

of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome



NEWSLETTER

NEWS FROM THE CEMETERY

Marking the death of John Keats in 1821

A small ceremony at his grave on 23 February marked the 200th anniversary of the death of John Keats. It was small because of the COVID-19 restrictions; otherwise, there would have been numerous admirers present. Giuseppe Albano, Director of the Keats-Shelley House in Rome, and Amanda Thursfield, Director of the Cemetery, laid wreaths on the grave. Rory Stuart, noted for his readings at literary and theatrical events in Rome, read Keats's 'Ode to a nightingale' and his sonnets 'Bright Star' and 'When I have fears'. Keats's favourite violets were flourishing on this sunny day, as were the daisies.



Photo: Lara D'Appollonio



Photo: A. Thursfield



Photo: Lara D'Appollonio



Photo: Lara D'Appollonio

A message from the Director

At the time of writing the Cemetery is open to concession-holders so that they can visit their graves (from 10.00 to 15.00h on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and on Sunday mornings, 10.00 to 12.30h; entrance at Via Zabaglia, 45). We hope to re-open gradually to the public in line with official guidelines for COVID-19 prevention. Please check the website at <http://www.cemeteryrome.it/>. Meanwhile gardening and restoration work continues and its beauty in spring is undiminished.

Amanda Thursfield



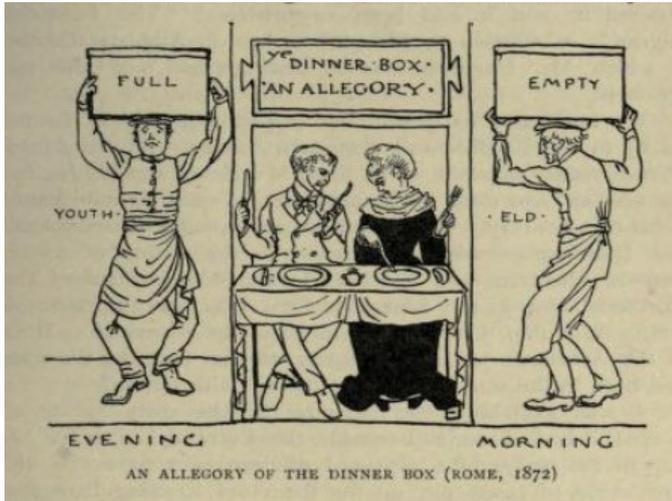
Lockdowns in the face of epidemics have many precedents, of course. The cholera outbreak in Rome in 1837 (see *Newsletter* 51) had a recurrence 30 years later, with great loss of life throughout the city. Augustus Hare, author of the popular *Walks about Rome*, had a first-hand account from Elizabeth, wife of the English sculptor Shakspeare Wood (see *Newsletter* 44). She told Hare that the Government wisely forbade any funeral processions, forbade bells to be tolled, and had the dead taken away at night. Then came the war [Garibaldi's assault on Rome in October 1867]. The gates were closed, and an edict published that bade all the citizens, when they heard 'cinque colpi di cannone, d'andare subito a casa.' 'The Woods laid in quantities of flour, and spent £5 in cheese, only remembering afterwards that, having forgotten to lay in any fuel, they could not have baked their bread.'

Surviving lockdown nowadays is easier thanks to ordering online and delivery to the door. Foreigners like the Woods, and Keats and Severn before them, were quite used to ordering in their food from a nearby *trattoria*. So too was the artist Walter Crane when he spent an extended honeymoon in Italy in 1871-3 and painted his lovely watercolours of the two Romantic poets' graves (see our

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tercentenary exhibition catalogue, nos. 37 and 40). Crane's 'Allegory of the Dinner Box' shows a young man delivering dinner to an elegant couple and an elderly man removing the empty box in the morning.



To celebrate the bicentenaries of Keats's and Shelley's deaths, the Garden Room has some new posters about their graves composed by the Editor and designed by Maxtudio. Visitors will be able to see them once the Cemetery is re-opened. Meanwhile, moving online, the Editor recorded a podcast with James Kidd for the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association. In it he discusses the graves but also the origins of the Cemetery and how it is being managed nowadays.

