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# RIVISTA

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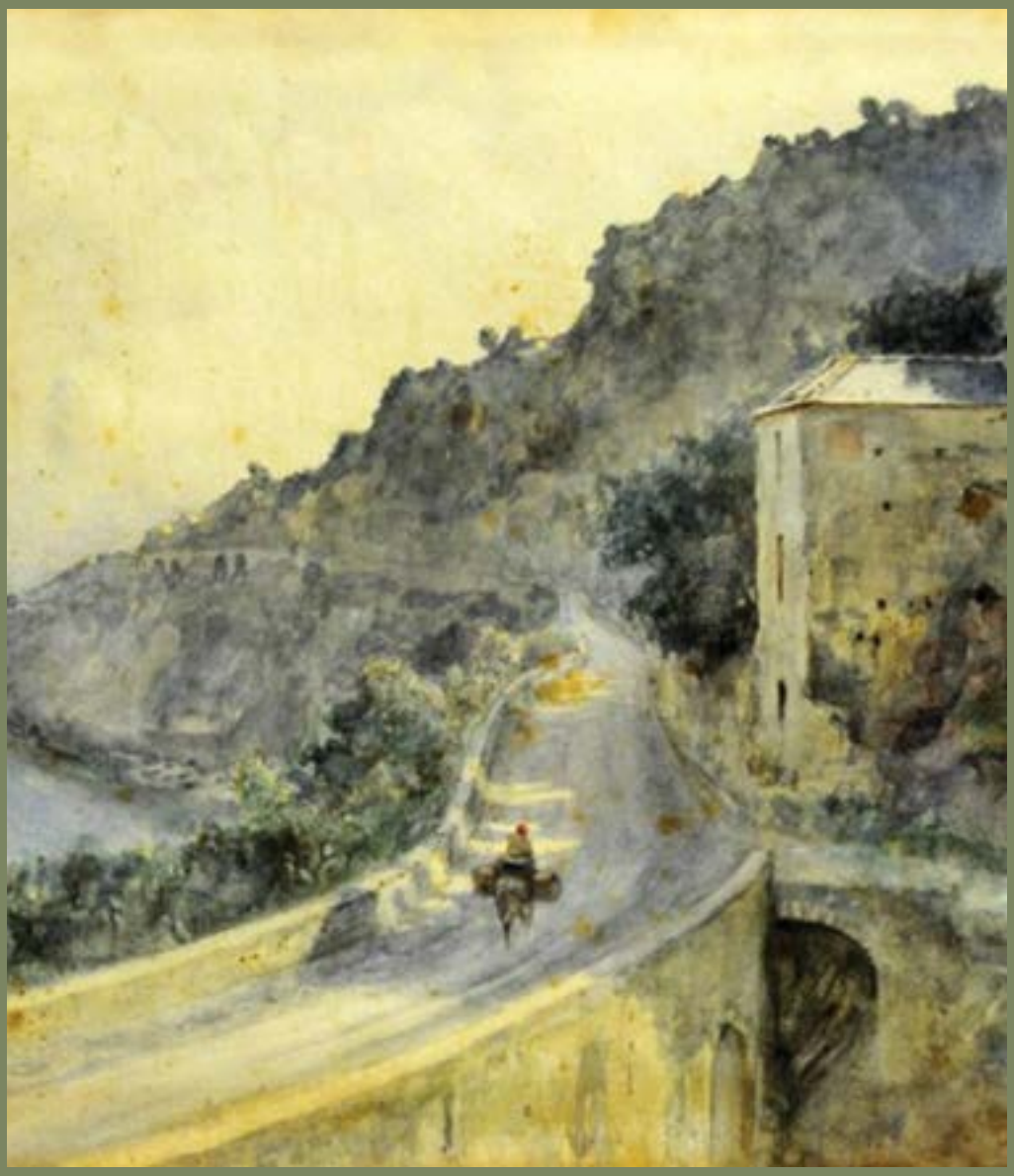

# RIVISTA

The Magazine of the British-Italian Society
No. 396 2013/2014
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# EDITORIAL

Dear Members

The Society's activities this year have been, as always, interesting and varied, for which, many thanks to our Events organiser Susan Kikoler and to the Trustees. From a talk on the geological ingredients of Italy to a wishful list of gifts intended for the Emperor of China, with stopovers to hear about some of this year's interesting books, on the powerful ladies of the Renaissance, on Primo Levi and on a notable "Queen Bee" of Florence. We had outings as well on the calendar: in April, members were treated to a soirée of vino at the Dalla Terra Wine Bar in Covent Garden. *Enologo* Giuseppe Gullo ably guided us through tastings of nine wines. To stave off stomach rumblings, these wines came with an array of nibbles. Gullo had a challenging time, speaking above the din of conversation but we all came away feeling more oenologically educated. In May, too, there was an outing – a full-day visit this time to Cambridge, beginning at St. John's College. Following lunch, Charles Avery guided members through the Italian sculpture collection at the Fitzwilliam Museum. As a finale to the season, there was a BIS supported concert presented by the Southbank Sinfonia.

And now to return to the subject of wine! This issue of RIVISTA opens with the entertaining but wise observations about home winemaking in the Italian countryside as recounted by Sara Capella. Read her article before making *any* rash moves. The *second* successive Briton to step into the role of Grand Master of the Knights of Malta agreed to be interviewed by our magazine and we give you our profile of him in our pages. Ian Grainger contributed with a humorous, lawyerly look at the rise and fall of Ferdinandea, that capricious now-you-see-it-now-you-don't volcanic island off the southern coast of Sicily, with a coda courtesy of Alexandre Dumas *Père*. From the remote valleys to the west of Turin comes the little-known story of John Charles Beckwith and his promotion of education for the Valdensian community, as described by co-editor Alexandra. From the extreme northwest, we move to the extreme northeast where Anthony Cooke leads us through plenty of historic caffés whilst telling us all about Trieste's past and present. It would be unthinkable to let 2013 slip by without a fulsome bow to Giuseppe Verdi. It is, after all, the bicentenary of the composer's birth and Simon Bainbridge, who edited *Kobbe's Illustrated Opera Book,* generously volunteered to write about the Maestro's professional experiences in England for us. We have two articles in this issue from Liguria: Patrick Fairweather brings us up to date on the situation of the Hanbury Garden at La Mortola, while elsewhere, Co-editor Georgina charts the historic popularity of the Western Riviera amongst the English.

Let it not be said that we have forgotten the pleasures of the table. Elisabetta Pesciolini Venerosi shares a nostalgic reflection on a cherished handed-down family recipe, her very special *minestra Andrenelli,* while Mauro Sanna spreads the tasty image of Sardinia to all of Belgravia. Italian (and English) flair makes an appearance as well with a piece on……train design. Read on for further enlightenment.

We have always liked turning the spotlight on to lesser known people in the Anglo-Italian spectrum and the story of Herbert Kilpin and Milan's AC football team is just such an example. Our story list continues with many more treats in store, so do settle in for a further read.

Earlier this year, our Chairman Charles de Chassiron formally announced that we would, after five years in the job, be relinquishing the editorship of RIVISTA. Without question, it has been one of the most rewarding and creative challenges either one of us has ever undertaken. And for that, we both have a debt of gratitude to Charles for placing so much trust in us. We have worked well together as a team and formed a strong bond of friendship. We have learned to be supportive of one another where story ideas are concerned…even the more unconventional ones! We are, it goes almost without saying, also indebted to our members for coming forth with so many good article ideas over the last five years. It simply would not have worked without you! Also thank you to Elisabetta and John. UN GRANDE GRAZIE A TUTTI I NOSTRI COLLABORATORI!

We would like to remind members about The British-Italian Society's new logo and website with its new twenty-first century dynamic look and choice of options. Also, please note the editors' new e-mail address: editors@british-italian.org

A word at this juncture is in order to say a few words about the cover art for the final issue under our watch. On the front is a work by Richard W. West, an Irish painter who painted in and around Alassio at the turn of the 19th century. We felt that it tied in with the piece which Georgina wrote for this issue on the lure that the western Riviera held for many northerners. This painting is entitled "Alassio Santana" and like some 76 others, it hangs in the premises of the English Library at Alassio. And on the back cover of RIVISTA, we could not resist a bow to Ian Grainger's article on Ferdinandea. Might it also just be a hidden allusion to two editors closing their editorship with a bang?

Linda Northern and Vanessa Hall-Smith take over from now and we are confident that they will continue to give you a lively and varied RIVISTA and will bring fresh new ideas to the job. We wish them much success and just as much fun as we have had.

**Georgina Gordon-Ham and Alexandra Richardson**

# BENVENUTA!

On behalf of the Society, I would like to welcome very warmly to London the new Director of the Italian Cultural Institute, Caterina Cardona, who arrived last March. She comes directly from Rome, where for the last 12 years – in fact ever since it opened - she has been scientific director of the marvellous gallery Le Scuderie del Quirinale. She has wide experience of planning and arranging major art exhibitions, including this year's major one on Titian, the opening of which in March 2013, just before she left Rome for London, was attended by President Giorgio Napolitano. Her role at the Institute will of course extend very much wider than the visual arts, and will embrace the whole range of Italian culture, which so interests us all. She has already made a very active start in presenting these riches to the British public and in revitalising the Institute's work.

As members will know, the Society has a traditionally close relationship with the Institute, and indeed our forebears helped to create the conditions for its foundation in the early 1950s. This relationship continues today, with an overlap of members, and with the holding every year of our prestigious Leconfield Lecture each November in the Institute's splendid aula. Indeed Dott.ssa Cardona was quick to offer us the venue again for 2013, for which we are all very grateful.

I am sure that we all wish her a very productive and enjoyable stay among us – *Buona permanenza a Londra!*

**Charles de Chassiron**
**Chairman**

# SIR GUY MILLARD REMEMBERED

RIVISTA regrets to announce the death this year of Sir Guy Millard, 96. Millard served as Ambassador to Italy from 1973 to 1976 following postings in Hungary and Sweden, also as ambassador. After his retirement, he was Chairman of the BIS between1977 and 1983.

# WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Mr and Mrs John Arnott
Ms Maria Barry
Ms Emma-Louise Bassett
Miss Susan L Betts
Dr Anthea Brook
Ms Margherita Calderoni
Dott.ssa Caterina Cardona
Ms Mariangela Cireddu
Mr Pierluigi Congedo
Mr John Connor
Ms Giulia Cristoforo
Anna de Chassiron and Ben Grindley
Mr Ben Downing
Ms Sarah Dunant
Lady Mayella Figgis
Mr Ivan Fowler
Ms Leonie Frieda
Ms Mariarosa Gatti
Mr Giuseppe Gullo
Mr Hussain Haider
Mr Luca Ilari
Mr Jonathan Keates
Ms Sybil Kretzmer
Ms Mary Laven
Mr Maurice MacSweeney
Mr E Marston
Ms Jacqueline McKay
Ms Alessia Mosci
Ms Stefania Pignatelli
Mr Philip Rouse
Mr A. Swinson
Mr Ian Thomson
Prof Marina Warner
Mr and Mrs Stephen Wickett
Mrs Sheila Woodward

## *Seasons' Greetings*

TO ALL, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING CORPORATE MEMBERS:

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and also to all the organisations which have contributed towards Rivista, with a special thank you to The Italian Cultural Institute and The Italian State Tourist Board ENIT.

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# EARTHQUAKES AND ERUPTIONS: HOW GEOLOGY HAS SHAPED ITALY By Georgina Gordon-Ham

Italy straddles the Europe-Africa plate boundary turning it into a tectonically active country prone to both volcanic activity and frequent earthquakes. The recent ones in Abruzzo in 2009 and Emilia Romagna in May 2012 have proved this to be a concern to the local population, businesses and cultural heritage causing disruption and damage, also economically. Lidia Lonergan's talk on 'Geology and Landscape – 100 million years of Italian History' opened The British-Italian Society's activities in September after the summer recess.

Dr Lonergan, Reader in Geotectonics at Imperial College London, gave an interesting and well illustrated talk on the formation of Italy over the years, taking us through various stages and aspects, such as the topography and physical geography, bathymetry, rock types, faults and folds and plate tectonics. Italy is a geologically very young country and has the highest number of active volcanoes in the Mediterranean. We learn how plates have been moving over the past 200 million years.

The talk described how the theory of plate tectonics allows us to understand the main elements of the geology of Italy. The collision between the African and European plates, which started about 100 million years ago, is responsible for the growth of the impressive Alpine mountain chain and the Apennines which form the modern backbone of the Italian peninsula. In the process, the main backbone of the Apennines is being pushed towards the Adriatic. The formation and evolution of these mountain chains is intimately related to their adjacent low-lying Po and Adriatic plains. Ocean-continent collision, known as subduction, occurs whenever an oceanic plate meets a continental plate. As a result, the oceanic plate subducts and a belt of volcanoes form. The subduction of an ancient ocean, Tethys, of which today's Mediterranean is partly a remnant, also plays a role in tectonic history and explains the volcanoes of the Aeolian islands and Mount Etna in southern Italy. They form one such arc and are known geologically as the Calabrian Arc. The Calabrian Arc has formed as the Mediterranean ocean floor subducts to the north under southern Italy.

Other volcanoes in Italy are testimony to the former presence of subduction zones. Vesuvius was illustrated in the talk as an example of one such volcano. Records about Vesuvius go back to Roman times in the first century AD with a letter Pliny the Younger wrote (letter 6.16 taken from his Vesuvius Letters) to the historian Tacitus describing the eruption of Vesuvius and death of his uncle, Pliny the Elder while trying to rescue survivors. It was like "A cloud of unusual size and appearance… The cloud was rising from a mountain -- at such a distance we couldn't tell which, but afterwards learned that it was Vesuvius. I can best describe its shape by likening it to a pine tree". Vesuvius has had a very long history with frequent eruptions between 1631 and 1944. This has aroused great interest not only on the part of scientists, but also of travellers, and artists throughout the ages starting from a Roman fresco discovered in Pompeii, a sketch by Althanasius Kircher SJ in 1669, Turner's watercolour in 1817, Degas' painting in 1892 and tens of other famous artistic depictions. It continues to be an ever present volcanic hazard slumbering near Naples.

The active geological history continues today as clearly illustrated by the INGV (Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia) map highlighting the magnitude levels and high risk areas affected over the years. Italy still lies along the African-Eurasian plate boundary. According to recent studies documented by geologists, Africa continues to move closer to Europe at a rate of 8 millimetres per year closing the Mediterranean in its grip. As a result, Italy is subject to ongoing earthquake and volcanic activity. Geologists and geophysicists cannot predict earthquakes. However, due to the location of Italy on an active plate boundary, continued volcanic and earthquake activity is to be expected.

**Lidia Lonergan**

# THE DEADLY SISTERHOOD

By Alexandra Richardson

"This was a fabulous story to tell. There were strong personalities and strong destinies to describe. All of them were exceptional; they were quite educated and many of them talented polymaths. Paradoxically, what tied them together were their differences". Thus Leonie Frieda began her soft-spoken BIS talk on 10th October 2012 about her new book, *The Deadly Sisterhood*, which came out six weeks later. Conversing with her that evening was James Birch, himself an author *(Dante's Invention)* and television documentary-maker.

It all began, we were told, while Frieda was writing her first book, a biography of Catherine de' Medici. "As I was researching for that book, I came across the names and lives of many *other* women, all of them exceptional. They were like dots needing to be joined together into one single tale". And that, she told Birch, was precisely what she did: write one single and extremely complex tale. Not a task for the faint-hearted! In her talk, Frieda succeeded in whisking us through a bewildering rainbow of heroines whose families all lived during the two centuries between the mid-1300s and mid-1500s, amidst loves, wealth, power…and an unpretty lot of dastardly deeds, including much scheming and some murders. If we sometimes felt overwhelmed by her populous cast of characters, she herself was masterfully in command, with ready answers to all of Birch's questions, navigating through those 200 years and her myriad protagonists. And although her book title suggests otherwise, there are, *per forza*, lengthy descriptions and accounts of the influential men in their respective lives.

Reading her book just weeks later illustrated what an ambitious undertaking this all was for Frieda, which she somehow compressed into forty minutes for BIS listeners. She recounted bites from their lives, events and entwinements of the families of the Medicis, Sforzas, della Roveres, Gonzagas, Estes, Borgias and Aragonas. Family trees are mercifully provided at the outset of her book to keep us clear on which of the four Lorenzos and four Giovannis of the Medici family she is talking about, not to mention the three Leonardos pertaining to the della Roveres, four Alfonsos in the Este stable, three Rodrigo Borgias or three Federico Gonzagas, plus, of course, the all-important portraits, such as those of Caterina (Sforza), Lucrezia (Borgia), Isabella (d'Este) and Clarice (Orsini). Her heroines appear sturdily undaunted by tragedy (right before her eyes, Caterina Sforza witnessed the murder of her first husband, Girolamo Riario; others lost offspring at birth or otherwise had them forcibly removed from family at an early age), illegitimacy (Lucrezia, notably, lost no sleep over her pedigree) and threats to their power and security (Caterina would bravely take up her sword in battle).

For forty minutes, Frieda took us through some of the twists and turns of her story, after which we repaired for refreshments, no doubt curious to explore those remarkable family trees a lot further.

**Leonie Frieda with James Birch**

# THE 2012 LECONFIELD LECTURE – ITALIAN FABULISM AND THE 1001 NIGHTS

By Diana Darlington

The Leconfield Lecture was held on Tuesday 13th November 2012 at The Italian Cultural Institute by kind permission of Claudia Toffolo, acting director.

The lecture was given by Professor Marina Warner C.B.E. Professor Warner is a professor in the Department of Literature, Film and Theatre Studies at the University of Essex. She is also a trustee of The National Portrait Gallery and a trustee of the British School at Rome. She took as her title "Travelling Texts, Eastern Approaches: Italian Fabulism and the 1001 Nights".

*The 1001 Nights* were first published in France as late as 1704, but for countless years before then, particularly between the 9th and 14th centuries, the plots, enchantments and characters of the Nights flowed throughout the Mediterranean region from the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Baghdad and further east to India and China.

Professor Warner considered the geographical position of Italy, strategically placed at the fulcrum of the Mediterranean. Norman Sicily and the Italian ports, including Genoa, Leghorn and Messina featured in the narratives of the *Nights* as the stories criss-crossed the Mediterranean with the flow of peoples and goods such as jewels, silks, rugs and exotic beds; the latter inspiring tales of magic carpets and the flying beds of Aladdin. The influence of Odysseus can be seen in the travels of Sinbad. The Sicilian island of Pantelleria is believed to be the island in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The strait between Sicily and Africa featured in the stories about the Prince of The Black Islands, in which the wicked sorcerer wife turned the Prince to stone below the waist.

The story of Aladdin and the Beautiful Maiden was echoed in the stories of Boccaccio and inspired Italo Calvino in the twentieth century. The narrative devices used in the *Nights*, such as the flying beds and carpets transport the listener and the reader through the romance of the fairy tales. Cristina Campo (1923-1977) drew comparatives between the intricacies of the fairy tales and the patterns woven into oriental rugs and carpets; both used convoluted structures to tell their stories. Professor Warner then considered how the tales from the *Nights* appeared in Italian literature, the plays of Carlo Gozzi and the librettos of opera, especially *Turandot* and *The Love of Three Oranges*. We were treated to an extract from a performance of the latter work at the Paris Opéra.

**Marina Warner**

We learnt that Richard Wagner's first complete opera, *Die Feen,* was based on the story of La Donna Serpente and Professor Warner played an extract from and showed slides of the 1998 performance designed by Beni Montresor, staged in Cagliari.

Professor Warner demonstrated through her fascinating and beautifully illustrated lecture how *The 1001 Nights* tales migrated seamlessly over hundreds of years between the voice, the page, the stage and media.

After the lecture, members and guests were able to talk to Professor Warner about her lecture whilst enjoying wine and delicious refreshments.

# BUFFALO DINNER FOR CHRISTMAS

By Charles de Chassiron

The annual debate in the British media over the respective merits of duck versus turkey for Christmas meals was perhaps overshadowed for 60 BIS members by the realisation – once we had all arrived -that we were going to be faced with buffalo meat when the Society's Christmas dinner took place in early December 2012 at the new Fratelli La Bufala restaurant on Shaftesbury Avenue. Perhaps the clue was in the name, as the family of three brothers were originally Neapolitan pizza-makers, who founded a successful international chain majoring in the animal's products, especially the famous mozzarella di bufala, which the owners fly in thrice-weekly from Eboli.

The restaurant's upstairs room, reserved for us, was bright and clean-lined, with a view of the busy kitchen, and the associate owner and chef Enzo Oliveri, who had catered for the Society's 70th birthday party last year, masterminded an excellent Italian festive dinner for us. After a welcome prosecco and canapés, and then a mozzarella antipasto, we were served risotto ai funghi or ravioli, and then the tender filetto di bufalo con melanzane e provola affumicata con salsa di vino rosso, with potatoes and vegetables. We finished with tagliata di ananas con gelato, rounded off by coffee. The consensus about the buffalo experience was generally positive! And unlike in some London 'Italian' restaurants, all the waiters were really Italian and super-charming.

We had decided not to have any talk before (or after) the Christmas dinner this year, as some people felt that they had had to wait too long for dinner last year . So I kept my welcome 'saluto' as short as possible, simply recalling the highlights of the Society's year, mentioning the prospects opened up for us by the major legacy we had received in the spring, hailing the quality of this year's Rivista, welcoming our President Sir Tom Richardson, and introducing as guest of honour – though he is a paid-up BIS member – Sir Tony Baldry MP, accompanied by his wife Pippa. Tony has been since 2010 the Chairman of the British-Italian Parliamentary Group, and a very active one too, recently returned from a political visit to his counterparts in Rome (he had written an interesting if rather puzzled blog about the Roman political scene the previous week for his North Oxfordshire constituents). He congratulated us on what we were doing for the general cause of British-Italian relations, especially in helping the embattled cause of Italian studies at our universities, and he proposed the Society's health.

The general feeling was that we had found an excellent and good-value venue – and we may well (depending on further feedback) return in 2013!

# PAVIA – THE ENGLISH SPEAKING TOWN

By Vanessa Hall-Smith

The 2013 lecture series opened in January with a talk by Ivan Fowler entitled *Pavia – the English speaking town*. Until that cold winter evening all I knew about Pavia was that it had an impressive Carthusian monastery and had once been the capital of Lombardy. It therefore came as something of a surprise to learn that the links between this ancient city and England go back to Anglo-Saxon times.

Beneath its streets lie the bones of Queen Aethelswith, daughter of King Ethelwulf, sister of King Alfred and wife of King Burgred who was driven from his Mercian Kingdom by the Danes in 874 CE and forced into exile in Italy. Queen Aethelswith died on the Via Francigena, on her way to Rome, and was buried in Pavia, possibly in the church of S.Giovanni Domnarum.

Aethelswith may not be the only monarch from England to end their days in Pavia. In 1878 a letter was discovered in Montpellier written to Edward III in 1336 by a Genoese priest, Manuele Fieschi. Fieschi claimed that Edward's father, Edward II, had not died during his imprisonment in Berkley Castle in 1327, but had escaped to Italy where he had lived out the rest of his life in a monastery in Cecina, in the diocese of Pavia. Edward II's reign had been disastrous; a crushing defeat by Robert the Bruce at the Battle of Bannockburn, instability at home and the liaison of his wife, Isabella, with Roger Mortimer led to Edward's forced abdication in favour of his son.

While there has always been mystery surrounding Edward II's

**Ivan Fowler**

death, including the rumour that a red hot poker had been thrust into his behind, the prevailing view, until the Fieschi letter came to light, was that he had been murdered while in prison. The authenticity of the Fieschi letter is not in doubt, but there is still no agreement as to whether its contents are true. Fieschi may have had his own reasons for claiming that Edward II had ended his days in Pavia and that the body removed for burial from Berkley Castle was that of someone else.

In 1368, a young Geoffrey Chaucer accompanied Lionel, Duke of

Clarence and third son of Edward III and Queen Philippa, to Milan for Lionel's marriage to Violante Visconti, the niece of Bernabò Visconti, ruler of Milan. The wedding was attended by Petrarch, whose patron was Galeazzo Visconti, uncle of the bride and Bernabò's brother, as well as the legendary English mercenary John Hawkwood who had played a role in bringing about the dynastic marriage between the Visconti and Plantagenet rulers. Lionel and Violante's marriage was short-lived; four months later Lionel was dead from a stomach disorder which may have been due to poisoning. He too was buried in Pavia although his body was later returned to Suffolk.

Chaucer subsequently made a number of diplomatic missions to Italy for both Edward III and his son Richard II and would certainly have been interested in seeing Pavia which had been brought under Milanese control by Galeazzo in 1359. He was greatly influenced by the work of the early 6th century philosopher Boethius, whose *Consolation of Philosophy* was written during Boethius' imprisonment in Pavia and was translated by Chaucer from Latin to Middle English. It is likely that the version of Giovanni Boccaccio's poem, used by Chaucer as the source of *The Knight's Tale*, was the one housed in Galeazzo's impressive library in Pavia.

The traffic between Britain and Pavia was not just one way.

Girolamo Cardano, born in Pavia in 1501, was the illegitimate son of Fazio Cardano, a friend of Leonardo da Vinci. He overcame the stigma of his birth to achieve recognition as a mathematician and highly skilled physician. In 1553 he was invited to Scotland to cure the Bishop of St Andrews of a serious asthmatic condition. Cardano's cure was successful but he declined the offer of a permanent position in Scotland. Cardano's portrait can still be seen in the School of Mathematics at the University of St Andrews. It is claimed that he offered his services to the young King Edward VI when he fell ill in 1553 but the king was dead before Cardano was able to treat him. Cardano also forged a friendship with the Elizabethan mathematician John Dee and was the inventor of what became known as the Cardan shaft, or universal joint, which allows a rigid rod to rotate in any direction. Cardano returned to Italy and was subsequently imprisoned on a charge of heresy for having cast a horoscope of Jesus. On his release he moved to Rome where he appears to have been forgiven and was granted membership of the College of Physicians. He died in 1576.

Today, there is little overt evidence of English influence in Pavia but it is notable that its medical school was the first in Italy to offer courses in English – Cardano would surely have been pleased!

# TALKED INTO LIFE: HOW PRIMO LEVI'S *'IF THIS IS A MAN'* CAME TO BE

By Linda Northern

Ian Thomson, a regular contributor to The Guardian, The Financial Times and The Times Literary Supplement and author of an acclaimed biography of Primo Levi, gave us a riveting talk on 7th February about his last meeting with Primo Levi in Turin in 1986. He told us how Levi's unique and profound description of the horrors of the Nazi genocide in his book, *If This is a Man,* was 'talked into life', and about the struggle the author had to find a publisher for his work. Primo Levi was born in 1919 in Turin and trained as a chemist. He died in 1987, just 9 months after Ian Thomson's last interview with him. The first part of his talk described Primo Levi the man and the rest centred on *If This is a Man*.

Thomson described how Levi was deported to Auschwitz in February 1944 with 650 other Jews and how when he returned to Italy in the autumn of 1945 "the need to bear witness was so intense", he began "to record… thoughts and events conversations… on the back of train tickets, scraps of paper, flattened cigarette packets" – anything he could find. He was driven to tell his story and, once started, completed *If This is a Man* within ten months. More than 6,800 Italian Jews – a fifth of the country's Jewish community – had perished in the Nazi camps and when Levi returned to Turin, he was in trauma and "disturbed in a way that only survivor friends could understand". The nightmare intensity of Auschwitz had left him with the sensation that "he was living, but without being alive".

**Ian Thomson**

During the post-war period he experienced feelings of estrangement, loneliness and alienation – no Italian admitted to having been a fascist. Deportees continued to return to Turin – 370,000 Italian POWs were yet to be accounted for. 'The nation was morally and psychologically devastated.' His family was poor but, at first, he was in no psychological state to work.

In the winter of 1945 he began to buttonhole passengers on the Milan-Turin express and tell them of what he had seen and suffered. He made no apology for this. Talking was his way of finding consolation and himself again. People's interest in his chronicle encouraged him, and friends and family began to regard him as 'a born storyteller'

Levi's poems, which were mainly influenced by Dante and T S Eliot, came first, and his prose later. His bleakest and most angry poem was 'Psalm' subsequently retitled 'Schema' (written as the Nuremberg trials were unfolding) ended with a curse on all those who forgot or failed to tell future generations what had happened in Occupied Territories. This poem, renamed *If This is a Man* now stands at the beginning of his published book.

He began working at Du Pont de Nemours & Company (DUCO) – a paint factory near Turin, on 21st January 1946 and slept there during the week. He was assigned a room in the firm's Bachelor House for single employees. During the 16 months he was there, living a monk-like existence, he performed the 'astonishing feat of recollection' which was *If This is a Man*. *Levi* wrote the last chapter first – a fourteen-page typescript dated February 1946 and entitled 'The Story of Ten Days'. He wrote 17 chapters in all.

Levi claimed that he wrote the book at speed and in a trance-like state, but according to Thomson, the fact that he did not start it until four months after his return and the many literary allusions, both classical and modern suggest otherwise. Thomson described for us the writing of six of the most renowned chapters of the book and outlined for us the various allusions to Italian literature. For example: 'The Story of Ten Days' contains a description strikingly like Alessandro Manzoni's celebrated description of Milan's devastation by plague in the 1600s in his 19th-century classic *The Betrothed*. 'The flashes of quiet humour and its affirmation of human dignity instils a kind of joy in the reader'. It also recalls André Gide's novel *Les Faux Monnayeurs.*

One week after completing 'The Story of Ten Days', Levi wrote 'one of the greatest hymns to the human spirit' (Thomson) –'The Canto of Ulysses'. It was written in a single lunch break and became the 11th chapter of the book. He recalled the Ulysses Canto from Dante's Inferno while accompanying a French prisoner across the work site to collect the camp's soup ration.

