

REPORTS FROM THE BES BURSARS FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE AT THE BSR EPIGRAPHY COURSE 2016

Blagovesta Atanassova (MSc student, University of Edinburgh)

I am truly grateful to the British Epigraphy Society for the travel grant which supported my attendance of the two-week Roman Epigraphy course at the British School at Rome in July 2016, organized and taught by Dr. Abigail Graham. I am interested in gaining insight into the lives of Roman women through their portrayal in different media, epigraphic evidence included. The course was a wonderful introduction to the field of epigraphy.

Among the course's various aspects, I enjoyed two in particular. The first was the ability to experience epigraphic sources in various environments, and in particular museum collections (such as the one at the Museo Nazionale Romano at the Baths of Diocletian) and on actual ancient sites (such as the tomb of the Scipios, the Forum, and the ancient city of Ostia). It can be difficult to imagine where objects would have fit in an urban context when isolated in a museum setting, although the museum label often names the place of origin. Seeing them within their original context allows for an entirely different type of understanding of inscriptions and the way they interact with their immediate environment. The inscription from the urn of Atistia, wife of Eurysaces the Baker illustrated this contrast very well. This inscription is located at the epigraphy museum at the Baths of Diocletian, but the tomb itself still stands. Seeing the inscription in the museum and later visiting the tomb allowed me to experience the inscription in multiple ways, with the addition of researching it in the museum catalogue and the CIL. This example allowed for a rather rare and perfect experience for a newcomer to this field such as myself.

The second aspect of the course which I enjoyed the most was being taught practical epigraphy skills. Among my favorite experiences in the course was being taught how to do rubbings and impressions, which I found quite helpful as they provide details that no photograph ever could. Another practical experience we had in the course was thanks to Silvia Orlandi, who generously allowed us to visit her office at La Sapienza and showed us the practical aspects of the CIL and the way it has been edited and updated throughout the years. This was definitely among my favorite activities throughout this course, first because it was really fascinating, but also because it is not often that one can witness how such an important resource is created.

Overall, this course was a really enjoyable experience. To me, it was the ideal introduction to epigraphy, as it taught me a lot about this field and allowed me access to a variety of sources and collections, which will be useful for my future research. Additionally, it helped to learn in the wonderful company of scholars with diverse interests. I am very happy and grateful to have attended this course, but would not have been able to without the generous support of the BES.

Thank you so very much!

Margaret Clark (PhD student, University of Texas)

The British School at Rome Summer Postgraduate Taught Course in Epigraphy was an incredibly useful and rewarding experience that will benefit me and my academic career for years to come. Put simply – the program was inspiring and reinvigorating, and I am deeply grateful to the British Epigraphy Society for helping to facilitate my attendance. I built both new connections between my research and epigraphy and new relationships with people across the world who are working on Roman history, civilization, and epigraphy. The passion, stamina, and kindness with which Abigail Graham led the course made it so successful, as she guided us along a well thought-out journey throughout the different contexts and “genres” of Latin epigraphy.

Coming to this course straight from the summer epigraphy course at the American Academy in Rome, I benefitted from the cross-pollination of the two approaches to epigraphy. Moreover, since some of the site visits did repeat, the ones that were unique to the BSR programme stood out in more dramatic relief. In particular, the excursions to the Via Appia and other catacombs, the visits to the tomb of Pomponius Hylas and that of the Scipios, a trip to the CIL VI archive at La Sapienza guided by Silvia Orlandi, and the tour of the Vatican Museums' Galleria Lapidaria given by Ivan de Stefano Manzella, were all awe-inspiring. The latter three would probably not have been possible, or at least would have been much more difficult to secure, without the organization and the permissions from the BSR. Benefitting from the expertise of de Stefano Manzella and Orlandi and their knowledge of the state of the field in Italy was an enormous privilege, especially for me coming from the States.

In addition to these on-site experiences, we made rubbings and squeezes of inscriptions at the BSR and also received a photography/lighting tutorial from Abigail. These hands-on practice exercises illuminated the difficulties and nuances of creating and interpreting accurate records of inscriptions, utilizing diverse methods. Other useful hands-on practice included a sketching exercise at the Museum of the Baths of Diocletian, creating a practice edition of an inscription from one of our museum visits, as well as conducting an object history search. Compiling the results of all this work into a presentation towards the end of the program really synthesized the information and skills learned over the course of the ten days. It was really incredible how much Abigail managed to fit into the course, without it becoming overwhelming.

Lastly, the experience of living at the BSR – interacting with scholars and artists from various disciplines and sharing communal meals, drawn out over the course of warm summer nights in Rome – was irreplaceable and rewarding. The friendliness and lack of pretension was refreshing. I could not have imagined a better summer, and I am sure that the course will continue to enrich and inform my scholarship for years to come.

