

Winter 2022

FRIENDS

No. 61

of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

N E W S L E T T E R



Amanda Thursfield retires after 15 successful years as Director

It is a moment of change as Amanda Thursfield retires as Director of the Cemetery. In this issue we recall some of the highlights of her tenure and invite others to reflect on her impact. We close by interviewing Yvonne Mazurek who has our strong support in the task of following in Amanda's footsteps.



Volunteers party, 2017



Amanda with Heather Munro, founder of the volunteers group, 2011 (*Newsletter 24*)



The Director and the Editor at the Visitors' Centre



Ornella Forte, Office Manager, with volunteer Rita Stivali (see *Newsletter 44*)

COMMEMORATIONS



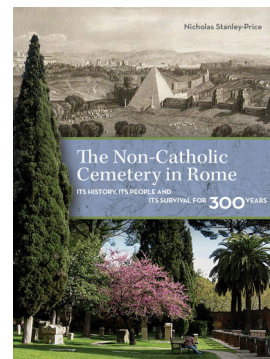
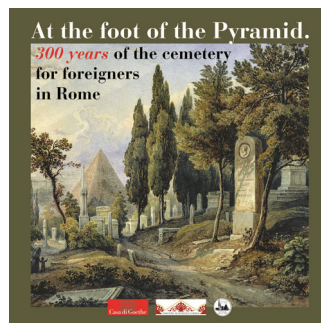
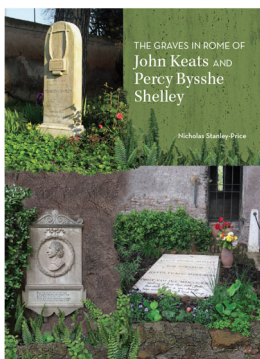
Commemoration of RAF pilots with the UK Minister of Defence, Tobias Ellwood, 2019 (photo: RAF; *Newsletter 48*)



Commemoration of the Ceccarinis and restoration of their massive monument, 2011 (*Newsletter 14*)



Opening the Tercentenary exhibition, Casa di Goethe, 2016 (*Newsletters 36, 37*)



CONSERVATION



The Page family tomb in 2011,
restored in 2012



Conservation of the Bowles monument,
2020 (*Newsletter 53*)



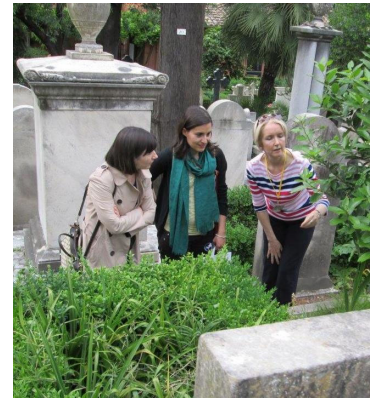
Conservation of the Karl Bryullov
monument, 2010 (*Newsletters 13, 57*)



A WELCOME TO VISITORS



With Koichiro and Nobuko Kawase
(*Newsletter 42*)



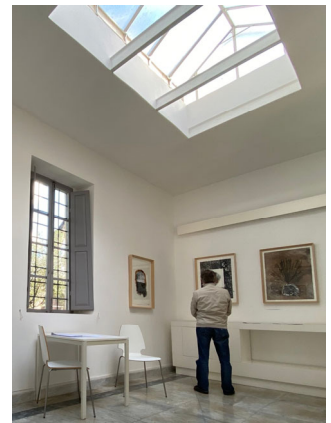
Helping visitors to find a grave

Visitors' donations at the gate, 2020
(now €5 is suggested)

CONVERSION OF THE GARDEN ROOM FOR EXHIBITIONS



H.E. Nomatamba Tambo inaugurating
the Garden Room, 2014 (*Newsletter 26*)



Exhibition by Marta Abbott in the
Garden Room, 2020 (*Newsletter 53*)

JUST A SAMPLE OF THE DIRECTOR'S CHALLENGES ...

COVID. Precautions for
visitors after re-opening



Starlings left 245 tombs in need of
cleaning, 2021 (*Newsletter 58*)



A heavy snowfall in
February 2018

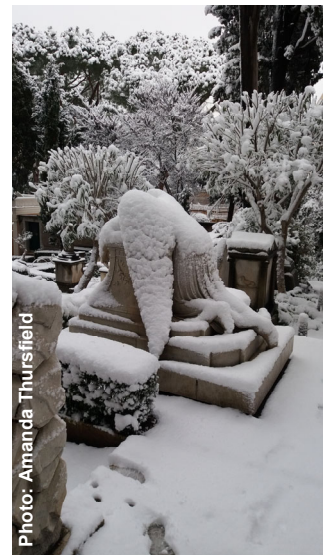


Photo: Amanda Thursfield

... JUST A SAMPLE OF THE DIRECTOR'S CHALLENGES

All leading to the award
of the MBE by HM The Queen

The fall of a pine tree branch after snow,
February 2010



COVID. Distancing at a book
presentation, September 2020



HOW OTHERS SEE THE DIRECTOR

What do the concession-holders say?

