ISSN 1759-6939

RIVISTA

n.393 2010/2011 The Magazine of the British-Italian Society

Pilgrims in the Jubilee year 1300. Miniature from the Chronicle of G. Sercambi

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The Magazine of the British-Italian Society
n.393 2010/2011
www.british-italian.org

Co-Editors: Alexandra Richardson and Georgina Gordon-Ham
E-mail addresses:
arr@british-italian.org
gg@british-italian.org

SOLICITING ALL BIS MEMBERS
Future issues of "RIVISTA" will be as good as you make them. May we strongly encourage you to pick up your pen (or put fingers to your laptop keyboard) and send in your contributions for consideration. Provided there is a British-Italian angle, articles on history, art, humour, travel, miscellany, as well as book reviews are all welcome.

Printed by Hobbs the Printers Ltd, www.hobbs.uk.com

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EDITORIAL

Dear Members

It is with pleasure that we present you the 2010/2011 issue of RIVISTA. With more time in hand this year, we have been able to assure you of an earlier delivery date. You will also notice a number of changes to the contents. For a start, this year's magazine features more and meatier articles. We have had more time to broaden the type of topics, too. So, yes, there are still travel, human interest features and book reviews. But this issue gives greater attention to BIS events throughout the year (including the ones that took place after last year's printing deadline), as well as to sports, music, humour, science and religion. We had hoped to galvanise more members into contributing articles to *their* magazine. Regrettably, the response was such that we had to widen our net to include a number of "outsiders" whose names may be unfamiliar. In the long run, that may not be such a catastrophe: some of these external contributors now hope to become BIS members thanks to their brush with RIVISTA! Thanks to the generosity of the editor of *The Strad*, we have been granted permission to reprint a fascinating article that has already appeared in their pages on lesser known violin makers in Cremona.

Last year, we had, sadly, to say *Arrivederci* to the outgoing Italian Ambassador, Giancarlo Aragona. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome his successor, H.E. Alain Economides.

We thought it might be interesting to take an occasional wander down memory lane, delving into the pages of the RIVISTA of yesteryear. One particular article which originally came out in the October 1947 issue especially caught our eye. While most of the articles for the magazine are written by the English about the Italians, here was one that showed the other side of the coin. It was written by a young Italian lady, Silvia Silvestri . In the article, Ms Silvestri takes on the English and shares her thoughts about living among the natives shortly after the war. We thought we'd take one further step: we would commission two young Italians of today to update impressions. Federica Cozzani and Davide Marchisio, who both live in London, gamely rose to the challenge. We decided to run the two pieces side by side. Harking back to practices of the past, we run them in Italian.

With this issue, inspired in part by Susan Kikoler's *Sotto l'Ombrellone,* we are introducing a grab-bag "bits and pieces" column which promises to be totally unpredictable. We see it as consisting in small snippets of news, consequential and inconsequential information and a bit of absolute trivia. If it elicits the occasional smile on your face, then we have done our job.

At the risk of wandering beyond our perimeters, may we urge members of the British-Italian Society to take greater advantage of the interesting events put on in the course of the year. Not only are the speakers invariably top notch, but these occasions are the perfect opportunity to catch up with friends and fellow members over refreshments afterwards. Great effort has been put into these programs and sometimes, the turnout has been a bit… "lonely".

We wish you all a *Buon Natale e Buon Anno*!

Alexandra Richardson and Georgina Gordon-Ham

RIVISTA – REMEMBERING MARIA FAIRWEATHER

It is with great sadness that Rivista notes the death this year of Lady Fairweather, wife of the Chairman (1996-2000) of the British-Italian Society. She died at home in Tisbury on March 8th. Maria wore many hats with distinction over the years: mother, interpreter, *ambasciatrice* and writer. Many will remember her grace and charm in presiding at Villa Wolkonsky, the residence of the British Ambassador in Rome, a posting that Patrick and Maria held from 1992 to 1996. During that time, she began her first book, *Pilgrim princess: a life of Princess Zinaida Volkonsky,* a biography of the Russian aristocrat who lived on the grounds and so inspired the gardens. Maria Fairweather went on, in 2005, to publish another meticulously-researched book, *Madame de Staël*. We shall all miss her.

BRITISH-ITALIAN SOCIETY EVENTS 2010-2011

Friday 26th November 6:30 p.m – 8:30 p.m.	Italian Cultural Institute 39 Belgrave Square London SW1X 8NX	**The LECONFIELD LECTURE** ***Caravaggio, a Life Sacred and Profane*** Andrew Graham-Dixon talks on his masterly readings of Caravaggio's paintings; how the artist created their drama and humanity and, in so doing, revolutionised art.
Tuesday 14th Dec. 6:30 - 10:30 p.m.	Grange Fitzrovia Hotel 20-28 Bolsover Street London W1W 5NB.	***Travelling from South to North – Italian Views on Britain in the Risorgimento*** *Talk by* Maurizio Isabella ***Followed by the Christmas Party***

EVENTS FOR 2011: PLACE AND DATES TO BE CONFIRMED

Planned Events in 2011 will include at least one talk to mark the 150th anniversary of Italian unification, probably centring on the figure of Sir James Hudson, the first British Ambassador to a united Italy.

20th January	**House of Commons Reception**.
28th February	**City Foundations and Rituals in Etruria** Talk by Dr Corinna Riva
8th March	***Immigration and Asylum in Italy*** Talk by Bruce Leimsidor
April or May	**Fund Raising Event** ***In Celebration of 150 Years of Italian Unity***
June	**AGM** ***History of Ice Cream*** Talk by Dr Melissa Calaresu (Caius College Cambridge)
September	***I Macchiaoli*** Talk by Christopher Garibaldi
October	***Landmark Trust*** Talk by Lorella Graham
November	**The LECONFIELD LECTURE** ***Italo Calvino*** Talk by Martin McLaughlin, Fiat-Serena Professor of Italian Studies, Oxford

Venues and exact dates had not been finalised at the time of going to press. This information will be supplied by Elisabetta closer to the date(s) of the events.

ITALY'S LEARNED ACADEMIES

By Alexandra Richardson

On October 6, 2009, BIS members attended a talk at the British Library which could not be reported in the last issue, as Rivista was going to press.

Jane Everson and her associates, led by Denis Reidy, head of Italian and Modern Greek Collections at the Library, took us through a "where-we-are-now" account of the long-term project her team are engaged in, putting the British Library's wealth of material concerning the Learned Academies of Italy onto a more accessible database. Until now much of the material in their possession, reckoned to be probably the finest collection outside Italy, had been catalogued in such a manner as to be difficult for scholars to retrieve.

The some 600 Italian Academies, which flourished from the early 16th century until the mid-18th century, were groupings of thinkers, brought together to debate and to write about high-minded issues of mutual interest. The disciplines they covered were in such areas as astronomy, theatre, poetry, politics, linguistics, music and painting. The Academies acted as the focus for experiments and innovation, and served to disseminate knowledge. They helped to inspire the founding of the Royal Society in England. Everson explained that by revising the retrieval system along themed lines, future scholars would find it easier to study and shed light on the wealth of cultural and social life in Italy over the last 600 years.

The first phase of the project focused on Naples, Bologna, Padua and Siena, and the second phase, which has just received funding for the next four years from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, will cover Rome, Venice, Ferrara, Mantua and other centres, and also will include research on the materials which the database contains. Members were able after the talk to view and even handle some of the Academies' publications held in the British Library.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Rt Hon.Tony Baldry
Mr Paul Bishop
Ms Canzonieri
Mrs Etta Carnelli – De Benedetti
Ms Fatima Carvalho
Mr Matteo Cerri
Mrs Marluska Chalmers
Ms V. Codias
Ms A. Day
Prof Richard Dyer
Sarah Dunant
Perdita Fraser
Mr G. Grandi
Miss Sally Anne Gross
Mr David Hales
Elizabeth Hersey
Mr & Mrs P. Humphreys
Ms Niamh Lane
Mr Marco Mancini
Mr & Mrs C. McGovern
Ms F. L. Montero
Jeremy P. Moore
Mrs W. L. Nash
Mr Glauco Pazzaglini
Mr & Mrs Riesenman
Robert Rietti
Dr Paul Roberts
Mr Valentine Rossetti
Simona Sangiuolo
Ms S. Sanson
Ms Sarah Saunders
Nelly Stefanova
Davide Taliente
Mr R. C. Taylor
Mark Thompson
Judith Wade

THE BRITISH-ITALIAN SOCIETY – CONTACT DETAILS

Membership secretary:
John Jinks
020 8150 9167 jj@british-italian.org
skype: member-ship

Events secretary:
Elisabetta Murgia
020 8451 6032 elisabetta@british-italian.org

THE LECONFIELD LECTURE
HADRIAN, THE ETERNAL EMPEROR

By Diana Darlington

The 2009 Leconfield Lecture was presented by Dr Paul Roberts on 25 November 2009 at the Italian Cultural Institute, London.

Dr Roberts is Head of the Roman Section in Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum, with responsibility for all of the Roman collections other than sculpture and wall paintings. His research focuses on aspects of day-to-day life of the ordinary people of the Roman world. He is an archaeologist and has taken part in excavations in many places in the Roman Mediterranean, particularly in Italy. Currently he is co-directing excavations in the Roman town of Forum Novum in northern Lazio.

For his lecture, Dr Roberts took as his theme aspects of the life and continuing influence of the Emperor Hadrian, drawing on the exhibition, "Hadrian, Empire and Conflict" held at The British Museum in 2008.

Diana Darlington, Co-Vice Chairman, and Dr Paul Roberts

Hadrian was born in 76 AD in Rome, of a wealthy senatorial family which made its money in the olive oil trade in Spain. His father died when Hadrian was still a boy and through family connections, the Emperor Trajan became his guardian. These imperial connections were strengthened on his marriage to Trajan's great-niece, Sabina.

Hadrian's autobiography, sadly lost save for a papyrus fragment, formed the basis of the fourth century "Historia Augusta" from which much of what is known of Hadrian's life was drawn. Marguerite Yourcenar's acclaimed "Memories of Hadrian" helped to re-establish Hadrian's importance in the twentieth century.

Hadrian succeeded Trajan as Emperor in 117 AD and inherited an empire that stretched from Britain and Germany in the North, Spain in the West, Armenia and Mesopotamia in the East and much of the north coastal regions of Africa, as well as Egypt, to the South; large parts of the three continents which comprised much of the then known world. It was a difficult time for the empire with rebellions in several of Trajan's newly conquered lands. Hadrian saw that this was the time to stabilise and consolidate the empire, not continue its expansion. He evacuated Mesopotamia, Assyria and Greater Armenia, at the same time maintaining his image as a strong military man. In 132 AD he put down with great ferocity the Jewish Bar Kokhba revolt and the Hadrian exhibition contained several poignant relics of that time, bronze vessels and other family treasures taken hurriedly by the fleeing rebels. Their large bronze door keys were a sad reminder that they hoped, in vain, to return to their homes.

In 121 AD Hadrian began the series of tours of the empire which were to keep him from Rome for more than half his reign, something which the Senate disliked intensely.

As a man, he was complex; intelligent but controlling and not particularly well-liked by his peers, though he did ingratiate himself with the populace on his accession, when one of his first acts was to remit 900,000 sesterces of taxes, ceremoniously burning the tax records in the Forum. It is unlikely this was done from any feelings of philanthropy.

His passion for all things Greek led his detractors calling him "Graeculus" – "Little Greekling" and Greek culture flourished with his encouragement during his reign. His keen interest in art and architecture led to his greatest legacies to the modern world. The empire saw a building boom. Hadrian's great Wall, built to delimit the most northerly of the empire's boundaries remains today (and has spawned countless modern-day spin-offs in the North of England in the form of Hadrian Beer and even Hadrian ice cream).

This passion for architecture and huge building projects arose, not just from his deep personal interest, but can be seen in terms of a political and dynastic priority. In Rome, he instigated a massive building programme. The Pantheon stands as a lasting testament and with that masterpiece of Roman architecture, St Peter's and Florence Cathedral's domes, and

Hadrian in military dress (photo by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)

Smirke's Reading Room at The British Museum could follow. The other great architectural relic of Hadrian's Rome is his tomb, now the Castel Sant'Angelo. The imperial villa complex at Tivoli which he built will be yielding up its glories for many years to come. These projects were lasting legacies and influenced our environment down to the present day.

Hadrian's love for the young Greek, Antinous, has caused speculation down the centuries – was Hadrian gay? We shall never really know the exact nature of this relationship and after Antinous drowned mysteriously in the Nile in 130 AD (by accident, murder or suicide), Hadrian honoured the boy's memory by what became the cult of Antinous. He was depicted variously as the gods Osiris, Silvanus and others. The magnificent statue of Antinous as Osiris from Tivoli was a major feature of the exhibition.

Hadrian died at Baiae, on the Bay of Naples in 138AD, having adopted Antoninus (Pius) as his heir and further securing the succession and stability of the empire by ensuring that Antoninus in turn adopted Lucius Commodus and the young Marcus Aurelius.

Whilst little now remains of Hadrian's autobiography, he did leave us with some final thoughts before he died, which may shed some light on Hadrian the man, rather than Hadrian, the Eternal Emperor:

"Little soul, little wanderer, little charmer,
Body's guest and companion,
To what places will you set out for now?
To darkling, cold and gloomy ones –
And you won't make your usual jokes."

SEASONS' GREETINGS

TO ALL MEMBERS INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING CORPORATE MEMBERS:

ENIT – Finmeccanica UK Ltd. –Mediobanca – Pirelli International Ltd. – UniCredit HypoVereinsbank

and also to all the organisations which have contributed towards Rivista. A special thank you to The Italian State Tourist Board.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES AT 2 AUDLEY SQUARE

By Alexandra Richardson

Sixty-eight BIS members gathered on December 15th of last year at the University Women's Club to celebrate the approaching holidays, enjoy a buffet dinner and listen to a captivating talk by the English novelist Sarah Dunant concerning the last segment of her Italian Renaissance trilogy, a book entitled "Sacred Hearts". Dunant was a superb lecturer that evening and spoke for nearly 45 minutes without a single written note to guide her. Perhaps this should not come as a surprise considering that she once worked as an actress and also as both a radio and television presenter and thus was entirely at ease and in command of her subject in front of an audience. Indeed a pinch of theatricality crept in to her presentation.

Dunant took us through her background: she read history at Newnham College Cambridge for three years, worked in the media and then began writing books in 1983, largely crime thrillers at the outset. With time, she told us, her lifelong love of history – coupled with a *Eureka* moment on the streets of Florence with her two daughters – steered her towards a totally different *genre* , namely historical fiction. Confessing openly to an adoration of Italy, she would set three of her novels in Italy. The first to come out was *The Birth of Venus* in 2003 about a headstrong Florentine teenager, Alessandra Cecchi. In 1492, the year Christopher Columbus discovered America, her father commissions a handsome young artist to come paint the family chapel. Alessandra falls in love with him but her father has arranged for her marriage to an older man. Dunant artfully braids together politics, painting and romance with the heroine showing all the signs of early feminism. *In the Company of the Courtesan* (2006), her second book, the scene shifts to licentious 1520s Venice, with a lush historical portrait of the no-less-assertive Fiammetta Bianchini and her life as a Serenissima courtesan.

But it was actually her third and most recent novel, *Sacred Hearts,* which brought her to our BIS evening event. The book is set in 1570 Ferrara, and the heroine is the 16-year-old Serafina who is forcibly committed to the convent of Santa Caterina. The author prefaced her talk to us with some very stark realities. In the Renaissance period, noble families produced large families and parents rarely could afford the soaring cost of wedding dowries for all their female offspring. The sad upshot was that while one daughter *did* marry, for the most part all the others were dispatched to convents for the rest of their lives. And thus, Dunant reminded us, it was estimated that up to half of all noblewomen became nuns. She discussed conditions generally awaiting these young girls, how none of them could ever hope to regain their freedom from those cloistered precincts. Yet within those confines, the convent was often a centre of culture and the nuns could, for example, sing, play music and write, to an extent not possible on the "outside". The lecture concluded with a short reading of her work.

Well-delivered and fascinating, but sombre food for thought at our Christmas gathering!

Novelist Sarah Dunant

THE ROOKE PRIZES 2009

The judges of the 2009 Rooke Prizes named the following winners:

UNDERGRADUATE PRIZES

Philip Lis (Oxford)
'The "depressione ciclonica" of causality: Carlo Emilio Gadda's detective fiction'

Joseph Sartorius (Leeds)
'Influence, mimicry and cultural identity: a new framework for Sienese-Florentine artistic interactions in the late middle ages'

Rachel Wellfair (Bristol)
'The representation of trauma in autobiographical writing: *Volevo solo vivere and Scalamara*'

Each winner received a prize of £200.

POSTGRADUATE PRIZES

Fabio Camilletti (Birmingham)
'Memoria, mitologema e *Pathosformel* ne *Le ricordanze*'

Katrin Wehling Giorgi (Oxford)
'"Back to the caul": Matricide and the element of the maternal in the works of Gadda and Becket'

Each winner received a prize of £250. The awards were presented at the meeting of the British Italian Society, which took place on Thursday 25th February 2010 before the talk by Judith Wade on GRANDI GIARDINI ITALIANI, at The University Women's Club, 2 Audley Square London W1K 1DB

GRANDI GIARDINI ITALIANI

By Susan Kikoler

As a young student in Italy, Judith Wade soon discovered it was no simple matter trying to visit Italy's many private gardens. Hardly any were open to the public and those that were had Machiavellian visiting hours designed to deter all but the most enthusiastic horticulturalist, while brochures were unheard of. Something needed to be done: the owners themselves had to be approached. Thus she decided to change the system.

Even with her later PR background, having worked for the Aga Khan in Sardinia, this was to be a daunting task requiring much ingenuity, powers of persuasion and lateral thinking. Italians, by nature, are highly individualistic, and initially the idea of a national network did not appeal. However, after meeting Susana Walton and being inspired by her experience in creating the gardens of *La Mortella* on Ischia, in 1997 Judith Wade decided to create *Grandi Giardini*.

Having been given a tour of the Marzotto family gardens near Vicenza (in the owner's Ferrari!), Judith set about inventing a novel way of introducing the locals to its statue-filled splendours with an Italian version of an English Easter Egg Hunt. Three thousand children invaded the grounds, vying with each other to fix the correct leaf on to the appropriate tree. Her idea was launched – soon *Grandi Giardini* began to grow with much help from the Italian press and, later, from Italian television.

However, Judith soon came to understand the complex individual problems faced by garden owners and authorities. The gardens at Caserta, for example, had up to 800,000 visitors a year, but all revenues went to the State and none to their upkeep. She had to try and convince government bodies of the advantages to be gained through greater support, such as job creation and an enhanced local economy.

She began to champion the concept of the self-governing and financially independent *Ente Murale,* such as the Villa Carlotta, famed for its topiary, at Tremezzo, Como – an idea that appealed to many owners' desire for self-expression.

Grandi Giardini today is a network of 75 gardens throughout the length and breadth of Italy. It includes famous delights, such as the Hanbury Gardens at Ventimiglia and the Villa D'Este on Lake Como, but also little known jewels such as the Mitteleuropean Palazzo Coronini Cronberg in Gorizia and private estates like Grazzano Visconti, near Piacenza, whose owner Luchino Visconti, (great-nephew of the film director), had created the short documentary originally planned to be shown at the beginning of the talk.

A technical hitch prevented the film from being shown - normally this might have been a disaster, but Judith Wade is a remarkable and charismatic woman, with a happy and vivid turn of phrase, who conjured images in our mind without need of illustration.

With much support today from Credit Suisse, *Grandi Giardini* flourishes as a testament to Judith Wade's dream and tenacity. She describes her role as that of a grain of sand in an oyster – certainly an irritant at times, but without which there would be no pearl.

"No borders to culture" is Judith Wade's mantra and her "necklace" now stretches even beyond the Italian borders to the gardens of Palazzo Parisio in Malta, and attracts visitors from as far as Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic who flock to the Parco del Castello di Miramare at Trieste.

Her network encourages research and the spread of expertise, for example in fountain restoration. Plants are exchanged. The 17th century Botanical Gardens of Catania University now have one of the largest and most important seed banks in Europe. Visitors' services have expanded from bars to restaurants to small hotels. There are art and nature trails. Some families have branched out into farming and wine production. Many gardens are hired for film locations or, like *La Venaria Reale* near Turin, are the settings for concerts and recitals.

Yet there is still scope for the idiosyncratic – near Padua, a family fleeing the plague in 16th century Venice, created a garden with 600 fountains. Today they are all computerised but the elderly owner (unnamed) still reserves the right to switch them on only if he likes the look of the visitors! The Reinhardt Gardens in the Esse valley, near Cortona, is rebuilt from scratch every single year by its owner while Pralormo Castle, near Turin, now vies with the bulb fields of Holland every spring with its display of 50,000 tulips.

As a young student, Judith Wade managed to visit the Boboli Gardens in Florence. On 27th January 2010 the latest garden to join *Grandi Giardini* was the Torrigiani Malaspina, Florence's biggest private garden, which lies directly opposite – a happy symmetry.

Grandi Giardini encourages conservation, employment, scientific research and beauty. It provides a legacy not just for Italians but for all who love gardens and the ability of man to forge beauty from nature – a remarkable achievement by a very remarkable woman.

THE WHITE WAR – LIFE AND DEATH ON THE ITALIAN FRONT 1915-1918

by Alexandra Richardson

Sixty people, including HE Iztok Jarc, the Ambassador of Slovenia and members of the British-Slovene Society, attended the talk on 10th March given by Mark Thompson on his book "The White War".

Thompson began his talk by setting out the reasons for our gap in understanding this brutal chapter of the history of World War I on the Italian Front. He attributed this, in part, to poor reporting on the part of the English press and to the inefficiency at the outset of the Italian propaganda effort. Aided by a screen, maps and images of the terrain, the author took us through the tangled history of the conflict as it played out in the rugged mountains of north eastern Italy.

A full book review of "The White War" appeared in the last issue of Rivista.

