Summer 2024

FRIENDS *of the* Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

No. 67

N E W S L E T T E R

Roses in the Cemetery

The Cemetery cannot specifically be considered a 'rose garden' as our examples are not laid out in large numbers in bold, assertive display-beds or borders, but tend to be one-off wonders discovered as we wander around. They are often shy, and peek out from behind other plants, notably jasmines, which bloom at the same time as roses, usually in May or June, and are a perfect backdrop to a rose plant, their perfume mingling with the rose's fragrance.

Many of the roses have been planted on individual tombs by the deceased's loved ones, others introduced by the gardeners over the years as decoration, in display pots or against walls. In other cases, roses have been put on the tombs of well-known personages as a memorial, long after their deaths. (For privacy reasons, I do not give here the exact tomb names or locations.)

Banksiae rose on the chapel wall in 2015

The 'Knock Out' rose

Perhaps the earliest bloomer and one of the oldest rose plants in the Cemetery is the banksiae 'Lutea', a climber near the door to the bell-tower of the chapel. It is named in honour of the wife of the famous botanist Joseph Banks. In March or April, it is a harbinger of spring, producing numerous small, cream-yellow flowers. A characteristic of this rose is its strong barky stem and absence of thorns.

White roses attract bees

Peach-coloured rose

On the main path leading to the chapel, next to the building known as the King Vault, you can find a recently planted shrub rose known as the 'Knock Out'. This cultivar is famous for being particularly hardy and resistant to disease. Here it lives up to its reputation, offering bright, cheerful, almost florescent pink flowers throughout the summer and reflowering in the early autumn. Further along the main path, in the very front row, we see a pretty white rose which, despite its delicate appearance, is strong, and flowers for many months of the year. White roses traditionally symbolise purity and grace. It is said that a white flower, lacking any bright colour, has a stronger fragrance in order to attract bees .

In the same row, we meet a shrub rose with beautiful, heavy cupped blooms of an unusual peach colour. Higher up in row 6 of the Zona Prima can be found a fine example of the 'Mutabilis' rose trained to climb around a round-topped arch. It gets its name because its blooms are mutable or changeable, with dark red buds that change from orange to pink as they open. The petals themselves are long, slim and elegant and move in the breeze, causing a number of visitors to say that they look like butterflies**.**

The 'Mutabilis' rose

Pink roses in terracotta pot

Regular visitors love the healthy, bright pink flowers of the roses in the terracotta pots at the arch leading to the Old Cemetery. They defend themselves against all sorts of threats, including often being flattened by the Cemetery cats who love to doze in the sun curled up in the pots.

Entering the Old Cemetery, on the right can be seen three examples of English climbing roses supplied by the famous English breeder David Austin. These were planted in 2019 in a new rose-bed designed by the gardeners re-using terracotta pots. The 'Shropshire Lad', 'Malvern Hills', and 'Shropshire Lass' roses were chosen for their copious flowering and their beautiful fragrance. Near the half-column marking the grave of the young German boy Friedrich Von Humboldt, who died in

New rose-bed for Austin roses

'Malvern Hills' rose

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1807, there is a rose, dark burgundy in colour, that was planted some years ago by German admirers. Its rich colour and rather formal rosette perfectly express the sadness and dignity of this young life cut short.

This is a selection of the roses to be found in the Cemetery, but we urge visitors to spot numerous other varieties that bloom throughout the garden from March to November, and some even well into winter.

Amanda Thursfield, former Director of the Cemetery. Photos by the author unless indicated.

A 'Shropshire Lass' rose

The Friedrich von Humboldt column

The 'Darcey Bussell' rose at the column

The sarcophagus of Scipio Barbatus, copies and souvenir models

When the 13-year-old Anny Synnot died in 1821, her father commissioned for her grave a copy of the sarcophagus of L. Cornelius Scipio Barbatus housed in the Museo Pio-Clementino in the Vatican (*Newsletter* 64). Dating from the early 3rd-century BC, it had been transferred there from the Tomb of the Scipios on the Via Appia Antica after it had been re-discovered in 1780, causing a sensation. Carved from a single block of tufa, the sarcophagus carried the name of L. Cornelius Scipio Barbatus on its top surface and, on its side, an epitaph about Scipio's career whose details have been a boon to the historians of early Rome.

