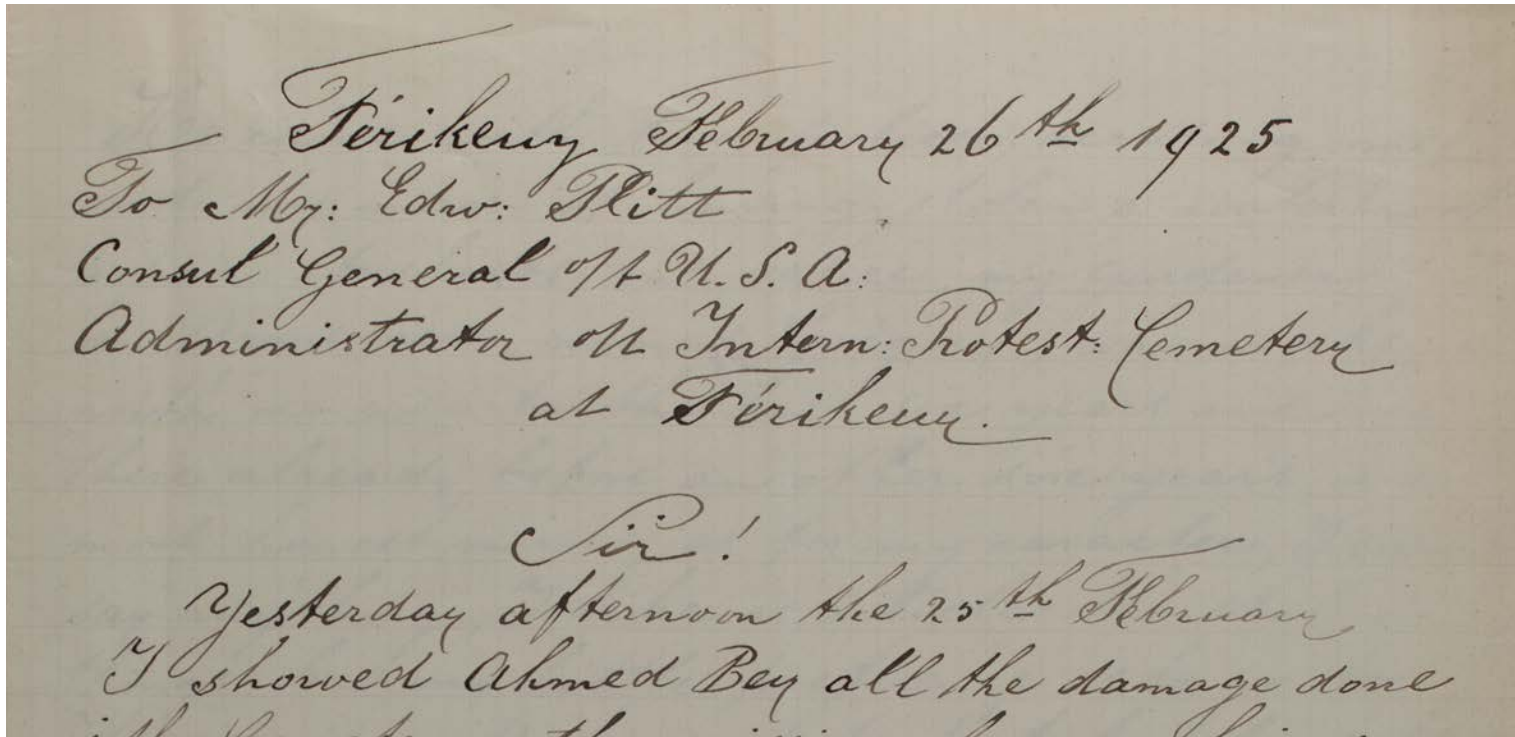


# The Ledger

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Bulletin of *The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative*



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## Editor's Note

Among its aims, *The Ledger* seeks to revive the memory of those who reside in the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery. This is challenging and often relies on chance. Most of the people buried in the cemetery do not have gravestones, and the precise spots where they lie are unknown. Roughly 5,000 interments are recorded in the logbook, but only about 1,200 plots are marked with tombs. Name, nationality, death date, and burial number on a single line in the registry is all that attests to many a past life.

This issue of *The Ledger* features articles on two individuals buried in anonymous plots. They died during the First World War and their lives were entwined with events of that era. Their stories reach to distant places, one as far as the tiny island of Nauru in the South Pacific. The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery only occupies about a hectare and a half of Istanbul's roughly 5,500 square kilometers, but as the city's sole distinctly international burial ground, its significance reaches far beyond the limits of the municipality and the frontiers of Turkey.

The final feature piece in this issue recounts a different kind of life, that of the cemetery itself, shortly after World War I. It describes episodes of exactly a century ago (1924-5), but those familiar with today's cemetery and its operations will realize that many of the matters and concerns of that time are perennial—just as recognizable and pertinent now as in the past.

Brian Johnson

## Somewhere in your Cemetery . . .

### *An Anonymous Burial in Feriköy Commemorated in Norwich, England*

**Elizabeth Cannon**

Somewhere in your cemetery, perhaps in the ossuary, along with those of many unknown people, lie the remains of an Englishwoman whose life was short but quite remarkable. Her name was Ida Marguerite Ames, and she was born in 1883 to wealthy parents, spending her childhood in the city of Norwich, near the east coast of England, where her father was a silk merchant. She had four younger brothers, and the family lived in a large and comfortable house on a wide, tree-lined road. In 1911 she married Patrick W. B. Walker, whom she had first known when he was a boarder at a small private school in the house next door. After the wedding he seems to have been taken into the family business as an overseas agent, and he and Ida were living in Kenya when their son Raymond Neville was born in 1913. By the time the child was about a year old they had moved to Mesopotamia (now Iraq). Ida and the child Raymond made the journey home to Norwich in the summer of 1914, and in September they set sail from London for the port of Basra to rejoin Patrick, who was working in Baghdad.

In broad terms what we know of the rest of Ida's life starts from an inscription carved around the choir pews in Christchurch, Eaton, Norwich, where Ida and Patrick had been married. Ida's parents, together with those of another soldier who died in the war, commissioned the pews as a memorial to their lost ones, and the inscription just below the upper row of desks tells that Ida was "taken a prisoner of war at Baghdad, and after two years wandering in Mesopotamia died at Constantinople October 12th 1916."

The First World War had already begun in Europe in August 1914: in the autumn Britain was moving quickly to secure her oil interests in the Persian

Christchurch, Eaton, Norwich, UK





Gulf, and it was not a good time to be in the Middle East. Before the end of 1914 Ida and her husband were caught up in the conflict, and as alien civilians were interned by the Turkish authorities. So, from being the only daughter of a prosperous family in a comfortable home, she found herself a prisoner in a foreign land, maybe destitute, and with a small child to care for.

