

Winter 2017

FRIENDS

No. 41

of the
Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome



NEWSLETTER

ARTISTS IN THE CEMETERY

Hendrik Voogd, Dutch landscape painter



C.J.L.Portman, *Portrait of Hendrik Voogd*,
black chalk on paper (Rijksmuseum)

Hendrik Voogd (1768-1839) arrived in the Eternal City on 3 July 1788 and never left. And he never married. He was born in Amsterdam and baptised in the Lutheran Church on 10 July 1768. After a spell at the city's Drawing Academy he trained as a painter with Jurriaan Andriessen (1742-1819). Andriessen specialised in landscapes and was well known for his workshop where he and his pupils produced complete rooms, with landscapes painted on

linen. Voogd was his favourite pupil, and it was decided that he should travel to Italy – following the example of Jean Grandjean, who died in Rome in 1781, and Daniel Dupré. He found a sponsor in the Amsterdam collector Dirk Versteegh (1751-1822) and the Haarlem-based Economic Branch of the 'Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen' (Dutch Society of Sciences).

Once in Rome he continued to specialise in nature and landscape, his first influence being the dry classical style of Jakob Philipp Hackert, the leading landscape painter in Italy at that period. But before long he was known as the 'Dutch Claude Lorrain', a connection evident above all in his graphic work, his drawings, lithographs and etchings. There is also a close relationship with the etchings of Claude's friend Herman Swanevelt, a Dutch artist who lived in Rome between 1624 and 1638.

Voogd quickly became friends with the very international crowd of artists who lived in Rome, particularly the German circle of 'Rom Fahrer' such as Joseph Anton Koch and Christian Reinhart (buried at Zone V.7.5), who were also interested in landscape. They met at the Caffè Greco, and together made trips to the Campagna to work *en plein air*, visiting Civita Castellana or the Lago di Nemi. Voogd's favourite subjects were the hilly landscape with cows, bulls and peasants, waterfalls and – what made him famous especially 'at home' – the Roman pine trees.

It was Christian Reinhart who taught Voogd the old tradition of etching. His earliest known print dates from 1793. In 1805 the first lithographic printing-office in Rome was founded by

Giovanni Dall'Armi. Koch was one of his first artists and introduced Voogd to this newly invented art-form. In German circles Voogd was recognised by Wilhelm von Humboldt, who wrote about him in a letter to Goethe in 1802. Elisa Baromin von der Recke mentioned Voogd during her travels in Italy in 1804-1806. Outside this circle Voogd had met fellow landscape-painters, such as the Scot Jacob More (1740-1793; buried in the Old Cemetery), and the Antwerp-born Simon Denis (1755-1813) who in 1806 became court-painter in Naples.

In May 1816 "Enrico Voogd, olandese, pittore paesista" became a member of the Academia di San Luca, quite an honour for a foreign artist. He sold his work to Italians and to Dutchmen who visited Rome on their Grand Tour. Regularly his paintings, drawings and etchings were sent 'home' and sold at exhibitions. He also obtained commissions. With his fellow Dutch artists who came to Rome after winning the *Prix de Rome* he had little contact: J.A.Knip in 1809, A.Teerlinck in 1810, P.A.Kleijn in 1811 and A.Sminck Pitloo in 1814. Voogd had increasingly dissociated himself from the art world in his native country. He refused even to supply information for a Dutch dictionary of artists. In 1830 Voogd was made a Knight in the Order of the Dutch Lion by King William I. He died in Rome on 4 September 1839, "a meritorious man and a great painter" as stated on his gravestone (Zone 1.10.15), recently restored thanks to Philip de Haseth Möller.

