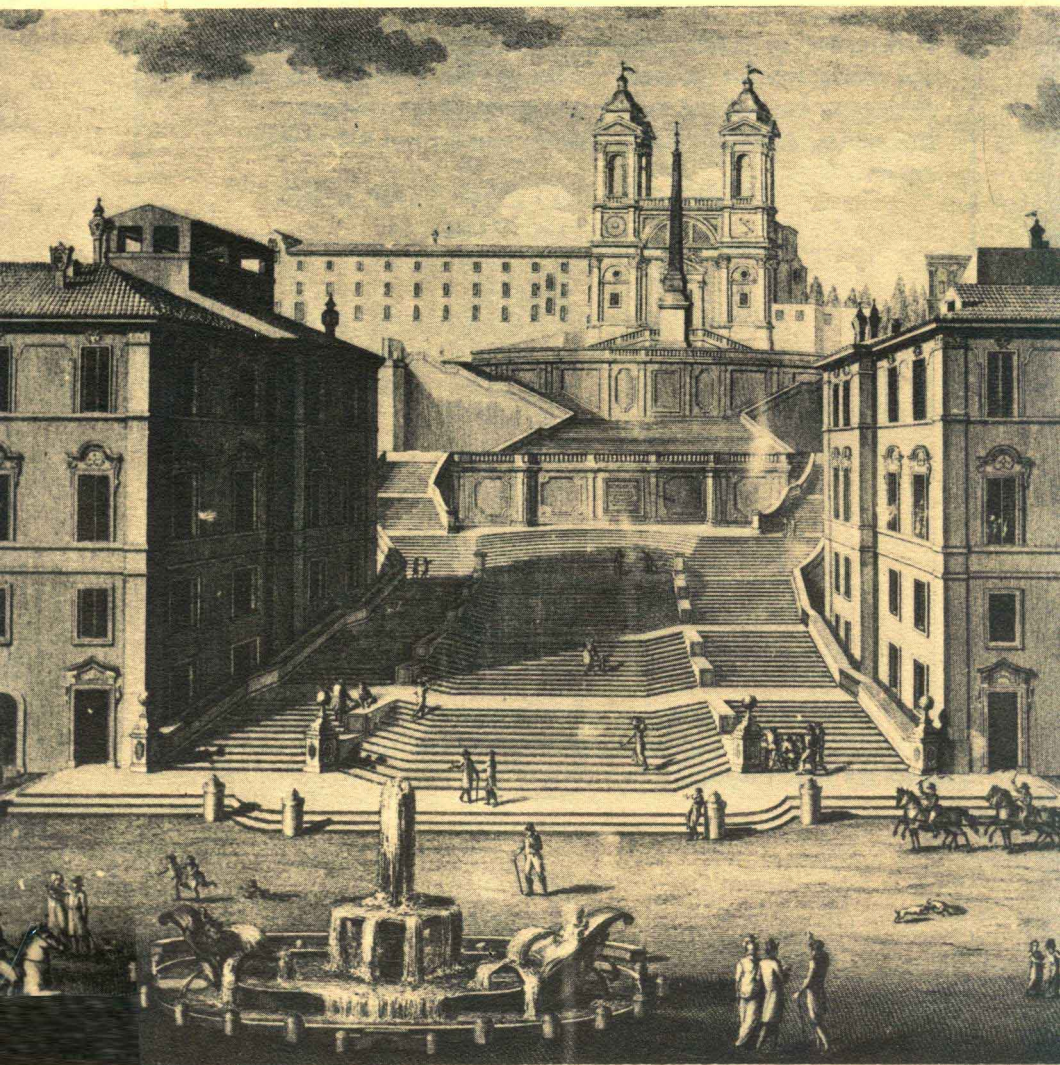


# THE KEATS-SHELLEY REVIEW



AUTUMN 1991

NUMBER SIX

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## *CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, 1990-91*

