

News and Notes

News and shorter items of Keats-Shelleyan interest

New Curator for the Keats-Shelley House at Rome: Dr Giuseppe Vito Albano

HARRIET CULLEN

Keats-Shelley Memorial Association, London, UK



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We are delighted to announce the appointment of our new Curator, since Catherine Payling has now left to pursue her career in the United States.

He is Dr Giuseppe Albano, of Scottish-Italian nationality, who took up his post on 28 November 2011. He joins us in Rome with an impressive academic and

professional portfolio: he holds a doctorate in English Literature from the University of Cambridge, and has worked as Librarian and Archivist for the Hawthornden International Writers' Retreat. His extensive teaching and museum experience includes lecturing at the Wallace Collection and the British Museum.

Giuseppe is now supervising the final stage of the Centenary Development project, the first-floor exhibition space, bookshop, and the reclamation of the adjoining terrace as an outdoor space for Museum events. He will also be working on other plans and directions in which to develop and promote the Keats-Shelley House.

From the Keats-Shelley House at Rome

GIUSEPPE ALBANO

Curator of the Keats-Shelley House, Rome, Italy

The Keats-Shelley House in Rome has now served as a museum for more than a century and continues to attract visitors from all over the world. Many are already well acquainted with the work of Keats and his fellow Romantics. Others are simply spurred by their curiosity about this handsome historic house in the heart of this splendid city. Whatever their reason for coming, all, I am delighted to say, will discover something wonderful, be it our fine collection of paintings and portraits, busts and miniatures, relics and first editions, manuscripts and letters, or our extensive library which has proved invaluable to many scholars and writers over the years.

We are working hard to improve our visitors' overall experience and to secure the building's future. As part of this process, we are presently restoring the house's exterior and spacious terrace, which will host special events and provide an excellent place for visitors to relax in. But there is also a need to revitalize the interior of the building and its exquisite collections, to host more temporary exhibitions so that the museum can play a stronger part on the national and international museum scene, and to create a cinema room where audiences can learn about the background of the collection and of the house.

All of this requires funds, but as a British museum abroad we receive no public funding from the UK. We therefore rely on the generosity of donors and on revenue from visitors, most notably from our beautiful gift shop which opened in 2010 and which was made possible, alongside vital restorative projects, by our enormously successful Centenary Appeal. However, we must never rely on our laurels, and in order to safeguard the museum's longevity and prosperity, we always warmly welcome donations, which, however, large or small, will see that future generations continue to enjoy and to learn from it.

The Keats-Shelley House is a truly special place. But we need your help to ensure that it survives and thrives for many, many more years to come. Thank you.

Book News: Denise Gigante, *The Keats Brothers*

‘Z’

The Life of John and George (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011)

Denise Gigante’s group biography of the Keats brothers appeared shortly after issue 25.1 of the *Keats-Shelley Review*. The book begins in Margate, summer 1816, when John and Tom were holidaying in Margate while back in London George toiled in Abbey’s counting house. John’s ‘social thought’ for his brothers is woven throughout Gigante’s narrative, and the shattering effects of Tom’s death (December 1817) and George’s departure for America (July 1818) are related to the great poems that were written in 1819 — the spring odes and *Hyperion*. Later chapters cut between John’s life in London and Rome, and George’s pioneering adventures on the Western Frontier where Gigante has much that is fresh and bold to say about George’s American life, precarious then profitable, and about the George Keatses’ role in nurturing John’s literary celebrity. There are good things here on Oscar Wilde’s 1882 visit to Louisville, when he saw the poet’s manuscripts. A full review of the book will follow.

News from Keats House, Hampstead

MICK SCOTT

Manager, Keats House, Hampstead, UK

I thought that I would highlight the work of Keats House in the local community in this edition of the *Keats-Shelley Review*. Keats House firmly believes that not only is it a place of pilgrimage, a tourist destination and a centre for the appreciation of the life and work of the poet John Keats but that it is also the local museum for people of our part of North London. Here in the words of our Community Officer Paul Sherreard is a brief summary of some of our work.