Thanks again to the BES for providing travel funds to cover some costs [...]

Emily French (PhD student, University of Pennsylvania)

Thanks to the generous support of the British Epigraphy Society, I was able to attend the British School at Rome's Summer Postgraduate Course in Roman Epigraphy, held in Rome from July 11th to July 20th. The course was directed by Dr. Abigail Graham, who ensured that the program was rich with site visits, practical exercises, and lectures that touched on the main issues facing the field of epigraphy. During the course, I learned the crucial epigraphic skills in reading, dating, and understanding inscriptions. While I am very familiar with Latin, inscriptions use certain language and abbreviations that one must know in order to fully grasp their meanings. I now feel confident that I can read any inscription I come across. Furthermore, a particular focus of this course was inscriptions and their contexts; as an archaeologist, I was able to not only engage with the language but also with the ways in which the inscriptions interact with and communicate with their landscapes and surroundings. We spent nearly every day of the program at various sites in Rome and in Ostia, including public monuments and complexes, private funerary spaces, and museums with leading collections of inscriptions. Examining inscriptions in so many different contexts gave me great experience in looking beyond the letters and relating the words to their environments. Visiting those sites in person allowed me to study these inscriptions in a much richer way than I would through a book or pictures. Some of the excursions were truly chances of a lifetime. We met with Dr. Silvia Orlandi at the archives of the CIL, where she showed us the work that goes on behind the scenes of the behemoth publication. It was an incredible privilege to see how inscriptions are documented and organized before their collection in a CIL volume. We also had an extraordinary opportunity to spend several hours in the Galleria Lapidaria in the Vatican Museums, which is currently closed to the public, and learned a great deal from the insight of Dr. Vania De Stefano Manzella. Additionally, we were able to study inscriptions in several smaller, harder-to-access sites like the Horologium, Columbarium of Pomponius Hylas, and the Tomb of the Scipios. These unique excursions helped enhance my knowledge of Rome and inscriptions that are much more rarely seen in person. Dr. Graham also ensured that we learned the practical skills that are important in epigraphy. We did much more than look at the inscriptions: we learned techniques for photographing them, and had hands-on lessons in making squeezes and rubbings. Lastly, this course was valuable to me, as an early-stage graduate student, because it introduced me to a group of scholars at various stages in their academic careers, with a wide swath of interests, and with different levels of familiarity with epigraphy. I learned a great deal from the other participants in the course. It was enlightening to discuss our common interests in epigraphy with such a diverse group. Overall, this course was expertly run, highly engaging, and has given me confidence that I can use epigraphy in my future studies.

Joe Grimwade (BA student, University of Warwick)

I applied to attend the BSR's epigraphic course because I hoped that it would provide me with expertise and knowledge that I could apply to my own field of research, which engages with memory studies in the Roman world. In particular, I was interested in finding out how and what people chose to remember and commemorate in inscriptions, and also in the phenomenon of *damnatio memoriae*. The course fulfilled and went beyond my expectations.

In terms of subject content, the training in epigraphic techniques was thorough and enjoyable, with a large amount of time devoted to learning on-site. The hands-on experience of rubbings, squeezes and photography helped me to understand how inscriptions are interpreted, and to view them from new angles. Likewise, I got new epigraphic perspectives on some of my favourite sites in and around Rome, such as Ostia. The environments of the funerary

inscriptions in the Tomb of the Scipios and the columbarium of Pomponius Hylas were outstanding, and I was pleasantly surprised by how much I enjoyed our talks from experts at Sapienza University of Rome and in the Vatican. The course leader, Abigail Graham, had tailored the itinerary so that all the participants' research interests were covered, and had highlighted relevant inscriptions for each person at each site. She provided excellent tuition in the techniques and methods of epigraphy, which I always found accessible. Her critique of the epigraphic tradition was astute and thought-provoking, and encouraged me towards a deeper understanding of the field. Above all, she did everything that was necessary, and more, to ensure that everyone was happy and satisfied during the course.

Another benefit was the location: staying at the BSR meant that its facilities, especially the library, were available to use around the clock, and I was able to access books that were proving difficult to get hold of in the UK. Learning in the academic environment of the BSR is again quite different from doing so in a conventional Classics department in the UK, and it allowed me to meet new and interesting people, and hear their ideas. The variety of backgrounds of the participants on the course, and their different research interests, was one of its greatest strengths.