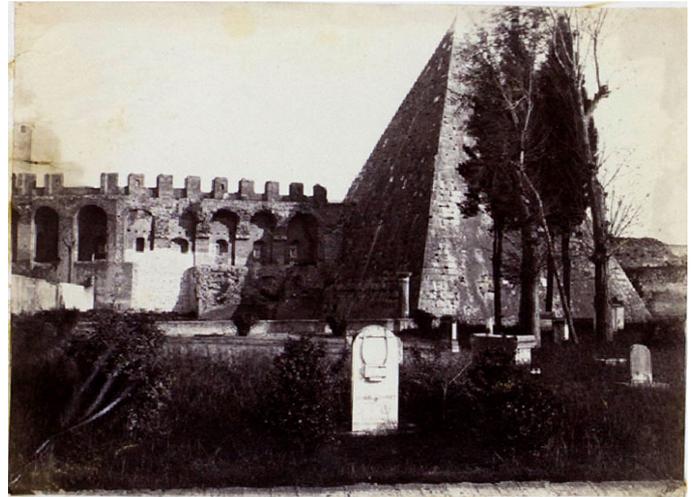


<https://feed.podbean.com/keatsshelley/feed.xml>

Arthur Dexter and his photos of the graves of Keats and Shelley

Arthur Dexter (1830-97) was an American photographer and a close friend of William Wetmore Story. While living in Rome in the late 1860s – early 1870s, he photographed Story and his sculptures, and other American residents including Emma Stebbins, John Rollin Tilton and James Russell Lowell and the less well-known Kuhn couple (see page 3). His albums are available online at the Boston Athenaeum.

One of them, dating from 1863 to 1869, includes photos of the Romantic poets' graves. A cropped print of Keats's grave is on the same page as six others inscribed with dates of 1868 or 1869. Under a full-size print of the same image, Dexter has written in pencil the epitaph on Keats's gravestone. His photo of Shelley's grave is the earliest known; Keats's grave had already featured in Robert Macpherson's fine image of a few years earlier (see *Newsletter* 43).



Arthur Dexter, Keats's grave (Boston Athenaeum)

Restoration of fine ironwork

On the south side of the chapel there is a door giving access to its tower. It was in poor condition but is now restored thanks to a grant from the Pax Romana chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, made in memory of their former president Candace Biamonti, Regent of the chapter, who died last year. Through Candace, a firm supporter of the Cemetery, the Chapter funded the restoration of American tombs

(*Newsletter* 45). The door has some elegant ironwork, as do the gates to the chapel in Via Caio Cestio (*Newsletter* 49) and to the Zona Terza in Via Zabaglia, both of them restored in recent years. These examples of fine ironwork must date to the 1890s when the German Embassy in Rome had the Cemetery extended and the chapel built.



The tower door restored



Chapel gate in Via Caio Cestio



Detail of chapel gate



Gate in Via Zabaglia

WHO THEY WERE

Hartman Kuhn, “an awfully nice fellow” from Philadelphia



Arthur Dexter, *Hartman Kuhn*
(Boston Athenaeum)

The Kuhn family was one of the four influential founders of institutional medicine in America – the others were the Shippen, Morgan and Rush families. John Christopher Kuhn emigrated to America from Germany in 1733 and settled in the Germantown district of Philadelphia. The family was at the heart of the cultural and political life of the city almost from the beginning. They tended to marry well, and by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Philadelphia social register lists many Kuhn family members as philanthropists, sitting on governing boards of various cultural institutions.

Every generation of the Kuhn family seems to have had its adventurers, while also being stalwarts of Philadelphia society. For a few, the lure of Europe seemed more compelling than a medical career back home. The Kuhn family papers reveal that Peter Kuhn, a nephew of the upright Philadelphia doctor Adam Kuhn, lived most of his life in Gibraltar, along with one of his sisters. He was appointed United States consul at Genoa in 1804 and served for several years. In 1807, he was arrested as an enemy agent by Napoleon’s minister of police for wearing the Cross of Malta, which had been awarded him by the British. It was Napoleon himself who wrote the order for his arrest.

Hartman Kuhn (1832-1870) was also from a side of the family that loved to travel. He was the great-nephew of the Kuhn who as a patron of the arts in Philadelphia founded the annual C. Hartman Kuhn prize, still awarded today to an outstanding member of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The great-nephew Hartman and his younger brother Charles spent much time in Europe. Charles married Louisa Catherine Adams from a distinguished family that included two Presidents of the United States, her great-grandfather John Quincy Adams, and her grandfather John Adams. Both of them died abroad, Charles in France in 1899 of “unspecified causes” and Louisa in July 1870 at Bagni di Lucca from a tetanus infection after her foot was injured in a carriage accident. Louisa Adams Kuhn is buried in the English cemetery in Florence.

In February 1870, just months before Louisa’s death, Charles Kuhn’s older brother Hartman died from an equally tragic accident. According to the Kuhn family papers he died in his sleep while visiting Rome. The inscription on his gravestone (Zone 1.11.33) does not disclose his cause of death. But Henry Adams, the noted author and brother of Louisa, wrote to his friend Charles Milnes Gaskell on March 7, 1870: “You must remember poor Hartman Kuhn in Rome! He was a good fellow, though he had too much of the Philadelphian in him, and his wife was a very attractive little woman, I suppose you must have heard of his death at Rome by his horse falling back on



Arthur Dexter, *Mrs Grace Kuhn as a widow*
(Boston Athenaeum)

him. It was terrible affair, but I have not heard the details, and am too sorry for him to wish to hear anything so painful. My sister [Louisa], however, in Florence, has been much distressed about it.”