Herbert J. Hijmersma, Trevignano Romano



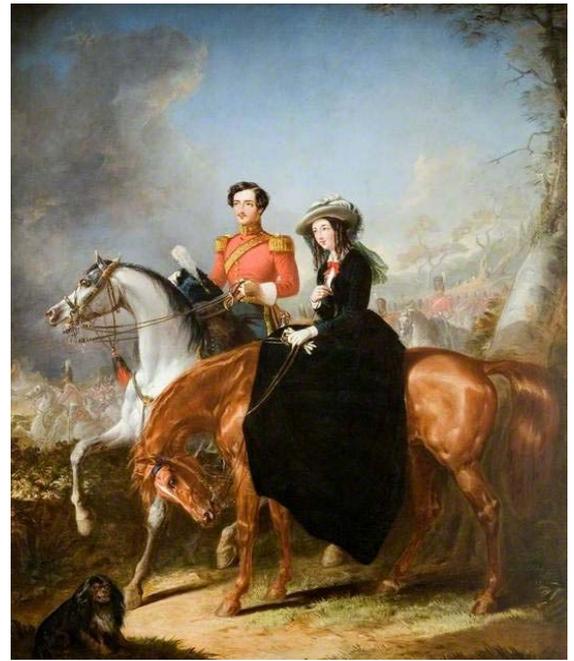
Hendrik Voogd, *Italian landscape with pine trees*,

A posthumous portrait of Devereux Cockburn

Benjamin Spence's tomb for Devereux Cockburn (pronounced Co-burn) is a favourite among visitors (see *Newsletter* 31). After his death aged 21 in Rome, his family commissioned a portrait of him in the uniform of the Royal Scots Greys, together with his sister Anne who also died young.



Photo: N. Stanley-Price



Thomas Jones Barker (1815-1882), *Portrait of Devereux Cockburn, Royal Scots Guard, and his sister Anne Russell*, 1854 (Victoria Art Gallery, Bath)



WHO THEY WERE

Captain Richard Butcher and the Papal State's steamships

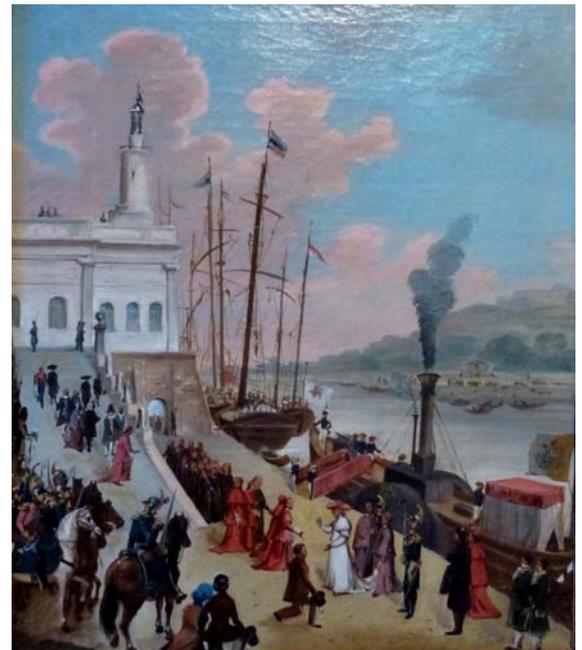


Captain Richard Butcher
(daguerreotype, family collection)

My great-great-great-grandfather was a naval captain who served for 40 years in the British merchant marine. Richard Butcher (1800-1853), born in London, captained ships engaged in the trade with the West Indies and with China. The family owns letters he wrote from India and Hong Kong, copies of ships' manifests, and the daguerreotype reproduced here. But it has always been a mystery how he died. We now know that he had been entrusted with delivering two steamships to Rome and died

at Civitavecchia before he could hand them over.

In 1841 the Papal State decided to mechanise the transport of goods on the river Tiber by commissioning three steamships from England. Following the revolution of 1849 and the restoration of the Papal state, the steamships were in a deplorable state. Only two of those imported in 1842, the *Blasco* and the *Archimede*, were in service and wooden sailing vessels were still predominant. So a delegation left for London in 1852 to acquire two new steamers. Heading the delegation was Carlo Cialdi, a native of Civitavecchia like his uncle, the renowned engineer and naval commander Alessandro Cialdi, who was responsible for the Tiber steamships. Carlo had accompanied his uncle to London when acquiring the three steamships ten years earlier. The experienced Captain Butcher was



Unknown artist, *Gregory XVI visits the first three English steamships moored at Ripa Grande* (Museo di Roma, Rome) [1842]

chosen to bring the two ships from London to Rome, with Cialdi on board with him. The midsummer voyage proved stressful, however. Thick fog and rough seas off Portugal led to the two ships being separated. It was with great relief that Cialdi reported their safe arrival at Gibraltar.

