



NEWSLETTER

Keeping it beautiful: an interview with Alessandro Babolin

In the summer of 2008 the Cemetery selected the firm Il Trattore after competitive bidding for a contract for horticultural maintenance of the Cemetery. We asked Alessandro Babolin (the Technical Director of Il Trattore who manages the contract) to tell us more about it.

You come originally from Padua. How did you end up working in Rome?

I came to Rome 30 years ago to do voluntary service and never left! In 1980 I was a founding member of Il Trattore, which we set up as a social co-operative. Our headquarters are in the nature reserve of Valle dei Casali on the southwestern outskirts of Rome. We do garden planning, maintenance of parks and gardens (public and private), which includes tree-felling and planting trees, bushes, flowers, and so on. But we also run gardening courses for adults and children; and we have a shop selling organic fruit and vegetables, wine, oil, preserves and cheese. So we keep busy!

How does working in the Cemetery compare with your other jobs?

As a company we are very pleased to have this work – the cultural and historical importance of the place is a big attraction. Personally, I like the variety of tasks: from pruning and felling very old, tall trees to planting seedlings on a new grave. Also, it's a relaxing place to work – there is parking, there are no large crowds with dogs to manage, and we enjoy the rapport we have built up with the concession-holders and the volunteers. In that sense, it is a very fulfilling place - you work with your body, your mind and your soul.

This is the positive side – what are the challenges?

There are many. This past year the weather has not been kind; a very wet winter between two hot summers, but then this is part of the gardener's life. Now, having been able to see the cemetery through all four seasons, we can plan better. We know we have to do planting and other major tasks in the spring so as to leave time for watering in the hot summer months. When this requires extra hands, as a co-operative we can easily bring them in. But, over and above regular maintenance, we'd like to innovate and establish new ways of doing



Removal of dangerous cypress tree

things. For instance, if we can reactivate the compost heap that lies in a corner of the Parte Antica, we hope by December to be using our own mulch for sustaining the older box hedges. We also realise that the exposed roots of some of the tall trees up in the Zona Seconda could potentially trip visitors – we'd like to treat or remove them and make good the paths with earth.

Any other particular challenge?

Yes, our lack of other languages. Some of our team speak English but we'd like to improve our languages so as to have a closer rapport with visitors. We would also like to plant shrubs on the older tombs.

Did you know the Cemetery before tendering for the contract?

Certainly. I knew it as the burial place of Keats, Shelley and Gramsci. Only when we started working here did I find the graves of others such as the son of Goethe, the beat poet Gregory Corso and the physicist Bruno Pontecorvo. What a variety of people are buried here!



Paolo Mancarella and Luca Koller at work

Are the plants in the Cemetery unusual in any way?

I love the variety of plants growing here, especially those typical of the Mediterranean *macchia* – the strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*), the myrtle, the pomegranates, the cypresses and so on. But sometimes I feel it is too dense. People may put plants or shrubs on their graves that are not suitable for the Cemetery or for that part of it. Plants that grow well in the humid Zona Terza might not flourish in the upper Zona Vecchia exposed to direct sunlight. Species such as the yucca and wistaria look beautiful but they grow fast, so they might soon damage the tombstone; whereas the mimosa has a slender trunk and cannot withstand strong wind. So we have to work closely with the concession-holders to advise them on suitable plants. We are preparing a list and of course can give advice whenever needed.

Would you like to see the maintenance done differently in any way?

I'd like to develop further the synergy that is already there between us, the concession-holders, the management, the restorer and the volunteers. We have to ensure that garden maintenance and tomb conservation go hand-in-hand.

Can you give some examples?

Well, we have to be careful when mowing and watering around tombstones. Leaving a pool of water on a tombstone that is then heated by the sun can cause stress and then cracking. Similarly, if we don't remove the many pine needles from tomb surfaces, they tend to concentrate moisture that can then affect the underlying stone.

So you work closely with the restorer on these problems?

Of course. For instance, after discussing with her, we have decided to change our mowing practice in the Parte Antica. You will see that we now leave a small fringe of longer grass around the ledgers (the horizontal grave-stones), so that the blades of the mower do not scratch them or deposit grass cuttings on them. This means more hand-cutting of grass and a less neat lawn. But these are important historic monuments and must be preserved. So in the end we have to find the solutions that best benefit the Cemetery for the unique place that it is.



WHO THEY WERE...