PIRANDELLO IN DOUBLE, TRIPLE AND MULTIPLES

By Alexandra Richardson

"For a great many years now, I have been assisted in my artistic labours by a sprightly young helpmate whose work remains as fresh today as when she first entered my service. Her name is *Imagination*. There is something malicious and subversive about her; indeed her style is generally felt to be bizarre. She delves into her pocket and brings out a jester's jingling cap, rams it onto her flaming coxcomb hair and is gone. She is off to somewhere different every day. Her great delight is to search out the world's unhappiest people and to bring them home to me to turn into stories, novels and plays". *Imagination* trawled busily for Luigi Pirandello his entire professional life, "bringing home" an astonishing array of characters to people his works.

Born on the outskirts of Girgenti (today's Agrigento) in 1867, Italy's greatest modern playwright would add a coda to that description of how inspiration came to him: "The enigma must remain an enigma and at the end there is to be no conclusion but only a question mark".

In a talk for BIS members on 22nd April, the Ferrara-born Robert Rietti – who himself counts a long and rich background in the performing arts as stage actor, film director, radio broadcaster, translator and dubber – took on the challenge of looking at and interpreting the oeuvre of the Sicilian author. In the course of his life, Pirandello was to write 43 plays in Italian and further ones in dialect. He wrote countless articles, poems, short stories, novellas and books as well.

Born on the south coast of the island of well-to-do parents who made their money in sulphur mining, the family moved to Palermo in 1880 when Luigi was 13 years old. Pirandello completed his studies in Rome and Bonn and began teaching at a private school for young ladies in Rome. With time, writing crowded out all else and he abandoned the classroom. In 1894 at the age of 27, he published his first collection of short stories, ***Amori senza Amore***.

Increasingly, his work became preoccupied with the problem of identity: nothing is what it seems, nothing is predictable. The individual is constructed, then promptly deconstructed. As Rietti noted in his talk: " the moment [Pirandello] looks at an individual, he sees him in double, in triple, in multiple forms, until his head reels…for him, an individual is only one of the infinite personalities which has – for the moment – the upper hand over all of the others". All somewhat like a never-ending Russian matryoshka doll!

In 1934, the playwright was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for "his bold and brilliant renovation of the drama and the stage".

Following the lecture, Rietti performed a short one-act monologue entitled "The Man With the Flower in His Mouth".

LANCIA: THE ART AND ENGINEERING OF ITALIAN CAR DESIGN

By Charles de Chassiron

In mid-May 2010, the Society held a well-attended joint meeting with the Lancia Motor Club of Great Britain, at which the President of the LMC Dr Paul Bishop gave an overview of the history of one of the most famous names in Italian motor industry history. The new venue we used, Heythrop College in Kensington, has a garden and drive where we were able to have six splendid cars of this marque on display after the talk (see illustration).

The LMC was founded around the same time as the BIS (in the late 40s), and we have had excellent relations since I was invited to attend a splendid 'raduno' of vintage cars held in Covent Garden piazza in June 2007. David Bieda of the LMC and I reconnected after nearly 40 years when we recalled that we had been at Cambridge together, and he invited me last year to attend a summer reception at his home for a group visiting Italian Lancia owners. That all gave us the idea for the joint event.

Lancia's history goes back over a century, and Paul Bishop described the innovative engineering genius of Rodolfo Lancia, who graduated from designing bicycles to cars, producing at least 1500 vehicles even before World War I – in fact several armies in that conflict employed their transport. In the 1920s the Lambda became famous, both as a racer and as a saloon, and in the 30s the Aprilia followed. After WW II the firm, now run by Lancia's son Gianni, initially struggled, but its racing models like the Appia revived its reputation in the 50s, the golden age of races like the Mille Miglia, and Paul's many excellent slides illustrated these cars' lasting appeal and their beautiful lines. He showed us the remarkable 'pillarless' construction (ie no strut between the doors) and the long bonnets of the Flaminia, Flavia and Fulvia, the last being the dream sports car of the 60s. Thereafter came the sale to Fiat, which meant a range of new models like the Delta and Thema. In Paul's opinion, Fiat will almost certainly want to keep Lancia as part of its stable, shared now with Chrysler, though he admitted that the marketing had not always matched the engineering, particularly in Britain, and the marque's reputation had long been dogged by a rust problem. But Lancia is indubitably still a potent national symbol.

The Club gathers British enthusiasts regularly for meetings at race tracks and country estates, and Paul's enthusiasm –evidently he first became keen on these cars while still a medical student – was very engaging. We are very grateful to him for a fascinating talk, and to David Bieda for helping us to organise it.

Lancia cars on display

THE DOLPHIN IN ITALIAN ART

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

This year's AGM held in June marked the end of The British-Italian Society 2009/2010 events calendar before the summer recess. It was followed by a most interesting talk on 'The Dolphin in Italian Art' by Charles Avery, a distinguished art expert and Trustee member of the British-Italian Society.

Dolphins have fascinated man for centuries and have long played a role in human culture. They have often welcomed travellers when cruising in the Mediterranean or other seas, as they skip and dance in whole schools alongside ships. Prompted by the publisher Thames & Hudson to write about the meaning of their logo, Avery explained how his study pursued these delightful noble intelligent and friendly creatures as they swam their way through art over the centuries going right back to Greek mythology.

He took us through an illustrated journey along the dolphin trail "The trail started from antiquity (when the creature – a mammal, not a fish, of course - was associated around the Mediterranean Sea with more gods and ideas than one would ever imagine)". This trail continued into the Byzantine Empire and into the Middle Ages, when the dolphin also took on Christian connotations when the cross-bar and shaft of the anchor were re-interpreted by Christians as the cross of Christ and the dolphin as a symbol of the Saviour. They began to identify the animal with Christ and the Resurrection and then with the Virgin Mary. The most prominent examples are to be found in the 6th century AD with the "triumphal arch" of the Byzantine church of San Vitale in Ravenna. Dolphins also appeared in heraldry; several families in Europe included dolphins in their coats of arms. However, the most celebrated claimant to the dolphin was the crown-prince of France, known as the Dauphin (heir apparent or dolphin in French).

The dolphin theme continued in the Renaissance with artists such as Raphael, Donatello, Giambologna, Mantegna and Dürer. Apart from the decorative arts all over Europe, Avery noticed "the dolphin playing a supporting role" in frescoes by the Carracci brothers for the famous ceiling of the grand gallery of Palazzo Farnese in Rome, and in fountains such as the one by Bernini in Piazza Barberini with the Triton Fountain, commissioned by his patron, Pope Urban VIII. Then there is a small version in bronze of Gianlorenzo Bernini's celebrated marble statue of *Neptune and Triton* in the V&A in London. The dolphins' journey continued into the 19th and 20th century, with dolphins clinging to cast iron Victorian lamp posts on the Thames Embankment, bronze dolphin sculptures by David Wynne along Cheyne Walk (Boy with a Dolphin) and near Tower Bridge (Girl with a Dolphin).

However, dolphins were not only to be seen in the visual arts, such as coins (decadrachm showing the head of the nymph Arethusa surrounded by dolphins or the coinage of Tarentum, modern Taranto with the image of its mythical founder, shown as an athletic youth riding bareback on a dolphin), pottery (a drinking vessel with dolphins and octopus in Eretria around 500 B.C.), mosaic (the Roman mosaic where dolphins confront each other on either side of a trident), frescoes (for example in classical and Italian Renaissance art the figure of Arion and the dolphin appear in the masterly fresco cycle in the Camera degli Sposi by Andrea Mantegna for Francesco Gonzaga his patron of the Arts), paintings (Albrecht Dürer's painting of Arion) and sculpture (the *Venus de'Medici* or *Venus Pudica*, which today is an exquisite example of classic Greco-Roman statues in Florence or Giambologna's famous sculpture of the dolphin in Bologna), but also in literature. These are just some examples quoted from the study. Charles Avery then goes on to quote some of the writers who were fascinated by these charming creatures starting with the Greek comedian Aristophanes (around 434 BC) in his comedy *The Frogs*:

"Where the dolphin loves to follow,
Weltering in the surge's hollow,
Dear to Neptune and Apollo;
By the seamen understood
Ominous of harm or good;
In capricious, eager sallies,
Chasing, racing round the galleys …"

Aristotle in his *History of Animals*, Book Nine [ed. 1862, p. 275, 2], wrote of the dolphin, "… it appears to be the swiftest of all animals, whether marine or terrestrial. They will leap over the sails of large ships".

Centuries later, Pliny described their friendly and rather protective behaviour: "It is not afraid of a human being as something strange to it, but comes to meet vessels at sea and sports and gambols round them even when under full sail."

In the Renaissance they were sometimes thought to presage bad weather.

More recently William Butler Yeats wrote *"That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea" in Words for music perhaps, and other poems* of 1932.

A more practical use of dolphins was an ornamental one "Another, especially Venetian, use of dolphins is on the grand, lyre-shaped, bronze door-knockers... these had an *apotropaic* function, to repel enemies and evil spirits from the portals on which they hung".

Charles Avery ends the journey in search of the dolphin, one of the most popular mammals in its varied manifestations in art with a whole chapter devoted to *"Rule Britannia"* on the pair of dolphins which frames the star of the Order of the Garter on the stern of the Royal Barge by James Richards, Master Sculptor and Carver in Wood to the Crown, and lastly with Trafalgar Square with William McMillan's Art Deco mermaid and the sculptures of dolphins unveiled in 1948. The talk was based on Charles Avery's book *A School of Dolphins* recently published by Thames and Hudson.

The **Triton Fountain** with dolphins by **Bernini, Piazza Barberini, Rome**

ARTSTUR
Italian Art & Culture

FLORENCE TOUR - 5-9 January 2010
Michelangelo, Bronzino, Cellini and Giambologna: Elegance and "Maniera" in the High Renaissance

On 24 September 2010 there will open in Florence in Palazzo Strozzi an exhibition of one of the outstanding painters of the High Renaissance and Mannerism - Agnolo Bronzino (1503 - 1572). He became the Court Painter to Duke Cosimo I de Medici (1519 - 1574) who established the Medici return to rule Florence as dynastic leaders. The amazing return of Florence to a new renaissance during the 16C, after the sack of Rome in 1527, enabled the Tuscan Capital to regain a parallel primacy in the Arts with Rome, Capital of the Papal States. This was due to Cosimo having reunited in Florence some of the main artists of the period namely Andrea del Sarto, Pontormo, Bronzino, Ammannati, Cellini and Giambologna. The only artist he was unable to attract back to Florence was Michelangelo. It is this return to an artistic supremacy of Florence which we will explore. Conducted by the great Renaissance sculpture expert, Charles Avery, we will look at the sculpture produced before and after the Cinquecento by Michelangelo, Giambologna, Cellini and others. Rosa Maria Letts will show us the paintings of the period centred on the Bronzino exhibition in Palazzo Strozzi and his contemporaries in major Churches and Palazzi.

THE PATH OF CHRISTIANITY ROME AND SOUTH - 31 March - 5 April 2011

This tour explores some of the early Christian churches in Rome and three great abbeys to the South of Rome. In Rome we stay at the Hotel Bernini Bristol in Piazza Barberini, an elegant 5 star hotel with a wonderful roof restaurant with views over Rome. It is well placed for the best shopping in Rome. During our stay we visit St. Peters Underground where, beneath the great Renaissance Basilica lie layers of Roman and Medieval remains including the tomb of St. Peter. Also our visit includes some of the more beautiful and interesting early Christian churches, all with Roman origins. From Rome we head south to visit the glorious Gardens of Ninfa and three great Abbeys - Fossanova, Casamari and Monte Cassino.

THE SOUTH WEST OF SICILY
26 May - 31 May 2011

This tour concentrates on Greek and Roman sites in the South West of Sicily. This allows us to concentrate on sites that have had recent renovations or new excavations and on those not normally visited on such tours. We are based in Villa Athena in Agrigento for two nights. This 18C villa is beautifully positioned below the Valley of the Temples and enjoys wonderful views particularly in the evening when the temples are floodlit. En route to Mozia we will stay one night in Marsala at the Delfino Beach Hotel. Then we stay two nights on the island of Pantelleria. This beautiful island, half way between Sicily and North Africa, is home to three 'Imperial Heads' - Caesar, Titus and either Agrippina or Antonia, mother of Claudius, which were exhibited in the British Museum in 2010. We stay at a lovely hotel in a beautiful position by the sea but with an awful name - Dream Exclusive Hotel!

Further information on our tours can be seen on our website: www.artstur.com or by contacting us by email: artstur@googlemail.com or by telephone: 020 7235 6650.

NOT JUST FELLINI–THE FILM MUSIC OF NINO ROTA

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

The first venue at Heythrop College to open the 2010/11 programme of BIS events was a talk by Richard Dyer, Professor of Film Studies, King's College London, to coincide with the film season at the BFI and his recently published book *Nino Rota: Music, Film and Feeling*.

During his long career Nino Rota was an extraordinarily prolific composer. He was remembered mostly for Fellini's films, Francis Coppola's *The Godfather* and Zeffirelli's Shakespeare adaptations. He wrote more than 150 scores for Italian and international productions from the 1930s until his death in 1979. They included popular film comedies to melodramas, neo-realism to Visconti and Fellini. "Music just poured out of him", commented Dyer. Apart from music for cinema, Rota also composed operas, ballets and dozens of other orchestral works.

Richard Dyer focused on Rota's music showing a series of extracts with musical excerpts from films, such as *Molti sogni per le strade; La domenica della buona gente; Amici per la pelle; War and Peace; Amarcord,* giving an idea not only of the range of his work but also of its consistency, including a fascinating and even disconcerting mixture of feeling and irony. There is a sense of flow from one theme to another. Dyer called it "20th century music which has its own place".

Nino Rota had an empathy with people and places, "a fondness and sympathy for characters". His film music style is "characterised by a certain good humoured energy verging on satire... His motifs allow one to be aware.... The camera is what you see the world of the film through". Rota's practice is related to some of the major ways music is used in film, including the motif, musical reference, and the difference between diegetic and non-diegetic music. "His music is in the world and out of the world", explained Richard Dyer.

To conclude this musical experience by Richard Dryer was an anecdote by Etta Carnelli – De Benedetti, Nino Rota's niece, who happened to be present at the event. She recalled how her uncle would answer phone calls or other inopportune callers with a screeching voice pretending to be the maid "Pronto, il Maestro non c'è, è appena uscito". One of these more persistent callers was Francis Coppola who wanted Nino Rota to write the score for *The Godfather*. Coppola finally decided to go and ring Rota 's door bell himself, and on this occasion Rota happened to open. He accepted to let him in mainly because he was attracted by Coppola's sandals. This was the unusual beginning for his musical relationship with the Godfather's director.

Professor Richard Dyer

THE REBIRTH OF THE VIA FRANCIGENA: THE PILGRIMS' WAY FROM CANTERBURY TO ROME

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially from every shires ende
Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende…

Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400), 'The Prologue to The Canterbury Tales'

Many of us are more familiar with pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela and less so with the holy route from Canterbury to Rome known as the Via Francigena. The Via Francigena (the route of the Franks), also known under other names such as the Lombard Way, Iter Frabcorum and the "Via Romea" (the road to Rome) is a 1900 km historical itinerary which in the past was used by thousands of pilgrims. Thanks to a document left to us by Sigeric, the Saxon Archbishop of Canterbury in 994 AD, on his way back to Canterbury, he described the journey and the main stopping places along the way in his memoirs. This was carefully recorded in a diary now kept in the British Library. Rediscovered in the 1980s, it has generated academic research, tourism promotion and, in some cases, restoration of the actual route for modern walkers. The archaeologist Giovanni Caselli re-traced the entire route on the ground, and mapped it in 1985 for travel today along the very path trodden by hundreds of kings, saints, prelates, merchants, scholars, and men and women of the Middle Ages. When in 1985 Sigeric's itinerary was surveyed and charted for the first time, long stretches of the Via Francigena, miraculously unspoiled by modern developments, were either country lanes or quiet roads with little or no traffic. Then academic research and the plan to re-create a modern-day pilgrimage route earned it the award of Major Cultural Route by the Council of Europe for the fact that it represents union and communication of cultures and ideas belonging to a wide European community.

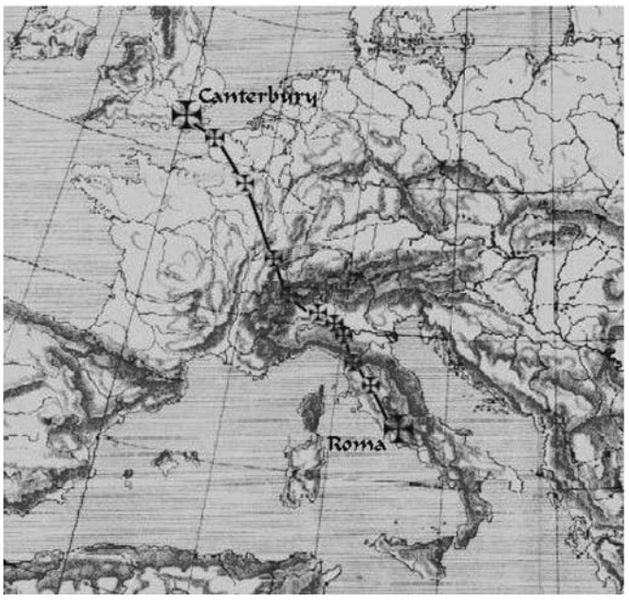
Growing interest in this old but underdeveloped route has taken a good ten years to make some progress and get various regions involved especially along the Italian route. Dr Simonetta Bonito of the Ministero per I Beni e le Attivita' Culturali (MIBAC) is trying to get more funds for a project to bring back to life the pilgrimage route through Italy. She said: "The last Jubilee Year in 2000 aroused great interest in these routes. And so the authorities gradually began to think about how to revitalize this heritage along the 1000 kilometre itinerary from the St Bernard pass to Rome. This led to an agreement in 2006 between the Ministry and the Italian Tourist Board as well as involving various associations on the Via Francigena ". In November 2009 the Italian government launched a project aimed at recovering the entire route not only in a spiritual and religious sense but also in terms of the environment, architecture, culture, history, wine, cuisine and sport. This project will be shared with other local regional authorities along the route as an encouragement to carry out similar recovery work. Tuscany seemingly has been the most active partner in setting up initiatives in the Lucca area. The aim is to bring it up to the standards of Santiago de Compostela, offering all the necessary facilities for pilgrims along the route and at the same time stimulating more and more tourism.

The route in Italy follows more closely the traditional route of the Via Francigena, a route which has recently been awarded EU funds to reinstate hostelry organisation and for route improvement.

Dott.ssa Josephine Garau, archaeologist and researcher was one of the major curators of an exhibition on the Via Francigena in 1995 hosted by the Museo Nazionale di Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome entitled 'La Via Francigena: cammino medioevale di pellegrinaggio quale proposta per un itinerario religioso, culturale e turistico del 2000'. She called it "The route of the saints. The iconography of the saints is distributed through the journey of faith".

The pilgrim had to travel mostly on foot for penitential reasons, covering about 20-25 kilometres a day, and was driven by a fundamentally devotional reason: the pilgrimage to the Holy Sites of Christianity. There were at the time three main centres of attraction for pilgrims: Rome, first of all, the site of the martyrdom of Saint Peter and Saint Paul; Santiago de Compostela in Spain, the place chosen by the apostle Saint James to rest in peace and Jerusalem in the Holy Land. Pilgrims normally travelled in groups and carried the pilgrimage emblems (the shell for Santiago de Compostela, the cross for Jerusalem and the key for Saint Peter in Rome). Rome was one of the major pilgrim destinations in the

✠ The Via Francigena ✠



✠Canterbury ✠Calais ✠Bruay ✠Arras ✠Reims ✠Chalons sur Marne ✠Bar sur Aube ✠Besancon ✠Pontarlier ✠Losanna Gran San Bernardo ✠Aosta ✠Ivrea ✠Santhia ✠Vercelli ✠Pavia ✠Piacenza ✠Fiorenzuola ✠Fidenza ✠Parma ✠Fornovo ✠Pontremoli ✠Aulla ✠Luni ✠Lucca ✠S.Genesio ✠S.Gimignano ✠Siena ✠S.Quirico ✠Bolsena ✠Viterbo ✠Sutri Roma

Middle Ages. Relics of the saints were believed to possess great power, and those of the Apostles were especially venerated. The Romipetae, or `Rome-seekers' was the name given to those on route to Rome.

Useful contacts on the Via Francigena:

Via Francigena – Associazione Europea: *Mostly in Italian, but you can download maps of the stages of the walk.*

www.associazioneviafrancigena.com

Association Via Francigena*: Information site in English.*

www.francigena-international.org

Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome*: Practical help and information for those making a pilgrimage to Rome by foot, bicycle or horse.*

In October 2004, a forum was set up to exchange information about the Via Francigena. After a couple of years the 'Friends of the Via Francigena' was formed. This led in November 2006 to the formation of a group of people who met in London to discuss this topic and agreed to form the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome (CPR).

www.francigena-international.org

The Via Francigena *– A site in English about the Via Francigena.*

www.canterbury.gov.uk

Notes on Walking the Francigena *– Interested in how long it takes to go from Aosta to Rome. Here are some notes from a pilgrimage.*

wanderingitaly.com/a/via-francigena-map.htm

EuroVia *– A site for pilgrims to share experiences.*

www.eurovia.com/en/activites.aspx

LightFoot Guide to the via Francigena *– Maps and field notes on all aspects of the via Francigena in Italy, from the Great St. Bernard Pass to Rome. Lots of pictures and information on what you'll see along the way. Interesting even for those who do not choose to walk the Via Francigena.*

www.pilgrimagepublications.com/via_francigena1.htm

Le Vie Francigene del Sud *– Maps and resources for the Via Francigena south of Rome to Brindisi and other east coast ports.*

www.viefrancigenedelsud.it/en/

FrancigenaLibrari *– New Italian Government portal for Via Francigena* information.

www.francigenalibrari.beniculturali.it/index_en.html

EuroVelo, the European cycle route network, is a project of the European Cyclists' Federation to develop 12 long-distance cycle routes crossing Europe. EuroVelo 5 is the route which involves the Via Francigena.

www.ecf.com

MARCONI'S NOBEL PRIZE COMMEMORATED

By Charles de Chassiron

The name of Guglielmo Marconi is a famous one both in Italy and the UK, but his strong British professional and family links are perhaps less well-known than they deserve to be. To mark the centenary late last year of the award to him in 1909 (at the age of 35) of the Nobel Prize for Physics, the Italian Embassy's Scientific Attache Prof Salvator Roberto Amendolia – a BIS member and an assiduous judge for the biennial Rooke Prize for British students' work on Italian themes –worked with the Institute of Physics to arrange a well-attended half-day seminar at the latter's smart premises in London's Portland Place. The event was sponsored by the Fondazione Marconi, the CNR, and Ericsson, as well as the Marconi Society. I attended to represent the BIS.