The ships docked at Civitavecchia in the evening of 28 July 1853. Three days later Captain Butcher was found to be seriously ill. There was a scare that he had cholera; but the health authorities determined that he was suffering from an inflammation of the stomach and intestine caused by excessive consumption of liquors

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and spirits. Butcher received medical treatment and was taken to a local inn to recover but died a few hours later. Umberto Mariotti Bianchi, who found the story in the State Archives (*Il fumo sul tevere*, 1985) implied that it was the rough Atlantic passage that had led the captain to “behave in a way that did little honour to the traditions of the British navy”.

The English press reported how Butcher’s death, attributed there to a ‘congestion of the brain’, caused a diplomatic incident. The English consul in Civitavecchia, J.T. Lowe, arrived to find the Papal flag already hoisted on the two ships, replacing the English flag. The poor Captain Butcher had been too ill to object to this premature move. Lowe argued that the ceremony must take place in his presence, and remonstrated with Papal officials in Rome. The solution was to pretend that no ceremony had yet taken place: the English flags were

raised again only to be immediately lowered and replaced with the Papal flag, signifying the formal handover of the two ships. The crowd gathered at the port applauded wildly at the respect shown to the English flag.

The two ships made their way to the Ripagrande port on the Tiber and the body of the deceased captain was taken to the Protestant cemetery. Our old handwritten inventory records his burial and later exhumation, but without further details. The story of Captain Butcher now joins those of other British sailors who died while on service in Italian waters (see *Newsletters* 8 and 37). His wife Susannah survived him, as did their son Richard who continued the family tradition by joining the Merchant Navy.

Contributed by Katrina Butcher, with Nicholas Stanley-Price



Trees and plants in the garden: a botanist investigates

Much of the beauty of the cemetery is due to its varied trees and flowering plants and the way their colours change through the seasons. We have long suspected that this ancient oasis of plant life might harbour some unusual species. Last summer Amanda Thursfield invited a botanist to study the vegetation zone by zone and to describe systematically those species he found of greatest interest. Dr Giuliano Russini has extensive experience as a biologist/botanist of studying and managing parks and gardens in England, France and Germany as well as his native Italy. In this Newsletter we start a series on some of his most interesting discoveries.

The sago ‘palms’

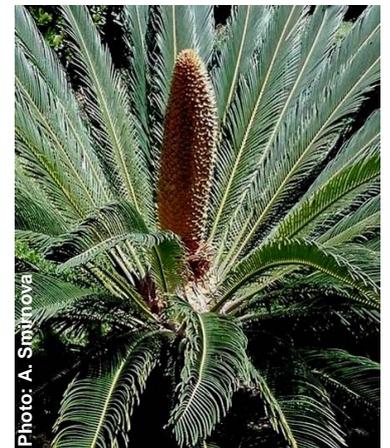
Immediately on entering the Cemetery, you cannot help noticing the two sago palms right in front of you. They are not in fact palms but cycads (*Cycas revoluta*, Thunb.1782), a species native to southern Japan. These long-lived, evergreen plants have a worldwide distribution in tropical and sub-tropical regions and are now widely cultivated as ornamentals. Their leaves are extremely toxic to animals (including humans). The pith from the stem is used to make sago but the flour from the ground-up pith has to be washed carefully to leach the toxins. The first known specimen in Europe was grown at the Botanical Garden in Palermo in 1793. The cycad is resistant to cold: in 1959 in Asti province in northern Italy, a specimen was accidentally left outside but, after surviving temperatures as low as -10°C , proceeded to sprout new leaves the following summer.



The two cycads in 2009 and the Kestner headstone



New growth on the male, 2017



Reproductive cones on the male (above) and female

Cycads are dioecious, i.e. a specimen is either male or female. The cycads that you can easily find in garden centres are nearly always females, rarely males. Ours, very unusually, are a pair, the one (on the right) female and the other male. And that’s not all: when we studied them last summer, they were mating. The male reproductive cone (*strobilum*) was covered with open microsporophylls (scales) containing microsporangia which pollinate the female when it is ready. When photographed last summer, the female’s reproductive cone had its fertile leaves (megasporephylls) closed and so was not ready to be fertilised (by windborne pollen from the male). Only next summer will we know whether fertilisation took place.

