

Spring 2014

FRIENDS of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

No. 26



NEWSLETTER

Now published in English and Italian editions!
The Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome. Its history, its people and its survival for 300 years,
by Nicholas Stanley-Price, 2014. On sale at the Visitors' Centre or through www.cemeteryrome.it

The Garden Room: a new asset for events and visitors



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

Autopsy room before renovation



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

Garden Room renovated

Thanks to generous donors we have a new room for receiving visitors and holding events such as talks and small exhibitions. We have renovated the building that was formerly an autopsy room and renamed it the 'Garden Room'. For making this possible, we are extremely grateful to John and Mary McGuigan, art historians resident in the USA but regular visitors to Rome, Friends of the Cemetery and contributors to the Newsletter (see next article).

The building straddles the wall that divides the Old and New Cemeteries. A date of 1884 appears above its entrance. The single room measures some 7m. by 4.30m. and 5m. high. A large glass skylight floods the room with natural light, as does a window giving directly onto the Parte Antica. Renovation work consisted mainly in control-

ling water leakage through the skylight and rising damp in the walls, followed by repair and re-painting. The works, duly approved by the Soprintendenza of the City of Rome, were designed by architect Flavio Bonsignore and supervised by architect Luigi Carosi.

The Garden Room had a 'soft opening' last September when it rained during the Family Day organised by the British Embassy. The British Ambassador, H.E. Christopher Prentice, welcomed Friends, volunteers and their families to guided tours and a magnificent tea held in the Garden Room. On Sunday 18 May 2014 there will be the official opening in the presence of John and Mary McGuigan and – we hope – a large number of Friends. Altogether a valuable new asset for which we thank all those who have made it happen.

During the project, the Soprintendenza asked that the columns flanking the door of the Garden Room be painted as *finto travertino* (imitation travertine). The Friends came to the rescue for this unforeseen extra expense, and also paid for lighting and furniture. They continue to support the printing of the Newsletter which in turn attracts more support. A big thank you to all you generous Friends.

A big thank you to the Friends



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

John and Mary McGuigan with Amanda Thursfield

An old photo and new light on John Gibson's tomb



John Linton Chapman (1839–1905), *The Tomb of John Gibson in the Non-Catholic Cemetery, Rome*, early 1870s, albumen photograph

Devotees of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome should welcome the recent publication of Nicholas Stanley-Price's new book about it, especially those among us who relish his assembling of many previously unpublished paintings, watercolours, drawings and photographs. It has been a pleasure when visiting Rome to spend hours poring over many of these images with him, bantering over attributions, locations, and dates gleaned from clues embedded therein or searching through the cemetery. One spring day last year found us standing before the tomb of the

Welsh sculptor John Gibson (1790–1866), trying to ascertain the exact location where John Linton Chapman, the American painter and amateur photographer, had placed his tripod to capture a photographic memento of the headstone of a dear family friend.

The Chapman photograph depicts the Gibson monument in three-quarter view reposing in the shadow of one of the ruined towers of the Aurelian Wall (Zona 1.12.28). The memorial, modelled after a sketch by the sculptor himself, is composed of an erect marble slab surmounted by a frieze decorated with acanthus antefixes. The sheer face bears the eulogy penned by Lord Lytton below an unsigned marble bas-relief of Gibson's profile facing left. At first glance this scene looks familiar to today's visitor, despite the removal of many trees and the two wrought-iron grave surrounds, but on closer inspection many of

the graves have since been removed (see Nicholas' note below).

Nicholas and I eventually turned our discussion to the long-disputed authorship of the Gibson portrait medallion. Speculation has largely centred around two of Gibson's former pupils, Benjamin E. Spence and Harriet G. Hosmer, the latter of whom executed a similar marble portrait roundel in 1866 (National Portrait Gallery, London, and Watertown Free Public Library, Massachusetts). Knowing, however, that I have never been convinced of either hypothesis, Nicholas issued a friendly challenge for me to uncover what I could.

