



NEWSLETTER

Rennell Rodd and the threat to Keats' grave

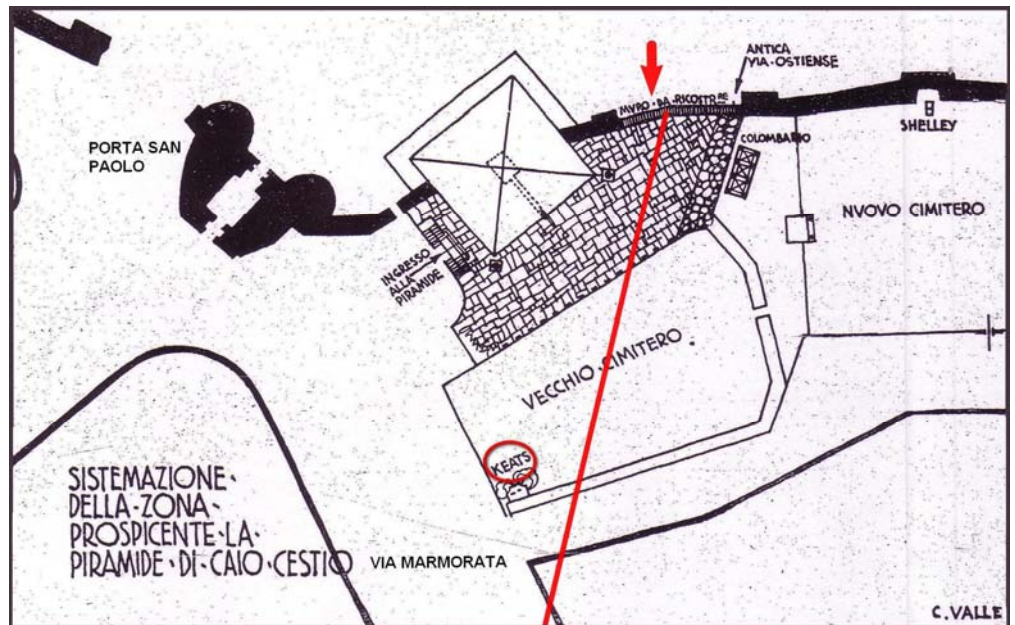
Imagine that in 1870 you took a carriage down Via Marmorata heading away from the river. As it does today, the road headed at first a little to the right of the Pyramid, then veered left towards the massive Porta San Paolo. However that gateway lies perpendicular to the line of Via Marmorata and – before large breaches were made in the Aurelian Wall to each side of it – it created an awkward angle for traffic. So the city council decided in 1888 that Via Marmorata should follow the straight line of the ancient Roman Via Ostiense through the Walls towards San Paolo fuori le Mura. To do this, the new road and tram-line would have to cut across the Parte Antica, destroying the old graves in the Protestant Cemetery including the grave of Keats.

London, only to learn quite by chance of the impending destruction of the old Protestant cemetery in Rome. Also by chance, his superior in Berlin, the British Ambassador, was leaving that night for an audience with Queen Victoria. The Queen, alarmed at the threat to Keats' grave, asked that the Ambassador in Rome record an objection to the scheme that only two months previously he had accepted; and that the Ambassador in Berlin obtain German support in opposing the scheme. Kaiser Wilhelm II, newly succeeded as Emperor (and Queen Victoria's grandson), was about to visit Rome and surely no request would be refused him.

In meetings with Bismarck, the German Chancellor, Mayor Guiccioli declared that the road project had to go ahead but, as a concession, the graves of Keats and Severn would be spared.



Mr James Rennell Rodd
(Spy for *Vanity Fair*, 1897)



The area of the Pyramid c.1930 (after C.Valle).
The red line is indicative only.

Rome had been growing rapidly as a capital city since 1870. The largely uninhabited *rione* of Testaccio was now due to have housing built for workers immigrating from other parts of Italy and also industrial premises (notably the municipal abattoir, inaugurated in 1891). This was the start of a new era.

As compensation for expropriating the Parte Antica (the Vecchio Cimitero), the Comune offered to concede to the Cemetery a large new plot adjoining the existing Nuovo Cimitero and to transfer there the tombstones from the Parte Antica. The British and German ambassadors in Rome raised no objection: the number of Protestant burials had been steadily increasing since 1870 and an extension of the burial-ground would resolve the space problem.

It was only because of a chance meeting in London and interventions at the highest levels in Europe that the plan did not go ahead.

In 1888 Rennell Rodd was a young British diplomat just finishing his first post in Berlin. He had not yet had the first of the three postings in his career to Rome. But the city was already familiar to him: as a boy of six, he and his parents had spent several months living in Via Condotti, and he had returned after his university studies for another long stay. On leave from Berlin he called at the Foreign Office in

Enclosed in an iron railing and planted with trees, they would form a little triangle of green between the wall along Via Marmorata and the new road cutting across the Parte Antica. Meanwhile, in preparation for the new road and tram-line, the Comune demolished a stretch some 30m. long of the Aurelian Wall through which it would pass (see the section arrowed on the map). But no further work took place.

