

Winter 2015

# FRIENDS

No. 33

## of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome



# NEWSLETTER



### Our 300th anniversary year starts!

To launch our tercentenary, we proudly feature a new logo, designed by Joanne Morgante. Our exhibition celebrating the history of the Cemetery as seen by famous artists (see *Newsletter* 31) is in preparation. It will run from 22 September to 13 November, 2016 at the Casa di Goethe in central Rome. We have been successful in obtaining the loan of some remarkable paintings but still need funds to bring them here (and to return them). Can you help, please? Just go to our website <http://www.cemeteryrome.it/2016celebration/celebration.html> and hit the Donate button! Any amount from €5 upwards will be much appreciated. Thank you.

### More tombs restored, thanks to donors and partners

The recent cleaning of the Pyramid of Caius Cestius (see *Newsletter* 29) has made it much more impressive; but it also shows how much Rome's polluted atmosphere damages its monuments and how prestigious restoration projects in Rome depend on commercial sponsorship.

We are in a similar position. The big difference is that we have over 2,500 monuments to keep in good condition, and they lack the worldwide appeal of the Pyramid. But we have to ensure that, as memorials to the dead, they will be passed on intact to future generations.

Around 80% of our tombs are no longer being actively paid for. That is why we are indebted to support from the Friends of the Cemetery, from several Embassies in Rome, and from individual donors (see recent Newsletters and the Wedekind article below). In 2015 we collaborated again with the ICCROM and Getty Conservation Institute course (see *Newsletters 18 and 26*) that brings experienced stone conservators from around the world for twelve weeks of intensive learning.

An important tomb that they cleaned in 2015 was that of the young Norwegian Helene Klaveness (see *Newsletter* 28; Zone 3.1.2.7). The fine detail of the carving and the inscriptions and coats-of-arms on the stela were badly obscured by moss, lichen and algae; now they are fully legible. The nearby monument to the young British diplomat Edward St.

Lo Malet (1872-1909; Zone 3.1.2.12) also received attention. The two slightly different twisted columns and capitals of marble were probably re-used medieval elements that were adapted and then capped by an arch in travertine. The rather fragile structure had evidently been restored more than once in the past.

Good results were also obtained on the intricately carved Pritchard tomb (Zone 1.5.29). Thomas Pritchard (1860-1886) was a young man from Manchester, UK, but we know little else about him. After various tests, controlled airbrasive treatment was chosen for cleaning the delicate floral decoration.



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

The Klaveness sculpture restored



Photo: ICCROM/GCI

Nashwa Alramlawi (Palestine) and Marija Milchin (Austria) working on the Malet monument

For the first time we chose a gravestone that had been transferred years ago to the Zona Terza. Ludwig Haach (1813-1842) was a German painter from Meissen. He died aged 28 but, despite being recognised as a talented artist, his grave was later removed. The badly damaged stone is now repaired and stable.

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Photo: N. Stanley-Price

Silvia Galvan (Italy) working on the Pritchard tomb

Stonemasons from the Fachschule für Stein-technik in Munich made their annual visit, carrying out maintenance, cleaning and repair work under the supervision of conservators from Il Laboratorio s.a.s. An important task was repairing the cracked cover of the German National Tomb.

Finally, Il Laboratorio has conserved the only tomb with a subterranean crypt: the Andersen family tomb (Zone 1.7.10). The crypt contains extensive mosaic decoration and a number of figural sculptures by Andersen in his unmistakable style.



Photo: ICCROM/GCI

Kimihide Okamoto (Japan) repairing the Haach gravestone

Thanks to a donation from Fondazione SINFUB Onlus, the tomb has been restored both inside and outside.



## The Wedekind family in Italy: businessmen and art patrons



Palazzo Wedekind today

The fine building in Piazza Colonna known to Romans as the Palazzo of *Il Tempo*, the daily newspaper, is officially called Palazzo Wedekind. In origin a 17<sup>th</sup> C building, in 1814 the Pope made it Rome's central post office. In 1838 Pietro Camporese completed a project to re-build it, as the inscription on the architrave records, which included adding its fine portico of antique columns. Then in 1852 Carlo Wedekind bought the building to serve as the Rome branch of his commercial and banking business.

