# University of Birmingham

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**Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology (/schools/historycultures/departments/caha/index.aspx)**

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## About

I am a Roman historian who teaches and researches on the city, city life and religious change in the Roman world and in particular late Roman North Africa.

## Qualifications

- BA in Archaeology and Ancient History (Birmingham)
- PhD in Archaeology and Ancient History: Late Roman North African Urbanism; Decline, Continuity and Transformation (Birmingham)

## Biography

The focus of my PhD and my research at Birmingham is on the relationship between religion and the city and transformations in that relationship during the late antique period, particularly in Roman Africa. My 2007 book on the late antique city and my subsequent co-written and sole-authored monographs on the city in the Roman West and the city in North Africa link to these interests and seek to examine the trajectories of development of the city under the impact of local, Roman and ultimately Christian ideas of the city. I am committed to using both literary material and archaeological evidence in my work and I have co-directed archaeological projects in both Croatia and Libya.

## Teaching

I teach on a wide-range of modules on Roman history and culture at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. These modules include both core Roman history lectures on Republican and Imperial history for first, second and third year students, which examine the basic chronology and key debates on Roman history and historiography. For first years I also teach a small-group 'Project' module that teaches basic academic skills whilst examining the late-Roman world as presented by the historian Ammianus Marcellinus. My two specialist small-group teaching modules for second and third years both consider the region of North Africa in Antiquity. One module examines Phoenician colonisation, the Carthaginian state and its religion, native kingdoms in the second century BC and the takeover of the region by Rome from the second century BC onwards. The module also considers the evolution of Roman Africa to the reign of Septimius Severus, the first Roman emperor who was born in Africa. My other specialist module considers Africa in the late fourth and early fifth century and assesses the religious debates, societal changes and urban life as demonstrated through the writings of Saint Augustine of Hippo. I also co-teach the 'Option' modules 'Pompeii and Campania' and 'Late Antiquity'.

At MA level I co-teach the 'Individuals in History' historiography module that examines a series of late Republican and Imperial authors and debates how far we can reconstruct the past by using written sources that are literary products. I also teach on the Empire and Identity module that examines the city in the Roman West in the mid-late Republic and the early Imperial period; it examines theoretical approaches to the ancient city as well as the production, re-production and the abandonment of the urban form.

At UG and MA level I supervise dissertations on all areas of Roman history and culture and I am particularly interested in supervising work on urbanism and city life and religious evolution.

## Postgraduate supervision

There are several areas that I have and would consider supervising MPhil and PhD students on.

- Urbanism in the Roman Empire and in particular North Africa
- The evolution of the late Roman city
- Christianity and Christians in North Africa (pre AD. 450); in particular heresy and schism and their sociological background and the relationship between Christians and non-Christians in the African cities.
- Paganism and syncretism in the later Roman Empire
- Aspects of the history of the later Roman Empire

I am always more than happy to talk to prospective students about their projects.

## Research

Most of my work is connected with the late Roman city, particularly in Africa, both as a construct in its own right but also as the prime venue for the production of the literary and epigraphic texts that comprise a key aspect of our evidence for late Roman and late antique life. I also study it as the location of the religious conflicts that, at times, dominate the literature of the era. I am currently doing research on religion and religious change in the cities of late Roman Africa, considering issues around the survival of traditional religious practice and belief into the fifth and sixth centuries AD and syncretism between traditional beliefs and Christianity. Recent publications include two books. One, *The Cities of Roman Africa* considers the evolution of urban space from the pre-Roman period until the fall of Carthage to the Vandals in AD 439 and also explores issues of social, economic and religious change and continuity. The second book, co-written with Prof. Ray Laurence (Kent) and **Prof. Simon Esmonde Cleary (http://www.iaa.bham.ac.uk/staff/esmondecleary.shtml)** (Birmingham), examines the evolution of the city across the provinces of the western Roman

Empire during the Roman Republic and early Empire. *The City in the Roman West: 250 BC to AD 250* not only compares the processes occurring in the different regions of the West but explores the changes through an examination of different building types and, more importantly, the activities that took place in them.

