

I am happy to report to the Institute about my work at the Via Appia Antica in Rome this summer, thanks in part to funding from the Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarship Program. I participated in a four-week excavation of an ancient Roman grave house site along the Via Appia Antica, approximately 6 miles southwest of the city center of Rome. The excavation was part of an ongoing project called *Mapping the Via Appia* sponsored by Radboud University Nijmegen, VU University Amsterdam, and the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome. The project investigates the fifth and sixth miles of the Via Appia with a particular focus on changing Roman burial practices and funerary architecture.

Currently, I am a Master's graduate student at Brandeis University in the Classics Department's Ancient Greek and Roman Studies program. I was fortunate enough to be one of only two American graduate students invited to participate in this particular excavation that has previously only allowed Dutch nationals to take part. During the course of the dig, I was able to learn field techniques, archaeological methods of practice, and employed some of the latest technology being used in modern archaeology, including GPS, 3-D imaging software, and aerial drone-based photography. Of course, there was also a great deal of traditional digging with trowels and brushes. The entire experience was a tremendous learning opportunity and represented my first exposure to field work in archaeology.

The excavation progressed through the entire month of July, and we uncovered several layers of the site from second century C.E. grave houses and burial urns to a third century B.C.E. Roman tufa wall dating to the time of the original construction of the Via Appia. The site was an extraordinarily rich one, yielding a great deal of Roman pottery of all types, intact oil lamps, pieces of Roman glass, an intact single-handled jug, cremated

human remains still in their funerary urns, and even a copper ring and bell. The highlight of the site included an untouched “Capuchin-style” grave formed by two adjoining roof tiles. Underneath were the remains of a tiny fetus accompanied by the small copper ring and bell. The site also contained an inner wall of a grave house with all of its grave urns still in situ.

The result of the dig was to deepen our understanding of Roman burial practices, daily life, and more specifically offered a better sense of the fifth mile of the Via Appia Antica with its extensive array of funerary monuments, its use and reuse of funerary architecture along the road, and a plethora of contemporaneous artifacts from the late republican to later imperial Roman eras.

Personally, I am so grateful that my experience was both meaningful to my work as a scholar of ancient Greek and Roman history and literature, and so enlightening in terms of seeing the daily work an archaeologist does to provide the context and analysis necessary for any understanding of ancient civilizations. This year I will complete my Master’s degree at Brandeis University as I continue to also teach sixth grade Social Studies in Needham, Massachusetts. My fieldwork will help me be a better teacher of ancient history and archaeology and hopefully inspire some of my students to pursue archaeology later in their educational careers. I am so grateful to the Archaeological Institute of America for offering the Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarship Program, and for selecting me as a participant this summer.