Born in Germany, Carlo Wedekind (1809-1881) had established himself in Palermo in 1838 as an importer of textiles and exporter of fruit. He set up branches in Rome, Genoa and Venice, with commercial partners in Germany and Britain, and his bank became a household name in Palermo and then in Rome. Later, in the 1890s, the family firm formed a joint venture in Venice with the businessman Benedetto Walter and Standard Oil in order to set up SIAP (Società italo-americana pel petrolio) – Carlo Wedekind's son Paolo was the first chairman of the board, acquiring the nickname of "the petrol king". With the outbreak of World War I and the seizure of enemy assets, the family lost control of both Carlo Wedekind & Co. and SIAP. In 1926 the Wedekinds sold the few assets that

were returned to them, left Italy and founded a new company in Germany that flourishes today.

As well as being a successful businessman, Carlo Wedekind was a generous patron of artists such as Arnold Böcklin, Anselm Feuerbach, and Wilhelm von Kaulbach. Among the family's portraits is a pastel (see photo) by the latter's great-nephew, Friedrich August von Kaulbach, of Carlo's daughter-in-law Charlotte. Her father was the bestselling author Ludwig Ganghofer. She had recently married Benno, the youngest of Carlo's seven children, who like his older brothers Roberto, Paolo and Carlo was a partner in the family businesses in Italy.

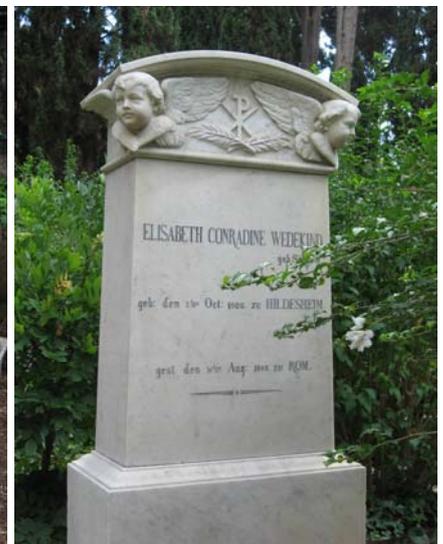


Anon, *Carlo Wedekind* (detail), oil on canvas, c.1850 (family collection)

It was the oldest son, Roberto, who had the saddest connection with our Cemetery. Moving to Rome in 1867 to work in the family bank in



Headstones to Anna Wedekind (behind) and her two children (restored 2015)



Monument to Betty Wedekind (restored 2015)

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Roberto and Anna Wedekind, c.1873  
(family collection)

Palazzo Wedekind, he lived in the Villa Spada on the Janiculum, at one point Garibaldi's headquarters during the 1849 siege of Rome and now the Irish Embassy to Italy. In 1872 he married the 19-year-old Anna Crome from Lübeck, niece of Werner Siemens, founder of Siemens AG Munich. In this image of the couple (see photo), Anna must already be pregnant with their first son, Carlo, who survived only nine months, dying on 28 April 1874. Worse was to follow: her second pregnancy a year later ended in another boy, Robert, surviving only a few days and she herself

dying a couple of months later. The three headstones, restored last year thanks to the Wedekind family foundation, tell their own pathetic tale (Zone 1.8.44).

The same donation also allowed the more ornate headstone of Elisabeth

(Betty) Wedekind (1808-1889) to be restored (Zone 1.4.40). Her husband (and cousin) Federico was Carlo Wedekind's brother who, until 1851 when the couple returned to Germany, was a partner in the family business in Palermo. As another indication of the family's pre-eminence in that city, he was the Royal Prussian consul while Carlo was the Royal Hanoverian consul.

