Xander Scott – Research and excavation funding report

During 10 weeks from May – July 2023, I was able to do some research for my thesis and take part in my first excavation in Greece. This would not have been possible if it were not for the generous contribution from the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies. A contribution I am very grateful for.

The aim of my trip was two-fold. First was to start research on my thesis by looking at the way aspects of Mycenaean cult and ritual are reflected in material culture (i.e., fresco iconography, human and animal figurines, specific ceramic shapes) and how the importance of their find context, excavation methodology and specialised analysis can be communicated in museum exhibitions and displays considering the complexity of these objects and the evolution of the archaeological discipline through time. To do this, my plan was to visit the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, the Archaeological Museum of Messenia, revisit Mycenae and lastly, visit the British School at Athens Library in Athens. The second aim was to take part in my first excavation, the Palace of Nestor Excavation Project (University of Cincinnati) where I would be exposed to the excavation process of the newly discovered funerary area and the documentation stages in the field and in the study centre of finds coming from these ritually charged contexts.

I was successful in most of this. I found some great examples of cultural material to study Mycenaean cult and ritual as reflected in material culture, and some examples for contextual analysis. The only part I was not successful in, was to visit the BSA’s library. After the excavation was over and I was back in Athens, I fell and twisted my ankle. This meant I could do nothing for the first couple of days. This cut into the time I had before I had to return to Scotland.

I spent most of my time in Greece in Pylos. Here I took part in my first archaeological excavation. Not only was I able to gain invaluable skill and knowledge, but I could also socialise with working archaeologists and scholars from all over the world. I could see the process of cultural material, from Mycenaean Greece, goes through from field to museum. I had a brief period of digging, processed my finds and most of the finds for the season, storage of finds, and saw finds from earlier seasons go through a process of being prepared for museum excavation.

The skills, knowledge and connections I made from this trip would not have been possible without the generosity of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies. Thank you.