In these fifteen years that I have known Amanda as Director of the Cemetery, so dedicated, always present with a ready word of comfort or advice, always with a smile, I have often asked myself 'How does she do it?' The answer is simple: that she was the perfect choice for a very sensitive and demanding job that no-one could have carried on as Amanda did with never a word of complaint.

The Cemetery has never looked lovelier, in spite of the drought this summer; the trees and flowers colourful and flourishing, the lawn is emerald green. Your gardeners are always available due to your guidance and presence. As Director with your excellent team of volunteers making visitors from all over the world feel welcome, you have created an oasis of calm and peace for all. Those whom we love but see no more are resting in peace. Amanda, thank you, you have the admiration and affection of all of us. We wish you a happy and well-deserved retirement.

Sandra Seagram Annovazzi, concession-holder

We are long-time permanent residents of Rome. Our son died in 1996 but we are fortunate to be able to visit his grave regularly in what is undoubtedly the most beautiful cemetery in the world. Where historic graveyards are concerned, there is always a problem reconciling the needs of those who wish to spend time remembering their loved ones and those who come to visit and admire. Before Amanda Thursfield's appointment, the administration of the cemetery was somewhat lacking in these respects. There were difficulties both on the gardening and maintenance side and in the control of outside visitors and tourists.

I am happy to say that the new order which she has implemented has led not only to a sapient promotion of the cemetery as one of Rome's leading tourist attractions, but also to a marked improvement in the upkeep of both the graves and the surrounding grounds. Worth particular mention are the Friends' *Newsletters*, both in print and on line, the revamped Visitors' Centre, the Friends of the Cemetery organisation, the exhibitions and book launches and, very importantly, how groups of visitors are now encouraged to progress in an orderly way around the graves. All this together with a gardener being always available when required...

In the words of Shakespeare as found on Shelley's tombstone: "A sea-change into something rich"...

Brian and Tazim Hammond, concession-holders

Amanda's kindness is immediately evident because it is part of her character. Not only is she kind but also attentive and polite and puts at their ease those who come to see her: something that is not easy in the place where she works. So we all remember Amanda with affection and gratitude and we all wish her the very best for the future.

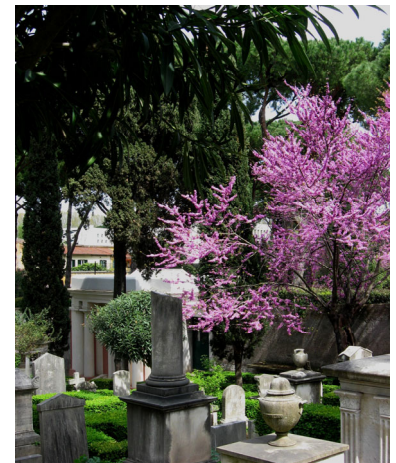
The Camilleri family, concession-holders

What do the gardeners say?

It is with great esteem and gratitude that I write on behalf of all those at the Il Trattore Social Cooperative to thank publicly Amanda Thursfield for her work as Director, for her competence and for her humanity, inculcating in all of us workers her enthusiasm and passion for working at the Cemetery. Her presence, constant but discreet, has always been for us an important and constructive reference point and a stimulus to do even better and to improve the Cemetery's image and its great historical, artistic and environmental value. Nor will we forget the care she has always shown when interacting with some of our working associates who are at times fragile characters, encouraging them in their most difficult moments. For this we will never cease to thank her.

We like to think of her still being with us even after December, with her smile and her kindness, greeting us as she does every morning with her 'Morning, lads!' And for our part we will continue doing our best while thinking also of Amanda, so that the verdant greenery of the Cemetery continues to be an object of beauty for enjoyment by the concession-holders, by visitors, and by the citizens of the world.