At the end of March 1946 he began the chilling 'Chemical Examination' chapter. He describes not only the Auschwitz Polymerization Department under Pannwitz, but the whole camp as a giant laboratory experiment designed to transform the substance of mankind. Jean-Henri Fabre (a French entomologist) was a literary influence as was Aldous Huxley, whose earlier works also teemed with laboratory influences. According to Levi "the smallest facts are the most significant"- *Maxima in minimus.*

'October 1944' was written between 5th and 8th April 1946 and examines the Nazis' greatest crime 'the assembly-line gassing of human beings'. Levi uses Dantesque language but his modern view of hell as a place "where the innocent are punished and the capacity to do evil, and create hell on earth, lay in us all" is far more disturbing. The style of 'October 1944', a strictly eyewitness report, was influenced by Charles Darwin. Midway through the book's composition King Victor Emanuel III abdicated (9th May 1946) and, after a referendum, Italy became a republic. He continued writing all through the summer and autumn of that year. The book's most wryly ironic chapter, 'This Side of Good and Evil', was begun and parodies Nietsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* in its title. Levi describes the prisoners' "foxhole barter in breadcrumbs, tobacco, gold teeth".

According to Thomson, 'Clear prose … was Levi's … antidote to the language anarchy - the 'confusolinguarum' – of Auschwitz.' The book's clean-cut narrative creates 'an extraordinary sense of communion and intimacy with the reader'. It ensured that one day it would be read by thousands of Italians of all backgrounds. The book was completed in December 1946. Writing it had provided Levi with 'a path back from the dead to the living', explained Thomson. 'Die drei Leute vom Labor', the last completed chapter, was dated 22nd December ,1946.

His fiancée, Lucia Morpurgo, imposed coherence on the pages by putting the sections in order. His book was turned down in America (the time wasn't right) and in Italy many times and for many reasons, before he found a willing publisher – an obscure publishing house in Turin run by Franco Antonicelli. The book had been entitled 'In the Abyss' and then 'The Drowned and the Saved' , but Antonicelli took the definitive title from Levi's poem, 'Psalm' and named it *If This is a Man*. The line carried an echo from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's astonished question in 'The Ancient Mariner' – 'What manner of man art thou'? There is also an allusion to Elio Vittorini's famous novel of the Resistance *Uomini e no* (Men and Non-Men) and to other writers.

*If This is a Man* was published on 11th October 1947. It met with mixed and indifferent reviews at first, but later two positive reviews stood out – Arrigo Cajumi's review on the front page of La Stampa and Italo Calvino's review in the communist daily l'Unità. Calvino was twinned with Levi as a promising new Italian writer. However, in spite of promotional efforts, there were only a few sales by the year's end and, sadly, Levi abandoned his plans to become a professional writer and returned full-time to chemistry.

Towards the end of his life, Levi was depressed and weighed down by domestic problems. He also indicted the new generation of German historians who "contended that the Nazi genocide was not a unique instance of human infamy but just one link in a chain reaction that started with the Soviet Gulag and went on to Vietnam and beyond".

He chose as his epitaph the Greek words which Homer used of his voyager Ulysses 'pollaplankte' ('much erring' or 'driven to wander far and wide').

# FORGOTTEN GIFTS: WHAT THE POPE DIDN'T SEND THE EMPEROR OF CHINA IN 1588

By Sandra Fox

**Dr Mary Laven**

Dr Mary Laven, fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, treated us on 11th March to a fascinating lecture on the subject of a kaleidoscopic list of gifts that the sixteenth-century Jesuits thought appropriate for the Pope to send to the Emperor of China and the history and motivation that led to this seemingly eclectic list. This gift list (which ended as a wish list that never was) was all about how the Italians of the sixteenth century encountered and connected with China. A major source of information on this subject is the Jesuit, Matteo Ricci's book *'A History of the Introduction of Christianity to China'.*

Ricci was the son of an apothecary and his home town was Macerata. Born in 1552, in 1561 he started attending one of the first schools established by the Jesuits in Italy for the purpose of, not just education, but of drawing young men into the Order. Whilst remembered as a scholar and an intellectual, he was one of a cohort of distinguished alumni from this school who went as missionaries to the Far East and distinguished themselves in this and other ways. Most notably, in addition to Ricci, there was Alessandro Valignano (the author of the gifts document) and Michele Ruggieri.

We were told of how all three of these distinguished Jesuits voyaged via Genoa, around the Cape of Good Hope and on to Goa and Cochin, Nagasaki and various other locations in both China and Japan. Whilst Ricci started his mission in what is modern day Hong Kong, he soon migrated to the Chinese mainland where he established the first Jesuit house on Chinese soil. This was the first and, gradually, he pushed further and further north into China, establishing other houses as he went, until he finally reached Beijing, his ultimate goal. However, China at this time was a far from friendly environment and they were met with much hostility. This did not defeat the Jesuits who were good at both networking and strategic gift giving. Indeed, Alessandro Valignano who was based in Nagasaki had not only managed strategic gift-giving to the Japanese but had also organised a Japanese mission to Europe in 1582 to promote Asia in Europe. Dr Laven told us that they were received by Pope Gregory and gave him suitable gifts and that this mission appeared to have been reasonably successful.

Whilst Valignano was based in Nagasaki, Dr Laven told us that he monitored the evangelising paths of both Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci in China. Thus, in 1588, he sent Ruggieri back to Rome to the Pope, to try and persuade him that a mission to China was needed to try and convert the Emperor. To this end he sent with Ruggieri a list of gifts which he felt was appropriate for the Pope to send to the Emperor. Dr Laven told us that this list was typical of the ethnographical eye and sensitivity to local culture displayed by the Jesuits of the time; it was typical also of their attitude of observing local customs and mores.

Twenty six suitable gifts were itemised, representative of the products of various areas of Italy, the science and culture of Europe and the needs of an emperor. Thus we find that there were items of clothing, belts and a hat all in the Chinese style, included, whilst 'Beobus' or screens were thought to be a good idea as well, although whilst these were usually constructed to show scenes of Japanese culture, it was thought that those on this list would display European culture to the Chinese. Then there were Venetian objects, including stained glass which was normally made in Venice not for domestic use but for the Ottoman market and was clearly thought appropriate for the Chinese Emperor. He was also to be given glass prisms. This

seemed a strange entry on the list but we were told by Dr Laven that the Jesuits travelled with glass prisms which they used in various healing and exorcism rituals. They were already know in China for their use of prisms and, indeed, using them to refract light had become one of their 'party pieces'.

Other items were included, Dr Laven told us, as they had been admired by the Chinese such as the locks used by the Jesuits on their doors and chests which were Flemish and could be sourced easily by the Jesuits due to their European connections. Surprisingly for a Holy Order, brocade was on this list, as this was a prized export and luxury object for Italians, about which Jesuits were surprisingly well informed, and which, they thought, would provide proof of the goodwill of the Pope to the Chinese. (At this time, Dr Laven informed us, whilst particular items such as glass and brocade were associated with Italy, the French gave tapestries, the Russians furs and the British, silverware as gifts.) The Emperor would, however, be spared a live ostrich as originally suggested by the Jesuits, instead feathers should be included.

As to demonstrations of European culture and superiority, Dr Laven discussed the fact that architectural books were requested. In themselves, these were of no great value but would demonstrate the open spaces, houses etc. of a civilised society. The images of Rome would demonstrate European civilisation both past and present, whilst the scientific instruments especially the clocks would indicate the scientific superiority of Europe. Dr Laven told us that clocks had already caused a stir in southern China, where the Chinese were fascinated by automaton.

But what of religious gifts? How could Christianity be advanced? Not a great deal according to what we were told by Dr Laven as the Jesuit emphasis was all upon avoiding any of the suffering involved with Christianity. So images of the Crucifixion would not do and there was concern that some of the usual images and paintings might do more harm than good. All the emphasis had to be on happy things. Hence, the aesthetics of any testament sent to the Emperor were more important and whilst coral might often be used to symbolise the blood of Christ and were used for rosary beads in this period, it was strings of coral that should be included but with no mention of their symbolism.

Dr Laven told us that this fascinating list of gifts never materialised. Valignano's list was ignored as the Church was more concerned in this period with the wars raging throughout Europe than with spending money on China. Evangelising China was not in their sights, however anxious the Jesuits might have been to spearhead this. Moreover, having arrived with the list Ruggieri never returned to the Far East. This lecture was a fascinating insight into the culture of the time, Jesuit activities of the day and into the work of three significant Jesuits of the past.

# QUEEN BEE OF TUSCANY AN ANGLO-TUSCAN DYNASTY

By Tom Richardson

For the Society's last talk this summer on 20th June, immediately after the AGM, we were lucky to have Ben Downing, an American writer and poet, introduce his new book on one of the most remarkable Anglo-Tuscan families of the last two centuries. Janet Ross, in particular, has cried out for a modern biographer, and I hope that Downing's book (a British edition of which has become available) will reintroduce a new generation to her fascinating life and times. It may also spur some of us to track down her own writings, as well as reread her niece Lina Waterfield's *Castle in Italy* and her great-niece Kinta Beevor's *A Tuscan Childhood.* Taken together they portray what it was like to live in Italy – both Florence and, later, remote Aulla in the mountainous Lunigiana – from 1867 to the years after World War II. By a happy coincidence Downing told us that he had been inspired to study the lives of British expatriates in Europe after reading Artemis Cooper's life of Paddy Leigh Fermor: a reminder that, both directly and through marriage, there is now a fourth generation of this prolific literary family, several of whom, including Ms Cooper, were present at the talk.

Like the Brownings earlier in the century, the Rosses originally made their home in Italy because it was cheaper; Janet's husband Henry had lost a lot of money in cotton while a banker in Egypt. No doubt they chose Florence because a cousin of Janet was British Minister there, when the city was briefly capital of the new kingdom. Downing brought out well the attractions of Florence to expatriates. It was a city, but not a huge one; there was some intellectual life, if not on the scale of Paris; and all around was the Tuscan countryside and what in those days, thanks to the sharecropping system (mezzadria) were still close connections between city and country. The life appealed to Janet, who had green fingers and prided herself on her estate management – a very unfeminine pursuit in 19th-century Italy. Both at Castagnolo, which the Rosses rented for 17 years, and then Poggio Gherardo, where Janet lived until her death in 1927, the olives and vines had to be tended, the gardens restored and the sharecroppers cared for.

She had many other sides to her. Something of a bluestocking when young, she was already well travelled before her marriage, she enjoyed the party life when Florence was capital, and both in her childhood and once settled in Italy she knew, and was visited by, a procession of the most distinguished people of the day. In her childhood, they included Macaulay, Thackeray and Carlyle; later on George Meredith who fancied her, and GF Watts who twice painted her. Over her many years in Italy, there would also be the Trollope and Browning families, Layard, Gladstone, Mark Twain and of course her close neighbour Berenson. She wrote a number of books about Italy, including one on the early Medici, but amusingly the one that is best known, *Leaves from our Tuscan Kitchen,* was penned by a lady who couldn't even boil an egg (but had a marvellous cook). Janet was a hyperactive and strong-minded person, and for many years Lina and she did not see each other because she had opposed Lina's marriage to Aubrey Herbert. She had taken in Lina as a young girl in 1890, shortly after Lina's mother's death, and no doubt there was a degree of possessiveness in her attitude. The First World War happily brought about a reconciliation, Lina stayed at Poggio for its duration, and after Janet's death in 1927 was willed the life enjoyment of it.

With so much material to hand, Downing had to move rather quickly through Lina's own eventful life: her rebuilding of Aulla, her work for The Observer as its Italian correspondent, her meeting with and opposition to Mussolini, and her and Aubrey's last-minute escape from Italy in 1940. She returned briefly to Florence after the war; but the taxes were high, and – as Iris Origo has chronicled separately – a whole way of life, that of sharecropping, was disappearing. In a sense Lina's departure and death also marked the end of the close British connection with the city of Florence, as opposed to the hills of Tuscany where so many of us now live.

But one vital connection is still there in the city, and it was Lina's doing: the British Institute of Florence, founded in 1917 as a demonstration of wartime solidarity, and now not far from its centenary. I'm glad that Downing paid tribute to it, and to the Waterfield Collection, the gift of Kinta's children, the Beevor family, that the Institute now hosts. I'd like to see ever closer relations between the Institute and our own Society, which in their different ways are both promoting the cause of British-Italian friendship and understanding.


**Ben Downing**

# WE ARE ALL WINEMAKERS

By Sara Capella

I was on the phone with my father the first time he tried our wine a few months after the *vendemmia*. "It smells like death", he said, with a touch of solemn humour. "And tastes"? "Far worse".

I was surprised as, in my ignorance, I believed that producing good wine was almost entirely dependant on the grapes being exposed to certain conditions, much like those that human beings require to be exposed to so as to reach the age of eighty in reasonably good health: plenty of fresh air, a balanced diet and a peaceful existence, bar any insuperable complications.

In 2005, my parents bought a house in Maremma, an agricultural area of Tuscany just north of the Lazio region, in order to spend an idyllic retirement making jam and feeding stray cats. Instead some of their most notable feats over the past couple of years have been building a reinforced cement garage which doubles up as a bomb shelter with their bare hands and picking tons of olives.

I must admit they chose very well - the property consists of one hectare of land on which the house, a pig pen and the new garage-bomb shelter are situated. The remaining land is covered by an olive grove and a small portion is taken up by vines. Ettore, the delightful man from whom my parents had acquired the house and surrounding land, had planted the vines in order to make some wine for his own personal consumption. Ettore was also instrumental in procuring my dad with the necessary equipment for his own winemaking experiment. We perhaps should have cottoned on to what the outcome of the experiment might be when we found out that Ettore had, for a number of years, been purchasing wine from his more talented neighbour.

I had only been exposed to the dangers of home-made wine in my mother's native Calabria, where we, along with my mother's family, would spend our summer holidays in a small town in the hills. My grandfather kept a cellar which was filled to the brim with dusty bottles of wine with makeshift labels and recycled corks. Occasionally one would explode. Since it was a summer house, when my grandparents would arrive for the season they'd be greeted with many gifts, including local wine made by just about every *contadino* in the surrounding area. Wine gifts were always accepted graciously, but never once opened to celebrate the end of the long journey from Rome to Calabria, no matter how distinguished the donor. For a time, the bottles were stored in said cellar until they matured into a very decent sort of vintage wine vinegar.

It wasn't the fault of the winemakers; their skills weren't tip top but it must also be conceded that, of all the Italian regions, Calabria has not been blessed with particularly formidable grape varieties, nor has it developed the same winemaking tradition as other southern territories. My mother looked on wearily as dad and Ettore got to work on the vineyard and subsequently on the grape harvest in September of 2010.

As my father suspected and my mother already knew, producing your own wine as a novice is a bit of a gamble. You cannot just throw it all in a big vat, stomp around on it and then expect to spend your winter and spring proudly glugging your produce as if you were at an orgy in ancient Rome. When contemplating the use of your grape harvest for anything other than elegantly decorating your country abode or feeding the local stray sheep that sometimes creep through your vineyard, I now know that the chances of obtaining a drinkable product are slim and that, in order to avoid disappointment, you really ought to at least consider the following factors beforehand (among many, many others): are your vines the right age? Does the soil in which they grow have the right acidity levels? More importantly, are you prepared to be extremely selective with your harvest? In order to ensure the quality of the end result, only the ripest, brightly coloured, healthy-looking bunches will do and the rest will have to be discarded without mercy, no matter how much time (and expense) has been spent on nurturing them.

But the outcome is only of relative importance - no matter the result, everyone wants a piece of it. Since the house was acquired and we each became involved in winemaking one way or another, I began to notice that locals, Italians and visiting foreigners alike are all intrigued by it and wish to be a part of it somehow, whether by partaking in the procedure itself or simply observing and sampling the results.

The fact that wine plays a more-than-fundamental role in every single region of this country will not be a revelation to anyone. The *RAI* channels run entire news items on Verona's Vinitaly and similar wine fairs, presenting the producers from the winning *cantine* as artists and heroes. Come May, thousands of drivers have their drivers' license confiscated during the *Cantine Aperte* week when each region prepares to showcase the new wine which is ready to be drunk by opening the doors of its wine cellars to the public and allowing people to sample their products (for free!). In the grape picking season, typically from August to October in Tuscany, people are eager to get in on the action by helping out someone they know with a vineyard or by taking part in a local festival. Even I have been surprised to find both Italian and foreign friends calling me around September asking if they could lend a hand (the only difference being that the Italians expected a share of the spoils for their efforts whereas the foreigners offered to pay for the privilege).

There may be no better place to celebrate the *vendemmia* than at the *Festa dell'Uva* (grape festival) in the town of Impruneta, just outside of Florence (Chianti, of course). On the last Sunday of September in each year, four districts (*rioni*) compete against each other in creating the most striking float depicting scenes associated with the grape-picking season. Put like that it sounds a bit tame and touristy but I assure you it is anything but - it can be savage. The teams are composed of local guys and girls who are up most nights for about a month before the festival, making and choreographing their floats, not to mention the props, costumes and accessories. Tempers rage, uninhibited by the large quantities of wine that are consumed to aid the creative process. Romances blossom, new friendships begin and old friendships are destroyed thanks to rivalry and things said and done that otherwise wouldn't have been. All this then culminates in one long night spent drinking, eating and even dancing (but mostly drinking). More crates of grapes will be emptied on the floor, on the floats and on tables in that one night than you will ever see and you will be sick of the smell and taste of that fruit come morning. Like most things to do with food, drink and tradition in Italy, the whole event from beginning to end is taken very seriously. It is intriguing to be a part of it, although of course, if you are not an *Imprunetino* you will never truly be a part of it at all.

Regardless of how you plan to get involved, whoever you meet will want to tell you about their experience with vinification ("In order to make the best wine in this country you have to do X!") or give you their two cents ("My brother-in-law makes the best wine in the country!"). I've had numerous encounters with taxi drivers who never fail to surprise me with their unique insight or point of view on almost any topic. On the way to the airport, Taxi driver number one recited poetry and tried to sell me his book. He too had a plot of land and a house in Lazio where he grew vines and made wine. "You must put a cup of sugar in each cask in order to obtain the best wine", he told me sternly. This tip was ignored as surely the addition of sugar would only serve the purpose of augmenting the alcohol levels in our already strong wine. Anyway, isn't that sort of cheating? Taxi driver number two was a large, bald, burly man with a deep voice and a rough Roman accent but he had no qualms showing me his romantic side on our short journey. He was moving to Brazil with his wife and was intent on selling some land he had acquired years before. He asked if I might be interested since my family was now in the winemaking business - vines grew on one half of the plot of land, he said, while the other was covered with rose bushes. I asked him about the roses and he responded with a question: have you ever woken up to a field full of roses and felt as happy as you did then on any other morning? I told him one vineyard was enough for me but I might be interested in purchasing a field full of roses.

In recent times, especially since the financial crisis has made a few people rethink their priorities and their careers, the pull of the vine has become so strong that urbanites everywhere have abandoned their jobs, cities, families and vocations in order to try their luck in the field. In every social circle and in every city, there are any number of urban legends doing the rounds about a moderately successful lawyer, accountant, doctor or other professional (but mostly lawyers) giving it all up to start their own wine-centric venture. I even read about a guy who moved to the Isola del Giglio, a tiny island just off the Tuscan coast, who used to be a maths teacher and had moved there in order to revive an indigenous grape variety named "Ansonaco". I should also mention the editor-in-chief of a prominent Italian newspaper who produces his own wine at his rural abode and has been known to wonder out loud on social occasions: "Why do people insist on bringing wine when we make so much of it here"? Guests have been tempted to reply, ask yourself a question and give yourself an answer, as they say here.

Soon after our own failed winemaking experience, I discovered that one such ex-lawyer had undertaken a similar feat just down the road from us, in Maremma. In the hope that we would become acquainted and, in the spirit of neighbourliness, be given some miraculous tips, one February my boyfriend and I ventured off the main road, uphill on a dirt track, for about 12 kilometres. We reached an austere-looking house at the top of a breezy hill and it was all very Wuthering Heights from then on. Shutters banging in the wind, the vines blowing wildly, the olive trees rustling and a very cold-looking cat cowering beneath the front door steps. After repeatedly ringing the doorbell, we were greeted unenthusiastically by a bearded guy in a hat who squinted at us questioningly until he understood why we'd come. Finally he led us down to the *Cantina* where the barrels were kept and told us his story. In short, he had been working in his father's Milanese law firm for some years when he and his wife found the house and surrounding land for sale on a weekend trip to Maremma. There was a lightening bolt *(colpo di fulmine)* and they suddenly realised that it was their destiny to own the house and plant vines all around it. At the age of 37, he had relinquished his portion of the firm and moved there with his wife and little girl. They began to cultivate a number of unusual varieties of grape which are not normally grown in the region, thereby producing some interesting wines (including a fantastic Cabernet Franc) and it appears that their bravery and their gamble has paid off - we recently passed by again to find the house boarded up and a message on the answering machine informing us that they were participating in a number of prestigious Italian wine fairs and would be away for several weeks. I smiled when I recently saw their wine on the menu in a restaurant in Umbria.

But as luck would have it, we may have no need for our neighbour's tips, and just as well as it seems he may be too busy to come to our rescue. It appears that we may have found our saviour in the form of Mr R, now nicknamed Dr R in our household, extended family and by our friends, for he has truly changed our perception of home-made wine. Dr R lives on his farm in a nearby division of our same *comune*. We heard about him from our surveyor who we have known since the house was bought – that's more than seven years ago now, and the identity of Dr R was only disclosed to my father in 2010. One can only infer that an outsider must earn the trust and respect of the local people before he can be entrusted with some of the place's best kept secrets.

Dr R is a man of 80-something years of age. Like most farmers in the area, he rears cattle and grows crops and the results are admirable but the red wine he produces overshadows all the rest. The red literally smells of the Maremma spring and tastes even better. The white is bitter and tastes of earth and grass. When you arrive at his house, he welcomes you by giving you your own little cloudy glass with which to taste the latest vintage. He brings you down to his cellar where his hams and *salami* are hung and fruit juices, jams, preserves and sauces are displayed on shelves. He will humbly join you in enjoying a glass or two, usually comparing it unfavourably with last year's batch. Made of only grape juice, it doesn't contain any sulphites or chemicals, not even a cup of sugar or two (the knowledge of this usually results in people having a couple of glasses more than they usually would).

For two years, we have been acting as Dr R's distribution network; we now supply Romans, Umbrians, Calabrians and Milanese with this Doctor's marvellous medicine. We spend our time wondering what we might be able to offer him in return that might be tantalizing enough to get him to pass on his secret skill, but I am now firmly convinced that Dr R wants for nothing, that he is as happy with his lot as they come.

I am not ready to give up on our vineyard - I believe that there is still a chance that we could turn our wine around and make small miracles in a bottle and join this happy club of brave idealists (alas, without giving up the day job). I just need for Dr R to believe in our cause before my mother gleefully rips our old vines out of the earth in the night while my father and I sleep.

# GIUSEPPE VERDI AND THE BRITISH: A BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

By Simon Bainbridge

When Giuseppe Verdi began his career, the British passion for Italian opera, which happily shows no sign of diminishing, had been established for well over a century. British impresarios keenly sought out new talent, so it was no surprise that Benjamin Lumley, who ran Her Majesty's Theatre in Haymarket in London, commissioned Verdi, the new star of Italian opera, to write something for his theatre before any of Verdi's works had been staged in Britain. *Ernani* was the work which began to spread Verdi's fame throughout Europe, and *Ernani* was the first opera by Verdi to be seen in Britain when it was given at Her Majesty's on 8 March 1845, a year after its premiere in Venice. Its success, which was immediate and long-lasting, led to performances in London the following year of *Nabucco* (renamed *Nino* and given a non-biblical story out of respect for the sensibilities of British audiences) and *I lombardi,* again at Her Majesty's and again with great success. Hopes were therefore high for Verdi's *I masnadieri,* which Lumley announced for the end of the spring season of 1847.

This was Verdi's first foreign commission. For him the attractions of writing an opera for London were many, but two stood out. One was the fee, which was four or five times what he was used to receiving in Italy, and the other was the cast which Lumley was proposing and which included two of the leading singers of the day, the soprano Jenny Lind and the bass Luigi Lablache. The first night was scheduled for 22 July, rather late in the season. Verdi arrived in London early in June to orchestrate the opera and supervise rehearsals, his usual working method at this time. He also agreed, shortly before the first night and with great reluctance, to conduct the first two performances. The result was a triumph: full houses, wildly enthusiastic audiences, even the presence of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort at the opening night. But not a triumph that lasted, for *I masnadieri* has never been one of Verdi's more frequently performed operas. Nor were the critics kind: H.F. Chorley wrote, "We take this to be the worst opera that has been given in our time at Her Majesty's Theatre. Verdi is finally rejected". The contrast between the warm bath of audience applause and the cold shower of critical comment was familiar to Verdi even at this early stage of his career, and he had learnt to bear it stoically. Often in the years to come – for most of his creative life, indeed – Verdi had cause to console himself with the thought that nobody liked his work except the public.

Verdi was overwhelmed by the size and scale of London, but also stimulated by it. "Nothing can be compared to its size, its wealth", he wrote, "the beauty of its streets, the cleanliness of its houses". The climate was no more to his liking than the polluted air, the food was unfamiliar and the drink too strong, but he had enjoyed the working conditions, he had met with success and he had earned a great deal of money. As the years went by the popularity of his operas grew and grew: *Rigoletto, Il trovatore,* and *La traviata* immediately entered the repertoire and have never left it. But Verdi did not return to the country where his music was so loved for fifteen years. When he did, it was another commission that brought him.

**Giuseppe Verdi**

In 1862, London mounted an International Exhibition. Unusually for Verdi, who disliked writing occasional or ceremonial pieces and regularly turned down invitations to do so, he had agreed to write a piece to be performed at the Exhibition's opening ceremony as the representative of Italy, then a new country of the European stage, Rossini having turned the offer down. France was represented by Auber, Germany by Meyerbeer and Britain by Sterndale Bennett. Verdi's contribution, *L'inno delle nazioni* (The Hymn of the Nations) was written for tenor, chorus and orchestra and set a poem by the 20-year-old Arrigo Boito (later the librettist of *Otello* and *Falstaff*), in a way which combined the national anthems of Britain, France and Italy. Verdi sent the work to the organisers of the Exhibition in plenty of time for rehearsal and himself arrived in London on 20 April, some weeks before the opening ceremony, only to find that the Hymn was not to be performed. The reasons given were that it was not an orchestral piece, as had been stipulated, and that Verdi had submitted the piece too late to allow for adequate rehearsal. Verdi defended himself in a letter to *The Times* written in dignified English (presumably by his wife, who had the command of English which Verdi lacked), but the opening ceremony took place with Verdi present and no performance of the Hymn. Verdi's popularity in Britain impelled the press to take his side and denounce the discourtesy and inefficiency of the Exhibition's organisers. Eventually, after only three days' rehearsal, the Hymn was performed at Her Majestry's Theatre on 24 May with a chorus of 260 and the soprano Thérèse Tietjens as soloist, an adequate tenor

not being available. The reception was enthusiastic enough to compensate Verdi for his rough handling and he cheered himself up further by buying two fine new guns before leaving for Paris. Twelve years would pass before he visited Britain again.

In 1874, the Requiem Mass that Verdi had written in memory of the writer Alessandro Manzoni had brilliantly successful performances in Milan and Paris. Plans were made for performances in other European cities and Verdi came to London to assess possibilities in June 1874, attending some performances at the Handel Festival. As a result, Verdi returned to London in May 1875 to conduct performances of the Requiem in the Royal Albert Hall. The performances went well, but the size of the audiences did not justify the risk of hiring such a vast venue and financially the venture failed. The performances did, however, allow London to claim one final, modest Verdi premiere. He originally wrote the Liber Scriptus passage in the Requiem's Dies Irae sequence as a four-part fugue for chorus, but later revised it as a solo for mezzo-soprano. This version, which is the one always heard today, was given for the first time at the London performances in 1875. The curious may like to know that the original choral Liber Scriptus is printed as a supplement in the current Novello piano score of the Requiem.

In addition to these major visits, Verdi came to London a couple of times in the 1850s. Not being a man who travelled for pleasure, he came on business, seeking to protect his author's rights by ensuring that pirated scores were not used in performances of his operas, These visits may seem mundane compared to those occasioned by performances of his music, but they remind us that no musical genius has ever had a better business brain than Verdi, and it enabled him to accumulate the enormous wealth that he used so generously.

It did not require Verdi's presence for his operas to flourish in this country; Britain's love of his music has grown as the less familiar pieces have been staged. For a generation or so after Verdi's death, changing fashions and taste limited Verdi performances to the handful of accepted masterpieces. Re-assessment of his entire output can be said to have begun with two events either side of the Second World War: the first British staging of the revised *Macbeth* at Glyndebourne in 1938 and the first British staging of any version of *Simon Boccanegra* at Sadler's Wells Theatre in 1948. A significant stage in this re-assessment was reached when Opera North produced *Jérusalem* in 1990, for that meant that at last every Verdi opera had been staged in this country. It is not only the major opera companies we have to thank for allowing us to see Verdi whole: lesser organisations like the Music Society of University College, London and the Camden Festival have also contributed to a greater understanding of Verdi, with six British stage premieres between them. Performances of the rarer operas have shown, of course, that not every one is a masterpiece, but they also show that none is negligible and that each offers moments of delight.

Britain can be said to have repaid some of its debt to Verdi by the means of scholarship. Towering above all other British writing about Verdi – and accepted as a standard work throughout the world – is Julian Budden's three-volume *The Operas of Verdi,* originally published in 1973, 1978 and 1981 and now available in paperback. It is impossible to overpraise the lightly worn erudition and sympathetic insights of these books, which all lovers of Verdi should read. Not completely overshadowed by Budden are two other writers, Frank Walker and Vincent Godefroy. Walker's *The Man Verdi* appeared in 1962 and raised Verdi scholarship to new heights with its close attention to primary sources and careful demolition of traditional misconceptions about Verdi. Godefroy's two-volume *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi*, published in 1975 and 1977, examines Verdi as a man of the theatre rather than as a composer and gives a convincing account of his mastery of drama and the skilful matching of music to action. Walker's and Godefroy's books are out of print, but not difficult to find. No matter how well you know Verdi's work, these books can only add to your love and understanding of his genius.

