

## Feriköy Protestant Cemetery

Daniel-Joseph MacArthur-Seal | British Institute at Ankara

In the final year of my assistant directorship, I oversaw the completion of two large projects at Feriköy cemetery, whose initiation was described in *Heritage Turkey 2022*. The plant survey conducted by Ilgın Deniz Can, Barış Necdet Uğurman, Gül Nilhan Tuğ, Necmi Aksoy and Ahmet Emre Yaprak was concluded in summer. The report provides a detailed inventory of plant life at the site, an assessment of its ecological value within the urban environment of Istanbul, and recommendations for the care of its many trees. The scanning and digitisation of 63 of the cemetery's oldest tombstones resting against its external wall, known as Monument Row, is also now complete. The results of both projects were presented at the summer showcase of the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative, alongside news of the ongoing restoration of a group of American tombs belonging to figures associated with Robert College, to an audience including members of the diplomatic governing board and interested public and academics. The data produced in the course of both projects are available for public access on the BIAA's Digital Repository at the following address: <https://digitalrepository.biaa.ac.uk/ferikoy-protestant-cemetery-collection>.

Access to the inscriptions provided by the detailed scans of the tombstones carried out by Aykan Akçay, a research assistant and PhD candidate at Akdeniz University in Antalya, together with Merve Eraslan, a graduate of the archaeology department at Selcuk University, has shone a light on numerous biographies of interest among the individuals buried at Feriköy. Given the absence of burial records related to these tombs, which were moved to Feriköy shortly after its establishment from an earlier burial place serving foreigners at Taksim, the inscriptions are in many cases the only evidence about the lives and deaths of these people. The inscriptions of most of the earlier graves are in Latin, which has been translated to English by former BIAA



Aykan Akçay recording Monument Row in summer 2022.

research scholar Matthew Tanton and Annika Asp, both of whom wrote their doctoral theses on the late Byzantine period but were quick to adjust to the peculiarities of 17th and 18th-century Latin.

The tombstones show the diversity of the British community in Istanbul during the period. The majority of the graves belong to merchants associated with the Levant Company, like Thomas Pigot, who together with many colleagues signed a letter of protest calling for the release of English merchant ships detained in port in Smyrna during one of the Ottoman-Venetian wars, in 1646. There are a smaller number of doctors of the likes of William Parmentier, Edmund Frank and George Barron Brown, who were commemorated in a 1906 issue of *The Lancet*, and Thomas Baines, the personal physician to ambassador Sir John Finch, more on whom later. Others were consular staff serving in the English (later British) embassy, such as George Philip Albert, who served William Pagett, ambassador to Constantinople from 1693 to 1702. Many other graves belong to the wives and children of those whose professional lives brought them to the city. One tombstone is dedicated to the two daughters of Peter Wych, ambassador from 1627 to 1641, for whom he left the message “Farewell Deare Babes for I must Leave you here”.

In some instances, the inscriptions reveal the causes of death. These changed over the period, with plague a common factor in the 17th century, while in the 19th century, deaths from cholera and typhus appear. The number of tombstones erected for children reveals the high levels of infant mortality, while several of the women buried in the cemetery died during childbirth.

The inscriptions further document the relationships between individuals whose tombstones are located at the site. The tombstone of Annetta Thomas Coke (d. 1725) is located close to that of her first husband, George Bridges (d. 1714). Bridges' will, available in the National Archives, states that he would leave her his Pera house but that inheritance of his English estate was conditional on her returning from Constantinople. In the event, she preferred to remain in the city, and remarried a local English merchant, John Lethieullier. Feriköy also holds the tombstones of both Jasper Abbot (d. 1723) and his grandson George Abbot (d. 1801). Jasper had initiated a dynasty of British merchants who spread over Ottoman lands, with branches of the family later establishing themselves in Thessaloniki and Aleppo.

Perhaps the most remarkable story to emerge from the Monument Row is connected to the tombstone of the doctor Thomas Baines (d. 1681). As mentioned, Baines had come to Istanbul in the service of Sir John Finch, but their



Monument to Sir Thomas Baines, Sides A and B.

relationship was clearly much more significant than merely that of doctor and patient. Finch and Baines had met as students in Cambridge, where country squire Baines had acted as a sizar – receiving a kind of scholarship in exchange for the menial duties he provided to richer students, including the nobleman John Finch. They had later moved to Padua, where they studied medicine, before Finch was appointed ambassador to Florence and finally Istanbul in 1674. As ambassador, Finch would play an important role securing renewed capitulations for English subjects in the Ottoman Empire.

Their residence in Edirne and later Constantinople coincided with an outbreak of plague, but it was kidney stones that would cause the death of Thomas Baines in 1681. Finch was deeply affected, describing his friend’s death as having ‘cutt off the thread of all my worldly happinesse and application to business’. Finch had Baines’ body embalmed so that it could be transported back to England. His organs, which could not be transported, were buried in Pera, however, and a monument of sorts was erected which bears a long dedication written by Finch for his deceased friend, celebrating the ‘marriage of souls’ between the pair. The monument bears a Latin inscription on both sides, running to almost 350 words in length.

The dedication was transcribed and translated by Edwin Peers, a long-term resident of Istanbul around the turn of the 20th century. Archibald Murray, in his 1917 study *Finch and Baines*, reproduces the inscription, which he

says was part of a more general work carried out by Pears to record the tombstones at Feriköy and which he deposited at the embassy chapel (Malloch 1917: 72). If such a document still exists, it would be extremely valuable for filling in indecipherable sections of the existing inscriptions given the likely better condition of the stones a century ago.

On his return to England, Finch also fell ill and set out his own will and testimony. He requested to be buried together with Baines at Christ’s College Chapel, and endowed a number of scholarships in both their names. After Finch’s death on 18 November 1682, a monument was built for the two men in Christ’s College Chapel, with a second inscription noting that Finch had ‘taken care of the viscera of his friend burying them in the Byzantine earth, adding an elegant marble where he thanked for their battle together’, referring to the tomb now located in Feriköy. The chapel monument is joined by that of clergyman John Covel, who had met the pair in Edirne on his travels in Asia Minor, before being appointed Master of Christs College Cambridge from 1688 to 1723.

The epitaph to the monument was composed by their college tutor, Henry More. A translation is provided in Jean Wilson’s 1995 article on the monument in the *Church Monuments* journal (75). As Wilson notes, the single urn at the top of the monument symbolised the union of their bodies after death. The two monuments are an important symbol of love at a time when homoromantic or homosexual relations were castigated. This is particularly relevant to today’s Türkiye, where recent years have seen increasingly virulent language targeting LGBTQ-identifying individuals and pride demonstrations have been banned since 2015.

No doubt there are many more stories, if perhaps not such dramatic romances, to uncover among the tombstones at Feriköy.

#### References

- Malloch, A. 1917: *Finch and Baines: A Seventeenth Century Friendship*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Wilson, J. 1995: “‘Two names of friendship, but one starre’”: memorials to single sex couples in the early modern period’ *Church Monuments* 10: 70–83

<i>Merchants</i>	29
<i>Doctors</i>	4
<i>Engineers</i>	5
<i>Consular Staff</i>	6
<i>Sailors</i>	2
<i>Soldiers</i>	1
<i>Family members</i>	10
<i>Unknown</i>	7

Professions recorded on the Monument Row tombstones at Feriköy.