Keats House Museum Group

This group of volunteers aged between fourteen and twenty-four uses a creative approach to engage people of all ages with Keats House Museum. They meet once a month on a Thursday evening where they discuss creative writing of all kinds, do a bit of writing, and come up with ideas for workshops and events at the museum. Group members also volunteer as part of our general events programme.

Keats House Poets' Forum

The Keats House Poets' Forum has drafted a bid for Young Roots funding, which would enable the group to continue bringing young and passionate poets into the museum, whilst also networking with other heritage sites in Camden.

The project will compare the life of youth poets today with the life of a young poet in Keats's time: expectations, barriers, triumphs, losses. The project would see the group present poetry performances at other spaces every other month, returning to Keats House on alternate months and bringing in new audiences.

The poets will create anthology of work as well as a learning resource for schools and youth groups.

The Keats Love Letter

We have completed a set of multi-sensory and outreach workshops, in collaboration with writer Anjan Saha, working with groups from Mencap and St Mungo's. Here is the link to the blog that was set up to capture some of the work <http://lovelettersto.london.wordpress.com/>

There will be another swathe of images and poetry added to the blog in the run up to Valentine's Day, when the next round of workshops and activities will be kicking off.

As you can see, this is a lively approach to working with young people and we are very proud of the progress the members of the various groups have made.

The Fate of the *Maria Crowther*

JESSICA BERRY

Maritime Archaeology Sea Trust (MAST), UK

Some may have wondered about the fate of the *Maria Crowther*, the brig that took John Keats and Joseph Severn to Naples in September 1820.

The *Maria Crowther*, a single-decked, 130 ton, two-masted brig, was built in 1810 in Chester. She was a cargo vessel plying in her early years mainly between London and Naples, though its first registered voyage with Lloyd's in 1811 was between Dublin and Norwegian ports. After 1824 her voyages were more limited, mainly to Wales and the west coast of Ireland. Unfortunately, there is no indication of what cargo she was carrying on that 1820 trip to Naples, although we do know from records that she was heavily laden.

The vessel, en route from Whitehaven to Dublin, carrying a cargo of coal, ran aground on 7 November 1837 near Laxey off the north-east coast of the Isle of Man in thick fog. The crew were saved, and even well looked after by the inhabitants of Douglas, who gave them 'pure and wholesome water', according to local reports.

The cargo was salvaged but attempts to repair the brig failed owing to heavy inshore winds which beat her against the rocks. Eleven days after running aground,

Maria Crowther was a total wreck. Well broken up, the debris was sold at auction. The proceeds were slim, but the spars and rigging were shipped to her home port of Whitehaven.

Keats and Seventeen

‘Z’

Keats had a strange preoccupation with the number seventeen. His brother Tom was seventeen on 18 November 1816 — see ‘To My Brothers’: ‘This is your birth-day, Tom [...]’. Earlier that month Keats had told Charles Cowden Clarke that he expected to see him on 17 December — that was six weeks in advance — for a party that Severn and Reynolds also attended. What was it for? To tell his friends that his first book would shortly be published?

At the end of the year Keats thought sufficiently well of his sonnet ‘On the Grasshopper and the Cricket’ to include it in his first book as Sonnet XV. Dated 30 December, it would be the most recent composition in his book. He also added the earlier ‘To Kosciusko’ and ‘Happy is England’ as Sonnets XVI and XVII. There may have been some personal significance for Keats in the symmetry between the evening of 17 December, when he announced his plans, and the addition of these three poems to make a group of seventeen sonnets for publication in 1817.

Why seventeen? Keats was seventeen in October 1812, around the time when Dr Hammond returned his apprenticeship indentures and Keats left Edmonton for London and Vauxhall. Was this the time of his first sexual experience, possibly in Vauxhall pleasure garden? When Keats first encountered Fanny Brawne, he thought it worth mentioning her age to George and Georgiana. Instead of telling them that she was sixteen years old, or eighteen years old (her actual age), he supplied an odd phrase: ‘she is not seventeen’. And there is another, more sinister association too: the roman numeral for seventeen, xvii, is well known to be an anagram of the Latin word ‘vixi’, I have lived; the implication being that, if I have lived, I may already be dead.

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