The Cox sarcophagus after conservation in 2014

Model of the sarcophagus (private collection)

Model interior as inkwell with two inkpots and sand-tray

Copies of the sarcophagus in the Cemetery

MONUMENT TO:	NATIONALITY	DEATH YEAR	LOCATION AND STONE NUMBER
Charles Duncombe	British	1810	Old Cemetery; S23
Johann Rudolph Sinner	Swiss	1811	Old Cemetery; S19
John Eyre	British	1819	Old Cemetery; S42
Anne Elizabeth Synnot	British	1821	Old Cemetery; S65
Louise Cox	British	1827	Zone V.12.21; S174
Frederica de Montmorency	British	1827	Zone V.12.19; S176
Jane Denis	British	1829	Zone 1.15.9; S574
Margherita Peckham Tooker	American	1888	Zone 1.4.30; S1239
Carrie Brown Bajnotti	American	1892	Zone 2.8.20; S1799
Florence Baldwin Deacon	American	1918	Zone V.10.22 ; S223

This impressive monument was soon widely copied. In our Cemetery Anny Synnot's is in fact one of ten copies which fall into two distinct groups (see the table, Fig. 13). In the first group, the three oldest sarcophagi commemorate men (Duncombe, Sinner and Eyre). Those of Duncombe and Eyre lack the original's Doric frieze of alternating triglyphs and metopes with rosettes. This is faithfully reproduced on the others, all dedicated to British females (see the photo here). Our other three copies do not appear until sixty years later (the Tooker example not only lacks the Doric frieze but differs in having additional decorative swags and a

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central inscribed panel.) All three American women came from wealthy families owning mansions on Rhode Island and so they probably knew of each other.

The Duncombe sarcophagus of 1810 is not the earliest known copy: in the Old English cemetery in Livorno, a copy in Carrara marble marks the grave of Robert John Chad, a young Grand Tourist who died in 1798. Others soon appeared in the United States: the Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven, CT, has three dated to the 1820s, the earliest one that of Eli Whitney (d. 1825). Also well-known are the Spurzheim copy in Italian marble (1832) at the Mount Auburn cemetery in Cambridge, MA; and, in the Glasnevin cemetery in Dublin, the monument to the politician and lawyer, J.P. Curran, which was erected in his honour in 1837. The tradition has continued, especially in the United States.

Scipio's famous sarcophagus also made an ideal subject for a souvenir of the Grand Tour. Miniature replicas were carved from a variety of stones – red, yellow or black marble, and even *peperino* – and in the nineteenth century were a speciality of Benedetto Boschetti in Via Condotti. The interiors, under a detachable top, were often made into inkwells, that essential accessory of the traveller while abroad which would unmistakably signify 'purchased in Rome' when placed on a desk back home.

Nicholas Stanley-Price

A Corfu – Rome connection: Diamantina Palatiano, and her brother Demetrios

Side-by-side in the upper Zona Vecchia (V.14.14 and V.14.15) stand two headstones both of which record the surname 'Palatiano'. The earlier one stands at the grave of Catherine Elizabeth Marrie (1803-1829) who married Count Demetrios de Palatiano in London in 1826 and died in Rome only three years later. The stone on the right is that of Diamantina (known as 'Nina') Palatiano (1797-1844), who was 'the beloved wife of Lieutenant General the Right Honourable Sir Frederick Adam, G.C.B.' Nina and Demetrios, he three years older, were brother and sister, from one of the leading families of Corfu.

In 1824, following a brilliant military career in the Peninsular War in Spain and then at the battle of Waterloo, Sir Frederick Adam was appointed Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands, the seven islands forming a British protectorate with its headquarters at Corfu. Adam had been a widower after his wife Amelia Thompson died in 1812, but in 1820 he met and married in Corfu Nina Palatiano, who herself had previously been married to Count Andrea Capodistria-Souffi. The Adams were a popular couple, entertaining at the Palace Nina's family and friends, and travellers passing through Corfu. They also built a summer residence in neoclassical style on the peninsula to the south of Corfu's old town, but enjoyed it only briefly before Adam was appointed Governor of Madras in India. Upon the union of the Ionian islands with Greece in 1864, Corfu gave the house and gardens to the Greek royal family who named them Mon Repos (Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, was among the royals born there).

