



NEWSLETTER

WHO THEY WERE...

It is a great honour that the Newsletter publishes here articles about the two Finnish classic sculptors of the 19th century. Both Johannes Takanen, who died in Rome in 1885 and rests in the Non-Catholic Cemetery, and Walter Runeberg, who worked here for many years and whose children are buried in Rome, have been held in the highest possible esteem in Finland. They are also considered to be an important link between the ancient world, our national cultural heritage and the Kalevala tradition. The Non-Catholic Cemetery is a place that the Finnish people respect highly and where, in this bustling metropolis, they gather in silence. My fellow countrymen are proud every time they read the epitaph on Takanen's tomb: "The mortal remains are buried in the foreign soil, while the homeland preserves the repute of his faithful son."

Pauli Mäkelä, Ambassador of Finland

Johannes Takanen (1849-1885)



Johannes Takanen 1849-1885

The sculptor Johannes Takanen was born on 8 December 1849 in the village of Ylä-Urpala in Virolahti, Finland, to Eerikki Takanen and Maria Markola who had married in 1842. Takanen studied design at Viipuri in 1864 and in Helsinki from 1865 to 1867 at the School of Design of the Art Association. He then studied sculpture at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen until 1873 when he moved to Rome where he lived for the rest of his life.

His life in Rome became – for economic reasons – a constant battle for survival. His public and the purchasers of his works were in Finland. Takanen used to send his works for exhibition in

Finland but they often arrived late. He was very slow in doing business and was not clever at managing his finances. He was also somewhat delicate in health and often ill.

Takanen shared a studio with another Finnish sculptor, Robert Stigell, in the Vicolo delle Lavandaie near Piazza del Popolo. The rent was modest for the artists but the condition of the premises did not do much good for their health. The earth floor, the cold and the humidity affected Takanen's health and contributed to his early death.

In 1879 his economic circumstances improved, which encouraged him to marry a Roman lady, Giacinta Biavasco (1851-1926). They married on 11 May 1879 and lived in a small apartment in Via Gregoriana 17. Three sons were born: Kullervo Eerikki in 1880, Melina (1882-1919) and Toivo (1885-1973). Kullervo Eerikki (Enrico) died on 3 March 1882 at the age of two from an attack of fever. He was buried in the ossuary of the Non-Catholic Cemetery but the exact spot is not known. Takanen had used Kullervo as the model for his sculpture *Amor, sydämiä kiduttava* (Amor that torments the hearts) of 1881. His daughter Melina had no children but descendants of Toivo still live in Rome today.



Photo: J. Liukkonen

J. Takanen. Tomb of Alexander Carlsson (1879)

The Takanen family moved to Via Sistina 104, occupying a corner apartment on the second floor. There Johannes Takanen died on 30 September 1885 aged 35. He was buried in the Non-Catholic Cemetery on 2nd October, in a service attended by his widow and family, and all the Scandinavians present in Rome, some twenty people, the majority of them sculptors and painters.

The only work by Takanen in the Cemetery is the marble portrait that he sculpted of his dear friend Alexander Carlsson, a Swedish sculptor who died in 1878.

He was the first sculptor from Finland, from humble stock, to acquire an international reputation. Thanks to his notable artistic production of a high standard, he – together with Walter Runeberg - is today held to have laid the foundations of Finnish plastic art. Among his major works was the *Väinämöinen, kannelta soittava* (Väinämöinen playing the Finnish harp) of 1872 which was commissioned for the Monrepos Park in Viipuri but which disappeared during the last war. Other important works are *Venus ja Amor* (Venus and Amor) of 1873, *Aino, merelle katsova* (Aino looking out to sea) of 1876, *Rebekka kaivolla* (Rebecca at the fountain) of 1877, *Andromeda, kallioon kahlittuna* (Andromeda in chains) of 1879 and *Amor, sydämiä kiduttava* (Amor that torments the hearts) of 1881.



