

IRGF Final Report

Gilmour - #103183

Preparing a Large Roman Period Skeletal Collection from Austria for Curation at Mount Royal University

1.1 Project Summary

In Winter 2023, I was awarded IRGF Funds to support, in part, my project: Preparing a Large Roman Period Skeletal Collection from Austria for Curation at Mount Royal University. I travelled to Austria and spent ~2 months working with ARDIG, an archaeological firm and liaising with government officials and stakeholders to finalize permissions. During this time, I washed, dried, and securely packaged these Roman period skeletons for transportation. The IRGF funds were used to support the travel (e.g., flights and accommodation) costs for this project; the project was additionally supported by the Archaeological Society of Alberta (Calgary Center) and Arts Endeavour.

1.2 Project Outcomes and Impacts

The first phase of this project was a resounding success. In July 2023, ~70% of the available Carnuntum Roman skeletal collection (ca. 200 individuals) arrived at MRU, on loan to Dr. Rebecca Gilmour. In the four short months since the collection's arrival in Canada, it has been mobilized for use in both research and instruction (e.g., ANTH 3321 - Human Osteology) with solid plans in place for public engagement and education opportunities in collaboration with the Archaeological Society of Alberta (Calgary Center) beginning in Spring 2024. The collection has already been the focus of a national conference presentation (co-authored with the MRU student Research Assistant who helped with transportation organization). It has also begun to create numerous work integrated learning opportunities for students; there are currently 11 MRU students and alumni volunteering to help catalog and inventory the assemblage. It is also the focus of a Teaching and Learning Enhancement Grant aimed toward the collection's digitization for instructional and outreach purposes. In addition to continued research, community engagement, and teaching opportunities, the immediate next phases of the project will look to curation, inventory, and digitization of the collection.

2.1 Use of Awards Funds

The IRGF award funds were used to cover the following items: Flights and baggage (\$2639.16) City and terrestrial transportation (\$670.35) Accommodation & Communication (\$1243.23) Packing & Shipping Materials (incl. Document translation) (\$428.83) All items are in line with the requested amounts in my initial application (flights, transportation in Vienna, Accommodation, packing & shipping materials). Additional budgetary details are available upon request. I am greatly appreciative for the support of MRU and the IRGF to undertake this project. This endeavor, the curation of this archaeological skeletal collection, will present innumerable opportunities over many years for continued research into health and activity in the

past, community engagement, international collaboration, pedagogical innovation, and student work integrated learning.

2.2 Additional Outcomes/Research Issues

The collection's curation at MRU has resulted in immediate research outputs, including collaboration and co-authorship with MRU students. In October 2023, Gilmour co-authored a national conference presentation with Vanessa Cicalo, the MRU student Research Assistant who assisted with the shipping component of this project; representatives from the Austrian contract company (ARDIG) and the Lower Austrian provincial government are also co-authors. Entitled "A Probable Case of Metastatic Cancer in Roman Austria: Exploring Ancient Health, Lifestyle, and Activity", this research specifically investigated the functional repercussions of a case of metastatic cancer in a Roman period individual and was presented at the Canadian Association for Biological Anthropology meetings (Winnipeg, October 2023). (Poster available upon request) In addition, this project has already created numerous work-integrated learning opportunities for students. Beginning in November, I accepted 11 volunteers (9 current undergraduates, 2 recent alumni of the Anthropology program) to assist with the inventory and curation process. I will work closely with these student trainees to teach them the basics involved in collection curation and documentation. Volunteer participation at this level is expected to continue for a number of years; in Winter 2024, I anticipate having the capacity to increase the number of laboratory volunteers to ~20 students. Funding has also been secured (e.g., the Provost's Teaching and Learning Enhancement Grant) to hire research assistants to contribute to a large project focused on the digitization of these remains for sustainable use in teaching, public education, as well as future research investigations. Furthermore, plans are in motion to develop and host a public-facing bioarchaeology workshop series with the Archaeological Society of Alberta (Calgary Center). In collaboration with the MRU student volunteers, I intend to design a two-day long programme that teaches the basic principles of bioarchaeology (in a Roman period context) to interested members of the Calgary and Alberta community. I aim for this public workshop series to launch in Spring 2024. Finally, in November 2023 I secured additional funding from the Arts Endeavour Fund to support the purchase of high-quality curatorial materials for long-term storage. This funding will be used to further support the curation of this collection, and enhance its accessibility for use in continued research and collaborative endeavors.

2.3 Dissemination of Project

Gilmour, R.J., Cicalo, V.*, Igl, R.+ , Pollhammer, E.+ 2023. A Probable Case of Metastatic Cancer in Roman Austria: Exploring Ancient Health, Lifestyle, and Activity. Canadian Association for Biological Anthropology Meeting (October 26-30), Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. * Student co-authors & contributors + Austrian stakeholders and/or government officials

2.4 Future Research Plans

- Winter 2024, submission of a SSHRC IDG application in collaboration with anthropologists at Western University. The research will involve quantification of trabecular bone microstructure using microCT methods to investigate the long-standing complications associated with injuries and arthritis. - Spring 2024, preparation and first-iteration of a public-facing workshop in collaboration with the Archaeological Society of Alberta (Calgary Center) - Summer 2024, return to Austria and report the initial phase of this project to my stakeholders (Bundesdenkmalamt [Austrian Federal Monuments Office], Landessammlung Niederösterreich [State Collections of Lower Austria], ARDIG [Archaeological Contract Excavation Firm]), as well as prepare and package the final 30% of the collection for transportation to MRU (thereby ensuring that the remains and collection continues to be housed/curated together). - Summer 2024, international conference presentation at the European Palaeopathology Association Meetings. This presentation will expand on my previous conference presentation involving metastatic cancer, incorporating additional imaging techniques (SEM, X-Ray, MicroCT) to enhance the diagnostic and interpretive power. - Summer/Fall 2024, collaborative publication drafted with colleagues in Hungary to investigate how Roman period individuals across Roman Pannonia experienced activity repercussions related to metastatic cancer. - Ongoing: Continued integration of the collection in my own research, and collaborative research with MRU students and visiting local, provincial, national, and international scholars.