

Report from IIHSA Bursary Recipient Kilian Mallon, UCD (2008-9)

"Last October, little more than a month into my M.A. thesis research I encountered a problem. I planned to look at the archaeology of Roman Crete, however, libraries in Ireland, and even the UK, did not stock most of the material that I would need.

Fortunately the IIHSA has a solution to this type of problem. I decided to apply for the IIHSA Travel Bursary and was lucky enough to be awarded one.

The Bursary allowed me to travel to Athens for two weeks. My main aim was to study at the libraries of the foreign Schools. It is difficult to express the sense of awe and excitement the libraries in Athens inspired in me, particularly the British, American and French Schools, which stock almost every book that any young Classicist could ask for. I found entire rooms full to the rafters with nothing but works of Classical History and Archaeology. They contain everything from scores of rare journals to multi-volume archaeological reports almost too heavy to carry. For a student used to libraries in Ireland, Athens was a paradise.

I stayed at the Irish Institute for two weeks in March. The hospitality and help I received from the Institute while I was there made the experience a pleasure. As well as helping me to get access to the academic libraries, events organised by the Institute gave me an opportunity to meet scholars and archaeologists working in Greece. There is a thriving community of scholars and archaeologists in Athens, and spending two weeks at the Irish Institute afforded me the opportunity to meet and get to know a tidy sum of students, archaeologists and professors alike.

Unfortunately, there were almost too many lectures and talks on every evening for me to choose between them. Nevertheless I was able to attend a series of lectures wide ranging in their subjects and never lacking in interest. For example, I attended a lecture on INSTAP's work on Minoan Crete at the American School, and a lecture on the coinage of Roman Corinth at the Canadian Institute. The Irish Institute also held numerous events while I was there, including a fascinating lecture by Prof. John Dillon on the philosophy of Iamblichus and an evening of terrific traditional Irish music. Perhaps one of the most enjoyable experiences of my time in Athens was our being invited to the residence of the Irish Ambassador to take part in his St. Patrick's Day celebrations. I was also fortunate to be able to visit numerous sites with the guidance of the Institute staff, for example, the Acropolis and Mycenae.

Altogether, the experience I had in Athens helped my research more than I could have imagined. I will always be grateful for the hospitality and aid afforded me by the Institute. I would highly recommend that any student hoping to pursue a career in Classics, or any student who feels it would help their research, should seriously consider applying for the bursary. There is no reason not to."