

## Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

## NEWSLETTER

**An undervalued gem: the Cemetery's chapel**

If you enter the Cemetery and turn right, after some 200 metres you ascend a set of eight steps, flanked by two elegant palm trees, and arrive at the Cemetery chapel. This fine building was designed by the German architect Andreas Holzinger and erected at the expense of the Lutheran Church in 1898 on the land that had recently been acquired for the Cemetery by the German Embassy.

Adjoining the main chapel complex are a bell tower, a sacristy, and a mortuary. An upstairs area was once the caretaker's quarters, and now houses the administration office and archive.

To put this new development into context, with the end of Papal rule in the city of Rome in 1870 non-Catholic churches were allowed to be built within the city walls. The first Protestant one was the American Episcopal Church of St. Paul's within the Walls in Via Nazionale, designed by the English architect G.E. Street, followed in 1886 by the Anglican Church of All Saints in Via Babuino and many more. The architects of these new protestant churches looked to the Romanesque-gothic of northern Italy and further north in Europe for their inspiration, combining traditional and modern materials and techniques, and adding details recognisable to their rather cultured congregations.

One can imagine with what fervour Holzinger must have designed a chapel to be a symbol of the ecumenical climate of the times. It refers to the diverse national origins of its users while also acknowledging the Classical models that had attracted many of them to Rome in the first place. The result is a design that is perhaps a somewhat eclectic mix of architectural elements. For example, the castle-like external tower containing a spiral staircase and the narrow vertical windows on the façade - recalling the arrow slits of medieval castles - verge almost on the whimsical.

The exterior walls of the main chapel are in red brick, with two horizontal white travertine bands. This polychrome effect is typical of the Romanesque-gothic architecture of churches in northern Europe and northern Italy. The materials represent a physical and symbolic fusion of the brick architecture of northern Europe, where stone was scarce, with the Italian travertine



photo Alex Booth

and marble used in classical and Renaissance architecture. The main façade, facing the cemetery, has a large central portal in white travertine with a triangular pediment, the doorway itself having a slightly pointed or gothic arch. The main roof is gabled and tiled. Holzinger followed the northern European tradition of an attached square bell tower rather than the detached one typical of Italian churches. It has the same vertical strips of brickwork and white travertine as the façade, with a set of three openings on each side, and is topped by a curious octagonal construction that is a local landmark in Testaccio.

The chapel interior has a rectangular nave and a slightly raised chancel. The two gothic arched windows in the left nave wall have



photo Heather Munro

some beautiful stained glass rounds in rich blues, greens and burgundy. Much more was destroyed during World War II but the remaining glass, although in serious need of restoration, is original (see box below). The chancel is lit by a high rose window that also contains coloured gemmed glass and recalls northern gothic rather than Italianate models. Small ribs of travertine meet in a pointed arch above the rose window. The ribbing is broken by four slender marble columns with composite capitals, which appear to be decorative rather than structural, and are copied directly from Romanesque architecture. The roof is barrel-vaulted with cross vaulting where the windows break the rhythm of the vault.

The chapel building abuts the Cemetery wall at the corner of Via Caio Cestio and Via Zabaglia, but its main door and windows face into the Cemetery. The trees shelter it from the direct summer afternoon sun and - thanks also to the extensive marble surfaces inside - the building remains cool during even the hottest months. As a chapel purpose-built for a modern cemetery, it has been carefully designed to accommodate funerals by means of a large gateway opening from Via Cestio (number 4, now used only for funerals), with covered access from the street to a side door of the chapel. All in all, it is a fine building which is an asset to the Cemetery.

Amanda Thursfield

The Chapel has been in continuous use since it was first built, and is hired today for funerals and other services. It is in good structural condition, and the roof and electrical system have been repaired in recent years. However we urgently need to replace missing window glass so as to create stable environmental conditions and to exclude pollution. We also need to replace the harmonium which ceased operation last year with a similar one or a small organ.