***The author, since 1988, has worked as a freelance in publishing and edited "Kobbe's Illustrated Opera Book". He has also long been associated with a number of opera and choral groups in London and regularly travels to Italy.***

# BRITISH ART HISTORIAN ELECTED GRAND MASTER

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

**Grand Master Fra' Matthew Festing**

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta, as the Order of Malta is officially called, celebrated its 900 years since the granting of a Papal Bull which recognised the Order as an independent, religious order carrying out works of charity in Rome in February 2013 at St Peter's with a procession in the square, a Mass in the basilica and a special address by Pope Benedict XVI. After being forced to move from country to country for centuries, in 1834 the Order settled definitively in Rome where it has its headquarters and owns, with extraterritorial status, the Magistral Palace in the heart of the city and the Magistral Villa on the Aventine Hill.

RIVISTA meets the Grand Master at the magnificent Renaissance Palazzo Magistrale of the Order of Malta in Via Condotti a few minutes' walk from the Spanish Steps. Fra' Matthew Festing talks about their activities and the Order today.

The current Grand Master Fra' Matthew Festing, also known as His Most Eminent Highness, the Prince and Grand Master of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta, to give the organisation its full name, was elected in 2008. The Grand Master has the rank of Cardinal in the Catholic Church. An English art historian and expert in the 17th and 18th centuries, who had formerly worked for Sotheby's, became the 79th Grand Master. It is quite unusual to have two British Heads of the Order in a row making him the third British Grand Master following the death of his predecessor Grand Master Fra' Andrew Bertie, a Scotsman and the first one being Fra' Hugh Revel in the 13th century.

Fra' Matthew Festing received an OBE from the Queen when serving as her Deputy Lieutenant in Northumberland. He has a military background as a former Grenadier Guard and colonel in the Territorial Army. He was educated at Ampleforth College and St John's College Cambridge, where he read history. Fra' Matthew Festing became a member of the Order in 1977 and took the solemn religious vows of chastity, poverty and obedience as a Professed Knight in 1991.

## *What this year's special event has meant to the Order*

"It wasn't 900 years since the beginning of the Order, but it was the 900th anniversary of the first document", explained the Grand Master. "So it is rather like the 900th anniversary of our birth certificate". It is a very important document, granted by Pope Paschal II in February 1113, which is what gives the Order of Malta its independence. "It is referred to as a Papal Bull, which it is not. It is what is called the Great Privilege, which happens to have a *bulla* attached to it. And that is the document which gives the sovereignty to the Order and it is why the Order is independent of other kings, sovereigns, or powers and indeed bishops, coming directly under the jurisdiction of the Holy Father". It is thanks to this status that the Sovereign Order of Malta has been able to carry out its humanitarian mission and charity activities running hospitals, first aid and ambulance services and homes for the elderly. There are not many organisations which can say

"Look, here we are mentioned nearly a thousand years ago. That was the significance of the event", explained the Grand Master. "We celebrated 900 years of existence in 1999 because the first time people became aware of the Order was in 1099 when the first crusade captured Jerusalem, but scholars say the Order already existed before then with our founder, Blessed Gérard, probably twenty years earlier".

The recent event was a great gathering of 5,500 people from all over the world (from Australia, South America, South East Asia, Africa, for example, Senegal, as well as from Europe) and it was used "not only to celebrate a big Mass at St Peter's, but also as an opportunity to organise an international conference discussing various things we are trying to do. We were not expecting every single member of the Order, of which there are 13,500". And another significant point is that "One did not know at the time that it was the last big event which Pope Benedict XVI took part in. It took place on the Saturday and then he announced his resignation on the Monday morning. In retrospect it was very significant from that point of view. Hence it was a great historical occasion as his last major public appearance before the announcement". The event "was a great success. We had a huge number of people and the most important part was that we had a large number of young people, who are the future".

## *The Order combines tradition with modernity*

"It is a sort of paradox", the Grand Master explained. "It is a very ancient organisation, and the reason why it is still in existence is because it has had the sense to adapt to change of circumstances and changes of society. Other similar organisations founded at the same time have not done so even in an attenuated form. We have survived because we look after the poor and the sick, hence our mission has continued". Wherever the Order went, the first thing they did was to set up hospitals and look after the locals. "That is why here in Italy we have the big San Giovanni Battista hospital at La Magliana, a suburb of Rome. During the Second World War we took over the English College and turned it into a hospital. We were originally founded to look after the poor and the sick, and then because many of our members had been professional soldiers, when Jerusalem came under threat, they then said 'You may be looking after the sick, but you are trained soldiers, so would you mind putting your armour back on and fighting the Saracens'. So that is where we got this dual role from".

## *The British-Italian connection through the Order*

In the First World War there was quite a bit of cooperation between the Order of Malta and Britain "because the sort of part-time medical cover for the Italian army is under our aegis. And there are still some Italian soldiers with Malta crosses on their uniform, the so-called *Corpo Militare*. What is interesting about the British-Italian connection is that in the First World War, they worked with the Royal Army Medical Corps evacuating casualties. Before that the Royal Medical Corps and the *Corpo Militare* operated together during the huge earthquake in Messina in 1908. They now cooperate again - this time with the Territorial Army doing joint exercises together. They worked together before the First World War, during the war and then now. So there is still a sort of connection".

## *Mystique*

Stories of knights in armour and knights dressed in traditional robes create a certain mystique. However, it was interesting to discover that not all the uniforms worn are based on models of the Middle Ages.

"The black church dress is comparatively modern and was invented around the 1950s. It is inspired by the Benedictine habit although it is not very like it," explained the Grand Master. "It was a way to make members stand out at important religious events, such as Lourdes, because until then there wasn't a uniform except for the Professed Knights who had special robes. There are today about 70 professed monk-knights and their robes have not changed since medieval times".

## *What attracts people to join the Order in the 21st Century*

"It is an interesting thought. Different people are attracted by different aspects. Certainly young people are strongly attracted by the business of doing something for other people. There is a strong attraction for looking after the disadvantaged, whoever they are, whether they are disabled, whether they are starving, whether they are in need of accommodation because they are refugees. It has a great appeal for relatively young people today".

Once drawn exclusively from Europe's nobility, the Order still boasts of families having members right down in the family tree, generation after generation. There is a huge family tradition. "The older members in their 80s probably joined when they were twenty out of family tradition. Here in Italy and in Germany there are people who are the fifteenth generation in their family. Somebody told me the other day that between now and 1400 or so there have been 42 very senior members in one family".

As time goes on and in the new world, such as the Americas and Asia, those countries do not have that tradition. This has recently made the Order more open. "People have the erroneous idea that the Order is based exclusively on the old aristocracy of Europe. It hasn't been for a very long time, apart from the fact that there have been exceptions which have proved the rule for centuries. However, many people who join us are from relatively talented backgrounds, not necessarily noble ones".

## *What made an Art Historian join the Order*

In my case it was basically family. After university I was a soldier, and I then left the army. When my relations discovered I was leaving the army, the very first thing that happened is that an old cousin said "Right you are leaving the army, then you are jolly well coming with the Order of Malta to Lourdes. I was sort of ambushed by my relations, nearly forty years ago. We need strong young people. Lourdes is a strange place as it has an extraordinary inspiring effect on people taking part in the works of the Order, with emphasis on the sick. It also coincides with the *raison d'être* of the Order". This main big international event for the Order takes place in May not only for the sick but also as a get-together. It is mostly a Catholic tradition, whereas

the great annual pilgrimage of Italian members of the Order is to Loreto. Pilgrimages also take place in other countries: the British members have a pilgrimage to Walsingham in September; then there are Fatima in Portugal and San Jacopo de Compostela in Spain, not to forget shrines on other continents, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, where members of the Order also gather.

### *New projects planned over the next five years*

As needs grow and change direction, the Order keeps up pace in the spirit of its mission, with its humanitarian services covering a wide range of areas. "We spend a great deal of time reacting to what is happening, as in the case of a tsunami or an earthquake", commented Fra' Matthew Festing. "Then there are trends, as in the case of our work in central Africa. There is also a huge amount to be done in South East Asia, for example, in Thailand and Cambodia – in the former we work with refugees, in the latter, with leprosy victims. South America has huge social problems. In disaster situations, an assessment is carried out on site to see whether the Order can help or not. We are neutral and can work in areas even where the UN cannot go, as was the case in Burma". With regard to immigration issues: "There is a movement of people from Asia and Africa, and we help the authorities deal with those people who arrive, as in the case of the Italian *Guardia Costiera*. Several big European cities have social issues, such as street children, unmarried mothers, the homeless, drug addicts, and now the aging population especially in Western Europe. We have projects to look after the elderly, setting up homes for them, especially in the UK (not in Italy, as most Italians look after their elderly), and caring for cases of dementia. All these are new challenges in the Order's mission to help the poor and the sick, whoever they are and from wherever they come. We did it in the eleventh century, we are doing it now, and we will go on doing it in the future".

# NOTES FROM TRIESTE

By Anthony Cooke

**Piazza Unità, Trieste - By courtesy of Chris Mason**

What better way could there be of starting the day than to sit, sipping orange juice and enjoying the morning air on the verandah of a house perched on a steep cliff, looking down over the city of Trieste, its old harbour and the bay beyond? Always assuming, that is, that the Bora is not blowing – the fearsome wind which sometimes rampages in from the wilder regions to the north-east.

After that, there is the schoolboy pleasure of catching the famous old Opicina tram as it creaks cautiously down the 1 in 4 slope into the city, for part of the way propelled by a moving cable. Having reached the bottom of the long incline, it pauses to become an ordinary electric tram before completing its journey. (This tram has now closed down following a recent accident).

Soon after alighting, you can meet the pavement-level bronze statue of James Joyce portrayed, stick in hand, strolling through the town, presumably heading for some dubious encounter.

(Joyce lived in Trieste in the years before and after the First World War. And he was not the only literary figure to have spent time in the city – Rilke, Stendhal and Jules Verne did and, of course, there was the fierce, larger than life explorer and translator of Arabic classics, Sir Richard Burton.)

Before the business of the day can begin, it is necessary to have one's morning fix of cappuccino in one of Trieste's dozens of coffee bars. (This is a coffee city, an important entry port for the bean and the home of the Illy company. The only professional coffee taster I have ever met has been in Trieste.) By the way, do not ask for a cappuccino – in this idiosyncratic city it is always referred to simply as *caffè latte*. And you stand at the counter while sipping it – there is an extra charge if you sit down. Duly fortified, one finally arrives at the office in the Mercato Vecchio and the day's work begins.

Later, you might take a snack lunch in, say, the Caffè Verdi, attached to the *Teatro Verdi*. This is a symbol of the city's *italianità*. It was in Trieste that two of the great man's operas received their premieres, albeit two of his least successful works, *Il Corsaro* in 1848 and *Stiffelio* in 1850. Alternatively, you might eat in a cramped but welcoming bar named after the Empress Sissy, thus reminding yourself that, although it always had a very strong Italian element, Trieste was an Austrian city until 1918. Sissy was the name by which the Kaiserin Elisabeth, the rebellious wife of Kaiser Franz Joseph I, was familiarly known. (She must have seemed an eccentric alien in the stuffy, conventional Viennese court – an enthusiast for the poetry of Homer, she is reputed to have been in the habit of reciting it while strapped into a chair on the bow of her yacht as she ordered it to be sailed into fierce Adriatic storms.)

Another reminder of Trieste's Austrian past is the statue of the Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, which stands just across the road from the Sissy bar. He was the Emperor's sailor brother who chose a site looking out to sea just outside the city to build an idyllic white home, Miramar (or in Italian, Miramare) for his young bride. He, like Sissy and other members of this unhappy family, met a sad end. In 1864, duty called when he reluctantly allowed himself to be recruited by a Franco-Austrian alliance to go to Mexico to become the emperor of a European-style state which, it was hoped, would counter the growing influence of the United States in Latin America. Rebels put him up against a wall and shot him in 1867.

Some idea of Trieste's complicated history can be gleaned by climbing up the steep slope to the old city. Before you begin the ascent, you will pass by the partly restored remains of the Roman theatre and you will traverse the site of the 17th century Jewish ghetto which was demolished between 1934 and 1938 to make way for the blockish, rather brutal buildings of the Mussolini era which still stand there. Having arrived, out of breath, at the top you will find yourself in a piazza of old and humble houses and shops, a world away from the imposing

**Caffè San Marco, Trieste**

metropolitan sophistication of the grand Austrian buildings in the centre of the city below. In this old hilltop square, you will also find the slightly grim cathedral of San Giusto. This too is a mixture of several periods, mainly Romanesque but with some Roman fragments and with a nave which was built in the thirteenth century to connect two churches which stood alongside each other. I am not a very religious person but it was here that I came as near as I am ever likely to do to having a spiritual experience. On a day when hardly anyone else was around, I was very conscious of the palpable atmosphere created by the generations of worshippers who for more than a thousand years have communed with their maker there.

'Modern' Trieste dates from the decision in the eighteenth century to develop a city at the head of the Adriatic which would be the port for Vienna – and indeed for most of Middle Europe. Its importance increased immensely in the mid-nineteenth century with the opening of the Suez Canal and the coming of the Südbahn railway from Vienna (partly financed by Rothschild money). Indeed, Trieste became the fourth largest city in the Austrian empire. Today, one of the Südbahn's main stations in the city, the Campo Marzio terminal, is merely a railway museum run by enthusiastic volunteers. The roof leaks and some of the giant, lumbering locomotives – built in Austria, Hungary and Germany to haul heavily laden trains north and south,– which stand in the sidings outside are literally rusting away. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating, if sad, relic.

For many centuries, there were other racial influences at play in addition to the Austrian and Italian, for Trieste became a magnet for many people from the nearby Balkan lands, then also part of the Austrian empire. Some of the more enterprising of these incomers were particularly involved in the development of the city as a centre of shipowning - especially, those from a village known to the Italians as Lussinpiccolo on the island of Lussino (now the Croatian Lošinj) which was, like some similar small coastal communities in Norway, Greece and Italy, a seedbed of maritime endeavour, producing successive generations of sea captains and shipowners.

From Lussinpiccolo, families such as the Cosulich, Tripcovich and Martinolich (later Martinoli) clans were drawn to the thriving metropolis of Trieste. The Cosulich family, in particular, became especially important in the early decades of the twentieth century, with their shipping lines and their shipyards, one of which also built railway rolling stock and seaplanes and had a football team which played in Serie B. The Cosulich family even had their own airline, whose flying boats ran services from a terminal in Trieste harbour which now serves as a depot for the *Guardia Costiera*. Alas, the family's enterprises fell on hard times in the Great Depression of the thirties. Nevertheless, descendants of those entrepreneurs are still heavily involved in the shipping business, but based now in Genoa.

With oil tankers queuing up in the bay, awaiting their turn to unload, and with daily ferries carrying loaded lorries and trailers to and from Turkey, Trieste is still a maritime city. But the Stazione Marittima no longer hosts the famous liners which used to set out from there to destinations around the world. Two of those ships, though, are still remembered – the Cosulich Line's sumptuously luxurious motorliners Saturnia and Vulcania. One of the city's several rowing clubs is named after the Saturnia and the Ristorante Vulcania still has a picture of the eponymous ship on a wall near the bar. Today the Stazione Marittima is used only for occasional visits by cruise ships. I once arrived there on the QE2. The sight of this famous ship slowed down the traffic along the Riva, the broad road which runs along the waterfront of the old harbour, and bystanders stood at the gates to get a glimpse of her. Shops had notices in their windows proclaiming 'Benvenuti QE2'.

And in the thirties, Trieste was sometimes called Il Porto di Zion, the Port of Zion, since it was from here that the ships of the famous old Lloyd Triestino Line (originally the Lloyd Austriaco) carried many German and other Jews to Palestine, fleeing the impending horrors. Briefly, there was a rival line out of Trieste, run by a Hamburg Jewish shipowner, Arnold Bernstein, but at home in Germany the Nazis arrested and imprisoned him.

The once-strong Jewish community in Trieste is sadly shrunken, not least by a terrible massacre which took place in 1944, but the imposing Great Synagogue remains, said to be the biggest in Europe – although Amsterdam would probably dispute that claim. And there is the sad Carlo and Vera Wagner Museum which, amongst other things, records the pre-war exodus and the fate of those Jews who did not get away. The synagogue was trashed by the fascists during the war and the Germans tried to locate its treasures which, it is said, they wanted to preserve as a record of the culture of a race which was about to become extinct. But they never found them. They had been hidden away in a small room, the entrance to which had been obscured by a massive piece of furniture.

In 1956, Trieste once again offered an escape route for refugees. In that year, during the uprising in Hungary which was quickly crushed by Russian tanks, there was a brief period when it was possible for Hungarians to leave their country. Many of them made their way to Trieste, from where they took passage to Canada on the famous but now ageing Saturnia and Vulcania.

There are many places of worship in this cosmopolitan city. Perhaps the grandest is the baroque church of S. Antonio Taumaturgo which stands at the head of the Canale Grande, on one side of which there is the Serbian Orthodox church, emphasising the way in which many diverse ethnic and religious communities have converged here and have built their own institutions and places of worship. It would be very wrong to imagine, by the way, that the Canale Grande in any way rivals its namesake in Venice. It is a small man-made inlet, just a few hundred metres long. But buried at its farther end are the remains of an Austrian submarine which was overtaken by the First World War.

The Irredentist movement, striving for a greater Italy, had strong support in Trieste. Their wishes were granted in 1920 when the city and the surrounding country became part of Italy. More than that, though, it was from here that Gabriele D'Annunzio, the flamboyant poet, hedonist and adventurer led his unofficial army across the Istrian peninsula to seize control for Italy of the city of Fiume which, when it became part of Yugoslavia after the Second World War, was renamed Rijeka. (Both names

have the same meaning – River.) Although most of the city's Italian population fled when the Yugoslavs took over, Italian is still understood there by many and there is even an Italian-language newspaper, *La Voce del Popolo*.

Trieste was, in fact, a stronghold of Italian nationalism and there is no avoiding the fact that, like that of many cities, its history is not entirely benign. In the twenties, the Slav communities and their institutions were victimised. One of the less brutal indignities inflicted on them was that many people were forced to Italianise their names. In 1938, Mussolini made his only visit to the city, arriving by sea at the symbolic quay of the Molo Audace (which had been re-named after the naval vessel Audace which, to huge rejoicing, brought the first Italian troops to Trieste in 1918). He addressed a great crowd in the Piazza Unità d'Italia and contemporary photographs show that the castle high above the city was floodlit and its wall was decorated with giant letters spelling out DUX. Similar signs, or others proclaiming DUCE, appeared on other buildings.

After the War, The Trieste Problem once again came to the forefront of international attention. The Yugoslavs claimed the place but the Western powers, alarmed by the advance of communism through eastern Europe and the strength of the Communist Party in Italy, did everything they could to prevent them getting it. For a time, it was a Free City governed by the American and British military on behalf of the United Nations. Finally, in 1954 the city and a narrow coastal strip were handed back to Italy.

Of course, Trieste cannot rival the grandeur or the artistic richness of Venice, just 60 miles along the coast to the west. There is nothing at all sensational about it. But it is a very favourite place for many people. Enjoying your coffee outside the famous old Caffè degli Specchi in the Piazza Unità d'Italia (given that name in 1918 and these days usually known simply as the Piazza Unità), with its huge and ornate nineteenth-century palaces of commerce and administration on three sides, you can sense the reasons for this. The square is enormous but is usually only sparsely peopled because Trieste is now one of Europe's quieter great cities – too quiet for some of the younger generation who tend to go away to more exciting places. The old bustle of the gateway to Middle Europe and, later to Zion, has gone. But it still has some of its industries and many Triestini have a great pride in their singular city. And, looking towards the fourth side of the square, open to the Riva and the bay, you might just see a reminder of former days if a ship happens to be moored at the Stazione Marittima.

(The author would like to thank Maurizio Eliseo, Claudio Ernè and Francesco Fegitz who have helped him to get to know and admire their city.)

# ANTHONY CLARKE: CHI ERA COSTUI?

By Benedetta Amari

Questa è la storia di Anthony Clarke, di Piero della Francesca e di Aldous Huxley, di come le loro vite si sono intrecciate, pur essendo vissuti in epoche diverse.

Il nome di Anthony Clarke può risultare sconosciuto ai più. Non è così per gli abituali frequentatori della libreria da lui fondata a Cape Town – South Africa, e che porta il suo nome, la Clarke's Book Store a Long Street, unanimamente definita la più bella libreria d'Africa, e per gli abitanti del paese di Sansepolcro, provincia di Arezzo, che alla morte di Clarke, avvenuta nel 1980, vollero intitolargli una strada.

Ma andiamo per ordine. Siamo in Italia, nell'Anno di Guerra 1944. Gli Alleati, dopo lo sbarco di Anzio, risalgono la penisola. Per agevolare l'avanzata e limitare le perdite umane, l'artiglieria è in prima linea: e una batteria al comando di un ufficiale inglese riceve l'ordine di cannoneggiare un paese posto tra Arezzo e Perugia.

E' così che il capitano Anthony Clarke, della Royal Horse Artillery, si trova sopra le alture di Citerna e diventa il protagonista indiscusso di questa storia.

Questa storia è a tutti gli effetti una piccola favola dei giorni nostri con, come interpreti, oltre al nostro capitano, uno scrittore britannico d'inizio secolo scorso, Aldous Huxley, e un pittore toscano rinascimentale, Piero della Francesca.

Il luogo è Sansepolcro, un borgo dell'Alta Val Tiberina, incastonato tra Romagna, Toscana e Umbria. Per la sua posizione strategica Sansepolcro, o Borgo San Sepolcro, come recitava il suo nome in antico, non era nuovo al passaggio di eserciti. Nel giugno 1440, infatti, cinquecento anni prima di questi avvenimenti, il territorio era già stato teatro di guerre, o meglio, della battaglia di Anghiari, tra le truppe milanesi e la Repubblica di Firenze. Per celebrare l'episodio i Fiorentini avevano commissionato a Leonardo da Vinci un affresco per le pareti di Palazzo Vecchio. Purtroppo per noi questo dipinto nei secoli è andato perduto.

L'ufficiale Clarke aveva combattuto in Nord Africa, a El Alamein. Al seguito delle truppe Alleate, era transitato per Montecassino, dopo che un furioso bombardamento aveva ridotto la millenaria Abbazia in un cumulo di macerie. Ora si trovava al comando dei suoi uomini in Alta Val Tiberina, con l'ordine di snidare e annientare ogni presenza nemica.

Mentre già il cannoneggiamento era in corso, nella mente di Clarke affiorò un ricordo: dove aveva già sentito quel nome, Sansepolcro? non aveva letto da qualche parte che a Sansepolcro era custodita la più grande pittura al mondo?

L'ufficiale non ci pensò su: diede ordine di interrompere le ostilità, si fece portare in paese e chiese del dipinto. E si trovò davanti alla Resurrezione di Piero della Francesca.

Il Capitano, per non avere ottemperato agli ordini ricevuti, rischiò il deferimento alla corte marziale. In cambio ricevette l'eterna gratitudine degli abitanti biturgesi. Clarke tornò a Sansepolcro nel 1965, accolto festosamente dalla cittadinanza. Ebbe a dire in quell'occasione: "Non ho mai mangiato e bevuto così bene in vita mia". L'episodio è riportato tra gli altri dal giornalista Tim Butcher che ne ha ricavato un bel documentario per la BBC.

Le parole che erano risuonate nella mente di Anthony Clarke:

**Anthony Clarke By courtesy of Archivio Fotografico Biblioteca di Sansepolcro**

"It stands before us in entire and actual splendour, the greatest picture in the world", si trovano nel capitolo "The Best picture" del libro "Along the Road" di Aldous Huxley, a metà tra il saggio e un diario di viaggio.

Questo libro era diventato un *must* per tutta quella generazione di angloamericani colti a cavallo tra la prima e la seconda guerra mondiale, quelli che romanticamente sognavano di rivivere le emozioni del Grand Tour in Italia, ma non "in the easy way" visitando luoghi canonici e opere nei musei. Essi erano alla ricerca della Bellezza, anche e soprattutto a discapito delle comodità. E infatti Huxley narrava in questo scritto di un lunghissimo e disagevole viaggio in autobus, e di come alla fine si fosse trovato inopinatamente davanti a quello che così aveva descritto: "Non abbiamo bisogno di immaginazione per aiutarci a comprendere la sua bellezza e la sua incredibile potenza: sta lì davanti a noi in tutto il suo splendore la più grande opera al mondo".

L'affresco della Resurrezione si trova da sempre nel luogo in cui Piero l'ha realizzata, in una parete dell'antico Palazzo Pretorio, negli anni diventato sede del Comune di Sansepolcro e attualmente sede del Museo Comunale.

E' un'opera di grandi proporzioni, la cui linea di orizzonte passa proprio all'altezza degli occhi dello spettatore. La scena risulta così divisa in due: sotto giacciono quattro figure di soldati addormentate (in quella di fronte a chi guarda si vuole vedere l'autoritratto dello stesso Piero). Sopra, sovrasta il Cristo, che prepotentemente balza fuori dal sepolcro, la gamba sinistra col piede saldamente poggiato sulla balata di marmo, e in mano il vessillo bianco della Vittoria sulla Morte.

E' interessante notare che l'Uomo raffigurato è lo stesso che si può ammirare, sempre di mano di Piero della Francesca, alla National Gallery di Londra, nel Battesimo di Cristo. Il pittore ha voluto per così dire continuare la sua storia per immagini: e se il Cristo di Londra è giovane e impacciato, il Cristo di Sansepolcro è diventato uomo fatto e appare forte e possente. Ma soprattutto è il suo sguardo che colpisce e incanta: è lo sguardo del Vincitore. Davvero, è lo sguardo magnetico e fascinatore del Padrone della Vita e della Morte.

Per chi fosse interessato a conoscere le opere di Piero della Francesca, un buon itinerario potrebbe cominciare quindi proprio da Londra, per poi passare a Milano, alla Pinacoteca di Brera, e toccare quindi Arezzo, la chiesa di San Francesco, e Urbino, con il suo Palazzo Ducale. Per approdare infine a Sansepolcro.

Nel prezioso e importante piccolo Museo, oltre alla Resurrezione, di Piero si può ammirare anche la stupenda Pala della Misericordia. E non lontano da qui, a Monterchi, non mancate di visitare la Madonna del Parto, con cui Piero volle omaggiare la propria madre, nata proprio a Monterchi.

In occasione delle celebrazioni per il millennario del paese, avvenute nel 2012, Sansepolcro ha pubblicamente ricordato la figura di Anthony Clarke. Come già aveva fatto il giornale di Arezzo la Nazione, con un suo articolo del 28/12/2011, e il quotidiano nazionale Corriere della Sera con un bel servizio sulla pagina della Cultura del 27/12/2011.

Anche la RAI, Radiotelevisione Italiana, ha citato l'episodio di cui Clarke è stato protagonista nella sua trasmissione - Uno mattina – andata in onda l'1/10/2012.

E da noi tutti, amanti del Bello, GRAZIE DI CUORE, Anthony Clarke!

**La Resurrezione by Piero della Francesca By courtesy of the Museo Civico di Sansepolcro**

# *SARDIGNA* IN BELGRAVIA

By Alexandra Richardson

**Mauro Sanna**

Twenty-three years ago, Mauro Sanna felt that he could do it better. "Italian restaurants in London were getting away with murder. Veal dishes that weren't. Cream sauces everywhere! There wasn't much that was authentic. Stuff was on the menus that had no right to be there. Chefs were giving Italian food a bad name and charging good money for it! *Troppi furbi in giro"!* Things have moved on since then and the 53-year old Cagliari-born entrepreneur has played his part in reshaping the image and reputation of Italian cooking here. With a twist, though. He would open his own place and introduce the best of his native island to London restaurant-goers, planting Sardinia firmly in the heart of Belgravia.

It all began almost serendipitously. He was one of seven children and maybe the most restless of the brood. Work in Sardinia was scarce and at age 17, as he saw it, his best bet was to head for England and start learning English. He worked in various London restaurants to tide himself over. This lasted for eight months and then, more confident in his new language, he returned to Cagliari. Job prospects at home had not, of course, improved during his absence. And so the *saliscendi* – backing and forthing – began between Italy and England. By the time he had completed his military service, Sanna had reached three conclusions: his future lay in London, he wanted to change English perceptions of Italian food and he intended to help his native land however he could.

He opened his first place, Olivo, on the site of the old French restaurant, Ciboure on Eccleston Street. It was November 1990 and he was all of 30. It was small and intimate. As an architect-manqué, Sanna had an eye for interiors and had the walls dressed in warm yellow. Like a ribbon, a whimsical border of what looks like pasta shapes ran throughout the premise. The stage was set to introduce the English to an entirely fresh and different take on his country's food. Bread was no longer that fluffy white stuff. It came paper-thin and crackled and was called *pane carasau.* Described as "Sardinian gnocchetti", an unfamiliar type of pasta – small, oval and firm – also appeared and was called malloreddus, usually served up in a meat or sausage sauce. Sardinia is traditionally an island of sheep and thus pecorino cheese – far tamer than its biting Roman cousin – was introduced. *Sebadas*, or sometimes, seadas, those fried round fritters stuffed with coarse-ground cheese and served with bitter *corbezzolo* honey, from the arbutus or strawberry tree, came on to the dessert list. The island's emblematic liqueur, *mirto*, was also a newcomer, made from the berries of the myrtle plant.

The restaurant caught on: the food was innovative and the Belgravia location spot on. Before long, Sanna raised his sites and opened a second place, in 1995, scarcely one block to the west. This one would be breezier, more informal, the décor more streamlined. Oliveto, in trendy Elizabeth Street, would reach out to a younger clientele, not only with Sardinian dishes, but also a choice of pizzas. His supporters were not so sure. But that, too, clicked.