It was their son Carl Albrecht (1841-1914), born like his cousins Roberto and Paolo in Palermo, who added a colourful streak to the family's history in Italy. While a partner in the family bank in Rome, he did much to support the German artists living there. He was treasurer of the German artists association *Deutscher Künstlerverein* and helped to secure the *Serpentara* property at Olevano Romano, still in use today by visiting artists in a scheme administered through the German Academy in Rome. But, at the age of 50, Carl Albrecht separated from his wife and moved to Capri where he set up house with a much younger Caprese beauty. He is buried there in the Cimitero acattolico, the fifth Wedekind to be buried in Italy where the family had been immensely successful in business while also supporting some of the leading German artists of the period.



Friedrich August von Kaulbach, *Charlotte Wedekind*, pastel, 1901  
(a wedding present from the artist; family collection)

*Nicholas Stanley-Price, compiled from information supplied by Ralph Edzard Wedekind, greatgrandson of Benno and Charlotte Wedekind*



## POETS IN THE CEMETERY (1): "The Errant Bard" and the Caffè Greco



Il Bardo Errante (by the author)

My grandmother Elena told me that, when she was small and living in Testaccio, she used to go and play with a gang of children in the Non-Catholic Cemetery. Every now and then they had to hide in fear when a strange event happened: a dark carriage would arrive and out would get a very elegant Chinese lady who proceeded to leave at one of the graves bowls full of food and perfumed candles. Some years ago, along with my friend Martina Kirchner who was then the Cemetery's treasurer, we explored every nook and cranny to discover whether there were in fact any gravestones with Chinese inscriptions. At a certain

point, pushing aside a bunch of nettles, I found a strange portrait on porcelain of a fine gentleman sporting moustaches like Buffalo Bill's, or...rather, like a Nazarene's?

point, pushing aside a bunch of nettles, I found a strange portrait on porcelain of a fine gentleman sporting moustaches like Buffalo Bill's, or...rather, like a Nazarene's?

The inscription on the gravestone (Zona 1.10.51) reads: "1877 1941 To the memory of the poet "Lewis" Charles Harold Geoghegan "Il Bardo Errante" as he used to call himself / His friends of the Caffè Greco according to his wishes had him buried here amongst artists and poets / This memorial was erected by subscription." His portrait is a drawing on porcelain, a unique concession to what is a very Roman but hardly a non-Catholic custom.



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

Tomb of "Lewis" Geoghegan

Construction of his tomb took some time. In 1943 a letter from Piermattei, director of the Cemetery, points out that the works for it had exceeded the estimated cost (a well-known situation today as it was then!). The sum of 780 lire had been set aside but, with the addition of a plaque and other details, the costs had risen to as much as 1,312 lire. The writer of the letter, Federico Gubinelli, begged to have "...a major discount, or otherwise I will be in real difficulty" (he was the owner of the Caffè Greco at the time).

In a faded newspaper clipping Lewis is described as a classic regular at the Caffè Greco: "Tall, thin, haggard and pale from the many hours he spent in his favourite caffè" where he used to recite his mysterious rhymes "in which he confessed in his mother-tongue his love for Rome".

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G.C., as the author signs himself, had not had the privilege of knowing Lewis but he had admired from afar his finest compositions, and the wrinkles of his face like words on a page." "Rome was at the heart of his life...this Rome of ours in which we sometimes are wrong to live without thinking of the singular privilege that good fortune has conceded to us". What is there to say about this comment made in 1941? Once again, today as it was then!

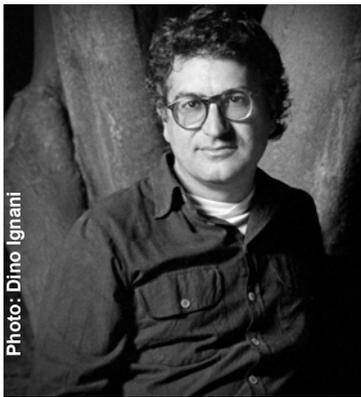
Contributed by Maria Cristina Crespo, a Roman artist