Marconi's mother was of Irish origin (née Jameson, and so he spoke English well from childhood. His first wife was British too. As a young man, he first came from his native Bologna to Britain in 1896 (by which time he had already developed apparatus to send wireless signals over a mile or so) and was able to meet the Chief Engineer of the Post Office and secure a patent for his system of wireless telegraphy. In 1899 he established wireless communication across the English Channel, and in 1901 he used his system to transmit the first signals across the Atlantic between Cornwall and Newfoundland, thereby proving that wireless waves were not affected by the curvature of the earth. By 1907 the first transatlantic services for public commercial use were a reality. In addition Marconi's system was soon taken up by both the Royal Navy and the Italian Navy, and Marconi gave valuable service to Italy in World War One, even attending the Paris Peace Conference. After the war, he worked on developing short-wave experiments leading to the establishment of the beam system for long-distance communications in the 20s, something the British Government took up quickly to help with imperial communications. In 1931 Marconi, by now back in Italy, opened the first microwave radio telephone link in the world between the Vatican and Castel Gandolfo, and within a few years he gave a practical demonstration of radar principles, the coming of which he had predicted a decade earlier. By now he had been bestowed with Italian and British honours and even made a Marchese. He died in Rome in 1937. Among the speakers at the 'convegno' last November were his 80 year old daughter Maria Elettra, accompanied by her son Guglielmo. I had met her once when living in Rome in the 90s, and she seemed unchanged, speaking animatedly both without notes and in fluent English about her father, recalling his enthusiasm, determination and love for sailing (his yacht based in Liguria was also called Elettra, and on it he carried out his later research on the parabolic antenna). The President of the CNR (Italian national scientific research council) Professor De Mattei spoke of Marconi's links with his organisation, and speakers from Ericsson and Cranfield University described his technical legacy. The second half of the event covered the practical impact of his discoveries and the new frontiers of wireless communications like mobile and medical applications and fibre optics, all presented by academic experts from both countries.

Marconi's links with the Fascist regime were not entirely glossed over, though his daughter did say that the growing prospect by the year of his death of war with the UK had severely depressed him. The other rather negative aspect of the event (though hardly Marconi's fault) was the sad fate of the Marconi company which he had founded in 1900. Although the Marconi Collection of scientific instruments is safely lodged in Oxford's Museum of Science – it was well described to us by the Director – the company bearing his name effectively disappeared in the late 90s, after some disastrous decisions on strategy during the dotcom bubble period. It is now part of the Ericsson group.

This event celebrated very well both the award of one of the first Nobel Prizes to this great Italian scientist and the close links which he always had with Britain. So many of the technologies which we take for granted today – long range communications, radio and TV broadcasting, GPS, radar – are the direct consequence of the first quavery signals sent by him from Cornwall and captured by a remote antenna in Newfoundland over a century ago. Marconi's quality of 'inflexible energy', to quote his daughter's striking phrase, was as well illustrated by this admirable centenary event as were his British links. During my Milan years, I had once been asked to talk to a local history group in Santa Margherita Ligure near Portofino about Marconi's links with the UK. An afternoon with Google and history books helped me produce something just about adequate, and during the trip there I discovered that Marconi's elegant yacht Elettra had been sawn into bits after the war, and saw that the prow was serving as a rather sad town park monument near Marconi's last home. But after attending this excellent and well-timed event I felt a great deal better informed about the great man.

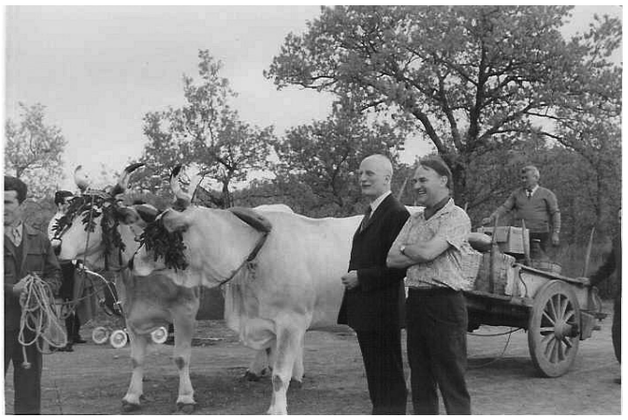
A FESTIVAL IN TUSCANY

By Frank Unwin

In June 1942, I was taken prisoner at Tobruk in the Libyan desert and two months later, arrived at a POW camp, PG82, at Laterina, a small town in Tuscany's Arno valley. From the moment I arrived, I was determined that I would eventually escape. After an unsuccessful attempt, I was returned to Laterina. I was offered a place in an escape tunnel project and slipped out along with three colleagues at the time of the armistice in September. Unfortunately I fell ill soon after and was forced to let them continue on by themselves southwards towards the Allied lines. For six weeks I wandered the countryside alone until reaching Montebenichi, a small, beautiful hilltop village in the Ambra valley where the villagers provided me with shelter and food. They built me a beautiful shack using chestnut saplings and brushwood situated deep in the woods, half a mile from the village. Two girls made a roster of the local families and a different one brought me food at midday each day for both lunch and the evening, at great personal danger to themselves. After many months, the troops had still not arrived and with two other escaped prisoners, I set out again for the lines, now at Monte Cassino. Unfortunately, we did not make it and I spent the rest of the war in Germany.

In 1967, the Foreign Office posted me to our Consulate General in Milan. I had always kept up with Montebenichi and now I could make regular weekend visits with my wife. Many wartime villagers had spread to distant parts of Italy by then. I suggested we try to bring them all back for a reunion. They agreed at once, producing all the necessary addresses A date in May was set. and I sent off invitations. One former prisoner from England would also make the trip. In addition, I invited a party of fifty British and Americans from Milan and all the rooms at the hotel in nearby Ambra were booked for them. For years I had been visiting the Nicchio *contrada* in Siena, not far away. My wife and I had been invited to dinners just before the Palio, the great horse race of the city. When the Nicchio *contrada* won the race in 1968, we were also invited to the victory dinner. As a token of thanks, I added four of the leading Nicchio officials and their wives to our guest list.

The day's high point was to be a barbeque and we needed a large beast. The villagers knew a butcher in Siena who could supply a six-month old calf weighing two hundredweight and I did a deal. The village ladies offered to prepare the *fagioli all'uccelletto,* rather like Boston beans but when treated with herbs in the Tuscan fashion has a superior flavour. I bought wine from Signor Milanesi, the local producer, and I also got a hundred kilos of bread. My wife and I went down a day or so before the barbeque and the village was a hive of activity. Signor Milanesi gave permission for the party to be held on a picturesque site near his villa. Tomaso the carpenter supplied mess tables and the Hotel Ambra supplied three very long tablecloths and enough plates, glasses and cutlery for three hundred. There were three huge sacks of charcoal and many litres of olive oil to baste the beast while cooking.



Montebenichi Festival in Tuscany (photo by courtesy of Frank Unwin)

Enrico the blacksmith, with great ingenuity, had made a special spit for the occasion. To transport the carcass a long way down to the barbeque site, Enzo, the village bricklayer had a vehicle known as an *Ape*. It was a motor cycle frame with a cab and a small low-sided truck at the rear. Really it was too small for such an unwieldy load. With no available alternative, though, the beast and the spit were gingerly loaded precariously across the back of the truck. Enzo set off, trundling out of the village and down a long track, two men trotting on each side to keep the load in place. Shouts of alarm and near disasters, but finally, after a hilarious journey, mission accomplished. I had already filled the pit with charcoal and the skewered beast was manoeuvred over it. I had brought a large Union Jack and asked the villagers for an Italian flag. Enzo supplied two slender tree trunks and with a flag nailed to the top of each, they were soon planted beyond each end of the spit. It began to look quite an inspiring sight. Meanwhile, the Milan party had arrived and made its way up to Montebenichi to meet the villagers and see the site. It was a very happy meeting and conversation was buzzing all over the village. Later, the Milan group all repaired to the Castello di Brolio for dinner, while I stayed behind to man the barbeque pit.

A consular colleague pitched a tent on the site to help me through the night. At midnight, the charcoal was glowing and the beast rotating. We used long brushes to baste it with the olive oil from a bucket. Mostly, it was a two-man job rotating and basting, but we took turns to go under a blanket for rest. Fortunately it was a calm night with no wind and we had the warm glow of the charcoal. As day broke, we greeted it with relief. The cooking was well under way but with more to go.

As the morning progressed, the first guests turned up. The site looked good with the flags fluttering gently in the soft breeze and the arrivals were much impressed. All wanted to be snapped turning the spit, so lots of cameras were clicking. The villagers had remembered the mayor of Bucine, the *comune* town and he appeared, resplendent in his tricolour sash. I was presented to him and welcomed him to the festival. He had brought others with him and yet more showed up from other villages. The crowd was growing and all were welcome. We now numbered about three hundred people.

Then came the surprise highlight of the day. The four Nicchio families from Siena arrived and to my delight they had also brought vans carrying about fifty other *Nicchiaioli* with them. I had known a number of them for some time and when I had originally told them that during the war I had been imprisoned in Santo Spirito prison there in Siena's Nicchio *contrada*, they laughed and thought it a most novel way of qualifying for "membership" in their district. As they all left their vehicles, we were surprised to discover amongst them two *tamburisti* or drummers and two *bandieristi*, flag bearers, all in traditional

costume. All four gave a dazzling display of their skills in flag dancing to the roll of the drums. This raised the festival to a level I had not dreamed of.

Later, I took some time off and wandered among the crowd seeking out the returned villagers, some of whom I had not seen for twenty-six years. There was much laughing and reminiscing, recalling happenings during my wartime months in the village. Meanwhile, preparations for the meal were in high gear. Tables stretched out in an arc, long white tablecloths spread along them. The loaves were heaped on one table, the cutlery, plates and glasses laid out and the *fagioli all'uccelletto* made ready. Space was left in the middle for the meat and the wives poised themselves to help serve. The time had arrived to bring the meat forward for carving. Two of the three brothers from the butcher's shop heaved the spit onto their shoulders and marched up to the table, the crowd cheering. Then still more ceremony as an ox cart pulled by two magnificent white oxen appeared, guided by a villager, Guido Landi, with three huge demijohns of Chianti at his feet.

I was very tired now but it was early afternoon and the most important moment was nearing. All the villagers were called and I and Norwen Davies, the other ex-prisoner, offered our thanks for the shelter, care and friendship they had so bravely offered us during the war at risk of their own lives. Then the butchers took over, their knives and cleavers flashing and the villagers were served first. Soon the whole company was sitting in groups on the ground, tucking into their food. As I walked around among the seated guests, there were thanks, toasts and compliments. I was happy and felt the day had been a success. All had had a good time.

LA SCUOLA ITALIANA A LONDRA, 1841-2010

By Francesca Invernizzi

In 1841, Giuseppe Mazzini, an Italian patriot living in London in exile, opened the first Italian school in London to offer an education to the children of the large Italian community which at the time was mostly based around Clerkenwell, towards the City.

In a letter to his mother, Mazzini wrote that his school would be "una scuola italiana gratuita per gli operai, per i ragazzi che suonano l'organo, che vendono le figurine di gesso. Si insegnerà tutti i giorni a leggere e a scrivere, elementi di grammatica, di geografia, specialmente italiana, aritmetica... e ogni domenica vi sarà una lettura di morale e di storia patria" *("a non-fee paying Italian school, for the workers, for the children who play the organ, who sell plaster figurines. Every day, pupils will be taught to read and write the basics of grammar, geography, especially Italian and mathematics...and every Sunday, there will be a reading on Italian history and morals ").*

Nearly two centuries later, a new Italian school is finally opening again in London. Although the profile of the pupils may have changed, the aims of the school are not dissimilar to those of Mazzini: to give Italian children living in London an Italian education which will allow them to keep in touch with their roots and be proud of their culture whilst participating in the culture of the city they live in.

In fact, the aim of the school is not only to educate children but also to create a meeting point for the whole community where Italian culture is promoted through cultural events, language and other classes for adults which will be opened to all, not just to Italians, so that the whole community will be able to participate and learn about our culture in the same way as Italians living here learn and participate in the culture that surrounds them.

Our project started in early 2005. As an Italian mother with young children, I found the complexities of the English system extremely frustrating and was yearning for the simplicity of my own parents' educational choices. Why was it that all my foreign friends also living in London had options like the French Lycée and the German School? Even the Swedes and the Norwegians had their own school in London and we Italians must outnumber them by at least 10 to 1!

Together with my friend Emanuela Federspil, who later became Chair of the Board of Trustees, we approached the Italian Embassy to propose that a school should be opened for the ever growing Italian community.

It was suggested that the first step should be to ensure that there was demand. Perhaps we Italians were just not interested in having the option to educate our kids in an Italian environment. The Consulate sponsored an open day at the Italian Cultural Institute to discuss the initiative and we were overwhelmed by the interest - we had to set up a video link from the main debating room to another large room on the first floor to accommodate the crowd.

So demand was definitely there…but how do you go about opening a school? At the start, it seemed a relatively straightforward task. Get a team, make a plan, implement the plan, and open the school.

1. Get a team

   With the backing and support of the Italian Embassy and Consulate, Emanuela and I assembled a team of like-minded volunteers from different backgrounds in order to cover all the elements necessary to open the school: we needed to create a fully bi-lingual curriculum that would allow pupils to move into either the Italian or the English system, we needed an experienced head who could build the school, we needed suitable premises, we needed to think through what sort of legal structure to use (company vs. charity) and last but by no means least, we needed to find the financing. Our project started to get real momentum when Laura Marani accepted to be our first Headmistress – Laura is a former headmistress of Pembridge Hall, one of the leading girls' independent primary schools in London, and had just participated in the start up of Notting Hill Prep, so has the experience of both the setting up and the running of successful schools.

2. Make a plan

   We are not a nation used to private schools and, until recently, private schools in Italy were associated with either religious education or with pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties. In the recent past, Italy has seen a number of privately run schools become very successful, but most Italians will still send their children to their nearest state school.

   Our plan was always to make la Scuola Italiana a Londra as accessible to as many Italian families as possible. Unfortunately, the Italian State does not fund Italian schools abroad. We therefore set up a company which obtained charitable status in 2006 (Charity No 1119966) and has since started to run a fundraising campaign whilst looking for suitable premises. This was possibly the hardest part of our job so far as we realised that you need premises to find financing and financing to find premises…!

3. Implement the plan (hustle, hustle, hustle)

   This was when the Embassy proved invaluable. With the assistance of the former HE Ambassador Giancarlo Aragona, we organised a very successful fund raising evening at the Italian Embassy at the end of 2008. Antonio Pappano, Musical Director of the Royal Opera House, was the star attraction and kindly donated his performance for the night to La Scuola Italiana a Londra.

   We now had the money to find the right site, but finding suitable sites was no easy task. We needed to be located within easy reach of at least one of the two major pockets of Italians living in London who, according to data from the Consulate, are today mostly resident in West London, between Fulham and Maida Vale, or in North London, between Islington and Hampstead. We soon found out that we were not the only school looking for a site and, worse, that we were frequently competing against property developers with much deeper pockets. London has seen the stock of purpose built school buildings shrink as councils allow these sites to be redeveloped for alternative uses (residential, gyms, offices).

Having searched far and wide, I eventually had the good fortune to find the perfect building in the perfect location – ideally positioned with good transport links: 154 Holland Park Avenue in Kensington.

4. Open the school

So, at long last, on 8th September 2010, the Scuola Italiana a Londra opened its first classes in nearly 200 years. The "so" at the beginning of that sentence really does not do justice to the enormous amount of work that has been done by our small group of volunteers…and a lot of work still needs to be done as we are only starting with a few classes but, as with all new projects, you need to walk before you can run and we look forward to welcoming all the families who have been contacting us over the years to join us and the pioneering few into this fantastic adventure which is the rediscovery of the roots of our culture.

Our vision is also much more ambitious than the creation of one primary school – we want to replicate the model across London, with all the schools working together for the promotion of what Italian culture represents not only for Italians but for Western culture at large.

We believe that primary schools are the basis of society, they are the place where infants become individuals and where parents are still very involved in the process of creation of these future adults. We believe that wherever there is a large Italian presence, there should be an Italian bi-lingual primary school, where children can learn from an early age to live and breathe two cultures and thus start opening up to all other cultures available for them in London. We also strongly support the Italian model of having small primary schools in all neighbourhoods so that children can access their schools easily, on foot, and create friends in their local areas. This is obviously beneficial from the point of view of traffic management as well as education.

We also believe this school is a model that can be replicated with other languages and everywhere in order to promote a multi-cultural society based on the knowledge of one's own and the respect of other people's heritage.

It seems like a very grand project, a utopia, but all important things are done by seeing the big picture and starting with a pencil draft. We are finishing the pencil draft, but the big picture is out there for us to reach, with your support.

Francesca Invernizzi

For further information about this great project and to make donations to help it happen, please visit our website www.scuolaitalianalondra.org

SAN REMO NIGHTS: THE 1999 SONG FESTIVAL

By Paul Brummell

The astronaut Buzz Aldrin walks down a Busby Berkeley staircase onto an Italian stage. He is interviewed by an eager young broadcaster named Fabio. Neither speaks the other's language. Translation is provided by a diminutive former ballet dancer named Don Lurio, now a television personality, thanks to his bizarre treatment of the Italian language. Imagine an Italian Stanley Unwin. Only shorter.

Despite the hindering presence of Don Lurio, Fabio manages to ask the astronaut about the difference between his experiences of descending the stairs of his spacecraft, to step onto the moon, and walking down those of this San Remo theatre, to step onto the stage. Buzz replies that the theatre has more stairs, and he walked down face forwards. He stepped off the spacecraft backwards. Thirty years ago he followed Neil Armstrong down those steps. He had now become the first astronaut to step onto the San Remo stage. This time around, Neil Armstrong would follow him.

Fifteen million Italians watched that exchange between Buzz and Fabio. It was later described by the organiser of the event as a personal highlight of this, the forty-ninth San Remo Song Festival.

I have lived in Italy for three years. I understand many of the rules of the game in this complex and fascinating society. I know that to ask for a cappuccino at any time other than early morning, or to sprinkle parmesan cheese over a plate of spaghetti with clams, is to be branded an ignorant foreigner. But understanding what brings this nation to its television sets for five consecutive nights in February, for three hours at a time, to watch often unremarkable singers perform often unremarkable songs. And understanding what has kept Italy doing so every February for almost a half a century. Now that is altogether a taller order.

Understanding began at lunch. I met a journalist named Aldo Garzia at a restaurant called Genius. Aldo is a man of passions. He made a pilgrimage to the remote Baltic island home of Ingmar Bergman. He is a mine of information on Havana cigars. And he has written a book on the San Remo Song Festival.

Aldo explained that the Festival was first held in 1951, in an Italy recovering from the traumas of the Second World War. The Festival started out as an initiative of the San Remo casino, a means of boosting the winter tourist trade to this seaside town on the coast of Liguria. From the outset it was supported by the Italian State broadcaster, RAI, and it is through RAI's television cameras that Italy lives the Festival.

San Remo gripped the public imagination almost immediately. It became a projection of Italy, its songs meeting the needs of the times. The winning song in the second Festival, "Fly White Dove, Fly", hinted at Italian demands for the restoration of Trieste, and no less than three of the songs the following year had patriotic themes, for much the same reason. The San Remo Festival provided the inspiration for the Eurovision Song Contest, which kicked off in 1956, making San Remo for some the least welcome export product since the Colorado Beetle.

For Aldo, the start of the golden age of the Festival was marked by the victory in 1958 of a song called "Nel Blu Dipinto Di Blu", its lyrics, all about blueness, inspired by a Marc Chagall painting. The song was immediately re-baptised the world over as "Volare…oh,oh!" It was sung by Domenico Modugno, one of two four-time winners of San Remo. The other was Claudio Villa, singer of touching romantic ballads, who was so incensed towards the end of his long career at an exclusion from the Festival that he entered himself in the preliminary competition as a "young hopeful". Five years later it fell to the presenter of the Festival to announce his death to the world.

The golden age ran through the sixties, the year of "Quando, Quando, Quando" and of a happy blend of old-style crooners and frothy new pop music. By the seventies, the world, and Italy, had moved on. San Remo no longer seemed relevant. Even RAI began to lose interest, televising only the final evening in the mid-1970s. Unexpectedly, the rot stopped. From the eighties onwards, San Remo began to flower again. But, warned Aldo over the wild strawberries, the nature of the beast had changed. While the Festival had in the 1960s been all about songs, about sales of 45 rpm records, San Remo nineties style was about television, a variety show of which the songs were only a part.

The most problematic part, at that. Big name stars were cautious about participating: they feared losing face and income if their songs were judged inferior to those of newcomers. So the contest tended to feature middle-rank acts; either emerging talent or once famous singers whose careers needed a boost. To understand the Festival, advised Aldo, it was important to pay attention to the on-stage chat, to the interplay between the presenters, and to the fashion on show.

As Festival week approached, the newspaper column inches devoted to San Remo started to expand into yards. The songs were indeed not the prime focus of press interest. San Remo, it seemed, was lived second-hand through its presenters. The press wanted to tell us absolutely everything about them.