Twelve years went by before Mauro Sanna opened his third place in 2007, Olivomare, in Lower Belgrave Street within the tight grid that had become his personal turf. As the name implied, seafood would be the star attraction this time. He turned, once again, to a talented Sardinian architect, Pierluigi Piu to give the interiors an eye-catching look. The Dutch graphic artist Maurits Escher was Piu's inspiration and out came a stylized shoal of never-ending shiny-eyed fish across the walls of Olivomare. This was when another popular Sardinian ingredient, *bottarga*, salted and pressed roe of grey mullet, made its début in Belgravia. Grated over pasta dishes, the briny taste soon had a following. The restaurant now gets through sixty kilos of bottarga per month. A small appendage to this restaurant serves as an daytime outlet for shoppers to buy Italian delicacies.

Sanna knows how to gauge himself. He lives in Pimlico and his daily commute is an unarduous stroll across the Elizabeth Street Bridge which spans the Victoria Station railroad tracks. From there, his restaurants are all within easy reach of one another. A Middle Eastern businessman pleaded with him to open a branch in The Shard, sweetened by favourable rent terms. *"Non ci penso neanche!* Why on earth would I want to waste my time stuck in the traffic, fighting to get across town"? Nor has he been tempted by the lure of cookbooks and television programmes and other trappings of stardom. There was, however, another niche to fill. In ever-changing Elizabeth Street, the premise of an old Italian restaurant fell vacant and the tug was too strong to ignore: *Olivocarne* opened in the summer of 2012. The accent this time was on meat. Spread out over two levels, Piu swathed the walls in sleek grey and white tiles, with a sly and barely discernible bow to floppy-eared sheep… everywhere! Wild boar, suckling pig and offal are among the specialties here. The quartet of restaurants is manned by a team of 96. "About 80 % of them are Sardinians", Sanna says proudly. And that does not count the team back on his island. He maintains a warehouse in Cagliari where supplies are kept. "We fly in goods on a regular basis", he explains. Not only the bottarga and *pane carasau* and wine. "Sardinia, for example, grows the very best artichokes in the Mediterranean", he boasts, "and we promote them, too, in all of my restaurants here".

London today counts nine restaurants which style themselves as Sardinian. None, however, have been as bold as Sanna, in opening four of them within the tight confines of a three-block quadrant in central London. Actually, better make that five. *Olivogelo* with its ice creams is a recent addition.


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# THE HANBURY GARDENS AT LA MORTOLA

By Patrick Fairweather

When I left Rome in 1996 at the end of my four years in the embassy, my admired Italian friend and colleague, Boris Biancheri, suggested that my wife and I should visit the Hanbury Gardens at La Mortola on the way home. He had a house, he explained, near La Mortola and was chairman of the Amici dei Giardini Hanbury. He thought I would be interested in the gardens and what the Amici were trying to do.

He was right. It is hard not to be overwhelmed by the situation of the gardens which plunge down to the sea from the old Via Aurelia, which before the building of the autostrada was the main road linking the Italian and French Rivieras.The view west towards Menton and Monaco and east to Ventimiglia and beyond to Bordighera is staggering. From spring well into autumn the air is heavy with heat and the smells of the plants and flowers. There is something about the place which evokes the Riviera, and particularly the Italian Riviera, of the years before mass tourism and what Italian friends call, for sadly obvious reasons, the "Rapallizzazione" of the Ligurian coast. Helped by the passage under the gardens of the railway – out of sight but not always out of sound - they recall an earlier age when the only way to travel comfortably was by train.

After this visit I thought no more of La Mortola until a couple of years ago when I was invited to come to a meeting of the Amici dei Giardini Hanbury ( Boris Biancheri still presiding ) with a view to my becoming a member of the Committee . I like to think I am as interested in gardens as the next man but I am no expert and I was uncertain what I could contribute. But La Mortola worked its magic and I convinced myself quite quickly that there might be a role for someone with experience, albeit from a British viewpoint, of Italian bureaucracy (and perhaps ways of getting round the problems which it sometimes creates).

The Hanbury Gardens were the creation of Sir Thomas Hanbury, a Quaker who made a substantial fortune from property development in Shanghai in the mid-nineteenth century. He retired in 1867, bought the 20-hectare Cape Mortola estate, built a handsome villa and planted an extensive garden running right down to the shore. He lived at La Mortola for 40 years and is widely commemorated in the area for his generous gifts to the local communities.

Thomas Hanbury built up a great collection of plants that was unequalled in the Mediterranean, many imported from China. The garden was visited by VIPs including Queen Victoria, who came twice, and was regularly opened to the public – rare in the 19th century. After his death his son, Sir Cecil Hanbury, continued to develop the gardens until they contained an incredible 7500 different species. The gardens were- indeed still are- famous for the acclimatisation of exotic plants from tropical and subtropical zones as well as Mediterranean type climates around the world.

Cecil Hanbury died shortly before World War II but his wife Dorothy returned to La Mortola after the war and instead of selling the gardens off for development, as so many others along the coast were doing, used funds deriving from the sale of furniture, jewellery and cottages in an effort to restore the gardens, which had been bombarded in the war, to their former glory. But funds ran out in 1961 and the estate was sold to the

**Villa Hanbury**

Italian government. She retained ownership only of a modest house in the grounds in which Carolyn Hanbury lives today.

At first the gardens ticked over well enough but in the early 1980s the management collapsed. The Royal Horticultural Society and the International Dendrology Society convinced Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign Secretary, to persuade the Italian government to entrust the gardens to the Botany Department of the University of Genova . The RHS set up at the same time the Friends of the Hanbury Gardens to work for the restoration of the gardens and their future safeguarding.

This arrangement is not working well. In part for financial reasons, in part perhaps because there is no great tradition in Italy of horticulture - getting your finger nails dirty - as opposed to botany, in part because of the bureaucratic obstacles , the university appears incapable of undertaking the necessary restoration and replanting. The number of plant species is now down to 3500 taxa.

Why should this be a matter of concern to the British-Italian Society?

- The Hanbury Gardens are a felicitous mix of British and Italian ( with a dash of Chinese ). So much so that they are cited, I am told, in a summit communiqué of circa 1985 as an example of something of importance to both countries and to be conserved. (But if any one can help me to find the reference I would be grateful).

- The preservation of species in a world where habitats are under such pressure is something which we should all care about. The Hanbury Gardens are important in this context and, with proper management, they could be still more important.
- With so much of the Riviera developed, and developed alas so badly, the preservation of such a beautiful place should be a priority not just for idealistic reasons but because the gardens could be one of the drivers of an effort to encourage – perhaps bring back is the right word- discriminating tourism linking Italy and France and countries further afield, particularly the UK. The impact on the local economy on both sides of the frontier could be considerable at a time when financial resources are under such pressure.

The problem is how to achieve these objectives?

There is plenty of talent in the ranks of the Amici; people who have ideas and experience on how to make gardens which are open to the public flourish in the modern world. The problem is that in the bureaucratic/academic structure of the gardens today, the Amici have no official role. Our new president, Alain Elkann, believes- surely rightly- that we need to raise the profile of the Amici so that Rome and Genoa take account of our views even if we have as yet no formal part in the structure. (As a personal observation, I find it extraordinary that an organisation which demonstrates its commitment to the gardens through the subscriptions of its members - more Italian than British by the way - can be systematically ignored in a consultation on new management structures). With this in mind the Amici are seeking to recruit a list of eminent persons from the cultural, horticultural, economic and political worlds who might become patrons of the Amici and give us more weight through the prestige of their names.

We need vision and drive to work for a new management structure which can bring experience and skills to bear for the restoration of the gardens to their former glory. (We probably also need money to demonstrate that it is worth giving the Amici a greater role). The Fondo Ambientale Italiano- the Italian equivalent of the National Trust - has experience in managing gardens in Italy and it would make sense to bring them into the structure of the Hanbury Gardens - something which will probably require a new statute, perhaps giving the Gardens foundation status. But whatever changes take place, the Gardens need to retain links with the University of Genova, which has a scientific interest and an important regional role.

Times are tough but it should not be impossible to find the funds for a well thought out campaign of planting and replanting to increase the taxa at Hanbury to their former level and to make the investment necessary to enhance the visitor experience such as building a bookshop and creating a car park so that the Gardens become financially self-sufficient. This money raising effort should extend from individuals living locally, to the large foundations and organisations like the European Union which have an increasing interest in ecological and environmental projects.

Meanwhile, I hope members of the British-Italian Society who are driving to or from Italy will drop in to La Mortola and see this beautiful place for themselves and if they feel moved to join the Amici, so much the better.

***For all further information, see:***
***www.amicihanbury.com***

# WHICH RARELY HAPPENS …

By Ian Grainger

As every first-year lawyer used to know - *sed quaere* nowadays - an island which rises in the middle of a river belongs to the owners of the banks on either side. But an island which rises in the midst of the sea is up for grabs. In the language of the ancients, it is a *res nullius:* it belongs to nobody and ownership can be acquired by anyone who occupies it with the intention of owning it. Such an application of the law of the jungle can be faced with equanimity because, as Justinian observes in an uncharacteristically chatty aside, this is something which rarely happens – *quod raro accidit*[1].

However, even the rarest event must sometimes occur. In the last days of June 1831, accounts of high seismic activity were received from the little town of Sciacca on the south coast of Sicily. Ships reported the sea to be bubbling and there was a strong stench of sulphur throughout the town, strong enough it was said to blacken silver. In the distance could be discerned a huge column of smoke. A fortnight (and one serious volcanic explosion) later, a fully-formed island appeared in the seas between Sicily and Tunisia. Composed mostly of loose volcanic material, its edges were constantly being eroded by the waves but it nevertheless continued to grow rapidly both in area and in height.

Conflicting claims to title at once emerged. Ferdinand II, *il re Bomba,* claimed it for the Kingdom of The Two Sicilies and his subjects christened it Ferdinandea in honour of His Borbonic Majesty. Spain also put in a claim and the French visited briefly, calling it *l'Ile Julie* or *l'isola Julia* in honour of the month in which it had appeared. The British, appreciating at once the value of a staging post between Gibraltar and Malta, landed, raised the Union flag and named the island Graham Island, in honour of Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty and second Baronet of Netherby (where else?).

[1] Insula, quae in mari nata est, quod raro accidit, occupantis fit: nullius enim creditur. At in flumine nata, quod frequenter accidit, si quidem mediam partem fluminis teneat, communis est eorum qui ab utraque parte fluminis prope ripam praedia possident ... Institutes 2.I.20.

**Island of Ferdinandea**

While diplomats wrangled, the island's extraordinary appearance excited much wider interest. Geologists were obviously cock-a-hoop but so too were some important literary figures. The most distinguished devotee was probably Sir Walter Scott, then in poor health. In a state of glee over events in the Mediterranean – "as strange a tale as any traveller could imagine" – the ailing Sir Walter set off in search of health and specimens for the Royal Society of Scotland, of which he was then President. By the time his ship arrived, the island was already retreating but was still big enough for him to explore, carried on the back of a dutiful sailor who plodded through the steam vents. Like a good Scot, his daughter Anne was less thrilled, complaining that the cinders burnt her shoes through and that it was a horrid place "where one might expect to see the devil".

Alexandre Dumas Père was much amused by the consequences of the island's appearance (as one can see from the Appendix below) but by the time he himself got to the site, there was nothing to be seen but a great boiling of the waters: *L'air était impregné d'une forte odeur de bitume, et la mer bouillonait sensiblement. Je fis tirer de l'eau dans un seau; elle était tiède.*

By December 1831, the island had disappeared altogether: Neptune was obviously disgusted by the diplomatic squabbles. Apart from a fleeting cameo reappearance in 1863, it has never surfaced again, though it continues to lie just beneath the waves: being referred to as Graham Bar or Graham Shoal on British charts.

However, it has not gone wholly unnoticed. In 1986, rumour has it that an American warplane, en route to bomb Tripoli, mistook it for a Libyan submarine and dropped a few Scud missiles on it. In 2001, following signs of further volcanic activity, a ceremony was organised by the townsfolk of Sciacca who were keen to claim the "island" as Trinacrian even though its present site was outside Italian coastal waters. With suitable flourish, the Duke of Calabria was asked to drop a plaque onto the seabed with the inscription L'isola Ferdinandea era e resta dei Siciliani. Well, perhaps, though it must be remembered that whoever owned the island in the 1830s, title was probably lost when it re-submerged; and also that future ownership will likely depend on precisely where it re-emerges. In fact, only weeks after it was dropped, the Duke's plaque was found to be shattered in pieces: Neptune again no doubt, or else the avenging shade of the second Baronet of Netherby.

It seems most unlikely that any new island would have the same strategic significance in post-Suez days as it did in the days of the Raj; but it is equally possible that there could be new, possibly North African, claimants to make the debate less predictable. The crucial thing is to keep the question away from the diplomats and their champagne-filled rooms. Some neutral international organisation must be found well in advance whose task it will be to regulate the whole matter and if need be to govern the island. One suitable choice could be the committee of the British-Italian Society, renowned as it is for the economy and efficiency of its counsels. Mind you, diplomats have been known to lurk even in that most pleasant of lagoons.

**Gaius Maritimus**

## *Appendix – from Le Speronare, by Alexandre Dumas Père (translated from the French by Ian Grainger)*

Our readers will undoubtedly have heard of the Island Julia, an ephemeral isle which had only three months of existence it is true, but which made as much noise – and more - during its passage through this world as certain islands which have existed since the Flood.

One fine morning in the month of July 1831, the Island Julia rose from the bottom of the sea and appeared on its surface. It was two leagues in circumference and had mountains and valleys just like a real island. It even had a spring, though in truth it was a spring of boiling water.

It had barely emerged from the billows when an English ship passed by: whatever phenomenon appears and in whatever part of the world, there is always an English ship passing just at that precise moment. The captain, astonished to see an island in a place where his sea chart showed not so much as a rock, brought his ship to a standstill, went down into a launch and landed on the isle. He saw that it was situated on the thirty-eighth degree of latitude, that it had mountains and valleys and a spring of boiling water. He had some eggs and tea brought and picnicked by the spring. Then, when he had eaten, he seized a Union Jack, planted it on the highest mountain of the isle and pronounced these sacred words: "I take possession of this land in the name of His Britannic Majesty". Then he returned to his ship, took sail and made for England, where he happily arrived, announcing that he had discovered an unknown island in the Mediterranean, which he had named Julia, in honour of the month of July when it had been discovered, and of which he had taken possession in the name of England.

After the English ship, a Neapolitan ship passed by, and it was no less astonished than the English one. At the sight of this unknown island, the captain, who was a cautious man, began by furling his sails, so that he could keep himself at a respectful distance. Then he took his telescope and with its assistance, saw that the isle was uninhabited, that it had valleys and a mountain, and that on the top of this mountain flew the British flag. He at once sought four volunteers to go to investigate. Two Sicilians presented themselves, went down in the launch and left. A quarter of an hour later, they came back, carrying the British flag. The Neapolitan captain then declared that he was taking possession of the isle in the name of the King of the Two Sicilies and he named it the Island of Saint Ferdinand in honour of his gracious sovereign. Then he went back to Naples, demanded an audience of the king and told him that he had discovered an island ten leagues in circumference, completely covered with orange, lemon and pomegranate trees, in which there was a mountain as high as Vesuvius, a valley like that of Jehoshaphat and a spring of mineral water where one could make a bathing establishment bigger than that of Ischia. He added in passing (without dwelling on the details) that when a British ship had sought to dispute his possession of the island, he had sent it to the bottom, in proof of which he had brought back its flag. The Minister for the Navy who was present at the audience, found this behaviour a little questionable; but the king sided entirely with the captain, made him an Admiral and decorated him with the Grand Cordon of the Order of San Gennaro.

The next day it was announced in the three newspapers of Naples that Admiral Bonacorri, Duke of Saint Ferdinand, had just discovered in the Mediterranean an island of fifteen leagues in circumference, inhabited by a tribe which spoke no known language, and whose king had offered the Admiral the hand of his daughter. Furthermore, each of the papers contained a sonnet to the glory of the adventurous navigator: the first compared him to Vasco da Gama, the second to Christopher Columbus and the third to Amerigo Vespucci.

The same day, the British Ambassador went to the Minister of the Neapolitan Navy to demand an explanation concerning the rumours which were beginning to circulate (to the damage of the honour of the British nation) about an English vessel which Admiral Bonacorri was claiming to have sunk. The Naval Minister replied that he had vaguely heard mention of something of the kind but he did not know which ship had been sunk, whether it was a Neapolitan ship or a British ship. Far from being placated by this explanation, the Ambassador claimed that it was an insult to his nation even to imagine that a British ship could be sunk by any other ship whatever and demanded the return of his credentials. The Naval Minister referred the matter to the King of Naples who ordered him to give the Ambassador whatever documents he sought; and for his part, the king wrote to his own Ambassador in London, with orders immediately to leave the capital of Great Britain.

Meanwhile, the British government pursued its occupation of the Island Julia with its usual diligence. It was the staging post which it had so long sought between Gibraltar and Malta. An old lieutenant, who had had his leg blown off at the Battle of the Nile and who had ever since been petitioning the Lords of the Admiralty for some suitable compensation, was named Governor of the Island Julia and received orders to embark at once and take up his post. The worthy sailor sold his small ancestral property, bought all the equipment necessary for a colonial expedition, went on board his frigate ("The Dart") with his wife and two daughters, rounded the point of Brittany, crossed the Bay of Biscay, passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, entered the Mediterranean, coasted along the African shore, left it at Pantelleria, arrived on the thirty-eighth degree of latitude, looked about him and saw not a trace of the Island Julia. The Island Julia had simply disappeared and I have never heard that anybody has ever, but ever, heard anything of it ever again.

The two belligerent powers, who had accumulated considerable armaments, continued to bare their teeth at each other for a further eighteen months. Then their snarl degenerated into a sour smile. Finally, one fine morning, they embraced and it was all over and done with. This momentary quarrel, which reinforced once and for all the friendship of two nations (who were in fact made to admire one another), had no other outcome than the imposition of new taxes in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and in Great Britain.

# SULLE TRACCE DEGLI STUART A ROMA

By Federica Napolitani

Il turista che giunto a Roma si rechi in San Pietro, oltre a visitare la magnifica basilica e ammirare i suoi enormi spazi, i marmi policromi, La Pietà di Michelangelo e il baldacchino del Bernini, potrebbe decidere di salire sulla cima del Cupolone e di lì godersi la vista sulla città eterna, un pò come il curioso gabbiano che tutti abbiamo visto sostare sulla cima del comignolo della Cappella Sistina prima della fumata bianca per l'elezione del nuovo papa. Oppure potrebbe decidere di scendere giù all'interno delle grotte vaticane che si trovano proprio sotto l'altare maggiore e che sono il cuore pulsante della basilica. Una visita a queste grotte, che altro non sono che gli spazi dell'antica basilica, gli riserverebbe una interessante sorpresa.

Addentrandosi in quegli ambienti angusti, tra tombe di papi (ultimo Giovanni Paolo II) e di regnanti desiderosi di farsi seppellire accanto all'apostolo Pietro, troverebbe un grande sarcofago di granito rosso sormontato dalla corona regale al cui interno sono custodite le spoglie di Giacomo III e dei suoi due figli, ultimi pretendenti della famiglia degli Stuart al trono d'Inghilterra. Curiosamente fu Giorgio VI, padre dell'attuale regina Elisabetta, a commissionare l'opera nel 1939 per dare una degna sepoltura ai tre Stuart che già vi erano seppelliti dai tempi della loro morte.

Ma perché i tre Stuart sono seppelliti proprio in San Pietro a Roma?

Pochi conoscono questa strana storia e il forte legame che ha unito gli ultimi discendenti della casa regnante alla città eterna.

James Francis Edward Stuart, noto come *The Old Pretender,* giunse a Roma nel 1718 dopo circa trent'anni di esilio trascorsi in Francia e dopo un breve soggiorno nei palazzi papali di Pesaro e Urbino nello Stato Pontificio, insieme alla moglie Clementina Maria Sobieski, pronipote di Giovanni III Sobieski, il re polacco che aveva liberato Vienna dall'assedio dei Turchi nel 1683. Come noto, la dinastia cattolica degli Stuart era stata detronizzata con l'applicazione del Bill of Rights emanato nel 1689, secondo il quale nessun cattolico poteva più sedersi sul trono d'Inghilterra, *"it hath been found by experience that it is inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this Protestant kingdom to be governed by a papist prince"*.

A Roma la Corte fu accolta con tutti gli onori e ricevette dal papa una degna residenza non lontana dal Palazzo del Quirinale, insieme a una dimora estiva nella ridente cittadina di Albano, sulle rive dell'omonimo lago a circa una ventina di chilometri da Roma. Per far fronte alle spese necessarie, la Corte ricevette dal papa un regolare sostegno economico *"an annual pension of 10,000 scudi, paid at the end of each quarter (…) just sufficient to maintain his court" (The Stuarts in Italy 1719-1766. A Royal Court in Permanent Exile* by Edward Corp). Ben sei papi si avvicendarono al pontificato durante gli anni di residenza a Roma della Corte e tutti contribuirono con maggiore o minore generosità al suo sostentamento, forse nella speranza di una futura restaurazione del re cattolico al trono d'Inghilterra.

La Corte si stabilì dunque nel palazzo seicentesco che apparteneva al marchese Giovanni Battista Muti (palazzo Muti-Papazzurri) in Piazza della Pilotta. All'epoca della sua costruzione, questo palazzo era collegato (tramite un piccolo


**Memorial Monument in St Peter's by Antonio Canova**

arco da cui prende il nome via dell'Archetto) con palazzo Balestra che si affaccia sulla adiacente Piazza dei Santi Apostoli e che apparteneva alla medesima famiglia Muti-Papazzurri. Negli anni in cui ospitò la Corte, fu denominato Palazzo del Re o Palazzo Stuart. Oggi è sede del Pontificio Istituto Biblico.

Qui Clementina, diede alla luce nel 1720 il suo figlio primogenito Charles Edward Stuart, conosciuto anche come *The Young Pretender* o Bonnie Prince Charlie, e qui nacque, cinque anni più tardi, Henry Benedict Stuart, Duke of York che diventerà Cardinale di Frascati. Qui, in seguito, morirono la stessa Clementina, poi James e poi Charles. Henry morì nel palazzo vescovile della vicina Frascati chiudendo nel 1807 la singolare avventura di una famiglia in esilio permanente.

Ma come furono questi anni di esilio?

Ce ne fornisce un quadro interessante Edward Corp che ha recentemente pubblicato i risultati delle sue accurate ricerche nel volume citato. La corte era sostenuta e protetta dal papato, era ben integrata nel tessuto dell'alta società e riceveva visite da cardinali e da esponenti della nobiltà romana. Con gli anni, divenne un punto di riferimento per i cittadini britannici che facevano tappa a Roma durante i lunghi viaggi del Grand Tour, o vi si stabilivano a vivere. Divenne una sorta di ambasciata che forniva aiuti nell'emissione dei passaporti, indirizzava a medici locali competenti in caso di necessità, forniva consigli sui migliori

**Original chapel ceiling at Palazzo Muti-Papazzurri**

vini da acquistare o informazioni sui ritrattisti locali più affermati. La Corte inoltre mise a disposizione dei cittadini protestanti una cappella anglicana ricavata all'interno del Palazzo Muti-Papazzurri, ovviamente con il consenso del papa Clemente XI il quale "In addition to trying to help James improve his finance, allowed him to bring his two Protestant Chaplains from Urbino, and permitted them to inaugurate the celebration of Anglican services within the Palazzo del Re (…) not only for the king's own household servants but for any Protestant in Rome". Naturalmente la corte organizzava cene, balli e concerti nei quali "*Whigs* as well as Tories socialised with the Jacobites, by giving each other dinner and supper parties, and by frequenting the same evening balls, concerts and assemblies, called *conversazioni*". Si creò insomma intorno alla Corte una comunità di britannici accomunati dai problemi pratici della lingua e del vivere in una terra straniera, ma soprattutto accomunati dal grande amore per l'arte, per l'Italia e per Roma.

A parte le ansie suscitate dai tentativi falliti di restaurazione al trono da parte dello sfortunato Bonnie Prince Charlie, le cui storie romantiche sono divenute quasi leggendarie, a parte le vicissitudine economiche e i dissidi familiari degli ultimi anni tra James e Clementina, gli Stuart a Roma sembra abbiano trascorso un esilio che potremmo definire dorato tra Palazzo Muti e Palazzo Savelli ad Albano dove si trasferivano nel mese di maggio per godere del fresco dei cosiddetti Castelli romani. Sperimentarono una sorte di "dolce vita" *ante litteram?* Chissà. Comunque, "il re e il cardinale erano amati e venerati in Roma per le loro virtù e beneficenze" *(Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiatica*. Compilazione del Cavaliere Gaetano Moroni Romano, vol CIII Venezia, 1861). Il Cardinale Henry Duke of York in particolare fu molto stimato dai cittadini di Frascati che lo apprezzarono per la sua grande umanità e per l'apostolato compiuto nei tanti anni trascorsi in questa cittadina "ameno soggiorno a lui costantemente e assai prediletto" (G. Moroni Romano op. cit.). Amava molto i libri e costituì una preziosa biblioteca denominata Eboracense da *Eboracum* il nome latino dell'antica città di York della quale Henry portava il titolo *(A duecento anni dalla morte del Cardinale Duca di York (1807-2007)* di Tonino De Juliis. Frascati; 2007).

Tra le tante opere, la biblioteca raccoglieva i testi ereditati dal nonno James II re d'Inghilterra e dalla casa reale dei Sobieski. Durante i bombardamenti del 1943, i libri furono frettolosamente caricati su automezzi con l'aiuto dei frati camaldolesi e portati in salvo nella Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV) dove ancora risiedono. Il fondo stampati York consta di circa 9400 segnature ed è descritto nel catalogo online della BAV solo in piccolissima parte (comunicazione personale, 2013). Ci possiamo immaginare dunque quali sorprese potrebbe ancora riservare.

Antonio Canova (1757-1822), celebre scultore italiano considerato il maggiore esponente del neoclassicismo, dedicò ai tre Stuart un bellissimo monumento funebre che è collocato all'interno della Basilica di San Pietro nella navata di sinistra. Stendhal (1783-1842) lo cita nel suo libro *Passeggiate Romane* tra le opere del Canova da lui considerate tra le dodici cose da non perdere quando si visita la città di Roma. Su questo monumento sono raffigurati due angeli dai lineamenti lievemente apollinei che sembrano ricordarci la grande malinconia di chi si trovi a vivere in terra d'esilio ma ci trasmettono anche il senso profondo dell'intrinseca bellezza e dolcezza di questa malinconia. Ci ricordano la morte dei tre Stuart, ma anche il sopravvivere della memoria del loro soggiorno qui a Roma, nella *città eterna*.

# THE SOCIETY'S POLICY ON GRANTS AND FUNDING IN 2012/13

By Charles de Chassiron

As members know, the BIS had an enormous stroke of good fortune not long ago. In late 2011, Mrs Ann Hawkins, who along with her late husband John had been members some years ago, left the Society the very generous sum of over £150,000 in her will. Ironically we first received news of this legacy just after the Society had held the 70th birthday party cum fundraiser which raised only a fraction of this sum. I feel members should have some information about what the Trustees have decided to do with the money so far. As a first step, I summarised this in the annual report for the AGM in June 2013.

The first decision which we took last autumn was to restrict, at least for the first year, our expenditure on helping good causes outside the Society to no more than the expected annual income from the prompt investment of the bulk of the money. We were mindful that we wanted the money to be of direct use for the Society itself in the first instance (see below for more on that). We set ourselves a figure of about £5,000 for 2012/13. We are always mindful that we are a charity, and that we have specific educational and social aims in the first part (article 3) of the Constitution. We do moreover receive a steady flow of unsolicited bids and requests for assistance to both individuals and organisations. In addition, we have the precedent of the decision taken a decade ago by our predecessors to help the embattled cause of Italian studies in the UK – under financial pressure even then, and it is pressure which has only increased since - by using funds from the earlier generous bequest by Janet Rooke. That took the form of the Rooke Prizes, which are awarded biennially for the best work in the field at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels at UK universities. The competition for them will be run again late this year, and we hope that the awards will be made to the winners in person in early 2014 at one of our events.

We shall now use some of the new Hawkins money to help in the same general way. Specifically, we contributed £650 towards the costs of two of the new students taking the pre- full term initial Italian language and grammar course in September 2012 at Oxford University (this is needed because Italian is hardly taught in UK secondary schools now). In addition, we gave £350 to the organisers of the important British Library/Royal Holloway conference held last autumn at the Library on the Italian Learned Academies project – members may remember the talk given to us on this topic about two years ago. In addition, we made a grant of £500 towards the costs of a double-header conference on the Italian Trecento and its interpretation in the 19th century, held both in London and Venice during 2013. All the organisers involved have expressed great gratitude, and our help has been duly acknowledged, using our striking new logo. We are in constant dialogue with the Society for Italian Studies –who organise the Rooke Prizes with us - about other possible ways in which we can help.

But we have not restricted our help to academic ventures. We have also continued our established tradition of helping after natural disasters in Italy (which also features in the Constitution). Just as we helped restock a school library in late 2009 in quake-hit L'Aquila, we also helped a flood-devastated musical project for children in Aulla in northern Tuscany with £1000 for the purchase of a new piano. These are small free-standing projects, and so do not risk the funds getting stuck in slow-disbursing official programmes.

Music too has attracted our help. We have sponsored the South Bank Sinfonia, a lively London-based group of young musicians recruited just out of the conservatories, to the tune of £1,000. We were impressed that they have developed a very successful annual participation in the Anghiari festival in Tuscany, and have this year extended their Italian summer tour to Ischia as well. The money was in fact spent not directly on their Italian ventures, but for a splendid London concert which was open free to BIS members held in July 2013. Continuing the musical theme, we have also pledged £1,000 towards the cost of the production of a new opera by Salvatore Sciarrino called The Killing Flower, which was mounted by Music Theatre Wales at the Buxton Opera Festival last July and subsequently toured to a number of other venues including the Royal Opera House. The work is about the dramatic life of the Renaissance composer Carlo Gesualdo. Members will have had the opportunity to see it, I hope.

The common threads running through this list are of course Italy and its culture, but also the attempt we are making to help young people, whether studying in disaster-hit parts of Italy, or pursuing Italian studies in the UK, or embarking on musical careers.