The statue of Sir Frederick Adam in front of the Palace, Corfu

Sir Frederick is commemorated in a marble bust in the Palace and in a bronze statue standing outside. Both were the work of Pavlos

Mon Repos from above

Unknown artist, *Lady Nina Adam* (coll. Mon Repos)

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Prosalentis, a pioneering Corfiote sculptor who had studied with Antonio Canova in Rome. Before leaving for their five years' stay in India, the Adams adopted Nina's little niece, Margarita, the daughter of her sister Aikaterini and Demetrios Alvanas. Margarita moved later to Italy, met and married in 1844 the Greek painter Giorgios Miniatis, and – as Margherita Albana Mignati, living in Florence – became a noted writer and scholar.

Italy continued to feature in the lives of the Adams though details are scarce. In Rome in the early 1840s, Diamantina is listed regularly as an honorary member of the Academy of Santa Cecilia, living at Piazza di Spagna, 93, where the Serny family who owned the Hotel de Londre in the piazza rented apartments. She died 'after three days illness' on 1 June 1844, the same year in which, in Florence, Margarita married Mignati and Sir Frederick had his portrait painted by G.F. Watts, but the relative chronology of these events is unclear. The portrait of Nina that hangs today at Mon Repos fails to do justice to the woman whom Sir Walter Scott's biographer, J.G. Lockhart, meeting her at the Adam family house in Scotland, described as 'a beautiful woman, whose countenance realizes all the poetic dreams of Byron'.

Nina's brother Demetrios Palatiano was a dashing figure who travelled widely in Europe. Dressed in traditional Souliot costume, he was painted by R.P. Bonington and Eugène Delacroix, the latter's portrait reproduced here in a copy. In accordance with the strict rules then in force (see also the George Knox case in *Newsletter* 66), the Vatican refused Demetrios's request to include in the epitaph to his wife, Elizabeth Marrie, his hope of seeing her in the next life. Surviving Elizabeth by twenty years, he died and was buried in the Old 'English' cemetery in Naples.

Nicholas Stanley-Price

Imitator of Eugène Delacroix, *Count Demetrius de Palatiano in Suliot Costume* (Cleveland Museum of Art)

NEWS FROM THE CEMETERY

Visit of Tunisian and Italian Ministers for the Disabled

On 5 March we received an official visit from Malek Ezzahi, Minister of Social Affairs in Tunisia, and his Italian counterpart Alessandra Locatelli, Minister for Disability. They inspected the gardening work of Il Trattore, the social co-operative with whom we have been co-operating for many years, as an example of successful inclusive work projects for the disadvantaged (see also *Newsletter* 65).

March also saw finally the completion of a project to renovate the staff and visitor facilities at the Visitors' Centre. There are now four toilets (two female, one male and one disabled), in conformity with Italian law, and improved staff facilities. A private donor helped to make this project possible.

In April the American Academy in Rome joined us to hold an exhibition in the Garden Room entitled 'Botanical Autopsies: Plants and people at the Non-Catholic Cemetery for Foreigners in Rome' curated by Miranda Mote, a current Fellow at the Academy. A series of botanical prints, based on eight plant species, commemorated the names of those buried in the Cemetery before the death in 1894 of Sarah Parker Remond (see *Newsletter* 38).

The Benedict Library transferred to the American Academy in Rome

We are pleased to announce the transfer, as an indefinite loan, of Clare Benedict's 'In Memoriam Library' to the American Academy in Rome. The Library, of some 70 books, belonged to Clare Benedict (1870-1961) or, originally, to her mother Clara or her aunt, Constance Fenimore Woolson (see *Newsletters* 13 and 62). Their aim was to collect books, in English and German, by authors who were eventually buried here or who had written about the Cemetery. Many volumes are now out of print and some quite rare. Moreover, the family had a habit of adding their own marginalia or inserting annotated photographs. Among the presentation copies are a volume of Shelley's poetry inscribed to C.F. Woolson 'from her friend & confrère Henry James', and a first English edition of Johan Beck-Friis's *Il Cimitero Acattolico di Roma* (1956) inscribed to Clare Benedict in appreciation of her generosity towards the Cemetery (on Beck-Friis's guidebook, see *Newsletter* 6).

Scholars have made use of the Benedict Library, for instance Anne Boyd Rioux for her biography of Constance Fenimore Woolson (2016). But for some years we have sought a home which could guarantee better security and conservation conditions. We are very grateful to the American Academy in Rome for agreeing to this indefinite loan.

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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