

Grazia Gobbi Sica, co-ordinated by Maurizio Bossi, with an essay and index on the Russian Community by Lucia Tonini, *In Loving Memory: Il cimitero agli Allori di Firenze* (Florence, Casa Editrice Leo S. Olschki S.r.l., 2016), xxvii + 544 pp., 366 b/w photographs, with a plan of the cemetery, index, and bibliography. ISBN: 978-88-222-64169. Price €120 (hardback)

Maro Kardamitsi-Adami & Maria Daniil, *The First Cemetery of Athens. Guide to its Monuments and History* (Athens, Olkos Publishers Ltd & Elliniki Etairia, 2017), 167 pp. with maps, index, short bibliography, and colour illus. throughout. ISBN: 978-960-8154-84-1. Price €18 (paperback)

One of the more arcane pleasures still available is the perusal of the marvellous maps of cities in old editions of Karl Baedeker's *Handbooks for Travelers* in order to chortle over the changes of what might be fashionable or not. In my 1936 edition of *Germany*, for example, certain thoroughfares named *Adolf-Hitler-Straße* were later transmogrified into *Walter-Ulbricht-Straße* and later still were named after other unpleasant figures, predictably acceptable to contemporary Received Opinion, but nevertheless no more attractive than those they had displaced.

When I was researching the life and work of the architect Henry Roberts (1803–76),<sup>1</sup> who died in Florence, the *Cimitero degli Ingleſi* (Cemetery of the English) or *Cimitero Svizzero* (because it was administered by the Reformed Swiss Church) was clearly visible on the Baedeker city map as an elliptical space in the *Piazzale Donatello*. Opened in 1827, the cemetery contains the graves of numerous exiles, including Walter Savage Landor (1775–1864), Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–61), Arthur Hugh Clough (1819–61), and Theodore Parker (1810–60). Pioneer of working-class housing and architect of the splendid Greek-Revival Fishmongers' Hall in the City of London (1832), Roberts was indeed interred in the cemetery as were his daughter Lydia Anastasie Davy Šechavceva, *née* Roberts (1851–77), who had married the Russian noble 'Pietro de Schéhavtsoff' (Pëtr or Piotr Ivanovič Šechavcev),<sup>2</sup> and granddaughter Véra Petrovna Šechavceva (1876–77). Although the interments of these three members of the same family were recorded in the *Registro Alfabetico* held in the cemetery office, there was no longer any sign of any of the graves or memorials.

In some despondency, after a visit to the *Villa Romana* on the *Via Senese*, which had been Roberts's home and where he died, I was sitting in a café on the *Via Senese* with a glass of wine and opened my 1913 Baedeker to inspect the map showing the Environs of Florence outside the *Porta Romana*. Just up the road I noticed a *Cimitero Evangelico degli Allori* and

went thither. Enquiries in the cemetery office at first led nowhere, but patient inspection of the registers, year by year, revealed that Catherine Roberts, *née* 'de Svétchine',<sup>3</sup> was buried there in 1905. Ekaterina Dmitrievna Svečina (1820–1905) was married to Henry Roberts in the parish church of Paddington in 1847, the Reverend Baptist Wriothsley Noel (1798–1873) officiating. Ekaterina (known as Catherine or Catherina) was the daughter of the celebrated authoress Sof'ija Petrovna Sojmonova Svečina (1782–1857), who ran a glittering salon in Paris and was a celebrated convert to Roman Catholicism. Sof'ija (known as Anne-Sophie in France) was in turn the daughter of Secretary of State Piotr Aleksandrovič Sojmonov (1738–1801) and Ekaterina Ivanovna Boltina (1756–90): the last was lady-in-waiting to Maria Feodrovna (1759–1828), briefly empress.<sup>4</sup>

The kindly Registrar closed up the office and took me up to a plot in the cemetery where all the Roberts family had been interred. Henry, Lydia, and Véra had been exhumed from the *Cimitero degli Ingleſi* (which was closed for new burials in the 1870s) in 1906 and buried beside Catherine.<sup>5</sup> They were joined by Henry and Catherine's other daughter, Theodora Amélie Roberts (1856–1916), founder and for thirty-five years directress of the Medical Mission.