The course will help me in my future studies with the new directions it has offered. I have picked up several case studies which are pertinent to my immediate research, but more than this, I have learned analytical skills that I can apply as I encounter new epigraphic material. I have acquired both tangible benefits and fond memories from the course, and would like to extend my thanks once more to the BES for providing funding towards its cost. I would strongly recommend the course to anyone with an interest in any aspect of Roman epigraphy.

Miriam Hay (PhD student, University of Warwick)

The 2016 Postgraduate Epigraphy Course at the British School at Rome, from 11th to 20th July, brought together eleven students from around the world with a diverse range of interests relating to epigraphy. I was hoping to enrich my research on late Roman and early Christian epitaphs and sarcophagi, and found that the course far exceeded my expectations.

The course began naturally at the Museo Nazionale Epigraphico, where we each practised drawing and documenting an inscription in the courtyard of the museum. We had the chance to learn about other technical aspects of epigraphy over the course, from library sessions on digital epigraphy and using ICUR, to making our own squeezes and rubbings of the BSR's own epigraphic collection.

We were guided by the course leaders around a great variety of sites around Rome, seeking out inscriptions both in situ and on display in museums to translate and discuss, including in the Roman Forum, the Capitoline Museum, San Sebastiano and St Agnese catacombs, and Ostia Antica, to name just a few.

We had the chance to learn from other established academics and curators, including a paper by the director Prof. Christopher Smith, and a meeting with Prof. Silvia Orlandi at La Sapienza University to delve into the archives. We were also guided around the Galleria Lapidaria at the Vatican by Prof. Ivan Di Stefano Manzella, which was a wonderful opportunity to see their wealth of inscriptions up close, to which the public are not normally able to gain access.

Over the course we each selected one inscription relevant to our own work to research further, and present to the rest of the group. This was a useful opportunity to apply what we had learnt and receive feedback from the other members of the group, who could offer different viewpoints on my inscription, which will form part of the body of inscriptions considered in my thesis. We were also able to take advantage of the school's wonderful library.

One of the advantages of the course was the flexibility to accommodate everyone's areas of interest, which resulted in a very varied and stimulating programme. A welcoming academic atmosphere was fostered among the course participants, as at the BSR as a whole; the creation of a friendly network of fellow postgraduate Roman epigraphers was one of the most valued outcomes of the course. My own work will benefit from considering the kinds of issues we discussed and experiencing the contexts of the inscriptions I research, not to mention gaining a much clearer understanding of the topography of Rome from our walks around the city.

I would like to express my gratitude to the British Epigraphy Society for the travel grant in support of attending the course. It was an invaluable experience for my PhD research, and I would certainly encourage other postgraduates to attend the course themselves.

Ivana Kosanović (PhD student, University of Belgrade)

I was honoured to be accepted onto two epigraphy courses which took place in Rome this summer: at the American Academy in Rome (30th June–10th July) and at the British School at Rome (11–20th July). I would like to express

my gratitude to the British Epigraphy Society for supporting my participation in these by awarding me a travel bursary. Attending these courses was one of the most valuable experiences in epigraphic field I have had so far.

The courses were intensive introduction to Roman epigraphy and they were well structured. Both courses were coordinated, so they had little overlap, and by participating in both of them, I got a more complete picture on the epigraphic heritage of the city of Rome. They were focused on the reading, interpretation and editing of Latin inscriptions from the city of Rome, but also on epigraphy in context. The participants have also had the opportunity to learn how to do paper squeezes and rubbings of inscriptions. The courses featured lectures given by course organizers - professors John Bodel and Abigail Graham, daily epigraphic walks, visiting major museum collections and exhibitions in Rome, as well as several study excursions (Ostia, Isola Sacra, Via Appia, etc.). Visiting the main epigraphic collections in Rome (the Capitoline Museum, the National Museum (Terme) and the Vatican Museum) was very important for me, since the curators themselves gave us a tour. I was particularly interested in the exhibition MADE in Roma at the Trajan's Market, focused on instrumenta inscripta. We also had the opportunity to hear a lecture on EpiDoc given by Scot DiGiulio, and by prof. Silvia Orlandi on EAGLE Database. Prof. Orlandi was also very kind to invite us to La Sapienza University and show us the archives for the new edition of CIL VI.

During my stay at the British School and the American Academy in Rome, we had the opportunity to use two impressive libraries. This was invaluable for me, because many of the publications important for my PhD thesis that I used in these libraries were not available in Serbia.

Being part of these two courses was a very rewarding experience. Furthermore, I met friendly and helpful scholars and I got to know many PhD candidates involved in classical studies, history and archaeology, with whom I will definitely keep in touch.

I am extremely grateful for the support granted to me, which allowed me to participate in these two amazing epigraphy courses. Abigail Graham and John Bodel made these two courses not only very helpful, but also extremely enjoyable.