

# of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

## NEWSLETTER



### HOW OTHERS SEE THE CEMETERY

In Newsletter 43 Amanda Thursfield spoke about her ten years as Director. But what do others think?



The entrance-gate, early morning in June

#### The view of a concession-holder (Sandra Seagram Annovazzi)

**I believe you came to Italy in the late 1950s?**

Yes, I arrived in Rome in 1959 after marrying Eugenio Annovazzi. Except for three years when we lived in Paris, I have stayed in Rome.

**And you have been a leading member of the Anglican community here?**

For ten years I was church warden at All Saints' Church in Via del Babuino. I have also been a strong supporter of the Anglican Centre's work on relations with the Catholic church.

**When did you acquire a concession?**

More than twenty years ago I took out a pre-concession. My husband had died some years previously.

**How would you compare the situation then and now?**

It's much improved. Today people respect it better as a sacred place. That is due to what Amanda Thursfield has achieved as director. She has

managed to build up a team – in the office, with the volunteers, the wonderful gardeners from Il Trattore, and all the others. They clearly enjoy working in this beautiful place – and that encourages visitors also to respect it.

**Do you ever think there are too many visitors?**

No, not at all. They should be welcomed so long as they respect the place.



**Why do you think they visit this cemetery?**

Everyone buried here has a story to tell – the profiles published in the Friends' *Newsletter* prove that. The lovely setting also makes it attractive. I hope it continues to be managed well for many years to come.

#### The view of a volunteer (Rita Stivali)

It was 2007 and in the newsletter of the foreign institution where I worked, I noticed an item stating that the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome was looking for volunteers for its Visitors' Centre. I at once contacted Heather Munro, then the volunteers' coordinator, keen to

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have closer contact with a place that had always fascinated me. I had been there a couple of times: in order to get in, you rang the bell and then waited quite a time until the gardener came to open the large gate which then closed behind you. The place was extraordinary.

Heather had recently set up this group and managed it extremely well. So I became part of it and still am, with undiminished pleasure and enthusiasm. Since then, the place has changed immeasurably for the better. Many visitors comment on its beauty and how it has improved over time, and many concession-holders say the same. It is therefore a great source of pleasure to be able to contribute, even in a small way, to realising such a positive goal.

For me, the fascination of the place lies in its beauty, its monuments, their fine epitaphs, being able to listen to the stories of those who have gone before, each one of them important, and in the fact that these people rest in peace next to one another, sharing what it is to have been human. Finally, I like the absence of photos on the tombs which allows me to reflect rather on the spirit, on what these people have meant to us. For me, it is a vibrant place, full of life.

### Recent comments from the Visitors' Book

In comments written in more than twenty languages left by visitors from all over the world, certain phrases recur frequently but are none the less complimentary even if repetitive: "absolutely breathtaking",



Photo: N. Stanley-Price  
Luca Koller and Paolo Mancarella of Il Trattore at work



Photo: N. Stanley-Price  
Keeping it tidy

"the most beautiful cemetery I know", "the most beautiful place in Rome", "an oasis of peace in the noisy city", "we come here every time we visit Rome", and so on. Visitors praise especially the high standard of maintenance but also the helpful volunteers. And the cats, of course.

The peaceful atmosphere helps to console people: "Thank you for changing my perspective on cemeteries. I didn't know that such love, friendship and beauty lie here". "I love this place. My father passed away yesterday morning...and I have found it a tremendous comfort being in this beautiful place." "I found this place enjoyable because it doesn't make me sad." "Congratulations for maintaining the memory of all these distinguished people, for us who never had the chance to know them." "Very beautiful and peaceful place. The love felt for those interred here is palpable."

"Every cemetery should be like this."



## NEWS FROM THE CEMETERY

We welcome H.E. Janne Taalas, Ambassador of Finland to Italy, as the new President of the Assembly of Ambassadors.

In May and June the Garden Room hosted "Continuum", paintings by Ennio Tamburi, some of them inspired by the epitaphs of John Keats and Gregory Corso. Luca Arnaudo acted as curator. In June the series of events devoted to writers associated with the Cemetery continued with an evening of readings about Venice by John Addington Symonds (1840-93). Edoardo Camponeschi, Jan Hague and Shelagh Stuchbery read passages from his *Sketches in Italy* (1879) that had been chosen by Mark Irvine. Stefano Evangelista provided an introduction which we reproduce here in abridged form.

### John Addington Symonds and Victorian Italy

John Addington Symonds was buried in the Non-Catholic Cemetery on 22 April 1893. His name is not widely known today but in the last decades of the Victorian era and into the twentieth century, Symonds enjoyed an enviable reputation as a prolific and popular historian. He was especially noted for his work on classical antiquity and the Renaissance, as well as being a respected poet and an immensely successful travel writer. In recent years he has come back to readers' attention under a new guise that was mostly unknown to his contemporaries, as a pioneer of homosexual rights.