Along with Dr Peter Keegan (Macquarie) and Prof. Ray Laurence (Kent) I have just edited the book *Written Space in the Latin West, 200 BC to AD 300* - **http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/written-space-in-the-latin-west-200-bc-to-ad-300-9781441123046/ (http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/written-space-in-the-latin-west-200-bc-to-ad-300-9781441123046/)** . The volume explores the creation of 'written spaces' through the accretion of monumental inscriptions and non-official graffiti in the Latin-speaking West. The volume includes new approaches to the study of political entities, social institutions, graffiti and painting, and the differing trajectories of written spaces in the cities of Roman Africa, Italy, Spain and Gaul.

I am a co-director of the Birmingham team with Professor Vince Gaffney in a project in Split and the Cetina Valley in Croatia. This project undertook a field mission in and around Split in June-July 2009 investigating the subsurface remains of rural sites in the Cetina valley with ground penetrating radar and magnetometry. We also used a Ground Penetrating Radar to investigate the remains of Diocletian's Palace in Split and intend to tie the results of those investigations with a 3D model of the Mausoleum of Diocletian the current Cathedral of Split that was created using a 3D laser scanner; a publication detailing the results from the season are currently in preparation.

### Previous research

I was the co-director of the Birmingham team in the Cyrenaica Archaeological Project (CAP), an international mission for the examination of the city of Cyrene, Libya, and its hinterland (see **www.cyrenaica.org (http://www.cyrenaica.org)** ). Two seasons have taken place so far. In June-July 2006 a team from the University of Birmingham (Professor Vince Gaffney, Dr Helen Goodchild, Richard Cutler, Dr Gareth Sears) and the University of Alberta in Edmonton undertook a topographical survey using a differential GPS in the CAP concession area around the extramural Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone in the Wadi Bel Gadir. In June 2007 a team from the University of Birmingham (Professor Vince Gaffney, Dr Chris Gaffney, Dr Andy Howard, Dr Helen Goodchild, Richard Cutler, Dr Gareth Sears) again travelled to Libya to undertake 3D laser scanning and panoramic photography in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone and in the upper town and to use a Foerster ferex magnetometer on the Acropolis and other intramural areas. The results of these seasons are being prepared for interim publication but Birmingham Archaeology reports are already available (see below).

In 2007 I published a book on the cities of North Africa during the later Roman Empire stemming from my PhD research in 2007. Late Roman African Urbanism considers the development of the cities of North Africa during the Later Roman Empire (AD 284-439). This work considers the evolution of the city away from the 'classical' Roman city in the region as well as the maintenance of the urban tradition and compares these developments to those occurring elsewhere in the Roman Empire in this period.

## Publications

### Books

- Sears, G., Keegan, P., and Laurence, R. (eds.) 2013. *Written Space*, Bloomsbury.
- Laurence, R., Esmonde Cleary S. and Sears, G. 2011. T*he City in the Roman West 250 BC to 250 AD*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Sears, G. 2011.*The Cities of Roman Africa*, The History Press, Stroud.
- Sears, G. 2007.*Late Roman African Urbanism; Continuity and Transformation in the City*, British Archaeological Reports International Series 1693, Oxford.

