

Summer 2015

FRIENDS of the

No. 31

Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome



NEWSLETTER

At the foot of the Pyramid. 300 years of the Cemetery for Foreigners in Rome

An exhibition to celebrate our 300th anniversary (22 September to 13 November 2016)

Next year we will be celebrating 300 years of burials at the foot of the Pyramid. Our main event will be an exhibition about the Cemetery's history as seen through the eyes of artists. These include foreigners such as J.M.W. Turner, J.P. Hackert, Salomon Corrodi and Edvard Munch, and Italians such as Bartolomeo Pinelli and Ettore Roesler Franz.

We have been ambitious in our plans, selecting works from nine countries in Europe and the USA. Many are little known or even unpublished – bringing them together in one place will be unprecedented. The curators of the event are Nicholas Stanley-Price and Julian Kliemann, art historian at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, both of them members of the Cemetery's Advisory Committee.

We are very fortunate that the Casa di Goethe has agreed to be a partner and to host the exhibition. It is ideally located in the centre of Rome on the Via del Corso, in the very rooms where Goethe stayed in 1786-1768. Nowadays it hosts international exhibitions and cultural events. Environmental control of the exhibition spaces meets the international standards that lenders of art require. There will be an exhibition catalogue in three languages (English, German and Italian) and a programme of talks and guided visits to the Cemetery.

Casa di Goethe

This promises to be a landmark event in 2016. Can you help us to ensure its success? (see Box)



Thomas Cole (1801–1848), *View of the Protestant Burying Ground, Rome*, c.1833-34, oil on canvas, OL.1981.17. © The Olana Partnership. www.olana.org

Fundraising – can you help?

Our ambitious plans require funds, of course. The main cost is borrowing the works of art which requires specialist shippers. The Friends have given €10,000, for which we say a big Thank You. We are also indebted to Mr Nicola Bulgari, whose family has strong connections with the Cemetery, for a generous personal donation to encourage others to contribute. Can you too help, please? Just go to the 'Donate' button on our website. Even a small donation will be welcome. We thank you warmly in advance for helping to make this event a huge success.

Two views of the New Cemetery

The American landscape painter Thomas Cole was in Rome in 1832. In this view, he depicts the New Cemetery that had been opened ten years earlier. Gravestones spill down the slope either side of the path that ascends from the gate. One of the tombs was that of Rosa Bathurst who drowned in the Tiber in 1824 (see *Newsletter* 19). In this unfinished watercolour of the tomb, the inscription is merely scribbled. Some time after 1830 the long text was added that you can read today (ZV.13.17).



Anon. *The tomb of Rosa Bathurst*, c.1830, watercolour and ink. Museo di Roma, MR 6159 (with permission)

The Family Day

Our President, H.E. Mr Mike Rann, Ambassador of Australia, hosted our annual Family Day on Sunday 17 May, a day blessed with hot sunshine. For the many who attended – from the Embassies, Friends, concession-

holders and their families – there were guided tours, followed by refreshments in the Garden Room.

Benjamin Spence's memorial to Devereux Cockburn

The striking memorial to a young English soldier, Devereux Plantagenet Cockburn, catches the eye of many visitors. It is unusual for several reasons: it is the only monument of its type in the Cemetery; it is signed by a known English sculptor, Benjamin Spence; and at some point in its history it has moved!



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

Spence's monument to Devereux Cockburn

Its inscription tells us that Cockburn died aged 21 in 1850, that he was formerly of the 2nd Dragoons (Royal Scot Greys), and had travelled widely in search of health. Born in Herefordshire in 1828, he was the eldest of four sons and five daughters, but all except the second and fourth sons died young and unmarried. His given names come from Cockburn ancestors: the Devereux who came over to England during the Norman Conquest and, through his German grandmother, the royal Plantagenet family. The marble memorial portrays him life-size, dressed in his army uniform, leaning on pillows and wrapped in a heavy cloak. He gazes upwards while holding an open book in one hand. A spaniel looks mournfully at him. At opposite ends of the plinth are carved the family's coat of arms and the insignia of the 2nd Dragoons. The sculptor placed his name prominently so as to be seen easily from the front.