The compère of the show was chosen first. Young Fabio. A cheerful, every mother's favourite son-in-law kind of soul. Fabio Fazio, we were told, wears size 41 shoes, has a shepherd dog named Sasha, and collects tin soldiers. He was a new type of compère. An everyman for the new Millenium. The Festivals of old had been commanded by monocratic and monolithic troupers. Veterans like Pippo Baudo, who surrounded themselves with attractive female co-presenters, required to do little more than exude beauty.

Every Italian knows the legend of Pippo Baudo. Pippo coaxed a would-be suicide from the Festival theatre balcony to safety. Pippo snatched Louis Armstrong's trumpet from his lips, when Satchmo showed all the signs of embarking on an impromptu jam session which would have thrown the Festival timings haywire. And Pippo rescued fifty handicapped children from a burning orphanage next door to the theatre (OK. I made that last one up).

The new, more pluralistic, style of the Fabio era was quickly confirmed by one of the young man's choices of co-presenter. Not a mute starlet, but an 85 year old scientist, and Nobel Prize winner to boot, Renato Dulbecco. An eccentric choice,

perhaps, for a song festival? Not at all, explained Fabio. This year the Festival would be for everyone. There would be walk-on roles for housewives and former Heads of State. So why not an octogenarian scientist as co-presenter?

Fabio's second choice of co-presenter indicated, however, that the new era marked evolution not revolution. Given Aldo's comments about the importance of fashion at San Remo, and the near certainty that Professor Dulbecco would not look much in dress, I should have guessed that a young beauty would be chosen. Fabio plumped for the super model of the moment. The belle de jour was Laetitia Casta. The press was remarkably unphased by the fact that young Laetitia spoke no Italian. As if being able to understand your guests was not a requirement for a presenter. Still, at least she confirmed that she would be taking lessons.

Italian newspaper readers were told, however, that the beautiful young presenter of the 1999 Festival was not like the beautiful young presenters of previous editions. The press emphasised Laetitia's family-friendly qualities. Her very slightly crooked teeth were taken to demonstrate a girl-next-door nature. Much play was made of the coincidence that "casta" in Italian means "chaste". So with Laetitia Casta we did not have a brainless bimbo. We had Lorraine Chaste.

San Remo itself is one of those genteel resorts which boasts high sunshine hours and moderation in temperature, noise levels, all things really. It hit its peak a century ago, and has survived thanks to special events of all kinds, from a cycling rally to flower pageants. I visited San Remo once, three years ago, in mid-Festival, partly out of curiosity about the event. I saw a good deal, and understood nothing.
All around town, television crews were filming stars. A blonde model draped across a yellow Lamborghini in the main square was being photographed by film crews, press photographers, tourists with disposable cameras. A knot of people outside a clothes store were whispering excitedly to each other. Apparently, "Mara" was buying a jacket.

But the real Festival-hunters were to be found outside the Ariston Theatre, in the heart of town. As seen by television viewers the Ariston, home of the Festival, is the height of chic. The audience oozes wealth. The RAI Orchestra is smooth and stylish. We see the glittering faces of the glitterati. As seen from the street, rather than through the camera lens, the Ariston Theatre was ugly. Its look was more municipal cinema than playground of the famous. It had mustard paintwork, and balconies that belonged to a two-star hotel in Benidorm. The entrance abutted the local department store. Next door there really was a Whisky-a-Go-Go nightclub.

Outside the theatre, the crowd started to gather in mid-afternoon, and by the early evening the road was packed, everyone eager to catch the arrival of the stars. Shouts of "Giampiero!" accompanied the sighting of a tubby sports journalist. Television crews were everywhere. Italy has a vast number of television stations to service. The crews really wanted to film the stars, but when there were no stars to be seen they filmed the crowd. The front of the theatre. Each other. Anyone.

I met the Mayor of the town, his winter suntan testimony to San Remo's mild climate. He emphasised the Festival's importance to the town. It was through the Festival that San Remo was known to the world. He had been on holiday to Polynesia. When, on a remote Pacific island, he had told a group of locals that he was from San Remo, they had started singing "Volare.. oh, oh!" That was the power of the Festival.

Three years later, I prepared to revisit San Remo. This time I was ready. I had spoken to the experts. I had read all about Fabio and Laetitia and Professor Dulbecco. There had even been one or two articles about the songs in the competition. This time, I would understand the Festival.

The doubts began to set in when I found myself at a dinner sitting next to a journalist from Liguria. The man was proud of his home region. I asked him about the relationship between the San Remo Festival and its host region of Liguria. He told me that there was none. San Remo was an international resort, located in Liguria geographically but not culturally. The Festival was more rootless still, sited, if anywhere, in the cathode ray tube.

It was dawning gradually that to visit the San Remo Festival did not involve visiting San Remo. To be a part of the Festival audience was not an option: stellar prices were charged for tickets which were not in any case available. The alternative, standing again in the crowd outside the Ariston, was neither an answer nor appealing. No, it was clear that the Festival must be visited as millions of Italians visited it every year, through their television screens. Armed with a packet of Stick Crok potato snacks and a can of cola, I made the journey to my sofa.

The Festival kicked off with a fanfare, a few cheery words from Fabio and the arrival of Professor Dulbecco. The latter secured this festival's first standing ovation. The Professor told Fabio that he had been to the Ariston Theatre once before, twenty years earlier, for a gathering of Nobel Prize winners.

"Who was the presenter? Pippo Baudo?"

"No. The King of Sweden."

Then Laetitia descended the stairs in an avalanche of fake snowflakes to some decidedly chaste music from the orchestra.

It was left to the Professor to explain the rules of the Festival. A scientific mind obviously was required. There were 14 songs in the main competition, and another 14 in a separate contest for "young hopefuls". The 14 main songs would be judged on the first night by a "popular jury", comprising 500 people scattered across Italy. On the second and third evenings, 7 songs from the young hopefuls would be heard each night, judged by the popular jury, alternating with songs from the main competition, on that occasion not judged by anyone. Evening four would see a reprise of the 14 young hopefuls, judged this time by a ten-member "expert jury", chaired by Ennio Morricone, best known for penning haunting scores for spaghetti westerns. The expert jury would then be called to judge the 14 songs in the main competition on the fifth and final evening. The overall winners in both competitions would be decided by aggregating the votes of the popular and expert juries. More than fifteen hours of programming to select two winners.

Interspersed among the songs in competition were performances of international guest stars, required to do no more than wave a good deal, mime their latest hit song and quit the stage, having boosted their profile among the Italian record-buying public in the process. Cher and Blur, REM and Mariah Carey, all performed their three minute mimes.

The international guests were more fun in the 1960s, when they actually competed in the Festival and having to perform, in Italian, songs which were also covered by an Italian star. The resulting mangling of the Italian language was often terrifying.

Into the hall of shame, please, Wilson Pickett, Paul Anka, Gene Pitney.

Three episodes concerning international acts have become part of the San Remo legend. The aforementioned affair of Louis Armstrong's trumpet. The non-appearance of Elton John in 1995, apparently because of air sickness suffered on his flight from London to Nice. And Patsy Kensit's breast. Italian newspapers, perhaps fortunately, do not mention Patsy Kensit frequently. When they do, reference is invariably made to the moment when, during a particularly frenetic part of her San Remo performance in 1987, her nipple (which one is never recorded) made a brief appearance. A public debate raged for weeks on whether this had occurred by accident or design. Nobody in Italy remembers the name of her pop group at the time (Eighth Wonder). But they have not forgotten her breast.

The international contribution to San Remo '99 will however be remembered more because of its non-singing foreign guests than the singers, or rather mimers. Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong. Roger Moore, who spoke more Italian in five minutes than Laetitia Casta managed all week, rather flummoxing Don Lurio, his pint-sized translator. Another Roger, Clinton, told journalists that brother Bill was thrilled about Roger's appearance at San Remo. Fabio asked Roger, given that his brother lived in a White House, did he live in a beige one? Yes, apparently.

It was the presence not of a Clinton, but of a Gorbachev, that really created a stir at the Festival. Mikhael and Raisa descended the stairs to Copland's "Fanfare For The Common Man". Mikhael was welcomed by Professor Dulbecco. Two Nobel Prize winners together. Raisa told Fabio that she and Mikhael liked waltzes. Mikhael made a speech. The resolution of the world's problems required an effort from everyone. It was too important to be left to the politicians alone. Globalisation brought benefits to some parts of the world, but penalised others. He praised the role of the Pope. And all this in the middle of a song contest. At the end of the speech, Fabio gave Mr. Gorbachev a certificate to prove that he was a bona fide San Remo Song Festival presenter.

As the week progressed it was becoming clear that Italy approved of Fabio, and Laetitia, and Professor Dulbecco. Laetitia bit her lip and looked coquettish, and had three changes of outfit each evening. Fabio always announced these with a slightly raised voice: "now, a historic moment, Laetitia Casta has changed her costume," as she walked down the stairs in a long pink dress to the tune of "La Vie En Rose." Or whatever. The press particularly liked her Inspector Clouseau-like treatment of the language. At one point, muddling the words "tanto" and "tonto", she told the San Remo audience that she liked them because they were so stupid. She meant "so numerous."

Professor Dulbecco was also sweet, only in an old and distinguished way, rather than a young and giggly one. Between musical numbers, he answered questions from Fabio about genetic engineering, or the current state of cancer research.

Oh, and there were some songs. It was clear from the outset that the "young hopefuls" category would be won by one Alex Britti, though as a thirty year old with a decade-long career as a blues guitarist he hardly seemed to fit the label. The main competition was more interesting. I rather liked Eugenio Finardi's "Love Me Lara" even if in his long coat and black beret he looked slightly like a bearded Monica Lewinsky.

Veteran crooner Al Bano was taking part in his eleventh San Remo Festival, with a song called, appropriately, "Still Flying". It seemed to be about his love being like a tired seagull. Tired indeed. Immediately after the Festival he announced his separation from his actress wife Romina Power, daughter of Tyrone. On each of Al Bano's appearances he pulled apart the on-stage floral displays, and handed clumps of San Remo's finest narcissi to any woman who happened to be in range.

There was only one band in the main competition: Stadio. Stadium. A disappointingly banal name, for a country which has come up with some wonderfully titled bands. Pooh. Dik Dik. Drupi. Their song, "Rucksack" was in homage to fashion-conscious Italian youth's least trendy personal accessory, and started out with the intriguing line: "I've hidden something in your rucksack." We never found out what it was.

The winning song was "Without Mercy", sung by a rather scary lady named Anna Oxa. No mercy was offered, as she belted out lyrics about being the cruellest general at the front. She glistened. Oil, not perspiration. She revealed a glimpse of underwear above her low slung trousers, grabbing the headlines for days. She had started out as a punk in the seventies, and was apparently distantly related to the former Albanian ruler, Enver Hoxha.

San Remo Festivals traditionally conclude with controversies about the judging. This year did not disappoint. A complex debate ran in the editorials of serious papers about the role of an expert jury, given the fact that, just like the popular one, Mr. Morricone and his team had favoured facile, populist songs. I was not aware that the Festival had offered us any other kind. One of the defeated female competitors had a more interesting criticism: the decision of the male-dominated expert jury to award the prize to a savage screaming singer whose muscles were greasy with oil suggested why male impotence was so widespread, she told journalists.

One press commentator likened the Festival to football. It provoked the same irrational passions. Criticisms of the expert jury were similar, he thought, to the global hobby of criticising the selections made by football managers. As I tried to make sense of Italy's passion for San Remo, a different sporting comparison came to mind. Why would millions of Italians sit in front of their television sets for five days, watching an often dull and repetitive contest, governed by impenetrable rules? Surely we Britons would never do such a thing? My sporting comparison involved leather against willow.

San Remo, like The Ashes, is a serious business. Sometimes too serious. On 26 January 1967 the young singer-songwriter Luigi Tenco, having sung his San Remo entry "Goodbye, My Love, Goodbye", dined at a local restaurant with his exotic girlfriend Dalida. Learning that his song had failed to qualify for the final night, in what was then a two-round competition, he walked out of the restaurant, returned to his bedroom, Room 219 of the Hotel Savoy, and shot himself in the head. Twenty years later, Dalida too committed suicide. One of the other songs in that 1967 Festival was called "You Need To Know How To Lose."

The author is a member of HM Diplomatic Service. He served at the British Embassy in Rome as First Secretary, 1995-2000, when he wrote this memoir. Following postings in Central Asia, he is currently HM's High Commissioner to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean.

ENGLAND'S GIFT TO ITALIAN ANIMAL WELFARE

By Alexandra Richardson

Think of "animal welfare" and "Italy" and if any single person springs to mind it is probably Giuseppe Garibaldi and his brave start in 1871 in establishing the Società Protettrice degli Animali in Turin. Badgered by a redoubtable Englishwoman, Anna Winter, Garibaldi and his personal doctor Timoteo Riboldi, brought the society into being and vowed from the outset that neither politics nor religion would in any way interfere with its sole aim of attempting to prevent cruelty to animals. Sporadically, other small groups burst into life elsewhere in Italy. But like small isolated brushfires, they pretty much sputtered out, unable to bond together into a cohesive, nationwide movement.

Then along came an Englishman. In the 1890s, in his early 20s, he set off like so many of his countrymen on a tour of Italy. It would be the turning point for the young man, for he was about to spurn a promising career in science back home. Leonard Hawksley would never be the household name that Garibaldi was, but his remarkable achievements in Italy would put him on equal if not stronger footing in the realm of animal protection.

Hawksley's first focus was on the horrendous and widespread sights he witnessed in Naples. There, horses and mules were fitted with spiked reins, jagged-edged halters and bits studded with sharp nails. When these creatures were lashed, it was invariably with wire whips, inflicting yet more pain. The young man was appalled. An ally from the very start was the "Princess" Mele Barese, an Englishwoman married to a local baker with social pretensions yeastier than his bread. She had set up her own little army of uniformed inspectors to monitor nefarious doings against animals in her adopted city. However, her skills in running her Naples anti-cruelty society on a sound financial basis were dodgy to say the least: all incoming monies were stored in a paper bag and only counted up once a year. If the sum was lower than expected, she topped it up from her own pocket. When it exceeded what she thought she had, the *principessa* dipped into the bag and spent the extra on something for the society to even things out.

Hawksley introduced sounder accounting practices to this eccentric new ally. He renamed the group the Naples Society for the Protection of Animals, pursued perpetrators of cruelty and continued to manage the group until 1909. He had also succeeded in setting up a group in Rome in 1901, with 40 inspectors to investigate cases throughout the country. Admirers and enemies alike gave him the new nickname of *Campofalcone*. To critics who asked why a foreigner was meddling in the animal welfare of a country not his own, he would snap back: "Animals don't have nationalities."

Up and down Italy, Hawksley increasingly "stirred up trouble", often paying dearly the consequences of his crusade. Pained by the sight of oxen straining under loads of marble on the mountainside of Carrara, he protested. To pay him back, miners lay in wait until one day they spotted him coming down the narrow alley of a quarry. Off went a blast, showering Hawksley with fragmented stone. He got off lightly that time, with an injured arm. On another occasion, for other inspections, he was ambushed one night, knocked unconcscious and laid out in the dark on the town's tram tracks. Luckily the tram driver spotted him in his path and stopped just in time. Hawksley was wounded in three places on his body and hit eleven times on the head. It would take him three months in bed to recover. And he lost the use of one eye on that occasion.

He took on "the battle of the birds" in Capri. Every Easter there, captured birds were released by worshippers inside churches at the end of the service. People were utterly indifferent to the fact that the fluttering creatures had no escape routes and eventually dropped to the church floor, exhausted, to die. The following Easter Hawksley's inspectors stationed themselves at the door but were often outfoxed by the wily Caprese ladies who entered with birds concealed in the flowing folds of their skirts. With that, the inspectors countered by climbing to the cupola and prying open all the vents.

Elsewhere, Hawksley took the *Camorra* head on. They were none too pleased in Campania where he was getting their companions prosecuted for infractions against animals. One *camorrista* approached him with an explicit warning: desist or you'll meet your end. Exasperated, Hawksley grabbed his tormentor's whip and broke the handle over the thug's head. The menace changed to near admiration and the word went out to lay off Hawksley and his team.
Perhaps to spur himself on, he kept seized animal traps on display in his Rome headquarters as a grisly reminder of the work that still needed doing throughout Italy. But he sought not only to arrest the culpable. He wanted to see legal measures, with real teeth, introduced as well. In 1912, cruel sports involving animals became punishable by law. The following year, he drafted the protection of animals act, which got watered down by the time it reached parliament. The battle and frustrations continued. Nonetheless, Hawksley persevered. During the Great War, he played a key role in forming the Italian equivalent of the Blue Cross with 22 veterinary hospitals that saved the lives of some 35,000 mules and horses. For his long years of devoted work in the field, he was made a *Commendatore* in 1920.

The long years of struggle finally took their toll and in 1931, aged 58, Hawksley returned to England in ill health. He left behind 22 animal protection societies in Italy either founded directly by him or with his assistance. He died quietly, as he wished, in 1948. The reins of his good work were taken up by a successor institution in 1952, the Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals (AISPA). At present they support no fewer than 21 projects throughout the country, helping to educate against and tenaciously combat the prejudices and atrocities that regretfully still survive throughout the country.

For further information, log on to www.aispa.org.uk

SAVOURY *SAGRE*

Compiled by Alexandra Richardson

Type in the words "sagre" and "Italy" on your computer and out comes a veritable Niagara Falls of choice. Italian "sagre" or festivals come in all sizes and for all palates. They often wrap together the celebration of a particular food with commemoration of the local patron saint. For good measure, a parade or procession is sometimes added to the equation. And maybe, too, a marching band, a donkey race or other excitements. Food and fanfare. A random selection follows of lesser known regional specialities in these sagre that illustrates the breadth of imagination and choice. Attention has been given to places off the beaten track rather than big-city festivities. An attempt has been made to put these events in chronological order. However, it never hurts to check with the contact sources provided that all is proceeding according to plan. Should you be inspired to experience any of the listed events and find it a memorable occasion, think about writing it up for the next issue of "Rivista".

21-30 January:	Festa del Radicchio Rosso di Treviso (red lettuce)	Casier (Treviso) Tel: 0422 382402
19-21 February:	Sagra del Tarocco (blood oranges)	Francofonte (Siracusa) Tel: 095-949976
5 March:	"Intrippiamoci" (tripe)	Brendola (Vicenza) Tel: 0444 601715
15 March:	Sagra della Pappardella al Cinghiale (pasta with wild boar sauce)	Torrita Tiberina (Roma) Tel: 349 5749265
19 March:	Sagra della Patata Arrostita (roast potatoes)	Spinoso (Potenza) Tel: 0971 954942
4 April-30 May:	Carciofesta (artichokes)	Cupello (Chieti) Tel: 334 8639176
10 April-18-May:	"Asparagi e Dintorni" (white Bassano asparagus)	San Zeno di Cassola (Vicenza) Tel: 0424 57135
13 April:	Sagra della piè fritta (flat bread)	Fontanelice (Bologna) Tel: 338 4322129
25 April:	Sagra della Sfogliatella (puff pastry)	Lama dei Peligni (Chieti) Tel: 0872 91221
1 May:	Sagra delle Fave con Pecorino (cheese and raw broad beans)	Filacciano (Roma) Tel: 3336935057
1-2 May:	Festa della Ricotta	Malborghetto (Udine) Tel: 0428 64942
24 May:	Festa della Focaccia (Genoese flat bread)	Recco (Genova) Tel: 0185 730748
First Sunday of June:	Sagra delle Fragole (wild strawberries)	Nemi (Roma) Tel: 06 9365011
First Sunday of June:	Sagra del Cappero (capers)	Pollara-Salina Island (Messina) Tel: 090 674236
July (tbc):	Sagra dei Pizzoccheri (buckwheat pasta)	Teglio (Sondrio) Tel: 0342 950166
First Half of July:	Le Contee del Farro della Garfagnana) (spelt)	Piazza al Serchio (Lucca) Tel: 0583 605548
18-19 July:	Sagra del Limone (lemons)	Massa Lubrense (Napoli) Tel: 081 533 9401
3-6 August:	Sagra della Trenetta (Ligurian flat pasta)	Loano (Savona) Tel: 019 668085
20-26 August	Sagra d'la Panissa (risotto with beans and sausage)	Vercelli Tel: 0161 58002
Third weekend Of August:	Sagra dello Zafferano (saffron)	Navelli (L'Aquila) Tel: 388 4792729
22-23 August:	Sagra della Bottarga (pressed mullet roe)	Cabras (Oristano) Tel: 0783 3971231
14 September:	Sagra dei canederli (stuffed dumplings)	Vipiteno (Bolzano) Tel: 0471 999999
19-20 September:	Sagra Nazionale del Gorgonzola (cheese)	Gorgonzola (Milano) www.prolocogorgonzola.191.it
Third Sunday of September:	Sagra del Bitto (cheese)	Gerola Alta (Sondrio) Tel: 0342-601140
Last week of September:	Festa del Baccalà (dried cod)	Sandrigo (Vicenza) Tel: 0444 659150
Last week of September:	Sagra del Salame d'Oca (goose)	Mortara Tel: 0384 2564230
Mid-October:	Sagra del Pistacchio di Bronte	Bronte (Catania) Tel: 095 7747213
Third Sunday of October:	Sagra del Sedano Nero (Black Celery)	Trevi (Perugia) Tel: 074 2 3321
Every Sunday of October:	Sagra delle castagne (chestnuts)	Marradi (Firenze) Tel: 055 8045170

CHRISTMAS DINNER 2009

At The University Women's Club

Charles de Chassiron, Chairman, and Sir Tom Richardson, President

THE SEBASTIANO RICCI EXHIBITION AT THE CINI FOUNDATION, VENICE

By Charles Avery

"This little one is the original, the altarpiece is only a copy."

