

VILLAFRANCA DI VERONA
HISTORY AND IMAGES OF THE COMMUNITY

WITH THE SUPPORT OF



REGIONE del VENETO



COMUNE DI VILLAFRANCA DI VERONA



Villafranca di Verona

HISTORY AND IMAGES OF THE COMMUNITY

by
PASQUALE CORDIOLI



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VILLAFRANCA di VERONA

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First edition: May 2018

Printed by Tipografia La Grafica, Vago di Lavagno (Verona) - www.lagraficagroup.it

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PREFACE

by San Rocco Committee

On behalf of the committee of San Rocco, we are pleased to present this book about the life of Villafranca, its history and its remarkable artistic and cultural heritage.

A challenging and unique operation, but full of satisfaction due to the number of people involved: young people with their university dissertations on Villafranca, local historians, private individuals with vintage photos and photographers have contributed to the publication.

The book is not intended to be an exhaustive historical and scientific document, but instead aims to encourage and promote knowledge of the history and artistic and cultural heritage of the town of Villafranca.

The photo section has been curated to create a pleasant book to browse and read. It retraces history along the “Via Postumia”, the ancient Roman road, which passes through our whole Municipality from south to north where the communities of Quaderni, Rosegafarro, Pizzoletta, Villafranca, Caluri, Le Chè, Dossobuono, Alpo and Rizza have developed over the centuries.

The history and the remarkable photographic documentation leave enough space for research and in-depth analysis that we hope will complete the history of our city over time. In this way, the unique historical and artistic beauty of the city and its towns is highlighted.

We often neither see nor consider this beauty that surrounds us, left to us by previous generations.

We forget that “*the past is the root of the present and guarantee of the future*” and, as Luciano Nicolis, founder of the Museo Nicolis, often reminded friends and visitors, “*We aren't the owners of all this, we are simply the guardians of it for the future*”.

Pasquale Cordioli
Editor

Eugenio Turrini
President, San Rocco Committee



PREFACE

by the Region of Veneto



By reading this book, you will be given the opportunity to undertake an emotional journey through the history of a community with its traditions and roots.

The images talk about the development of a city, its past recollections, and the life of its inhabitants. A photo captures the moment, tells a story and transforms it into a memory to pass down to future generations. Therefore, I would like to congratulate the St. Rocco Committee of Villafranca di Verona on this book, which enhances a territory through a deep knowledge of the architectural and artistic treasures, along with the culture, of the place.

As a consequence, this book supports the touristic promotion of a place in our Veneto region, which is a land of extraordinary beauty. A land that is suspended between the sky and the earth – as I often like saying – with hardworking, hospitable people, who are strongly connected with their own identity and values.

Luca Zaia

President of Veneto Region

Our region of Veneto is rich in history and culture: with its own laws, it promotes and fosters research, enhancement and dissemination of cultural and linguistic heritage. This is the foundation on which the Venetian identity is based.

The core of the legislation concerns the promotion of and support for seminars, research, publications, and awareness events. All of this aims to publicise the cultural and linguistic sophistication which reflects the expression and signs of our identity. The Committee of San Rocco of Villafranca di Verona, in promoting this publication, has been able to fully grasp the potential and cultural impact of this sophistication.

Co-ordinated by Pasquale Cordioli, this publication contains valuable content and images. It is a significant work that has involved public and private bodies as well as individual subjects in a personal capacity, and young university students and high schools in the Municipality of Villafranca. The result is an important and high-quality book that represents a cross-section of more than eight hundred years of socio-economic cultural life of the territory, that with its 35,000 inhabitants is the most populous in the province of Verona.

Cristiano Corazzari

Councillor for the territory,
security, culture and Venetian identity

PRESENTATION

by the Municipal Administration of Villafranca



To adequately celebrate the 833rd anniversary of the foundation of Villafranca, the Committee of San Rocco wanted to edit the Villafranca edition of this essay.

The volume does not claim to be a complete and meticulous history of the eight centuries of life of the Borgo Libero, but is intended to illustrate interesting excerpts that can best present our beautiful city in its most varied aspects (social, political, economic, religious, etc.). This is to encourage the reader to continue to broaden their knowledge, and maybe go in person for a cultural visit. Cultural tourism, in fact, is closely linked to the culture of a specific region or country. It is in relation to the model of life, history, art, architecture, diet, religion and other elements of populations in the specific geographical areas, which contribute to create that kind of life. Today, tourists move much more easily but have less time, and the needs of new travellers are obviously very different from the past. This situation, accompanied by the strong commercialisation of the tourism sector, has obviously changed many things. Cultural tourism must rightly have a “widespread” dimension and therefore can be the platform for the development of many peripheral realities that may have interesting “heritage” that is little valued. Different connotations of “cultural tourism” can then contribute to “de-seasonalize” different destinations (and this applies to many of our places) and to make the existing hotel facilities more usable, on average.

The publication also intends to give correct recognition to the many young university students who are engaged in the deep knowledge of our territory. They devote themselves to research and studies that have received the proper approval of the academic world.

Thanks also to the availability of the teaching staff of the High Schools of Villafranca, and to the involvement of the students, for providing editions in foreign languages to facilitate the numerous guests who visit our territory.

The result is a prized work written in a way that can be appreciated by all – without wishing to trivialise it – and the authors should also be thanked for this. We are convinced that this is the way to real cultural growth of citizenship.

Maria Cordioli

Councillor for Culture

Mario Faccioli

The Mayor

INTRODUCTION

by *Ezio Filippi*

The San Rocco Committee of Villafranca di Verona was established many years ago to celebrate this saint on his anniversary, August 16th. In the oratory church dedicated to him, the Committee has continued his activity throughout the ages. Over time, the religious festival has become of secondary importance to other celebrations, for example culinary ones.