Finally, the Trustees are agreed that the new funds will allow us to use slightly more up market venues, beginning with the AGM in June, and to improve the wine and canapés which we traditionally offer after talks, as well as to pay our excellent Secretaries a bit more. We also spent a certain amount on the BIS website facelift which we unveiled in April. We hope to start using a number of new event venues from autumn 2013, though inevitably it takes a little time to find and secure the right places. Any further suggestions, and your feedback, will be welcome.

I want to stress too that we are open to any ideas which members may have on further uses for the Hawkins money, in line with the Society's aims. I should like to find a way to badge one of our programmes with her name to show our gratitude, as was done a decade ago when we set up the Rooke award. Please do contact me or any of the Trustees to tell us your views.

# ITALY'S PASSION FOR CRICKET

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

The earliest mention of cricket in Italy dates back to 1793 when Admiral Nelson's sailors organised the first recorded match in Naples. About a hundred years later, cricket was reintroduced by expats living along the *costa ligure.* Cricket was one of the favourite sports played in their clubs. Sir James Edward Spensley founded the Genoa Cricket & Football Club to be followed shortly afterwards by several combined cricket and football clubs in Milan and Turin. The reason for including both sports was because cricket was considered mainly a summer sport, whereas football was played more in winter. Later football clubs turned exclusively into soccer clubs. Sadly, cricket was gradually being forgotten about, whilst football became more and more popular. The advent of fascism saw the disappearance of the game, which only slowly re-emerged after World War II.

Simone Gambino, Italy's cricket promoter with a passion and President of the Italian Cricket Federation, talked to RIVISTA about the development of cricket in Italy. The transformation from an expat game to an integrated sport activity began in 1980 with the foundation of the Associazione Italiana Cricket. Recognised by the International Cricket Council (ICC) in 1984 firstly as an Affiliate Member, the Associazione acquired Associate status in 1995 and became the Federazione Cricket Italiana on 1st March 1997. He said: "Cricket reappeared in 1946 after the war mainly in Rome with staff from the British Embassy, from the War Graves Commission, from FAO and the religious colleges (in particular, the English College and the Scots College). They all had people who liked playing cricket. Princess Orietta Doria Pamphilj married an Englishman, Frank Pogson, who was another promoter. He had a cricket pitch built in the park of Villa Doria Pamphilj around the late 1940s/early 1950s. The revival of the 1950s and 1960s turned these years into the golden era for Rome cricket with about twenty teams". Villa Doria Pamphilj marked Simone Gambino's first encounter with the sport as he nostalgically recalled going there as a child to watch a match in 1967 and was hit by a cricket ball. "Unfortunately, the seventeenth-century villa was then taken over by the Comune di Roma in 1973 and cricket started going down again".

It then moved to Villa Palazzola, the summer residence of the Venerable English College on the Via dei Laghi overlooking Lago Albano across from Castel Gandolfo. This 13th-century Cistercian monastery, known as the *'anticamera di paradiso'* for its breathtaking lakeside view was an ideal location. "I used to play there in 1975", commented Gambino. "I was seventeen at the time. I had learnt to play cricket in England during the summer holidays and realised there had to be Italians in the team in order for cricket to be recognised in Italy. Cricket was gradually going right down and died completely in 1979. This marked the death of the English vision of cricket". Until then it was more of a foreigners' sport. So at that point Gambino thought it was time "to organize cricket for Italy by including Italian players also in order to be recognised by the Italian Sports Authorities. We were now in the 1980s". This also meant different Italian cricket clubs having to play each other. Hence, Italian cricket began to exist and be on the map. "In the early 1990s the World Cup in Australia had a global impact in terms of communication and I had seen this coming. I bought the Italian rights for TelePiù, which then became SKY, so it would be shown on Italian television. There were now Italian championships with 15 teams from Rome northwards. ICC recognised Italy as an associate member. Italian cricket began to get its backbone between 1992 and 1997. Hence, the Associazione Italiana Cricket became the Federazione Cricket Italiana under the CONI aegis. It marked the beginning of Italian cricket history".

**Simone Gambino**

Simone Gambino was proud to say that "Italy now ranks number 20 in the world out of more than 100 countries and is the best after the Netherlands in Europe. On 25th July 1998 Italy played the European Championship in Holland and we beat the England county team. Later, we beat Denmark, Holland and Scotland, although these countries are sportswise culturally far ahead of us". This opened doors to become part of the cricket elite. "It marked an achievement. It helped us to consolidate internally", commented Gambino. "Culturally speaking we are not there yet, as for instance we have not got grass pitches, they are artificial pitches (be it AstroTurf, matting, or various types of artificial pitches), which is not good. My legacy will be to leave with at least three grounds with grass pitches".

Since the first decade of the new millennium cricket in Italy has become more of an Asian sport with all the immigrants and second generation of Asians born in Italy. Cricket in Brescia is the main sport of the town due to the large Asian community".

For the Federazione Cricket Italiana nationality is important and whoever wishes to play has to be or become an Italian citizen. Gambino clarified the issue of nationality, adding "In 2001 ICC refused our Italians living abroad to play for Italy because they were not residing in the country. They banned half the team, so the Italian Government stepped in saying this was discrimination. Everyone now plays on the basis of nationality regardless of where you are. Hence, Italy's greatest contribution to cricket lies in the change of rules on eligibility to cricket, which are based on nationality, whilst before it was based on birth and residence".

Another feature about Italian cricket is that "No club in Italy under Italian law owns its own ground. Rome and Lazio play on the same ground. Juventus are the only ones to own their own ground and stadium. It is a totally different culture".

Italy has 39 clubs and cricket is mostly played from Rome upwards. Bologna is culturally very open and is now the capital of Italian cricket also because they have the best facilities except for not yet having grass pitches. Italy has six teams in the first division, four teams in the second division, twelve teams in the third division, 6 teams for the under 19 championship, 10 teams play the under 17 championship, 8 teams play the under 15 championship, 4 teams play the under 13 championship and there are 8 female teams. Most of the women are from Shri Lanka apart from the Italians. Female cricket was first played in 2009 and is growing. Bologna hosted the European Female Championship in August this year. Simone Gambino was also proud to mention Progetto, promozione e sviluppo (PPS), the "special cricket programmes set up for young people in 35 schools starting from the age of eleven".

Cricket is the number two sport in the world after soccer, but many people do not know this because it is not well distributed from a global standpoint. It is mostly played in countries such as India, Pakistan, South Africa, Australia and England. Although Italy has had some brilliant results, it still has a long way to go. Cricket is not well known among the Italian public and needs to be promoted more widely on a national scale. Simone Gambino is confident the situation will improve and hopes that younger generations will become more aware of the sport.

# THREE TUSCANS IN LONDON

By Daniele Danesi

I've chosen three early Tuscan travellers to write about because they recorded their journeys in letters and diaries. Probably they had very different purposes when they left Tuscany for Europe, and for London in particular. The choice of these three men was motivated not only by the wealth of information left behind from their writings as well as from other sources, but also, as we shall see, by their very different outlooks. Moreover, there are 25 years between the very first journey in 1826 and the other two in 1851, and this lapse of time serves to illustrate some of the profound cultural changes in attitudes and interests which took place in the intervening years.

The three men who made the journey to London were **Niccolò Puccini** (1799-1852) who travelled in 1826, **Bartolomeo Cini** (1809-1877) and **Stanislao Grottanelli de' Santi** (1788-1874). The last two came to London in the same year, 1851, albeit at different times of year, for The Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace: Cini was in London from 14th to 17th July, while Grottanelli de' Santi was present between 22nd July and 28th September.

The three men had much in common: they all came from Tuscany. Niccolò from Pistoia, Bartolomeo from the mountains behind Pistoia and Stanislao from Siena. They were very rich, at least by the standards of that time in Italy. Niccolò and Bartolomeo – I'll use their first names for the sake of brevity - were unquestionably the wealthiest and most prominent men in their communities. Their families belonged to the local aristocracy and they had a passion for the same things: travel, politics, culture, books and art. The three were well-travelled: Niccolò moved about indefatigably from 1822 to 1826,

**Cini**

**Puccini**

notwithstanding his physical handicap (he had a serious spinal deformation) first in Italy, then in Europe. Stanislao had visited France and England in 1824 (when he proposed to his wife) and again in 1839. Bartolomeo had travelled widely in Greece, Turkey and France. But there the analogies end. Their journeys took place at different times in their respective lives: Niccolò was only 27 and had just inherited his fortune after the death of his elder brother; Bartolomeo was 42 and at the centre of large-scale industrial and railway projects; Stanislao was 63, a former professor of medicine at the universities of Florence, Siena and Pisa, who had by that time retired. They had a shared interest in politics even though their political affiliations were very diverse. Niccolò was, at least at the time he undertook his journey, leftwing, very close to the most radical groups fighting for the independence of Italy; Bartolomeo was a democratic and free-trade liberal, but fairly conservative, while Stanislao was definitely a strict rightwing Catholic, suspicious of socialists, republicans and everything which smacked of progress or democracy, giving vent to his distaste for the electoral process and its results.

Bartolomeo and Stanislao had something else in common that explains to some extent their interest in everything British: their wives were both English. Bartolomeo's wife was Nerina Teige, a friend and relative of the Shelleys in Pisa. Stanislao's wife was Marianna Rowe, whose relatives were the owners of The Thames Soap Works at Brentford.

At this time, the English presence in Tuscany was not exclusively due to family ties. A considerable number of English and Irish men came to Tuscany to work on railway construction as engineers and labourers, both in Pistoia and in Siena. Indeed, they were the most numerous group of (temporary) immigrants in the passport registers preserved in the State Archive at Pistoia. Railways would play a leading role in the journeys undertaken by Bartolomeo and Stanislao. Likewise, in the same period, there was a large presence of Italians in London: to the traditional community of musicians and singers, by the 1820s an influx of political refugees had arrived in the aftermath of various failed Italian uprisings and conspiracies. Dante Gabriele Rossetti and Antonio Panizzi are the most obvious examples that come to mind. Further down the social scale were the so-called "Italian boys", quasi-slaves, roaming the streets begging, the organ grinders and the ice cream vendors. But this stratum of the population was completely invisible to our travellers who moved about in higher circles.

The purpose of Stanislao's journey is not clear. It is possible that he just wanted to accompany his son and daughter on a visit to see their deceased mother's birthplace and to meet their English relations. There were also, as for Bartolomeo, some financial problems to solve: an inheritance of the children and the much more complicated transfer of his late wife's dowry from a bank in London to one back in Italy. For the rest of the time, in his writings, he came across as an elderly gentleman on holiday, interested mainly in the weather, what English newspapers were saying about politics and religion, making his own comments about the Italian and French political situations. Much of his diary is dedicated to summaries of articles from The Times and other newspapers, on these and other matters. He fills pages with data: the geographical size of Great Britain, the population of London and its increase in the 19th century, the number of immigrants in New York, etc. He also records the daily crowds of visitors who pour into Crystal Palace for The Great Exhibition. In other respects, he is brief and to the point when he writes about something about his movements, merely noting "Went to London" or "Visit to Crystal Palace" without further comment. Probably this was because the places were already familiar to him from the past. Elsewhere he recorded the changes he has seen: "We went to Kew Gardens with the Fishers and the Lewises (the Cinis' London relatives). It has undergone considerable enlargement and improvement since 1824 and 1839 and was now a real botanical garden, perhaps even one of the leading ones in Europe".

What emerges clearly from the diary is his great admiration and affection for everything English. Niccolò expresses the same enthusiasm during his visit in 1826, an experience that stayed with him for life. When his friend Bartolomeo left for London, he wrote to him: "I have heard with great pleasure that you are leaving for England [to see The Great Exhibition. If the increase of my years had not weakened my courage, I would have liked to be in your company". And then he listed a number of items that he wanted Bartolomeo to buy for him at The Exhibition.

Niccolò's first encounter with England had been on 5th June when - unusually for a traveller - he witnessed the procedures for the election of a Member of Parliament in Dover. Niccolò's brief description compares to that of Giuseppe Pecchio, a political refugee, commenting on the same process at Nottingham. But it was London that had the greatest impact on the young Niccolò. In a letter to his mother, he described the buildings, the streets, the parks and concluded that London was far superior to Paris

(It was a view shared by these three, as well as others). What struck them in London was the swell of traffic, the great gridlock of carts, coaches and pedestrians which they saw as a sign of vitality, progress and modernity, compared to the sleepy places from which they came.

Niccolò was also very different from the other two in other respects. Because of his age and also possibly because of the era, he was more literary in his observations (his letters remind one of Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*) and there is a marked libertine streak. If he was very keen on describing landscapes, industries, elections and people, he showed particular enthusiasm when talking about women – a flirtatious lady on the stagecoach to Birmingham, the costumes of London's women, with particular attention given to their décolletage. The literary aspect is evident in the kind of people he saw during this extended visit: historians, poets (he saw Foscolo), novelists. The tour of Scotland which he had intended to do (but had had to abandon in Birmingham) also showed a literary flavour, on account of his fascination with the novels of Walter Scott. And even his interest in young women and girls, which came naturally to him, had something of the literary about it.

Visiting *people* in England was without doubt one of the most important motives for the journeys of all three men. Stanislao mainly visited his own English relations and friend. But he had long meetings too with [the eminent churchman] John Henry Newman. Unfortunately, the diary was silent on matters discussed. At the Hunterian Museum in London, he met Richard Owen, the comparative anatomist. Bartolomeo visited Richard Cobden and the foreign secretary, Lord Palmerston. In a letter to Massimo D'Azeglio, then Prime Minister of Piedmont, Bartolomeo wrote: "Your nephew will send you a note that I have written about a conversation that I had the other day with Lord P., during which I did all I could to give him a complete account, as far as I was able, of our matters. We spoke also a little about Piedmont and of you and it seems that they admire and appreciate your government…I think that, in order to strengthen these feelings and obtain some results from them, it would be very advantageous if you were to come here". Bartolomeo also met Antonio Panizzi in London at the British Museum, but the diary is reticent about his business and his political meetings. What we know about such encounters comes mainly from the letters he wrote. Niccolò did not keep a diary and many of his letters were lost. But from what survives, it is clear that he had a youthful bravado and that he was prepared to visit people that interested him, even without letters of introduction.

The attitudes of the three men towards London, England and British matters in general differed. Niccolò and Stanislao were both equally enthusiastic, but for different reasons. Niccolò was absorbing information and ideas which would later serve him well in the field of philanthropy, while Stanislao's love stemmed from remembrance of things past, his family relations, recollections of his first journey and of his deceased wife. Bartolomeo, on the other hand, was more discriminating and even negative about the customs and way of life of the English. One feels he had already experienced his own industrial revolution back home and had nothing to learn from the English model. So while he did admire the British Museum, and particularly the library, his reaction remained negative to London's modern architecture or such feats of engineering as the 1843 Thames [Rotherhithe-Wapping] Tunnel. He abandoned a Society of Mechanical Engineers banquet, finding the endless toasts unbearable and the possibility of getting drunk too risky.

It was the differing views of these three on St. Paul's Cathedral that was particularly striking. Niccolò and Stanislao were most admiring of the Wren building ("St.Paul's is magnificent for the architecture and wealth of monuments…the other day, it was filled with 12,000 boys and girls from charity schools… once you have climbed to the top…you are amazed by the spread in every direction of this city", Niccolò wrote to his mother). Bartolomeo, however, disliked it immensely. "English people praise St. Paul's all the time. They say that it is second only to St. Peter's. I have gone there twice…looked at it with the greatest attention and I have not been much impressed with all its white marble [ but coated in] coal smoke".

***The author, before retirement in 2011, directed the historic public libraries of Scandicci, Pistoia and Siena.***

# JOHN CHARLES BECKWITH, SOLDIER AND SAMARITAN

By Alexandra Richardson

Their history is blighted by a long and gruesome succession of atrocities: heads blown off, live burials, impalings, disembowelments and other unspeakable mutilations. Shunned and cut off from the social, political and cultural fabric of their surroundings, the Waldensians of Piedmont - nestled in settlements in the remote valleys to the west of Turin – endured persecution, hardship and poverty for their contested Protestant faith from the 1100s through to the early 1800s. Horrified by their plight, John Milton was to pen a sorrowful sonnet, speaking *of their martyred blood and ashes sow/ O'er all the Italian fields.* William Wordsworth, too, later on remembered those who *explored Subalpine vales, in quest of safe retreats…Nourish the sufferers.* But it would be quite another Englishman to step in with more than just sympathetic words, to tackle at least some of the endemic trials of Piedmont's congregation, settled around Torre Pellice, Luserna, Rorà, Villar Pellice, Pinerolo, Bobbio and other dots on the map.

This Protestant movement had originated in 12th - century Lyons with a wealthy merchant named Valdes. His followers called themselves the "poor of Lyons" and subscribed to a simple lifestyle. Increasingly uncomfortable with the mounting popularity of their philosophy, the Archbishop of Lyons and the elite Catholic clergy forbade further preaching and labelled the Lyons Poor as heretics. But the new belief by then had spread through France and into Italy. Unable to entirely wipe out its adherents, the Catholic Church launched persecution after persecution over the centuries, fuelling bitterness, prejudice, hatred of one another.

The "English angle" of the story began far from those lonely mountain valleys of north-western Italy and quite a few years later. Standing in the library of Apsley House, the central London residence of the Duke of Wellington, one day in 1827 was a sad-eyed but handsome and solidly built man who had recently reached his 38th birthday. Lumbered with a wooden leg, the result of a cannonball shattering his left limb during the Battle of Waterloo at age 26 in 1815, he waited quietly for his appointment there at Apsley House. Browsing in the anteroom through the Duke's bookshelves, he happened upon a recently-published (1824) tract by the clergyman William Stephen Gilly, *Narrative of an Excursion to the Mountains of Piedmont and Researches among the Vaudois or Waldenses*. By then, and despite his relatively young age, John Charles Beckwith's fighting days were over. He had fought campaigns in Denmark, Portugal, Spain and France and climbed the ranks of the military until Waterloo brought all further combat to an end. After a brief retreat to Halifax, Canada, where his parents had settled and where he filled his days helping to set up a Sunday school for the local Nova Scotians, Beckwith then returned to England.

Gilly's book that day clearly struck a chord; soon afterwards the young war veteran was on his way to Piedmont to investigate the conditions of this beleaguered community for himself. No doubt his organisational skills - well-honed during the military years - together with his strong Anglican faith were about to play their part in his life. He was to make several more trips to Italy before deciding to settle there permanently: Beckwith had

**John Charles Beckwith and his dog**

now found his new calling and it was to improve the pitiful existing schools and to create new ones. Lots of them.

Of those that he found on arrival, he exclaimed *[They are as] ill-built as barns [and] as dirty as stables.* Such classes as were taught were conducted in either dialect (Provençal) or in French, compounding the sense of isolation of these *valdesi*. Worse still, no formal guidelines existed to help these "undiploma-ed" teachers along with their curriculum. What was more, some of the comparative statistics made for sad reading. Parish-funded schools could afford to stay open ten months of the year and pay their teachers up to 600 francs. The Waldensian ones, on the other hand, could manage only three or four months of any instruction and could scarcely scrape together a salary of 4-8 francs per month for their educators. Added to their chores, Protestant teachers had to provide their schoolrooms with firewood, stoke the stoves, open and close the church doors, tend to lighting the candles, sweep the chapel floor and… look after the funeral carriage!

Money, of course, was needed to bring about the changes that Beckwith envisaged.

He was in luck, though. It was an age of intense Anglo-Saxon affection for Italy, with the resumption of travel after the Napoleonic wars. Evangelicals of the north willingly rallied to help their brethren in those alpine valleys of Italy and reached promptly into their pockets every time the peg-legged benefactor came calling, his small bushy-tailed dog at his side. Beckwith often covered the shortfall. In 1808, the valleys had had only 78 district schools; by the time the Englishman was well into his schooling campaign, the area had 120 so-called "Scuolette Beckwith". He saw to it that they were of adequate size, conveniently sited near to the footpaths. They were bright and sunny; fresh air helped the students concentrate. The youngsters sat at long wooden tables, side by side. For good measure, he had quarters built to accommodate the teacher as an extra incentive. And he leaned firmly on the local authorities to help improve the salaries. The basics of adding and subtracting were taught and often they used the Bible as a spelling primer while other textbooks were imported from England. Before long, teachers were dispatched to Lausanne to strengthen their command of French and sieve out the Provençal. When King Carlo Alberto promulgated the use of Italian in school, Beckwith promptly dispatched his teaching corps to Florence to polish up their spoken Italian. He was, it seems, a fervent advocate of "the move into Italy" which, to him, entailed embracing that language. Another of his initiatives, in 1837, was to create the area's first *Scuola Superiore Femminile* at Torre Pellice, mindful that educated valley women were a precious asset in fighting childhood illiteracy.

To be sure, as an upright Anglican, John Charles Beckwith also focussed energies into the building of new Protestant churches, including in 1853 Turin's Waldensian one , the first to be erected outside the valleys. Others rose at Rodoretto, Rorà and Torre Pellice. At least two hospitals went up at his instigation as well. In recognition of his labours with this widely shunned and impoverished faith, King Carlo Alberto in 1848 awarded him the cross of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus. In 1850, Beckwith married a Waldensian woman, Anne Susanne Caroline Valle. He died twelve years later, in 1862, in his beloved adopted country. Visitor and Cultural Centres there bear his name, as do street names. The "Scuolette Beckwith", for the most part survive, reminding of and all bearing witness to a little-known and unsung chapter of Anglo-Italian friendship.

# HOLLYWOOD ON THE TIBER

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

'Cinecittà, one of the world's great centres of movie-making, was inaugurated on 28th April 1937. A few years later it was turned into a concentration camp during World War II and then into a refugee camp, but resumed its film industry activities in the early fifties to then reach a climax in the sixties with screen legends such as Charlton Heston in *Ben-Hur*, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton in *Cleopatra*, Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn, Sophia Loren, Kirk Douglas, Gina Lollobrigida, Claudia Cardinale, Vittorio De Sica, Anna Magnani (the only movie star to be immortalised on the pavement outside the studios as along Hollywood's Walk of Fame), just to name a few of those famous names.

Both film and TV productions continue at the studios today, including some more recent foreign films, such as Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, Martin Scorsese's *The Gangs of New York* and a Woody Allen's *To Rome with Love*.

However in these times of crisis Cinecittà, once known as the "factory of dreams" for its famous film studios has been going through a difficult period. In 2012 there were a series of strikes by staff threatened with redundancy. Surging costs and lower demand to use the studios, especially by foreign movie companies due to their more competitive eastern European counterparts, has brought about bitter dispute over its future. However, Cinecittà Holding SpA currently manages the studios and is doing its best to keep business going. It is a holding company whose subsidiaries provide film production services. They include Istituto Luce, which produces and distributes films and owns movie theatres across Italy; and Cinecittà Servizi, offers production, editing, and special effects equipment, as well as owning more than 22 studios, 40 editing rooms, 3 rooms, and a film restoration lab. There are also plans to build a hotel for visiting actors and staff.

**Anna Magnani's star**

In 2011 Cinecittà opened its doors to the public as another way to raise money. In addition to seeing various film sets ranging from


***The Gangs of New York* set**

ancient Rome to New York and Paris, all at a short distance from each other, visitors can walk through the permanent exhibition, which offers an educational and interactive environment focused on the fascinating world of film-making, directing, screening, audio, costume and fiction. The studios have become an important heritage and are under the aegis of the Beni Culturali.

Not to be forgotten is the recent Rome international film festival, now an annual event, which is a reminder of the city's film history. The great film director Federico Fellini loved the Cinecittà studios, and once said: "All encounters, relationships, friendships, experiences and travels for me begin and end at the studios of Cinecittà".

# TRAIN STORY

By Alexandra Richardson

Who among us has boarded a train in Italy and *not* glanced fleetingly out from the corner of an eye at the stylish script emblazoned on the side of our carriage? Deservedly, it is among the most striking examples of modern European design…but with a twist. It is *not* the genial outcome of quite who you might imagine. In fact, Italy's Ferrovie dello Stato owes its gone-with-the-wind logo to the English.

For decades, trains in Italy had been monogrammed with a succession of tired and staid emblems: the 1970s had a logo described by one critic as "an old fashioned television screen", boxy and boring. "You almost expected someone to appear and read you the news". Matters did not improve with the 1980s re-do. Those two letters, "F" and "S", got not much more than a broader and equally uninteresting brushstroke, this time enclosed in a lozenge-shaped frame. By the early 1990s, the time had come for a bold break from the past and to give a livelier look to a railway system that counted over 24,000 kilometres of track and a fleet of 58,000 rolling stock. In early 1992, an official state competition was announced and the race was on for bids to reshape the entire image – or "corporate identity" as the business world likes to call it - of Italy's railway network. Italy was, in those decades, at the very forefront of industrial design in all its facets. It did not, therefore, seem an unreasonable conclusion that one of their own would win the competition. Following a complicated "pre-qualification" process, the list of bidders was winnowed down to four finalists.

Interestingly, at that stage, the exhaustive documentation to be submitted included just about everything…except actual design proposals. Perugia-born Londoner Rob Davie takes up the story: "[The] competing agencies, the short list, were given the same six-week deadline [by which time] copies of the final tender documentation had to be delivered". It was "onerous" and "exhaustive". After tensely waiting for an evaluation of the submissions, the London-based agency XMPR Plc and its managing director Davie got the good news in November 1992: they had been awarded the contract. "That was a great day", he remembered.

What he and his design team would sit down to create was an entirely new graphic image to appear on every single item belonging to the Ferrovie dello Stato. The list seemed endless. What would impact on the average traveller right off would be, of course, that emblem boldly featured on the sides of the railroad carriages. But it went a lot further. The logo would appear on train personnel uniforms, conductor caps, tickets, timetable covers, station signage, promotional material, company stationery and publications, crockery, cutlery, interior upholstery and fittings. And even toilet paper! Davie recalled that "the scale and complexity of the project made it the biggest, most prestigious and most formative project I was ever responsible for throughout my career".

The XMPR Plc team began to come to grips with FS's history, philosophy and aspirations through intensive briefings. Over the next 20 months, shuttling back and forth between London and Rome and working through the various segments of the project, stylised designs began to take shape until the definitive one was chosen, to much acclaim. At an important exhibit at the British Council in Milan's Via Manzoni, the winning designs drew crowds. The Italian Trade Centre in London was to mark the occasion as well.

Some at the Rome headquarters of FS read heavy symbolism into the adopted palette of colours: the use of green signified "the values of responsibility, reliability, competence, safety". Deep blue expressed the notion "of professionalism, efficiency, pride" while light blue was employed as "a unifying colour… linking up the two other hues". Davie gave his take more simply: "The colours refer to the land and seas of Italy across which the dynamic tracks and routes of the FS network can be seen slicing through in white". And then, there is that striking slant to the design. To the untutored eye of this writer, it speaks unequivocally of velocity, of the train speed and wind bending over the lettering in its wake. The XMPR Plc design for this visual whoosh was so successful that in the years that followed its introduction, with only minor tweaks to the colour scheme, it has successfully remained in use throughout the Italian State Railways.

# THE FORGOTTEN RIVIERA

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

Today many people associate the Italian Riviera with the fashionable coastline south of Genoa from Portofino to Santa Margherita, Rapallo, Le Cinque Terre, Portovenere right down to Lerici and the Golfo dei Poeti forgetting all about north of Genoa. These areas of the Riviera di Levante ("the coast of the rising sun") have become the international stars' favourite wedding venues. In the past, between 1890 and 1939 the Riviera di Ponente ("the coast of the setting sun") overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea and extending westwards from Genoa to the French border, became known as "The British colonies", where wealthy Victorians and Edwardians would come to *svernare*.

Italy has always represented an escape to a better, more colourful and less spoilt world away from the tight conventions of British society, especially for the Victorians. Also, in that period a number of the settlers had spent some time in India and China which meant that Italy was a good compromise on their return to Europe where they could continue to enjoy the sun, comfort and the freedom they were used to.

No doubt, the Ponente Ligure's vicinity to the more expensive Nice and Côte d'Azur, in addition to the beautiful natural coastline and healthy climate, added to their choice. Even earlier travellers noticed the mild temperatures of this coastline. Marguerite Gardiner Countess of Blessington described the *ambiente* in her book *The Idler in Italy* (1823): "The Ligurian moon shines more brightly than the English sun. One can have lunch outside in the open on 27th March on a terrace overlooking the sea".

**Hanbury Tennis Club**

## *The British Legacy*

Alassio, once a humble fishing village where sheep and other farm animals used to roam freely on the beaches close to the fishing boats, was then one of the favourite seaside resorts *degli inglesi* apart from Sanremo or San Remo, as it is also spelt, along with Bordighera and Ventimiglia. At the turn of the 19th-century, the British communities in these towns supported each other in their colonial lifestyle. Walter Congreve (1824-1913) was the British consul at San Remo. A Congreve agency and bank were set up in Alassio on the ground floor of Palazzo Scofferi-Montanaro in Piazza Sant'Ambrogio. Another English bank was managed by Edward Berry, who also set up an estate agency

**Alassio**


**Muretto di Alassio with colourful plaques**

in Bordighera in 1892. English clubs were built in most of these towns. The Hanbury family at La Mortola, between Ventimiglia and Menton, continued to acquire land in Italy. After Sir Thomas Hanbury's death in 1907, his eldest son Cecil inherited La Mortola villa and gardens, whilst his other son Daniel continued looking after his father's real estate business in Alassio - in particular the management of the Tennis Club, the British Club (Hanbury Hall, built to celebrate the sixty years of Queen Victoria's reign, but sadly demolished in the 1960s to build an apartment block), the Norfolk Hotel and the numerous villas which his father had built on the Alassio hills. Thomas Hanbury had foreseen Alassio's potential as a winter resort in the wake of Menton, Bordighera, and San Remo.

