

ALEXANDER RAPHAEL – A MAN WITH TWO BURIAL PLACES

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ABSTRACT

In 1816 Alexander Raphael commissioned a sarcophagus for himself in the church of the Armenian Monastery on the island of St. Lazzaro in the Lagoon of Venice. It was never used and after Raphael died in England, in 1850, he was buried in the crypt of St. Raphael's Church in Surbiton, the building of which he had funded.

INTRODUCTION

A biography of Alexander Raphael, *From Madras to Surbiton. Alexander Raphael, unbeaten champion, 1775-1850* can be found at www.kingstonhistoryresearch.co.uk A publication, probably of 1902, by the Mekitarian Press reported the existence of a sarcophagus commissioned in 1816 by Alexander Raphael Gharamian in the church of the Armenian monastery on the island of St. Lazzaro in the Lagoon of Venice.¹ Situated to the left of the narthex, this was made entirely of white marble on which were carved Raphael's coat of arms and his name in Armenian letters. Furthermore, it reported that the sarcophagus was never used and that Raphael died in England. In fact, Alexander Raphael died in Surbiton, in England, in 1850, and his coffin is in the crypt of St. Raphael's Church, which he had built.²



Figure 1. All that remains of Alexander Raphael's sarcophagus, in the church on St. Lazzaro. After zooming-in, Raphael's coat of arms [Figure 2 below] can be seen on the marble plate below a monument installed in 1940 or later. The rest of Raphael's sarcophagus has disappeared. The original photograph was taken by Jessica Kennedy, on 10 December 2018.



Figure 2. Close up of Raphael's coat of arms in the church on St. Lazzaro. Original photograph taken by Jessica Kennedy on 10 December 2018.



Figure 3. Alexander Raphael's coat of arms above the choir loft in St. Raphael's Church, Surbiton. It differs from those at St. Lazzaro, the crypt of the Church [Figure 4] and in the stained glass window above the high altar of the Church in that a cross is installed upon the double-headed eagle on top of the crown.³



Figure 4. Alexander Raphael's coffin in the crypt of St. Raphael's Catholic Church, Surbiton. His coat of arms is in the background. Original photograph taken by David A. Kennedy, 27 February 2018.

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NOTES

1. The Mekitarian Press was on the island of St. Lazzaro, Venice.
2. See, *From Madras to Surbiton. Alexander Raphael, unbeaten champion, 1775-1850*, www.kingstonhistoryresearch.co.uk
3. See, http://www.straphael.org.uk/structure_of_the_church.htm