*The working members of the
Il Trattore Social Cooperative*



What do visitors say? A selection of comments in the Visitors' Book in 2022

One of the most beautiful cemeteries in the world! I live two steps away from Père Lachaise in Paris. Thank you for the devotion of you all who keep it so poetic! (France). This is a place beyond words, full of love and memory. It is immensely beautiful to experience and remember (Belgium). The cemetery is marvellous. One breathes a feeling of serenity. I'd like especially to emphasize the kindness of the volunteers. Smiling, helpful and very kind. Thank you for the emotions you have helped to give me (Italy). What a very special place, and so

beautifully taken care of, thank you! (Malta). An enchanting place where one doesn't feel the presence of death (Italy).

Astonishing to be in the presence of so much beauty (Scotland). Not covered with a veil of religion though unveiling the Divine's presence in every corner and its purest form. Thank you (USA). I try to visit here whenever I come to Rome. I feel that it is one of the most beautiful places in the world (UK). So good to see the Cemetery in such a good state, wonderful team work with the Director and everyone involved here. Always visit here when in Rome. Sarah Green (who was a member of the survey team led by Sebastian Rahtz in the 1980s).

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW DIRECTOR, YVONNE MAZUREK

1. *Congratulations on being appointed as Director of the Cemetery from 1 January 2023! You have been living in Italy for many years but when did you first learn of the Cemetery?*

Twenty years ago when I was teaching art history full-time in Viterbo and the school regularly travelled to Rome. Because of the poets' tombs and the Latin epitaphs, the Literature and Latin teachers vied to bring groups to the Cemetery, while I led site visits to Rome's museums and archaeological sites. It was the bicentenary of the deaths of Keats and Shelley that brought my attention back to the Cemetery and allowed me to forge an intimate relationship to this very special place.

2. *You have been 'shadowing' Amanda Thursfield for periods in November. What have been your first impressions of the job?*

The garden is a constant source of inspiration, but the people I've met behind the scenes have impressed me most. Amanda Thursfield has directed this site with utmost skill and care towards its many stakeholders. The staff has impressed me with its enthusiasm, commitment, and competence. The volunteers are cornerstones of the Cemeteries' visitor services, and distinguish themselves for their passion and friendliness. The concession-holders are, of course, the soul of the Cemetery. I appreciate their warm welcome.

3. *You were brought up in the United States and studied art history at the University of Chicago. What brought you to Italy?*

Many things. As a child, I felt at home among Tarquinia's painted tombs and was drawn to Mediterranean cultures. As a young adult, I studied art history, married an Italian, and had my daughter here. These family ties kept me here, as did my work dedicated to Italy's heritage and history. I now consider this country my adopted home.

4. *The cemetery is remarkable for the diversity of nationalities and religious faiths that the Director encounters. How do you think you can handle this aspect?*

The Cemetery's diversity, inclusiveness and syncretism make this an especially relevant place in our polarized world. In 2015, while managing an educational project in France for Plum Village, one of the best-known Buddhist contemplative centres in the world, led by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, I was asked to liaise with people in spiritual and secular roles from many paths. I believe that curiosity and humility are the foundations for intercultural dialogue and am looking forward to getting to know the many traditions that infuse our Cemetery.

5. *In recent years you have specialised in heritage conservation and museums, completing a Ph.D on the town of Orte north of Rome. How do you think this experience will help you manage the Cemetery?*

My doctoral research explored museum and conservation strategies for 'minor' Italian heritage, requiring research in museums, libraries, and a variety of archives. While I grappled with issues that may seem distant from this historic site, I believe the methods and skills I have gained will help me understand the complexity of this 300-year-old site and the people who shaped it. I encourage further research into the lives of those buried here and the international networks that brought them to Rome.

7. *What do you consider the greatest challenges in managing the Cemetery's future?*

I see two major challenges. The first we have little control over: climate change. We have yet to understand how irregular rainfall will impact our pines and cypresses over time, nor do we know how the garden's soil, plants and wildlife will evolve. The second challenge may seem minor by comparison, but involves the Cemetery's intangible heritage: its calm. For example, we invite visitors to limit the use of their electronic devices in the garden. While the internet is full of unapproved photographs of the Cemetery, it is our duty to concession-holders to preserve its contemplative atmosphere. I feel strongly about the value of this slow and 'unplugged' experience. As Director, I would like to find creative ways of nudging visitors off their cameras/phones and into the 'live' experience of the site.

8. *Any final word to the Friends as you start your job?*

'The holiest place in Rome,' as Oscar Wilde described it, stays open to the public thanks to the generosity of daily visitors and Friends like you. Your donations directly finance conservation projects and your participation make this the special place it is. Thank you for your continued support!



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

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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