His accidental death while out riding is confirmed by Maitland Armstrong, at the time the American consul general to the Papal States. In his memoirs (*The Day before Yesterday: Reminiscences of a Varied Life*), Armstrong describes him as being “an awfully nice fellow, handsome and dashing”. He had several fine horses and used to go hunting, a favourite if

dangerous sport of the English at Rome. Although a fair rider, he had “the bad habit of checking his mount just as it was rising to the jump, which threw the horse out of its stride. He was out with his groom in the countryside trying to correct this habit, when he pulled on his horse so suddenly that it fell on him and injured him internally.” The personal doctor of the emperor (presumably Franz Joseph I of Austria) who happened to be in Rome pronounced his case hopeless. Kuhn died within a few days, leaving a young wife, Grace Morris Cary, and a son.

Contributed by Lisa Colletta, American University of Rome



Scene of hunting on the *campagna*

Sergei Petrovich Postnikov, Russian painter

A simple stone slab covers the grave (Zone 1.7.47) of Sergei Petrovich Postnikov. Its inscription states only that he was born in Moscow in 1826 and died in Rome in 1880. He was a painter and lithographer who specialised in historical and biblical themes while also painting scenes from Roman life and landscapes.

He was the son of Peter Ivanovich Postnikov, a merchant in Moscow, and Natalia Alekseevna (née Kudimova). His younger cousin Mikhail Petrovich Botkin (1839 -1914) also became a well-known painter. Postnikov studied at the Moscow school of painting and sculpture and at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St Petersburg (1855-1858). The last year of his studies there coincided with the death of the

painter A.A. Ivanov (1806-1858), whose work he and Botkin examined. The following year, for his sketches from nature Postnikov received the title of non-class (i.e., freelance) artist in historical and portrait painting. In the same year, at his own expense, he went to Italy where he studied the work of the old masters, copying their paintings. In 1863, he travelled to St. Petersburg to present to the Academy of Arts there works that he had made abroad. He was awarded the title of academician for the paintings *Hector's Farewell to Andromache* (Chelyabinsk Art Museum, Russia) and *Bacchante with a tambourine* (present location unknown).

He lived in Rome, periodically travelling to Russia, France, Germany

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and Spain, until 1871 when he settled in the apartment of M.P. Botkin in St Petersburg. In 1870 the Council of the Academy of Arts expressed its gratitude for the paintings *Sisters of Lazarus*, *Vespers church service at the Carthusians in Rome* (present locations of both unknown) and *Seminarians in Rome*, and for a number



Hector's Farewell to Andromache, 1863
(Chelyabinsk Art Museum)



The artist Alexander Andreevich Ivanov, 1873
(Tretyakov Gallery)



Michele Mang, *Sergei Petrovich Postnikov*,
1869

of sketches from nature made in Italy. In 1873, together with M.P. Botkin, he visited Vienna, Munich, Paris and London, and in 1878 the World's Fair in Paris. He exhibited in six of the annual exhibitions of the Imperial Academy of Arts between 1863 and 1882.

At the Tretyakov gallery we have fifteen paintings and two drawings by Postnikov. We know of around fifty paintings by him, but many of them are unlocated. They may have disappeared or were destroyed during World War II or they survive perhaps in private collections. Our project continues with the aim of making this artist better known.

Contributed by Svetlana Kapryrina, curator, The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



HOW OTHERS SEE US

A Greek poet at the grave of Keats

In his travel book *Italia* (1953), the Greek poet, writer and journalist Kostas Uranis (1890-1953) described a visit to the grave of Keats.

I remembered more intensely the day I made a visit, as I once used to do very often, to the tomb of Keats which lies in a deserted corner of the Protestant cemetery. Around the simple, beautiful gravestone on which is carved an ancient lyre without any name, the luminous peace was such that it invited a feeling of bliss. The sun was gilding the marble stele, the little cypress trees aligned their arrows of shade and on the grass of the plot

someone had left a bunch of white roses – so fresh that they did not create the impression of an act of devotion to one who had died but resembled the tender traces of a love-tryst with that fine, young inhabitant of that quiet corner of Rome ...

Uranis is also remembered for a line in one of his poems: 'The dead die only when they're forgotten'. He may have had in mind George Eliot's very similar thought in *Adam Bede* (1859): 'Our dead are never dead to us, until we have forgotten them.' As at all cemeteries, our wish is that they are never forgotten.

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
(last entrance 12.30pm)

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

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ROME, 2021

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Disponibile anche in versione italiana
www.cemeteryrome.it

All previous Newsletters and an Index of contents are at www.cemeteryrome.it/press/newsletter.html