### Chapters/Articles

- Sears, G. 2014. 'Cities in the Roman World', ***Oxford Bibliographies Project (http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/obo/page/classics)***
- Sears, G. 2013. 'A New Era? Severan Inscriptions in Africa', in Sears, G., Keegan, P., and Laurence, R. (eds.) 2013. *Written Space*, London, Bloomsbury: 201-16.
- Gaffney, V., Sears, G, Gaffney C. et al. 2013. 'Visualising Urban Change: The Mausoleum Of Diocletian and 3D Laser Scanning', in Ch'ng, E. (ed.) *Visual and Spatial Technologies and Computational Archaeology*
- Sears, G., Gaffney, V., Gaffney, C., Cuttler, R. Goodchild, H. and Kane, S. 2012. 'Deciphering urban landscapes at Cyrene' in Christie, N. (ed.) *Vrbes Extinctae*, Aldershot
- Sears, G. 2011. 'The Fate of the Temples in North Africa', in Lavan, L. and Mulryan, M. (eds.) *The Fate of the Temples*, Late Antique Archaeology series, Brill
- Sears, G. 2010. 'Image and belief in the late Antique townscape: An Introduction', in Sami, D. and Speed, S. (eds.) *Debating Urbanism: Within and Beyond the Walls A.D. 300-700*, Leicester Archaeological Monographs 17, Leicester: 211-212.
- Cuttler, R., Gaffney, C., Gaffney, V., Goodchild, H., Howard, A. and Sears, G. 2009. 'Changing perspectives on the city of Cyrene, Libya: Remote sensing and the management of the buried archaeological resource', *ArchéoSciences*33.1: 65-7.

### Book Reviews/ reports/ encyclopaedia entries

- Sears, G. 2007. Review of: Heijmans, M. *Arles Durant L'Antiquité Tardive: de la Duplex Arelas à l'urbs Genesii*and Kulikowski, M. *Late Roman Spain and its Cities*, JRS 97: 384-5
- Sears, G. 2007. 'Early History of North Africa', *The World and its Peoples, Middle East, Western Asia and North Africa*, Volume 9: North Africa, New York: 1174ff
- Cuttler, R., Gaffney, C., Gaffney, V., Goodchild, H., Howard, A. and Sears, G. 2007.*Mapping the City, Sustaining the Environment: A programme of 3D scanning, geophysical survey and geomorphological assessment at the World Heritage Site of Cyrene,* Birmingham
- Cuttler, R., Gaffney, V., Goodchild, H., Rossiter, J. and Sears, G., 2006.*Cyrene Archaeological Project: field survey, GIS and assessment 2006. Birmingham Archaeology Report PN 1320*, Birmingham

### Selected papers; session and conference organisation

- Sears, G. '*Opposition and triumphalism? Christian and pagan space in Roman Africa*.' , invited paper, Topoi Research Excellence Cluster, Berlin, Germany, 10th-11th November 2011.
- Sears, G. '*Strategic defence or urban ideology? City walls and their importance in late Roman Africa.'* City Walls and the Fortification of 'Interior' Provinces in the Later Roman West, Art and Social Identities in Late Antiquity, invited paper, University of Aarhus, Denmark, 19th May 2009.
- Session co-organiser RAC 2009: '*The Roman City as Written Space*', Roman Archaeology Conference, University of Michigan, US, 3rd-5th April 2009.
- Sears, G. '*A New Era? The Function of Severan Inscriptions in Africa'*, Roman Archaeology Conference, University of Michigan, US, 3rd-5th April 2009.
- Kane, S. and Sears, G. '*The Cyrenaica Archaeological Project*' (my part of the presentation was on the 2007 laser scanning and magnetometry), Leverhulme Colloquium: Roman Libya: epigraphy, geography and archaeology, King's College London, 14th February 2009.
- Sears, G. '*Urbanity and the Church*', invited paper, European Association of Archaeologists, University of Malta, Malta, 16th-21st September 2008.
- Gaffney, C., Gaffney, V., Kane, S., Sears, G., Cuttler, R., Goodchild, H., and Yorston, R. '*Linking Buried and Monumental Archaeology at Cyrene, Libya*', Society for American Archaeology, Vancouver, Canada, 26th-30th March 2008.
- Sears, G. '*Religious Violence in Roman North Africa*', Classical Association Conference, University of Birmingham, 12th-15th April 2007.
- Sears, G. '*The Fate of the Temples in Latin North Africa and the Cyrenaica*', invited paper, The Archaeology of Late Antique Paganism, Late Antique Archaeology 2005, KULeuven, Belgium, 25th-26th November 2005.

### Conferences Organised

- I was the co-organiser of the 2005 Roman Archaeology Conference at the University of Birmingham.

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