

## of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

### NEWSLETTER



#### Andrea Camilleri, writer and theatre director (1925-2019)

The Cemetery was in the national and international news after being selected as the place of burial for one of Italy's most popular writers, Andrea Camilleri. The news of his death on 17 July was followed by an announcement that, at the family's request, he would be buried in the *Cimitero Acattolico* in Rome. A feat of organisation by the Director, staff and volunteers ensured that on the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> the family could hold a private funeral ceremony in the chapel, before hundreds of his admirers arrived that afternoon to pay their respects at his grave. The police and Carabinieri controlled the crowds in Via Caio Cestio, eventually allowing in twenty people at a time to walk to the grave and to exit through the rear gate on Via Zabaglia.

Why the Non-Catholic Cemetery for this Sicilian writer? The President of the Assembly of Ambassadors can authorize an exception to the usual prerequisites for burial in the case of famous figures who are internationally recognized for work contributing to the prestige of Rome or of Italy in general. Andrea Camilleri certainly met this requirement. His long career in the theatre and television and as a writer culminated in his series of novels set in Sicily featuring Inspector Montalbano. These and their television adaptations brought him worldwide recognition, sales of more than 10 million books and translation into numerous languages. Among those filing past his grave on 18 July was Luca Zingaretti who plays the inspector in the TV series, as well as the Minister of Culture, the Mayor of Rome and other notables. His grave continues to attract numerous visitors. May he rest in peace.



Photo: N. Stanley-Price



Photo: La Repubblica



Photo: La Repubblica



Photo: A. Thurfield

## WHO THEY WERE

### The Talbot Wilsons of Rome

Henry Talbot Wilson (born 1837) was a successful stockbroker in Liverpool, and heir to the Over Kellet estate near Lancaster. In 1886 he sold up to embark on the 'Grand Tour' with his wife Jane and two daughters, Muriel and Ina, together with a governess and a maid. They spent over a year in the 'British colony' of Dinan, south of Saint-Malo in France, before moving to Geneva, Capri and Dresden. The family finally settled in Rome in 1897. Henry was a churchwarden for fourteen years at All Saints' Church in Via del Babuino until his death in 1912; he is commemorated there on a memorial tablet on the north aisle wall. His elder daughter Muriel (1877-1928) has a tablet below his as she was President of the Girls Friendly Society in Rome. She also wrote *The History of the English Church in Rome, 1816-1916* (published in Rome in 1916).

The younger daughter Ina (born 1879) was a talented artist and habituée of the 'English Guest House' in Ari, Abruzzo. This property was in fact the XIV<sup>th</sup> century Palazzo Baronale Nolli, the summer residence of Count Nolli of Naples. The then Count, Mario, was married to a Welsh artist named Frances Picton-Warlow, and they hosted a literary circle. Oscar Wilde is reputed to have been a guest but we have no firm proof. It was in Ari that Ina met Dr Giuseppe D'Alessandro (1868-1955), possibly as a patient since she suffered



Ina on horseback at Ari, 1900

from asthma. Giuseppe was a third-generation medical doctor and political activist. He was a friend of Gabriele D'Annunzio and gave speeches in his support when standing in the 1897 by-election at Ortona. In Ari a blue plaque outside the D'Alessandro palazzo records this friendship and, in the piazza, there stands a bust of Giuseppe D'Alessandro, installed in 1971 by descendants of families in Argentina whom he had helped to emigrate in the 1920s.

D'Annunzio wrote out one of his poems for Ina for her wedding to Giuseppe in 1901. The couple had a son Camillo in 1902 but Ina died of an asthma attack in 1907, aged only 28. Camillo went to live with the Talbot Wilsons in Rome and studied at the University there before settling in England in 1933 with his English wife, Violet Squire, whom he met in Rome where she was studying Italian. By then she was pregnant with the first of four sons, and is reputed to have declared that no child of hers would be brought up a Blackshirt. Camillo became a freelance tutor in Oxford and a friend of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, even translating *The Lord of the Rings* into Italian. He died in the UK in 1993 aged 91.

Jane Talbot Wilson outlived her two daughters, dying in 1929. Her last home in Rome was in Via Francesco Redi, not far from the Villa Torlonia conceded in 1925 to Mussolini as his State Residence. The grave of Henry, Jane and Ina Talbot Wilson lies at Zone 3.1.7.4 while Muriel's is nearby at Zone 3.2.8.7.