When Rodd returned to Rome as the British Ambassador in 1908, he found the gap in the Aurelian Wall still blocked by a temporary wooden hoarding (see image on page 2). Approaching the Mayor of Rome, Ernesto Nathan (English-born, Jewish, a Freemason), he found a man who was entirely sympathetic to preserving the Old Cemetery. Nathan proposed that instead a new road should perforate the Aurelian Wall further to the west (the four arches visible in today's Via Nicola Zabaglia); and that the ugly wooden hoarding should be replaced by a re-built wall and an iron entrance-gate. The Old Cemetery would remain undisturbed so long as its use did not change.

The agreement made in 1910 between Nathan and the British and German ambassadors ensured that the Parte Antica would remain intact. But the road plan continued to be a bone of contention in

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Temporary wooden hoarding in Aurelian Wall, c.1912

Roman politics, the more so after 1914 when the two principal foreign nations involved went to war with each other. With the declaration in 1918 of the cemetery as a Zona Monumentale de Interesse Nazionale, the Protestant community could feel reassured about its preservation. Finally in the 1930s the Aurelian Wall was rebuilt with an entrance-gate, replacing the wooden hoarding erected forty years earlier (see photo below).



The Aurelian Wall re-built (in pale brick)

How much credit is due to Rodd? Other than his fortuitous but crucial meeting at the Foreign Office in 1888, his initiative in taking up the matter with Mayor Nathan twenty years later led to the cancellation of the road-building scheme. His saving of Keats' grave ranks as a success along with the other cultural institutions in Italy that he helped to found: the Keats-Shelley House, the British School at Rome, and the British Institute in Florence.

As a diplomat he enjoyed the highest reputation, being also well regarded as a poet, classical scholar, linguist and painter of watercolours. He epitomised the unfailingly polite English gentleman-diplomat of impeccable integrity. Perhaps conscious of this reputation, he wrote in his memoirs about the chance meeting in 1888 that led ultimately to Keats' grave being preserved: "During this visit to England I became involved in the only intrigue of which I have been consciously guilty in my life", concluding that the end justified the means.

Nicholas Stanley-Price



WHO THEY WERE...

Hilde Bauer Lotz (1907-1999)

Wolfgang Lotz (1912-1981)

"Make sure the documents for the cemetery are in good order," our mother would say time and again when one of us visited her. Looking after her husband's grave and securing her place there meant so much to her.

Born in Munich, Hilde Bauer was awarded a doctorate in 1931 for her thesis on Gothic sculpture. She then trained as a photographer at the Munich photo school, completing her studies cum laude. She was amongst the last to be awarded an Italian scholarship without



Hilde Bauer, early 1930s

having to join the Nazi party. Arriving in Rome in 1933, she worked as a jobbing photographer for scholars, including her first husband Bernhardt Degenhart, at the German art historical institutes in Florence and Rome. She toured southern Italy and Sicily, documenting architecture, sculpture and drawings with her heavy Linhof camera, reserving her handheld Leica for personal work. Her photographs of Scanno captured the unique costumes and lifestyle of this isolated village in the Abruzzo mountains. She fell in love with Wolfgang Lotz, who had been awarded a bursary to study at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence. The son of a German mining industrialist, he had just completed his thesis on the Renaissance architect Vignola.



Wolfgang Lotz's official pass to Italian museums, renewed until 1942

Florence was a sanctuary for the couple from the horrors of Nazi dictatorship, even as political tensions rose and war broke out. The

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Photo: Helga Fietz

Hilde Lotz at the Hertziana, c.1973

couple, with their Siamese cat Ulrich, lived in the Torre dei Ramaglianti where Christoph was born. Hilde was commissioned to document Florentine architecture for an intended book by Friedrich Kriegbaum. The photographs were never published due to Kriegbaum's untimely death, but Hilde's crystalline portrait of the city remains unique.

Wolfgang was called up in October 1942, forcing Hilde to leave her beloved Italy with her baby son so that she would receive his soldier's pay. There she settled in a tiny Austrian village near her friend, psychiatrist Alice von Platen. The Wehrmacht dispatched Wolfgang to Saxony for interpreter training and then to Yugoslavia. He was held at the vast Remagen camp as a prisoner of war, finally to rejoin Hilde in Munich late in 1945. Here their daughters Irene and Corinna were born and Wolfgang worked at the Central Art Collecting point, set up to restitute works confiscated by the Nazis. He then became deputy director of Munich's newly-founded Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte. In 1952 the family moved to the United States, where Wolfgang took up teaching posts, succeeding his close colleague, Richard Krautheimer, first at Vassar College and then at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. The volume on Italian Renaissance architecture that Nikolaus Pevsner now commissioned him to write for the Pelican History of Art series became Wolfgang's cross and magnum opus.