Thus wrote Sebastiano Ricci (1659-1734) to a potential patron when he was over seventy and this year's exhibition (April-July 2010) celebrating the 350th anniversary of Ricci's birth, more than proved the point. With forty of his works on display, only one major altarpiece painting was included, with the model exhibited on a slope in front of it (but a decent distance away); yet one could enjoy a survey of Ricci's life's work on a manageable scale, taking in two or three cognate pictures at one time. Twenty other works by contemporaries, pupils and successors – including three Rococo models in terracotta by the sculptor Morlaiter – rounded out the picture of Ricci's achievements, his life and times.

A self-portrait and three caricatures by Zanetti showing Ricci in portly middle age confirm the details of his personal life: he enjoyed wine, women and song, communicating his joie de vivre in the vibrant, though carefully toned and balanced, colours of his paintings. Pagan and Christian themes alike are enlivened by effects of bold zig-zag compositions, dramatic movement, flying figures, bare flesh and heightened emotion.

Most readers will be aware of Sebastiano Ricci's connection with England through having admired and enjoyed his great canvases that flank the stairs of Burlington House, thanks to the patronage of the eighteen year old Lord Burlington in 1711, long before it became the seat of the Royal Academy. The *Bacchus meeting Ariadne* is illustrated in the catalogue, p.33. Three smaller canvases, showing the Loves of the Gods, including one of the *Betrothal of Bacchus and Ariadne,* are also to be seen in Burlington's neo-Palladian *villa suburbana*, Chiswick House. People with an art-historical or Venetian bent will also be aware of his connection with that vigorous diplomat, entrepreneur, patron and collector Consul Smith, whose armorial tomb slab is now ensconced appropriately on the wall of St. George's Church in Venice.

The roll-call of lenders to this exhibition, beginning with H.M. the Queen, indicate that he is well-ensconced in the British consciousness: Gateshead Museum has combined with the Metropolitan Museum of Art to allow a partial reconstruction in small of the long since lost - but evidently jewel-like - Chapel of Bulstrode House, Gerrards Cross. This was commissioned around 1713-14 by Henry Bentinck (1682-1726) second Earl and, from 1715, 1st Duke of Portland, who was grudging with payment but finally disbursed £600 in 1717. The sketch for its ceiling shows a typically Rococo "*di sotto in su*" rendering of the *Ascension of Christ* in an oval, centred on the Saviour – legs, arms and drapery afly – rising towards a luminous heaven flanked by banks of cloud that are populated by cheerful cherubim and gesticulating angels. The *Baptism of Christ* from New York happily includes the trompe l'oeil architecture and sculpture of the surround, indicating how thoroughly Ricci transplanted the latest Venetian style of interior decoration to the depths of Buckinghamshire. For George Vertue writing in 1733, "the whole" was "a Noble free invention, great force of lights and shade, with variety and freedom in the composition of the parts".

However, English taste had changed by 1842 when Anna Jameson disparaged a similar, bravura sketch for the altarpiece in fresco of the *Resurrection* for the Royal Hospital, Chelsea (lent by Dulwich Picture Gallery): "a small picture, with numerous figures: all poverty and flutter. This painter lived in the latest and worst time of the Italian school". Worse was to come in a catalogue entry of 1859, at the height of the vogue for Pre-Raphaelitism: "not a good specimen even of his debased style … the whole composition is unquiet and in a flutter". Flutter was evidently a very pejorative concept for the Victorians and so, for them, Ricci - who in artistic terms had lived for it - fell by it also. The revival of his fortunes took over a century, with the bulk of entries in the Bibliography of the catalogue falling after the Second World War, while 1976 was his *annus mirabilis,* with the simultaneous publication of a monograph in English and a catalogue in Italian by the late-lamented Jeffrey Daniels, as well as the acts of an international congress of 1975.

H.M. Queen Elizabeth lent an *Adoration of the Shepherds,* measuring just 72 by 39cm., which she has inherited from King George III, who acquired it with a long "Italian List" from Joseph Smith, British Consul in Venice, in 1762. Sebastiano made great play of the contrast between the sombre, brownish tones of the coarse rustic figures and farm animals gathered in the foreground around the mother and baby in the straw-filled manger and a colourful chain of joyous, well-nourished, cherubim tumbling in the sky above. A veritable Christmas card *avant le mot,* this lively sketch was painted around 1723, not long before the altarpiece in the Cathedral of Saluzzo, judging from the close comparison offered by another sketch in the Royal Collection for the *Adoration of the Magi,* which is actually dated 1726.

A visit to Hampton Court, a royal residence, would be enough to confirm the passion of the Hanoverian King for Ricci: for there hang his Seven Stories from the New Testament of c.1724-26.

Another London institution, the Courtauld Gallery, contributed to the exhibition, but to the section devoted to Ricci's followers, including the best and most famous of them, Giambattista Tiepolo (1696-1770): this is an oblong sketch for *The Triumph of Eloquence,* for one of his earliest ceiling frescoes, that in Palazzo Sandi, which, according to Sir Michael Levey, has "something of the nature of a manifesto by an emergent genius".

If ever, therefore, there was a "British-Italian" art exhibition, this was it, with the diplomat Consul Smith playing a vital rôle in the cultural exchange, as has been the case with so many of the Society's Presidents two – or almost three – centuries later.

ADORATA ALBIONE

By and large, Rivista articles take a look at Italy and the Italians. We thought it would make a refreshing change to read the observations that one Italian, Silvia Silvestri, made about us, from the October 1947 issue of Rivista. Sixty-three years later, we approached two young Italians living here today. These two contributors are Federica Cozzani and Davide Marchisio. She moved to London in 2001 and is a solicitor specialising in shipping and marine insurance law. He arrived three years later, in 2004, and works in London for an online gaming company, as business and product development manager for Italy.

Yesterday:
Molto si scrive in questi tempi sull'Inghilterra, e non credo sia un fenomeno puramente italiano, penso piuttosto europeo per il fatto che la guerra ha messo la "fortunata isola" in condizioni sotto molti aspetti pari a quelle delle altre nazioni.

Si aveva all'estero l'impressione che gli inglesi considerassero se stessi e fossero realmente quasi "gli eletti", il popolo migliore, il popolo dai cinque pasti, come fu per molto tempo chiamato, dando con ciò l'idea del benessere economico se si considera quello che cinque pasti richiedono di lavoro, consumo di generi e perdita di tempo.

Veramente il popolo inglese si è sempre distinto nettamente dal resto dell' Europa per tutti i suoi usi e costumi, ed ora malgrado le conseguenze della guerra conserva con tenacia e amore le vecchie abitudini, le conserva malgrado le molte ondate di modernismo portate specialmente dai contatti con l'America e dal desiderio stesso dei giovani di essere più sfrenati, più vivaci e direi un pò spregiudicati nelle idee e negli atteggiamenti. Questa infiltrazione viene considerata da molti un bene per l'Inghilterra e si incomincia a parlare di una certa "umanità inglese". La vita più difficile e la coscienza di non essere più il popolo più ricco, in altre parole il contatto con la vita povera, il dover controllare le spese, le limitazioni di ogni genere, specialmente quelle della tavola e delle lunghe vacanze europee ha abbassato l'inglese ad un piano economicamente uguale e gli ha dato problemi del tutto simili ai nostri.

Io però non mi voglio soffermare su questo avvicinamento, anche perchè chi non conosce molto bene l'Inghilterra degli anni scorsi non può fare simili confronti, mentre invece sente immediatamente una grande differenza tra i popoli latini e i sassoni, differenza che esiste ed è profonda e non si può cancellare anche se si vanno perdendo del tutto gli strascici della vecchia disciplina puritana che proibiva quasi di ridere alla domenica, che non permetteva divertimenti di alcun genere e financo la cucina doveva essere solo fredda per non creare lavoro alle donne. Ora con meraviglia dei vecchi si nota anche la domenica funziona il cinematografo, i treni corrono quasi regolarmente, tutti girano e cercano anche di mangiare quanto è possible e se vanno all'estero sono felici di avere un vestito alla moda di Parigi o di Torino, le scarpe a sandalo da portarsi senza calze. C'è libertà di atteggiamenti: non è difficile il caso di trovare in pieno giorno, nelle parti più frequentate di Hyde Park o di qualsiasi altro ben noto parco di Londra, giovani coppie distese ed abbracciate sull'erbetta mentre a soli pochi passi distante un libero parlatore con la faccia rossa e le vene gonfie cerca di entusiasmare gli ascoltatori ad un nuovo vangelo religioso o politico.

Tutto questo, ripeto, non può ancora far confondere l'Inghilterra con le nazioni più moderne. La vera impressione è quella di una vecchia signora un pò decaduta, ma sempre straordinariamente dignitosa. La moda di vestire per esempio è veramente inadeguata ai tempi e se quegli stessi vestiti venissero indossati da noi in Italia, saremmo semplicemente ridicole, ma non è così in Inghilterra dove una scarpa dalla punta lunghissima e sottile e dal tacco a rocchetto non solo passa inosservata, ma non toglie niente alla dignità ed estetica della persona.

Che sia un popolo 'tradizione per eccellenza' lo si nota in ogni cosa, prescindendo anche dalle più importanti come il mantenere pesi, misure e valori propri e non voler adottare il sistema decimale, costruire le case dividendole verticalmente anzichè orizzontalmente che porterebbe vantaggio di spazio, ma naturalmente toglierebbe l'impressione di possedere una casa e la grandissima risorsa del giardino. Strana e fedele alla tradizione è la cucina inglese o meglio la suddivisione dei pasti, l'abbondante breakfast ha ancora oggi il suo posto di vantaggio sulle varie altre refezioni della giornata, e saltare il "tea" del pomeriggio credo venga considerato dannoso o imprudente, perchè ho notato che non capita mai, nemmeno in casi di un lavoro eccezionale, un viaggio o un divertimento. Infatti il tea viene distribuito durante una partita sportiva e negli intervalli di un cinema o teatro. Ho notato innumerevoli diversità che non appartengono ad un individuo o ad una famiglia, ma a tutte indistintamente e perciò fanno parte della tradizione. Mi riferisco ad esempio a tutte le tradizioni di casa, al caminetto attorno al quale si svolge la vita familiare e penso alle serate intime e serene di poche persone raccolte attorno ad una fiamma, magari non più di legna o carbone, ma elettrica o a gaz con la immancabile tazza di tè. Ho usato l'aggettivo "sereno" ed infatti direi che malgrado tutto la vita sull'isola è "serena". Brontolano gli inglesi sulle restrizioni attuali, ma brontolano con serenità come se fosse un compito da assolvere e con serenità affrontano le faccende quotidiane nelle quali marito e moglie hanno gli stessi compiti: cioè non esiste un lavoro che sia esclusivamente dell'uomo o di sola competenza femminile. Ripeto che l'impressione è quella di una vita serena la quale ha il suo lato negativo ed è la tremenda uniformità che qualche volta agisce come un incubo su temperamenti latini.

Ancora una parola voglio dire in lode agli inglesi e questa è in merito alla loro grande ospitalità. Un popolo come un individuo non si può conoscere che a casa propria. Per la famiglia inglese l'ospite non è un peso ma un piacere, piacere della sua compagnia e, con molto senso pratico, anche del suo aiuto. Chi ha fortuna di vivere qualche tempo in una famiglia inglese o di avere degli amici inglesi è certo che quella famiglia e quegli amici non lo tradiranno nè lo dimenticheranno mai, anche se una guerra potrà per forza maggiore momentaneamente renderli nemici.

Silvia Silvestri

Today:
Quando si passeggia per strada a Londra, se non fosse per il clima piovoso, sembrerebbe molto spesso di essere in Italia. Invece di sentire parlare inglese, con " l'accento della Regina", si ascolta l'accento romano, napoletanto e milanese! Da Clerkenwell a Chelsea, l'italiano si è perfettamente ambientato e si è portato dietro le abitudini, le tradizioni e i costumi che oramai sono entrati a far parte della vita nella capitale inglese.

Non è più necessario andare a Torino per un buon caffè, o a Napoli per una pizza con la mozzarella di bufala. Oggi a Londra è facile trovare un buon gelato e mangiare *"al fresco"*, cose che solo pochi anni fa sarebbero state considerate delle stravaganze. Le tipiche usanze italiane, a partire dal cornetto e dal cappuccino della mattina fino all'aperitivo serale, vengono ormai condivise e addirittura richieste dagli inglesi, che si sono "*europeizzati*" grazie anche ai viaggi "*low cost*" sempre più frequenti nel continente alla disperata ricerca di un po' di sole o di una bella sciata!

L'adozione delle usanze italiane da parte degli inglesi non si ferma solamente allo stile di vita mondano ed ai prodotti culinari, ma si presenta anche sul campo della moda e del design in generale. L'inglese medio è infatti diventato più raffinato e "modaiolo" ed ha rimpiazzato la giacca di tweed ed il cappello a bombetta con capi esclusivamente *"made in Italy"*.

Si potrebbe quindi dire che l'inglese nella Londra di oggi mangia, veste e parla italiano! La domanda da un milione di euro (o sterline) quindi è: perchè l'italiano si trasferisce a Londra?

La risposta è semplice. Nonostante la crisi economica attuale abbia colpito Londra forse più di altre capitali europee, rimane comunque la principale meta per giovani alla ricerca di opportunità lavorative che a volte altre città europee non offrono. Come il fenomeno dell'emigrazione dal sud verso il nord Italia durante il boom degli anni '50 e '60, così i giovani italiani ora emigrano a Londra in cerca di una solidità sempre più precaria. L'unica differenza è che ora hanno spesso una buona preparazione culturale ed invece della valigia di cartone, hanno una Samsonite o una Tumi!

E' comunque sorprendente osservare come Londra, città estremamente multietnica ed internazionale, riesca a mantenere anche oggi la sua identità e le sue tradizioni intatte. Questo è il motivo per cui la capitale inglese continua ad affascinare ed attirare migliaia di stranieri. Dalle giornate di polo estive sorseggiando un *"pimms and lemonade"*, alle infinite partite di cricket, o dal "*Sunday roast*" alle pinte di birra al pub, Londra incanta i suoi visitatori, che si fanno coinvolgere con piacere dalla cultura inglese. Italiani o stranieri che siano, chi può dire di non avere mai bevuto una buona tazza di tè, rigorosamente con latte e non limone, magari accompagnata da un po' di "*scones and cream*"? Ci sono delle cose di Londra che non cambieranno mai, e il *"afternoon tea"*, è proprio una di queste.

Questo miscuglio di tradizioni così tipicamente *British* e di nuove tendenze totalmente europee, rendono Londra una città unica dove l'italiano di oggi vive bene, conservando le proprie usanze, ma allo stesso tempo adottando parte della cultura inglese, che sicuramente porterà con se al suo ritorno in patria.

Federica Cozzani & Davide Marchisio

ARCHAEOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY MEET

Paco Lanciano, familiar to the Italian public thanks to his appearances in various TV documentaries including SuperQuark hosted and produced by Piero Angela, talks to Georgina Gordon-Ham about his scientific approach to museums and archaeology.

"We always hear about the archaeological aspects of excavating, but less about the scientific approach and science communication, in particular to the way the public is involved", says Paco Lanciano. "It is a long story. My interest in scientific dissemination stems from my passion for astronomy. I graduated in astrophysics. In addition, I studied the most sophisticated aspects of astronomy back in the 1970s/1980s, which took me to the United States. I soon found myself working at two levels: a very high level to do with research and a lower level to do with dissemination." It was something of a novelty, Lanciano observed, to be communicating scientific developments to a non-scientific audience. "I realized that in Italy scientific dissemination was far behind that of other countries, such as Germany, France, Spain and Scandinavian countries – not just the UK. In Italy, for example, we have very few science museums and they are mostly traditional and old fashioned structures". Some feel that Italy is not grounded in the sciences because the accent in Italian schools and culture is more on the Humanities and the Arts. They feel that Francesco Petrarca comes before Galileo "We have such a huge concentrated humanistic heritage compared to the rest of the world and a slightly weaker scientific background, which justifies the fact that our larger museums concentrated more on the humanities... Galileo discovered the craters of the moon and the satellites of Jupiter in 1610; indeed by that time he had already published a scientific journal disseminating his discoveries around Europe and the world". When asked why he considers science so important, Lanciano replied: "The great strength of science lies in the fact that everything is based on previous knowledge. In the world of research discoveries are written up for publication and pooled information is shared further. This started with Galileo. Until then they thought that everything was based on the past without thinking or even attempting to understand the present".

And to this he added: "Over the years we have set up a number of small interactive scientific museums throughout Italy, such as an astronomy museum, a geology museum, a paleontology museum, a climate museum, an energy museum, a geophysics centre on earthquakes, but there isn't a Science Museum in Rome. A few years ago, Mayor Walter Veltroni launched a tender for a project for the Rome Science Museum, in which various groups were involved including two English groups. I took part in it with a team which included Piero Angela who is well known in Italy for his historical and scientific documentaries. We won the tender and prepared the project. However, the project is at a standstill for the time being due to financial and political reasons, but we hope it will go ahead in the near future".

Physicist Paco Lanciano

What would you say is the difference between an art museum and a science museum?

"Art museums speak for themselves, but scientific museums do not. A geology museum is full of stones, which fascinate the expert but mean nothing to the general public. Often scientific objects are displayed just like pieces of sculpture. We must try and make those stones come to life, doing so has brought us close to archaeology which is often a world of stones which were once walls, houses, temples and then became ruins and required explanations. Explanations related to time and space, that is a certain period in time and a specific place, especially in Rome which was built on various layers over a period of time".

How did you get involved in the excavations of Palazzo Valentini?

"In the case of Palazzo Valentini, Piero Angela and I were asked to turn these excavations into a museum. They lie about 10 metres from the Trajan column. Palazzo Valentini was built in the 16th century over a Roman building, like most of Rome. We must not forget that ancient Rome counted 2 million inhabitants. London reached the same number of inhabitants in the 19th century. There is a model at the Museo della Civilita' in EUR which shows a reconstruction of Rome at the end of the Roman Empire. Most of the inhabitants were within the walls, where buildings were six to seven floors high in the first and second century AD. A large number of the inhabitants lived in the 'insulae', the dwellings of the people inside the city. The very rich lived on the lower floors, whereas the poor lived on the very top where it was very cold in winter and hot in summer, apart from the inconvenience of having so many flights of steps. The city was densely built with tall buildings and many narrow alleys. There were few roads, the main ones being the 'Consular roads', such as the Flaminia, the Aurelia, the Cassia, the Appian Way, and the Salaria.

Officially, work began around 2006 on the cellars of Palazzo Valentini which today is the headquarters of the Province of Rome. Flooring was discovered, then a small wall followed by steps which led to a Roman 'domus', dating back to the second century AD.

"We joined the project when the excavations were already well underway and our role was to help non-experts to understand the ruins. The "modern" palace went up around 1560 and had a whole underground area, the cellars, which is where these ruins lie. It is not easy for people to recognise what they are seeing since there is a mixture of 16th century parts and Roman walls. They asked us to use our scientific approach to explain these ruins. There are no monuments or statues, just flooring and some mosaics. Archaeology has its own approach and

language. Normally books are written about findings and that is about it. A Roman amphitheatre was recently discovered in London and opened to the public. They kept the underground area, incorporated what was missing and projected the rest against the background of the wall. This is similar to what we have done. This is an approach which is used in the UK, whereby they tell the story to help people understand what it is all about. I often hear museum officials say reproachfully "People do not read". To which I would answer "We ought to have museums without a lot of writing since people tend not to read".

A Magical Evocative Atmosphere of Emotions

Paco Lanciano says: "What we should bear in mind is that we have other moments in which to read which aren't necessarily when we are visiting a museum. We can read a book, a newspaper, a magazine or even internet when we are comfortably sitting in an armchair at home. Normally we are not so happy to read standing up and cannot concentrate so well. In the case of artworks, such as paintings, one has to go to the museum to see them since that is where they are. What one does not want is panels and panels of written explanations which become tiring after a while to read standing up. That is why we have decided it is best to create museums without written panels or with very few written panels supported by audio visual aids". This is a modern approach which caters for everybody of all ages and cultural backgrounds. "What is difficult and where we have to be careful is to maintain standards and scientific sophistication, yet convey a message which can be grasped by all. No one should be excluded. It has to be accessible to non-experts and must be a magical evocative atmosphere of emotions. Some museums, however, will add extra pieces to their displays, such as vases , statues, objects, etc. These extras cause confusion in the viewer because it no longer is clear what is real and what is artificial". So Lanciano, instead, offers another approach: "What we have decided to do is use light effects and project videos to create the atmosphere, which when switched off all disappear bringing one back to reality to how the place is now. What happens is you walk from one area to another, lights turn on and focus on one thing, then on another and so forth in a very evocative way". This is done by a photography expert, thus paying attention to the atmosphere, dim lighting, light and shade using special light effects projected on the ruins, the wall and the flooring. "Then reconstructions are superimposed with videos projected onto glass screens, which are transparent so that the scenes and images disappear as soon as the projector is turned off. Virtual reality can take place anywhere and at any time. People move and visit places because they need authenticity. In Italy tourism is mostly for art. Communicating with people still requires physical contact at a certain point. Here, we are in a place, Palazzo Valentini, where the Romans actually used to live even if all we have left are ruins. The fact that we can turn these ruins temporarily into what they used to be enhances the ruins even more".

A multimedia museum to show visitors what it looked like originally through audio explanations and virtual reality reconstructions projected on the walls.

The audio part includes the voice of Piero Angela telling the story and music in the background. The visual part shows scenes and images with light effects, thus technology helps to create an evocative atmosphere, drawing in the visitors and helping them understand what they are seeing". It is, in other words, a multi-medial approach. "People often ask 'Has this been done before elsewhere?' What we have attempted to do is respect the place and be clear. Piero Angela narrates the story of the place using clear terminology. The fact is that technology has never been used in this way before." Lanciano says: "I would call it a novelty in the way of using technology in a certain way whereby walls, whatever the size, are used as screens". He concluded his thoughts with these words: "What is important is that the visitor has seen something unique, has learnt something and goes home satisfied. What we have attempted to do is respect its authenticity".

"It has been a unique emotion. Thank you for a fascinating visit".