Italy was one of Symonds's passions. His monumental seven-volume study of the Italian Renaissance reveals an impressive academic knowledge of historical and literary sources, and Italian

locations dominate his travel sketches. It was not Rome, however, but Venice that was Symonds's favourite Italian haunt. He made regular trips across the Alps from his home in Davos, Switzerland, where he relocated from England partly for health reasons (he suffered from tuberculosis), partly to escape the narrow moral atmosphere of Victorian England which he found uninspiring and inimical to his temperament. On these occasions he left his wife and daughters behind in Switzerland in order to go and stay with his close friend, the historian Horatio Brown, who lived in Venice and knew the city intimately.

Symonds's Venetian writings radiate an aura of curiosity and humanity – curiosity inspired by the humanistic ideal of the Italian Renaissance that he admired so much. It is no surprise that a hundred or so years ago readers consumed them eagerly, edition after edition. To readers in the twenty-first century they offer a glimpse into that fascinating cultural hybrid – Victorian Italy – and a way of experiencing Venice that is still surprisingly fresh, inspiring and waiting to be rediscovered.

Contributed by Stefano Evangelista, Trinity College, Oxford University

## The funeral and grave of John Addington Symonds

Symonds died in Rome on Wednesday 19 April, 1893. He had arrived with his beloved daughter Margaret after a final tour of southern Italy. Hotels in Rome were full because of the imminent visit of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany but they found rooms at the Hotel d'Italie in Via Quattro Fontane. After her father died, Margaret was assigned a plot in the Cemetery near to that of Shelley (whose biography Symonds had written). "In all the world there is no place more penetrated with the powers of poetry and of natural beauty", she wrote.

That night, at 3 a.m., a hearse conveyed the coffin to the cemetery, followed by Symonds's friends from Venice: Horatio Brown, his literary executor and biographer, and Angelo Fusato, a gondolier who was Symonds's servant and travel companion. Axel Munthe, who had a doctor's practice in the same rooms that John Keats had occupied, embalmed the body so that the funeral could be delayed until Saturday. By then Symonds's wife and another daughter, Lotta, had arrived from Davos and his sister Charlotte from England. Also at the funeral were Matilda and Anne Lucas, the redoubtable sisters whose gossipy letters describe social life in Rome. They had never met Symonds but knew his books and wanted to show their respect. They reported a small attendance that included the Stillmans, i.e., William J. Stillman, the *Times* correspondent in Rome, and his artist wife, Marie Spartali, who were friends of Symonds. Lucas adds the significant detail: "Old Mr Story drove up when it was all over."

Symonds's grave (Zone V.15.8) is the only one (until Gregory Corso's burial in 2001) in the row in front of Shelley's that does not belong to the family of William Wetmore Story. As a result, when Emelyn Story died the following year, she could not be buried next to their little boy Joseph (d. 1853; Zone V.15.9) as his parents must



The Symonds headstone between the two Story monuments; Shelley's grave behind

always have intended. We can imagine Story's disappointment when he belatedly arrived and saw where Symonds had been buried.

If his literary reputation nowadays is mixed, Symonds had many admirers in his lifetime. The American author Carol Atwater Mason visited the Cemetery ten years later and wrote (*The Spell of Italy*, 1909): "Unexpectedly I came upon the stone of John Addington Symonds. I had forgotten that he was buried in Rome. He, of all Englishmen, seems to have discerned Italy most subtly, profoundly, gravely, yet with passionate sympathy."

Nicholas Stanley-Price



## Trees and plants in the garden: a botanist investigates (no. 3): the 'Umbrella pine'

The Italian stone pine (*Pinus pinea*, L. 1753) is often called the 'umbrella pine' because of its broad, flat crown. It is a coniferous, evergreen tree that can grow to more than 25m. high, with trunks 3.0 – 3.5m. in diameter and can live for up to 250 years. In the Old Cemetery and in the Zona Vecchia there are some impressive examples. When it was laid out in the 1890s, the Zona Terza had pines planted at the corner of each quadrant.

The stone pine native to the Mediterranean region is a familiar feature of the Italian landscape. Pine trees cover about 20,000 hectares in Italy, in forests but also planted for ornamental use in parks and gardens and along roads. An excursion down the historic Via Appia shows stone pine trees at their best. One drawback is their extensive root systems that tend to disrupt road and pavement surfaces – and create obstacles for the unwary on the paths in the Cemetery.