The town of Alassio in the province of Savona about 80 kilometres from the French border stands in a bay backed with rugged hills and scenic views. Henry Alford mentions Alassio with its "lovely bay" and backdrop of "huge hills covered with olive ... banked up behind the town; and dotted about upon them, in all the most favoured spots, are campanili, and villages" as he writes in two chapters of his book *The Riviera: pen and pencil sketches from Cannes to Genoa* (1869). At the beginning of the 19th century, horse-drawn coaches were still the main form of transport taking just over three weeks to get to the Italian Ligurian Riviera from the UK. It was not until the construction of the coastal railway in 1872 followed by the steam train through the Calais – Paris - Nice – Rome Express in 1883 and later in 1886 the Calais-Mediterranée Express or Le Train Bleu, as it was called, connecting London to Genoa that travel became faster and easier to reach la Costa Ligure. It drew the attention and interest of the rich, cultured and sophisticated English tourists, who very soon became Anglo-Alassini citizens.

There is a past presence of British culture with its British expatriate heritage. The British residents of the time left a number of cultural and historical legacies, such as an Anglican church, The English Pharmacy, a lending library, Villa della Pergola and a Lawn Tennis Club. They all still exist in Alassio, although the church is now run as an exhibition centre by the town council, while the Hanbury Tennis Club, founded by Daniel Hanbury, with its historic Club House, opened in 1923 still keeps a few English letter boxes and telephone boxes dotted around its grounds together with photos, old tennis rackets and other memorabilia inside its bar lounge.

The lending library set up around 1875 at 17 Viale Hanbury still stands thanks to the efforts of a long-time British resident, Jacqueline Rosadoni, the head librarian who works there on a voluntary basis. It is also dependent on the goodwill of the Alassio Municipio, which agreed to take on the funding and upkeep of this old institution when the Anglican Diocese of Gibraltar could no longer afford it. With around 15,000 books (originally there were about 30,000), this is one of the most important English libraries in Italy after the British Institute in Florence, which recovered some of the books from the original collection in Alassio, and the British School at Rome. The notice board outside still displays a poster from the library's glory years,

**Villa della Pergola**

which tells us that it is situated "near the English Church and Tea Garden" and in the next line claims to have the "newest books on hire weekly from Harrods, London". It closed down during World War II. "There were around 700 British residents at Alassio until then when they all had to leave", commented Mrs Rosadoni. "Only a few returned after the war, and then the numbers began to drop". Jacqueline Rosadoni herself came to Alassio in 1959 and has been working in the library for about 26 years. When asked about the current British community at Alassio, she said "Now there are only about 15 permanent British residents, whilst a few others have bought property here, but come and go".

## *Some of the residents*

During Alassio's pre-war glory days, there was constant entertainment including boat rides, walks in the hills, tennis, bridge, theatre, charity events, shopping, and meeting up in the cafés or British Club. There was an English fortnightly newspaper, the *Alassio News,* and *The Italian Riviera Illustrated Magazine*.

Rev. John Hayes, the first Anglican English chaplain in Alassio, put up a large bookcase outside the door of the "Church room" so that the English could leave any books there they did not want to take back with them to Great Britain.

Behind the library is a gallery of paintings by Richard West, an Irish artist who moved to Alassio in 1890. His works depict fishing villages and various landscapes of this part of the Riviera in the final years of its natural rural landscape.

There were many important residents (writers, poets, musicians, painters, artists, scholars from various disciplines and politicians), who belonged to the British colony in Liguria. What was their impact on local society of the time? On the one hand, they created botanical gardens, libraries, their own churches, cemeteries and restored buildings, whilst, on the other, they retained the colonial attitude, isolating themselves by living within their closed community in exclusive clubs. They created golf, tennis, football and cricket clubs which later were adopted by the locals. They kept their own habits, way of dressing and cooking which puzzled some of the local domestic staff who had to learn English recipes and customs. On this matter, the following publications make interesting reading: *The English in Alassio* by Emily Rose Dickinson and her sister Margaret Anna, and another book published by Emily *Alcune ricette di cucina per l'uso degli Inglesi in Italia,* a manual of Anglo-Ligurian cuisine translated into Italian for staff and cooks working for British families in Liguria. . There were English shops and pharmacies. San Remo also had an English bank and estate agent. They did not really fully integrate, but left behind legacies. Among them is Villa della Pergola with its exotic domes and garden, once an old country house of the counts of Lengueglia. The hillside

estate with its twin villas and acres of landscaped terraces was bought by the Scottish war hero General Sir Montagu McMurdo in the 1870s. He transformed the estate for his large family of fifteen children.

The principal building, the Villa della Pergola, was larger than the Villino and stood on a slightly lower level. It was designed according to an eclectic taste with large balconies and verandas. The McMurdo family's intention was to make the park as a sort of environmental continuum of the inner rooms towards the sun and the Mediterranean flora. The garden was designed on a terraced level, following the natural sloping of the hill. General McMurdo died in Nice in 1895. Before Lady McMurdo's death in 1912, the property passed to Sir Walter Hamilton-Dalrymple, a Scottish baron, to then later fall into the hands of the Hanbury family.

By now a wealthy businessman and one of the most important figures in the British community of the Riviera Ligure, Daniel Hanbury bought Villa della Pergola in 1922 from Sir Hew Clifford Hamilton-Dalrymple. He restored the villa and completed its gardens, enriching them with a great variety of exotic plants taken from the botanical gardens of the La Mortola. Sylvia, Daniel's first wife, called it "…simply enchanting". In 1940, at the outbreak of the war, the Hanbury family went back to England, like most of the English living in Italy. Daniel, after his first wife's death, married Ruth Hardinge, a noblewoman belonging herself to an English family from Alassio. In 1948 Daniel suddenly died and his death marked the decline of Alassio as a winter resort for the English. Ruth went back to live in the "Villa della Pergola" until 1982 and surrounded herself with a small group of English friends. She became well-known for her spring parties, given during the flowering of the wisteria pergolas. Unfortunately, the property took a downturn, started to decline, was later sold and was almost demolished.

Villa della Pergola and its villino have been restored and turned into an exclusive hotel by the most recent owners, Silvia and Antonio Ricci, who bought the property in 2006. The restoration works to the villas and gardens took six years to bring them back to their former glory. Not only have they saved the property from the planned demolition by developers, but also honoured its past through their passion to detail and collected memorabilia associated with its previous owners and British visitors to Alassio. Antonio Ricci proudly showed me glass showcases in the main hall displaying an informal museum of British Alassio. One is dedicated to Edward Lear, who lived in San Remo for the last 18 years of his life and often visited Alassio to paint (one of his watercolours depicts *Alassio from Laigueglia*, 1864); another case displays Elgar items, whose concert overture *In the South (Alassio)* was written during an extended stay here in 1904; and an early edition of *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame (chapter 9) open at the page where Rat disembarks at Alassio. There are also posters, props and memorabilia connected with the two films which were shot on location at the villa: Alfred Hitchcock's first film as director, the silent *The Pleasure Garden* (1925); and *The Snorkel* (1958). The gardens are an array of colours and are the pride of Silvia Arnaud Ricci. As we walked around this oasis where water abounded running down streams, mini cascades, lily ponds and fountains under the hot summer sun, the plants and flowers emerged "felici e sorridenti". As new members to the Grandi Giardini Italiani, visits to the gardens are now possible upon request.

## *Alassio from the 1950s onwards*

Although the story of Alassio as an English tourist paradise closed with the death of Daniel Hanbury, in the early 1950s the town was to refashion itself as a capital of the international high life. Well known celebrities appeared linked to cinema and culture, shows and events at every hour of the day. The main instigator for all of this was the Berrino family and their Caffè Roma. It was a meeting point for the jet set on holiday in Alassio or elsewhere on the Riviera, with dream cars, divas and artists passing through every day. It was in 1953 after an encounter with Ernest Hemingway that the idea of *Il Muretto* took shape.

Mario Berrino loved showing his customers his album of autographs of the famous people who had come into his bar; as the years passed the pages filled up with dedications and autographs. It was a shame to keep them hidden away. That is why when Hemingway was signing his album, Berrino told him about his idea. So that is how it all started. Today, over 500 tiles can be found on the wall. Christian Barnard, Vittorio De Sica, Nino Manfredi, Adriano Celentano, Walter Chiari, Jean Cocteau, Corrado, Xavier Cugat, Lucio Dalla, Carlo D'Apporto, Fabrizio De André, Lorella De Luca, Anita Ekberg, Giorgio Gaber, Jacques Prévert and Salvatore Quasimodo are just some of the famous people. Alassio is also known as La Città degli Innamorati. Its bronze statue of the "Innamorati" by Eros Pellini on the "*Muretto*" is another feature where lovelocks are chained to this special wall.

The British visitor really should rediscover Alassio with its charm and British-Italian links, which is what my husband and I did this summer on our way down to Rome by car. Once in Alassio it is worth visiting the Hanbury family's legacies along the forgotten Riviera including La Mortola (see The Hanbury Gardens at La Mortola, page 29), apart from the resorts of Ventimiglia, Bordighera, San Remo and neighbouring town Laigueglia (with their sagre and festivals, such as every August they recreate the Saracens attack in 1546) and the historic Albenga, a town which flourished in the Middle Ages. Alassio also boasts a good railway link thanks to Daniel Hanbury who granted some land to the Ferrovie dello Stato on condition that trains would always stop there, thus allowing easy transport access to the town and surrounding areas. Why not follow the steps of Kenneth Grahame's Water Rat and wander down to Alassio:

***"We made Alassio in the evening, lay to, hauled up our wine-casks, and hove them overboard, tied one to the other by a long line. Then the crew took to the boats and rowed shorewards, singing as they went, and drawing after them the long bobbing procession of casks, like a mile of porpoises…".***

# THE LORD OF MILAN: A FOOTBALLING ODYSSEY

By Robert Nieri

Herbert Kilpin must have been looking for me. On Saturday 16th June 2007, I glanced at the headline on the front page of the Nottingham Evening Post *"The Pride of Nottingham. How a Nottingham man created Euro champions"*. The article recounted how Kilpin, a butcher's boy had gone on to found Milan Football and Cricket Club, aka AC Milan, which had beaten Liverpool in a football match in Athens the previous month to be crowned European champion for a seventh time.

When I returned home, I googled "*Kilpin*" to learn more. Many have heard the story of how in the early 1900s the student team of Juventus from Turin needed a new strip and someone came back from Nottingham with the black and white shirts of Notts County and the rest was history. But few have heard of Kilpin.

I've always been proud of my Italian roots and mad about football. Growing up in Manchester in the 1970s and 1980s, my dream was to play for Italy (not England) in the World Cup Finals. As an adult, I've been lucky enough to live in Turin and to spend time in Milan. (They say everyone has a book in them and ...).

I headed north from Nottingham city centre, where the students and their kebab houses now hold sway, to number 129 Mansfield Road. This was where Kilpin was born in 1870, the ninth child of Edward and Sarah. He'd played his first games of football less than half a mile further up the road on the Forest Recreation Ground, a great expanse of grass that centuries before had been at the southern most reaches of Sherwood Forest. I then made for the Adams Building in the historic Lace Market where Kilpin had worked as a warehouseman in the late 1880s before emigrating to Italy.

Paradoxically as my horizons were widening to write the story of someone who had brought football to a country that would win the World Cup on four occasions (so far), at the same time they narrowed to my immediate surroundings, as I looked at the environment that had shaped the footballer as a young man and as I learned more about the boomtown that had been Nottingham in Victorian England.

The lace industry had been the engine for growth, the expiry of patents on lace machines sucking in workers from the countryside to try their luck at making a fortune in the rapidly expanding town in the 1830s, leading to chaotic growth, overcrowded, pestilential tenement dwellings, great wealth and greater poverty.

Eye-catching buildings lined the streets, all fashioned out of red brick interspersed with heavy black timbering, the colours Herbert would in time bequeath to his team:

*"Our colours will be red, because we will be the devils and black, signifying the terror we will strike into the hearts of our opponents".*

The land and times in which Kilpin lived and worked around the turn of the twentieth century after leaving Nottingham forever couldn't be disregarded, so I resolved on writing Kilpin's story against the backdrop of Italy, but not the well-known land of the Renaissance, of beautiful landscapes and urban spaces.

Instead, the young nation in search of an identity in the years preceding the Great War and Mussolini's ascent to power. Like the ribbon development along the autostrade of the Val Padana as you make your way from one beautiful medieval city to another, it's not pretty. In fact, it's often ugly. The more I looked at the times, the clearer the connections became between the great themes and events of the day and the story of this man from provincial England.

On the day of the first Italian football championship in Turin in May 1898, less than eighty miles away, the army was aiming cannon fire at its own people who were protesting in the streets of Milan about the high price of bread. Hundreds died that day but the out-of-touch monarch Umberto only poured oil on the fire by decorating the commanding general for having restored order. The slaughter provoked a young emigrant, Gaetano Bresci, the same age as Kilpin and of strikingly similar appearance, to return from the eastern seaboard of the United States to assassinate Umberto at Monza, only two months after Milan Football and Cricket Club had won the inaugural King's Medal he had put in play.

There was an economic crisis in 1907 and when things get tough at home the natural instinct is to look for people to blame. For some years the gymnasium sports clubs had lobbied for all-Italian teams and that year the Football Federation decided that the next year's football championship would be reserved for Italian players, with another competition run for teams including "foreigners". Kilpin and other English and Swiss players had been instrumental in developing the game in Italy but the nationalists wanted to move on. The big clubs protested and the controversy caused a schism within Milan, resulting in a faction breaking away to found a new club that would be open to all, "Internazionale", or Inter Milan as we know it today.

But there was still room for typically English humour. A Milan team sheet appeared in the pages of the *Gazzetta dello Sport,* announcing a new team of English players led by Kilpin. But the joke was on the ever-so-serious advocates of an entirely domestic league: the Italian players had anglicised their names in solidarity with their English team mates. Thus Hieronimus Root was actually Gerolamo Radice and Pietro Lana and Marco Sala had taken on the alter egos "Peter Wool" and "Mark Hall".

And what of the character at the centre of all this? An amateur footballer who played at the weekends after clocking off from work in the lace warehouse and who took a chance, went to Italy and founded one of the most successful clubs of the most popular sport on the planet. A man who was able to play football until the age of 43 because he pounded the public parks of Milan in the dead of winter to keep himself in shape but at the same time posed for the camera in his football kit with a cigarette in his hand and openly drank Black and White whisky before, during and after matches to recharge his batteries, to celebrate goals scored and just to help him to forget those conceded.

Not the most gifted of footballers in his homeland, Kilpin was feted in Italy as the father of football, the "Lord" of Milan, because he had fulfilled his self-appointed mission to teach Italians how to play the game and led his teams by example with utter dedication to the cause.

Some, in particular his long-suffering wife, might say Kilpin went too far. Kilpin was like St Francis of Assisi, totally in thrawl to his god, which was football. Years after the event he told the world how on the evening of his wedding a telegram had arrived at his home in Milan inviting him to play the following day in Genoa for an Italian representative team against Grasshoppers of Zurich. Amazingly, he accepted the invitation:

*"Naturally my wife didn't want me to go. But I reminded her that before we had got engaged I'd told her that if she didn't let me carry on playing football then I wouldn't marry her.*

*During the game I took a big kick on my nose and it bled for hours. I used up lots of handkerchiefs to staunch the flow and soak up the blood. I came back home with an unrecognisable face. My wife was hysterical, screaming:*

*'Herbert, what's happened? Are you suffering'?*

*I replied: 'I'm absolutely fine! If only you knew how light my head feels'!"*

Here was a man who displayed a warped sense of priorities, who left his wife in penury on his death at the age of 46 in the middle of the Great War and who never had children. But his legacy was a great one. The obituaries that appeared in the sports papers were effusive.

*"For ten years the public, opponents, team-mates, admired and applauded the virtue of the fighter and the ability of the peerless champion who is considered the greatest pioneer of Football in Italy… he gifted all his inexhaustible energy, he loved and taught us, not like a foreigner but like a brother…Kilpin, a name that is almost everything in the history of our football".*

He was quickly forgotten in his unnamed vault in the Musocco Cemetery to the north of Milan as the dead were buried and the living struggled on during the harsh winter of 1916, while troops continued to suffer and die on the frontline in the Alps and on the Carso plateau. But in 1998, the year before the centenary celebrations of the founding of Milan were to take place, signor Luigi La Rocca, the club's amateur historian, found Kilpin's final resting place and the club arranged for his remains to be reinterred in the more fitting setting of the Monumental Cemetery along with other famous inhabitants of Milan.

And then a rather marvellous thing happened. Kilpin became the twenty-first century icon for the AC Milan fan base, for those who had tired of the commercialism and badge-kissing of the modern game and who yearned for the simpler age of the gentleman-amateur, when footballers had played for the love of the game, not to interest their next club or secure an even more lucrative advertising deal. Kilpin's name appeared on the back of replica shirts sold outside the San Siro stadium on match days and a banner with a caricature of "*Il Lord*" in full flight with a heavy leather football appeared on the *Curva Sud* of the ground among the diehard fans, proud of the English origins of their club, still reflected in the name which fascism couldn't permanently change to "AC Milano".

In October 2006 on the ninetieth anniversary of Kilpin's death, a fans' group wrote an open letter to the *Gazzetto dello Sport*, the same sports paper that had been one of the first to announce the exploits of Herbert Kilpin. The letter questioned why the


**Plaque of Herbert Kilpin By courtesy of Robert Nieri**

authorities had never considered commemorating a figure who had contributed so much to Milanese and Italian culture; why not even a flower bed outside the stadium had been named after him when the founders of Genoa, the first great team in Italian football and the legendary Grande Torino of the late 1940s had received recognition in their cities.

The letter led to a campaign by Milan fans to induct Kilpin into the *Famedio*, the city's Hall of Fame within the Monumental Cemetery, where the names of the great and good are etched onto a stone plaque in a roll of honour. It took a couple of years of trying, a Facebook campaign, a petition outside the ground and the lobbying of local politicians but eventually, in November 2010, Herbert Kilpin's name appeared on the plaque.

They say a prophet is never honoured in his own land. To date, the article in the Nottingham Evening Post and a ten-minute film on the local news a few years ago is about it in England. Hopefully, this will now change. A plaque marking his birth place would be something but maybe it would be more meaningful to arrange a football tournament every year for children who live around The Forest, now a deprived inner city area; the "Kilpin Trophy", to show young people what can be achieved if you put your mind to it.

For centuries before him, compatriots with far greater means and culture had embarked on the Grand Tour to round off their education, assimilating the greatness of Ancient Rome and the Renaissance. They came, saw and then went home to their country pile.

The son of a Nottingham butcher came, stayed and gave much to the people of that far-off sunny land beyond the mountains and for this he has been remembered by them. And we should be proud of him for this.

I'm glad Herbert Kilpin found me. He certainly was a fine character in search of an author.

# THE INCOMPARABLE CAETANI FAMILY

By Esme Howard

Gentle Lelia Caetani, painter and gardener, died in 1977– the last of one of the most colourful of Italy's many dynastic families. Caetani history marks every step of the Tyrrhenian coastland–from Pisa to Rome, from Cisterna, Ninfa, Sermoneta and Anagni on down to Fondi, Gaeta and Naples. Edward Gibbon, the celebrated 18th-century historian, rightly observed that 'the proudest families are content to lose in the darkness of the Middle Ages the tree of their pedigree'. That may be so. However, in the family history *Domus Caietana* of 1927, the 9th-century Anatolio, Lord of Gaeta, is the first of the Caetanis to gain prominence. From Gaeta, of course, sprang the Gaetanis, who by the early 11th century were significantly dispersed to north and south of their native town, once a seaside resort for affluent Romans. By the 12th century, the derivative name 'Caetani' stood for an influential Lazian family noted for strategic ties to other powerful dynasties – for example the Orsinis, Contis and Annibaldis.

In 1118, Giovanni Gaetani, a Benedictine monk of Monte Cassino, succeeded Paschal II to become Pope Gelasius II. The Emperor Henry V, in power from 1105 to 1125, imposed the anti-pope Gregory VIII. Gelasius, by now seeking refuge in Gaeta, retaliated by excommunicating Henry only to die of pleurisy in Cluny a year later. Caetani records begin in earnest with Benedetto Gaetani (1235-1303), whose family had settled in Anagni, equidistant between Gaeta and Rome. In 1294, succeeding the hermitic St. Celestine V, he was elected pope and took the name Boniface VIII. A competent canonist and patron of the arts, Boniface founded the Rome University of La Sapienza and renewed the Vatican Library. His pontificate, however, was mired by constant disputes with Philip IV of France. His provocative Bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302), an extreme affirmation of papal supremacy, led to the humiliating circumstances of his arrest in Anagni in September 1303, and the pillaging of his palace by Henry's forces. Outraged and shaken, the elderly Boniface died a month later. Always controversial, he was perhaps the last of the medieval emperor-popes.

In his lifetime, the opportunist Boniface heightened the power of his family through territorial expansion. Notable was his acquisition of the papal fiefdom of Ninfa and other nearby estates which he then passed to one of his nephews. Ninfa, now strategically so important, was increasingly fortified although not enough to save it from being ruthlessly sacked in 1381 against a background of papal wars and inter-family territorial disputes. A simmering rivalry between the Caetani and Colonna families was followed in 1499 by a drama of potentially crippling consequences – the confiscation of all Caetani properties by the Borgia pope, Alexander VI. Happily, these were restored by Pope Julius II in 1504, soon after his accession. In spite of this confrontational climate, the Caetanis increased their influence, particularly in the Pontine region. The impregnable Castle of Sermoneta is an enduring monument to the family's former power, no less than the nearby ruined town of Ninfa with its thirty-metre landmark tower, a ducal castle and municipality, seven churches, two convents and many private houses – indeed all the external relics of a once bustling religious, civic and military centre.

After the two family popes came two16th-century Caetani cardinals– Niccolò (1526-1585), appointed when only fourteen, and his nephew Enrico (1550-1599), both of whom were from the Sermoneta branch of the family. Onorato IV Caetani, (1542-1592), Cardinal Niccolò's nephew, was captain general of the papal infantry at the Battle of Lepanto (1571) and was

**Pope Boniface VIII (1235-1303)**

aboard *La Grifona*, the first Christian vessel to come under attack from the Turks. On his triumphant return to Sermoneta and to his wife Agnesina Colonna, sister of the admiral of the Spanish-pontifical fleet, Onorato built the church of S. Maria della Vittoria in thanksgiving. Pope Sixtus V made him first Duke of Sermoneta. His marriage to a Colonna was another effort to reconcile the two families after so much mutual animosity.

In the late 17th century, Francesco Caetani (1613–1683), 8th Duke of Sermoneta, Viceroy of Sicily, a Prince 'no less good at governing flowers, than men', made efforts to bring life back to wounded and slumbering Ninfa. He is remembered for his propagation of tulips, fashionable at the time. A later duke, Francesco V Caetani (1738-1810), busied himself no less with the work of revival. In 1765 a devoted tenant set a plaque into the wall of the old town hall, which from the Latin translates as:

> *Don Francesco Caetani, Duke of Sermoneta, having raised the waters, built bridges, repaired the mills completely, and restored the access road more conveniently, built the house and large granary from their foundations.*

Whilst the Appian Way, following the western flank of the Lepini Mountains, was one of the most important military and commercial thoroughfares in Roman and medieval times, the land itself was no less prized, as we read from an18th-century manuscript:

> *Il territorio si distingue in campi aperti, piani, colli, valli, selve, paludi, e monti, alcuni coltivabili et altri nudi, e vestite di selve… È tutto irrigato dall'acque, che divise in mare, fiumi,*

*stagni, laghi, rivi, e fonti, lo circondano, lo rinfrescano, lo fecondano, ed arricchiscono, non solo coll'umore mà anche con abondanza di buoni pesci.*

This lush Pontine heartland of the Caetanis, essentially the Sermoneta estates, peaked with a boundary of over 100 miles. From ancient times, though, there remained one colossal topographical challenge, namely the marshes. These had the periodic effect of making the Appian Way impassable. Whilst the counter-effect was to tighten the trade and military corridors between Rome and Naples and thereby make them commercially exploitable, malaria was persistent and uncompromising. Successive attempts were made to restore the marshland to what Pliny described as the 'blossoming landscape' that existed at the time of the Volsci tribal settlers in 500 BC. For centuries, Roman emperors, including Trajan, vainly sought the means; then, with Ninfa a papal possession, popes tried their hand, including Boniface VIII and Sixtus V who died of malaria in 1590 after a visit to the marshes. The 17th and 18th-century dukes of Sermoneta were likewise unsuccessful. Only in the 20th century was the challenge met, and the genius behind it was Lelia's uncle Gelasio Caetani.

Gelasio (1877-1934) was the fourth son of Onorato, 14th Duke of Sermoneta, himself a mayor of Rome and member of the Senate. Cultivated and resourceful like his father, Gelasio went on to become Italian ambassador to the United States and his face appeared on the front cover of *Time Magazine* in April 1924. Steeped in the history of his family, he compiled the aforementioned *Domus Caietana*. Not the kind of person one might associate with explosives, he knew all about them having worked in his early career with several American mining companies. He used his expertise to devastating effect during the war with Austria, between 1915 and 1917. High

**Inside the Caetani castle of Sermoneta**

**The ruined church of S. Maria Maggiore at Ninfa**

up in the Dolomites, the cone-shaped Col di Lana had been commandeered by Austrian troops. Ten thousand Italians had lost their lives trying to capture what was known as the 'Eye of the Austrian Army'. With a team of eighty handpicked engineers, Gelasio laid tons of explosives beneath the Austrians and brought the whole mountain down. He now turned those same skills to devising a plan for the marshes. The reclamation work, which included the use of explosives to create a series of drainage canals, was carried out in collaboration with armies of immigrant labour provided by the Italian State. It was completed in the early 1930s.

Palaces and strongholds associated with the Caetanis remain – for example in Rome, Cisterna, Sermoneta and Fondi. Looking back, though, the Caetani story is not just one of power or survival. The 20th century alone produced a generation of Caetanis steeped in the arts, in scholarship and in music. One calls to mind two of Gelasio's brothers – Leone, the renowned Islamist scholar, and Roffredo, Lelia's father, a gifted composer. Gelasio, who died in 1934, is particularly remembered for his vision in clearing the ruined site of Ninfa and with his English mother setting it on its way to becoming an idyll that would one day capture the imagination of musicians, artists, poets and gardeners from all over the world. A foundation, named after Lelia's father Roffredo Caetani, owns and manages this among her other country properties, keeping to the traditions she established in her lifetime and offering a paradigm of conservation and cultural excellence throughout the southern Lazio.

Lelia so marked Ninfa with her taste, discretion and quietness of spirit that the Caetani story has its most fitting denouement within that now harmonious space, in marked contrast to the turbulence of the past. As ever, the fortress of Sermoneta, high on a nearby hill, looks down, almost protectively, on Ninfa's enchanted ruins and on the once marshy lands of a great and distinguished Italian family.

***Esme Howard is a nephew of the late Donna Lelia Caetani and a councillor of the Roffredo Caetani Foundation.***

# AUGUSTUS HARE AND TRAVEL WRITERS OF HIS TIME

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

Two interesting travel writers of the 19th century are George Bradshaw (1801-1853) and Augustus Hare (1834-1903), whose books continued to be published for quite a few years into the early 20th century. The former was especially well known for his practical information *(Bradshaw's Continental Railway Guide and General Handbook)* offering advice to travellers about rail timetables, rail costs, hotel directory, customs-house regulations, etc. In his introduction, he warned "In practically all European countries no merchandise is allowed to enter free of duty". However, "In the case of travellers, customs-house officials have a certain latitude allowed them". As regards ticket prices, Bradshaw pointed out that "Children travel free up to the age of three years throughout the greater part of the continent...in France and Italy, three and seven, half price".

Augustus Hare focused more on culture and history, apart from his personal links with Italy. In *PECULIAR PEOPLE: The Story of my Life,* he tells us he was born in Rome; later he was adopted by his aunt Maria, the widow of Augustus Hare, and his parents renounced all further claim to him. His autobiography details both a devotion to his adopted mother and an intense unhappiness with his home education. "In the autumn of 1833 my father rented the beautiful Villa Strozzi at Rome, then standing in large gardens of its own facing the grounds of the noble old Villa Negroni. Here on the 13th of March, 1834, I was born - the youngest child of the family, and a most unwelcome addition to the population of this troublesome world, as both my father and Mrs Hare were greatly annoyed at the birth of another child, and beyond measure disgusted that it was another son". Just before his birth his uncle Augustus came to Rome with his wife Maria, but soon died and was buried in the cemetery by the Pyramid. "At Genoa the illness of Augustus became alarming, but he reached Rome, and there he expired on the 14th of February 1834...my father's most earnest wish was to comfort his widowed sister-in-law, and...he entreated, when I was born in the following month, that she would become my godmother...wishing that I should be called Augustus after him...It occurred to Augustus Hare's widow as just possible that my parents might be induced to give me up altogether to live with her as her own child. In July she wrote her petition, and was almost surprised at the glad acceptance it met with. Mrs Hare's answer was very brief". She promptly replied: "My dear Maria, how very kind of you! Yes, certainly, the baby shall be sent to you as soon as it is weaned; and if anyone else would like one, would you kindly recollect that we have others".

This background helps us to better understand the melancholic tone behind Augustus Hare and his lyrical musings which take us on a journey through the Italian landscape in craving search of history and the picturesque. With an inexhaustible store of historical knowledge and sensitivity, he paints a portrait of Italy in the nineteenth century.

He wrote several books about Italy covering the whole country: *The Rivieras; Cities of Northern Italy, Cities of Central Italy* (vols. 1 and 2); *Cities of Southern Italy and Sicily*, plus specific cities, such as *Venice* and *Florence*, and two on Rome and surrounding areas entitled *Days Near Rome* (vols. 1 and 2) and the two-volume *Walks in Rome*. What strikes one is his unique approach,

**Augustus Hare**

detail and mention of other visitors to Italy by quoting their impressions and comments in addition to his own as he takes the reader through the streets to look at monuments and places of interest, as in the case of Verona where he quotes Ruskin "- I mean Verona – the eye never seeks to rest on that external scenery, however gorgeous..." (taken from *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*), or for the Lion in St Mark's Square. "It is looking into the distance, and its claws grasp the book: it seems to send a roar of defiance to the East" (taken from *The Builder, 19th July 1884*), just to cite some of his endless quotations.

