

Report on The Tempest Anderson Memorial Tour to Campania, October 2013

Grand Tour leaders: Dr Bone Jones and Mr Jim Spriggs

It is hardly surprising that the Bay of Naples was one of Tempest Anderson's favourite holiday destinations, both to study the recent eruptions of Vesuvius, and visit the volcanic delights of the Campi Flegrei as well as the classical sites and museums for which the area was so famous. But like other Grand Tourists, he made the journey mainly to relax with his travelling companions in pleasant surroundings and take in (and photograph) the beautiful and often dramatic local countryside, coast and islands. It made a pleasant change from climbing in the Alps, or undertaking one of his longer, more arduous trips to record volcanic activity in more far-flung places.

The centenary year of Tempest Anderson's death offered an opportunity for a group of YPS Members to embark on our own Grand Tour of Campania, with the aim of tracing Tempest Anderson's footsteps, in the continuing spirit of philosophical enquiry and enjoyment of which we believe he would have approved. We did not go unprepared, being fortunate that in the months before the tour the British Museum had mounted the major exhibition 'Life and death in Pompeii and Herculaneum', plus accompanying TV programmes. Our geological and volcanological knowledge was also greatly improved through a seminar and handling session at the Yorkshire Museum, where Stuart Ogilvy led us in a discussion of the geology of the Bay of Naples, and produced examples of the types of rock and other volcanic minerals we were likely to encounter. He also indicated that the Yorkshire Museum collections were deficient in well-provenanced samples from the Naples area, and welcomed our offer to do a little unofficial collecting.

Armed with his trusty Baedeker guide to Southern Italy, and Bulwer-Lytton's 'The Last Days of Pompeii' for light reading, the experienced traveller in Anderson's day would either make the journey overland to Naples by train, taking fifty hours or so, or the comfortable route by sea from Southampton or Tilbury, taking seven to nine days. Arriving by train, the exhausted and travel-stained Grand Tourist would have been greeted by the noise and jostle of a major Italian railway station. The approach by sea was calmer, the glories of the Gulf of Naples, with its islands and towns and the vine-clad slopes of Vesuvius, gradually unfolding before your eyes as you approached the port, would often lead (as Anderson's friend Thomas Bonney put it) to an 'exuberance of language' amongst the passengers. This exuberance was soon to be extinguished as, on disembarking at the Port of Naples, the traveller was assailed by noise, confusion and filth, as the rabble of boatmen, porters, and cab-drivers all vied for custom. It was, as Bonney says, enough to 'put a sinister interpretation on the equivocal maxim, *Vedi Napoli e poi mori*'.

With these thoughts uppermost in our minds, the York Grand Tourists set off by coach, similarly armed with the above-mentioned books as well as some more up-to-date guides, at a respectable hour in the morning for our teatime flight from Stansted, arriving in Naples just as it was getting dark. On the roof-top terrace of our Sorrento hotel that evening, grateful to have been spared the experiences of earlier travellers, we were able to enjoy the warm evening air and look out over the port of Sorrento, enlivened by cruise-ships lying at anchor in the harbour below, each ablaze with lights reflecting off the surrounding sea. In the far distance we could just see the lights of Naples and dimly make out the bulk of Vesuvius silhouetted against a moonlit sky.

Our week was to be a kaleidoscope of experiences and impressions, every day involving an early start by coach towards our chosen destination. Dr Jones and Mr Spriggs had worked hard with Tailored Travel, our chosen tour agency, to put together an itinerary that would include the main sights of the area, singling out those that we felt had some connection with Tempest Anderson. We wondered about Tempest Anderson's impressions of these places, and what he had chosen to photograph, although we were already familiar with his dramatic glass slides taken on his climbs with friends up Mount Vesuvius, some showing ladies 'appropriately' attired in long, full skirts and holding aloft parasols, and gents in waistcoats, breeches and Panama hats. Only with the imminent completion of a catalogue of Tempest Anderson's collection of glass slides at the Yorkshire Museum will we learn where else he visited, but just in case he had missed anything, Mr Spriggs came prepared to capture some black and white images of the tour on an early quarter plate folding camera of a type that would certainly have been familiar to him. By good fortune, we also had Dr Jones's daughter Alice with us, who works as a science researcher and producer for the BBC. She also had camera equipment with her, but from a distinctly later era than Mr Spriggs'. Alice filmed and interviewed members of the group throughout the tour, all of which we hope will receive an airing someday.