What really happened to the little family of three during those two years? Research has shown that British families captured in Baghdad in 1914 were gradually moved northwards from one internment camp to another, settling for a while in Mosul, and later at Aleppo, in Syria, before finally reaching Constantinople (today's Istanbul). It seems that some of the wives and children were separated from their husbands, but so far as I can tell, Patrick and Ida and the young Raymond remained together. There is no record of how the journey was made, but passing remarks in some of the Foreign Office documents now deposited at the National Archives, Kew, give the impression that it was on foot and arduous. Ida's parents made enquiries about her through the International Red Cross in June 1916, and its First World War archives record the request, but simply report that the family was taken to Aleppo, and that there had been no further news of them.

Part of the choir pew inscription commemorating Ida Marguerite Ames



Eventually the group of captives reached Constantinople—there is a telegram from the US ambassador in London to the British foreign secretary copying one received from the US ambassador in Constantinople listing four families who had arrived, including the Walkers. All were said to be well. This was sent on 10 October 1916 and, as the inscription says, they had been two years on the journey. Ida died the next day. A paragraph in a letter from the US embassy in Constantinople reports that she was taken ill and died very suddenly on 11 October 1916. Curiously, there is one day's difference between this record and the inscription on the choir pews. The exact nature of her illness is not recorded, but there is a note that she had been seriously ill before leaving Baghdad and had fully recovered.

We know that Ida was buried in the Protestant cemetery at Feriköy from an entry in the UK Foreign and Overseas Registers of British Subjects kept by the US embassy in Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> It is probable that she was interred in an unmarked grave since Patrick may have been unable to afford to buy a plot and a memorial. As a prisoner he was likely to be restricted in what he could do, and keeping his child alive would probably have been his first priority. He also had the daunting task of informing Ida's parents of her death. Only brief messages of up to thirty

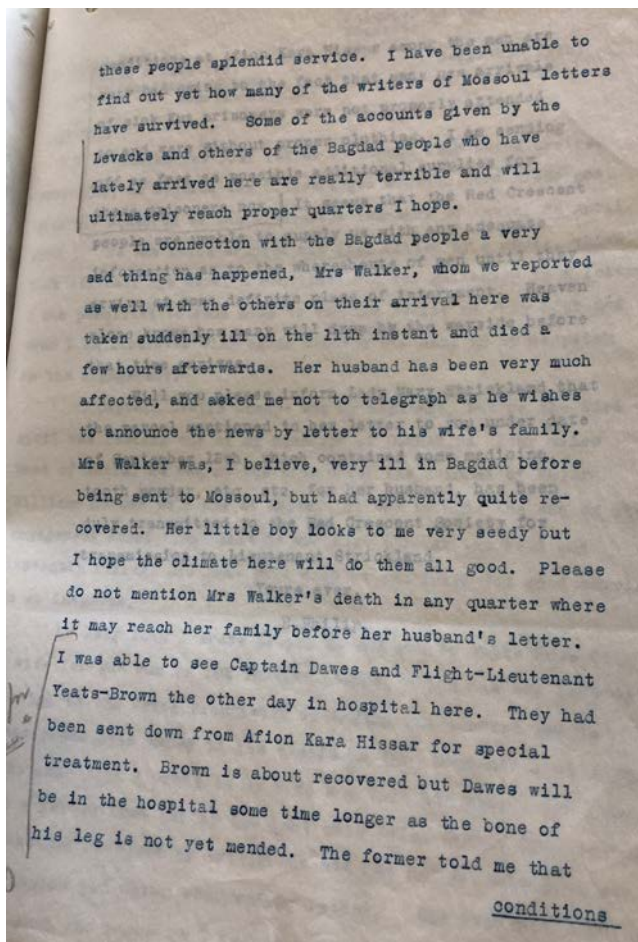
<sup>1</sup> Her burial is also recorded in the cemetery's registries, no. 3032, "Mme Wacker [sic], anglaise."

words could be sent by way of the American embassies in Constantinople and London and the British foreign office. Patrick did what he could to ensure that the Ames family was told of Ida's illness before they heard of her death. There is a letter from Mr. Ames amongst the documents expressing his thanks to the foreign secretary for sending the information and enquiring anxiously about his grandson, then just three years old. The records show how carefully the British authorities monitored what was happening to the group of people taken prisoner in Baghdad, and also how closely they worked with US diplomats in maintaining communication about them and in doing what they could to promote their wellbeing.

Patrick and Raymond returned to England in December 1918, and Patrick continued his work in the family business. Raymond was brought up by his grandparents, the Ames, and educated at Norwich School, which was in Cathedral Close. He afterwards followed a military career. I suspect that his descendants are now living in Virginia.

This is just one of the many stories of people whose remains lie in anonymity in Feriköy. People who lived far from their homeland wherever that was, died in what is now Istanbul, and rest permanently in the tranquil and secluded place that is the Protestant cemetery.

Report of Ida Marguerite's death from the US embassy, Constantinople



Elizabeth Cannon and Brian Johnson at the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery in 2019

*Elizabeth Cannon (efcnr4@gmail.com), of Oxford, England, has long been interested in family history. She lived for many years in Norwich, near Christchurch, and became involved in the story of Ida Marguerite Ames in 2013, when her next-door neighbor, a clergyman in the parish, asked her to help with research into the inscription on the choir pews. He was preparing a book of remembrance as the centenary of the beginning of World War I approached. Besides her investigation of the historical sources, Elizabeth had the opportunity to travel to Istanbul in 2019 and visit the place where Ida Marguerite now lies. The materials she uncovered during her research are kept at Christchurch, as an additional memorial to a remarkable woman.*



# “In the Shadow of Cypresses”

## Finding Gotham Eodeben

Hilary Howes

Gotham Eodeben (1900-17) demonstrating the traditional Nauruan string figure “flying fish” (Plate 17 from Paul Hambruch’s account of the Hamburg South Seas Expedition, *Ergebnisse der Südsee-Expedition 1908-1910: Nauru*, vol. 1.1)



On 22 May 1917, Siegfried von Lüttichau, pastor to the German congregation in Constantinople (today’s Istanbul), wrote in his diary: “Very suddenly, to our great sorrow, our Gotham has been called away from us.”

More than a century after Gotham Eodeben’s untimely death, this diary entry has helped bring closure to his relatives on the island of Nauru in the Pacific Ocean. They knew only that Eodeben (his Nauruan name) had left Nauru to travel to Germany around 1910 and had never returned. In the 1920s his immediate family had received a small payment, the proceeds of his estate, but the paper currency could not be used on Nauru. Despite being kept in a camphor box, it was gradually eaten away by silverfish until nothing remained.

In recent years a few further clues came to light. The German embassy in Canberra, Australia, funded an English translation of two volumes by the German ethnologist Paul Hambruch,<sup>1</sup> who visited Nauru as part of the Hamburg South Seas Expedition of 1908–10, and dedicated it to the people of Nauru on the fiftieth anniversary of their independence in 2018. These two volumes contained photographs of Eodeben and sketches by him, suggesting that perhaps he might have traveled to Germany with Hambruch. Other Pacific Islanders were known to have joined scientific expeditions during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries; Tupaia, an *arioi* priest and master navigator from Ra’iātea in the Leeward Society Islands, who joined the crew of the *Endeavour* on James Cook’s first voyage to the Pacific in 1769, is probably the best known example. Separately, a series of confidential British Foreign Office political correspondence from the 1920s,<sup>2</sup> digitized and made available online, included the important information that Eodeben had died on 19 May 1917, at the German Hospital in Constantinople, and that he had been employed by “Count von Luettichau, pastor to the embassy in Constantinople,” at the time of his death.