Charles Dudley Ryder (1806-1825)

In 1824-25, in the space of a little more than twelve months, the Cemetery witnessed the burial of two young victims of separate incidents of drowning, both of them members of prominent English families. The two tombs can be seen today, side by side. One is that of 18-year-old Charles Dudley Ryder, the other of Rosa Bathurst who was only sixteen. The story of Rosa's tragic death in March 1824 was to grip the attention of the foreign community in Rome for years to come. She had fascinated Roman society with her beauty, intelligence and charm, only to be overwhelmed by the waters of the flood-swollen river Tiber while out riding one day beyond the Ponte Milvio.



photo N. Stanley-Price

Tombs of Ryder (l) and Bathurst (r)

The circumstances of Charles Ryder's death were quite different. As the inscription on his tomb relates, he was a midshipman on the H.M.S. *Naiad* whose captain was the Hon. Robert Spencer. On 28 May 1825 the midshipman was 'drowned with five of the crew by the upsetting of a boat at the mouth of the Tiber'.

The names of the five seamen are given on the memorial stone located some 20m. to the right of Ryder's tomb: Richard Gaudy, Stephen Perrin, Joseph Jones, John Macdonald and Joseph Nicholson. This was erected by Captain Robert Spencer 'as a testimony of respect and regret' to the seamen who were drowned while on duty from H.M.S. *Naiad* off Fiumicino. It is not known why the boat from the *Naiad* capsized. The Tiber mouth at that period was navigable only with difficulty because of the whirlpools and shoals created by the sand and debris carried downstream by the river; perhaps they played a role in the tragedy but this is speculation.



photo N. Stanley-Price

Gravestone of the *Naiad's* boat crew

Charles Dudley Ryder was, as his tomb inscription states, the second son of the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, Henry Ryder. His elder brother went into the Church, and he – like many boys of his privileged background – joined the navy as a midshipman with the aim of becoming a commissioned officer after several years' service on the

lower deck. Captain Robert Cavendish Spencer (a great-great-uncle of Diana, Princess of Wales) took command of the frigate *Naiad* in April 1823. The end of the Napoleonic Wars had not seen the disappearance of what the British called 'Barbary corsairs' operating out of Algiers. In May 1824 boats from the *Naiad* attacked an Algerian warship off the port of Bona (modern Annaba). Charles D. Ryder is mentioned as one of eleven midshipmen from the *Naiad* taking part in this successful engagement. Only a year later his promising career was cut short when he was drowned at the Tiber's mouth.

Of Bishop Henry Ryder's ten sons, Charles was not the only one who served his country well but who met an untimely death. The youngest son Spencer Charles Dudley Ryder was born only two months after Charles had been drowned (and was given his name).



HMS *Naiad* (centre) off Gibraltar after the Battle of Trafalgar (1805)

Having reached the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in the Bengal Staff Corps, he died aged 47 and was buried in the English Cemetery in Naples. Three years earlier, in 1870, Spencer's son Edward had been drowned while serving as a midshipman. A memorial window to the two midshipmen, Edward and his uncle Charles ('drowned off Civita Vecchia' in 1825), can be found in St Ann's Church in the Naval Base of Portsmouth in England. The window was donated by another of Charles' younger brothers, Alfred, who by 1885 had risen to the highest rank of Admiral of the Fleet. Sadly, three years later he too was drowned when he fell into the river Thames in London.

The adjacent Bathurst and Ryder tombs in the Cemetery prompt some reflection on fame and posterity. The tragic drowning of Rosa Bathurst is recorded in innumerable memoirs, poems and prints of the time, including the writings of Stendhal who was in Rome that year and was one of the many admirers of the young lady. By contrast, the loss of Charles Ryder and his crew from the *Naiad* has left few traces in the historical record. It is the monuments in the Cemetery that are the most visible memorial to these men who died while on active service for their country. May they all rest in peace.

Nicholas Stanley-Price



German tombs restored

Several notable tombs have been restored recently with the help of funding from the German Embassy in Rome, from the Museum August Kestner and from the Friends, all of whom we thank warmly.