"Many disasters have befallen the world, but few have brought posterity so much joy," wrote the German poet Goethe after touring the ruins of Pompeii in the 1780s. As Grand Tourists, the famous excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, plus the nearby Villa of Poppaea, at Oplontis, were high on our list of places to visit. As well as admiring the spectacular Roman remains themselves, we were able to see at first-hand how each of these places had been subject first to light falls of lapilli and tephra up to 50cms thick, followed the next day by massive falls of ash and scoria many metres thick in some places. We were able to observe (and surreptitiously take samples from) these superimposed layers of volcanic material in the modern access ramps and stairways leading down the sides of the excavations into the sites. The effects of the devastating pyroclastic flows that we now know caused such loss of life (and which Tempest Anderson witnessed in the West Indies in 1902) were all too plain to see. We were affected by the pathetic sight of the huddled skeletons of the hundreds who perished taking shelter in the boat houses on the shoreline at Herculaneum, and wondered at the famous plaster casts of the residents of Pompeii and their animals, captured in their death throes. Only some of the mosaics and wall paintings remain in the buildings in these places which are otherwise devoid of their original contents, removed either as booty to furnish the palaces of the Bourbon kings (in the late eighteenth-century), or latterly by archaeologists for conservation and safekeeping. But we were able to visit the National Museum in Naples where we could enjoy the fabulous collections of antiquities housed there, though sadly some galleries, including the frescoes gallery, were closed due to lack of staff. However, we were not disappointed by the mosaics gallery and were amazed at the intricate detail of the very fine mosaics on display. The infamous Gabinetto Segreto was also open, and we observed how several important artefacts of an erotic nature were missing which we knew to have been in the big British Museum exhibition and not yet returned.

The Campi Flegrei, to the west of Naples, is famous for its thermal and sulphurous baths and other interesting volcanic phenomena. Special arrangements had been made for us to visit the Grotta de Cane (the Dog Cave), close to the Terme d'Agnello hotel and health spa, only very recently rediscovered and prepared for viewing. This site was visited and photographed by Tempest Anderson who describes how, for a few cents, the caretaker would place a small dog into the cave,

only to extract it, seemingly lifeless, some minutes later. Once in the air again the dog recovered quickly from its suffocating dose of carbon dioxide, ready to repeat the trick for other visitors. There are literary references to the Grotta going back to Pliny the Elder, but our experience of it was much like that of Mark Twain who, visiting in the 1860s, wrote (in his 1864 book *Innocents Abroad*) "We reached the grotto at about three in the afternoon, and proceeded at once to make the experiments. But now, an important difficulty presented itself. We had no dog" We also, perhaps fortunately, had no dog! From there we moved on to Solfatara, the crater of an extinct volcano now covered in a brilliant white crust of kaolin and sulphur. Here we saw bubbling mud pools, home to the thermoacidophilic bacteria *Sulfolobus*, one of the most primitive life forms known. We also observed fumaroles emitting mixtures of hot sulphurous gas and steam and heard about the many uses that the various minerals and other resources of the crater had been put to over the centuries.

On one warm sunny morning, the coach took us not in the usual direction of Naples, but in the opposite direction, down the coast to Paestum. Heading south, we bypassed the busy port of Salerno and remembered the historic Allied landings there, exactly seventy years ago, which liberated southern Italy and confirmed the armistice. Anderson and other late Victorian visitors would have travelled here by train, the new road we drove on not yet having been built. As we approached Paestum mid-morning, we were impressed by the solidity of the ancient Greek city walls and gateways, composed of enormous oblong travertine blocks. Once inside the city, we wandered at leisure amongst the magnificent 6th and 5th BCE ruins, enjoying the warmth, sunshine and smell of pine trees. The afternoon was spent in the Paestum Museum, which has excellent modern displays of material from the area. Of particular note are the paintings on plaster from 4th century BCE chamber tombs, including the famous 'diver' scene. The red- and black-figure Attic vessels from tombs of the 6th and 5th centuries BCE were equally impressive. Finally, tearing ourselves away from this treasure house for the drive back to Sorrento, we managed an unscheduled stop at a public beach nearby for a dip in the Tyrrhenian Sea (Dr Jones had already had a swim to cool off before lunch, making use of the folding bicycle that he had thoughtfully brought with him).