MYSTERIOUS STRINGS: THE LESS KNOWN VIOLIN-MAKERS OF CREMONA

By Carlo Chiesa

When we think of violin makers from Cremona, our minds immediately recall three great names: Stradivari, Guarneri, Amati. With good reason, obviously. Adding the names of Rugeri, Bergonzi, Storioni and Ceruti we have seemingly covered nearly all of the Cremonese instruments we can easily see or hear in the hands of the best players. Nevertheless, they were not the only actors in the play. Many more were involved, and for a good number of them we'll never even know their names.

It would be wrong to assume that all of the men (and possibly women) who worked in the trade were members of these leading families: we know that in the main workshops, pupils and assistants were employed to help the master, who was in part acting as an entrepreneur, and at least a few of these helpers may have established independent workshops. But Cremona in 1700 was very different from how it is today, a town in which it is easier to find a violin maker than a baker. In fact, in 1700 there were not that many people employed in the craft, but since the history of Cremonese violins extends over 300 years, together they add up to a sizeable number.

In the 1576 census of Cremona, the only maker of musical instruments recorded was Andrea Amati, who was listed together with his sons and close relatives. Apparently, the monopoly of the Amati family went on for a long time. It was only in 1610 that we learn of another family of makers in the town. That year, a man called **Giovanni Maria Cironi** filed a request for the right of citizenship. His family had come to town a few years earlier from Pozzaglio, nearly halfway between Cremona and Brescia. Cironi gave his profession as a player and maker of viols, citterns and other musical instruments. He and one of his sons, Gerolamo, were members of the guild of woodworkers. Documents show that Cironi's business was highly profitable, and he ended his days, around fifteen years later, as a rich man. Most interesting of all is the statement, confirmed by witnesses, that at the time of the request, Cironi had already been in the trade for many years and that the Cironis were both players and makers of instruments, including violins. As far as I know, no instrument by the Cironis survives, but in her will, Cironi's wife , Lucrezia, gives a violin with a bow to an unidentified heir. This seems to be the only available information relating to a Cironi violin: not much, considering the wealth that the family amassed through their members' work. Time passed by and while the Cironis were developing a successful business, the Amati shop was also flourishing. With no sons and relatives available to help him, in the first half of the 17th century. Nicolò Amati began hiring assistants from outside the family. The first and probably most important were Andrea Guarneri and **Giacomo Gennaro.**

Setting aside Guarneri – his family is known well enough! – Gennaro is an important character. Born in or around 1624, he resided for a few years in Amati's house, at least from 1640 to 1646. In 1648 his first child was born, which suggests that he left his master's house at the time of his marriage, but it is also possible that he continued working at the Amati shop. Nevertheless it appears that Gennaro made at least a few instruments on his own, mainly in a style very close to his master's. He was never a rich man, but he was able to supply his daughters with good dowries. In one instance, the dowry included a small collection of jewellery with some precious stones, items we do not expect to find in the house of a poor man. Although fully trained for a long period in the art of violin making, from 1658 onwards Gennaro also had another job. He was responsible for the care and maintenance of the clock on the Torrazzo, the bell tower of Cremona's cathedral. Gennaro had to attend to the clock's counterweights every evening, and in the morning if necessary, and if the clock stopped or suffered any other malfunction, he had to deal with it as speedily as possible. However, he was strictly forbidden to use any file or metal tool inside the clock, and in case of problems he had to call on the chief engineer of the cathedral to visit. Gennaro received a good salary for this job. Perhaps at this point in his life, violin making became a second job and this would explain why the number of instruments he made appears to be so small. Gennaro died in 1701.

From the list of apprentices who resided in the Amati household, we know many more names of young men who tried to start careers as violin makers; significantly, none of them were from Cremona. Because of this, they lived with their master's families, and as a consequence, they usually left town as soon as they completed their apprenticeships. As is often suggested, it is possible that Antonio Stradivari and Francesco Rugeri were also trained in the Amati workshop, but because they were from Cremona and had no reason to live in the master's home, there is no documentary evidence that they were there.

Among these apprentices we find some foreigners. From at least 1680 one **Gio Segher** lived at the Amatis. He was the son of a luthier and the correct spelling of his name was Jaeger. Unfortunately, he died in 1682. His place was taken by another

Cremona violin maker's workshop

young maker from a German family of luthiers, **Giacomo Reilich**, whose family had connections in Padua, Bologna, Brescia and Venice. From the dates given, it is interesting to note that these two apprentices were in fact pupils of Nicolò's son Girolamo II Amati, in a period in which the Amati shop was in a sudden and steep decline. But earlier on in Nicolò's workshop, two of the most prolific makers to spread the Cremonese style around northern Italy were trained. They were not from Cremona, and never worked on their own in that city, but their importance was great. The first, listed only in the year 1660, is **Bartolomeo Pasta.** Born around 1640, Pasta later moved to Milan, where he lived for a period in the same house as the Testores, which suggests a further working relationship between these makers. He died shortly after 1700, leaving two or three sons trained as violin makers.

After Pasta left the Amati house, his place was taken by **Giovanni Battista Rogeri**. A native of Bologna, he remained in Cremona for a couple of years and then moved to Brescia, where he became the most important maker in that city. After his death, his workshop was inherited by his son Pietro Giacomo, but it is probably more than mere chance that just at that time one or two of Pasta's sons also moved to Brescia. It is possible that the two families had maintained some sort of relationship and this was helpful when work in Milan became hard, or when the younger Rogeri needed a trained hand to help him in Brescia.

But going back to those Cremonese citizens involved in violin making whose names are all that remain, it is surely right to end with two men: **Stefano Tili** and **Domenico Moneghini.** Nobody has ever seen a label bearing their names. Nevertheless we are all well acquainted with their work, whatever it was. They were brothers-in-law of Nicolò Amati, and both were his partners in the family business, probably under the successful and well-known firm, the Brothers Amati. We'll never know if they were fully trained as violin makers or if their role in the business covered other aspects, such as the supply of cases, or the quest for good wood or strings or the care of customers. The only fact that we know is that they were not mere employees, but co-owners of the business. And this leads us to an extraordinary conclusion: that we know very little of the daily organisation of one of the most famous workshops in the history of violin making. And it is possible that part of the work on some of the most famous violins in the world was done by people nowadays completely forgotten. So for now, let us remember those that we *do* know.

The Milan-born author, Carlo Chiesa, is a graduate of the Scuola di Liuteria there. He makes violins, violas, cellos and viols and is conservator of stringed instruments at the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory in Milan. He co-authored "The Stradivari Legacy." This article is reprinted by courtesy of ***The Strad*** *Magazine and originally appeared in the Cremona Supplement to the magazine in August 2009.*

A TRAIN INTO THE PAST

By Alexandra Richardson

What struck me most were the railroad times. In her gold-tooled diary of 123 years ago, my 18-year old grandmother, Mary Lawrence, recorded all the unfolding experiences of her very first trip through newly-unified Italy, illustrated with delightful little ink drawings. There were detailed descriptions, of course, of all the monuments and artworks she saw en route, not to mention the people she met.

But when she chugged out of Florence's old train station at 10:40 one brisk Monday morning in the latter half of April 1887 en route north to Bologna, it would take her five hours and forty-five minutes to reach her destination. A look at any current timetable shows clearly that the 60-mile journey, cutting straight through the Apennines, takes 60 minutes. I had clocked this leg of the journey many times myself, travelling between Rome and Milan. Even allowing for the slower equipment of yesteryear, how on earth had she added close to another five hours to that voyage?

The question was put to a retired railroad man friend, Antonio Barberis whom I knew in Tuscany, as we leafed together through the pertinent pages of her journal: *the ride was a long one as we started at ten forty and did not reach Bologna until 4:25. It was one of the most beautiful car rides I have ever taken for we passed over the Apennines ascending a very steep grade and descending another on the other side.* We looked at the adjacent sketch that she had done of a *campanile* and, like lightening, it all then clicked for my friend Barberis: "Of course! That's the medieval Catilina tower of Pistoia, 21 miles west of Florence! There was no direct line north to Bologna in her days. Your grandmother had to go via Pistoia, then up along the Porrettana", said Barberis, adding, "Why don't you do it too? It's one of the loveliest train rides in Italy".

I hadn't a clue what "La Porrettana" meant, nor indeed its precise route. But, appetite whetted, and with my friend's enthusiastic recommendation, I thought: With diary in hand, why not retrace her steps over a century later and compare notes?

Bypassing a string of faceless Florentine suburbs, I drove directly to Pistoia and parked near the lovely pale yellow and grey railroad station in Piazza Dante. The tortuously-snaking rail line I was about to see firsthand, "La Porrettana" (the term is used interchangeably for both the line and the train itself) was opened in its 61 ½ -mile entirety on November 2, 1864, eleven years after the initial groundbreaking.

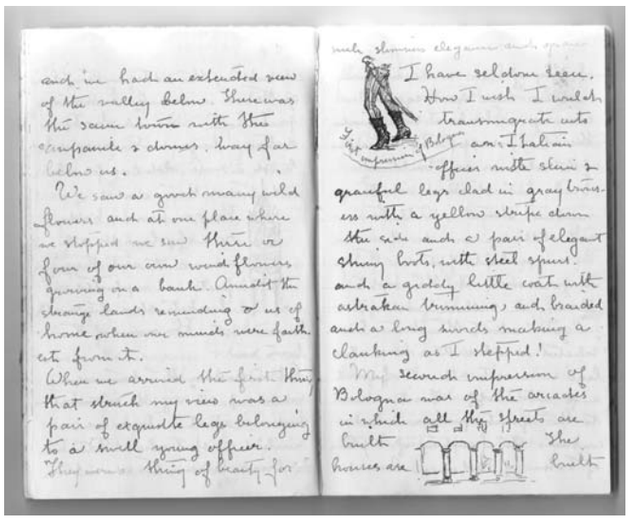
It took its name from the peak-top spa of Porretta Terme, known since Roman times for its sulphur springs. Lorenzo de Medici and the painter Andrea Mantegna came here to cure their ills and Niccolò Macchiavelli immortalised the pungent-smelling waters in his play La Mandragola. As at the turn of the century, today's visitors are mostly seasonal, lured during the summer months as much for the cool mountain air as for the sulphur cures.

With four magnificent major viaducts, seemingly countless tunnels burrowing through the peaks and railroad bridges zigzagging across the water, it was an engineering marvel of its times, with important political implications of linking the new country, a north-south lifeline, when the capital shifted from Turin to Florence.

If I grumbled under my breath over the expense of a second-class fare, I was in good company. Granny had had to shell out 16 francs 55 centimes for her one-way ticket and thought it rather steep. At 11:20 on a hot August morning – at probably just about the same hour that she too passed through all those years ago - I glided out of Pistoia aboard a two-carriage graffiti-blighted electric train headed up and through the Apennines. At a siding just beyond the station stood a gleaming black steam engine and three lovingly-restored racing green carriages. My grandmother's train no doubt was hauled by a similar coal-fuelled locomotive. But her curtained and leather-lined carriage interior would have been an entirely different configuration, where passengers boarded their respective compartments from outside, corridor-less and sealed off from all other travellers.

The clattering climb out of Pistoia aboard my Spartan open-plan car was almost immediate. Scarcely 3 ½ miles out of town, just before being gulped up by the short Ponzano tunnel near Valdibreana, I caught a brief back-looking glimpse, as she had had of the view. *The campanile had rows of colonnades all around it and the upper part was supported in brackets above the small lower shaft,* my grandmother had noted. It was the Catilina Tower, boasting three tiers of celestial loggias high above the cityscape.

With scarcely seven stops to oversee between Pistoia and Porretta Terme that morning, my conductor Mauro Briganti volunteered a helpful commentary on a run that he knew by heart. If La Porrettana was dogged in the early days by natural disasters, (Mary Lawrence's journey occurred 15 months after a particularly freakish mudslide in January 1886. The volume of mud hurtling down the slopes into the river near Pracchia was sufficient to swell the river and flood the tracks on the opposite side, killing one and injuring others) then in more recent times they were man-made catastrophes. As we passed over one viaduct, Briganti reminisced that during World War II, 17 American bombers had attempted to knock out the vital Pitecchio viaduct along this track in April 1944, to stymie the German retreat. The bombs fragmented some



A pair of exquisite legs (from the diary)

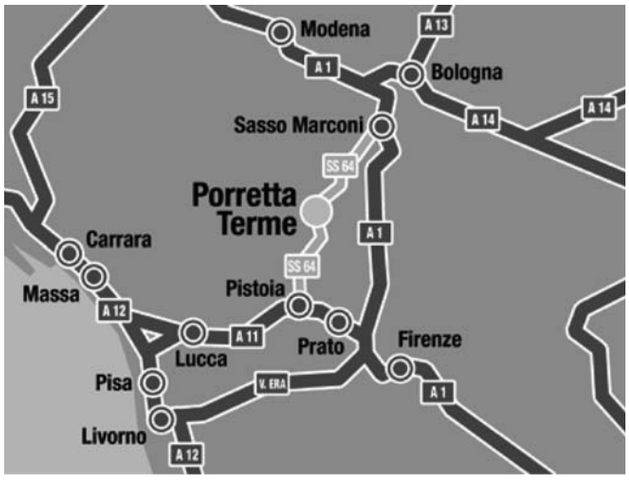
of the pylons but did not bring them toppling down. That dubious accomplishment was achieved by the Germans three months later who, to thwart the advancing Allied ground troops, successfully mined that one and two others. "Of course we restored them after the war", Briganti said.

And still we climbed. I was beginning to enjoy a slight drop in the temperature after the baking Tuscan plain. *It was quite cold as there had been a snow storm the night before, covering all the mountains with a sheet of snow,* were the next lines from the diary. What Miss Mary Lawrence probably did not know was that this part of Italy was renowned for its commercial ice industry and that cold snaps meant good money. Conductor Briganti pointed out that water from the river further along was diverted into basins where, during the harsh winter months, they froze over. This ice was cut into large blocks to be sold in Bologna and Florence. The arrival of the railway rewrote transport problems. The very year of Granny's trip, 17000 tons of ice was carried out by rail along her route. Nearby Le Piastre boasts an interesting museum telling of the local ice industry.

The train wound along the side of a rushing mountain brook which we discovered afterwards was called a river and had a very fine name. She neglected names but I knew what she meant. The gurgling water she initially saw was from the two Arno tributaries, the Ombrone and the Brana. The "*very fine name*" she failed to conjure up was probably of the river Reno which she saw further along on her journey. And that, by the way, is the Italian for "Rhine"!

Our climb seemed to be getting steeper and steeper. "It's a 26 per 1000 grade", reported Briganti, reading my mind, "meaning that we are climbing 26 metres for every 1000 metres of track". In scarcely 27 minutes, we had puttered by the postage-stamp stations of Pitecchio, Corbezzi, Castagno and San Mommè, wedged between tight folds of the mountains. We then rumbled into the lofty Galleria dell'Appennino which, at 8940 feet, is the longest tunnel on the line and the last before pulling in for our one-minute stop at Pracchia. This is the watershed point between the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian Seas. At 2026 feet above sea level, this miniscule town is, literally, the high point or rather highest point, of my trip. Sadly, though, Pracchia's luster has long since faded. The Belle Epoque elite once flocked there, strutting their finery through the polished confines of the Albergo Appennino, today a shuttered relic of what once was. A frumpy dresser by her own admission and not much taken in by the glamorous set, Granny had other things to absorb her attention rather than a fleeting train-window glimpse of the Pracchia swells. Despite the dusting of snow, she saw *a good many wild flowers and at one place where we stopped we saw three or four of our own wild flowers growing on a bank amidst the strange lands reminding us of home when our minds were farthest from it.* A century's growth had turned a lot of that into a thick tangle of trackside bramble. The only mouth watering vegetation I saw was a gorgeous crop of wild blackberries reminding me, too, of home.

A tug of curiosity would later prompt me to seek out railroad historian Maurizio Panconesi who is the author of three books exclusively about the Porrettana, to ask him further about the steep ascent to Pracchia. "It's certainly not the steepest grade of the Italian railroad system," said Panconesi. "That record, at 34 metres per kilometre probably goes to the Giovi leg of track between Genoa and Turin. But what makes the Porretta



Rail route from Pistoia to Bologna via La Porretta

itinerary so special is that it is an ascent sustained for a stretch of 20 kilometres".

The engineering works to complete the railway line from Pracchia on north to Bologna are quite remarkable, for the track crosses the Reno 19 times and threads through 23 tunnels, totalling a length of nearly five miles. At 12:11, my little train pulled in to Porretta Terme, 1155 feet above sea level. There are sixteen hotels there today, some of which feature modern sulphur baths. But an 1899 the Baedeker Guide to northern Italy lists as "worthy" only the Albergo di Roma and the Albergo Palazzino, both long since gone.

Unlike Granny, I had to alight and dash to the next track to board the connecting service to Bologna. Eleven minutes later, we pulled out of our Alpine-flavoured setting and glided downhill for the final 63 minutes to our destination. The Mary Lawrence diary devotes no lines whatsoever to this second half of the journey, even if she surely was spared the steady succession of anonymous commuter towns and quarry-gouged hillsides that I was now seeing. Charmless, dusty industry clings to the tracks like a magnet today and passengers listlessly ascended and descended from my train.

But like the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel, my grandmother had one final feast for her eyes at the Bologna railroad station. *When we arrived the first thing that struck my view was a pair of exquisite legs belonging to a swell young officer. They were a thing of beauty, for such slimness, elegance and grace I have seldom seen. How I wish I could transmigrate into an Italian officer with slim and graceful legs clad in gray trousers with a yellow stripe down the side and a pair of elegant shiny boots with steel spurs and a giddy little coat with astrakhan trimming.* The eighteen-year old American girl was clearly riveted.

Hoping to match that heavenly apparition, I cast my eyes around the Bologna station for someone comparable. The August heat was stunning and there was no fur trim nor shiny black officer boots anywhere. Huddled off in a corner wilting in the heat were two Polfer officers, Italy's railway police, in their rumpled uniforms moist with perspiration. Cheated of Mary Lawrence's Grand Finale, I boarded the next train back to Pistoia. Clearly, it was time to go home.

CARAVAGGIO, THE ART WORLD REVOLUTIONARY

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

Famous while he lived thanks to his appeal to rich and powerful patrons, Caravaggio was forgotten almost immediately after his death, and it was only in the 20th century that his true importance was rediscovered.

Italy has been commemorating the 400th anniversary of Caravaggio's death in 2010 with exhibitions, talks and other initiatives, such as the possibility of renaming one of Milan's or of Bergamo's airports to Caravaggio. The outstanding artist Michelangelo Merisi, or Caravaggio as he is also known as after the small town where he spent part of his childhood, lived a short but turbulent life.

The celebrations began with an interesting exhibition on Caravaggio and Francis Bacon at the Galleria Borghese in Rome, where Caravaggio spent many years, followed by another show at the Scuderie of the Quirinale with about 24 paintings from all over the world, including loans from New York and St Petersburg. The dimly lit rooms unfortunately slightly marred the atmosphere by creating an even more melodramatic environment. Events then shifted to Florence, where exhibitions featured paintings by artists influenced by Caravaggio's style, with its focus on chiaroscuro and naturalism. Paintings by the leader of the 'Caravaggisti', Bartolomeo Manfredi, and Dutch artists Gerard van Honthorst and Theodore Rombouts are among those featured. 'Caravaggio e i Caravaggeschi' at the Palazzo Pitti and the Uffizi Gallery in Florence continue the tribute to him. Florence's Villa Bardini is also hosting an equally striking but much smaller exhibition of the master's works collected by 20th-century art historian and top Caravaggio expert Roberto Longhi. Later in the year, Rimini's Castel Sismondo hosts 'Caravaggio and other 17th-Century Painters'.

Caravaggio's fame spread from Rome to all over Italy and Europe. It was there that he got his first commissions and established his reputation. He was jailed in Rome for a defamatory pamphlet attacking other painters, and it was where he often found himself involved in brawls, which a few years later forced him to leave, sentenced to a perpetual exile from the Pope's city. One of his places of refuge was Malta. According to Stefania Macioce, an Italian art historian and Caravaggio scholar, Merisi's exile there was perhaps where he sought redemption. During his stay in Malta he was made a knight of the Order of St John. However, this did not calm down Caravaggio's restless character. Another brawl forced him to leave the island. He became a lonely man as his vagabond life continued, leading to an early death at the age of 39, yet leaving an indelible mark on the art history world.

In addition to these initiatives, researchers from the universities of Ravenna and Bologna have conducted DNA tests on corpses found in a Tuscan crypt that many believe contains the painter's remains. Hence, this technology may soon solve the mystery of the disappearance of one of history's most colourful and enigmatic artists.

The Lute Player, Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg (photo by courtesy of the Scuderie of the Quirinale museum)

Tests will also look for evidence of malaria, and typhoid, another big killer before the advent of antibiotics, as well as evidence of the heavy metals present in oil paint. The scientists hope to compare the DNA samples from the crypt with relatives of the painter who are alive today. Researchers have looked for possible descendants in the northern town of Caravaggio, where he grew up, and descendents of his brother who still lives near Milan.

The painter was not always so popular. In Rome during his lifetime, the prevalent mannerist painters, trapped in their veneration of the High Renaissance, were shocked by Caravaggio's sensual realism. His revolutionary use of contrasting light and dark, chiaroscuro, and naturalism made him modern in many ways. He had extraordinary artistic skills which made him stand out. Caravaggio exemplifies the modern antihero. He is a hyper-realist whose art is instantly accessible to all.

To conclude, Andrea Dusio, the music and cinema critic, has made some interesting comments in his recently published book entitled Caravaggio White Album. He sees the painter as a modern man who has revolutionised the way of painting and the relationship with the art world as "likewise the Beatles and the Rolling Stones did with music. They all had something new to convey". Hence the choice of the title White Album is dual: on the one hand it recalls the Beatles' White Album, whilst on the other it is a way to look at Caravaggio from a different viewpoint bearing in mind the artist's desire to be realistic. The book is a sort of 'tabula rasa' eliminating all the various layers of information and interpretations on Caravaggio to-date giving a fresh look.