Benjamin Spence (baptised 1823-1866) had arrived in Rome in 1846 with an introduction to the famous Welsh sculptor John Gibson, a friend of his father from his Liverpool days. Gibson welcomed him to his studio but thought little of his ability, writing to a friend that he 'seems to me a very good young man but I do not think he has genius for art'. Perhaps as a result, Spence soon moved across the street to the studio of Richard Wyatt, Gibson's friend and rival, where he concentrated on producing sentimental subjects, often young females, in neoclassical style. In May 1850 he suddenly found himself busier than ever: Wyatt died unexpectedly, leaving several unfinished commissions which Spence began to complete (Wyatt's grave is marked by a fine headstone with portrait medallion sculpted by John Gibson, Zone 1.5.2). To this

unforeseen workload was added the memorial to Cockburn who had died three weeks earlier.

The Cockburn sculpture is reminiscent of recumbent effigies, those sculptures found in churches that show the deceased lying prone, sometimes reading a book, sometimes with a dog at his feet. But the pose of Cockburn also recalls Etruscan and Roman models. In turn, many years ago the art historian William Gerdtz



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

referred it to a tradition of romantic, melancholic figures, giving as an example a portrait by Wright of Derby. Whatever Spence's inspiration, it remains unique of its kind in the cemetery and an important example of his work.

Joseph Wright of Derby, *Sir Brooke Boothby*, 1781 (Tate)

Despite its great weight (it measures almost 2m. long and 0.65m. high at the head), the sculpture has shifted on its plinth at some point. Rather than being centred on the plinth, it aligns with its edge at the downslope end. A line scored in the plinth surface at the opposite end shows that it has shifted some 16 centimetres. What could have caused this shift? It might have been the tremors caused when the tip of the pyramid, struck by lightning in October 1861, fell to the ground (see *Newsletter* 29). These were sufficient to throw a gardener working nearby off his feet. Or the bombs that fell on the Old Cemetery in WWII (see *Newsletter* 28) might have been the cause. Whatever the explanation, may Devereux Plantagenet Cockburn now rest in peace.

Nicholas Stanley-Price



Cowboys and camels at the Pyramid



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

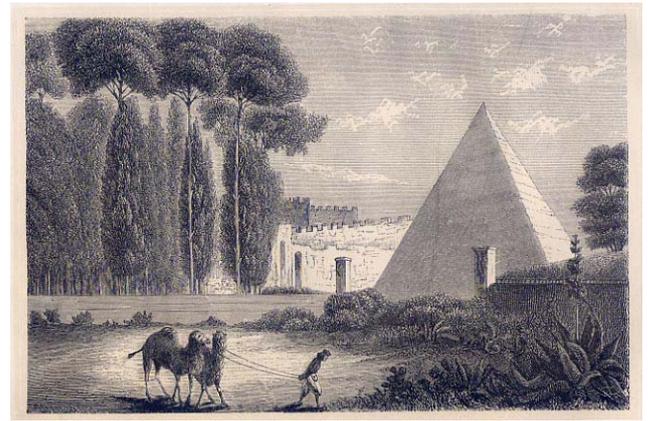
Inauguration of the cleaned pyramid

The newly-cleaned pyramid of Caius Cestius (see *Newsletter* 29) was formally inaugurated on 20 April in a ceremony attended by its sponsor, Mr Yuzo Yagi, and the Mayor of Rome, Mr Ignazio Marino. Together with the imported obelisks that grace the city's *piazze*, the pyramid is a perpetual reminder of the links between Rome and ancient Egypt. Perhaps aiming to make the pyramid appear more authentic, the artist of this woodcut (see top of the next page), published in a German magazine in 1880, decided to liven up the 'classic' view by adding a couple of camels (actually, dromedaries).



La Comp^{ie} Liebig, *La campagne romaine*, 1920s (?)

