an insight into the political world of the Ancient Greeks, but also an insight into how they would have lived

socially. Walking in their footsteps, as we did when we visited the Athenian Agora, was inspiring as this experience allowed us to think of how an Ancient Greek would have felt when walking into the city. Seeing material remains such as the fountain in the Kerameikos reminds the historian of the everyday activities of an Ancient Greek. Likewise, learning that women did indeed work in the market place, I felt would allow for an interesting dissertation on Ancient Women in the Workplace.

The course was of importance to my studies as it allowed me to develop my understanding of museum and museum practices. Many of the museums we attended were well designed, with items laid out in such a way that the viewer did not feel too overwhelmed. The positioning of the objects was interesting to see, specifically at the Acropolis Museum where the statues were placed in such a way that you were walking through them as the Ancient Greeks would have done. Similarly, at the Piraeus Museum, being able to visually see the inside of what a temple would have looked, allowed the visitor to feel as if they themselves were in Ancient Greece. These examples of good museum practices, and the experience of visiting so many, were useful in allowing me to reconsider what a career in museums may look like. Currently I volunteer at a museum in my local town called, Limavady Orange Heritage Centre, so the course has been of much use in allowing me to see how other museums function, and how we can possibly also change aspects of our own museum.

Another reason why the course was useful to my studies was the different sites which we visited. The preservation of sites has always interested me, as has the tourist aspect of people coming to see them. Furthermore, many of the sites that we went through, specifically Delphi, are still well preserved. Learning about the games which were held at Delphi was also of interest to my studies, as we saw the large stadium in which athletes would have competed. This knowledge of social history has been useful in allowing me to consider doing a dissertation surrounding men who were athletes. The religious significance which the site had was also of use to my studies, as it deepens my understanding of how these religious centres were so pivotal in the politics of Ancient Greece. The way that they showed off, and used them as propaganda sites for the victories that they won over their enemies, showed me the way in which religion was used to subdue ones enemies and remind the common people who truly ruled. An interesting conversation which developed at the site, and one which would make an interesting dissertation, would be the question of how truly religious the Ancient Greeks were and if they believed in all the different gods. One of the lecturers commented, that religion was also used as a means for people, specifically women, to socialise. I found this an interesting concept which could be further researched.

Learning about the archaeology of different sites was of use to me as a historian as it allowed me to form an image of what the site may once have looked like. The pivotal role which archaeologists play in uncovering remains allows the historian to make detailed history of the site and realise the significance of it. Therefore, the course was of use to me, specifically when we visited the sites of Tiryns and Mycenae, as it reminded me of how important primary evidence can be for a historian, and how historians must always cite from primary sources before making an assessment. Furthermore, visiting the fortress of Methone, and learning of its history, was of great use to me in allowing me to consider doing a dissertation in how Venice conquered

many small states, cities, and islands in the East and held them against the power of the Ottoman Empire.

To conclude, receiving the bursary was necessary for me, and many others for attendance on this trip. In times of great economic uncertainty students can face all kinds of financial problems, so bursaries such as these are vital. Overall, the course has been stimulating and inspiring, and will hopefully help me in choosing a dissertation topic and also in a module I am doing next year on Ancient Cities.

Josh Kerrigan, Queen's University Belfast

The BSA summer school has been an invaluable source of education. Although entering into my third year, the course provided information which would have been otherwise unavailable. Having never been to Greece, I lacked the reality other academics have – i.e. they had been exposed to the climate, surrounding terrain and the sites, consequently having a firmer grasp on what the lives of the people were. The classical world is no longer a concept to me.

Before coming to the summer school, I had predominantly focused on Athenian and Spartan culture, however, now I am aware of other demes which I had never heard of and subsequently developed interest in. This course is necessary for students of Classics and Archaeology whom wish to develop a thorough body of knowledge regarding the Classical world; extending to the change of Greece due to the Romans. Indeed, I was aware these cultures impacted one another, but not to such a large scale which dictated the change of daily aesthetics and societal function; I do not believe people can comprehend or grasp this solely from classical texts or studies from books.

Going into my third year, the school has instilled skills within me that I definitely lacked as a Classics student – archaeology and topographical approaches are essential for any meaningful extraction of the texts or they simply become literary criticisms. The course necessitated independent thought – we were able to consider the realms of museology and excavation, which I thoroughly enjoyed and has subsequently instilled another mode of thought which extends the classical tradition to something practical too. How should we be displaying these remains, what are the ethics involved, how ought one to approach the information within museums? The school provides many seeds of thought which develop both during and after the trip.

I had studied many of the sites before enrolling at the school, however there was always a block, as it felt I was applying facts and ideas to a conceptual case study – now these places exist, and it allows me to appreciate what I am learning, but also to take away what other academics are arguing and consider whether I think it is applicable.

One of my goals on this trip was to gain insight into the mind-sets of the people within these civilisations, and how the terrain and climate impacted their modes of thought, but also how this shapes the daily lives – I have achieved this and I now appreciate the importance of the stoas and fountain houses.

I had previously been sceptical of my success as a classical academic, due to my exhaustive readings of books and finding little new research – which was further exacerbated due to my financial inability to travel to Greece and immerse myself in the sites. Visiting the lands with academics has given me ideas for research, as when walking through the sites there is clearly a plethora of information and study to be done on certain areas. This trip has been the best of my life and this was only available due to the generosity of the BSA bursary. I would not have been able to go on this trip without the financial help provided, and as I have now experienced the quality of the course I am eternally grateful. I recommend this trip to fellow undergraduates, as not only does it provide a large body of knowledge and criticisms, it also shows you the legacy of these civilisations and how the Modern Greeks have adopted it into their own culture – this is integral to any form of human study; it cannot end at a certain date, this trip highlights this clearly.

I would like to thank all at the BSA for an immeasurably wonderful trip – my brain feels enriched and I feel empowered going back to university and heading into postgraduate research. I cannot imagine how deprived my education would have continued to be if I had not received the bursary to attend this trip.

Michael Free, King's College London



At the Hephaisteion in the Athenian Agora.