We had planned to have one free day, but Dr Jones had persuaded most of the group to take the morning boat to Naples to visit and attend seminars in the oldest aquarium in Europe. The Acquario is part of the Stazione Zoologica Napoli (SZN), a marine research and conservation centre established in 1871 by the German naturalist, and friend of Charles Darwin, Anton Dohrn. Pleasant courtyards, a splendid aquarium, a grand piano nobile with frescoes, excellent research facilities and laboratories, plus a historical archive of preserved specimens, were guaranteed to please and impress. But the icing on the cake was a small collection of letters from Tempest Anderson, especially retrieved from the archives for us. Anderson, being acquainted with Anton Dohrn's secretary, Dr Herman Linden, had sought his help in making local arrangements in advance of his visits to Naples. Part of the programme for the day was a series of short presentations from staff and researchers at the SZN, on both historic and contemporary research topics. Dr Jones also featured, talking about his research on archaeological fishbones, and possible tie-ups with the SZN, and Mr Spriggs gave a brief presentation on the YPS including on Tempest Anderson and his interest in volcanology. This was an extremely interesting and worthwhile day, and it is to be hoped that there can be a continuing dialogue between the YPS and this historically interesting institution, which continues to undertake important marine research and conservation work.

An ascent of Vesuvius was clearly something that we had to do, for its own sake and also in memory of Tempest Anderson. In his day, the journey to the top would have been arranged via Messrs Thomas Cook and Son, who would arrange a carriage to take you from your hotel to the start of the electric railway (tram) at the foot of the cone. This would take you as far as the observatory about two-thirds of the way up, from where a wire-rope funicular railway would take you to the summit. Nowadays, a road winds up most of the way to a point well above where the funicular began, leaving a climb of only about 650 ft to the crater. In our case, we first made a stop at the Royal Observatory of Vesuvius, built in 1841, and which, as its name implies, was used to observe and record changes on the volcanic mountain. The fact that the Observatory has survived a number of major eruptions unscathed, including the latest in 1944, is put down to the proximity of the chapel of San Salvatore which bears the Latin inscription: 'In the midst of fire I am not consumed'. The observatory actually owes its survival to being built on a ridge which deflects lava flows to either side, so preserving the buildings. The old Observatory is now a museum where we were shown extensive collections of local minerals, as well as early seismographic equipment built by the late 19th century Director of the Observatory, Luigi Palmieri, who we suspect must have been known to Tempest Anderson. We also saw the telescope used throughout the 19th and into the 20th centuries to keep a close eye on activity on the volcano and, in the library, we could turn the pages of a facsimile of Sir William Hamilton's beautifully illustrated two-volume set of books of 1772 *Observations on Mount Vesuvius, Mount Etna, and other volcanoes*, - a book Tempest Anderson would have been familiar with. We were also shown the first properly surveyed geological map of Vesuvius, produced in 1891 by Naples-based British medical doctor HJ Johnston-Lavis, indicating the lava flows and other features resulting from the many eruptions over the centuries - being a fellow doctor and volcanologist, we wondered if Anderson would have met him too?

The coach now took us up a few hundred feet more on a dangerously winding road past text-book examples of corded lava, bread-crust bombs and other volcanic features until reaching a small car-park near the top. Here we bought our tickets, and set off on the half-hour or so trudge, up the steep cindery path to the crater. In Anderson's day, one could engage a porte-chaise to carry you to the top, or rent a strap to attach to your guide's belt to help pull you up. No such conveniences now and, whilst catching our breath at the top, our guide gave us the salient facts and figures and pointed out the main features as we gazed down into the abyss. The crater seems enormous and very deep, though erosion from round the sides has caused loose material to form scree slopes towards the volcanic plug at the bottom. There is currently absolutely no sign of activity on Vesuvius apart from one small steam fumerole on the inside of the crater. We were told that, on the basis of recorded history, another eruption could occur at any time, and the local authorities review their evacuation plans on a regular basis. Turning away from the crater, the view over the countryside towards the sea is breathtaking. In the foreground the overlapping deposits of ash and lava are cut by clefts and valleys now mainly covered in lush green growth, evidence of the great fertility of these volcanic deposits. All the same, it was difficult to imagine how Spartacus and his rebellious slaves managed to survive up here for any length of time in the 1st century BCE. It was easier to imagine Tempest Anderson and friends exploring this mountain, collecting samples, photographing each other and risking burning their boot leather on approaching too close to the lava streams that flowed then.

Brief mention can only be made here of other places we visited such as the Roman market in Pozzuoli, Cumae (of Sybil fame), the so-called Tomb of Virgil at Posilipo, and the Cathedral in Naples

with its Roman Baptistery. These are all lovely and most curious places which we greatly enjoyed, always aware that we were only skating lightly across the surface of what Campania really has to offer. In conclusion we, the tour leaders, would like to thank our group of Grand Tourists each of whom brought something special to the tour, be it specialist knowledge, a searching question or insight, or just their unfailing sense of humour. Our gratitude is also due to those other Grand Tourists who visited Campania before us, especially Dr Tempest Anderson, our muse throughout this trip, whose words and images continue to inspire us.



YPS Grand Tourists at the Mount Vesuvius Observatory
(photo taken on early quarter plate folding camera)