The editor adds: the portrait on the gravestone is taken from a drawing of 1937 by Feri Faragó in the collection of the Caffè Greco. As a regular habitu  of the caf  for many years, 'Lewis' made a striking figure – an impoverished, romantic poet who used to declaim the poetry of Dante

and Milton, even sometimes his own, to his friends assembled there. According to Diego Angeli in his *Cronache del Caff  Greco*, he had moved to Rome from Milan where he had known everyone in the music world. Geoghegan had thought himself in love with the great actress Maria Melato and spent hours writing poems and love-letters to her. He also frequented Cinecitt  where his unusual appearance helped to employ him as an extra. In the weeks before he died, he played a dying plague victim in the leper asylum scene from *I Promessi Sposi* (1941), directed by Mario Camerini, which was a huge commercial success. For a life characterised by the three 'P's of Poetry, Passion and Poverty, Manlio Barberito reckoned the Errant Bard to be the last figure of the Romantic era.



## POETS IN THE CEMETERY (2): Dario Bellezza



Dario Bellezza

collection of poetry *Invettive e licenze* in 1971, he was instantly hailed by no less than Pier Paolo Pasolini as "the best poet of the new generation" and in 1976, aged only 32, was awarded the prestigious Viareggio Prize.

Unlike a number of 20<sup>th</sup> century artists by now long associated with Rome, the poet, novelist, and playwright Dario Bellezza (1944 – 1996) was born and lived his entire life in the city. Cultivating and living the life of the artist-outcast and po te *maudit*, Bellezza was infamous for the outspoken and often confrontational/controversial nature of his writing and personal life, which was often related to his being openly homosexual. Extremely prolific, he published more than twenty works of poetry, prose and pieces for the theatre in only twenty-five years. With Garzanti's publication of his first

In addition to his own writing, he worked for the journals *Paragone*, *Carte segrete*, *Bimestre*, *Periferia*, *Il Policordo* and *Nuovi Argomenti* and, unsurprisingly, translated Arthur Rimbaud's entire oeuvre for Garzanti as well. Nevertheless, it was difficult for him to make a living and by most accounts throughout the course of his life he remained in rather dire straits. Unfortunately, just a little over a month after the death of his close friend (and once room-mate) Amelia Rosselli (see *Newsletter* 27), Dario Bellezza also died prematurely, due to complications from AIDS (Zone 2.9.28).

*Ormai non resta che battere  
la [sudicia] citt   
in cerca di chi non c'  pi .*

*Now there's nothing left to do but scour  
the [filthy] city  
looking for who's no longer there.*

Contributed by Alexander Booth, a writer, translator and former resident of Rome who now lives in Berlin. Work of his may be found at *Wordkunst*.

## NEWS FROM THE CEMETERY

### The Friends' Newsletter

To reduce mailing costs, Friends can now receive the Newsletter electronically. Producing and mailing the Newsletter every quarter requires the help of many volunteers. We thank particularly Patrizia Coppola, Ornella Forte, Tatiana Morici, Mick Phillips, Laura Scipioni, Anka Serbu, Rita Stivali and Matelda Talarico.

### Tax exemption for donations

Italian residents should know that the Cemetery has been approved for participation in the 5 x mille scheme that qualifies it to benefit from tax deductions. Also, just to remind our US-based Friends, donations are tax-deductible under the IRS code section 501(c)(13) (note: not 501(c)(3) but 501(c)(13) which is designated for cemeteries). Please remember the Cemetery when making your tax return!

### Oscar Wilde in the Chapel

On October 1 we held another fundraising event of readings by leading members of the English theatre scene in Rome. This time the chosen author was Oscar Wilde whose visit to the Cemetery led to his composing sonnets on the graves of Shelley and Keats, declaring the latter's tomb the holiest place in Rome. With Rory Stuart in the title-role, readings from Wilde's letters, John Keats and Colm T ibin made for an entertaining evening.

### Member of ASCE

Since 2009 the Cemetery has been a member of the Association of Significant Cemeteries of Europe (ASCE). We have now installed an ASCE plaque conferring this status at the entrance. In September the Editor attended ASCE's annual meeting in Bucharest and gave a paper on the conference theme of 'Foreigners in cemeteries'.

### 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

via Caio Cestio, 6, 00153, Roma

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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### NEWSLETTER

of the Friends of the Non-Catholic  
Cemetery in Rome

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