



The British Cemetery, Madrid

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The British Cemetery was founded in an area of Madrid which, in 1854, was a place of small taverns and hillslopes outside the town. There were other cemeteries in the vicinity as, in the decades before, Madrid's local government had taken to setting up new burial grounds further out from the expanding centre. Ever since the seventeenth century the British Government had fought to have a cemetery for its citizens who died while exercising their professions as diplomats or tutors or engaged in trades (building, iron foundries,) or using new skills not yet familiar in Spain (such as insurance, photography, teaching English) or other specialised activities brought from beyond the Spanish frontiers.

As a cemetery for British subjects meant a cemetery which was not Roman Catholic, there was a certain amount of resistance from traditional interests and much resistance from the Roman Catholic Church but at last the Spanish government relented and after many, many false starts land was bought from a tavern keeper, Manuel Chacón, and a plan was made by the British Government's Board of Works to lay it out and wall it round and complete the site with a splendid neogothic battlemented gatehouse.

As time went by, the cemetery accepted several nationalities

for burial other than British, the common denominator being that none was Roman Catholic. There had been no place where a non-Roman Catholic might be buried until the British founded their cemetery. In 1883, when the climate of opinion in the Spanish political scene had calmed down after the turbulence of the 1860s and the Republic and the Restoration of the 1870s, the *Cementerio Civil* was founded and it was there were buried the new wave of atheists, agnostics, freethinkers and some who were simply not Roman Catholics wherever they were from, Spain or anywhere in Europe.

However, by that time, the British Cemetery was well established for British people who died in Madrid and also for members of respectable, influential and important families from everywhere in Europe. In that period of the later nineteenth century burials took place of many Jewish families who had come to trade in Spain and of a number of Greek and Russian Orthodox families who were linked to diplomatic missions. Prussians, Saxons and other German States with Protestant cultures all are represented in the registers of that time. There are to be found in the ceme-

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