Augustus Hare openly discloses his feelings in *Walks in Rome* when he calls practical information on how to get about "dull-useful information". In his Introduction, he showed how he was not impressed by the Murray, Baedeker and Bradshaw guide books. "Their Murray, their Baedeker and their Bradshaw indicate appalling lists of churches, temples and villas which ought to be seen....The promised pleasure seems rapidly to change into an endless vista of labour and to be fulfilled and of fatigue to be gone through..."

Let's follow Hare's advice when visiting cities and places of interest "Better far to leave half the ruins and the nine-tenths of the churches unseen and to see well the rest". Pause, absorb, assimilate, perceive and enjoy what we see around us. "To see them not once, but again and often again; to watch them, to learn them, to live with them, to love them, till they have become a part of life and life's recollections". And as for Rome, he wrote "It must not be supposed that one short residence

at Rome will be sufficient to make a foreigner acquainted with all its varied treasures...It is only by returning again and again, by allowing the *feeling* of Rome to gain upon you, when you have constantly revisited the same view, the same ruin, the same picture, under varying circumstances, that Rome engraves itself upon your heart, and changes from a disagreeable, unwholesome acquaintance, into a dear and intimate friend seldom long absent from your thoughts". These thoughts could easily be attributed to today's Rome with its chaos and traffic, yet bewitching charm and centuries of overlapping history.

# "ITALY IS NEVER OUT"

By Alexandra Richardson

English travellers to the Continent once took their cue largely from the descriptive published accounts of their countrymen before they headed south across the Channel. One iconic book after another, including those of Augustus Hare, helped shepherd visitors through the histories, sites and treasures of Europe, telling them all that they needed to know. Sometimes there was even a miserly nod in these writings to the less lofty and more practical details – hotel listings, recommended local doctors, train fares and such!

In modern day, though, much of that has largely faded. In place of learned travel tales, we have "travel agents" and "tour operators", with plenty in between. The eight-year old Association of British Travel Organisers to Italy (or ABTOI) is the London-based principle umbrella body which gathers together a good number of the Italy specialists in England. Its spokesperson, Carolyn Spinks, explains: "ABTOI is our country's only official travel industry association focused on Italy. It is a marketing consortium and helps to untangle some of the confusion in making quality choices on where to go and what to do and see in Italy. There is probably a nucleus of 200-300 small to fair-sized operators here in the U.K. addressing those matters. Some of them are one-man bands and a number of them may only arrange one trip per year to Italy". But for large and small alike, Spinks sees as her mission to turn the wattage up even higher. The well-made tailored tour for example, which caters to pinpointed tastes, is seeing increasing popularity. "About 40% of the agents and operators today are specialists, fixed on a particular interest group. We are seeing trips built around sports, gardening, food sourcing, painting and wine. Weddings in Italy are becoming more fashionable. Olympic fever brought a rising interest in cycling holidays. They are booming these days".

In other words, the travel industry involving Italy may be changing its size and shape and be going in new directions. But there are still constants. "We categorise that country", says Spinks, "as a *'Mature Market'* meaning that Italy as a destination remains stable". There may be temporary up or down fluctuations, "but Italy is *never* out".

# MINESTRA NEL SACCHETTO, OVVERO MINESTRA ANDRENELLI

By Elisabetta Venerosi Pesciolini

Cosa c'è di meglio in una fredda sera d'inverno di un'ottima minestra? Un piatto che ti riscaldi non solo le membra ma anche i sensi con il suo gusto delicatissimo?

Quella che sto per descrivere è veramente eccellente e proprio per questo particolarmente adatta ad occasioni "speciali".

Fa parte delle innumerevoli ricette di minestre a base di uova e parmigiano delle quali è ricca la tradizione gastronomica italiana, specie emiliana e marchigiana, come i passatelli, la stracciatella, la zuppa imperiale.

La "minestra nel sacchetto", che propongo qui, si discosta però dalla tradizionale ricetta bolognese per l'assenza del prosciutto.

La ricetta proviene dalla famiglia Andrenelli, originaria di Recanati, i cui discendenti vivono oggi tra Firenze e Roma ma non hanno abbandonato le proprie origini marchigiane continuando a soggiornare, almeno in estate, nelle Marche: ad Osimo, Cupra Marittima e Recanati.

Tra i membri più illustri di questa famiglia è giusto ricordare la figura di Vincenzo, medico condotto a Recanati tra la fine dell'Ottocento e la prima metà del Novecento. Vincenzo è annoverato tra coloro che maggiormente si adoperarono per combattere la terribile epidemia di Spagnola, scoppiata nella zona di Porto Recanati negli anni successivi al primo conflitto mondiale con circa 800 vittime, per fronteggiare la quale fu necessario ricorrere addirittura all'impegno dei sanitari del 64° battaglione Bersaglieri che, negli anni del conflitto, erano presenti con una compagnia nella cittadina marchigiana.

Di Vincenzo si ricorda soprattutto e ancora oggi in famiglia la grande sensibilità e generosità. E' noto infatti che quando si recava al capezzale di qualche persona in difficoltà economiche era solito lasciare, sotto il guanciale dell'ammalato, alcune banconote per potergli permettere l'acquisto delle medicine prescritte. Peccato che questa bella abitudine sia diventata desueta!

Non ci resta allora che consolarci con la nostra "minestra nel sacchetto" e magari pensare di proporla nel menù, nel caso ci dovesse capitare di avere ospite a cena qualche illustre esponente dell'*ars medica*, accompagnandola con il racconto dell'aneddoto e sperare che esso ispiri nobili sentimenti in chi la gusta.

Questa sofisticatissima minestra viene ancora oggi proposta dalla famiglia Andrenelli nelle grandi occasioni come il pranzo organizzato per festeggiare il matrimonio tra Francesco Maria Andrenelli , fratello di colei che mi ha trasmesso la ricetta e Cindy Barrett, cittadina inglese, innamorata dell'Italia, matrimonio che dura felicemente da venti anni, rallegrato dalla nascita di un bellissimo figlio e dalla fortuna di poter vivere immersi nella magica bellezza della campagna del Valdarno.

Ecco allora infine la ricetta fedele, avuta dalla bisnipote del nostro dottor Vincenzo, Luisa che ringrazio per avermela generosamente trasmessa.

*Iniziamo con gli ingredienti : 300 gr. di farina, 300 gr. di parmigiano grattugiato, 200 gr. di burro, 5 uova, noce moscata. Volendo si può aggiungere un pizzico di sale sulle uova, ma può anche essere omesso in quanto è già presente il parmigiano.*

*Come si lavora il tutto? Sbattere le uova con il parmigiano, poi aggiungere la farina ed il burro fuso, quindi la grattatura di noce moscata. Prendere un sacchetto di lino o cotone bianco. Con l'impasto preparare una palla, inserirla nel sacchetto, che verrà poi chiuso senza stringere troppo, perché il composto aumenta un pò di volume, ed immergerlo nel brodo. Far cuocere per due ore. Lasciar raffreddare, quindi estrarre l'impasto ormai rassodato e tagliarlo a fette, poi a strisce ed infine a cubetti di poco meno di un centimetro. La minestra, ora va nuovamente messa a ribollire nel brodo filtrato, fino al momento di andare a tavola.*

A questo punto, ringraziando gli avi, e chi ha mantenuto viva questa tradizione, non mi resta che augurare a chi legge di trovare presto l'occasione per provarla!

# ROMA SOTTERRANEA: THE FINE LINE BETWEEN SPELEOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

## By Helen Cheyne

It was a beautiful warm sunny February day and I was lying on my back on the grass in Augustus' Forum, soaking up the sun next to a huge base on which there once stood a colossal figure of Augustus himself, or perhaps of Julius Caesar (all that remains of the statue today is a giant footprint). I was also quite close to the bare walls of what had once been a picture gallery, where Augustus had displayed a collection of Greek old master paintings from the time of Alexander the Great. There was no one in sight – not one tourist. I had the Forum all to myself, and was feeling very fortunate to be there. However, I was covered in mud. Black, smelly mud. The kind of mud that collects in drains. For that is where I had been – down a Roman drain under the temple of Mars Ultor – as I am a member of a group of *urban speleologists* called "Roma Sotterranea". And going down drains is what we do. Our job that day had been to survey the ancient drain under the Forum, using a laser rangefinder and a compass. The data we were collecting would be used to plot an accurate map on a computer.

The drain had been rather low. I could only move along it by crouching or by crawling on all fours. And it was lined with a good twelve inches of mud and water. I had arrived at a point under the Forum where there was a right-angle turn, and it was impossible to go any further. The mud became so thick it sucked down the rubber waders I was wearing – and would not release them. I found myself well and truly stuck. However hard I pulled, all that happened was that my feet slipped out of my boots. I should add that the waders I am talking about are not those gentlemanly thigh-high ones used for trout fishing on highland lochs; they go all the way up to my *armpits*. My colleague, Ivano, who was still at the entrance to the tunnel shouted instructions to me on how to move my legs in order to get my boots out.

**Helen Cheyne**

His advice worked – and suddenly I was free. Although he was ready to come down the tunnel to pull me out. So, that is why I was now lying on my back on the grass in the sun; I had flopped down there – immediately after my struggle with the mud.

Roma Sotterranea is a non-profit organisation, founded in the year 2000, and dedicated to urban speleology in the city of Rome and its environs. Urban speleology is the exploration and study of man-made underground tunnels and chambers. The founders of Roma Sotterranea, Adriano Morabito and Michele Concas, realised that archaeologists frequently do not study and record subterranean sites as well as they might, simply because of the great challenges involved in working underground. There is no light, the spaces are cramped, and sometimes it is difficult to proceed without using ropes and tackle. In addition, in the case

of hypogea, or subterranean chambers constructed for the water supply (for example aqueducts, cisterns, drains, and sewers) there is often water, mud, or sewage to be waded through. These are situations that are best tackled by speleologists. Therefore members of Roma Sotterranea volunteer to assist archaeologists in their research. They do this in various ways: by carrying out a survey to map the area; by excavating or clearing wells or tunnels that have become filled with debris or mud; by exploring, photographing, and filming subterranean passages; by testing the air to check for poisonous gases; or by sending down a robot probe to film areas where it is impossible to pass.

The aim of Roma Sotterranea is thus to explore and study underground Rome: any type of tunnel or chamber – not only famous ones, which have produced finds of immense value and interest but also the little known ones all over the city which give us an idea of how the Romans lived.

Over the past 13 years, Roma Sotterranea has collaborated in a large number of prestigious projects carried out by various organizations, including the Sovraintendenza ai Beni Culturali di Roma Capitale, the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archaeologici di Roma, and the University of "La Sapienza", among others. Just recently the Municipality of Rome asked Roma Sotterranea to investigate and make a map of the foundations of a local school that had been built directly above an old Roman quarry. This was to ascertain whether the school's foundations were sound – a very important assignment. Some of the projects which Roma Sotterranea has been working on in recent years have been: surveying the drainage system under the Colosseum, mapping a Roman quarry at Villa De Sanctis on the Casilina, exploring and mapping the water tunnels under the Villa of Massentius; excavating and surveying Etruscan and Roman water tunnels at the archaeological site at Veio; exploring, surveying, and studying the underground chambers of the Roman insula under the Church of Santa Pudenziana; and exploring and mapping the Roman quarry and tunnels under the Villa Medici on the Pincio.

One of the biggest projects is surveying and studying the main sewer of ancient Rome, the Cloaca Maxima – together with an archaeologist from the Sovraintendenza ai Beni Culturali di Roma Capitale . The Cloaca Maxima was built so well that it is still used as a sewer today, after more than 2000 years.

At the moment Roma Sotterranea has 79 "active" members who work on the projects. These are people from all walks of life, including some archaeologists. The work they do for Roma Sotterranea is completely voluntary and, as most members hold down regular jobs, they work mostly at the weekends. The members meet regularly once a week at their headquarters on the Via Appia Antica to discuss how current projects are progressing, and to plan future activities. Social events, such as dinners and trips are also organised. One memorable event was a Christmas dinner, held at the headquarters, when the members were asked to cook famous dishes from Roman recipes, mainly from Apicius' cookbook, and to present them to the diners in ancient Roman style. These were then judged by taste and presentation by two distinguished archaeologists who had been invited specially for the occasion.

Although Urban Speleologists are not archaeologists, their work of collecting data from underground cavities, tunnels, and hypogea, constitutes a vital part of the research carried out on ancient Rome. As I myself can testify, their activities give them the thrill of exploring the past, as well as the adventure of making a descent into hidden, forgotten spaces underground. As I lay on the grass in Augustus' forum that day, gazing up at the beautiful, blue, cloudless sky – even though I was covered in mud right up to my waist – I felt exhilarated. And yes, privileged too. To be part of the great archaeological project to map the ancient places below modern Rome; to be part of Roma Sotterranea.

***For further information, see the Associazione Roma Sotterranea website: www.romasotterranea.com***

# COLLECTING ART AND THE PALE RIDER

By Olivia Cooper

"And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him" (Revelation 6:8). This, for many art collectors, is an all-too-accurate description of the taxman. In this article I will briefly explore what it is to be an art collector, the manner in which one holds one's collection and the potential tax issues which may arise. It is worth remembering that art values in general have been performing well, standing out as a bright gleam in the gloomy overall economic situation, and that a collection that may have begun on a whim can soon develop into a viable taxable asset in one's estate.

## *Why collect?*

There is one important question that needs to be asked before looking at tax issues: why become an art collector? This may seem an obvious question, but the answers are not necessarily as obvious. Collectors have a variety of reasons for collecting. For some it may be a passion for a period in history or a particular artist, for others the aim is to add diversification to an existing asset portfolio. Many collectors will wish not only to accumulate a collection that expresses their own passions but to safeguard it into the future so as to be able to pass it down through generations of family, creating a dynasty of collectors. Whatever the reasons, any tax planning undertaken must be tailored to the overall reasoning behind the collection. Naturally reasons change, and indeed one generation's view of how matters should be arranged may not be shared by the next generation, so tax planning should allow for a certain amount of flexibility.

There are a number of ways in which collectors are able to hold their collections, each with their own possible tax implications.

## *My name - my property?*

The most obvious way to hold any asset is in one's own name or in joint names with one's spouse or civil partner. In the short term this is certainly cheaper than holding your collection in a trust or company as there are no trustees or company administration fees. However, from a tax point of view there are the significant charges levied by Capital Gains Tax and Inheritance Tax to consider.

If your collection remains in your sole name then on death its value is considered part of your estate, and if your estate is taxable then Inheritance Tax will be charged at 40%.

The gift or sale of the collection or part of the collection may incur a liability to Capital Gains Tax which will be charged at either 18% or 28% depending on the owner's tax position.

## *A crusader trust?*

One possibility is to put the entire collection into a trust. The concept of a trust wherein the legal title and the equity title of an asset are held by different 'persons' is a curiously English concept with ancient historical roots. It was first developed at the time of the crusades by knights needing to safeguard their estates for their wives and children while they were busy fighting in the Holy Land.

Nowadays there are many different forms of trust both onshore and offshore. There are benefits to using a trust structure to hold one's collection as it can provide a means of protecting the collection on death, divorce or bankruptcy. From the point of view of taxation there is also the advantage that holding the collection in a trust takes the value of the collection out of one's estate. It is also relevant that a liability to Capital Gains Tax arises when any sale proceeds are distributed to a UK resident beneficiary of the trust rather than automatically on the sale of the asset. If, therefore, one's main concern is to ensure the continuance of a collection, making sure that it survives one's lifetime intact, then a trust structure may be appropriate.

It should be remembered however that where a UK domiciled individual makes a gift into a trust this action may give rise to a 20% Inheritance Tax charge. There is also the question of the ten-yearly charge of around 6% of the value of the trust's assets levied on the trust by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

## *A generous gift?*

Why not give it away? Gifts to a registered UK or EU charity will be tax exempt but caution should be used where the gift is made to any other entity, including an individual, as tax charges will almost certainly apply. Beware of Capital Gains Tax and particularly Inheritance Tax as its name is calculated to mislead contrary to popular opinion it is not only charged upon death.

When gifting away an asset beware of the 'potentially exempt transfer' rule. The person making the gift must survive the date of the gift by seven years for the value to pass out of the estate, otherwise the value of the asset will be counted back into the estate. The asset itself, however, remains with whoever received it.

A common mistake is for collectors to 'give' their collections to children or grandchildren but to retain the collection on display in their property. Unless properly undertaken, using for example the gift and leaseback scheme, such an arrangement will result in a 'gift with reservation of benefit' verdict meaning that the taxman does not recognise the gift has taken place because the benefit derived from having the collection has been retained by the original owner. The result being that the value of the collection is considered never to have left the original owners estate.

## *Rent-a-collection?*

A gift and leaseback arrangement involves the asset being gifted away, with the person making the gift 'leasing' back the asset and paying an annual rent or premium for this service. Such a scheme has its risks, not least under the 'Potentially Exempt Transfer' rule which still applies to gifts made under a gift and leaseback scheme.

## *Love of the nation?*

In the case of art collections one of the main areas of scope in tax planning is the 'Conditional Exemption'. Here the owner of a collection can defer the inheritance tax on those assets provided that the recipient of the assets gives an undertaking to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs that the assets will be looked after, will be kept in the UK and will be open to public viewing. The tax authorities have to be satisfied that the assets in question can be judged to be of pre-eminent importance to the nation's heritage. Despite this potential difficulty, this still remains a useful tax planning tool.

It should also be remembered that Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs accepts heritage property on death in lieu of liabilities to Inheritance and Capital Gains Tax (the Acceptance in Lieu Scheme). Once again, however, the asset or assets in question must be judged pre-eminent and of sufficient national, scientific, historic or artistic interest.

Running alongside the Acceptance in Lieu Scheme is the Gifts of Pre-Eminent Objects to the Nation Scheme, implemented in 2012 as a means of encouraging individuals as well as other bodies to gift works of pre-eminence to the Nation during their lifetime. An individual can give away pre-eminent assets in value of up to £30 million per year. The tax benefit is that the donor, the person making the gift, is given a tax credit of 30% of the value of the asset donated to be used against any Income or Capital Gains tax liability that occurs within five years of the date of gift.

## *To conclude ....*

It is in many ways heart-warming to know that the same trials and tribulations with the taxman that we suffer today were experienced by our ancestors. Benjamin Franklin is credited with remarking, in 1789, that 'in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes', and his sentiment was anticipated by Daniel Defoe in 1726 when he suggested that 'things as certain as death and taxes, can be more firmly believed'. Yet while one cannot avoid either of these two certainties, one can at least plan for them.

It is important to note, of course, that any collector should seek individual tax planning advice, most especially before any acquisitions or disposals. In this way collectors can maximise the enjoyment they derive from their collections while knowing that the taxman is kept at bay.

***Note: This article is not intended to be a complete guide to the law to which it refers. Specific problems should be referred to a member of the firm before any action is taken.***

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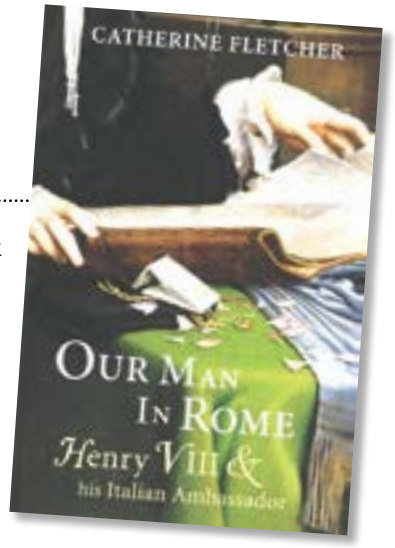
# BOOK REVIEWS

## OUR MAN IN ROME-HENRY VIII AND HIS ITALIAN AMBASSADOR

Catherine Fletcher The Bodley Head £20




No doubt the editors of Rivista thought that one of our Queen's men in Rome was well placed to review Catherine Fletcher's book on Gregorio Casali, Henry VIII's man in Rome from 1525 to 1536. So I must set out my lack of qualifications. I did not enter diplomacy from a youth spent trading pedigree horses and drilling troops. Nor have I (recently, anyway) raised soldiers for my sovereign or been besieged, with a pope, in Castel Sant'Angelo. I have not been simultaneously French ambassador to the court of Mantua nor spent time and trouble arranging ambassadorships in Venice and Hungary for my brothers. I have not tried to bribe at least two cardinals, or kidnapped an emperor's messenger, or broken open and decoded papal correspondence, or bribed sundry Italian theologians to construe Leviticus as forbidding a man to marry (as had Henry) his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon.

For Catherine Fletcher lets us see "the king's great matter" – his divorce, or technically the annulment of the papal dispensation to marry his brother's widow – from the other, Italian, end. It's an interesting approach, rather like Tom Stoppard's play about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The great men – Henry, Wolsey, Cromwell – are present offstage for the most part, barking orders and occasionally remembering to give Casali and his English diplomatic colleagues much-needed money. But the heart of the book is the narration of his increasingly desperate and imaginative attempts in Rome to persuade Pope Clement VII to grant Henry an annulment in the teeth of the resistance of the strongest military power in Italy at the time, Catherine's nephew the Emperor Charles V; the one man moreover who could restore Clement's Medici family to the rule of Florence. It is an account of court life and subterfuges, of a world we can recognise from the pages of Machiavelli.

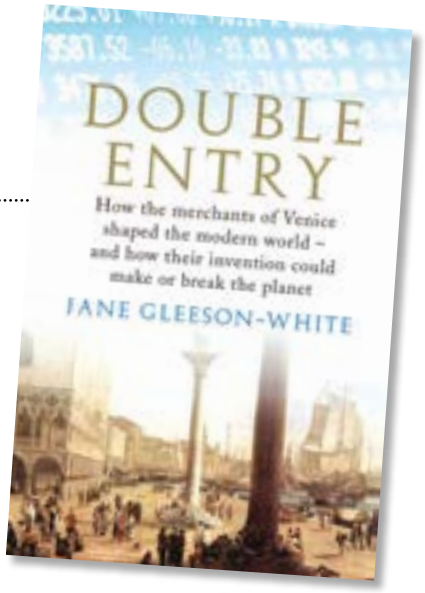
At the start of the book Casali, still a young man and a minor nobleman from Bologna, has Henry's and Wolsey's trust. Early Renaissance Europe was still cosmopolitan; there was no reason why an Italian shouldn't act for Henry in Italy any more than why Italians couldn't receive lucrative English bishoprics. We see the gradual change in attitudes as the English court realises that Clement will never grant the divorce and that the German princes, Lutheran though they be, may have found the right solution in breaking with Rome; and in consequence a growing suspicion of Casali, and Henry's stated certainty that his ambassadors would rather be reputed "entire Englishmen than Englishmen papisticate". Towards the end of his life Casali was complaining of "the ingratitude of princes". He claimed to have spent 30,000 ducats of his own money on the king's service – though it's fair to add that without his ambassadorial moniker he might not have landed a wealthy heiress.

Catherine Fletcher's book may daunt the general reader by its very density, the bewildering shift in the allegiances of so many Italian courts and their servants, and the manoeuvrings of popes and cardinals. But she writes well and clearly and, paradoxically, a good way to read the book is almost to forget about the divorce and simply to take it as a snapshot of its age, and of the hopes and ambitions of one family among many, the Casalis, for good jobs, new estates, wealthy heiresses and advancement. These ambitions are timeless.

***Tom Richardson***

# DOUBLE ENTRY: HOW THE MERCHANTS OF VENICE CREATED MODERN FINANCE

Jane Gleeson-White Allen & Unwin £12.99




Jane Gleeson-White's book is an entertaining essay about the history of the Renaissance and accounting. The first part of the book is a description of the evolution of accounting in modern times. The first chapters of the book are an interesting source of information about the man, Fra' Luca Pacioli, who emerges in the background of the Italian Renaissance.

Born in Sansepolcro, near Florence around the 1440s, Pacioli became known for his *Summa de arithmetica, geometria, proportioni et proportionalita.*

The chapter he dedicated to a revolutionary accounting method made him undoubtedly the father of double-entry bookkeeping. However, what emerges is how Luca Bartolomeo de Pacioli was also very well connected to the most important and influential people and places of this period in Italian history.

Finding himself in the right place at the right time and the success of double-entry bookkeeping went in parallel with the increasing wealth of Italian merchant families.

Monk, mathematician, magician and friend of Leonardo da Vinci (with whom he shared a house in Florence in 1499 and to whom he taught mathematics), Pacioli is believed to have been taught mathematics by Piero della Francesca - two names which placed him directly at the centre of the Renaissance.

The book describes Pacioli's life and travels. We see him in Sansepolcro in his childhood and it was there that he started getting involved with Piero della Francesca's studies on *abbaco* mathematics, before moving to Venice as an abbaco teacher himself, in what was at the time not only the financial capital of 15th-century Europe but what was equally helpful for him was that it was also the publishing capital of the world.

Pacioli's double-entry bookkeeping studies were so successful in Venice that his method soon became known as bookkeeping "alla viniziana". Calculating profit as a key element resulted in double-entry contributing immensely to the growth of the northern cities in Italy and towards the wealth of its merchants. It became the most prolific period in Italian art history.

Pacioli was in Rome under the protection of Giuliano della Rovere, the late Pope Julius II, with the privilege of having access to the Vatican library and consulting for the first time texts of Greek and Arabian mathematics, one of the first scholars in Italy to have been offered this.

Before leaving Rome for Naples, Pacioli took religious vows to become a Franciscan friar, the influential order to which both his patron Giulio della Rovere and Pope Sixtus IV belonged.

Constantly continuing his studies, we find him in Perugia, Zara and Urbino where his friend Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino and son of Federico, granted him access to his libraries.

It was to Guidobaldo that Pacioli dedicated the *Summa*, the sum of his learning, eventually published in 1494.

The fame of his book *Summa* spread throughout Italy and Pacioli received the most important recognition when Jacopo de' Barbari painted his portrait, now hanging at the Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte in Naples. In those days it was a way to make someone a celebrity.

Curiously Pacioli's portrait is considered a milestone not only in the history of mathematics, for its geometry, but also in history of art. In fact close to Pacioli stands a portrait firstly believed to have been Guidobaldo da Montefeltro and later identified as that of Albrecht Dürer, the German artist and mathematician, who was in Venice trying to discover the secrets of the new Italian paintings.

In 1494 Pacioli arrived in Milan, a city Ludovico Sforza had the ambition of transforming into the new capital of the Renaissance. There, we see Pacioli meeting Leonardo and teaching him arithmetic and helping with the mathematics of linear perspective for the creation of The Last Supper.

They started working on several projects including Pacioli's next book *De divina proportione,* written in honour of Ludovico Sforza and whose illustrations were sketched by Leonardo himself. Together they fled from Milan to Mantua, following the invasion of the city by French soldiers. They were offered shelter by Isabella d'Este and they later reached Florence.

Pacioli considered double-entry bookkeeping nothing more than the written expression of the working of a merchant's day to day business activities. By following his method, a merchant would have known exactly whether a business was doing well or not.

It was an important step forward in the history of business and trade, as well as in the way of measuring, later on, the growth of national economies. The development of the world accounting system had Pacioli's studies at its centre.

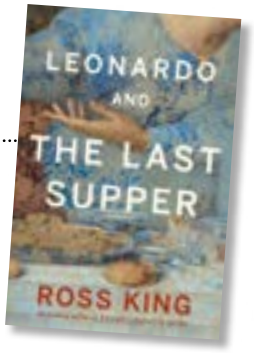
It is extraordinary how all this happened because of the accounting studies of this medieval monk having access to so many rare libraries in the golden age of Italian history of art. He was hardly known, yet was a true Renaissance man.

***Alessandro Iobbi***

# BOOK REVIEWS

## LEONARDO AND THE LAST SUPPER

Ross King Bloomsbury £20




This is the third of Ross King's books about heroes of the Italian Renaissance (the others being *Brunelleschi's Dome* and *Michelangelo and The Pope's Ceiling*). Ross King writes about The Last Supper, probably the most famous painting in the world after The Mona Lisa, and indeed a landmark in painting.

Ross King sets the story in the contexts of the political situation in Milan when it was painted between 1495 -98 and the biblical story. He considers in depth not just why and how it came to be painted, but also examines the biblical background and the myths and legends which have grown up around the protagonists – especially the apostle John the Beloved and Mary Magdalene (debunking the myths promulgated by Dan Brown in The Da Vinci Code). The food and drink depicted in the painting and the relationship with the initiation of the Eucharist as well as the accoutrements of the dinner table are included amongst other subjects covered by the book.

Leonardo (1452-1519) left Florence in 1482, leaving behind unfinished works and dissatisfied clients, for the court of Lodovico Sforza (Il Moro) at Milan, hoping to work as an architect and engineer. Instead, he was commissioned by his patron to work on a statue of a bronze horse on which he was to work on and off over the years, but was never to finish. The French occupiers of Milan in 1499 were to use the enormous clay model for target practice.

In 1494/5 Il Moro gave Leonardo the commission to paint the end wall of the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie, a Dominican monastery under the patronage of Lodovico. Not the obvious choice for the job and unskilled in the art of fresco, nevertheless, Leonardo could hardly refuse and he was to be well paid.

The Last Supper was an obvious choice of subject for such a position and Leonardo would have seen several in Florence, including works by Ghirlandaio and Castagno. It was not an easy subject bearing in mind the number of people in different poses all to be accommodated round one side of the table. Ross King describes how Leonardo would have set about this monumental task, sketching the characters he saw around him in the streets and markets of Milan, capturing faces and body movements in his tiny notebooks. King sets the scene in Leonardo's studio and in the refectory, describing his assistants and daily life in the Corte dell'Arengo, where Leonardo and his acolytes had their lodgings. It is likely that the faces of the apostles were taken from friends and courtiers as well as the people Leonardo would meet in the streets of Milan.

The art of fresco involved both precision and quickness and neither of these qualities were possessed by Leonardo. He was fascinated by the possibilities of working in oil paint, but for The Last Supper, he experimented with a mixture of oil and egg white to create a type of oil tempera. King goes into some detail as to how the artist worked, probably drawing his design directly onto the dry plaster with red chalk or black paint and gradually building up his layers of paint in a manner impossible with fresco. Leonardo wanted his mural "to have the chromatic panache of an altarpiece painted in tempera or oil rather than this more limited range of tones necessitated by fresco".