Still, many questions remained. Who was Count von Luettichau? How had Eodeben found his way to Constantinople? What had caused his death at such an early age and where had he been buried? Hoping to help Eodeben’s relatives find answers, Nauruan-born historian Alamanda Lauti turned to the German embassy in Canberra for assistance in 2022.

I was working at the embassy at that time, and Eodeben’s unique life story caught my attention. I was not certain that it would be possible to find out more, but I wanted to try.

German-language Google searches confirmed that a man named Siegfried Graf (Count) von Lüttichau had indeed served as embassy pastor and pastor to the German congregation in Constantinople from 1906 to 1919; they also revealed

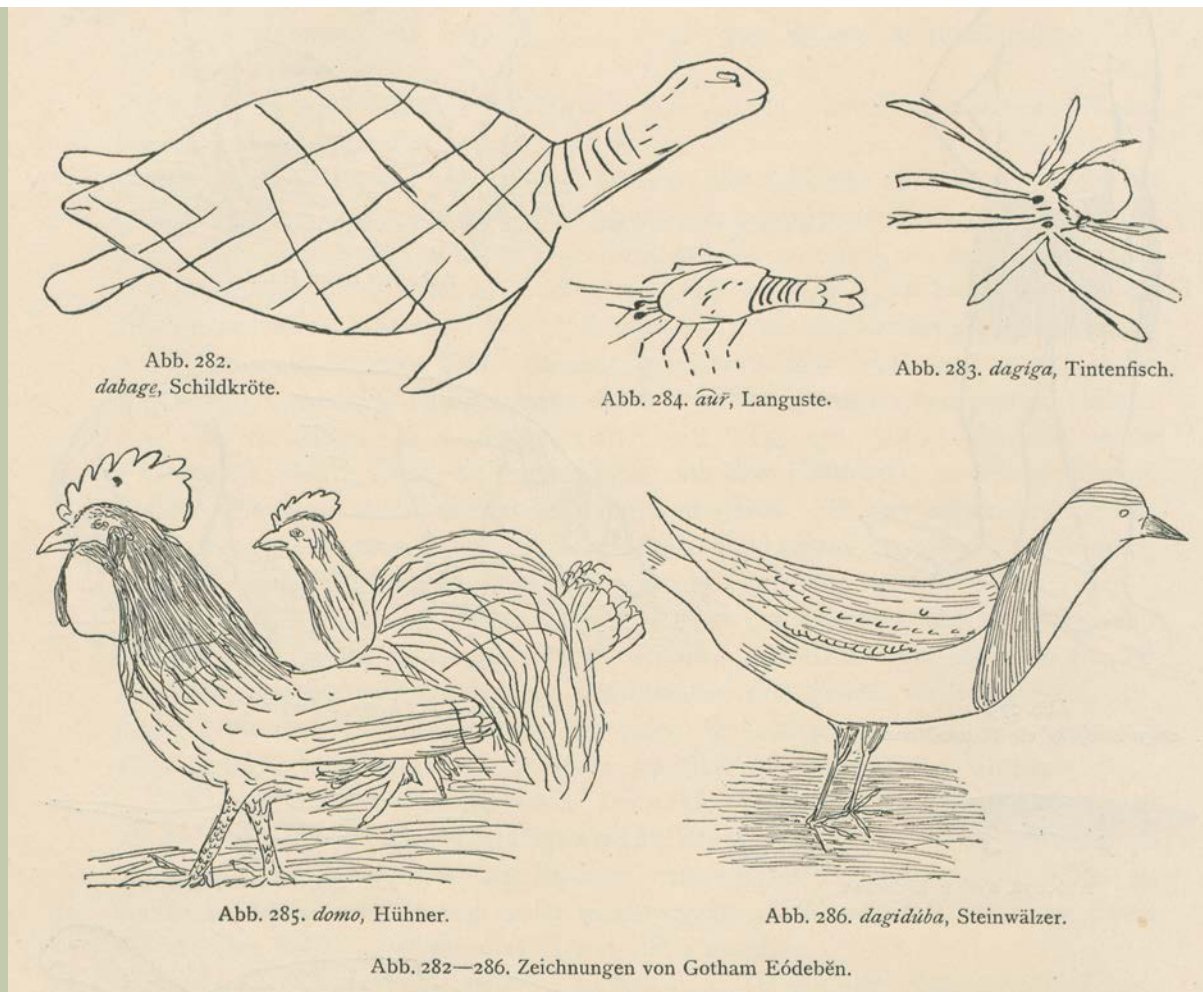
1 P. Hambruch, *Ergebnisse der Südsee-Expedition 1908-1910, II B 1: Nauru*, half-vols. 1-2, Hamburg, L. Friederichsen & Co, 1914-5.

2 P. Kesaris (ed.), “Confidential British Foreign Office political correspondence / Germany. Series 1, 1906-1925. Part 2: 1920-1921. C 3890/18/21 Estate of late Gotham Eodeben of Nauru (Marshall Islands),” pp. 150-67, <https://www.bsb-muenchen.de/mikro/lit1502.pdf>.

the existence of a series of volumes on the history of the von Lüttichau dynasty, including excerpts from Siegfried's letters and diaries.<sup>3</sup> These volumes were not available in any Australian library; only a handful of overseas libraries held copies.

At the beginning of 2024, I resumed work as a researcher at The Australian National University and traveled to Germany to undertake archival research. Having established that RheinMain University and State Library in the city of Wiesbaden held copies of the relevant volumes and that I would need to spend time in that part of Germany anyway, I contacted the library, arranged to visit for a few days, and was finally able to sit in the reading room with Siegfried's letters and diaries open in front of me.

Against all odds, I found the information I had hoped for. Eodeben had not traveled with Hambruch but had been sent to Germany by Philip Delaporte, a German-American missionary working for the American Board



Sketches by Eodeben of animal and bird species found on Nauru (Hambruch, vol. 1.2, p. 200)

of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) on Nauru, “to be educated in a theological seminary.”<sup>4</sup> The German connection is explained by the fact that Nauru was a German protectorate from 1888 to 1914. Eodeben stayed in the household of a Protestant pastor, Wilhelm Horning, in Fröschweiler (now Froeschwiller) in Lower Alsace, then part of the German Empire, now northeastern France. He attended school in Fröschweiler for almost two years, but “could not tolerate the climate and suffered from homesickness.”

A sympathetic Horning arranged for Eodeben to “embark on a voyage to the Mediterranean,” possibly with the intention of returning to Nauru. The outbreak

<sup>3</sup> HG v. Lüttichau (ed.), *Beiträge zur Familiengeschichte der Herren, Freiherren und Grafen v. Lüttichau*, 3: *Siegfried Graf v. Lüttichau*, half-vol. 1, Kirchheim, Teck, als Manuskript vervielfältigt, 1993.