It is with sadness that I am obliged to report two major events in the history of our Association. The first is the death on Friday, 5 April 1991 of Viscount de L'Isle who was our president until his death. He was an effective and enthusiastic supporter of our Association, served on our Committee in various capacities for many years and was a tireless fundraiser during our appeals. His directness and common sense will be greatly missed during our deliberations. The second is the retirement of Lord Abinger as the Chairman of the Association. Lord Abinger has made a very substantial contribution to the Association and, I am very glad to say, remains as a member of our Committee with special responsibility for the business aspects of the publication of our *Review*. Our committee accepted his resignation as our chairman with the greatest reluctance and regret. We are deeply grateful both to Lord de L'Isle and to Lord Abinger for all their efforts on our behalf.

Next year will be one of great importance to our Association. It is the Bicentenary of the death of one of 'our' poets, Percy Bysshe Shelley. A list of proposed events is published elsewhere in this *Review*. Our Association engaged a coordinator in Italy, Mrs Debbie Hodges, to work with our curator and others to promote various methods of celebrating 200 years of Shelley. The Bodleian Library at Oxford is mounting an exhibition mainly comprising some of the Abinger papers.

*K.V. Prichard Jones*

## LETTER FROM ROME OCTOBER 1991

1990 marked a great turning point in my life. I left the Victoria and Albert Museum, where I had worked as a Curator for over eight years, and arrived in Rome to take up my new position as Curator of the Keats-Shelley Memorial House. I left England, inspired by the news that the Grosvenor House Antiques Fair had raised £46,000 for the Appeal, and determined to meet the new challenge that lay ahead.

Following the example of Keats, I too arrived in Italy in October. The beginning of the academic year was heralded by the arrival of the school groups. More than 100 schools visited the House in 1990-91. Although the Gulf crisis cast a blight over Rome in January and February, by the Spring the visitors were returning to the Eternal City. We took advantage of the winter months to carry out essential work on the interior of the House. As a result of financial help from the London Committee, a splendid black and white Carrara marble floor, based on an eighteenth-century design, was laid in the main entrance hall. The Museum itself was totally re-wired with additional financial support from 'Esso Italia'. Much needed new silk moiré curtains and wall coverings are currently being made and sponsored entirely by the Venetian firm of historic fabric manufacturers, Rubelli. Olivetti has generously given the House a computer, a laser printer, a photocopier and even a fax machine – the latter is proving to be an enormous success and has allowed us to conquer the difficulties of the Italian postal system!

However, there is still a multitude of problems to be faced. Many of the prints and drawings are in urgent need of conservation, the Library should be deep-cleaned on a regular basis, and new show-cases and labels as well as an air-conditioning system are all required in order to ensure that our historic collection will survive into the twenty-first century. I am also most anxious to continue and develop the tradition of cultural activities at the House, which is already well-established.

## LETTER FROM ROME

This Autumn, Roderick Cavaliero, Honorary Treasurer of the London Committee, gave a lecture entitled 'A Place too Savage for an Invalid: Rome at the Time of Keats's Death' to an extremely crowded and thoroughly captivated audience. This lecture is printed elsewhere in the *Review*.

Detailed plans are now being made to celebrate the Bicentenary of Shelley's birth in 1992. The British Ambassador, His Excellency Sir Stephen Egerton, has very kindly agreed to launch the Bicentenary programme with a reception at his residence, Villa Wolkonsky, in January. Events will be taking place in Italy every month throughout 1992. A series of lectures covering a wide range of topics, relating to Shelley's life, poetry and politics will be held at the British Council. A Poetry Festival, the first of its kind, organized by the Keats-Shelley Memorial House and the British Council, will be held in Lerici and the 'Golfo dei Poeti' in May. A cross-section of contemporary poets and academics will be participating. In June a gala concert in aid of the House will be held at the Castello di Lunghezza, home of the Munthe family. Walking tours, concerts and poetry-readings in Rome are also planned. The programme is being issued now.

One year on and I have at least survived a little longer than Keats. I am determined that his House will also survive; large sums still need to be found but with the help and support of good friends and sponsors in England, Italy and America, as well as a high-profile cultural programme, I maintain my optimism for the future.