We are therefore appealing for funds to make possible:

Window glass restoration; Cleaning of the exterior facades; Pigeon control; Cleaning of the interior surfaces and furnishings; Replacement of the harmonium

**Please can you make a donation towards one or more of these needs?**

If so, please contact the Director for details on [mail@protestantcemetery.it](mailto:mail@protestantcemetery.it). Requests for booking the chapel should go to the same address or by telephone to 06 5741900.



## Conservation: analysis of the Thomas Jefferson Page tomb

The collaborative project on stone conservation (see Newsletter no. 5) has led to an article on the analysis of the Page tomb to be published in the journal *Environmental Earth Sciences* and a student thesis by Elisa Marasco. The extract published here illustrates how all conservation treatments must be preceded by systematic analysis of the causes of deterioration.

The deterioration is evident if you compare the photo here with the one published some 25 years ago in the revised *Guidebook to the Cemetery* (in fact, George Nelson Page who is buried in the same family tomb helped with this revision in 1982). His grandfather Thomas Jefferson Page seems to have been one of the many southerners who went into exile following the Confederate defeat in the Civil War.



Portrait of T.J. Page, photo Gloucester Museum of History, Gloucester, VA, USA

### The tomb

Thomas Jefferson Page (1808-1899) was an officer in the US Navy and an explorer, who served in the Confederate Navy during the Civil War. He was a grandson of Thomas Nelson Jr., signatory of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and of John Page, a minor figure in the American Revolution and a friend of Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson Page is famous for having made various maps of Argentina and Paraguay (1853-1856) and for having mapped the river systems of Paraguay (1859-1860).

His funerary monument in the Zona Prima of the Non-Catholic Cemetery is the work of the sculptor Ettore Ximenes from Palermo (Palermo 1855-1926 Rome). Among Ximenes' best works are: the marble group representing Law on the Victor Emmanuel monument in Rome (1908), the Quadriga (1911) on the Palace of Justice in Rome, the statues of Garibaldi at Pesaro (1887) and Milan (1895), and the monument to Verdi at Parma (1913-1920).

The Page tomb contains the burials of: Thomas Jefferson Page Jr.;

Mary Belle Page; Thomas Jefferson Page; Benjamina Price; George Nelson Page; Anna Maria Antoldi; Elizabeth Page; George Blunt Page and Maria Luisa Roca.

In architectural terms, the Page tomb is built in marble and consists of different components, namely a statue, an obelisk, a sarcophagus and columns.

### Programme of research

Seeing that the sculpted part of the monument consisted of separate blocks, my idea was to characterise chemically and mineralogically the constituent parts, so as to understand if they were all of the same type of material and, especially, to identify the quarries from which they came.

Characterising the material is anyway a good point of departure for understanding the causes and mechanisms of the different forms of deterioration present.



The family tomb of T.J. Page

### Conclusions

The diagnostic study of the tomb monument has led to an exhaustive characterisation of the materials of which it is composed and how they have deteriorated. The results can be summarised as follows:

Thanks to chemical analysis (using a Scanning Electron Microscope with X-ray microanalysis (SEM/EDS) and Laser Ablation Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry (LA - ICP-MS), we have been able to identify a previous restoration that has not been documented, on the side of the obelisk facing southwest.

Subjecting samples of the marble to analysis of their manganese content, carbon-oxygen isotope ratios and MGS (maximum grain size), we can determine their provenance: samples taken from the obelisk, from the upper part of the sarcophagus and from the tomb base are all representative of the same type of marble, coming from the Carrara quarries.

Naked-eye visual inspection in the field and optical and electronic microscopic analysis in the laboratory have allowed us to recognise different forms of alteration of the monument such as carbonate dissolution, fractures, patinas, staining and runoff streaks. As for the biological patina, we can identify some biodeteriogens such as cyanobacteria, actinomyces and ascomyces on the tomb.

The data on the marble provenance and on the deterioration will be used as a starting point for building a complete database of all the stone materials that have been used in the Cemetery. Furthermore the results can then be used as guidelines for planning future conservation treatments on the soundest possible basis.