<sup>4</sup> P. Delaporte, “HMCSL - Micronesian Mission Collection - Delaporte, Philip - 20.” Letter to D. Scudder, February 13, 1913, p. 4. Hawaiian Mission Houses Digital Archive, <https://hmha.missionhouses.org/items/show/13637>.



of the First World War derailed these plans, forcing the ship to take shelter in the harbor of Constantinople. The ship's crew departed to take up arms. Siegfried von Lüttichau, becoming aware of Eodeben's situation, "arranged with the captain that he should serve in our house and should be prepared for confirmation at the same time." Eodeben joined Siegfried's household on 22 January 1915 and was confirmed on 28 March of the same year. "He was so happy," Siegfried recalled.

ABCFM missionary Philip Delaporte and his wife Salome departing on a mission tour



Siegfried von Lüttichau preaching at a German military camp, near Es Salt, Palestine

In May 1916 Eodeben underwent the first of several operations to remove swellings on his neck, caused by tuberculosis. Doctors had hoped to "localise the ailment," but by April 1917 it had spread to his internal organs. He was admitted to Constantinople's German Hospital and cared for there until his death on 19 May 1917. Siegfried sat by his bedside as he lay dying, held his hands, and prayed with him.

Reading Siegfried's heartfelt descriptions of Eodeben's short life and tragic death, I found myself close to tears. Despite the chance nature of their encounter, Eodeben had evidently become a much-loved member of Siegfried's household, valued for his "sunny nature," his studiousness, his devout Christian faith, his selfless wish to serve his community, and finally his courage in the face of terminal illness.

On 20 May 1917, Eodeben's funeral service was held in the chapel of the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery. The cemetery's logbooks record the date of his burial (no. 3082) as 21 May. Siegfried concluded his diary entry with the following words: "Now he rests out there, surrounded by blooming roses, in the shadow of cypresses and cedars. We are still in disbelief. It was almost like a dream; we all miss him at every turn [...] he was a manifest blessing for our household and for everyone who knew him."

Many people have assisted and supported this research. I would particularly like to thank Alamanda Lauti, now German honorary consul in Nauru; Dr. Hans-Peter Laqueur; Dr. Brian Johnson of the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative; Heike Steller-Gül, pastor to the German-speaking Protestant congregation in Turkey; and the staff of RheinMain University and State Library in Wiesbaden. I would also like to acknowledge Eodeben's relatives, including his sister, the late Einomeno (Ei Numano); Einomeno's son, the late Gaeowa (Gaowa) Daoe; Gaeowa's daughter Roxanna Samantha Detenamo née Daoe and her siblings; and Roxanna's daughter Rowanna Deiranauw. They never gave up hope of finding out what had happened to Eodeben, and it is primarily thanks to their dedicated efforts that he can now be remembered as "gone but not forgotten."

Some of Eodeben's relatives. Standing from left: David, Rick, Robin, Raelene, Roxanna, Ronay. Seated: The late Gaeowa Daoe survived by his wife Sakura



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# A Year in the Life of a Cemetery

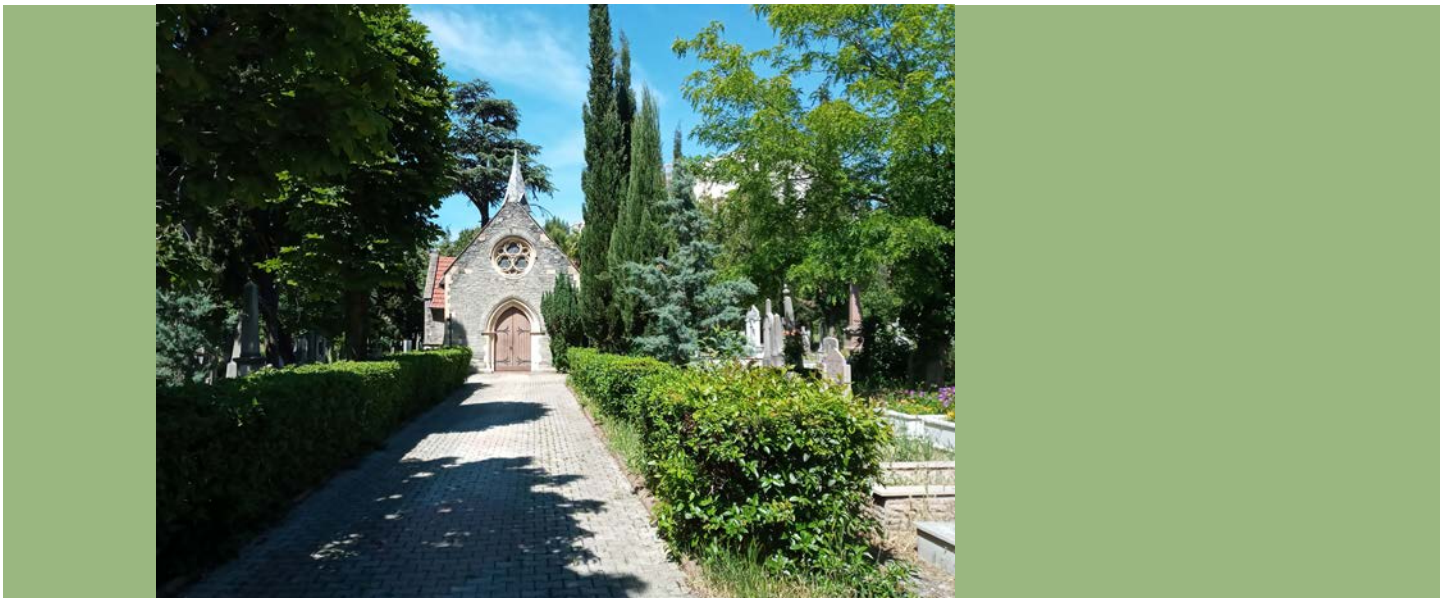
**Brian Johnson**

After passing through the gate of Istanbul's Feriköy Protestant Cemetery, a visitor is likely to sense a feeling of detachment. The graveyard is remarkably quiet despite flanking one of the busiest avenues in the area.<sup>1</sup> A high wall and profuse trees and shrubbery block the view and muffle the sound of life outside. The funerary monuments, many broken and weathered, some in rows, some haphazardly placed, accentuate the separation. Memorializing generations of vanished lives, the tombs intensify the isolation.

But the separation is illusory. As one strolls among the graves, or stops to sit on a bench beside the chapel, the pulse of life outside gradually becomes noticeable. The wall and greenery fail to shut out the drone of traffic and voices of passers-by on the avenue. Distinctly audible, the heartbeat of Istanbul is heard even here where so many silently rest.

Cities of the dead in many ways resemble those of the living. Active and growing, they require attention and care. Although much of the work is commonplace—issuing burial permits, maintaining the grounds, overseeing repairs—challenges arise to break the routine. At the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery, administrative responsibility belongs to a group of foreign diplomatic missions in Istanbul, which have shared managerial duties since the cemetery's opening in 1859.<sup>2</sup> One well-documented period in particular, from October 1924 to September 1925, illustrates these tasks.