*Bathsheba Abse*  
Curator



**PROJECTED TIMETABLE OF EVENTS  
FOR SHELLEY BICENTENARY**  
*Organized by Keats-Shelley Memorial House*

**1. JANUARY 1992**

Launch of celebrations at the Villa Wolkonsky hosted by  
His Excellency the British Ambassador.

**2. THROUGHOUT 1992**

Lecture series on aspects of Shelley's poetry and philosophy of life.

(i) **29 JANUARY**

William St. Clair: 'The Godwins and the Shelleys: The  
Biographer as Archaeologist'.

(ii) **18 MARCH**

Clive Wainwright: 'The Romantic Interior: Literary Houses  
1780-1840'.

(iii) **1 APRIL OR 11 APRIL**

Muriel Spark on Mary Shelley (sponsored by 'Penguin Italia').

(iv) **JUNE (to be confirmed)**

Anne Mellor on Mary Shelley.

(v) **30 SEPTEMBER**

Richard Holmes: either 'Shelley in Italy' or 'The Romantics in  
the South' (sponsored by 'Penguin Italia').

(vi) **7 OCTOBER**

Paul Foot: 'The Trumpet of a Prophecy: Shelley & Revolution'.

(vii) **11 NOVEMBER**

John Freeman: 'Shelley's Ecology of Love'.

**3. 8-10 MAY 1992**

'Il Golfo dei Poeti'. A weekend of poetry at Lerici. English and Italian  
contemporary poets reading from their work and reflecting on the  
poetry of Shelley. The weekend will include an introductory lecture, a  
guided visit to the Casa Magni, and an evening boat trip around the  
Gulf of Lerici. In collaboration with the British Council, the 'Comune'  
of Lerici and possibly the 'Cassa di Risparmio' of La Spezia.

## SHELLEY BICENTENARY EVENTS

### 4. APRIL – MAY – JUNE 1992

In the Footsteps of the Poets. A series of walking tours of Rome visiting the places where famous poets and writers lived.

### 5. MARCH 1992

'Il Coro del Lunedì' at the Castello di Lunghezza. A spectacular evening of choral music at the medieval castle of Lunghezza. The tickets will include a champagne supper.

### 6. 13 OCTOBER 1992

Mary Shelley at Babington's. An evening soirée at Babington's Tea Rooms with a professional actress reading extracts from the poignant letters and diaries of Mary Shelley. We shall either sell tickets or ask for donations; Babington's will provide drinks and buffet.

### 7. OCTOBER 1992

Film season. A number of films including various versions of *Frankenstein* and Ken Russell's *Gothic* (funded and promoted by the British Council).

### 8. JUNE, SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 1992

A series of musical recitals at the British School at Rome, performed by the 'Centro Musicale di Risonanza'. The musical programme will be contemporary with the life of Shelley.

### 9. CHILDREN'S POETRY COMPETITION

A competition for Italian and English school children divided into six categories with two prizes in each group. 'Penguin Italia' will sponsor the prizes. The closing date is 15 April.

### 10. SEPTEMBER 1992

In collaboration with the British School at Rome. An exhibition of drawings by the artist James Hakewill who made a sketching tour of Italy in the early part of the nineteenth century. The drawings are a unique collection showing places, including Rome, much as they would have looked when visited by the Romantic poets.

### 11. The British Council will also be sponsoring seminars at the Keats-Shelley Memorial House and at Casa Magni, Lerici.