PINOLI: NATURE'S PINT-SIZED GIFT TO ITALIAN CUISINE

By Alexandra Richardson

His tiny hand clutching a small rock, little Emilio in Rome bangs intently on his brittle brown quarry until it finally cracks open and he prises free the slender white nugget from within. Some sixty kilometres south of Rome, just outside Latina, one of the Paduano brothers gazes at his sprawling, rattling Heath Robinson-like machinery hard at work. In a far more complex manner, it is achieving precisely the same results as the youngster's stone. Emilio's is the time-honoured method, while Paduano's is decidedly out of the 21st century. They are *both* processing that miniscule and largely unsung delectation of the Italian table, the versatile *pinolo* or pine nut. Emilio will pop his resin-scented kernel straight into his mouth for a quick snack. Paduano's yield, instead, will be packaged for the national market, part of Italy's crop which, over the last twenty years, has averaged 3000 tons annually.

There are about 80 varieties of pines worldwide; less than half of them yield edible seeds. They grow in China, the entire Mediterranean basin, Mexico, the Middle East, even Siberia! But only the *Pinus pinea* species, or the stone pine – locally called the "pino domestico" – earns the highest culinary mark of all among Italians for its little protein-rich contents. The pale 2-centimetre long seed that we use today for a host of Mediterranean dishes boasts some of Mother Nature's most resilient wrapping. The first hurdle is to coax open the seemingly-impenetrable clove-like segments that make up the pine cone. That done, there is the further barricade of a hard woody casing around each individual kernel. *That* cracked and one is pretty much in business.

Luca Gorreri is the author of a book entirely devoted to the pine groves and pinoli crops of the Tuscan coast around San Rossore and as such, a major expert on the subject. He has studied the properties of a dozen types of pine nuts from around Italy, from Turkey, Portugal and China. "Ours", he has commented, "strike a good balance. The ones from China are over-oily. Others are short on oil. Ours in Tuscany, at 42%, are smack in the middle. They're more aromatic. And they appeal to the eye as well".

Pine nuts are no newcomers to Italy. Indeed, archaeological evidence from the AD 79 ruins at Pompei and Herculaneum in the south suggest that seeds form pine cones were very much in culinary use even then. In fact, a recipe for a savoury accompaniment using almonds, chopped pinoli and vinegar survives from ancient times. In his book *De re Coquinaria*, Apicius quotes 57 uses for them: mixed into soups, blended with sausages, sprinkled over game. Much like moviegoers today with their peanut shells all over the cinema floor, Roman legions in England left behind scatterings of pine nut casings as they munched their way through this delicacy centuries ago, far from home. During the Middle Ages, the Maritime Republic of Pisa purposely planted vast acreage of stone pines, partly, of course, to provide the necessary timber for boat-building. Tree resin was marketed and pine kernels were the icing on the cake, so to speak. On the slopes of Vesuvius outside Naples during the 1800s, meanwhile, enterprising *contadini*-woodsmen collected cones and took them door to door. If a housewife needed a handful of fresh kernels for a dish she was preparing, the peddler would crack them open right on her doorstep. Harvesting was equally labour-intensive in the north, where each tree had to be climbed and limbs shaken gently until the cones fell to the ground for collection. One colourful figure who was part of this whole choreography was the *ghiraio* or dormouse-catcher. For these little rodents, too, had a taste for pinoli and it was always a race to see who would reach the pine cone first. The ghiraio helped slow down that race.

Italpinoli at Borgo San Donato, just southeast of Latina is one of Italy's five major pine nut processors. It is easily spotted as one drives through the flatlands south of Rome: surrounding the Paduano Brothers processing plant are vast mounds of dull brown cones waiting for attention. Raffaele Paduano explains that the harvest takes place in the late autumn when "green" pine cones are brought to them. If little Emilio were running the show, he'd be popping his cones into a heated oven and watching for the cloves to open up, much like clams or mussels in a steam pot. But Paduano is large scale and so must force the pace. *His* cones are fed into a large warm husking cell. Five more stages of crushing, sifting and polishing will follow over an eight-hour day. The mathematics, Paduano explains, say it all: "one hectare of land will normally yield 30 quintals of closed pine cones. Processing the cones dramatically strips that harvest to a humble 3 quintals of ready-to-eat kernels at the end. Add on the labour costs of harvesting this cumbersome quarry plus the expense of keeping all my machinery in good working order and you'll quickly understand why these white kernels are so costly".

The ancient Romans had their own clear ideas on how to use the pinolo in cooking. We have simply added to the repertoire over the succeeding years. And what a repertoire! From Sicily, where local cooks use pinoli in a sweet and sour sauce reminiscent of yesteryear, it is poured over sardines. And, what about their role in a classic vegetable *caponata*? Carrying on north to Naples, it shows up in many stuffings and sauces. Proceed up the peninsula and no *Torta della Nonna* at the end of a meal would be complete without a generous layering of pine kernels atop the cake. The more adventurous sprinkle them toasted over green salads, while in Alto Adige, it would be *verboten* to exclude them from strudel. And then, of course, there is Liguria's sublime green gift to the world, pesto sauce, where pinoli figure in the magnificent triumvirate together with fresh basil and olive oil, with a brief bow to garlic and grated pecorino. Elsewhere in the Mediterranean basin, pine nuts appear in many of the *mezze* dishes of Arab cuisine and in the recipes for a Turkish *imam bayildi*. As if this all were not praise enough, the modest little pine nut has also entered the classroom: Slow Food often offers *workshops* entirely devoted to the study of the pinolo.

Whatever the dish is, there are some "dos" and "don'ts" in choosing your pine nuts on the market. Check the expiry date on the packet to ensure it hasn't exceeded its shelf life. Study the colour: if they aren't creamy-hued, give them a miss. Once purchased, keep them in a closed container. Air is an enemy. Lastly, when preparing a dish, add the pinoli at the last moment: it preserves the crunchiness.

As if to officially crown this understated little workhorse of Italian cuisine, to truly put it on the map, one Tuscan town near San Casciano in Val di Pesa, Chiesanuova, has even construed an entire local festival, which falls each June, in celebration of the pinolo. What more fitting tribute could a little white kernel ask for than to be given its very own party?

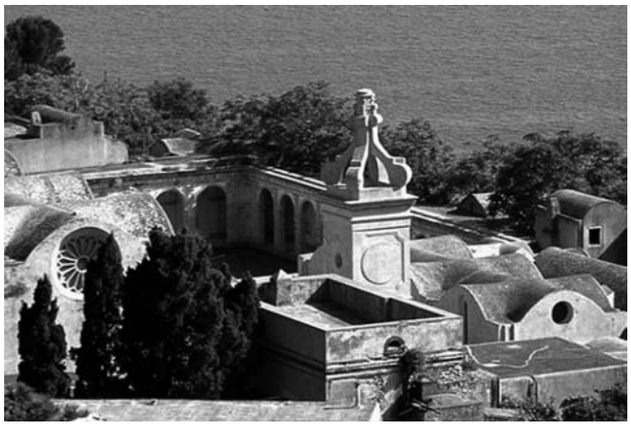
THE CERTOSA OF CAPRI

By Alexandra Richardson

The "guest list" looks like a leaf out of "Who's Who". They came in droves, no prompting needed. Graham Greene, Tommaso Marinetti, Axel Munthe, Alfred Krupp, Norman Douglas, Maxim Gorky, Pablo Neruda, Thomas Mann, Alberto Moravia, Somerset Maugham. And even Gracie Fields and Lenin…but not together! From the late 1800s onward, the crème of international culture flocked to Capri, off the coast of Naples, to write, to paint, to reflect. Or simply to bask in the good weather and regain health, with the added assurance of stimulating company. Shielded from the limelight, they settled into the privacy of secluded villas or discreet hotels, enjoying walks over the craggy terrain and looking out onto stunning vistas.

Capri *still* provides the setting to work its intellectual magic, albeit perhaps in a more open, more public manner these days. A case in point has been the re-emergence of the 14th century Certosa di San Giacomo, now a principal focal point for the cultural life of the island. Perched high on the central plain, this sprawling Charterhouse of Saint James commands a grandstand view out over Capri's most famed emblem, the *Faraglioni,* those peaked rocks jutting up from the sea. Built in 1371-74, the complex at the outset housed, the order of Carthusian monks who took vows of silence, prayer and asceticism. The serenity of the monks and their quarters, however, would see considerable upheaval. Plundered by Saracen pirates, afflicted by plague, pummelled by invasion, the place was ultimately squashed during the religious suppression of 1807, with the property taking on an ignominious afterlife - first as army barracks, later a prison, then a home for the elderly and a military hospital. Nonetheless, traces survive of its happier period as a monastery. Indeed the complex was embellished with frescoes including one small gem of a 14th century lunette depicting The Virgin and Child surrounded by Saints John and James. The front entrance to the church features a bas-relief of Saints Bruno and James. Also unchanged is the sheer size and layout of the Certosa which counts one small cloister and one larger one. Plus a sizeable chapel, refectory and the prior's quarters and an idyllic pine-shaded garden overlooking the sea. All seemingly seeking a fresh *raison d' être.*

Initially that came as a permanent resting place for the large and troubling artworks of the late Karl William Diefenbach,



The Certosa of Capri

a German painter who made Capri his home until his death in 1913. Room was made to accommodate a *liceo classico* for the island's students as well as a small library. Money, such as was available, went towards structural restorations. And as improvements were made, temporary exhibitions, concerts and other events began to be staged at the Certosa in a sporadic manner. But in 2006, with the formation of the Friends of the Certosa di Capri association, a bold new chapter was opened. Distinctly international in outlook, the association's ambition was to establish fixed and firm dates on the annual calendar, at the end of August, to present a wide range of cultural activities of a new and bolder calibre. Within twelve months, the first Summer Music series was hosted there and the following year, the Friends widened their net to include dance, theatre , film and art. The Festival has drawn such international figures as Sir Neville Marriner conducting the National Youth Strings Academy Orchestra, Italy's Giancarlo Giannini compère-ing various performances, Wendy Nielsen the Canadian soprano and Stig Björkman the Swedish film director.

For further information about scheduled 2011 events there or for additional details on Friends of the Certosa di Capri, contact info@capricertosa.com

A SHORT HISTORY OF MOWERS IN MONTICIANO

by Judith Evans

It was February when I completed the purchase on the house of my dreams in the hills 35 kilometres south of Siena. I'd fallen in love with the place on holiday the year before, and the two-bedroomed house with its four terraces of garden was everything I wanted. When I came back for my first visit after buying it, the wisteria was in bloom on the wooden canopy shading the doors to the living room. Clumps of blue and white irises were out in splendour and huge shrubs of lilac filled the garden with their fragrance. It was perfect, apart from one thing. Lawns I'd called them in February. By May they were meadows, albeit beautiful ones; filled with wild flowers, clusters of red poppies intermingled with purple clover, margheritas and buttercups. But the grass was knee high and needed cutting.

Monticiano is a small village surrounded by funghi-filled woods, housing the district's commune, necessities like bar, bank and bakery, and two miles down the road there is an ironmonger's shop. If I could buy a mower there, they'd be able to sort out repairs as well. I drove down to have a look. *La Magoncina* was an old fashioned ironmonger's, stocking paint, nails, garden tools, screwdrivers, in short everything you could get in Homebase as long as you didn't mind waiting while it's ordered.

'I need something to cut the grass,' I said. A small, dark-haired woman looked up from her calculator and called her husband. He led me to three electric lawn mowers in the centre of the shop, each one slightly larger than the other, and all of them eye-wateringly expensive. I went for the cheapest, put it in the back of the car and brought it home. It didn't require much putting together. The handle had already been fixed on, so all I had to do was attach the green bag for clippings and plug it in.

Soon the clippings bag was full and I'd made only a small indent on the top terrace. I trudged to the place the previous owner had used for rubbish and emptied it out. Two hours later and with a high pile of grass cuttings, I needed a rest. In fact I had to have one, because the flex was too short for me to mow the third terrace. At least the break gave me and the motor a chance to cool down.

In the afternoon I went back to *La Magoncina* for an extension lead. It enabled me to mow the third terrace, but not the fourth. I took some measurements, and reckoned I needed 45 metres of flex to reach the end of the garden. This time it was the son who served me. Only when he'd cut the flex and sold me sockets for both ends, did he tell me that to use a flex as long as 45 metres was illegal. By this time, I had spent nearly five hundred euros at the place, the only good news being that the exchange rate was better then. At last I got the fourth terrace mown and my garden was lovely again.

By the end of June, the luscious green grass had burnt to a crisp but so too had my lawn mower. I took it back to *La Magoncina*. All summer the sun was too hot for the grass to grow and also, seemingly, for repairmen to work. Eventually, in the autumn, and another large repair bill later, I had my mower back. By now I had got used to carrying the cumbersome machine up and down the steps between terraces, and I used garden shears to cut the slopes. It was hard, hot work. Surely this wasn't how the Monticianese cut their grass?

I watched families from the house the other side of the valley using strimmers around their orchards. The commune workmen clearing the dirt tracks encircling Monticiano's medieval walls used strimmers. Indeed, it seemed anyone cutting grass anywhere in the vicinity used a strimmer. The next time my mower broke down, I put it out with the rubbish, went to *La Magoncina* and bought a strimmer myself. Needless to say it didn't come cheap.

However, it worked. Not only did it cut the flat bits, but it whizzed away weeds growing on my stone walls and earth banks. It also flattened the fennel, honesty and most of the flowers planted by my predecessor, which I couldn't see through my steamed-up safety goggles. And then it coughed and sighed and rested. Back to *La Magoncina* it went for repair.

Unfortunately, Husband now worked somewhere else, and repairing my strimmer wasn't high on his list of priorities on his weekends home. After a couple of months, Son was sympathetic to my problem and lent me a brand new strimmer from the shop. A year later my strimmer still wasn't ready. Eventually, after eighteen months, I got it back having, of course, paid another substantial sum. As I left the ironmonger's, a man overhearing the saga told me, 'Next time, go to Torniella,' and gave me directions to the village half an hour from Monticiano in the opposite direction.

The following year, when I needed my strimmer repaired, I followed his advice. The workshop was about half the size of a tennis court with benches round three of the walls. Each was covered with tools laid out like cutlery for a banquet. A counter separated the mechanic from his customers. I handed over the strimmer and the man moved it from bench to bench; taking it apart, cleaning it out and sucking in air through his teeth. I resigned myself to bad news and another big bill.
'It needs a new distributor.'
That sounded expensive.
And he didn't stock parts for my make of strimmer.
'So that means you can't repair it?' I said.
'Not at all,' he replied. 'I'll make you one, but it won't be perfect.'
At the end of his half hour's work, I had a strimmer as good as new and a bill in single figures. I could have hugged him.
'If you have one of these makes,' he pointed to the strimmers on display, 'I stock the parts.'
I left feeling I had unlocked the key to mowers in Monticiano.

Two years ago, the garden my bedroom looks out on was bought by Signor Antonio. Like me, he has four terraces, two of which are lawned. Not long after he moved in, I watched him pushing an impressive electric lawn mower along his terraces. But I see this year he too is using a strimmer. I guess I'm not the only one to have been pointed to the mowers at *La Magoncina*.

THE MERCHANT OF NAPLES

Edited by Julian Potter

Orford Books - £20

This is a rich and unusual book. James Close (1799-1865) was a highly successful trader who spent the greater part of his life in Naples, then the capital of the Bourbon kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Amidst a welter of other activities, he imported coal, iron and cotton textiles, exported corn and marsala wine, set up a printing press, built storage depots for olive oil and founded a coastal shipping line. He was rich.

Carefully edited by Julian Potter with the active help of the Close family, the book falls into four main parts. In his old age, Close wrote for his large family both a brief family history (he disliked most of them) and an account of his own life up to 1822, by which early age he had already studied in Germany, done an apprenticeship in Le Havre and worked for the family firm in Messina and Palermo. For the next 36 years – which covered most of his career in Naples – he was silent, and the editor helpfully provides a bridging chapter based on what is known of his activities and a more general description of life in Bourbon Naples. Then, from 1858 until Close's death we have the longest and most charming part of the book. For seven years Close went to sea and took his second wife Anne and his nine children round the Mediterranean in a sailing schooner he had acquired from King Ferdinand ("Bomba") some time earlier. He had had an unhappy time at school and was determined to give his children a better – and non-classical – education; so every morning on the ship they had lessons from tutors and from Close himself as the ship moved from Naples to Ischia or Ponza or Sardinia or Corsica or Toulon or, finally, Antibes. He insisted that he and his family keep a daily diary, and it is full of fascinating vignettes of life at sea or on land.

Finally, after his death three of his sons moved to the United States, bought large tracts of undeveloped land in Iowa and Minnesota, formed a company and encouraged well-connected but landless Englishmen to join them. The story ends with William, his most enterprising son, investing in the building of a railway across high mountain passes to the newly discovered Yukon goldfields. William's diaries and letters are fresh and entertaining; but the American coda falls outside the scope of this review.

It is of course a pity that the middle years of James Close's life are relatively thinly documented, because these were the years in which the merchant of Naples made his fortune and one would have loved to have available the material which went into Iris Origo's account of the merchant of Prato. Close had the characteristic Victorian attributes of great drive and commercial acumen, not to say ruthlessness, coupled with a great, if largely non-denominational, religiosity and a strong sense of family. In the last decades of the Bourbon kingdom, the British had something of a stranglehold on its foreign trade, and Close was one of those who resisted Ferdinand's efforts to build up local industries behind protectionist barriers (a job later completed by the united kingdom of Italy, much to the South's disadvantage). His sister married into a well-connected Neapolitan family, and his brother-in-law was of some help to Garibaldi in the crucial months of 1860. But although he and his family spoke perfect Neapolitan, he does not seem to have mixed much with the locals. He predicted that Bourbon rule would collapse, and this was probably why he left Naples and took his family to sea, only two years before the end of Bourbon rule. He eventually decided to settle in Antibes, then little more than a village, but died before his vast building works were completed.

Few of the family remained in Italy or France after his death. One son joined the family bank in London; and Close Brothers Group plc still survives today, though the family is no longer directly involved.

In reading the families' diaries and letters, it is impossible not to feel nostalgic for a vanished Mediterranean. These were the last years of sail, and of an era when travel by sea, in Italy at least, was more convenient than travel by land. Port life in Ischia or Toulon; diving off the boat once lessons were over; riding and picnicking along a still unspoilt Riviera coast; improvising musical entertainments with the help of a ship's whistle, ear trumpet and water funnel; running for port in storms and watching shipwrecks; mending roads on Ischia; climbing Vesuvius; practising with the pistol; staying with landowners in Puglia; and a thousand other activities. The 1850s and 1860s were the early years of the British invasion of the Riviera, which John Pemble has so well described in his book "The Mediterranean Passion". This book brings the period alive, and one can as well dip at random into the family's diaries and letters as read the book sequentially from cover to cover. What a pleasure that all these first-hand impressions have survived.

Tom Richardson

ITALY'S MAXXI MUSEUM OF 21ST CENTURY ARTS

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

On 30th May 2010 Rome's Ministry for Cultural Heritage inaugurated the nation's first 21st century museum. It was designed by the famed London based Anglo-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid and it is dedicated to contemporary art, architecture and other artistic disciplines. The main idea behind the project is directly related to the objective of creating a building for the presentation of the visual arts. The Museum was developed on the former old military barracks of Montello at 4A Via Guido Reni. The façade of the building has been restored but otherwise remains unchanged, whilst the inside has been completely modernised.

This museum of contemporary arts in point of fact features two museums – MAXXI Art and MAXXI Architecture. The two museums rotate around a large, double storey atrium, the point of connection with the permanent collection galleries and temporary exhibition spaces, the auditorium, reception area, a laboratory for experiment, study and research, a library, a shop and cafeteria.

Located off the beaten track in the Flaminio district of north Rome, close to the Flaminio stadium and Renzo Piano's Auditorium Parco della Musica, this building is striking both inside and out. The Iraqi-born British architect Zaha Hadid's remarkable concrete and glass structure breaks away from the traditional room by room museum layout in favour of an open dynamic flow where space and light are essential elements. Her stunning design was acclaimed for its originality and formal fluidity. Its essential feature is the superimposition of long flowing galleries on various levels which offers a flexible, interdisciplinary arena for the exhibition of contemporary art and architecture. She says "It is all about an interior-exterior existence". The continuity of space guides the visitor along a sweeping route, all covered by a glass roof which means every angle is flooded with natural light. The galleries soar up to 7 metres high and others are almost a 100 metres long. There's not a right-angle in sight; all is smooth curves. There are no stairways, only gently rising and falling walkways connecting one exhibition space to another. Huge windows offer visitors wonderful vistas of the Rome skyline.

By breaking down typical museum features such as the vertical wall on which paintings are to hang, fluidity and design replace them so that walls can become ceilings or even openings according to requirement. The idea is to create space through which there is not only one line to offer a complex network of connections and routes, in other words light, space and flexibility are key points in the architectural structure. The top floor is for temporary exhibitions whilst the first two floors house the museum's permanent art and architecture collections. Having said that, part of the ground floor is for longer itinerant exhibitions, such as the one paying tribute to Luigi Moretti, one of Italy's leading 20th century architects, who also had a passion for art and science. He is remembered for the Olympic stadium and the urban planning of the "Foro Italico" complex in Rome.

Inside the MAXXI Museum (photo by courtesy of the Maxxi Museum)

Zaha Hadid, who was at the opening, remarked how "Everybody has been incredibly supportive in these past 11 years". She also recalled how "In the early 60s I came to Rome as a child and never thought I would be here today. Rome left an impression on me". She recently found a photo taken at the Trevi fountain during that visit. Hadid commented "Rome has fantastic light. It brings light to space, which in turn gives freedom. Rome is a city of layers and this has layers". And concluded "It was thus a way to pay tribute to the city of Rome, a city of light and layers" and thanked "Rome and the Romans for their generosity".

Time shall tell whether this avant-garde museum meets its objectives and whether it will be appreciated only by modern art experts and contemporary artists or also by the general public.