The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery is a rare green spot in Istanbul's acres of concrete



In the early 1920s, an administrative committee comprised of representatives from several nations directed the affairs of the Protestant cemetery at Feriköy. The committee treasurer was responsible for managing most of the daily business. American Vice-Consul Edwin A. Plitt assumed this office in October 1924,

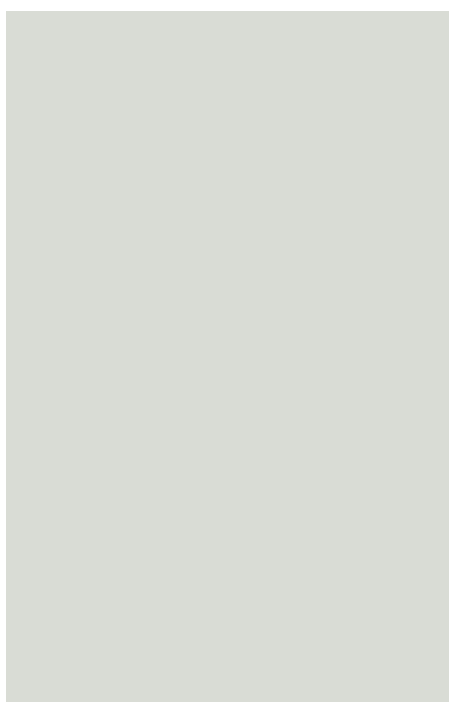
<sup>1</sup> Abide-i Hürriyet Caddesi

<sup>2</sup> In 1857 the Ottoman government gifted the land for the cemetery to the leading Protestant Powers of the day: Great Britain, Prussia, the United States of America, the Netherlands, Denmark, the United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway, and the Federated Cities of the Hanseatic League. Currently, management of the site is entrusted to the consuls general of Germany, the United Kingdom, the USA, the Netherlands, Sweden, Hungary, and Switzerland.

commencing a twelve-month career as the cemetery's supervisor. His colleagues on the committee were Dr. Johannes Kalmodyne, chargé d'affaires of the Swedish Legation; A. Koch representing the Dutch; and Canon F. C. Whitehouse, chaplain of the British diplomatic mission.

Like most worldly institutions, cemeteries operate on a capital budget. Since Treasurer Plitt's main role was to collect revenue and pay expenses, his first order of business was to assume control of the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery's funds deposited at the National Bank of Turkey. After obtaining Kalmodyne's written introduction to the bank, as well as submitting a specimen signature, he was vested with authority over the cemetery's account.

Almost immediately, Plitt received a bill from John Dekkers, the cemetery's custodian. Dekkers, along with his Armenian assistant Kirkor, cleaned the grounds, dug graves, kept the burial registry, and helped at funerals. For his services, Dekkers was given a monthly salary and accommodations in the caretaker's house. Other than a room at the cemetery, no mention of what Kirkor earned appears in the records.



Women of Istanbul's American community decorating graves in the cemetery's US section on Memorial Day 1924, a few months before Edwin Plitt took up the post of treasurer

A native of Holland, Dekkers retained his post through a succession of administrative committees until his death at the age of ninety in 1949, when he was laid to rest in the same ground he had tended for decades. Diligent in collecting his salary, he prepared receipts for his pay just as conscientiously. Written in a bold hand, affixed with stamps, and signed and dated twice by the "Chief Gardener and Caretaker," Dekkers' statement for October 1924 reads: "Received of Mr. E. A. Plitt, Consul of the U.S. of A. . . . for the keep and care of the cemetery during the month of October. Seventy-five Lira Turc . . . Lira Turc 75.-"<sup>3</sup>

Meticulous as he was about his wages, the custodian appears to have been less attentive in other matters. Later in the month, Plitt received an invoice from the cemetery's water supplier, the Compagnie des Eaux de Constantinople, for repairs to the burial ground's water meter. Since the work had been done without the committee's knowledge and approval, Plitt asked for an explanation, and Dekkers, who might have been absent or failed to monitor the job properly, reported:

<sup>3</sup> Salary receipt, 1 November 1924, FPCA ["Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Archives"].B4.F7.027.





Map of the Feriköy district in 1925, showing the Protestant cemetery during Edwin Plitt's term of office

Sir! I have been examining the water-meter but I don't see any[thing] extra ordinary about it; the meter has been painted black, the glass of the little watch renewed there where the two pipes join the meter, the leather renewed . . . Those different things [assorted pipes, valves, and other parts listed on the bill] must be inside. I am sure that the Compagnie will be so kind to send a man to show and explain.<sup>4</sup>

Plitt was apparently dissatisfied with the caretaker's statement, and his suspicions about the general condition of the cemetery were aroused. A few days after receiving the custodian's note, he inspected the site with Canon Whitehouse. Plitt's report of 4 December 1924 reveals that the visit was overdue:

On this day the Rev. Whitehouse and the undersigned made an inspection of the cemetery. The Keeper, John Dekkers, was instructed to carefully go over every section and have all graves cleaned and all shrubs and vines properly trimmed and to replace the tiles which have fallen from the property walls. The building was found in need of certain repairs, woodwork, paint, gutters and roof. It was decided to wait for this until spring.

In the depot a coffin was found which, the Keeper said, had been there for about ten years. Apparently no one has claimed it and in view of the apparent decomposition of the body it was decided to have it interred in the international section. The name: Belikedjian or Belikedjolis was written on the door of the depot and the Keeper thought it was the name of the deceased.<sup>5</sup>

Five days later, the corpse was laid to rest. Dekkers' logbook entry for the interment—"Bilisjikolja . . . Russ[ian]"—hints at the reliability of the cemetery's burial registry.<sup>6</sup>

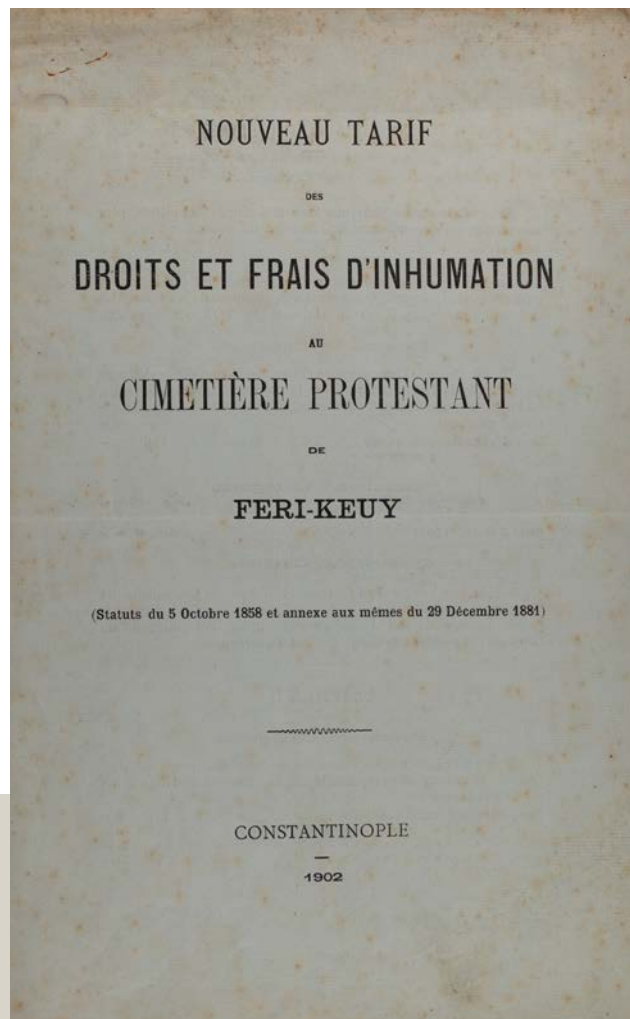
Bodies were often placed in a depot temporarily. Some were eventually repatriated to their country of national origin, others were interred in Feriköy. The cemetery adhered to specific procedures, and every burial required authorization. The administrative committee issued permits upon official notice from the consular service of the deceased's country of citizenship. Requests—such as the following addressed to Treasurer Plitt—were drafted in formal diplomatic language:

4 Correspondence from John Dekkers to Edwin Plitt, 1 December 1924, FPCA.B4.F6.035. (N.B. The second page of this document, including the last two sentences quoted, is not digitized.)

