

Crae Wilkins

AIA Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarship Report

Thanks in large part to the funds provided by the Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship through the Archaeological Institute of America, I was able to attend the Lincoln Archaeological Field School in Lincoln, UK. The funds provided to me by this scholarship were unquestionably important in my ability to fund my field experience, and I am truly grateful to have been a recipient of this award in 2018.

The Lincoln Archaeological Field School was based in Newport, an area of Lincoln that is “uphill,” as it is referred. This area has seen domestic occupation and industry dating as far back as Roman times, and there is abundant evidence for it in the archaeological material we found. The site this year was called St. Hugh’s, a plot of land on a street corner where Newport, an important Medieval road, intersected Rasen Lane. Newport was particularly important during the Roman period as it was right on the cusp of the Roman walls surrounding the city, so its archaeology reflects this transient area between city and country.

Lincoln’s field school taught its participants so much more than just pure excavation. Each student was taught methods and practices of site mapping, reporting, sampling and flotation of environmental materials, level-taking, 3D modeling and imaging, and proper safety and site navigation. While altogether it may seem a daunting task to put into a month, it was divided well in that students would take on different tasks each day as we were divided up, making the small-group feel like you were getting the one-on-one attention you’d find in a graduate-level course or practical.

My experience at field school was one of both excitement and determination. Having never done fieldwork before, jumping right into the trench (often literally) to begin on the second day (after our site introduction and safety presentation of course!) was an example of the significance of the work we would be doing. Working as a team with students from across the UK and around the world was an experience unlike any I’ve experienced in a lab or classroom setting back home.

The parts of field school I enjoyed the most were the development of my skills in identifying features and the stratigraphy of an area of the trench which could help inform us of the changes in time period or archaeological material we would find. Training your eyes to see what may be commonly overlooked is a skill I will take with me into future field experiences and will hopefully be able to employ in my future lab and research endeavors as well. I also thoroughly enjoyed learning to 3D model some of the important finds we came across, including some bones and Roman accessories/pins. The field school staff were all so knowledgeable in their areas and were able to convey ideas so well that it never felt like I was being told to remember things; rather it was an explanation that would then be turned into hands-on lessons and independent exercises to build skills from trial and error rather than repeating something on an exam or assignment.

Being from the United States, attending field school in the UK was a significant financial commitment, and the scholarship provided by the AIA is what helped make it possible for me to make it accessible. The funds of this scholarship assisted in paying for the field school's tuition, an important subsidy without which I would have had to take out some form of external financial means. With the assistance of this scholarship I was able to spend more time focusing on my archaeological commitments and less on arranging financing or repayment options for other financial sources.

I want to again thank the Archaeological Institute of America for awarding me this scholarship. Its importance to me cannot be overstated, and I look forward to sharing my story and experience at field school with any and all students who are as passionate about archaeology as I am.

- Crae Wilkins



Our site crew this year. Site director Duncan Wright, front center.



The Americans were all surprised with cake on 4th of July (a full working day for us in the UK!)



Learning how to permatrace a feature. All students were taught by experts who let us try it on our own rather than just explaining.



Getting to the Roman layer in our front trench. Note the disarticulated cattle mandible in bottom left! Earl



Early modern floor/threshold found in interior section, below a later wall.



A Roman wall found in the front trench, running generally North-South. Roman tenement walls found further North, as well as evidence of iron-working.



Another photo of the early modern walls/floor deposits.



Some of the crew working in the front trench. Top left excavating a likely Medieval market context.