Outside the MAXXI Museum, recent winner of the RIBA award Sterling Prize 2010 (photo by courtesy of the Maxxi Museum)

1910 – 2010 ITALIAN RUGBY REACHES THE 100 MARK

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

Italy's rugby history goes back a hundred years. However, the process was rather slow with various unpredictable bounces of the oval ball over the years. Although the first rugby game played in Italy between the French team of the Paris Racing Club and the Swiss team Servette was held in 1910 in Turin, it was not until the following year that Italy had its own first amateur team 'US Milanese', which played against the French team of Voiron in Milan. Unfortunately, the 1914-1918 war put a halt on Rugby taking off.

Interest in the game revived in 1927 when a promotion committee "un comitato di propaganda" was set up by Piero Mariani, who was appointed the first president of the Italian rugby association, the Federazione Italiana Rugby, on 28th September 1928. Clubs started to be set up and by 1929, which marked the official date for the birth of Italian rugby, Italy had six active clubs which played their first national championship with the Ambrosiana Milano team as the first winners. An official national team was soon formed allowing Italy to play in Barcelona on 20th May 1929, when the team lost against Spain. Rugby soon became more and more popular spreading further across the country to Brescia, Genoa, Bologna, Padua, Treviso, Rovigo, Rome and Naples, to name but a few.

Encounters with the Allied Forces (South African, Australian, New Zealand and British troops) at the end of the Second World War showed Italian rugby a new dimension although Italy still remained attached to the French model.

Italian rugby emerged in the 1990s leading to a historical turning point in March 1997 in Grenoble, France, winning 40 against 32. These events soon uplifted the team and New Zealand coach Brad Johnstone was brought in 1999 to train the Italian national team for entry into the Six Nations in 2000. Italy marked a historical feat beating Scotland 34 against 20 in its Six Nations inauguration match held at the Flaminio stadium on 5th February 2000. Player Diego Dominguez became a national hero over night scoring 29 points. They got their second Six Nations win in 2003 against Wales. Their third win came against Scotland in 2004.

Success was shortlived, followed by a downturn until 2005 when Italy beat Argentina in Cordoba. In 2007 'gli azzurri' beat Scotland in Murrayfield and two weeks later the Italian team beat Wales in Rome. In May 2008 Giancarlo Dondi, the president of Federazione Italiana Rugby, was appointed member of the Executive Committee of the International Rugby Board.

The Rome rugby champions in Italy 1937 (photo by courtesy of Federazione Italiana Rugby)

The Italian Rugby Federation has recruited high profile international coaches (Brad Johnstone, John Kirwan another New Zealand coach, Pierre Berbizier from France and Nick Mallett from South Africa) making the team more competitive at the international level. Rugby's growing popularity now boasts having about 1,024 clubs and over 80,000 registered players. Italian team members often play in club competitions in England and France allowing them to make further progress.

Although female rugby is comparatively new on the scene with its history going back to the late 20th century, the game is already becoming a challenging sport among young women in Italy. In 2007 Italy's 'Azzurre' joined the Women's Six Nations Championship.

Not to be forgotten in the 150 years Giuseppe Garibaldi celebrations is the Giuseppe Garibaldi rugby trophy, a rugby union trophy, which is an Italo-French equivalent to the Calcutta Cup, awarded to the winner of the match between Italy and France within the annual Six Nations Championship, first awarded in February 2007 as part of the celebrations of the bicentenary of Garibaldi's birth.

As more and more Italian fans come to watch rugby union games and fill the stadiums with a good home crowd both for male and female rugby, Italian rugby is marching on: "Forza gli Azzurri!".

SNIPPITS

The wedding gift offered to Princess Elizabeth by the President of the Italian Republic is to be presented to her by Duke Gallarati Scotti, Italian Ambassador to the Court of St. James. She will receive nineteen lengths of pure silk, amounting to about two hundred yards. Some of the textiles chosen have not been woven for many years because of the rarity of the necessary materials, especially of the fine interwoven threads of gold and silver. An exact reproduction is sent of the royal tunic of Can Grande della Scala, who entertained Dante at Verona six hundred years ago. The difficulties of blending the shades of delicate colours have been successfully overcome in copying a rare French material of the time of Louis XV.

These materials are fine examples of Italian weaving which follows the traditions of mediaeval arts and crafts. They will reach Princess Elizabeth in an oak chest of 1700, which is ornamented with a bas-relief representing a Roman bride receiving her wedding gifts.

From the pages of ***Rivista*** *of December 1947*

Rome is to host the second Formula 1 Race in Italy in 2012 or 2013 as plans still remain on track. The proposed Rome Grand Prix has been a contentious issue since it was first proposed last season, especially by the local inhabitants of EUR, based in the southern modern area of the capital. The district seemed a natural choice since it was previously used for racing in the late 1920s. The Rome Grand Prix in fact dates back to 1925 when Carlo Masetti won a race of that name on a circuit at Monte Mario. There were other venues tried before the races ended up on an eight-mile street track around the area now known as EUR. At the time it was known as the Tre Fontane circuit. The Tre Fontane district was substantially modified in the 1930s with the construction of EUR, which was designed by Benito Mussolini as the venue of a planned exhibition to celebrate 20 years of Fascism in power (which would have been in 1942). The war meant that the exhibition never took place although the district remains a tribute to Fascist architecture.

The city's Mayor Gianni Alemanno recently announced that the Rome bid is still on, and will be a second Italian F1 race "This will be the second race for Italy, because the race at Monza is guaranteed." However, he could not deny that there was still some way to go before being rubber-stamped. Protests against a street race did not just come from the inhabitants of EUR, but also from the organisers of the Monza racing circuit reacting negatively saying that it is already difficult to get sponsors for their own race.

A few curiosities gleaned from Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable:

Belladonna. The Deadly Nightshade. The name is Italian and means "beautiful lady". Its power of enlarging the pupils was put to use by would-be glamorous females. This is the usual explanation of the name but another is that it was used by an Italian poisoner named Leucota to poison beautiful women.

Che sarà, sarà. What will be will be. The motto of the Dukes of Bedford and the Russell family.

Move over Miss Marple. Guido Brunetti, Piero Trotti, Salvatore Guarnaccia, Achille Peroni, Flavia de Stefano, Urbino Macintyre, Alessandro Cenni, Alec Blume, Gordianus and Nic Costa are now among your well-entrenched Mediterranean rivals for world popularity. What all these fictional gumshoes have in common is their Italian nationality and their foreign authors. To be sure, the crime fiction genre has spawned an early handful of Italian *giallisti*: think Emilio De Marchi, Luciano Folgore and, far more recently, of course, Andrea Camilleri. Writer Alexander Stille has hypothesised that there weren't even more home-grown detective story writers because "the country's own political life was itself a kind of mystery novel. The would-be Italian detective novelist must compete with daily events, the mystery of the latest financial scandal, terrorist bombing, Mafia feuds, government bribes or secret political deal which out do all but the most imaginative detective plots". Whatever the truth, this genre's popularity shows no sign of abating. Washington's respected Georgetown University featured an academic course ("Giallo! Italian Detective Fiction") in their curriculum several years ago. A special website (italian-mysteries.com) now rates all such books in circulation and tracks the newcomers upon publication. Italian crime fiction is now on DVD. And now, BBC One is bringing out three new feature-length dramas based on the late Michael Dibdin's fictional detective Aurelio Zen. The trio of stories, which starts off with "Vendetta", are set in and around Rome and star Rufus Sewell.

The Art of an Italian Garden near lake Bracciano introduced by Elisa Resegotti, art and garden curator, was inaugurated as a break after the eventful week of exhibitions following the opening of Rome's Maxxi Museum for modern art at the end of May. One Minute Tree was the name of the inaugural event offering Nature and Art Projects including an ongoing programme of contemporary artist projects and commissions in the Garden.

The exhibition was the first of a series offering a way to appreciate art with artists and collectors in a bucolic atmosphere viewing the works and after the visit sitting around an oak tree in the amphitheatre in the garden. Elisa Resegotti's idea is to hold garden lounging with art and music in the background accompanied by a roundtable discussion in the wake of the first philosophers who used to meet under a tree to talk to their followers. Speakers included writers, architects, landscape gardeners and other experts of the arts. The choice of the venue is a place of beauty and calm to converse and widen the participants' knowledge discussing the importance of reading the landscape through its history, preserving its tradition and wisdom. It is a journey into time and space, where the artist intervenes to give a new meaning of beauty to nature against a vision of degradation which permeates modern society. What strikes one about the garden is the way the garden is looked after and yet is so natural. It lies on hill slopes retaining its spontaneous flora with winding pathways which lead to openings along the path. The garden of Pianamola is a private garden 3 km outside Bassano Romano village less than an hour from Rome. Visits are by appointment. For further information, see www.pianamola.org

In the last several years, the *Addiopizzo* movement in Sicily has been gaining momentum. It was conceived by a group of youths who dreamed of opening their own coffee bar in Palermo without "encroachment" from the Mafia, namely the practice of exacting *pizzo* or protection money. Indeed it is estimated that shops and businesses have been forced to hand over an estimated 160 million Euros in Palermo alone each year simply to survive without trouble. Those who defy the arrangement often pay dearly, seeing their shops destroyed or their very lives taken.

Nearly 500 shops in Palermo have now signed on, refusing to pay these Mafia "fees". Stickers in their shop windows attest to this as a sort of badge of cleanliness, which encourages greater patronage from the public. *Addiopizzo* then began to offer "tours" for holidaymakers, in support of Mafia-free restaurants and hotels that had opted out of criminal intimidation. And now, with support from the German Embassy in Rome, *Addiopizzo* recently began distributing German-language maps of Palermo highlighting those establishments which do not pay protection money to the underworld. Adding to the arsenal, too, is a newly- available book, ***"Guida Addiopizzo"***, published by Feltrinelli.

In Spain they are called *paradores,* stately homes that open their doors to travellers, while the Portuguese call them *pousadas.* Italy, too, is increasingly offering something a cut above *agriturismi* for the discerning visitor. Historic houses in virtually all sizes, from fairytale castles down to handsome wine cellars are rolling out the welcome carpet. Take the grandiose Torre di San Martino outside Piacenza, or the Abbadia (Abbey) di San Giorgio at Moneglia (Genoa) or the recently-restored medieval Hotel Posta in the heart of Reggio Emilia, all of them under a single "umbrella" as is the Baglio Villa Sicilia at Selinunte. The umbrella in question is a group called "Abitare La Storia" which brings together unusual places that are a far cry from chain hotels. For the full list and details, log on to **Abitare la Storia.**

A further initiative called "Hotel della Cultura" with largely the same objectives was recently launched. It has the added appeal of being a little gentler on the pocketbook while still offering different and very special lodgings. One of their offerings is the Cavallerizza Reale, an extension of the Royal Palace in the heart of Turin, while another is accommodation in a Jesuit College in Noto, Sicily. Aside from the attraction of cheaper rooms are the worthy overall objectives of drawing visitors to lesser known cities such as Forli and of shoring up forlorn buildings which otherwise risk falling into dereliction. For further details, log on to **Hotel della Cultura.**

Papal Historic Visit to the UK: 16th to 19th September 2010

Some extracts from the farewell speech of Prime Minister David Cameron to Pope Benedict XVI at Birmingham International Airport:

Your Holiness Pope Benedict, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

This ceremony brings to a close an incredibly moving four days for our country……

For you have offered a message not just to the Catholic Church but to each and every one of us of every faith and none……

You have really challenged the whole country to sit up and think, and that can only be a good thing.

Because I believe we can all share in your message of working for the common good and that we all have a social obligation to each other, to our families and our communities……

As we stand here in Birmingham to bid you farewell let me return to the words of Cardinal Newman.
The Cardinal is greatly remembered here in Birmingham for his care for its people.
During a cholera outbreak in the city, he worked tirelessly among the poor and sick.
And when he himself died, the poor of the city turned out in their thousands to line the streets.
Inscribed on the pall of his coffin was his motto "Heart speaks unto heart".
That has been the theme of this most special visit……

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITS IN LONDON

12 January 2011 – 3 April 2011: "*From Morandi to Guttuso: Masterpieces from the Alberto Della Ragione Collection*"
Comprising over 200 works of Italian Modernism by such artists as Carlo Carrà, Filippo De Pisis, Giacomo Manzù.
Estoric Collection, 39a Canonbury Square N1.

May 2011: *"A Masterpiece A Month: Paolo Veronese, Venere e Mercurio presentano a Giove Anteros ed Eros"* from Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. In celebration of the Gallery's bicentenary year in 2011, a masterpiece is shown each month, borrowed from a major city's institution.
Dulwich Picture Gallery, Gallery Road, London, SE21.

06 July 2011 – 2 October 2011: *"Devotion by Design: Italian Altarpieces before 1500"*
The exhibition explores the function, original location, and the development of Italian altarpieces during the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance.
The National Gallery, Sainsbury Wing, Trafalgar Square WC2.

09 November 2011 – 5 February 2012: *"Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the Court of Milan"*
The most complete display ever held of Leonardo's rare surviving paintings, including La Belle Ferronière (from the Louvre, Paris), the Madonna Litta (from the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg) and Saint Jerome (Pinacoteca Vaticana, Rome).
The National Gallery, Sainsbury Wing and Sunley Room, Trafalgar Square WC2.

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITS AND EVENTS IN ITALY

FERRARA

09 September 2010 – 10 January 2011:
"*Boldini in Impressionist Paris*"
Works of art by Giovanni Boldini from all over Italy and the world, organised together with the Clark Art Institute of Williamstown.
The exhibition investigates a fundamental chapter in the career of Giovanni Boldini, that of his first Paris period, from 1871 to 1886. He portrayed every corner, every quiver of life, translating the energy of the city and its atmospheres into lively and at times overpowering brushstrokes. Boldini was a many-sided artist. The exhibition reveals the complexity of Boldini's personality during that period which was to lead him away from his experiments with the Macchiaioli style to the achievement of the broad, swift manner characterizing the portraits of his full maturity.
Palazzo dei Diamanti

FLORENCE

24 September 2010 – 23 January 2011: "*Bronzino: Artist and Poet at the Court of the Medici*" Angelo di Cosimo, known as Bronzino (1503-1572), was one of the greatest artists in the history of Italian painting. Court artist to Cosimo I de' Medici, his work embodied the sophistication of the Mannerist style. Bronzino conveyed the elegance of the Medici court in his work with "naturalness" and, at the same time, austere beauty.
Palazzo Strozzi.

1 October 2010 – 23 January 2011: *"Portraits and Power"*
The exhibition explores portraiture and the representation of political, economic and social power in the contemporary world through the works of contemporary artists depicting portraits of famous political figures. Artists: Tina Barney, Christoph Brech, Bureau d'études, Fabio Cifariello Ciardi, Clegg & Guttmann, Nick Danziger, Rineke Dijkstra, Jim Dow, Francesco Jodice, Annie Leibovitz, Helmut Newton, Trevor Paglen, Martin Parr, Wang Qingsong, Daniela Rossell, Jules Spinatsch, Hiroshi Sugimoto, The Yes Men.
Centre for Contemporary Culture Strozzina (CCCS)
Palazzo Strozzi.

1 October 2010 – 23 January 2011: "*Installation by Michelangelo Pistoletto*"
The Centre for Contemporary Culture Strozzina invited Michelangelo Pistoletto to present his installation *The Cubic Meter of Infinity in a Mirroring Cube in the courtyard of Palazzo Strozzi*. The installation is a cubic structure covered with dark steel sheets on the outside and with mirrors on the inside. This work of art offers the public the experience of a place without boundaries which extends into infinity.
In the Courtyard of Palazzo Strozzi.

20 July 2010 – 15 May 2011: "*Vinum Nostrum: Art, Science and Myths of Wine in Civilisations*"
The exhibition focuses on wine and all its uses throughout history, from communion to drunkenness, sacrificial symbol to food pairing. The exhibit uses relics, showpieces, sculptures, frescoes, mosaics, multimedia and video installations to recount the history of the grapevine and wine and its influence on cultures ancient and modern, from the Etruscans, Phoenicians and ancient Romans to the modern aspiring sommelier. The show invites visitors to reflect on and learn about the evolution of viticulture and cultivation techniques.
Museo degli Argenti, Palazzo Pitti

PADUA

16 October 2010 – 16 January 2011: "*Giorgione in Padua – The enigma of the wagon*"
The artist's works are the centerpiece of a special path which, starting from interpretation in Padua of works by Giorgione, rebuild relationships, cultural affinities and iconographic references suggesting an interaction between Giorgione and the culture, art and literature of the city, between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.
Musei Civici agli Eremitani.

RACCONIGI (TURIN)

02 October 2010 – 13 March 2011: "*Vittorio Emanuele II. King gentleman*"
The exhibition, organized in collaboration with the Regional Directorate for Cultural Heritage and Landscape of Piedmont, follows the traces of the personal and private life of Vittorio Emanuele from his youth to Italian unification. The route is developed in three venues: the Royal Palace in Turin, Palazzo Chiablese and Castle Racconigi.

ROME

19 September 2010 – 9 January 2011: "*The Risorgimento in colour: painters and patriots in Rome in the nineteenth century*"
The exhibition illustrates, through a wide selection of paintings and sculptures from the collections of the Museum of Rome and other major public and private collections, the most significant events of the Risorgimento in the city narrating the history of the Roman Renaissance, describing the most significant events with a selection of works by Italian and foreign art.
Palazzo Braschi.

26th February – 8th March 2011: *The Rome Carnival*
The capital revives its carnival tradition with events taking place in many squares of the city, performances and a masquerade ball to be held on 8th March in a prestigious location (still to be confirmed) in Rome.

Tel. +39 06 0680
www.carnevale.roma.it

VENICE

26th February – 8th March 2011: *The Venice Carnival*
Saint Mark's Square remains the heart of Carnival, with its huge stage, although other events take place throughout the city: balls, performances, shows and different forms of entertainment.

Tel. +39 041 2412988
www.carnevale.venezia.it

FILM FESTIVALS IN ITALY

Compiled by Georgina Gordon-Ham

Although the Italian film industry started taking shape between 1903 and 1908 with Arturo Ambrosio's Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei (The Last Days of Pompeii), most people remember Italian cinema for the 'Dolce Vita' in the 1960s and Cinecittà with film directors such as Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini and Michelangelo Antonioni. This made Italy not only the world of art but also the world of cinema. As a result, film festivals developed throughout the country in different regions. The list below is just a few of the most famous festivals which have drawn international attention.

La Biennale di Venezia - Venice International Film Festival

The Venice film festival is Italy's most important film festival, known as Venice International Film Festival, *La Biennale di Venezia*, which starts in early September at Venice Lido. The Venice Film Festival is the oldest film festival in Italy and 2010 marked its 67th year. Each year top film makers compete for the *Golden Lion* award. *Vaporetti* or water buses take passengers between Venice and the Lido. To get to the Lido from Piazza San Marco, you can take the number 1 vaporetto.

Tel: +39 041 2726501
www.labiennale.org

Salento International Film Festival

The Salento Film Festival, held in early September, is a top southern Italy film festival and addresses current topics such as peace and multi-cultural issues. Categories include world cinema, independent Italian cinema, and special sections. The Salento film festival takes place in Tricase in the Lecce province of Puglia, toe of the boot. In June, they hold the Salento Fear Festival for those who enjoy scary movies.

Tel: +39 0833545037 / 0833640151
www.salentofilmfestival.com

Milano Film Festival

Milano Film Festival, following the Venice festival, takes place for 10 days in September. Competitions include short films and feature films and there are special film categories each year.

Tel: +39 02 713 613
www.milanofilmfestival.it

Rome International Film Festival

Next in line is the Rome film festival, a relatively new festival which starts around mid October - November. The festival includes international film premieres, best independent cinema, and films for and by young people. It is not only a festival, but rather a party, an important event for all of those who love cinema.

Tel: +39 06 40401900
www.romacinemafest.org

Torino Film Festival

The Torino, or Turin, film festival takes place in late November. The Torino film festival serves as a meeting point for contemporary international cinema and to provide an opportunity to discuss the most recent artistic trends. It consists of 4 competitions and several non-competitive sections, and pays special attention to emerging cinema and young filmmakers.

Tel: +39 011 8138811
www.torinofilmfest.org

Bolzano Short Film Festival

Bolzano, near the Alps of northern Italy, holds an international festival of short films in November. It also includes a *No Words* fest featuring films which communicate nonverbally without the use of any words.

Tel: +39-0471-272851
www.bolzanoshortfilmfestival.it

Pordenone Silent Film Festival

Created in 1982, the Pordenone Silent Film Festival has covered all aspects of early film history, ranging from the classical Hollywood cinema to avant-garde and animation. The Giornate del Cinema Muto, aka Pordenone Silent Film Festival, has established itself as the leading international event dedicated to the preservation, dissemination and study of the first thirty years of cinema. It takes place in Pordenone, northern Italy, in October.

Tel: +39 0432 980 458
www.cinetecadelfriuli.org/gcm

River to River - Florence Indian Film Festival

River to River is the first film festival in the world devoted to films from and about India. It takes place in Florence in December.

Tel: +39 055 286929
www.rivertoriver.it

Taormina Film Festival

Italy's principal summer film event celebrated its 56th year from June 12 to 18, 2010, against the stunning backdrop of the Teatro Antico of Taormina, one of Sicily's most important and well-preserved monuments. The festival is a major showcase for film premières from Hollywood and around the world. Each year the festival presents a careful selection of just 21 new features, chosen from the most significant recent production. Prizes include the Golden Tauro for best film and the renowned Taormina Arte Awards given to outstanding members of the film community.

Tel: +39 06486808 or +39 094 223 220
www.taorminafilmfest.it

PATRONS

The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Harewood, KBE

H.E. The Italian Ambassador

PRESIDENT

Sir Tom Richardson, KCMG

CHAIRMAN

Mr Charles de Chassiron, CVO

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 to-day 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 outings to places of interest are also arranged.

"Remembrance"

View of Via Francigena, near Scandriglia in the Lazio region
(Photo by GGH)