Designed by Giuseppe Bocchini (1840–1900), inaugurated in 1878, and situated on sloping ground near the Villa of the Allori family of artists (hence its name, 'at Allori'), the cemetery is planned symmetrically: sections K to Z, on ground nearest the road, are laid out on a rectangular grid with a circular open space in the centre (section A) and two semicircular layouts (sections B and C) at either end; the upper part (sections D to I) is a vast semicircle with a circle above it (half of which is contained within an arcaded element) bounded by straight walls set at 45 degrees to the main axes. A rather uninspired Neo-Gothic building containing the offices and other elements is situated beside the road on the main axis leading to the arcaded climax of the whole composition. Now mature, with

fine planting, the *Cimitero* is embellished with an astonishing array of splendid sculptures and tombs, and inhabited by numerous cadavers of celebrated foreigners, notably Russian *émigrés*, and many with connections to the British Isles, including figures as disparate as the aesthete Harold Acton (1904–94), Reggie Turner (1869–1938) who boasted that it was his second editions that were so rare, and the painter John Roddam Spencer Stanhope (1829–1908).

This truly wonderful book celebrates the cemetery, is crammed with biographical and bibliographical information on the inhabitants of each plot, and illustrated with a marvellous array of photographs, not only of individual monuments and mausolea, but of the once-living commemorated. It is a great work of scholarship, and its compilers and publishers deserve the highest praise. Cemeteries deserve such treatment as well as respect (something not universal in these islands) and reward those who study them beyond measure. It is a pity there could not have been some synoptic essays in English, German, and Russian, for the entire book is in Italian, but that does not lessen its indubitable importance. It is superbly designed and printed.

Much smaller, but utterly delightful and in English, is the beautiful and comprehensively illustrated guide to the First Cemetery of Athens (founded 1837), a magical place so graced by exquisite neoclassical monuments (many of which are *stelai*) that it is really an outdoor *Glyptothek* commemorating the dead of several religious persuasions. This book also lists biographies of notable individuals entombed there, including William Bell Dinsmoor (1886–1973), author of that essential work on Greek architecture known to all scholars of the subject.<sup>6</sup> It gives useful layout plans showing numbered plots, discusses tomb types, and shows a truly marvellous range of refined grave-markers, some with impressive modern bronze sculptures, e.g. the monument by Dimitris Ferentinos (1908–86) to army officers who fell in wartime, and the desperately skeletal reminder of the German Occupation by Kostas Valsamis (1908–2003)

that contrast with the average standard of what passes for sculpture in Britain today (with the honourable exception of the work of Alexander Stoddart). Outstanding among the mausolea is the tomb of Heinrich Schliemann (1822–90), who discovered Troy and excavated Mycenae. This splendid amphi-prostyle-tetrastyle Doric temple on its high podium was designed by Saxon-born Ernst Ziller (1837–1923), an accomplished Greek Revivalist who became a naturalised Greek citizen. It features a vigorous sculptured frieze around the frieze of the plinth on which the temple sits by Giorgios Xenakis (1865–1911). Ziller was also responsible for the distyle *in antis* Doric mausoleum of Efstathios Evgenides (1899). Sometimes the style of the monuments departs from pure Grecian and turns to Byzantium, as in the highly decorated mausoleum of the Vasilis Sikiaridis family by Giorgios Vitalis (1838–1901).

The First Cemetery of Athens offers immense rewards to visitors, and the authors and publishers are again to be congratulated on a fine achievement. In fact, both books are enthusiastically recommended to cemeterians. They are admirable additions to the literature of what is one of the most fascinating subjects imaginable.

JAMES STEVENS CURL

#### Notes

- 1 James Stevens Curl, *The Life and Work of Henry Roberts 1803–1876: The Evangelical Conscience and the Campaign for Model Housing and Healthy Nations* (Chichester, 1983).
- 2 They were married in the Demidoff private chapel of San Donato in 1875 (Archive of the Russian Church of Florence).
- 3 Sometimes given as 'Swetschine'.
- 4 See Alfred-Frédéric-Pierre, Comte de Falloux du Coudray, *Madame Swetchine: Sa Vie et ses Oeuvres* (Paris, 1860).
- 5 Section B VII 68–71.
- 6 William Bell Dinsmoor, *The Architecture of Ancient Greece: An Account of Its Historic Development*, revised and enlarged by William J. Anderson and R. Phené Spiers (London, 1950).