

Summer 2021

FRIENDS

No. 55

of the  
Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

N E W S L E T T E R

### 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 people at 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 daisies were flourishing on this sunny day, as were the daisies.

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



The Kuhn family was one of the four influential founders of institutional medicine in America – the others were the Shippen, Morgagni 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 of them, the lure of Europe seemed more compelling than a medical career at 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 war 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 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 Caroline 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

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*)

### 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

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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