

Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship - Report.

Eastern Boeotia Archaeological Project, 2017

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Figure 1 EBAP's team for 2017

This year I had the pleasure of participating in my first archaeological project as a new student in Classics, being part of the team of the Eastern Boeotia Archaeological Project in Greece, directed by Dr. Brendan Burke from the University of Victoria and Dr. Bryan Burns from Wellesley College. My participation was only possible thanks both to the Archaeological Institute of America and the University of Victoria, that supported me respectively with the Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship and with the International Student International Activity Fund.

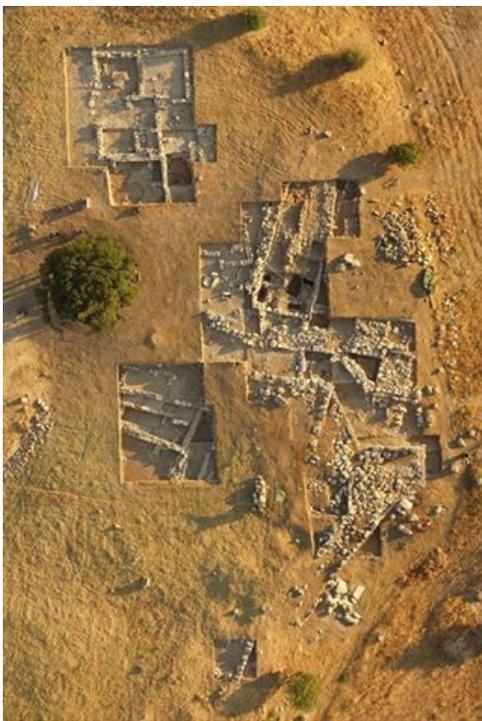


Figure 2 Ancient Eleon

The excavation site is near the modern city of Arma in central Greece and focuses on ancient Eleon, which was already cited by Homer.¹ The site has archaeological evidence from the Middle and Late Helladic periods, to the Archaic and the Classical periods, with the site being in use until Medieval times. Such evidence comes from crafts (such as pottery, bone decorations, and painted figurines), architectures (such as the 17th century BC Blue Stone Structure, the Archaic ramp at the entrance of the site and the Polygonal wall) and bones from burial contexts.

Excavations started this year on the 28th of May and it proceeded until the 8th of July. The beginning of the season was characterized by some rainy episodes that slowed down the work right at the beginning, but we managed to proceed at a good speed afterwards. The team's routine was very regular: starting working at 6:30 am, or earlier depending on the intensity

¹ Hope Simpson R. – Lazenby J., 1970. *The Catalogue of Ships in Homer's Iliad*, Oxford.

of the heat. The work on the field would conclude regularly at 1:00 pm, while from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm we would wash and sort bones and pottery found in the field during the day, or we would do photo recording and data entry. On the occasions in



Figure 3 Pottery washing. Photo from <https://ebapexcavations.org/>

which a new tomb was discovered, there was no scheduled hour, until the excavation of the area was concluded, as by law. On those occasions, the working day could have been fairly long, but certainly

fulfilling. Alternatively, we

would take turns to work in the apotheke on pottery, whenever needed.

Each junior archaeologist was assigned, on a weekly base, to a different trench supervisor, who had specific expertise on his/her area of the site. In such a way everyone would gain practice in all the different areas of the site; moreover, the small size of the groups in the trenches allowed us to be trained, instructed and supervised very closely and efficiently.

The work this year was centred in two main areas: the Blue Stone Structure and the North West housing complex. We opened new trenches on the east of the Blue Stone Structure, where at the end of the season we revealed the whole architecture of the external sidewall. During this process we could see the different stratigraphic layers of the tumulus that was covering the complex. On the northern-east side of the Blue Stone Structure, we also found, with some surprise, some capstones and tombs. Excavating this trench required a lot of effort and dedication, due to the presence of

several exposed skeletons, sometimes with some painted and interesting accompanying wares.

During the excavation of the tombs, under the supervision of Dr. Herrmann and his team of master's students from the Texas State University, I had the chance to be exposed for the first time to human osteology and thus I could also learn a lot on how to excavate a skeleton. Once the surrounding loose soil has been removed, the bones are maintained in their position and shape. Successively, a more detailed process begins with trying to define the bones, with the smallest tools in order to contour and individuate their first characteristics. The identification can be



problematic as characteristics and shapes can be smoothed or destroyed over time.

In the housing complex in the North-West side of the site, we expanded the excavation of previous years, revealing more of the architectures among which some walls, niches, hearths. In this area a huge quantity of cooking and storage pottery was found, as well as animal bones and small obsidian tools, with few copper and alloy findings. The overall disposition and use of the space has to be yet to be clearly determined.

Figure 4 Jacob Karas, Joseph Bellows and I excavating bones

Through this incredible experience, I had the chance to work with knowledgeable experts and their cohesive group. Learning from everyone in the team enriched me as a junior archaeologist and it also has instilled an irrepressible curiosity on the future excavations of the site. I am very grateful to the whole team of



the EBAP for teaching me all the skills that I need and to the Archaeological Institute of America and the University of Victoria for having invested in me by financing this experience.

Figure 5 Me and the Blue Stone Structure on the background