

IIHSA Report – Aisling Tierney, Trinity College Dublin 2006.

Thanks to the generosity of the IIHSA I was able to visit Greece in order to conduct research for my undergraduate thesis on *Organisations and Policies Affecting the Underwater Cultural Heritage*. Almost half of my thesis was focused on Greece but due to the dearth of information in this field it was greatly beneficial to me to carry out research in Greece itself. The twelve days I spent in Athens at the Institute were incredibly helpful as I was able to gain access to publications only found in Greece. I was also able to meet with archaeologists actively involved with underwater archaeology. The British School at Athens and the American Blegen Library allowed me access to their archives and I found books and articles that broadened my perspective on my thesis subject. I also attended lectures held at the BSA on archaeological topics. By obtaining the museum pass I was able to visit objects recovered from underwater contexts close up.

I conducted two interviews while I was in Athens. The first took place on the 22nd of February with Harry Tzallas who is the President of both the Hellenic Institute for the Preservation of Nautical Tradition and the Hellenic Institute for Ancient and Medieval Alexandrian Studies at Athens. He has been involved with international congresses on the legal progress of the underwater cultural heritage, and under his guidance excavations have been undertaken off the coast of Alexandria in joint ventures with Greek and Egyptian groups. Throughout our meeting he was incredibly courteous and helpful, explaining current policies affecting the underwater cultural heritage in Greece and Egypt. From this information I was able to construct comparative models of approach by governments as regards underwater archaeology and how it is managed. He also gave me information and contact details for archaeologists in Israel who would be useful to contact should I continue my research at a postgraduate level.

The second interview took place on the 27th of February with Katerina Dellaporta who is Director of the Department of Underwater Antiquities, a branch of the Ministry of Culture. Ms. Dellaporta explained the current, unstable, situation in Greece where there is a conflict of interest between archaeologists and some government officials regarding the new Recreational Diving Bill. The Bill seemingly usurps the authority of the revised 2002 heritage law (Law 3028). Ms. Dellaporta gave me access to an article she had written on the 2002 law and explained her

position on the new Bill (this was translated from Greek with the help of Heinrich Hall and Christian Reihe). We also discussed general underwater archaeology issues such as looting, recovery and conservation. Ms. Dellaporta graciously extended the offer to stay in contact with me via email should I have any further questions. I found the information she provided and her opinions very useful when writing my thesis.

In addition to my core research purpose I also took advantage of the opportunity to visit some of the major archaeological sites in Athens, such as the Acropolis. Some of the social events I attended included the annual carnival party at the BSA where I was able to meet many eminent archaeologists in an informal setting. As I was the first IIHSA bursary student the Irish Embassy extended a warm invitation to the Assistant Director, Heinrich Hall, and myself to attend a dinner hosted by them. It was an honour to attend the dinner with such distinguished guests as the Irish Ambassador, the Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Professor John Spearman.

My research trip to Athens proved to be very useful in allowing me to access materials unavailable anywhere else and to meet those involved in underwater archaeology in person. The trip was an overall success and improved my thesis hugely. My deepest thanks go to the IIHSA for giving me this invaluable opportunity.