# KEATS-SHELLEY REVIEW

## EVENTS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN ENGLAND

Date:	Event:	Venue:
Workers Education Association/Sussex University		
January 1992 5 week course	The Shelley family and Horsham.	Forest Boys School, Horsham
November 1992 5 week course	Shelley and his world.	
November 1992 5 week course	Politics and Utopianism (much about Shelley and his works).	
West Sussex County Council		
12 noon 17 July 1992	Unveiling plaque on premises in Warwick Street Worthing (Shelley's printers).	Warwick Street, Worthing, West Sussex
10 September 1992	Henfrey Smailes Lecture by Judith Chernaik.	
Horsham District Council		
May or June 22 or 23 July To be arranged To be arranged	Shadow of the Sun. Judith Chernaik on Shelley. <i>Gothic</i> (18) a film by Ken Russell. <i>Haunted Summer</i> – a film by Ivan Passer.	Horsham Arts Centre Horsham Arts Centre Horsham Arts Centre Horsham Arts Centre
South East England Tourist Board and Sponsors		
To be arranged	A series of literary dinners in Horsham with important speakers. The first will be Paul Foot.	To be arranged

## SHELLEY BICENTENARY EVENTS

Date:	Event:	Venue:
<u>Field Place</u>		
Early June 1992	Gabriel Woolf reading a programme of Shelley related books.	Field Place
4 August 1992	Fun run commencing at Field Place and passing many points of interest on the Shelley Trail.	Field Place
<u>St Marks Church Ladies Organisation</u>		
23 April 1992	Audrey Robinson (Author of <i>Shelley and Horsham</i> ) talking on Shelley.	St. Mark's Church Hall, North Heath Lane, Horsham
<u>Pathfinder Audio</u>		
25 April 1992	<i>Rebel Poet: A life of Shelley in words and music</i> by John Webster.	St. James's Church, Piccadilly, London.

There will also be exhibitions at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, at Dove Cottage, Grasmere and at Eton College; the University of Durham will be promoting a series of lectures in the Autumn; the University of Bristol hopes to perform *The Cenci*.

## CONFERENCES

Conferences are scheduled as follows: 20-23 May (Shelley: Poet and Legislator of the World organized by the Keats-Shelley Association of America at the New York Public Library); 15-17 August (Shelley and the Canon at Gregynog, Wales); 30 September – 2 October (conference organized by the University of Salzburg); 2-5 October (conference organized by the University of Rostock, Germany); 9-12 October (conference organized by the University of Prague, Czechoslovakia); 15-17 October (Conference organized by the University of South Africa, Johannesburg); 9-12 November (conference organized by the University of Rome).

## KEATS-SHELLEY REVIEW

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## A PLACE TOO SAVAGE FOR AN INVALID\*

*by Roderick Cavaliero*

John Keats and Joseph Severn entered Rome from Naples by the Lateran gate, now the Porta San Giovanni. In a few minutes they had arrived at the Colosseum, then a tumble-down ruin open to all and sundry. Severn was to risk his neck climbing up the crumbling walls to pick a wallflower for Keats to enjoy the scent, and Stendhal saw one of their countrymen ride his horse in at one end and out at the other. Most visitors, however, made their entrance through the Porta del Popolo, as they followed the more usual route down the Cassia from Florence, to enter by the foreigners' quarter where they would find their lodgings or an hotel. All along the Via Babuino with its tiny *vicoli* were what we should now call self-catering apartments for foreigners, mainly English, and the Piazza di Spagna was where they parked their great high-sided travelling carriages. Lodging-houses indicated by their names which clientele they favoured so that most of them had their signs up in English or French.

The Piazza del Popolo was always busy. Most of the city's beggars lingered there, hoping for bounty from these English milords for, no matter how modest their means, all English travellers to Rome, even Keats and Severn, were rich. Would-be servants clambered onto the running-boards of newly arriving carriages fighting for the attention of the travellers, hoping to be taken on. There was always someone offering you a service in return for a tiny coin and everything and everyone could be hired in the piazza. By night the place was the principal haunt of the daughters of joy, all displaying their special licences from the Cardinal Vicar, while in one of the nearby streets was the famous brothel which, when it was run by the sisters Cazenove, had been James Boswell's favourite haunt.