Conversely, the artist for the Liebig card stressed the Roman *campagna* context. He depicts cowboys preparing their dinner next to the tombs (current rules would prohibit this practice!). Liebig was the Belgian parent company of Oxo beef extract and Fray Bentos products. For a hundred years (1872-1974) its cards, printed in large numbers and many



Camels passing the pyramid (c.1880)

languages, were the most widespread form of advertising in Europe. Unlike the Liebig sets illustrating, e.g., Roman monuments or fountains, this card relates directly to the company's beef products.



WHO THEY WERE

An Australian in Rome: John "Peter" Mosman Harrison

At the age of five, my uncle had an accident that helped determine the course of his life. While growing up in the country near Grafton, on the north coast of New South Wales, he caught rheumatic fever which seriously weakened and deformed his heart. No-one realised at the time. It was only after he had enlisted, in 1941 at the age of 18, in the Royal Australian Air Force that his medical condition was diagnosed. He and the family were devastated at the news. Instead of training as a pilot in Canada, he took a job in a bank in Sydney.

When Japan entered the war in 1942, John was conscripted along with all men aged between 18 and 40. Keeping quiet about his heart condition, he joined the Army Engineers, determined to serve his country. But a medical test prior to his posting revealed the truth and he was discharged as 'medically unfit'.

John now found an interest in the stage and acted in productions for the Independent Theatre in North Sydney while also starting to study foreign languages. With the end of the war, and yearning for a wider cultural scene, he sailed for London. There he tried to make a career on the stage. Knowing there was another actor called John Harrison, he adopted the stage-name 'Peter' that he used for the rest of his all-too-short life. He joined a repertory company, the Regent Theatre Corporation, and had some success touring the English counties. But acting proved to be fatiguing and the income intermittent.

In 1954, he travelled to Italy to escape the English climate and settled in Rome where he became fluent in Italian, French, Spanish, German and Russian. He earned a living as a translator, acquired a considerable library, worked for the British Institute, and became a broadcaster for Radio Rome & Television (now RAI) as one of its leading translators and commentators.

John was one of the founders of the first Shakespearean theatre company in Rome, and even had a small part in a film: *Under Ten Flags* starring Van Heflin and Charles Laughton, directed by Duilio Coletti and produced by Dino De Laurentiis. He was known as a challenging conversationalist and was extremely well read. Despite his heart condition, he undertook strenuous walks in Lazio, Tuscany and Umbria.

His multifaceted life in Rome was the subject of numerous aerograms and postcards that he sent his family in Australia. In 1963 he made a return visit to see them – I remember him on this visit, dressed as an



John Harrison at Pisa

Italian and wearing clothes of a style not yet seen in Australia: a lightweight, machine-washable suit, long-sleeved knitted jerseys and soft leather slip-on shoes. On this and a second visit in 1965, he found little in common with Australia: he felt truly at home in Rome. But he agonised about returning to his birthplace and finally decided that he should seek different medical treatment in Australia. He was planning in February 1966 to return to live in Sydney when he was hospitalised in Rome, and died several weeks later aged 44, shortly before his ship was due to sail.

It was two good friends who ensured his burial in the Cemetery, choosing for his grave a simple headstone made of *peperino rosa* from Viterbo (Zone 1.11.38). Fernando Calabrese, an archaeologist, had often been his companion on his strenuous country walks; and the politician Leone Cattani (associated with the Liberal Party and then the Radical Party) and his wife Maria invited him regularly to their house in Albano. John was devoted to Italian culture, art and history. He was an entirely unassuming man, not interested in materialism – he chose never to buy a car since he found that he met more people when walking. His mother once wrote that John was one of the happiest and most uncomplaining people she had ever known, despite a life dogged by his heart condition and constant medication.

Adapted from a fuller tribute written by his nephew Ian Daymond in Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Carl Möller, Swedish architect



Oscar Björck, Carl Möller (National Museum, Stockholm)

In May 1934 a woman is travelling from Stockholm to Rome. She is carrying an urn, and her destination is the Non-Catholic Cemetery in the Eternal City. The woman is Dagmar Möller, and the urn contains the ashes of her husband, Carl Möller, famous Swedish architect, who had died in Sweden a few months earlier.