Contributed by Simon Wilson, great-great-nephew of Henry Talbot Wilson



All Saints' church spire and St Peter's dome

### Sarah de la Poer Beresford (and her convict husband)



George Richmond, Sarah Beresford, 1863

(the parallel street to the Spanish Steps on their north side).

There is scant information about their life together in Rome, despite a long residence of thirty years or more, occasionally interrupted by travel to England or Ireland. We find a crucial brief reference to them

After a hundred years links between graves can become totally forgotten when the names on them bear no apparent relationship. This happened with Sarah de la Poer Beresford (1801-1898; Zone 2.9.24; see photo). Recent family research reveals that the cemetery also contains the graves of her unmarried sister Eleanor Bull (1812-1889; Zone 2.3.16) and of her unmarried daughter from a first marriage, Mary Simpson (1823-1910; Zone 2.8.10). All three, along with Sarah's daughter from her second marriage, Cecilia Melanie Beresford (1840-

1880s) in Roma Lister's *Reminiscences* (1926) describing Rome in the 1880s: "A very dear friend of ours was Miss Beresford: she was all Irish and of Irish beauty. With Miss Beresford lived her mother and an old aunt, Miss Bull. Their apartment was in the Via San Sebastianello, on the top floor, and many who could not climb the second or third floor stairs of other apartments managed to get to the bright drawing room of Mrs. Beresford. On the roof they had a kind of hanging garden with orange trees and bamboos. Under these plants we often used to drink tea. Melanie Beresford had a talent for painting."

Melanie's watercolours with Italian themes found a ready market in England and Ireland, where she frequently exhibited. In recently discovered correspondence from Melanie in England to the sculptor John Gibson in Rome, she asks after mutual friends such as Harriet Hosmer and Charlotte Cushman, leading members of the Roman expatriate cultural and social scene in the 1860s. Sadly, Melanie died in 1893 aged only 53 while on a painting trip to Switzerland, and was interred in Berne.

Sarah's father, John Bull, the owner of a prosperous Jamaican coffee plantation, "Sheldon", was well known in Kingston where he built the most prominent townhouse, known as "Bull's House". In about 1818 Sarah married David Simpson, a Kingston merchant, and they had three children, including Mary. By 1828 David had died and two years later the widowed Sarah made a fatal decision. At Bath, or

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perhaps in Ireland, she became acquainted with the Rev. William de la Poer Beresford, of a noble Irish family, who was due to inherit a title since he was preceded only by an aging bachelor cousin. Sarah, already an heiress, married him in 1830. Melanie, born in 1840, was their only child. The parish at Iniscarra, Cork, that Beresford had inherited from his father brought him an annual income from tithes that was generous but insufficient for his profligate nature. His absences from Iniscarra and his mishandling of church funds caused scandal. Becoming desperate, after spending much of Sarah's fortune, he committed his worst transgression when he forged the endorsement of a bill of exchange for 100 pounds. At his trial in December 1855 at York Assizes, an implacable judge, Sir Samuel Martin, ignored his aristocratic background and sentenced him to transportation (to Australia) for life. An appeal for pardon to Queen Victoria went unanswered. He died in 1881 in Western Australia, a penniless old gentleman with aristocratic airs, abominated by Sarah and Melanie who were happy never to see him again. The title that Beresford had expected to inherit went to his cousin, who was persuaded by the family finally to marry in order to prevent the disgraced convict from succeeding to it.

The family in Via San Sebastianello still had sufficient means to allow them to move comfortably in Roman society. Sarah and Melanie travelled occasionally to England to visit relations, especially William's brother, General Marcus Beresford, with whom they remained on excellent terms. Sarah had a daughter and a clergyman son residing in England, children of her first husband, David Simpson. Sarah's sister



Unknown artist, *Eleanor Bull*



Tomb of Sarah Beresford

Eleanor was the first to be buried in the Cemetery, in 1889, followed nine years later by Sarah herself at the great age of 96, and then her daughter, Mary Simpson, in 1910. The poignant inscription on the latter's gravestone, "The eyes of those who see shall not be dim" betrays the fact that Mary had become blind.

