

Letter in the Financial Times, August 31, 2013

August 30, 2013 10:37 pm

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### **Keats never got as far as Florence**



©National Portrait Gallery

Portrait of John Keats by artist William Hilton

*From Mr Nicholas Stanley-Price.*

Sir, With regard to the former residents of Florence listed by Izabella Scott (“[A bridge from opera to olives](#)”, House & Home, August 24): Elizabeth Barrett Browning was definitely, Percy Bysshe Shelley was briefly (four months, when his son Percy Florence was born) but John Keats never. Keats reached Rome from Naples already ill with tuberculosis and died a few months later in February 1821. Both he and Shelley are permanent residents of the beautiful [non-Catholic Cemetery](#) in Rome.

**Nicholas Stanley-Price, Rome, Italy**

September 13, 2013 11:34 pm

### **Is there an ode to a purple bouquet?**

*From Mr Angus Logan.*

Sir, Nicholas Stanley-Price ([Letters](#), August 31) rightly describes the [Non-Catholic Cemetery](#) in Rome as being the last resting place of Shelley and Keats. There also lie [R H Dana](#), the American lawyer and author, and [Antonio Gramsci](#), the Italian socialist and political theorist, among other prominent and permanent residents.

The cemetery grounds too provide delightful corners of shady cool from the Rome heat as well as amusing frolics by numerous friendly, well-fed looking and surprisingly tame cats.

Some years ago, while ruminating around the gravestone of Keats, I saw a tall young man leave purple coloured bouquets – of violets perhaps – at the foot of the Keats’ plot. I have often wondered since then what the flowers might have referred to in the poet’s short life or works. Perhaps Mr Stanley-Price can enlighten us on this?

**Angus Logan, Glasgow, UK**

September 20, 2013 10:28 pm

## Flowers flourish at Keats' resting place



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The grave of poet John Keats in Rome

*From Mr Nicholas Stanley-Price.*

Sir, Angus Logan ("[Is there an ode to a purple bouquet?](#)", Letters, September 14) asks why a young man might have left a bouquet of purple flowers – perhaps violets – on the grave of John Keats in Rome. They may well have been violets, which were among Keats' favourite flowers.

As he lay dying in the house on the Spanish Steps, he sent Joseph Severn to inspect the "English cemetery" where he knew he was destined soon to lie. He was delighted with Severn's report of a beautiful spot with violets, daisies and anemones sown amid the grass – the same "light of laughing flowers" that Percy Bysshe Shelley alluded to in *Adonais*, his elegy on the death of Keats. The violets, daisies and anemones still flourish there today.

**Nicholas Stanley-Price, Rome, Italy**