The most rewarding project has been the tomb of the painter August Riedel (1799-1883), with the discovery of well-preserved gilding on the bronze portrait medallion (see *Newsletter* no. 7, 2009). Born in Bayreuth, Riedel studied in Munich and Dresden before moving to Rome, where he taught in the *Accademia di San Luca*. He is known for his portraits and genre scenes.



photo Rita Galluccio

The tomb of the sculptor Josef von Kopf (1827-1903) (and his wife) consists of a white marble ledger surmounted by a *peperino* stone marker with a niche containing a bronze bust of the deceased. It is signed by the artist himself and dated 1891. In 1852 Kopf had walked to Rome (as several artists did at that time) and settled there as a sculptor, excelling in portrait busts. He had many clients in the court of Württemberg, including Grand Duke Frederick I, who built a summer workshop for him in

Kopf tomb (August 2009)

Baden Baden, and the Emperor Wilhelm I and his consort Augusta, who became his patron. The tomb was treated for extensive biological growth on all surfaces, for staining caused by copper salts and for incrustations.

A more radical operation was required for the tomb of Auguste de Molière (1793-1845). A Prussian officer, he served as adjutant to the Prussian Prince Heinrich (1781-1846) who lived in Rome from 1819 to his death. His tomb is a sarcophagus with a base and cover, nearly 2m. high, and has a fine bronze bas-relief of the dying Christ. The tomb was unstable, and so it was dismantled to ground level, pro-



photo Rita Galluccio

Molière tomb before and after restoration



photo Rita Galluccio

Dismantling the tomb

vided with a new base and re-assembled securely. The corroded bas-relief was restored, as were all the surfaces of the monument.

The need for such major operations as this can be reduced, though never eliminated, through regular maintenance. Thanks to a donation specifically for its maintenance made by the Museum August Kestner in Hanover, the tomb of Kestner, situated right opposite the main gate, has recently been treated for biological growth and the vegetation trimmed. August Kestner (1777-1853) was a Hanoverian diplomat and art collector who in 1818 became an official envoy and minister resident in Rome, where he remained until his death. The museum's origins lie in the Egyptian and classical antiquities collection of Kestner, who was also a co-founder in 1829 of what was to become the prestigious German Archaeological Institute.



In memoriam

Bruno Spinner, Ambassador of Switzerland (1948-2009)

We mourn the loss of a true friend, Bruno Spinner, who died on 25 July after a short illness. Since 2004 he had been Swiss Ambassador in Italy, Malta and San Marino. As the President of the Assembly of ambassadors in 2007-2008, he devoted much time to promoting the Cemetery's interests which included overseeing the first appointment of a Director through open competition. We benefited hugely from his support and miss his warm concern and empathy towards all those with whom he worked.



Craig Arnold (1967-2009)

We also record with great sadness the death in May of the American poet Craig Arnold, missing while walking on an island in Japan and now presumed dead. The winner of the American Academy's Joseph Brodsky Rome Prize, he spent a year (2005-06) at the Academy in Rome working on a lyric biography of Ovid. He was a great admirer of the English Romantics and the Non-Catholic Cemetery and gave the reading from Shelley's *Adonais* at the 2006 launch of the Friends of the Cemetery.



How the Friends are helping

Your donations as Friends are all devoted to long-term goals of keeping the Cemetery the beautiful and tranquil place that it is. This Newsletter is effective in raising awareness about how the Cemetery is being managed and about its historical importance. The Friends help to fund its printing and distribution costs. You also funded the continuing tree survey by Gian Pietro Cantiani (*Newsletter* no. 4, 2008) which aims to ensure the safety of the Cemetery. Finally, the Friends contributed to the restoration of the De Molière tomb (see above). We strongly urge you to continue your support and to encourage others to join. Thank you.



Music again in the chapel

We are very grateful to the Lutheran Evangelical Community in Rome for kindly lending us temporarily a harmonium. So there will again be music to accompany our funerals and other services. But we still need a small organ or harmonium for the long term – can anyone help?

Poets in the Cemetery

Wilhelm Waiblinger

*O Tiber, gönn' in deiner Nähe
Bald mir ein Grab an der Pyramide!*

O Tiber, allow me soon
A grave near you by the Pyramid!

Wilhelm Waiblinger (1804-1830) was a romantic poet and prose writer born in the Schwabian town of Heilbronn who grew up primarily in Stuttgart and Reutlingen. He is known today mainly for his biography of the poet Friedrich Hölderlin, whom he befriended while a theology student at the famed *Tübinger Stift* (from which, in true Romantic fashion, he was to be expelled in 1826 due to a "scandalous" love affair with an older woman).