Elisa Marasco

(extract, translated from Italian, from: Diagnostic study of the monumental tomb of Thomas Jefferson Page in Rome, Tesi di Laurea, Università degli Studi della Calabria, 2007/2008.)





## Dangerous trees removed

In mid-March twenty-three cypresses and one large pine tree were removed by tree specialists. This work follows the recommendations of the systematic tree survey carried out by Gian Pietro Cantiani (*Newsletter* no. 4, 2008) and is aimed at making the Cemetery a safer place. The pine tree that was removed from near Shelley's tomb in the Zona Vecchia was some 25m. high and well over 100 years old. Most of the cypresses were in the Zona Terza and were dead or potentially dangerous. The law requires us to replace trees that have been felled so we will be replanting over the next few months. If you would like to dedicate one of the new trees to the memory of a relative or friend, please contact the Director.



Removal of pine tree from Zona Vecchia.

## Spectacular gilt medallion revealed

Restorer Rita Galluccio has done a magnificent job in cleaning the bronze portrait medallion on the tomb of August Riedel (1799-1883), the German painter, in the Zona Seconda. The whole medallion proves to have been gilded, and 90% of it has survived, hidden under surface layers of bronze corrosion. The monumental tomb itself is of a durable pink granite and has also been cleaned. We thank warmly the German Embassy for funding this work. It is now looking spectacular. Definitely worth a visit!



Portrait medallion of A. Riedel after cleaning

## Service in memory of British pilots

On May 19 we organised a memorial service for the three British airmen who died 90 years ago while pioneering civil air routes from London to Asia and Australia (see *Newsletter* no. 5, 2008). The short service, held in the Cemetery chapel and at the graveside, was led by The Revd Canon Jonathan Boardman of All Saints church in Rome. Other speakers were Nicholas Stanley-Price for the Cemetery, Colonel Charlie Darell, Defence Attaché of the British Embassy, and Ann Ciarrocca reading a message from the T.E. Lawrence Society. The President of the Assembly, H.H. Einar Bull, and a number of Friends, volunteers and concession-holders attended this memorable occasion.



## Family Day

The Ambassador of Norway, H.H. Einar M. Bull, hosted a Family Day on May 10, following the precedent set by his Swiss colleagues last year (*Newsletter* No. 4, 2008). A number of Embassy personnel, Friends and volunteers and their families took part in guided tours, games for children and light refreshments in the afternoon after the Cemetery had closed to the public. It was gratifying to welcome a number of Embassy members who had not previously visited the Cemetery.

## Thanks

Organising these two events and staffing the Visitors' Centre daily would be impossible without the help of the volunteers. A big thank you to all of them for their hard work; also to Susan Sanders for the layout of the first issues of the Newsletter and to Dan Keller for improving our IT capacity during the past year.



## Who can be buried nowadays in the Cemetery?

The Cemetery has produced a summary of the answer to this common question. We also want it to be better known that the Cemetery is an active one in which burials and other forms of commemoration can still take place today. (New tombs can be conceded only for the interment of cremation urns.)

The information given here is based on an explanation of two official documents, the Statute of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome (revised June 2008) and the Cemetery Regulations (revised 2009). In any question of interpretation, these two documents take precedence over the text below.

( → pag. 4)



**Who can be buried nowadays in the Cemetery?**  
(from pag.3)

### 1. Who is entitled to be buried in the Cemetery?

1.1. You can be buried in the cemetery if (a) you are a citizen of one of the following countries and (b) are not of the Roman Catholic faith and (c) at the time of your death are effectively a resident of Italy:

Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States of America.

1.2. If you are a citizen of another state, are not of the Roman Catholic faith and at the time of your death effectively a resident of Italy, you may be buried in the Cemetery subject to the approval of the President of the Assembly of Ambassadors.

1.3. If you are an Italian citizen or of the Catholic faith and are either the spouse or the mother/father or the son/daughter of someone qualified under (1.1) and (1.2) above, you may - subject to the approval of the President - be buried in the Cemetery but only in the same tomb as the qualified person already deceased and only if space permits.