These cycads are probably quite old. A memorial to the Hanoverian diplomat, August Kestner (d. 1853) stands right behind the cycads, and burials ceased in this part of the Zona Vecchia in the 1850s. Even without knowing when they were planted, we can say they are a very rare example of a male-female pair growing side-by-side.

Giuliano Russini and Nicholas Stanley-Price



Jasmine and *Caesalpinia* in the Zona Prima

The Cemetery in modern fiction

The Cemetery features in the work of several modern writers including Emilio Calderón, Sebastian Faulks, P.D.James, Tom Rachman and Antal Szerb (see *Newsletters* 12 and 16).

There are references to the Cemetery as a place of burial (e.g. in Gore Vidal's *The Judgment of Paris*, 1952, and John Cheever's *Boy in Rome*, 1978); but often it is the venue for a visit or a chance meeting. The grave of John Keats features frequently in this role, for instance in James Salter's *Light Years*, 1975. Penelope Fitzgerald (*Innocence*, 1986) mentions the aperture in the wall by his grave, as does Penny Feeny (*The apartment in Rome*, 2013) when the novel's heroine, like many visitors today, forgets the Sunday afternoon closure. Keats's name 'writ in water' "made Tom's eyes fill with tears on the three occasions he had seen it in the English Protestant Cemetery in Rome, and could sometimes make his eyes water when he merely thought of it" (Patricia Highsmith, *Ripley underground*, 1970).

In *A man of no moon* (2009), Jenny McPhee writes: "The gravestones, elaborate and varied, were arranged with the care of a prized menagerie. The grounds were perfectly manicured; the cypresses tall and proud, the grass combed, the violets a flourish of color." Writing a novel set in 1948, the author appears unaware of the bomb damage and poor state of the post-war Cemetery.

Delia Ephron gets it right in her popular novel *Siracusa* (2016): "Its palette was cool, not sun-baked like the rest of Rome, we agreed, and now we agreed on everything, but the deep primal green of a forest owing mainly to the cypress trees, erect and severe, and the density of other foliage – box-cut hedges, a tumble of snarly low growth creeping over and around tributes and remembrances, the myriad ways grief had inspired the living. By turns modest, whimsical, poetic, emotional, grandiose – it was instantly an overwhelming experience. I could not remember when I had been so smitten."

Coming right up to date: Mario Fortunato read his short story *Ai piedi della piramide* at the Casa di Goethe during our Tercentenary exhibition. Its main character, an inscrutable Englishman, declares that the only place in all Rome that he unconditionally admires is

the so-called 'English cemetery' (home to the grave of his adored Shelley). The author and publisher allowed us to post the story on our website (under 'Libri e articoli') before its publication in Fortunato's *Tutti i nostri errori* (Bompiani, 2017). Recommended for all admirers of the Cemetery.



POETS IN THE CEMETERY

The long tradition continues of writing poems about the grave of John Keats. Michael Coy (from Ronda in Spain) composed a sonnet while sitting at the poet's graveside in June last year and then inscribed it in the Visitors' Book. We print it here with his permission.

At Keats's Grave

When I take thought of all my squandered days,
my self-disgust, unmitigated shame
wells up and drowns me. Whom else can I blame?
I came here as a boy to "wear the bays",
but decades drain away – yet Caius stays,
in rectilinear rebuke, the same
as when plumbago, oleander flamed,
and I was young, and green ambition blazed.

And now, June's morning sunlight plays
on this slight headstone of undying fame,
and I can't help but think of all the ways
that you were cheated of your honest claim
to life and productivity, and am amazed.
I offer you my wonder as my praise.



HOW TO BECOME A FRIEND

This Newsletter is made possible by the contributions of the Friends of the Cemetery.

The Friends also help fund the care of the trees in the cemetery and the restoration of tombs. Please can you help us by becoming a Friend? You can find a membership form at:

www.cemeteryrome.it

THE NON-CATHOLIC CEMETERY IN ROME

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Director: Amanda Thursfield

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(last entrance 4.30pm)
Sunday & Public Holidays: 9.00am - 1.00pm
(last entrance 12.30pm)

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