In 1962, recognised as "the one of the most perceptive critic-historians of his generation", he was appointed director of the Hertziana, now the Max Planck Institute for Art History. Wolfgang transformed it into a major international research centre, inviting scholars from around the world. Despite his relaxed and self-deprecating manner, running the institute was a demanding commitment, with both management and research responsibilities. During this golden age, the Lotz family along with Hertziana staff enjoyed the run of the Renaissance Palazzo Zuccari and its Tempietto at the top of the Spanish Steps. Hilde presided over her popular Friday afternoon teas, relaxed social occasions where friendships were forged. In 1975 both the Pelican volume and *Studies in Renaissance Architecture* appeared. In them, Wolfgang interpreted the symbolic significance of Italian squares, churches and palaces and architectural complexes, drawing on his encyclopaedic knowledge of drawings and

endless field trips to Italian towns and churches. He died unexpectedly, after collapsing on the Pincio only months into his retirement.

Hilde organised exhibitions of her Florence photographs at Palazzo Strozzi, at London's Courtauld Institute, and in Bonn and Mannheim between 1977 and 1994 to critical acclaim. She continued to live near the Hertziana, only reluctantly relocating to Munich in 1986. On a beautiful July day family and friends from five countries gathered at the Cemetery to inter her ashes next to Wolfgang in the city and cemetery they had held so dear. And, finally, the Scanno photographs were displayed in the mountain village, thanks to art historian Tamara Hufschmidt and Mayor Angelo Cetrone.

Contributed by Corinna Lotz and Irene Lotz



NEWS FROM THE CEMETERY

Ceremony for the restored Ceccarini tomb

On May 8 a large group of citizens of Riccione in Emilia-Romagna travelled to Rome for the unveiling of the restored Ceccarini tomb (see *Newsletter* 14). A crowd of around 50 listened to speeches given by Mr Massimo Pirone (Mayor of Riccione), Mr Riccardo Angelini (President of the Rotary Club of Riccione Cattolica), Mrs Adele Marina Zoffoli (President of the IPAB Asilo d'Infanzia Maria Ceccarini), H.E. Ambassador Einar Bull (President of the Assembly of the Cemetery) and Mrs Amanda Thursfield (Director of the



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

Mrs Zoffoli speaking, watched by the Mayor of Riccione



Amanda Thursfield speaking at the ceremony

Cemetery). This was an important occasion, both for honouring the Ceccarinis as great benefactors of Riccione and for the Cemetery's success in having this large, imposing tomb restored with the help of external fundraising. A model that we hope will be repeated in future.

The earliest woman painter: was it Eleonora Harboe?



E.C. Harboe (1796-1860) (attrib.), Portrait of her mother Maren Harboe

In response to our appeal in *Newsletter 14*, Steen Neergard has proposed Eleonora Christine Harboe (1796-1860) as the first woman painter to have been buried here. Born in Copenhagen as the daughter of a naval officer, she applied to take private lessons at the Royal Danish Academy with C.W. Eckersberg (1783-1853), at a time when women had no access to public education. Eckersberg has been called the 'father of Danish painting' because of his skills as a painter and teacher. As well as copying the great Italian and Dutch masters, Harboe also did portraits on commission in a style that betrays her debt to Eckersberg. These appear occasionally at auction; the one we reproduce here was sold at auction in May this year. In the autumn of 1856 she settled in Rome, where she made a living from her painting until dying of cancer in a Catholic foundation. Her grave no longer exists, her remains having been transferred long ago to the communal ossuary in the Zona Seconda where her name is recorded.

Steen is the co-author with his wife of *Vi kom fra Danmark: danske gravsteder på den ikke-Katolske Kirkegård I Rom* (Copenhagen: Conradianum, reprinted 2010) which we sell in the Visitors' Centre. He kindly supplied information about Harboe and the image.

A tree in memory of Chris Huemer

In May a group of Chris's friends dedicated one of the sponsored cypress trees in her memory. The tree and accompanying plaque lie in a prominent place in the Zona Vecchia (Row 12.1). All tree and garden maintenance continues to be in the hands of Il Trattore, a social co-operative that employs disadvantaged youth (see contact details below). Many of our visitors comment on their excellent work, most of it carried out by Luca, Paolo (pictured below) and Daniele of Il Trattore. Our warm thanks to them.

Guided tours

We are delighted to be receiving a growing number of groups visiting the Cemetery. Most of these come from schools in and outside Rome but others come from abroad. We also welcome university groups, many of them students on 'Semester in Rome' programmes, and members of Italian cultural associations. Groups can bring their own guide or can request one from us (Italian, English and German are the languages that we offer). We ask groups with their own guide or school groups guided by us to make a donation of €3 per person. We ask for a donation of €4 per person for other non-school groups who use our guides. There is now a booking system in place and this helps to relieve congestion and to reduce the physical impact on the Cemetery. A big thank you to Ornella Forte in the office and to volunteer Jane Lawrence for helping to administer this. If you wish to bring a group, please let us know in advance. See <http://www.protestantcemetery.it/visit/visit.html>

Tax-exempt status of the Cemetery for US residents

The Cemetery has reactivated its tax-exempt status in the United States that had become dormant after being established in the 1960s. Its status is as a cemetery under 501(c)13 of the IRS tax code. For more details about tax-exempt donations, please contact the Director.



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