Pine cones are ovoid in shape, and take up to two years to mature. The edible pine nuts (*pinoli*) are a well-known ingredient of Italian cuisine, notably in *pesto* and *torta della nonna* and other desserts. But Italian pine trees have recently been infested by the Western conifer seed bug (*Leptoglossus occidentalis*, Heidemann, 1910), accidentally imported from the United States, and prices for pine-nuts have risen accordingly.

Like other long-lived evergreens such as the cypress, the pine is often seen as a symbol of immortality. The pine-cone in occult symbolism represents human enlightenment and 'the third eye'. Perhaps this is why we often find pine-cones that visitors have placed on tombs. These magnificent tall trees are a great asset to the Cemetery but they require con-



A pinecone on the tomb of Karl von Pidoll (Zone 2.20.15)



The large pine in the Zona Vecchia

stant monitoring, regular pruning (see *Newsletter* 43) and occasionally removal for safety reasons – not an easy task in this confined space! (see *Newsletters* 7 and 21, p.7).

Giuliano Russini and Nicholas Stanley-Price

## WHO THEY WERE

### Shakspere Wood, sculptor and author



Elizabeth Hutchinson Wood (photo: G. Borelli, Rome; family collection)

Shakspere Wood arrived in Rome in 1851 aged 24. He had studied sculpture at the Royal Academy in London and travelled to Rome to further his studies. His father, Hamilton Wood, was a partner in a London company carrying out wood-turning. Shakspere worked mostly with white marble in the neo-classical style, which at that time was most popular in Europe. He was a friend of the Welshman, John Gibson, who was the highly successful doyen of the expatriate marble sculptors in Rome. His friendship with Gibson eased his entry into the frenetic circles of expatriate artists. In 1859 he married Elizabeth Lecky Hutchinson in London and they were based in Rome for the rest of their lives.

In the city Shakspere could easily obtain high-quality marble and expert marble workers to assist in his business. It was common practice to produce first a full-size clay or plaster model of the subject, and then to execute it in marble. From his studio at Via del Corso, 504, he sold his sculptures mostly to British residents or to visitors to Rome. His early works included a *Statue of a young maiden* (1857) and *The village blacksmith*, a 1.7 m. high statue (1864). Some were copied and very popular ones such as *Elaine* were copied a number of times. In 1865 Shakspere exhibited four works at the *International Exhibition of Arts and Manufactures* in Dublin: a statue of *Evangeline* and two others, probably small portrait studies, of Passucia and Hebe, all for sale; and – apparently not for sale – a marble medallion portrait of the Rev. Francis Woodward, Chaplain of the Anglican Church in Rome from 1850 till 1865. In the vestry of the same church there are preserved two of his plaster portrait medallions, one of them depicting the first Earl Cairns, Lord Chancellor of England under Benjamin Disraeli. Other important people who sat to him included John Astell, the Irish Attorney General, Astell's predecessor, Chief Justice James Monaghan, and Alexander Mitchell, "the Blind Engineer" who worked as a civil engineer with an assistant acting as his eyes. The last statue he is known to have produced is *Spring cometh up like a flower* (1878). It was bought by an Australian, E.R. Fairfax, who donated it to the

Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney where it is still on public view.

Living in Rome, Shakspere developed a strong interest in archaeology. He was fascinated by Father Joseph Mullooly's excavations under the Irish Dominican church of San Clemente in 1857. He lectured and wrote about these and other discoveries, becoming the Roman correspondent for *The Times* of London and a guide for visitors to the city. His knowledge of sculpture led to his compiling a catalogue to the sculpture collections of the Capitoline museum (Rome, 1872). His familiarity with the city is evident from the guidebook he wrote, *The new Curiosum Urbis: a Guide to Ancient and Modern Rome* (London, 1875; available online). It remains a valuable account of Rome in the mid-nineteenth century and of its community of resident artists whom he listed in the book. In 1881 his services in Italy were recognised when he was made a Commander of the Order of the Crown of Italy.

The following year his brother, Marshall Wood, also a successful sculptor who had worked in England, India, Canada and Australia, died in England and two years later his own 19-year-old daughter Katherine died. She was the first of the family to be buried in the cemetery, soon followed by her father Shakspere who died aged 58 in 1886, leaving his wife, three other daughters and a son. His wife Elizabeth survived until 1911 (Zone 1.9.32–33). One death notice reported that "Mr Wood had a very large acquaintance among various classes in Rome", an epitaph that he would probably have been happy with.

*Peter Hutchinson, a great-great-nephew of Elizabeth Hutchinson*



Shakspere Wood, *Spring cometh up like a flower* (1878)



Louis-Laurent Razé (1805-1872), *Studio of Signor Shakespeare Wood, Sculptor, 504 Corso, Rome*, watercolour, c.1867 (private collection)

#### 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](http://www.cemeteryrome.it)

#### THE NON-CATHOLIC CEMETERY IN ROME

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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)

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