

IIHSA Bursary Report, March 2010, Peter W. Myler

Thanks to the generous award of an IIHSA travel bursary I was recently able to travel to Athens in order to pursue research for my MA thesis on the nature of the hoplite soldier during the Persian Wars. While in Athens I had the opportunity to avail of a wide range of relevant resources including well stocked libraries, museums, various talks and lectures and the chance to examine some archaeological artefacts.

My research focuses on how the individual hoplite fought in the early fifth century BC. There was a wealth of information in the libraries in Athens relating to my subject area. For the most part I spent time in the Library of the British school. With the assistance of the helpful and friendly staff there I was able to find various works not available to me in my own university as well as useful items not found elsewhere; such as unpublished theses on relevant subjects. My time in the BSA allowed me to develop my thesis further resulting in the addition of an extra chapter exploring the trend of mercenary employment used to fill the void created by rapidly narrowing role of the hoplite.

During my time in Athens I was able to avail of several lectures in various fields of Classics and Archaeology. As well as being extremely interesting these lectures allowed me to meet likeminded scholars whose friendly and helpful suggestions will not soon be forgotten. Out of one of these lectures arose the opportunity to examine some hoplite arms and armour. Robert Pitt, assistant director of the BSA informed Tom Loughlin, assistant director of the IIHSA of the artefacts which were in the possession of the BSA and offered me the opportunity to examine them personally. Given that a large part of my research consists of examining the arms and

armour used by the hoplite this was an incredible experience. In particular I deal with the weight and form of hoplite armour, having the chance to hold and feel the weight of armour in person went a long way to understanding the limitations it imposed on the wearer.

My time in Athens also led me to the various museums the city has to offer. Those of most benefit were the National Archaeological Museum and the War Museum of Athens. The National Archaeological Museum had some excellent examples of arms and armour however I was disappointed to see vast sections of the museum closed without any possibility of there opening in the near future: Most notably I was denied access to the vase collection. The War Museum on the other hand housed not only impressive originals but some high quality reproductions not likely to be seen anywhere else. The array of arms and armour recreated is considerable; the chance to view them greatly helped me understand how they were used in battle.

Despite minor setbacks from closures and strikes in the capital my trip to Greece was extremely beneficial. I would like to thank the IIHSA for awarding me the bursary and the BSA for the use of their excellent facilities.