

Practical Epigraphy Workshop 2018

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, June 25th-27th



A three-day Practical Epigraphy Workshop took place in Oxford from June 25th-27th in collaboration with the Centre for Study of Ancient Documents and the Ashmolean Museum. The aim of the course was to offer expert guidance and a “hands on” practical experience with inscriptions: how they are created, studied, recorded and presented both in the field and in museums. The program included numerous interactive experiences with inscriptions: drawing and measuring the stones, imaging, making squeezes; together with aspects of further study, such as the production of transcriptions, translations and commentaries.



The Ashmolean’s facilities and expert staff, including museum curator Dr. Anja Ulbirsch, allowed students to study stones that were otherwise inaccessible to the public, as well as few inscriptions which were on display, providing a rare opportunity to study a single inscription in a variety of different media. Material for the workshop including squeezes and materials for making squeezes, drawings, transcriptions, and commentaries were generously provided by the Centre for Study of Ancient Documents. Instructors, Roger Tomlin (Oxford), Abigail Graham (Warwick), Charles Crowther (Oxford), and Peter Haarer (Oxford) presented a range of interests and approaches across a broad chronological and geographical scopes.



New elements of this course included a lecture on “Latin Cursive on Samian Wares” by Roger Tomlin and a carving demonstration given by one of the participants, a professional letter cutter: Wayne Hart. Wayne provided drawings and a beautiful illustration of how the carving process took place: selecting the stone, choosing the space, making measurement and drawings, and carving the stone. Participants had the opportunity to experience the act of carving, both by observing Wayne and then picking up a chisel themselves. This was a truly transformative, enlightening and enjoyable event.





The 18 course participants were a group of wonderfully diverse individuals from 14 universities, 7 countries and 3 continents, ranging from final year undergraduates to late stage Ph.D candidates. Based on their course applications, participants were paired with materials and scholars related to their fields of study, and assigned a specific inscription, which they examined in “hands-on” basis throughout the course. Evening dinners with course instructors in the University’s colleges (Trinity and Corpus Christi) were also an excellent opportunity for developing ideas and collegial bonds that last well beyond the course. All participants presented their assigned inscriptions on the final day of the course.

The course ended with a special curator’s tour of the Ashmolean, given by Anja Ulbrich, who took students through the process of presenting and collecting museum materials. The collaborative efforts of the Ashmolean museum and the Centre for Study of Ancient Documents resulted in an unparalleled interactive learning experience, that few universities or museums are able to offer. Our ability to offer this course at such an accessible cost (£130), appealed to many international applicants, was dependent upon the support of a generous AIEGL grant.