A nail hole in the wall in Christ's right temple marks the very centre of the painting, which the artist described as "the diminishing point". From that nail radiated out incised lines to create the sense of perspective – a technique pioneered by Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence. Leonardo created an architectural space according to the musical harmonies worked out two thousand years earlier by Pythagoras.

Leonardo based his Last Supper on the Gospel of St John and King draws on his extensive researches to describe each of the disciples, and their poses around the table and the meanings of their gestures. The identities of the apostles were confirmed in c1807 when a sixteenth century copy was discovered with the twelve names carefully painted underneath. King considers in some detail how Leonardo expressed in the painting his belief that paintings with representations of human figures must be done in such a way so that the spectator may easily recognise by their attitudes what may be "the purpose of their minds".

Whilst the artist was making his preparations for the work, designing the scaffolding, preparing the plaster, the King of France, Charles VIII was invading Italy to seize the throne of Naples. Lodovico was determined to see him off. Doubly worrying was the claim by the king's cousin, Louis of Orleans to the Duchy of Milan. These political machinations between Lodovico, the French and Emperor Maximilian were to continue off and on throughout the time of Leonardo's work on the painting.

Work on The Last Supper was interrupted by other commissions from Lodovico as well as Leonardo's own personal enthusiasms, including mathematical studies with his friend Luca Pacioli (see previous book review), for whose book, *Divine Proportion,* Leonardo did the illustrations. Work on The Last Supper stopped altogether in the middle of 1496 when he suddenly disappeared, having "caused a decided scandal". What that scandal was is not known, King suggests it may have been over payment. But whatever the reason, work had re-commenced by January 1497 and was finished a little over a year later.

By early 1499, things were going very badly for Ludovico; his friends were deserting him and his enemies were on his doorstep. When, later that year, he had finally been driven out, the new Duke of Milan, Louis XII, entered the city in triumph. The following day Louis visited Santa Maria delle Grazie to view the painting. He was so impressed he asked whether it could be detached from the wall and taken to France, only desisting on being told that to do so would destroy the building.

Because Leonardo did not paint in fresco, within a few years the paint began to flake, suffering a "defective adhesion" to the wall. These problems were made worse by the fact that the shoddily built refectory wall was damp, exposed to steam and smoke from the nearby kitchen and soot from candles and braziers. Subsequent years saw a door being cut into the wall, amputating Christ's feet in the process. Horrendous attempts

at restoration (including washing with caustic soda and over-painting, which turned Bartholomew's foot into a chair leg and Thomas's hand into a loaf of bread, caused more terrible damage. A final act of despoliation was caused when the refectory was hit by allied bombs during the last war but miraculously the end wall with its painting survived.

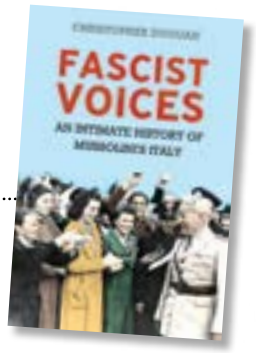
King's final words sum up the story of The Last Supper. "The world's most famous painting….no longer exists. But this ghostly evanescence has only enhanced its fame, making for endless interpretations and reinventions. Not only does it tell a story from the Gospels: it has become its own story, one of Leonardo's miraculous triumph followed by centuries of decline, loss and – finally five hundred years later – a kind of resurrection. Leonardo, perhaps, was right: what is fair in art does not entirely pass away".

Ross King's book well deserves to be read. It is not only erudite and scholarly, but thoroughly enjoyable too.

***Diana Darlington***

# FASCIST VOICES

Christopher Duggan Bodley Head £25




Way back in the sixties and eighties, when I was on post in Milan and Rome, the history sections of Italian bookshops were full of republican and partisan offerings on the Ventennio and the Second World War. Then I returned to Rome in 1996, and the shops groaned instead with works on Mussolini and fascism. In his excellent new book Christopher Duggan, author of *The Force of Destiny*, reminds us of the impact of 1991-2 in giving political and above all emotional space to a reassessment of fascism: the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in Italy of the so-called First Republic. There had been a few earlier signs of change, like Renzo De Felice's magisterial biography of Mussolini, criticised at the time for being too lenient; and I recall, somewhere around 1985, the huge but coyly named "Italian Economy in the Interwar Period" exhibition in the Colosseum, no less. But nothing prepared me for the revisionism of the 1990s and beyond.

We know already what the Duce thought of his fellow-Italians (not much, at least towards the end). What Duggan has done is to ask what they thought of him and his regime, and to attempt to answer the question bottom up by using primary sources that until now have been relatively untapped: ordinary people's diaries, their letters to the Duce (around 1500 a day in the mid-thirties), and reports on the public mood and signs of dissension by OVRA and PolPol, the secret police. How far can this raw source material be trusted? In his preface, Duggan sets out very honestly the difficulties that historians have had in interpreting it. In an age of censorship, diarists had to write prudently, writers to the Duce may have had ulterior motives such as pensions, jobs or local vendettas, the OVRAs of this world had their own jobs to keep and reported accordingly, and so on. But he does show beyond doubt, I think, that an awfully large number of Italians believed in the Duce personally, didn't always ask for a reward and indeed often eulogised him anonymously. Even in an age in which Futurism and D'Annunzio infected the language with florid declamation, some tributes to the Duce, especially those written by women, sound extraordinary to modern ears. There was support too for fascism, though to a lesser extent in that the party leaders were widely perceived as corrupt and "if only Mussolini knew…" His daughter Edda was one of the few who in the regime's last years could tell him the truth, and her account of Sicily in 1942 is heart-rending. "For the time being", she concluded, "people are still saying that the Duce does not know what is going on. Now you do".

The book follows the rise and fall of fascism chronologically, but it is at heart an emotional history of the period and of concepts like fear, faith, obedience and pride in Italy. More concretely, it traces the mantras of the age: the unfulfilled hopes of the Risorgimento, the Italietta of the bourgeois liberals, the "mutilated victory" of Versailles, the red peril and breakdown of order in 1919-20, resentment of the effete plutocratic democracies of Britain and France, Italy's rights as a "proletarian" nation to a place in the sun, the glorification of war and so on. Duggan offers a particularly fascinating analysis of the areas where fascism and Catholicism found common ground and those, like education, where they did not. Indeed, many of the paeans to fascism had religious undertones, with Mussolini as the Christ-figure working and suffering for Italy. He believes that consent for the regime was widespread up to the first few months of war in 1940, and that despite the aggressive turn taken by fascism after Ethiopia (the anti-Semitic legislation and the increasingly militarised conformity) the younger generation, who had never known any other form of government, wanted a radical, purified fascism, not a return to democracy. For much the same reason, it is argued, the growing disaffection with the Duce's rule in 1941-3 owed more to dislike of Germany and a desire for peace than to any demands for a different form of government.

This is a rich and thought-provoking book. A foreign reviewer should tread especially warily. Whether or not fascism was popular in its time has been a highly political issue ever since the end of the Second World War, as Duggan explains in his brief epilogue. The Left had their own reasons for maintaining that the great majority of Italians were innocent blameless victims; the Right were happy in the early post-war to take part in a victimless conspiracy of silence. Times have changed, but history should still be about truth. Read Duggan's last five pages, of tributes left at the Predappio shrine, from among the tens of thousands there, and you do realise how easy it is to forget or distort one's country's past. Politicians should not say that Mussolini "never killed anyone". Not nearly as many as the Nazis or Soviets; but kill them he did.

***Tom Richardson***

# BOOK REVIEWS

## DANTE'S INFERNO

Hunt Emerson with Kevin Jackson  Knockabout Books  £14.99


One could be forgiven for thinking that almost every year sees something published on Dante. For example, 2006 saw the publication of Barbara Reynolds' biography of Dante, in 2009 there was Guy Raffa's *The Complete Danteworlds,* A.N. Wilson's book, *Dante in Love,* came out in 2011, whilst 2012 saw a new and sensitive translation of *The Divine Comedy* by J G Nichols, himself a poet. But what copy of Dante's *Inferno* could possibly make a ten-year-old boy stop, reach for it and start reading? A miracle no, just a highly entertaining cartoon version published last year (2012) by Hunt Emerson and Kevin Jackson.

I have always had my doubts about cartoon books; the delights of *Asterix*, for example, have always passed me by regardless of which language they may be in and despite the fact that we have over twenty in Italian, not to mention the French editions. So, somewhat reluctantly I picked up the Emerson-Jackson version of the *Inferno* . . . .and did not put it down until I had read it from cover to cover. It is hugely entertaining and, whilst some of it can come over as a little coarse, as Kevin Jackson points out in his commentary at the end, all the 'grubby bits' are pure Dante. Indeed, Jackson's commentary at the end is just as interesting as the cartoon part. He discusses the *Inferno* and its basis in the numbers 3 and 9, in particular, and goes on to give a brief outline of Dante's life and times together with a section on the structure of the *Inferno*. He also points out that this version of the *Inferno* "is in no way intended to be a crib for idle students" even though the cartoon "stays surprisingly close to the storyline and characters of the poem".

All I can say is that, whilst I have dipped in and out of Dante's *Inferno* in the past but never sat down to read it from beginning to end, I was left rushing to the bookcase to retrieve my copy with a view to doing just that. So if, like me, you have postponed the joy of Dante's *Inferno* for all too long, read this cartoon version first - it will give you all the inspiration you need. For those of you who already know the *Inferno*, this will make you chuckle, as Hunt Emerson has slipped in some splendid little extra jokes and has illustrated the whole most wonderfully.

***Sandra Fox***

## REMEMBERING THE BRITISH-ITALIAN SOCIETY IN YOUR WILL

From time to time, the Society receives sums left to it by members in their wills and is immensely grateful to all. Such gifts have not only allowed us to continue our present activities but also to launch new initiatives (such as the biennial Rooke Prizes in Italian studies, which the Society is able to fund as a result of a bequest from the late Rosemary Rooke. These prizes reward undergraduate and graduate work in UK universities).

If you enjoy the Society's events and activities and would like them to continue for the benefit of future generations of Italophiles, leaving a legacy to the Society is one way of ensuring that they will. Any bequest, no matter how small, will be very gratefully received. It would be helpful to our planning to know of your intentions.

We emphasise the importance of consulting a solicitor about drawing up a will (or a codicil to an existing will): real difficulties can result from the well-intentioned efforts of the do-it-yourself testamentary draftsman. In this connection, the Society will gladly send your solicitor any information that is required.

If you are interested in doing this, please contact our Membership Secretary, John Jinks, on **020 8150 9167** or by e-mail **jj@british-italian.org**

# FORTHCOMING EXHIBITS IN ITALY

## *Until 13 January 2014:*

***"From Donatello to Lippi. Prato's School"*** *The exhibition covers an important period of Italian history of art: Donatello, Michelozzo, Maso di Bartolomeo, Paolo Uccello, Filippo and Filippino Lippi.*

**Museo Civico, Palazzo Pretorio, Prato**

## *Until 5 January 2014:*

***"French Impressionists"*** *An exhibition of 12 nineteenth-century masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, including some of Degas' ballerinas and paintings by Monet, Cézanne, Renoir, Pissarro, Fantin Latour and Paul Giugou. The exhibition "Impressionists at Palazzo Pitti" is divided into two sections: the first on outdoor scenes and the second on indoor ones. The Museé D'Orsay lent the 12 Impressionist masterpieces after the Palazzo Pitti Gallery of Modern Art contributed to the Paris exhibition at the Musée de l'Orangerie entitled "I Macchiaioli des Impressionistes Italiens".*

**Gallery of Modern Art, Palazzo Pitti, Florence**

## *Until 2 February 2014:*

***"Royal Carriages – A Ceremonial Parade of Popes, Princes and Kings"*** *A unique display of ten carriages from the 18th and 19th century. The exhibition presents the carriages which once belonged to Carlo Alberto, Pope Pius IX and Vittorio Emanuele II. It also includes superb carriages and sedan chairs of the Italian royal family, the Kings of Naples and Sardinia, and the Grand Duke of Tuscany.*

**Juvarra Stables, Reggia di Venaria Reale, Turin**

## *Until 2 February 2014:*

***"Cézanne and Italian Artists of the 20th Century"*** *An exhibition depicting Cézanne's influence on Italian artists.*

**Museo del Vittoriano, Rome**

## *Until 12 January 2014:*

***"Antonello da Messina"*** *The exhibition offers an overview of the artist and his times, with insights into chronological details, an analysis of his collaborations, similarities and differences, imitators and masters, but concentrates also on a profound study of the poetic intelligence of an artist who succeeded in capturing the psychological overtones and most intimate characteristics of the human soul.*

**MART - Museo D'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto**

## *Until 19 January 2014:*

***"Unstable Territory, Borders and Identity in Contemporary Art"*** *The exhibition showcases work by international artists encouraging visitors to reconsider the notion of territory in a contemporary world. Whilst the latter is increasingly characterised by the obsolescence of such concepts as the nation state and borders, there is, at the same time, a return to new forms of nationalism and renewed interest in the individual in relation to a specific area or community.*

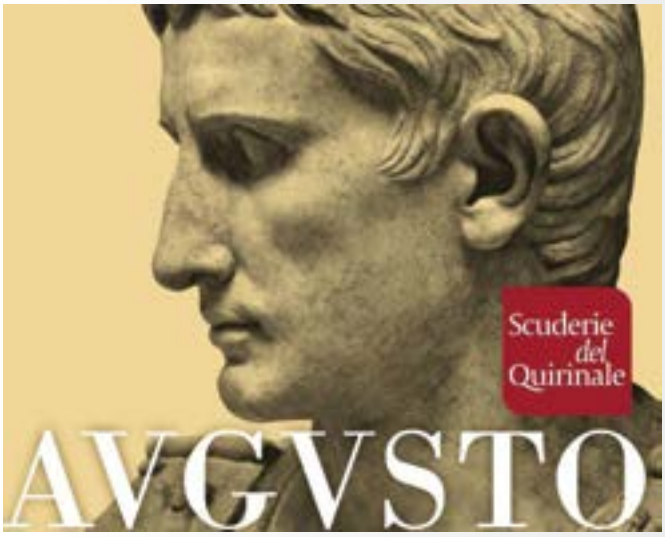
**Centre for Contemporary Culture Strozzina Palazzo Strozzi, Florence**

## *Until 2 February 2014:*

***"Cleopatra, Rome and the Enchantment of Egypt"*** *This exhibition charts the relations between Rome and Ptolemaic Egypt. Objects in quarried stone, in glass, bronze, ivory etc. portray ancient Egypt's environment, art and history. The show also explores the Roman years of Queen Cleopatra (46-44 BC), including her influence on customs and religion.*

**Chiostro del Bramante, Rome**

## *Until 9 February 2014:*




***"Augustus"*** *2014 marks the 2000th anniversary of the death of the man considered the founder of the Roman Empire and its first Emperor: Augustus died an old man in Nola on 19 August 14 AD with his wife Livia by his side, accompanied by her son Tiberius into whose hands the Empire was to fall only hours later. Augustus was an exceptional figure. No one achieved greater triumph in war or was more measured in time of peace than he.*

**The Scuderie del Quirinale, Rome**

## *1 February 2014 – 15 June 2014:*

***"LIBERTY. A style for Modern Italy"*** *The exhibition will focus on Italian Liberty style ranging from Art Nouveau, to painting, sculpture, furniture, fabrics, jewels and other items representing a modern style, particularly for Italy. The artists include painters such as Boldini, Previati, Nomellini, Baccarini, Kienerk, Grubicy de Dragon, Segantini, Pellizza da Volpedo, Longoni, Sartorio, De Carolis, Marussig, Zecchin, Chini, Casorati, Mucha, Boccioni, Dudreville, Innocenti, Bocchi and Viani. Scuptors such as Bistolfi, Ximenes, Trentacoste, Canonica, Rubino, Andreotti, Wildt and Martini are also featured. Stained glass and wrought iron by Mazzucotelli and Bellotto, ceramics by Galileo Chini, Baccarini, Cambellotti, Spertini, Calzi, and posters by Dudovich, Terzi and Hohenstein complete the exhibition.*

**Musei San Domenico, Forlì**

## *Until 28 February 2014:*

***"The World of Leonardo"*** *The most important and multidisciplinary exhibition dedicated to the artist and engineer Leonardo da Vinci. It is for audiences of all ages and offers 3D experiences.*

**Exhibition Centre, Piazza della Scala, Milan**

## *Until 20 June 2014:*

***"From Jerusalem to Milan"*** *On occasion of the 1700 years since the Edict of Milan of 313 AD when Emperor Constantine agreed to grant freedom of worship throughout the Empire, the exhibition illustrates the historical, political and religious contexts in which Christianity developed, including the philosophical and religious currents which interacted with its gradual emergence.*

**Civico Museo Archaeologico, Milan**

# ANNUAL EVENTS IN ITALY

### *Until early January 2014*

***"Mercatini di Natale"*** *Special Christmas markets are held in one of the main squares of most towns until Epiphany. See website guide below:*

**www.mercatini-natale.com**

### *27 February - 4 March 2014*

***"Carnival in Italy"*** *Carnival is now celebrated in most towns. There is some flexibility in relation to the above official dates. Celebrations begin a bit earlier in some cities, as in the case of Venice (15 February - 4 March, see: www.carevale.venezia.it), and end a bit later as in the case of Milan, which celebrates the Carnevale ambrosiano. The main differences lie in the liturgical year, whereby Lent starts four days later than in the Roman Rite. In Milan Carnival continues until "sabato grasso" making it Shrove Saturday instead of Shrove Tuesday, and Ash Wednesday is moved to the first Sunday of Lent. This was because St Ambrose, then Bishop of Milan, was away from the city and asked to postpone celebrations for the beginning of Lent for a few days until his return. See the menu Carnevale A-Z of the following website:*

**www.carnevaleitaliano.it**

### *Throughout the Year*

***"Sagre and Festivals"*** *All regions offer special events throughout the year. See the following website for calendar of events:*

**www.regioni-italiane.com/calendario-sagre**

# FORTHCOMING EXHIBITS IN THE UK

### *Until 10 November 2013:*

***"Leonardo da Vinci: the Mechanics of the Man"*** *The exhibit is focused on Leonardo's anatomical investigations during the winter of 1510-11 when he carried out some 20 autopsies at the University of Pavia. His studies resulted in detailed illustrations of human bones and muscle groups. The 18 double-sided sheets, the artist crammed over 240 individual drawings and notes in his distinctive mirror-writing.*

**The Queen's Gallery, Edinburgh**

### *1 November 2013 – 16 March 2014:*

***"The Genius of Castiglione"*** *One of the great artists of the Baroque, Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione (1609-1664) was perhaps the most innovative and technically brilliant Italian draftsmen of his time. He practised as a painter but won fame for his drawings and prints. The Royal Collection holds the finest surviving group of the artist's works.*

**The Queen's Gallery, London**

### *Until 22 December 2013:*

***"Emilio Greco: Sacred and Profane"*** *Although best known for his distinctive portrait busts, Emilio Greco also received a number of religious commissions. This show marks the centenary of the artist's birth and includes bronze and terracotta sculptures, as well as studies for his monumental religious commissions.*

**The Estorick Collection, London**

### *15 January 2014- 19 April 2014:*

***"Giorgio de Chirico: Myth and Mystery",*** *featuring rarely-seen sculpture together with a sampling of his drawings.*

**The Estorick Collection, London**

### *19 March 2014-15 June 2014:*

***"Veronese: Magnificence in Renaissance Venice"*** *This show is the first monographic show on the artist ever held in the UK.*

**National Gallery, London**

### *30 April 2014- 21 September 2014:*

***"Building the Picture: Architecture in Italian Renaissance Painting"***

**National Gallery, London**

# FORTHCOMING BRITISH-ITALIAN SOCIETY EVENTS

### *Wednesday 20 November 2013:*

***The Leconfield Lecture***
*The State of Italy. Talk by Bill Emmott*
**Venue : Italian Cultural Institute**
**39 Belgrave Square London SW1X 8NX**
**6.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.**

### *Monday 9 December 2013*

***Christmas Party at Mele e Pere***
**Venue 46 Brewer Street**
**London W1F 8TF**
**7.00 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.**

*Further events and exact dates had not been finalised at the time of going to press. Please check on the BIS forthcoming events page of the website for up-to-date info. This information will also be supplied by Elisabetta Murgia, the Events Secretary, closer to the date (s) of the events.*

Rome's *nasoni* for le *quattro zampe*. City authorities have developed an animal-friendly "bowl" which has been attached to some of the capital's most traditional public drinking water *fontanelle*, the *nasoni*. The bowls allow dogs and cats, with or without owners, to drink easily from the fountains. Twenty-one bowls have already been installed and others will be put in place during September. The city's aim is to ensure the widest possible coverage throughout Rome.

Earlier than anyone else, in an era before moulded plastics and poligrip, the Etruscans 2700 years ago knew all about the real *minding of the gap* and how to achieve the "confident smile" on the faces of the well-to-do. In the tombs of Etruria, archaeologists unearthed the remains of mankind's very first dentures and they must have been quite a mouthful. As accomplished goldsmiths, the Etruscans artfully fashioned flattened gold bands, affixing the required number of replacements to fill unsightly voids in the mouth. Strictly speaking, the replacements weren't *false* teeth at all. Choppers were removed either from departed human beings or deceased animals, bolted to the band of gold which in turn would be anchored to the surrounding teeth.

Scarcely one month into the annual hunting season this fall, Italian *cacciatori* managed to kill 13 people and wound another 33. Some of the victims were nowhere near the woods. One injury victim was out cycling on a country road and another gardening in his back yard. Yet another, aged 16, was fatally wounded by a close friend. Most of those applying for the yearly hunting licences in Italy are aged 65 to 78.

2013 marks the seven hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Tuscan author-poet Giovanni Boccaccio, famously known for the *Decameron*. The Universities of Manchester and Bristol honoured the occasion with a joint conference in July, while the British Library in London, in partnership with London University (and with support from BIS), followed suit at the end of September with an all-day event entitled "Boccaccio & Company: An Introduction to the Decameron". Major literary celebrations were also staged in the United States, while a number of lectures, performances and exhibits took place throughout Italy. And the postal authorities there even issued a handsome blue-tinted 70-cent stamp with an image of the eminent writer.

Whilst Italians boast holding the European record for owning the greatest number of mobile phones, Italy's public telephone booths and tokens are gradually being phased out. This reduces vandalism and maintenance costs. Telephone kiosks will remain in schools, barracks and hospitals. In towns, the idea is to leave just one phone box per district. However, local residents have a right to protest against the removal of public phones in their area.

The newest jewel in Italy's museum world to make its debut is Cremona's state-of-the-art Museo del Violino. Opened on 14th September, it brings together instruments and artefacts from the golden age of lutherie. Located in what once served as a school of violin making, the Museo del Violino consolidates under one roof the various distinguished collections that had previously been dispersed around town.

The new museum also features a spectacular Auditorium in the round, where concerts will be held.

Milan is the first city in Italy to offer the new car-sharing service, initially launched in Germany, giving drivers more flexibility. Car2Go, which is a Mercedes-Daimler subsidiary, allows drivers to pick up and leave off a Smart car in any of the special parking places outlined in blue throughout the area covered by the service. No forward booking is necessary and the cost is €17.40 an hour. The idea is to use the Car2Go service rather like BikeMi, for short journeys, picking the car up in one area of the city and leaving it off in another. At present 150 Smarts are available, with another 450 arriving in the autumn. All of them have automatic transmission, with a manual option.

His real name, Braccio di Bartolo, may ring very few bells or, indeed, his nickname, *Nano Morgante*. If he were to win any prizes at all, they would be for sheer grotesqueness. Yet even with his obese girth billowing au naturel out over the tortoise he is riding, this figure of him in the *Fontana del Bacchino* near the north-eastern entrance to the Boboli Gardens in Florence rivals other public monuments such as Cellini's *Perseus and Medusa* or Michelangelo's *David*, for popularity among visitors to the city.

One of five dwarves in the mid-16th-century service of Grand Duke Cosimo I, Nano Morgante experienced honour and humiliation in equal measure in the Medici court at the Palazzo Pitti. As jester for his master, he was subjected to degrading tasks such as wrestling in the nude with monkeys and being treated as a deformed clown. Yet art historian Giorgio Vasari who knew him well affirmed that he was intelligent and cultured. Evidently, Cosimo thought so as well: when he wasn't being debased, Nano Morgante served as his master's close advisor and travelling companion throughout Tuscany, played cards with his lord's wife Eleonora di Toledo, was housed, fed and kitted out in finery. He was granted permission to marry, and given land by Cosimo on which to build a home. Other artists like Bronzino and Giambologna also immortalised Braccio di Bartolo. But it is sculptor Valerio Cioli's version, absurdly atop a tortoise, that has over the centuries won the greatest affection among viewers.

Archaeologists discover Hadrian's hall under one of Rome's busiest roundabouts at Piazza Venezia. It was built in AD123 and could seat 900 people. This complex, unearthed thanks to excavations to build a new underground metro line across the city, is considered to be the most important Roman discovery in 80 years. It is the biggest find in the area since the Forum was uncovered in the 1920s.

The centre, built by the Emperor Hadrian, offered three massive halls where Roman nobles flocked to hear poetry, speeches and philosophy tracts while reclining on terraced marble seating. The excavations will soon be open to the public.

# SNIPPETS

Six scientists and one government official have been convicted of manslaughter for failing to properly communicate the risk of a major earthquake in L'Aquila and they were found guilty meaning they could spend six years in jail. This is sending chills through the scientific community. Defenders say Italy's legal system is one of the world's most "garantista" — or protective of civil liberties. Defendants are guaranteed three levels of trial before a conviction is considered definitive, and both sides are granted the right to appeal. Hence, this case will have to go through an appeal and the three levels of trial before a final decision is taken and may result in a conviction depending on the judge of the last level.

An Italian judge of the first level determined that the men were guilty on multiple charges after they gave a falsely reassuring statement six days prior to the 6.3-magnitude earthquake in L'Aquila, Italy, on 6th April 2009, which killed 306 people and left the city in ruins.

Biking is becoming so popular in Milan that finding a place to park is proving a problem. According to the newspaper *La Repubblica* the city administration has now written to condominium administrators saying that they should respect the right of cyclists to leave their bikes in the communal space of the buildings where they live or work. Only places of designated historical and cultural interest are exempt. The *Comune* has also requested buildings provide special racks and places to secure bikes.

One out of every two Italians buys counterfeit goods, according to a survey conducted by Coldiretti; they have a particular penchant for clothing bearing the (fake) labels of famed fashion houses. Fourteen percent of Italian consumers are attracted by high tech gimmicks, unfussed by the true origins of the item. Where they show far greater wariness is with medicines and cosmetics, preferring no-risk authenticity. Coldiretti estimates that purchases of counterfeit goods in Italy, overall, amounts to 6.9 billion euros per year.

They go by many names: living walls, landscape walls, vertical gardens, bio walls, flower towers. They are those buildings with flanks "paved" in vegetation from top to bottom. A Paris museum boasts one. Ontario, a university. Singapore, a mall. Los Angeles, a restaurant. Bringing plants closer to home is not entirely new: the ancient Romans grafted arbours onto their villas. America's famed "Ivy League" universities have long mostly been clad in ivy. But now Milan is outdoing them all with twin 24-floor towers, the work of architect Stefano Boeri. His so-called *Bosco Verticale* soars above a trendy area known as Isola, near the Porta Garibaldi railroad station. Boeri calls his creation an example of "metropolitan re-forestation" and when the full complement of vegetation is in place, it will count 700 trees, 5000 shrubs and 11000 plants.

We are no closer to identifying the landscape surrounding Leonardo da Vinci's famed portrait of the Mona Lisa, but not for want of trying. One Tuscan academic thought he recognised the seven-arch stone Ponte a Buriano over her left shoulder, in the lower right quadrant, a bridge which still stands, just to the north of Arezzo. Another art historian claimed that the backdrop was Bobbio. Most recently, two Urbino-based researchers, Olivia Nesci and Rosetta Borchia, claimed that the countryside seen in the portrait is of Montefeltro as seen from the heights of Valmarecchia. Other experts insist that it is simply an idealised backdrop behind the Mona Lisa and no more. The debate continues!

Milan Fashion Week Autumn 2013 wakes up to alarm bells. Italian fashion has always carried the banner of world fashion for its exclusive designers. What was Milan now so suddenly alarmed about? The rise of London as a new fashion power is a threat. It rivals Italy for its coverage, buzz and young talent. Key commercial brands, such as Tom Ford and Burberry are deserting Milan for London. It is time Italy's fashion world stopped being complacent and feared for its future at home.

Milan's fashion elite is at last beginning to realise that allowing those young talents to take centre stage is the best way to keep Italian fashion relevant and in demand.

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## WE WISH TO REMIND MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH-ITALIAN SOCIETY'S BACKGROUND AND THE BRAVERY OF ITS FOUNDER MEMBERS

In 1941, a group of British academics, journalists, broadcasters and former residents of Italy decided to form the Friends of Free Italy, echoing the "Friends of Italy" founded in London by Mazzini in 1851. The new group resolved to remind their countrymen of the true and immortal Italy which transcended the Axis regime with which the country was at war.

Around the same time, a parallel group of Italians formed the Free Italy Committee which became the Movimento Libera Italia. Following internal dissension, the Movimento merged with the Friends and in 1945 became the British-Italian Society which it has remained ever since. Its aims and objects were redefined as being "to increase the understanding in Great Britain of Italian history, Italian institutions, the Italian way of life and the Italian contribution to civilisation, to increase the knowledge of the Italian language in Great Britain, and to encourage and promote the traditional friendship between Great Britain and Italy".

The aims of the Society are to increase the understanding in Great Britain of Italy and Italian civilisation and to encourage friendship between the two countries.

The Society is interested in the political, economic and social development of Italy as well as its culture and history – and as much in the Italy of today as in the glories of the past.

Regular lecture meetings are held on topics covering a wide range of subjects. The annual Leconfield Lecture, in memory of the Society's first Chairman, Lord Leconfield, is always given by a speaker of particular distinction.

Various social events and occasional visits to places of interest are also arranged.