1.4 The rights regarding spouses (see 1.3) can apply to you if you were a live-in partner of the deceased, so long as you can document cohabitation for at least five years.

1.5 If your spouse is Italian or Catholic and survives you but then re-marries, he/she loses the right to be buried in the same tomb as you (the same applies to partners, see 1.4 above).

### 2. Can burial in the Cemetery be arranged prior to death?

2.1 You can request a concession for burial in the Cemetery prior to death, but only if you meet the requirements of 1.1 above and are over 75 years old or in the terminal stages of an incurable disease (medical documentation needed).

2.2 If you are granted a pre-concession under 2.1 (above), it will be considered retracted if you subsequently convert to Catholicism or surrender your non-Italian citizenship.



### Corrado Augias on DVD

The book *Secrets of Rome* by Corrado Augias which starts in the Cemetery (see Newsletter no. 5, 2008) now forms the basis of a series of fine DVDs distributed by La Repubblica/Espresso. They show Rome at its best, with some remarkable aerial views of the Pyramid area. Several recent Italian visitors have said they discovered the Cemetery thanks to Augias' book.



### How others see the Cemetery

*Of the many English authors who have written about the Cemetery, we feature two who are separated by almost 200 years. Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), a banker, poet, art collector and patron of writers (including Dickens), was equally famous for his kind heart, his sharp tongue and his lavish breakfasts to which the leading literary figures of London were invited. His poem on Italy had its origin in a visit that he made in 1815 - so here he is describing the Parte Antica of the Cemetery when relatively few tombs had been erected there.*

When I am inclined to be serious, I love to wander up and down before the tomb of Caius Cestius. The Protestant burial-ground is there; and most of the little monuments are erected to the young; young men of promise, cut off when on their travels, full of enthusiasm, full of enjoyment; brides, in the bloom of their beauty, on their first journey; or children borne from home in search of health. This stone was placed by his fellow-travellers, young as himself, who will return to the house of his parents without him; that, by a husband or a father, now in his native country. His heart is buried in that grave.

It is a quiet and sheltered nook, covered in the winter with violets; and the Pyramid, that over-shadows it, gives it a classical and singularly solemn air. You feel an interest there, a sympathy you were not prepared for. You are yourself in a foreign land; and they are for the most part your countrymen. They call upon you in your mother-tongue in English in words unknown to a native, known only to yourselves; and the tomb of Cestius, that old majestic pile, has this also in common with them. It is itself a stranger, among strangers. It has stood there till the language spoken round about it has changed; and the shepherd, born at the foot, can read its inscription no longer.

*From Samuel Rogers. Italy. A poem, London, 1822.*

*The Cemetery continues to be featured in contemporary fiction set in Rome. In Sarah Duncan's fourth novel published this year, Natalie flees her disintegrating life in England for Rome where she takes a fancy to Guy who is doing historical research at the British School. Impressed with Guy's knowledge of Rome, she is amazed to find that he has never visited the Cemetery. Not only is the description right up to date (numbered trees!) but the Cemetery, once they have managed to find it, is in an immaculate state.*

The traffic noise along the Via Marmorata stopped. Instead the air was filled with birdsong coming from the towering firs and cypresses billowing gently in the breeze, scenting the air with evergreen freshness.

In contrast to Natalie's image of overgrown dereliction, the cemetery was immaculate. It was crammed with graves as neatly arranged as soldiers standing shoulder to shoulder, each plot defined by a box hedge...Trees punctuated the rows, all with cardboard numbers pinned to them.

'This is so not what I expected' Natalie murmured to Guy.

*From A single to Rome, by Sarah Duncan, Headline, 2009 (with thanks to Mrs. Rita Zakevics for her eclectic reading tastes.)*



### HOW TO BECOME A FRIEND

This Newsletter is made possible by the contributions of Friends of the Cemetery but we *urgently* need more Friends in order to continue the Newsletter. Please go to our website to find a membership form and instructions :

[www.protestantcemetery.it](http://www.protestantcemetery.it)



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