Photo: J. Liukkonen

The grave of Johannes Takanen

As a portraitist Takanen was superior to any other Finnish sculptor of the period. Many important Finnish men and women were immortalised in his sculpture portraits (for instance, the half-bust in bronze representing J.V. Snellman (1884) at Kuopio). In 1885 Takanen won the competition for a monument to Alexander II, Emperor of Russia and of the Grand Duchy of Finland. He was due to undertake the work with Walter Runeberg who came second in the competition but Takanen died before its completion. The monument that is now in Senate Square in Helsinki was created by Runeberg who, on the basis of Takanen's design, sculpted the figure of the Emperor.

To celebrate the 160th anniversary of Takanen's birth on 8 December 2009, the Johannes Takanen Society organised during 2009 an exhibi-

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*Amor that torments the hearts (1881)**

bition, an art competition for young people, a seminar, a theatrical drama and other events. These celebrations culminated in a visit by its members to Rome in October during which they met descendants of the family and visited the tomb of Takanen where they laid a wreath. The programme of the visit was planned together with the Finnish Embassy in Rome; particular thanks are due to Ambassador Pauli Mäkelä and to his wife Leena Kurko.

Contributed by Jaakko Liukkonen, President of the Johannes Takanen Society.

*Photo: Central Art Archives/Ateneum, Helsinki

Carl Michael Runeberg (1869-1871) Walter Fredrik Runeberg (1871-1872) Maria Christina Runeberg (1872-1873)



Walter and Lina Runeberg in 1868

The son of Finland's national poet, the sculptor Walter Runeberg (1838-1920) first came to Rome in November 1862, accompanied by a Danish sculptor and close friend, Lauritz Prior (1840-1879). They both had studied at Herman Wilhelm Bissen's studio and at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. They had absorbed the neoclassical style of sculpture and in their own work carried on the tradition of the great master, Bertel Thorvaldsen. In their studio near Piazza Barberini, there was a third sculptor working, the Swede Frithiof Kjellberg (1836-1885). For a sculptor it was a dream come true to be able to study antiquity in its original environment. Thanks to the river Tiber, even the modelling clay in Rome was - as Prior put it - "the best in the world and like butter to work in".



The grave of Peter Bruun, c.1865

It was there in Rome that Walter experienced the first loss of a good friend when the young Norwegian Peter Bruun died in February 1865 (on Bruun, see below). After designing his gravestone, he returned to Finland and married his fiancée Lina Elfving (1841-1916) in summer 1867. They arrived in Rome together early the next year. The family's tragedy started in December 1871 when their firstborn son Carl Michael, "Carlo", died aged two of a sudden illness. Only three weeks later his little brother

Walter died of pox after weeks of dysentery, only nine months old.

The previous autumn their father had described in letters how, witnessing their children's suffering, Lina had lost much weight and he himself was like a thin line drawn between two points. Working on several sculptures and having two to four men working for him every day, he was exhausted. Now the children had died and their home seemed so terribly empty. At the end of the summer they travelled back to Finland, where their daughter Maria Christina was born on October 16 in Turku, Lina's hometown. There was hope again for their happiness, and after one year's absence they returned to Rome. But the baby Maria survived only two weeks before dying of what was described as *perniziosa*. She was buried beside her brothers in the Protestant Cemetery.

Her parents were heartbroken and were brought even closer to each other. Lina came often to the studio and stayed there while her husband worked. In the following spring Hjalmar Johannes, "Nino", was born. In 1876 they moved to Paris, which they believed to be a healthier place to live while never finding it as inspiring as Rome. There in October a second daughter, Vasthi, was born, and a son, Alfred, later in 1882. All three lived to be adults.

A dove of peace with an olive-branch in its beak decorates the children's gravestone designed by their loving father. Walter Runeberg had used the same motif for the grave of Finnish painter Magnus von Wright in Helsinki in 1871. It symbolises hope of a new life (referring to the Flood in the Bible).



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

The Runeberg children's grave today

In April 1876, just a few months before the Runebergs left the city for good, a close friend and client, Victor Hoving (born in 1846) died of typhoid. He was a patron of the arts and a businessman in the transport and timber industries. Hoving's brother asked Walter Runeberg to design a monument for his brother's grave. He produced a bas-relief with an angel of peace holding a palm frond in his hand. Hoving had been born in Sweden but moved to Finland when only five years old; his brother asked that his adopted country rather than his native one be engraved on the stone.



