

On my second evening in Rome, thunder cracked above the steps where I sat. Lightning blew bright upon the marble columns of the BSR, and humidity lay thick and heavy in the nights air. This was not, though it felt like it, a religious omen directing me and my fellow students to dedicate to a God. But it was one of two storms that foretold the electricity of my 2 weeks stay on the summer course at the British School at Rome from the 1st to the 13th of September 2022. This report will highlight the principal ways in which I have benefitted from the course. I wish to encourage any student thinking of travelling to apply for a place on the BSR. The money from the Charles Oldham and C. E. Stevens Scholarship allowed me to take my place on the course and to learn in greater depth about the city which so inspires me.

Firstly, the timetable of a day on the course was as follows. Breakfast at 8am, and out the door at 8:30 am, from then we visited around 5 sites a day, with information on each from our guides, Professor Ed Bispham, Brasenose College, and Robert Cotes-Stephens, Cary Fellow at the BSR. Lunch was around a 30-minute break and usually took place at 1pm, which was followed by a visit to one more site. We were given free time every day from around 3pm to 6pm, when we would then have a lecture either from Robert or Ed providing background on the next days visits.

The structure of the course was designed to tackle the major points of interest in a thematic way, each day covered a different theme with visits to connecting monuments and museums. There were 10 themes in total: The Tiber, Forum Romanum, The Triumph, Horti Romani, Princeps, Ostia, Cities of the Dead and Living, Panis et Circenses, Transformation and Hinterland. For the purposes of this report, I will focus on the three most interesting and relevant days for me. The day of the Triumph took the shape of a long walk along the ancient processional route of the Roman triumph. The ability to track the length of the route and its key architectural features provided me with an acute sense of spatial context for the triumph. Visualising the stops and sites along the way enabled me to take a visual and spatial approach to my proposed dissertation topic, the Augustan triumph.

Another area of interest to me was the final day, which took us to the Villa of Hadrian in Tivoli. My finals paper 'Politics, Society and Culture from Nero to Hadrian' covered the luxuriousness of imperial palaces. However, the trip to the Villa of Hadrian in person has reinforced the sheer magnitude of opulence an emperor could justify. The statuary around the lakes reminded me of Hadrian's sympathy for Hellenistic culture, as well as the moated dining room reinforcing the nature of exclusivity and elite competition that followed the emperor wherever he went. In addition to this visit being enjoyable and interesting, it was also extremely beneficial to remind me of the key aspects and themes of my papers (which I may have let slip over the long vacation).

Finally, the Forum Romanum was displayed across several days, emphasising the centrality of this space to Roman life. Hosting dealings of many kinds, political, economic, religious, salacious, oratorical, and violent, the Roman Forum was impressed upon me as the beating heart of the city. For the first time, the archaeological aspects of the Forum were shown to me, an opportunity I have not had much studying Ancient and Modern history. The levels of history found in the street plans detailed the shadows of intimidation that the looming builds in the nearby imperial fora would have cast over the republican traditions of the Rostra or the Curia. I felt that the reflection of political change in architecture was a crucial aspect to remember in my study of the city as part of my degree course.

The course did not just enrich me academically, but also provided me with an experience I will never forget. I feel I have truly got to grips with Rome as a city, both ancient and modern. I witnessed many memorable things, which I did not expect to when I arrived at the course. Lightning strikes over the theatre of Pompey, rain but also heat, an Oxford professor destroy many 20-year-old classicists at Ping Pong, the production of an Italian period film (for which I hope to receive a mention in the credits) and the cultural embarrassment of the refusal of my request for a cappuccino after 12pm. The people I met on this course made it such a special experience. I would like to thank Ed Bispham and Robert Coates-Stephens for making the trip both serious and funny. I would like to wish all my fellow students on the BSR the very best for the rest of their time as classicists and ancient historians. I very much hope to see everyone again soon.

The Charles Oldham and C. E Stevens Scholarship has enabled one of the most enjoyable and, crucially, useful experiences of my life so far. I am utterly grateful to the Classics Faculty for providing me with the funds to travel and take my place at the British School this summer. I would encourage any student thinking of applying to the British School at Rome to do so, failing to would risk missing an incredible opportunity and the wrath of the Gods. I hope to return to Rome soon and be equally struck by such a storm of magic and history.

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