

previously, and I was able to find further material on them at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato. Without the Balsdon Fellowship, which allowed me to consult all those different libraries and archives for three months, I could not have completed my research for this project.

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Tombs and the art of commemoration in second-century CE Rome

Tombs and burial customs are an exceptional source for social history, as their commemorative character means that they express much about the ideology and value system of a society. My current project aims to present a holistic view of the funerary culture of Rome and its surroundings during the second century CE. This focus takes into account the fact that the situation in the immediate vicinity of the capital is quite different from that elsewhere in Italy or the Roman Empire, not least due to the presence of the emperor and the institutions of government.

Previous studies of Roman tombs and burial customs have been devoted mostly to just one type of evidence (architecture, wall painting, sarcophagi, epigraphy, literary sources, for example), to particular cemeteries, or to the freedmen class. The latest surveys and more general treatments of the subject are by now over twenty years old, and cover the entire Roman Empire. While most studies address social questions in some way, their results are either rather limited or very general, depending on the limitations or breadth of the evidence considered, so that there is ample scope for further research. Moreover, my previous research on the third century suggests that a holistic approach does much more than present a convenient synthesis of what is known already. Integrating a wide range of evidence but focusing on an area characterized by a common social structure can result in major challenges to generally held assumptions, and opens up new potential for approaching questions that had been regarded as unanswerable.

The main objective of the project is a better understanding of the ideologies and attitudes of different groups in society. While the freedmen class has received much attention recently, there has been little distinction between different kinds of freedmen, especially between the majority of *liberti* and imperial freedmen, who had a prominent role in translating imperial preferences and *habitus* — such as portrait representations *in formam deorum* or the use of temple tombs — into wider society. Research on equestrians has been very limited, and the senatorial class has gone somewhat out of fashion in recent years. While their tombs were prominent, and are well-researched for the first centuries BCE and CE, the general belief is that we do not, and can not, know much about them from the late first century CE onwards. Moreover, because of the absence of senatorial tombs, which are not nearly as well preserved as the freedmen tombs, it often has been assumed that they were never very conspicuous in the first place.

However, the contextual approach allows us not only to identify a limited but very significant number of senatorial tombs in the Roman suburbs, but also to reconstruct the design preferences, their epigraphic habit, and their choice of imagery on walls, urns, altars and sarcophagi, which can in turn be related to themes we know from the consolatory literature. Moreover, understanding better what the senatorial class did and did not favour, the choices made by the freedmen class are thrown into much higher relief.

During my term as Hugh Last Fellow, I had the opportunity to make the most of the excellent British School at Rome library. It made accessible to me both publications of the primary evidence, mostly published in hundreds of short reports, and secondary scholarship. I also was able to see and analyse much of the ancient evidence in person, either in museums or in the countryside, and received great support from the BSR in obtaining permits for access to sites and monuments otherwise closed to the public. This has helped me to advance my project substantially in general, and to finish two key chapters of the book.

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Saints and salvation: the Wilshere Collection of gold-glass, sarcophagi and inscriptions from the catacombs of Rome

I am preparing for publication a catalogue of the collection of early Christian and Jewish gold-glass, inscriptions and sarcophagi formed by Charles Wilshere (1814–1906), and purchased by the Ashmolean Museum from Pusey House, Oxford, in 2007. The catalogue, to be published in the spring of 2014, is preceded by essays introducing the collector, the sources for his collection, honouring the dead in fourth-century Rome, the iconography of gold-glass, and the production of gold-glass, sarcophagi and inscriptions. Appendices give the results of scientific analysis of materials in the collection.

In my three months as Hugh Last Fellow from January to March 2013, I expected to do some background reading and to check references in the British School at Rome's library, to familiarize myself with the catacombs and early Christian churches of Rome, to look at some eighteenth-century drawings of gold-glass from predecessors of the Wilshere Collection in the Vatican Library, and to see similar collections in Rome, Florence, Bologna and Milan.

All these aims were achieved. I thought it likely that Rome would offer new insights, but was quite unprepared for the surprise that awaited me. From library research in the BSR and discussion of the Vatican Library's archives, I came across letters from Wilshere to the founding father of early Christian art and archaeology, Giovanni Battista de Rossi, and to his rival, the Neapolitan Jesuit archaeologist, Raffaele Garrucci. The 69 letters to de Rossi begin in 1865 and only end in 1894, when de Rossi died. They are held in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana within an archive of 26,000 letters to the great man. A further eleven letters to Raffaele Garrucci are kept in