The grave of Victor Hoving, c.1880

During his time in Rome Walter Runeberg became one of the pioneers of Finnish sculpture, achieving a maturity in his art and an international fame.

Susanna Widjeskog
Curator, Porvoo museum and the Walter Runeberg Sculpture Collection, Porvoo, Finland

Photos 1, 3 and 4 © Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, Helsinki

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There are about 40 Norwegians buried in the Cemetery. Johan Peter Bruun lived in Rome at a time when many artists from all over Europe came to Rome to get inspiration for their work - Henrik Ibsen, Edvard Grieg, Sigrid Undset, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Per A. Munch just to mention a few. It is very sad that he passed away at such a young age, but he has found paradise on earth in this beautiful and peaceful place.

Einar M. Bull

Ambassador of Norway and President of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

Johan Peter Bruun (1843-1865)

When a man dies at the age of 21, it is impossible to say whether he would have become someone of importance and fame. Johan Peter Bruun died at this early age and rests under a simple monument in the Zona Seconda, but he had a remarkable life, not because of himself but because of the people surrounding him.

Johan Peter, born in Kristiania (now Oslo) on May 1, 1843, was the son of a lawyer who passed away two months before the boy was born. He inherited his father's name. The young mother and widow was known as "Lina". She was 27 and her full name was Hansine Nicoline Juliane Sybille Stenersen. She saw her great calling in life as to bring up and educate their three talented children. Lina was a determined and independent woman. Her ideals for the children's upbringing were influenced by the ideas of the Danish pastor Grundtvig: "Respect for God and hard work." Lina moved several times to give the best educational opportunities to her children, in Norway and even to Rome.



Detail from an engraving by F.C. Lund in Illustrerte Tidende, Copenhagen, 10 January 1864

Johan Peter had artistic talents and his ambition was to become a sculptor. In 1862 he made a trip to London, but Germany was really the place to be for Scandinavian artists at the time. Because of his frail health his doctors advised him not to study in Germany. The family therefore moved to Rome, hoping that his health would improve and that the Roman environment would be good for the young sculptor. There they were easily absorbed into the thriving Nordic artist milieu. At a meeting that year of the Scandinavian Association in Rome, he is seen portrayed between his tall sister, Thea (standing) and his mother (seated in front of him).

His elder brother Christopher, already a theologian preoccupied with the ideas of Kierkegaard, wanted to study history in the Eternal City.

Like his mother, Christopher was an idealist and when war broke out between Denmark and Prussia in 1864 he volunteered with other Scandinavians to fight on the Danish side. He soon became a hero for his bravery, and his fame increased further when, with the war over, he walked from Denmark back to Rome to join his two siblings and mother.

Lina and the children spent the hot summer months of 1864 in Genzano, together with other Scandinavians, among them the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen and the Finnish sculptor Walter Runeberg.

Ibsen at that time was working on his play *Brand*, very much inspired by Christopher Bruun's uncompromising character and idealism and by the philosophy of Kierkegaard. Johan Peter's charming and intelligent sister, Thea, became the model for Agnes, the lead female character in the same play. Both Ibsen and Runeberg flirted with Thea that summer, and she is also believed to be the inspiration behind Ibsen's poem *Borte* ("Gone").

Walter Runeberg was like a member of the Bruun family in Rome and celebrated Christmas with them in 1864. He was obviously in love with Thea who was cautious not to get too involved, since Walter was already officially engaged to Lina Elfving. With his great talent and similar artistic ambitions to those of Johan Peter but four years older, Walter was a great help and inspiration to him.

Johan Peter suffered from tuberculosis and the winter 1864/1865 was particularly hard. As he grew weaker, Lina made plans to go to Algeria where the dry climate could have improved his condition. But on February 7, 1865, Johan Peter passed away. Walter Runeberg had been at his side during the last days, supporting the grieving family. At the funeral two Norwegians laid wreaths, the playwright Henrik Ibsen and the distinguished art historian Lorentz Dietrichson. The simple monument on the grave was designed by Walter Runeberg, who was to become the great national sculptor of Finland. It bears a short text, probably chosen by Lina: "Blessed are those who die in the Lord".

Thea also fell ill and died in Kristiania on December 16 the same year. The surviving brother Christopher lived until 1920, becoming a remarkable cultural figure, priest, editor and builder of bridges between the church and the cultural establishment.