5 Report titled "Cemetery Inspection," 4 December 1924, FPCA.B4.F6.034.

6 Burial no. 3361, FPCA.B1.F2.094.

His Britannic Majesty's Consulate General at Constantinople present their compliments to the Consulate General of the United States of America at Constantinople and have the honour to request that a burial order for the Protestant Cemetery at Ferikeuy may be issued for the burial of Mrs. Martha Hall, a British Subject, aged 71 years and who died at Shishli this 18th day of April 1925.<sup>7</sup>



The 1902 list of interment fees and classes of burial at the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery, which was still valid in the early 1920s

Contrary to the notion of the equality of the grave, most burial grounds—the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery included—have a distinct social hierarchy. As in life, status after death is largely determined by financial means.

During Vice-Consul Plitt's tenure, several classes of burial were available. The most common—an ordinary grave of 2 x 1 meters for five years—cost six Turkish liras in gold.<sup>8</sup> At the end of the five-year period, as well as each thereafter, the concession could be renewed at extra cost. If payments lapsed, the remains of the deceased might be exhumed and placed in the cemetery's ossuary, freeing the plot for a new occupant. Ownership of the ground in perpetuity and permission to erect a monument could be purchased for an additional six liras, as Plitt explained in reply to an inquiry about placing a monument on a gravesite:

In reply to your letter of August 30th relative to a permit for the erection of a tombstone on lot No. 3342, you are informed that this permit may be had upon payment of six Turkish gold pounds. This is the purchase price of the lot.

The burial permit, which is returned herewith, grants you the use of the lot for a five year period only. The erection of a monument may be granted only after the lot has been acquired.<sup>9</sup>

7 Correspondence from British Vice-Consul, Constantinople to Consulate General of United States of America, 18 April 1925, FPCA.B4.F8.015.

8 Approximately 50 Turkish paper liras, i.e., 8.4 paper liras = 1 gold lira.

9 Correspondence from Edwin Plitt to J. Macnamara, 2 September 1925, FPCA.B4.F8.007.



For those lacking financial resources, burial at a reduced price or free of charge was granted at the discretion of the cemetery administration. On occasion, special petitions were presented to the committee, such as an appeal sent by John Dekkers to Canon Whitehouse in November 1924:

Mrs. Müller, the mother [of Maurice Müller, who died in 1922] living now in Switzerland begs, to reduce the 50 Liras (to pay for a permit for the erecting of a plain cross of cement . . . on her son's grave) to 30 Liras. A certain Swiss lady friend of the mother named Mrs. Fuchs charged with this affair . . . asked me if she should address herself to the German Pastor, but I told her that the President of the Committee of the International Protest[ant] Cemetery could only decide in this matter.<sup>10</sup>

Whitehouse forwarded the correspondence to Plitt, who circulated it to the rest of the committee members. Personal endorsements can help in grave matters, and a brief note added to the letter by Reverend Whitehouse—"The woman, Mrs. Müller, is respectable and hard working, and I think her application might be favourably received"<sup>11</sup>—undoubtedly influenced his colleagues. The request was approved, and the cemetery ledger records a payment of thirty liras for permission to erect a monument on Maurice's burial plot.

Although cities of the dead might seem immune to the iniquities of the world, vandalism and thievery often occur within their boundaries. The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery is no exception. During Plitt's term as supervisor, bronze chains and flower vases were stolen from graves. Tiles disappeared from the cemetery walls, reappearing as patches on the roofs of nearby buildings. Rubbish was also dumped on the grounds. Dekkers said nothing to the neighbors, however, noting, "I dare hardly pass a remark, when I get for answer, 'You look out, otherwise we put a blade between your shoulders.'"<sup>12</sup>

Plitt lodged a complaint at the Feriköy police station on 12 February 1925, demanding investigation of thefts, punishment for perpetrators, and prevention of future incidents.<sup>13</sup> Evidently, it was effective. About two weeks later, Dekkers informed the American vice-consul of prompt police response to a new robbery:

. . . you have been so kind, Sir, to draw the attention of the police to those facts . . . I witness myself of the ardour and zeal the police showed yesterday in a small case—namely, an officer [from the military school at Harbiye], living in one of those small houses . . . leaning nearly against the left wall at the entry of the Cemetery . . . came with two police, accusing me and my man of having stolen a waterproof [coat], a pair of shirts and [a] valise. . . .

And for reference the custodian added:

. . . my gardener . . . is a most honest man; as for my character, I can say . . . I like . . . the stolen things, but my little preference is to go to Hayden's or Baker's shop.<sup>14</sup>

One can only conjecture about Plitt's reaction. An experienced diplomat, he sent an emissary to visit both the Feriköy police chief and the military officer to "restore . . . friendship" and "evade further trouble."<sup>15</sup> Lacking evidence for a conviction, the police did not press charges. The officer appreciated the vice-consul's efforts and gave his assurance that he would not pursue the matter, even though he suspected Dekkers knew the thief's identity. Perhaps he was right.



The price of earthly memorial can be costly, and the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery committee often received appeals to reduce the fee for a permit to erect a monument

10 Letter titled "Grave No. 3311, 1922, Maurice Müller, Swiss," FPCA.B4.F6.032a-b.

11 Ibid.

12 Correspondence from John Dekkers to Edwin Plitt, 26 February 1925, FPCA.B4F6.002f.

13 Letter addressed to "Ferikeuy Police Station," (Ottoman Turkish/English text), 12 February 1925, FPCA.B4.F6.002a.

14 Correspondence from John Dekkers to Edwin Plitt, 26 February 1925, FPCA.B4.F6.002f-g. Hayden's shop was an exclusive clothing store on the Grande Rue de Pera, which specialized in fabrics imported from England. Also located in the district of Pera, "Maison Baker" was a department store.