Carl and his wife had led an interesting life. Not only did Carl have a brilliant official career, he was surrounded by artists, authors and musicians. The magnificent house 'Villa Bo', designed and built by him in 1909, became a meeting-place for persons of outstanding culture. Dagmar was an admired singer of romantic songs, and two of her thirteen siblings were famous actresses, Alma Fahlström and Harriet Bosse (the third wife of August Strindberg). In Strindberg's *From an occult diary*, we get glimpses of both Carl and Dagmar. Edvard Grieg often praised Dagmar and dedicated his song-cycle *Haugtussa* to her.

From an early age Carl wanted to follow in the footsteps of his father and his grandfather. Both were skillful builders. From 1871 there is preserved a design made by him, aged only 14, of a wooden house façade with decorations in fretwork. In 1883 in central Stockholm his father built a house with much lavish detail, all of it designed by the 25-year-old Carl. At that time he was already an architect at the *Överintendentämbetet* (the Board of Public Works and Buildings) where he spent all his professional life. In 1904 he was appointed head of the Department (later re-organised and re-named *Byggnadsstyrelsen*).

He was the architect of notable churches in Stockholm: Johannekyrkan, Gustav Adolfskyrkan and Stefanskapellet. He also planned many exhibitions: in Stockholm (1897 and 1909), the World Exhibition in Paris (1900), the Baltic Exhibition in Malmö (1914), and the Exhibition of Decorative Art in Paris in 1925. The Italian Exhibition at Liljevalchs Konsthall in Stockholm generated hundreds of articles in the Italian and Swedish press in 1920 but is almost forgotten today. There Carl worked closely with Maja Sjöström, the textile artist who for many months travelled through Italy to find unique objects for the exhibition.

In 1924 Carl retired with a pension from the *Byggnadsstyrelsen*. Many asked him to become chairman of their organizations. But Carl was tired of the official life, gave it all up, and went travelling with his wife for five years.



From left to right, Oscar Björck, Theodor Lundberg, Carl Möller and Prince Eugen of Sweden, 1891

He died aged 76 on 4 December 1933 at Harpsund in Sweden. At his funeral in Stockholm he was honoured by the presence of royalty and famous professors, artists and musicians. The guests entered the chapel through an alley of flaming torches, with the white coffin surrounded by tall candles in a ceremony in which, in line with his own wishes, nothing but the ritual words were read. A string quartet, consisting of pupils from the Royal Academy of Music, played music by Grieg.

The next day Carl's urn was placed in a niche at the Northern Crematorium, a niche jointly chosen by his wife Dagmar and his sister Blenda who was overwhelmed by grief at her beloved brother's death. In her diary she wrote that Carl was the only person in the world who cared for her. After his death, she often visited his grave bringing flowers. But one day the urn was no longer there. Dagmar – after six months – had removed it. Why?

The answer was that one of Carl's best friends, the Swedish sculptor Theodor Lundberg, who lived in Italy for many years and died in Rome in 1926, was buried in the Non-Catholic Cemetery (Zone 3.4.5.5). Carl had visited his grave and fell in love with this romantic place. His wish to be buried there beside his friend had come true (Zone 3.4.4.8).

Dagmar herself, who died in January 1956 at the age of 89, had written twice to the director of the Cemetery, Marcello Piermattei, about her wish to be buried beside her husband. But nothing came of it, and so husband and wife rest in different graves in different countries.

Contributed by Åsa Rausing-Roos, who thanks Nicholas Stanley-Price and Amanda Thursfield for providing information from Cemetery records and the Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde for the photo.



Photo: Comune di Roma

The prize rose for fragrance

NEWS FROM THE CEMETERY

Our roses are among the flowers that look spectacular at this time of year – and the Director, Amanda Thursfield, had the honour of being invited to be on the International Jury for the 73rd International Rose Competition, held by the Rome City Council at the municipal Rose Garden. (The garden is on the site of the former Jewish Cemetery on the Aventine that was expropriated by Mussolini in 1935 for road-construction.) There were 89 new rose varieties on show, with entries coming from as far as Japan.



Roses of our own

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

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OPENING HOURS

Monday to Saturday 9:00am - 5:00pm
(last entrance 4.30pm)
Sunday & Public Holidays: 9.00am -1.00pm
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