Oddbjørn Sørmoen, art historian and senior adviser, Directorate for Cultural Heritage, Norway

Volunteers needed

As always, we owe much to the volunteers who keep the Visitors' Centre open, who help produce the Newsletter, who organise and lead guided tours, and who help in many other ways too numerous to mention. We are especially sorry to lose Ann Ciarocca and Serena Galliani who have left Rome. A big thank you to all of them, and to Heather Munro for co-ordinating volunteer activity. Another new face we have welcomed is Ornella Forte who joined us as Office Assistant in January.



We depend on volunteers to keep the Centre open; and to assist visitors, help with events, do translations, and update our databases.

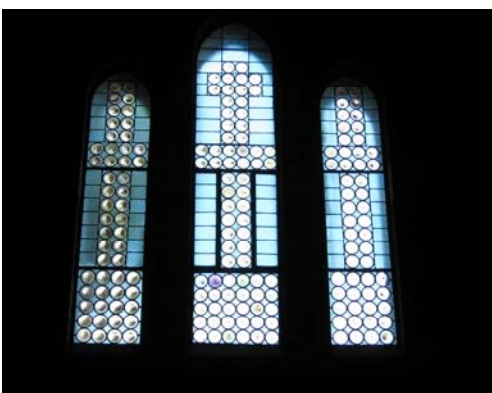
If you like to work with people and have some time free, please contact us:
Email: visitorcentre@cemeteryrome.it
Telephone: 06 574 1900

YOUR HELP WILL BE WELCOME!

Restoration of the chapel's stained glass

The chapel of 1898 is a valuable asset to the Cemetery and is used for funerals and for other ceremonies (see *Newsletter* no. 7, Summer 2009). In order to make greater use of it, we needed to replace missing window glass so as to make it weatherproof. Thanks to the efforts of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Rome, the Stichting Johanniterhuis, a Dutch Protestant charity organisation in the Netherlands, gave us a donation to this end. We hired a specialist stained glass restorer, Daniela della Putta, who has worked on the windows of a number of Rome's famous churches.

The stained glass in the windows of the chapel are of three main varieties: stained glass rounds in rich blues, greens and burgundy which make up the three rose windows on the south and west walls; beautiful roundels of Venetian clear glass on a blue background; and large panels of yellow 'cathedral' glass, each composed of ten rectangular sections.



It is possible that the yellow glass panels replace windows of the Venetian clear glass that were destroyed during World War II, but much remains to be learnt about the history of the chapel.

The restorer found that the lead coming in the windows was overall in very good condition, whereas the stucco in which it was set was badly weakened and had to be replaced. The windows were dismantled, cleaned and restored where necessary, replacing damaged or missing areas

with new glass (the clear glass roundels are still made in Germany). Now that all the glass is remounted, cleaned and complete, the chapel looks much better. Our grateful thanks go to the Royal Netherlands Embassy and to the Stichting Johanniterhuis for making this possible.



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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(last entrance 4.30pm)
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(last entrance 12.30pm)

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Ceremony at Thomas Jefferson Page tomb



On April 24, the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) organised a Cross of Honor dedication ceremony at the graves of Thomas Jefferson Page, father and son. Capt. Thomas Jefferson Page (1808-1899) was Commander of the CSS *Stonewall* while his son (1839-1864) was a Major in the Virginia Artillery. SCV members from Germany, Italy, Sweden and the USA attended, together with members of the Rome chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Navy League of the United States. Camp Adjutant Chris McLarren organised the ceremony which started in the chapel and continued at the graveside. The ceremony was an opportunity to publicise the badly deteriorated condition of the beautiful and historically important Page family tomb (see *Newsletter* no. 7, 2009), and we are now working with the SCV to raise funds for its cleaning and conservation.



C. McLarren placing flag and Cross of Honor



New website launched

In April we launched a re-designed website with a new address: www.cemeteryrome.it

Please note the new email addresses listed in this Newsletter. A warm word of thanks to all those who helped make the new site possible, especially for technical help from Michele Greenstein, Dan Keller and Alessandro Barilà. Enquiries addressed to the previous address will be automatically forwarded but please update your address books!



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