The Piazza di Spagna, being the tourist heart of Rome, was rather more select. Hopeful models, handsome men and women and their children from the Abruzzi, lounged on the Spanish Steps waiting to be hired by

\* The text of a talk given at Keats House, Camden, on 20 June 1991 as the Annual Keats-Shelley Memorial Lecture and at Keats-Shelley Memorial House, Rome, 7 October.

itinerant artists, and the shops round the square were set up to provide all household services more cheaply than you could do them for yourself. Most people who took rooms there, like Keats and Severn, had their meals sent in by the cookshops, who on the whole thought the English would eat anything, and this was why Keats threw his dinner into the Piazza one night, after which the service improved. Anna Angeletti, then a recent widow of forty-three from Venice and her two daughters, who scarcely appeared younger than their mother, had turned No.26 into lodgings. She already had in residence a Mr Gibson in the front rooms on the ground floor. The third floor, now the flat rented by the Landmark Trust, accommodated a twenty-five year old Irishman, James O'Hara, and a twenty-seven year old Italian army officer, Giuseppe d'Alia.

At the top of the steps outside the house, Sta Trinità dei Monti was on the edge of fields, and the French Academy in Villa Medici looked northwards on woods. The Pincio gardens were just being laid out for perambulation on horseback or foot but, if on horseback, you could canter for miles up and down the hills that are now Parioli. A fit young man could walk across Rome in a couple of hours and would see scarcely anything to remind him that he was not living a hundred years earlier. The population within the city walls was about 135,000 but the inhabited area was bounded on the south by the Capitol, on the west by the Tiber, on the east by the Pincian and Quirinal Hills. Three-quarters of the city was within the Aurelian walls, and the Viminal, Esquiline, Caelian and Aventine Hills were silent and solitary. Among the vineyards on their slopes fever lurked.

Years of being the centre of tribute from abroad, first Roman, and then Roman Catholic, had induced in the inhabitants a sense that the world really did owe them a living. A vast population lived on charity, and there was very little serious commerce or manufacturing. Cleaning up the city seemed to be no one's responsibility so that, despite the proliferation of fountains, the streets and squares were filthy. A quarter of the city's inhabitants were in holy orders of one kind or another and so exempt from manual labour. To the President De Brosses fifty years before, three-quarters of the population appeared to do nothing, while the rest were statues.



Rome had been a Mecca for English travellers for over a century, since the English had become rich, in fact, so that they could do the Grand Tour, buy antiques (especially statuary), visit the places about which they had been taught, often at the end of a cane, and go home, satisfied that they had completed their education. Society revolved round the *conversazioni* held by the Roman princes where the indefatigable Bozzie had found a 'great deal of formality and also a certain air of pleasing richness and grandeur'. They took their tone from those cardinals who could be persuaded to attend. The food brought in from outside was always cold, and most of it had been pilfered by the servants before it could reach the guests for whenever there was a *conversazione* the palace servants were augmented by liveried ruffians who foraged their one square meal of the day by enrolling with a master who had never seen them before and who generally did not know how many servants he employed anyhow.

Religious ceremonies were the commonest entertainment and tourists were invited to attend the profession of nuns, the celebration of patronal feast-days in convents accompanied by elaborate masses and elegant music, and Papal services which were both splendid and long. Treating the events like theatre, they behaved accordingly. When Joseph Severn became British Consul in Rome forty years later, he had to translate for the British community the regulations that governed the behaviour of foreign women in church and which Pio Nono had decided to enforce. Papal Chamberlains, on the first transgression, were 'to use the most insinuating supplications and in the sweetest and most imploring manner, but when this failed they must snatch away the offending lady without the hope of pardon, whoever she may be, and expel her from the holy place'. Any woman 'feeding, guzzling, or laughing and screaming' during the most solemn moments of the Mass was to be dragged out of her place as soon as the moment was over, and at the end of the service women were to be prevented from climbing over the balconies to jump down and get away more quickly. Men who insisted on chattering to the ladies during Mass had only to be escorted out of the ladies' section!

Most of what went on in the theatres was of an insufferable dryness and piety so that people mostly went to meet their friends and eat the ice-