

## The cemetery comes alive: the work of the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative in 2022

Daniel-Joseph MacArthur-Seal | British Institute at Ankara

This year has seen significant developments at Feriköy Protestant Cemetery, where the BIAA has been involved since 2019 as a member of the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative together with the Netherlands Institute in Turkey, American Research Institute in Turkey, Swedish Research Institute Istanbul and Orient Institute Istanbul. The cemetery is a site of major historical importance as the resting place of so many individuals who played a significant role in Ottoman and Turkish history. These include Franz Carl Bomonti, creator of the eponymous beer, Nakamura Kenjirō, who established a Japanese import and export shop in the city at the turn of the 20th century, William Churchill, publisher of the Ottoman Empire's first newspaper, Ernest Mamboury, who wrote on Istanbul's archaeological monuments and composed an early guidebook to the city, and scholars who were active more recently, such as John Freely and Norman Stone.

Recognising such rich heritage, the cemetery has now been accepted as a member of the Association of Significant Cemeteries of Europe (<https://www.significantcemeteries.org/>), following a proposal by the Initiative. Membership will promote the cemetery among interested parties. It also opens up the possibility of networking with relevant experts across Europe, as well as participation in future annual general meetings of the Association.

Thanks to the help of volunteers, including Natalie Stuart at the BIAA, condition reports for each of the graves, documenting the size, type, transcriptions, materials and damage, are now largely complete and processed into a single database. Initiative members are now determining details of the future digital archiving of these materials and how to link the records to those generated by an earlier project carried out by the Orient Institut Istanbul to archive the cemetery's burial registers.

Also within the realm of digitisation, the Initiative has proposed scanning and preserving the archives of the Feriköy diplomatic board, which document the management of the cemetery over the last 150 years. In this connection, Bernard Mantel of the Dutch National Archives was invited to consult the materials, currently held at the Dutch consulate, and is preparing a report with advice for their digitisation and archiving.

The BIAA has also initiated a plant and tree survey of the cemetery, one of the few green spaces remaining inside the urban sprawl of central Istanbul. The project is being supervised by Prof. Dr Ahmet Emre Yaprak and Prof. Dr Gül Nilhan Tuğ from Ankara University's Department of

Biology, with the support of Prof. Dr Necmi Aksy of Düzce University's Department of Forestry. The work will be carried out by PhD students Iğın Deniz Can and Barış Uğurman, who previously worked on cataloguing the British Institute's herbarium collections. Two of five visits to the site, which are timed to observe seasonal changes, have now been completed. The findings will be summarised in a report demonstrating the site's biodiversity and ecological value.

Among the oldest tombstones at the site are those composing monument row; these were moved to Feriköy from the earlier Christian burial ground on Taksim hill as the city expanded northwards. The tombs mostly represent merchants who belonged to the British trading community in the Ottoman Empire. Thanks to the support of the British Community Council of Istanbul, the BIAA was able to bring Aykan Akçay, research assistant at Antalya University, to the site to create 3D scans of 63 of these tombs using structure from motion photogrammetry. The 3D models are now available online for



Prof. Dr. Ahmet Emre Yaprak and Prof. Dr. Gül Nilhan Tuğ from Ankara University's Department of Biology.

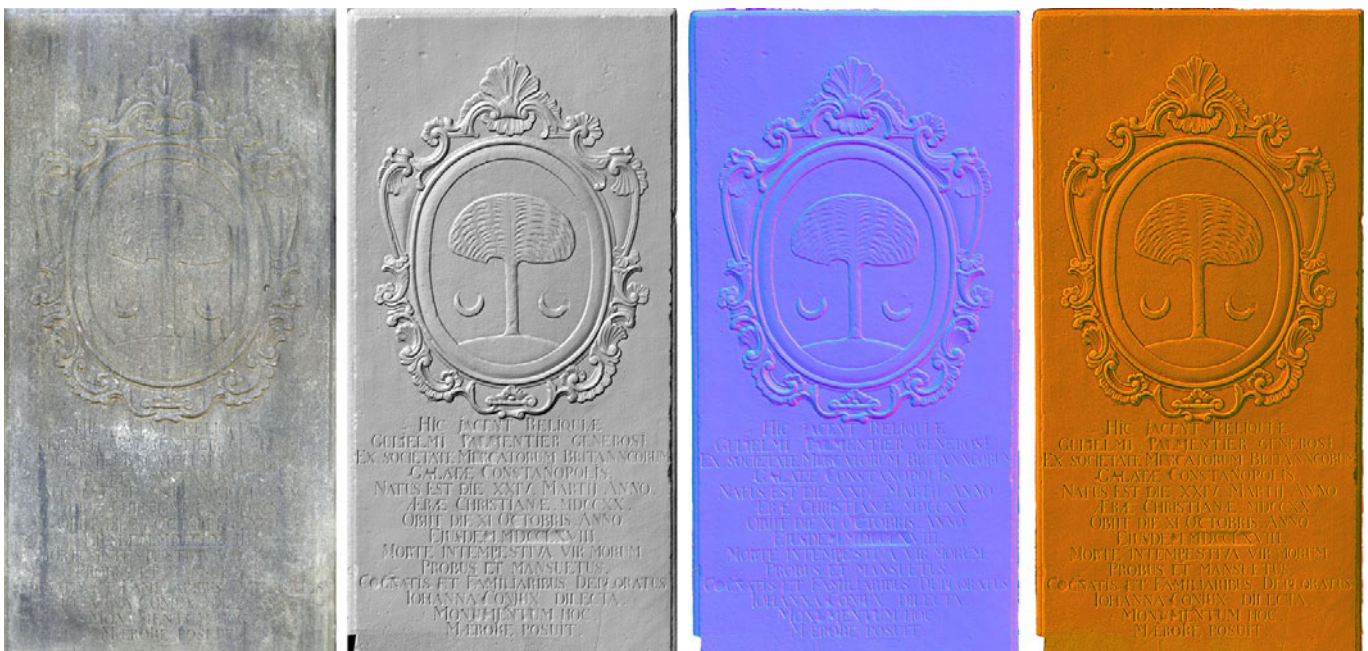


Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and Deputy General Secretary Mahir Polat, with embassy representatives.

public consultation at <https://sketchfab.com/Ferikoy>, while filtered 2D images allow for the reading of otherwise illegible text that has suffered several centuries of erosion. We hope that further funding will allow for the extension of this work to other sections of the cemetery.

The cemetery has also benefitted significantly from cooperation with the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, whose cultural heritage division's conservation team recently completed the renovation of the chapel at the centre of the cemetery. On 31 October, Istanbul Metropolitan Mayor

Ekrem İmamoğlu, Deputy General Secretary Mahir Polat and Şişli Mayor Muammer Keskin presided over a ceremony marking the completion of the project, attended by representatives of the academic Initiative and consulates of the nations tasked with administering the cemetery: the United Kingdom, United States, Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Hungary and Germany. For ongoing project updates and future news on the site, interested readers can consult the Initiative's bi-annual newsletter, *The Ledger*, available online at <http://www.ferikoycemetery.org>.



Unprocessed photograph of the tombstone of William Parmentier (left) and additional filters enhancing legibility of the inscription (right), using structure from motion photogrammetry.