*Contributed by Geoffrey Beresford in Madrid, Spain. The paintings are reproduced courtesy of the owner, Mr. Patrick Henry Grattan, M.B.E.*



## Monuments to distinguished Danes looking better

Thanks to generous support from a Danish foundation, we have restored several Danish tombs. Two bear portrait medallions signed by the Danish sculptor Johan Hoffmann (1844-1920): Johannes Bravo (1797-1876; Zone 2.10.4) who arrived as a painter but stayed for years as consul for Denmark, and later for Norway and Sweden too; and Christofer Myhlenphort (1837-91; Zone 1.6.34) who held a similar position (Hoffman himself served for a few years as consul after Myhlenphort's death).

The tall travertine stela of the Danish painter Johan August Krafft (1798-1829; Zone 1.16.14) also bears his portrait. The sculptor, H.W. Bissen, was a friend of the painter but produced his gravestone only thirty years after Krafft's death. Another sculpture that catches the visitor's eye is the 'Angel of Faith' on the tomb (Zone 1.7.50) of the landscape painter Harald Jerichau and his wife Maria Kutzner, both of whom died young. Unusually, the sculpture

– by Harald's father J.A. Jerichau – is in antimony, set on a marble base. Also restored were the monuments to the novelist and poet Carsten Hauch (1790-1872; Zone 1.12.57), the composer Niels Ravnkilde (see *Newsletter* 24; Zone 1.3.40) and Olaus Kellerman, a young scholar of Latin inscriptions who was a victim of the 1837 cholera outbreak in Rome (Zone 1.12.6).

Thanks to the Friends and other donors, non-Danish tombs too have been restored: the simple slab over the grave of the Prussian diplo-



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

Gonzales before restoration



Photo: G. Malorgio

Jerichau restored



Photo: N. Stanley-Price

J.A. Krafft restored



Photo: G. Malorgio

Myhlenphort restored

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mat Jakob Salomon Bartholdy (1779-1825; Zone V.14.30), funded by the Moses Mendelssohn Stiftung; the fine monument to the British antiquary James Irvine (see *Newsletter* 39); and the headstone to the artist Thomas Dessoulavy (1801-69; Zone 1.13.55), a talented landscape painter who spent 53 years in Rome “and never ceased to be an Englishman”, according to his epitaph. Finally, very near the main entrance, we have restored the elegant tomb of an Irish woman, Margarete Gonzales (1811-59; Zone 1.2.4). Margherita Lamon attributed its design to the Milanese sculptor Giovanni Strazza (1818-75) who spent the years 1840-58 in Rome. Strazza is famous for his *Veiled virgin*, an extraordinary feat of achieving transparency in marble – but you will have to go to Newfoundland to see it whereas the Gonzales monument is right here.



Thomas Dessoulavy, An Italianate landscape (art market, 2014)



Dessoulavy restored

Gianfranco Malorgio and Sara Toscan of Sinope s.r.l were responsible for all these restorations, assisted for the Irvine tomb by a team from the Fachschule für Steintechnik in Munich.

## NEWS FROM THE CEMETERY



In July the Garden Room hosted an exhibition of work by the artist and art critic Edith Schloss (1919-2011; her grave is at Zone 3.3.0.11). A memorable character to those who knew her, in 1962 she had moved to Rome from New York where she mixed with exponents of the ‘New York School’. The exhibition, curated by Silvia Stuckey, marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birth. Different in scope but equally popular was “Stone and nature”, work by Jane Horton from Sheffield (UK). Her drawings and watercolours of the Cemetery were on show in September and October.



Jane Horton, *The Garden Room, Non-Catholic Cemetery of Rome*, watercolour, 2019

The series of literary events held in the chapel continued in June with readings from the work of Constance Fenimore Woolson (1840-94; buried at Zone V.13.12). Another author, Hans Barth (Zone 1.13.13; see *Newsletter* 40), was celebrated at the Casa di Goethe for the reprinting of his popular guide, *Osteria. Guida spirituale alle osterie italiane da Verona a Capri* (Verdone Editore 2019).

As maintenance of the Cemetery’s buildings and fittings continues, the iron gates giving street access to the chapel and to the Zona Terza have been restored. The specialist restorer commented on the superior quality of the ironwork, probably dating to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.



The exhibition in the Garden Room



Gate on Via Caio Cestio, restored (detail)

### 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

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#### 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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