

The Cemetery of the Nameless Ones

Only in Vienna author Duncan J. D. Smith gives us an insight into his exceptional guide book.

Of all Vienna's fifty five cemeteries, both large and small, one of the most poignant must surely be the Cemetery of the Nameless Ones (Friedhof der Namenlosen). It lies on the bank of the Albern Dock beyond some huge grain warehouses and is protected from flooding by an earthen rampart (Hochwasserschutzdamm) erected in the early 1930s. Lying just outside the city limits the cemetery is somewhat difficult to get to and is consequently little visited, other than the first Sunday after All Saints' Day (November 1st), when some Viennese lay flowers here.

Another reason that few visitors come is because of the 104 corpses laid to rest here between 1900 and 1940, the majority are unidentified having been found drowned in the river nearby. Their corpses were washed ashore by the current at the confluence of the Danube Canal and Danube proper. Although forty-four persons were later identified, the final resting places of most are embellished only with a clump of mournful purple iris and a simple cross inscribed with the word *Namenlos* (Nameless). The occasional flickering candle and bunch of flowers lends a touching dignity to this melancholic place otherwise marked only by a small Chapel of the Resurrection added in 1935. No wonder the actress Julie Delpy was so moved when her character Celine visits the cemetery in the romantic film *Before Sunrise*.

Between 1840 and 1899 the cemetery had a predecessor on the riverbank itself, called *Auf dem Sauhaufen*, although the 478 bodies buried there were never exhumed and the site has been abandoned to the river forest; a plaque today marks the site of this lost cemetery.

With the construction of the nearby Albern grain dock in 1939 the river currents were themselves altered so that the Danube no

longer brings its dead to the Cemetery of the Nameless. Despite this, each All Saint's Day witnesses the fishermen of Albern build a raft decorated with wreaths bearing a plaque inscribed "For the dead of the Danube" in German, Slovakian and Hungarian. Accompanied by a mournfully playing band the raft is pushed out into the river from where it drifts slowly downstream to Bratislava, Esztergom, Budapest and beyond.

11th District (Simmering), the Cemetery of the Nameless (Friedhof der Namenlosen) at Albern Hafen

Tram 71 from U-Bahn Simmering (U-3) to terminus at Kaiserebersdorfer Strasse, then Bus 76A or walk

Text © 2006 Duncan J. D. Smith adapted from the book *Only in Vienna: A Guide to Hidden Corners, Little-known Places and Unusual Objects* by Duncan J. D. Smith (2005)

Only in Vienna is not your typical city guide and is ideal for those who have just arrived, lovers of local history as well as those who think they know everything about Vienna.

No stone is untuned in Smith's guide as the book deals with each district thoroughly and thoughtfully. Stories highlighted include the history behind the only statue of Franz-Josef, Europe's longest reigning monarch, and James Bond's appearance in Vienna - both officially and unofficially.

The book is beautifully illustrated too. An absolute must if you want to know Vienna beyond the pomp of its imperial history and fancy of international flair. Available to buy at The British Bookshop.

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The author's biography:

Duncan James Duffon Smith was born in Sheffield, England in 1960.

From the age of 10 he has been an avid collector of all things historical and ran his own private museum (in his parents' cellar!) before going on to read Ancient History and Archaeology at Birmingham University in 1979.

As a result he has undertaken numerous expeditions around Greece and Turkey. He has co-written and illustrated four highly successful books on the history and curiosities of Sheffield, their hometown, and the English county of Yorkshire in which that city lies.

He is also the author of the bestselling topographical book *Yorkshire A Portrait in Colour*, which has been in print continuously for a decade. Duncan has also undertaken radio and television work in the course of promoting his creative efforts. Having spent most of his working life in the publishing business he is now working currently as a freelance travel writer and photographer, sharing his time between England and Central Europe. His most recent book is the very successful

Only in Vienna, published in Spring 2005 in both English and German.

A sequel, *Only in Budapest*, was published in May 2006 and the third title in the series, *Only in Prague*, to be published in spring 2007. At present he is researching his next book, *Only in Berlin*.

Only in Budapest has recently been published, *Only in Prague* will come next Spring, and the series will continue in 2008 with *Only in Berlin*.