Delving into a wealth of resources on the once popular but now largely forgotten Gibson, I learned that, though he bequeathed a sizeable fortune to the Royal Academy in London, he allocated a meagre £50 for his own burial, which provided for only a modest brass plate to be placed over his grave which read: "Cav. John Gibson, R.A., aged 76 years." Such an unremarkable plaque for so accomplished an artist prompted his numerous friends to organize a subscription in order to erect a more fitting tribute. In May 1867 many London periodicals repeated reports that first appeared in *The Builder* that the funds had been secured and a proper monument would soon be erected with a portrait medallion modelled by Spence, who had died the previous October. One month later nearly every British news outlet announced its formal dedication and continued to perpetuate the rumour that Spence had been the sculptor. Apparently only the correspondent for the *Liverpool Daily Post* bothered to correct the record, relating that "though the late Mr. Spence did indeed begin a likeness he had intended to present to the executors for this monument, he destroyed his first attempt, because dissatisfied, and unfortunately did not live to complete another; and that the portrait actually in its place, which is at once recognizable was made by an Italian named Minghini" (17 June 1867).

Though I have as yet found no evidence to explain why the little-known sculptor L. Minghini was chosen for this commission, for now, however, there is one less unattributed sculpture in the cemetery and one sculptor deservedly added to its illustrious ranks.

For Minghini, see Alberto Riccoboni, *Roma nell'arte: La scultura nell'evolo moderno dal Quattrocento ad oggi* (Roma: Mediterranea, 1942), 495.

Contributed by John F. McGuigan Jr, independent art historian. jfmcguigan@mac.com

Nicholas's comment: identifying graves that have gone

Early photos such as Chapman's are valuable for what they show. Only two of the graves, other than Gibson's, are still there today: behind his stands the white headstone of Avarilla Savery, the daughter of a banker in Bristol, who died aged 30 in 1861; and in the shadowy background between them is the grave of Marjorie Cunningham, widow of a Scottish general (Zone 1.14.25).

The half-hidden standing stone to the left is no longer there. But by deciphering a couple of words in its inscription, I identified the name Henry Horner Johnson. I was then amazed to find his displaced gravestone, leaning against the wall in the Zona Terza (see photo). At that time, new graves were identified by numbered wooden crosses until a gravestone was installed (although many burials never had gravestones). One such wooden marker, numbered 305, is visible in Chapman's photo. An old inventory lists it as the grave of a nine day-old infant named Al-



The tombs of Gibson and (behind) Savery and Cunningham



The Horner Johnson headstone

fred James Dent (d.1868) who was later exhumed. You won't find Horner Johnson or Dent in our online databases but, thanks to Chapman's photo, we can now update our records.

PROGRESS IN CONSERVING OUR MONUMENTS

ICCROM and the GCI return to the Zona Vecchia

After our successful collaboration with ICCROM and the Getty Conservation Institute in 2011 (see *Newsletter* 18), another seven tombs were restored during their 2013 stone conservation course. We used various criteria to select the tombs – that they exhibited a range of deterioration problems and a variety of tomb-types, and that they were located near one another, to make it easier to supervise. All date to the first decades of the New Cemetery (opened in 1822), and, but for one

tina, Australia, Austria and Kenya first mapped its condition. The map’s colours refer to different defects, e.g. green for biological growth, yellow for ‘black crust’, and red for a missing element. (The ‘black crust’ is a deposit primarily of gypsum that forms easily on stone monuments in Rome’s polluted air.) The team also found that Barbara Yelverton, a Baroness in her own right who married a Marquess, was a respected scholar of fossils. She deserves to be listed among the scientists buried in the Cemetery.

Near Rosa Bathurst’s tomb, there are two prominent sarcophagi tombs made of travertine. One (ZV.12.19) is the tomb of



Condition mapping



Cox sarcophagus before and after cleaning



Floral motif after cleaning



Vinka Marinković (Croatia) at the Usedom monument

Irishman, all were of females who died young.

The teams of conservators used techniques such as drawing, rectified photography and digital mapping to document the tombs. They then assessed their condition, subjecting them to biological and materials analyses, before proceeding to cleaning and consolidation.

For the marble tomb of Barbara Yelverton (1810-1858; ZV.4.1), a team of conservators from Argen-

Frederica de Montmorency, and the other (V.12.21) of Louisa Cox, both of whom died young in 1827. After cleaning the Cox sarcophagus of its black crust, accumulated soil and ivy growth, the team were able to correct previous readings of its inscriptions.

The other, smaller tombs were those of the Irishman Harvey Montgomery (V.8.22), the infant Maria von Usedom (Zone 1.13.14), Roberta Krause (V.4.6) and Constance Grant (V.9.27). The result was seven tombs restored to high standards, and nineteen conservators from around the world with richer professional experience.

Many thanks to our partners ICCROM and the GCI for copies of the excellent conservation reports.