While still young, Waiblinger became friends with Edward Mörike, Gustav Schwab and Ludwig Uhland (all formidable figures in German literature), as well as Hölderlin, and in 1823 published his first novel *Phaeton*, heavily influenced by Hölderlin. In 1824, inspired by Lord Byron, he began work on a poetry collection entitled *Erzählungen aus der Geschichte des jetzigen Griechenlands (Anecdotes from the history of contemporary Greece)* and undertook his first trip to Italy. From 1825 he began to publish in various German reviews.

Seeking new experiences, Waiblinger returned to Italy in October 1826, arriving in Rome on his birthday that year. If not exactly living well (he managed to be caricatured by the painter Bonaventura Genelli as the classic "Bettelpoet" or "beggar-poet"), he wrote and travelled prodigiously, writing poems, diaries, and letters steeped in the culture and quotidian life of Italy's cities and countryside. It was in Italy that he finished his biography of Hölderlin which, however, would be published posthumously.

In November 1829, after a visit to the mausoleum of Cecilia Metella on the Via Appia Antica, Waiblinger came down with pneumonia. Within two months, he had died due to complications of the "poet's disease", tuberculosis, and was buried in the Non-Catholic Cemetery.

*Gleich kommt wieder ein Neuer: der Scheidende trifft schon am Thore
Seinen Landsmann und wird trefflich des Abend ersetzt.
Kommt man aber hinaus, so beginnt die Not erst entsetzlich,
Und das Leben im Rom scheint jetzt ein glücklicher Traum,
Dann ist man froh und begnügt sich, ein Stammbuchblättchen zu malen,
Drunter schreibt man: ich bin Künstler und war einst im Rom.*

aus "Deutscher Künstler im Rom, Elegie"

Soon already another: at the door the departing meets
His fellow countryman and, by evening, will fittingly be replaced.
But if you make it out, that's when the suffering really starts,
And your life in Rome now seems a delightful dream,
Then, full of joy, you are content to paint a family-register's little page,
Beneath which you write: I am an artist and lived once in Rome.

from "German artist in Rome, Elegy"

Extracts from Waiblinger, W. *Gedichte aus Italien*. Leipzig, 1893. Translations and text by Alexander Booth, who lives and works in Rome. He has recently translated into English a selection of Sandro Penna's poems, and is working on a book of his own poetry.

How others see the Cemetery

Several newspapers around the world have recently published stories relating to the Cemetery. In a series by Emanuele Trevi on the ancient walls of Rome for the Italian daily *La Repubblica*, the feature on 12 July about the Aurelian wall near Porta San Paolo was largely devoted to the Cemetery.

In the same paper's Sunday supplement on 17 May, Mario Tedeschini Lalli contributed a full-page article on the 1919 air crash in Rome involving T.E. Lawrence, mentioning the pilots who died and our memorial service for them (see *Newsletter 7*, 2009). The same service was reported on May 20 in *The Times* (London) by its Rome correspondent, Richard Owen, who explained how *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* might never have been completed.

The Rome correspondent of *La Vanguardia* (Barcelona), María-Paz López, contributed a column in its 'Correspondents' corner' (28 July) that evoked well the atmosphere of the Cemetery, its history and its residents. So too did a piece by student journalist Kristijan Eker in the Serbian daily *Danas* on 13 March.

Further afield, original pieces have appeared in the *Australian Financial Review*, and in the *New Straits Times* (Malaysia)

where (14 July) Koh Soo Ling, an English literature professor, wrote a moving article about her recent visit to Keats' grave. The stimulus for Marion Hume's monthly fashion column in the *Financial Review* in June was rather different. During an interview in Rome with Nicola Bulgari, he recommended a visit to the Cemetery as a worthwhile way to spend a morning in the city. The Director, she writes, was a blonde Englishwoman and "was wearing a very nice leather jacket and thus seemed the most unlikely director of a graveyard". Life is so unpredictable...

HOW TO BECOME A FRIEND

This Newsletter is made possible by the contributions of Friends of the Cemetery but we *urgently* need more Friends in order to continue the Newsletter. Please go to our website to find a membership form and instructions :

www.protestantcemetery.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 - 13.00pm
(last entrance 12.30pm)

Tel 06.5741900, Fax 06.5741320
mail@protestantcemetery.it



NEWSLETTER of the Friends of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

Nicholas Stanley-Price, EDITOR
Anka Serbu, GRAPHIC DESIGN
Stab.Tipolit. Ugo Quintily S.p.A., PRINTER
ROME, 2009

Contact: nstanleyprice@tiscali.it
Disponibile anche in versione italiana