15 Report titled "Memorandum Concerning the Trouble at the Protestant Cemetery," 28 February 1925, FPCA.B4.F6.002b-c.

Roughly a week later the house next to his was robbed, and Kirkor emerged as a prime suspect:

. . . That same afternoon the police search the quarters of Kirkor. They go into his room [and] tell him to open his trunk. He says that he has the keys upstairs [and] goes up to fetch them. When he comes down he apologizes for having forgotten it [*sic*] in the pocket of his coat in the garden and goes out to bring it. The police wait . . . for some time [but] seeing that he does not turn out, they go out in the cemetery . . . They look around and cry out for Kirkor, but nobody [is] in the garden. They get suspicious, return to the room, [and] to their surprise they find Kirkor there and the trunk broken open . . . He tells them that he has lost the keys; therefore, to facilitate their search he has broken it open. They begin to look into the trunk, and they discover some cartridges. They ask for the gun, he says he does not have any, so they continue searching and right at the bottom they find a big revolver . . . They also find three ladies watches and a bracelet. . . .<sup>16</sup>

Cemeteries seem shielded from worldly iniquity, yet the misdeeds of the living can even intrude on the realm of the dead

The police arrested both Kirkor and Dekkers. Yet, once again, the evidence against them was circumstantial, and it appears that neither man was charged with the theft. After a short detention, Dekkers was released, and he returned to his duties. Kirkor, it seems, retained his job, although he might have been punished for possessing an illegal firearm.

The burial ground returned to normal, and Edwin Plitt resumed the mundane tasks of issuing permits, supervising repairs, and managing accounts. He completed his term as treasurer of the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery on 30 September 1925.

In a fitting close to the previous twelve months, Plitt received a final message from Dekkers two days before stepping down: “Dear Sir! I send my man with my bill, as I suppose you want to close your books before leaving . . . I don’t like to leave [Feriköy] today, as up till now, there is no sign, neither of a body nor of a burial; [but] everything is prepared, grave, chapel, etc.”<sup>17</sup>—much the same as on any other day in the life of a cemetery.

*Brian Johnson (bdjohnson62@gmail.com), editor of The Ledger, is the librarian of the Istanbul branch of the American Research Institute in Turkey. He has been involved with projects and research on the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery since 2001. This article was first published in Turkish in 2006, under the title “Ölüler Şehrinde Bir Yıl,” Toplumsal Tarih 147 (2006): 72–7.*



<sup>16</sup> Untitled report, 3 March 1925, FPCA.B4.F6.002d-e.

<sup>17</sup> Correspondence from John Dekkers to Edwin Plitt, 28 September 1925, FPCA.B4.F7.002.



## Cemetery Happenings



Vice-Consul Marc Seemann, 2024  
President of the Diplomatic Governing  
Board

Nemeskő workers remounting a  
cross during the Hungarian tomb  
renovations

In 2024 management responsibility for the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery passed from the USA to Germany, and Vice-Consul Marc Seemann assumed the presidency of the Diplomatic Governing Board. A career diplomat since 1985, he has served the Federal Foreign Office in many places, including Brazil, Honduras, Indonesia, South Africa, and the Dominican Republic. Since his arrival in Istanbul (2021), he has worked in the cultural section of the German Consulate.

When he learned that cemetery management would be among his duties, Marc was surprised—to say the least—and a little apprehensive. But after becoming Board president in January, he took to the task with resolve. Under his leadership, major progress has been made to implement administrative procedures essential for the cemetery’s long-term preservation.

Marc implemented the general rules introduced by the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative in 2023, along with accompanying procedures for selling plots and building monuments. Initiative members Richard Wittmann (Orient-Institut Istanbul) and Brian Johnson (American Research Institute in Turkey) supported his effort with more than 300 volunteer hours, serving as Marc’s eyes and ears on site, reporting to him, and liaising with the custodian, plot customers, funeral home directors, and stone masons. Close collaboration between the President and the Initiative provided a level of operational oversight at the cemetery hitherto unseen, and “Marc’s Method” offers a model for the future.

Initiative member Fokke Gerritsen (Netherlands Institute in Turkey) also contributed many volunteer hours preparing the Governing Board’s digital cemetery management program, OpusXenta. Assisted by NIT intern Esen Kayan, he extracted information from the cemetery’s archive needed to operate the system, including details about burials and plot sales from c. 1990 to the present. OpusXenta is expected to be up and running in 2025.

Maintaining last year’s momentum, further renovations of the cemetery’s built heritage were implemented in 2024. The most extensive comprised twelve historically important tombs in the Hungarian section, including those of Imre Cseh (1805–52) and Dániel Szilágyi (1831–85), featured in *A Brief Guide to Istanbul’s Feriköy Protestant Cemetery*, and Jacob Ambrosius Lang (1663–1725), whose biography appears in *The Ledger* 2.1–2. This project was undertaken in the context of the 2024 Hungarian-Turkish Cultural Year and was one of its chief highlights.



Directed by Hungary’s National Heritage Institute, with local support from the Liszt Institute and the Hungarian Cultural Centre, the renewal work began with a survey of the monuments in 2023. Based on the report and proposal that followed, the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Innovation appointed Nemeskő Ltd.—a Hungarian company specialized in tomb renovation—to complete the job in spring 2024, supervised by stone sculptor and restoration expert György Konkoly.



The Hungarian restoration work was no easy task

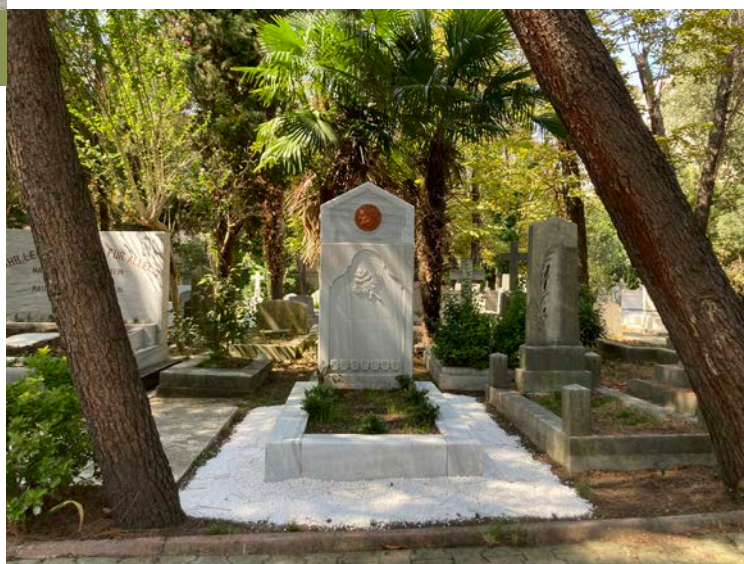


Dániel Szilágyi's monument restored.



The work was demanding and involved. All but two of the tombs had to be dismantled, and the majority needed new foundations. Reinforcement and reconstruction were followed by cleaning and chemical treatment to eliminate biological contaminants. Cracks were filled, joints mended, and other defects corrected. Some repairs required special treatment, such as the replacement of lead lettering on Dániel Szilágyi's tomb. The final tasks included application of hydrophobic coating to the monuments to protect against water damage, a procedure that will be repeated every five years along with cleaning.