Germany supports tomb restoration

Germany has also been helping us. Students from the Fachschule für Steintechnik in Munich, supervised by conservators Gianfranco Malorgio and Sara Toscan, cleaned the popular Passarge tomb (Zone 1,

against the Aurelian Wall), and repaired a broken cross on the Goedecken tomb (Zone 2.9.3). The German Embassy in Rome funded urgent works to improve the condition of the German National Tomb. Our warm thanks to all of them.

Swiss help for J.J.Frey's tomb

The Swiss Embassy in Rome gave us a grant to restore the tomb of the painter Johann Jakob Frey (1813-1865) and his Italian wife Maddalena Bartoli (d.1894). After training in Basle, Paris and Munich, Frey settled in Rome where he became a successful landscape painter. Admiring his talents, the Prussian Egyptologist, Richard Lepsius, invited him in 1842 to join his expedition to Egypt to record landscapes and archaeological sites. But



Photo: C. Bernardini



Landscape with peasants, 1855 (Victoria & Albert Museum)

bad health forced Frey to leave prematurely. Both Lepsius and Frey caught severe chills after their camp had been raided in the night and Frey's eventually turned into amoebic dysentery, forcing his return to Rome where it could be treated. Fortunately he recovered, married Maddalena, and continued his career as a painter, producing plates for Lepsius' publication and oil paintings of Egyptian and Italian scenes.

The tomb (Zone 1.13.43), of white marble on a travertine base, bears a portrait relief of the artist and, above, a segmental pediment in Roman Egyptianising style that recalls his days in Egypt. Thanks to several months' work by the conservator Cecilia Bernardini, it now looks splendid.

For details of Frey, I have used *Who was who in Egyptology* (4th ed., 2012) and notes from recent books about the *Lepsius expedition* kindly supplied by Dr Heike Schmidt.



All previous Newsletters and an Index to nos.1-21 are at www.cemeteryrome/press/newsletter.html

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

via Caio Cestio, 6, 00153, Roma

Director: Amanda Thursfield

OPENING HOURS

Monday to Saturday 9:00am - 5:00pm
(last entrance 4.30pm)

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

Tel 06.5741900, Fax 06.5741320
mail@cemeteryrome.it

NEWSLETTER of the Friends of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

Nicholas Stanley-Price, EDITOR
Anka Serbu, GRAPHIC DESIGN
Grafica Di Marcotullio, PRINTER
ROME, 2014

Contact: nstanleyprice@tiscali.it
Disponibile anche in versione italiana
www.cemeteryrome.it

Finally, Sarah Parker Remond is commemorated!

We have put right a serious omission by unveiling a memorial plaque to Sarah Parker Remond (1824-1894). You can see it on the wall to the right of the entrance gate.



Her experience of colour discrimination during her school days in Salem, MA and as an adult in Boston led her to become an outstanding speaker for the American Anti-Slavery Society. Selected for a speaking tour in England, she spent several years there engaged in public speaking and continuing her own education at Bedford College in London. Among those whom she met there was a fellow activist, Giuseppe Mazzini. Whether or not this meeting influenced her decision, in 1866 she moved to the Santa Maria Novella hospital in Florence where she studied medicine under the American doctor Benjamin Appleton and then went into practice. Late in life she married Lazzaro Pintor, a Sardinian, and moved to Rome where she eventually died. Her grave was in "the fifth row below the tomb of the poet Goethe"; but once it had been removed, there was no visible record of her burial here.

This has now been put right. Marilyn Richardson, art historian and former curator of the Museum of African American History in Boston, launched an appeal for funds through her website <http://sarahparkerremond.wordpress.com> (and see *Newsletter* 10). Her campaign joined an initiative by Francis Mayo, an attorney in Salem, who wanted to see Sarah Remond formally commemorated in both Salem and Rome. Thanks to their sustained efforts and to individual donors, a memorial plaque now commemorates this remarkable woman..

A free audit

From 2013 the financial statements of the cemetery will be audited by Deloitte and Touche, S.p.A., Italy. After years of employing a local auditor, we asked six firms to tender, whereupon Deloitte - one of the primary audit firms in Italy and worldwide - offered to perform it free of charge. Obtaining such high-calibre professional services is a sure sign of confidence in the Cemetery and allows us to devote what might have been spent on audit fees to more visible maintenance needs.

New President elected

The Assembly has elected H.E. Nomatamba Tambo, Ambassador of South Africa, as President from January 2014 and we welcome her strong interest in our work.