A smaller but no less important renovation was also carried out in the cemetery's German section behind the chapel. The tomb of the scholar and artist Traugott Fuchs (1906–97), whose life's story was captured and featured in film in 2022–3 (recounted in *The Ledger* 3.1–2), was cleaned, polished, and enhanced with an arch displaying his profile in relief. This striking image was sculpted



The tomb of Traugott Fuchs with its new addition

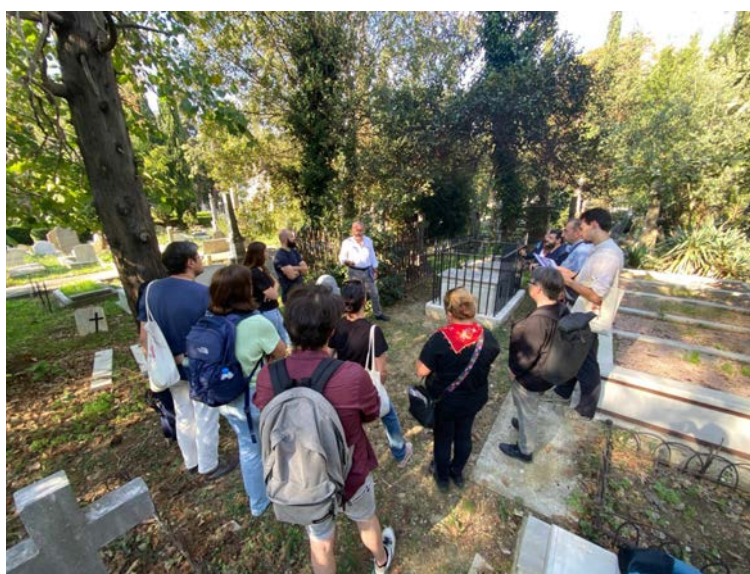
in Heidelberg by Traugott's nephew, Hermann Fuchs, to honor his uncle. The entire project—funded privately, overseen by Richard Wittmann, and directed by Istanbul architect Jan Gavrilof (who managed the American tomb renovations in 2023)—happened in tandem with a series of summer events to mark the opening of the Traugott Fuchs Archive at Orient-Institut Istanbul, which holds hundreds of the artist's paintings and close to 10,000 of his sketches.



Early in 2024, in anticipation of future sitewide conservation, Richard Wittmann worked with a team of architects from Istanbul Gelişim University's School of Architecture to create a plan to preserve other structures and facilities besides grave markers, including the east and south walls in vital need of reinforcement. The university freely offered the time and expertise of three professors specializing in preservation architecture, who have fulfilled many projects for Turkish municipalities, especially for public safety and to mitigate earthquake risks. The team presented their findings to the entire Initiative in May for inclusion in its work.

Formal tours by the Initiative occurred at the cemetery throughout 2024. In May, Brian Johnson showed Swedish Consul General Johanna Strömquist and Deputy Head of Mission Martin Fredriksson around the site, accompanied by Henrik Selin, a priest who represents the Church of Sweden in the eastern Mediterranean, including Turkey, and Björn Kling, his predecessor in the same post. In November, Richard Wittmann and Olof Heilo (Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul) gave a tour to Swedish Consul Annika Bröms and Swiss Consul Pascal Sollberger; both are new members of the Governing Board. In September, Peter Cherry and Işıl Günsu of the British Institute at Ankara guided trustees of the British Community Council of Istanbul around the

Attendees of the Seventh Annual International Necropoleis Research Network Meeting visiting the cemetery in October



cemetery, which fostered discussions about how to develop and further protect the British section. In October, Fokke Gerritsen and Brian Johnson hosted a group of scholars attending the Seventh Annual Meeting of the International Necropoleis Research Network. Their three-day conference at NIT on mortuary archaeology from the Iron Age to Late Antiquity was capped by a visit to a contemporary place of mortuary practice.

Public outreach in 2024 also included an event abroad. In April, Richard Wittmann and Brian Johnson spoke about the cemetery at the International Conference on Cemetery Studies, at Harokopio University, Athens. Their paper, "Five Years Sustaining a Five-Century Legacy: Efforts to Preserve the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery, 2018–23," described the site, its history and significance, and the Initiative's efforts of the last half decade. While in Athens, Richard and Brian visited the city's Protestant cemetery, which is also under diplomatic control. Some of the practices they observed there could be used in Feriköy, such as a method for preserving bones in an ossuary.



Richard Wittmann and Brian Johnson with the custodian of the Protestant Cemetery in Athens

program to fully record the cemetery, delayed for almost two years by the COVID-19 pandemic. This vital work for the cemetery's future preservation and management was accomplished entirely by student interns and volunteers from all the Initiative's member institutes. The last, Brian Knewton, enrolled

2024 marked the official conclusion of the Initiative's



at Hillsdale College, Michigan, USA and affiliated with ARIT, worked onsite from June to August, retaking photographs, documenting graves, and resolving outstanding questions. He also devoted time to research for a paper he aims to present at the annual conference of the Association of Gravestone Studies in June 2025.

The cemetery had a meaningful impact on Brian, especially for his studies as a history major. He has always been intrigued by historical cemeteries, and writing about his time in Istanbul and work in Feriköy, he noted:



Initiative/ARIT intern Brian Knewton taking notes in the cemetery

I suspect that I will look back on my time in Istanbul as formative in my undergraduate years. My conception of the world was expanded by exposure to a vastly different culture and people. Spending time in the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery showed me a unique and powerful way to study the history . . . of people whom I never would have known about if I had not taken on the challenge . . . I am very grateful to ARIT and the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative for giving me this wonderful opportunity.

On behalf of the Initiative and ARIT, “Thank you, Brian Knewton, for letting us give you that opportunity.”



## Remembering the Cemetery's Best Friend

*Sezar, c.2010-24*



In July 2024 the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery lost its best friend, Sezar, the Black Golden Retriever. For more than a decade, Sezar greeted visitors, guarded the site at night, and chased the cats. A faithful companion to the cemetery's custodian and his family, he was loved by all, except the cats. He embodied the characteristics of his breed: loyalty, intelligence, and affection. Sezar was so amiable that even people with no affinity for dogs took a liking to him. He was also a fixture on cemetery tours—accompanying groups, brightening the atmosphere, even pointing out details to stragglers who fell behind.



Sezar will be missed. Perhaps the best epitaph to commemorate his life is the same tribute etched on the tomb of a dog cherished by an anonymous Roman centuries ago:

“He never barked without reason, but now he is silent.”

## The Ledger: Bulletin of The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative

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### Last Words



"You two did this. We saw it!"

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Founded in 1859, the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery is the main burial ground for Istanbul's foreign Protestant and otherwise non-Catholic or Orthodox dead. It is managed by a governing board comprised of the consuls general of Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden, Hungary, Switzerland, and the USA. The cemetery is registered as a "Significant Cemetery" by the Association of Significant Cemeteries of Europe (ASCE): <https://www.significantcemeteries.org>.

The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative is a scholarly working group established in 2018 to document and preserve the Protestant cemetery at Feriköy as a heritage site. Affiliated with six Turkey-based international research centers (the American Research Institute in Turkey, the Netherlands Institute in Turkey, the Orient-Institut Istanbul, the Hungarian Cultural Center, the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, and the British Institute at Ankara), it serves as an advisory body to the cemetery's diplomatic governing board. For more information, please visit the Initiative's website: <http://www.ferikoycemetery.org>.



The Feriköy Protestant  
Cemetery Initiative