In addition to the festival of August 16th, a great tradition in the neighbourhood near the oratory, the Committee has involved local scholars in cultural initiatives and received finance from local entrepreneurs to commit these studies to print in an elegant manner¹.

This volume is part of the latter activity of the Committee and, to an extent,

takes advantage of a previous work², in the sense that it includes some articles published in the previous edition of the book five years ago, despite a different structure that provides a certain originality.

The book is divided into seven parts: 1. The history of Villafranca di Verona; 2. Villafranca today; 3. The historical and artistic heritage of Villafranca, including the Castle, Palazzo Bottagisio, Caffè Fantoni, Museo Nicolis and the airport; 4. The remarkable recent urban and economic transformations of Villafranca; 5. Villafranca's churches; 6. The seven towns of the municipality, including La Rizza, the centre of which belongs jointly to the territories of Verona and Castel d'Azzano; 7. Famous citizens of Villafranca.

¹ COMITATO DI SAN ROCCO DI VILLAFRANCA, *L'oratorio di S. Rocco e i tesori di Villafranca di Verona*, Vago di Lavagno, La Grafica, 2009, pp. 194; IDEM, *Madonna del Popolo in Villafranca di Verona*, Vago di Lavagno, editor Gianni Businelli, 2014, pp. 196.

² AA.VV., *Villafranca e il suo territorio: immagini ed itinerario storico, artistico culturale lungo la antica via Postumia alla scoperta di Villafranca di e delle sue frazioni* Verona, A.S.D. Polisportiva San Giorgio (Vago di Lavagno, Tip. La Grafica), 2012, pp. 212.

The book also includes information from the individual towns, like the band and majorettes of Quaderni and its unique desserts, the *puoti*, the choir of *Campagnoli* of Rosegaferro, the band of Dossobuono, and *La contrada Fornaci* of Caluri³, as well as information on some 32 famous citizens.

What can be said about this book? It is an act of goodwill, an act of love for Villafranca and for the culture in general, a resource to provide information about the territory and the community, from the past to the present day. Topics of great importance are covered within, such as the transformation of the society from agricultural to industrial, and its services. Photographs have been included to enhance the content of the contributions, providing extra character for the reader to enjoy and preserving images whose originals could be lost in time. The history of Villafranca is full of original elements, some of which are covered in this book and some not. I refer, for example, to the foundation of the inhabited centre there, that could have been subject to the floods of Fossà, unless at that time the weather was warmer and drier than in our day. I re-

fer to the shape of the inhabited centre, which was on three large avenues, 300 metres apart; on the boulevards there were holdings of 3000 square metres each, a rectangle of 20 metres along the avenue, with a depth of 150m. This was granted to each family so that houses were built on the avenue, with vegetable gardens inside. I refer to the rare presence of vast private properties for a long time and the long duration of municipal property - pasture and wood - available for the benefit of the population. Therefore, while I recognise the usefulness of this volume, I hope that the territory will be presented methodically from two points of view, natural history and human history in a broad sense, the story of the men who settled there. In this way, we will achieve a deep, specialised knowledge of the Veronese territories, of the moraine hills which partly covered them, and of the inhabitants from prehistory to the present day. Therefore, I ask the promoters of this initiative to increase their scope by bringing together all the capable people and those with goodwill - scholars and sponsors - to attain a secure and complete knowledge of the natural and human history of Villafranca di Verona and its territory, which pays tribute to this large community.

Ezio Filippi

³ The author, Piero Spellini, has published some works about possession, among which I recall *De le Fornase nobile poesia: ricerche e ricordi*, s.l., 2012, pp. 99.



VILLAFRANCA DI VERONA

THE HISTORY OF VILLAFRANCA

by *Ilaria Malini*

Writing about local history is as important as writing about history in general. Indeed, it is often more challenging, because despite endless archival research, it is particularly difficult to exhaust every single line of enquiry, as well as provide a cohesive summary to the reader.

As a matter of fact, the history of Villafranca comprises many minor events and daily occurrences, which are inextricably linked to international events of wider scope.

So, we need great ability and strong curiosity in order to interconnect and unite history in general with memories, chronicles, data and local curiosities. However, documenting the past of a city is not only a historical exercise, but a privileged undertaking, designed to enhance the environmental and cultural beauty and ultimately enrich the heritage of a territory and its people.

These pages trace the history of our community from the earliest evidence of the local people to the present day, and all crucial occurrences and events have been covered.

Establishing when and how prehistoric man came to appear in Villafranca is still unresolved.

Surely this vast sandy plain, covered in pebbles and stones, infertile and afflicted by drought, was rather inhospitable. Nevertheless, it became a cradle of human settlement in ancient times.

Indeed, the many discoveries of prehistoric material support this theory. In addition, systematic excavations were carried out by researchers and experts far beyond the boundaries of the city, including the famous “tomb of Villafranca”, which was discovered by chance in 1913 in a gravel pit owned by the Comm. Luigi Valentini from Mantua.

The burial site yielded a few fragments belonging to a human skeleton accompanied by an arrowhead, a silver pectoral and finally a copper halberd.

The remains mostly date back to the Bronze Age, even if their typological analysis shows the high aesthetic and commercial value of almost certainly imported materials.

The Gorgiera of the Neolithic Tomb of Villafranca di Verona

In 1913, in a gravel pit by the castle of Villafranca di Verona, at a depth of 3.6m, the following items were discovered near a skeleton:

- 1 - A red flint arrowhead with violet reflections;
- 2 - A thin * silver sheet in the shape of a crescent with rounded ends, commonly called “Gorgiera” or pectoral;
- 3 - A large triangular blade with a strong rib in the middle of both sides, commonly called a halberd but it could also be a sickle tip.

The site can be dated back to the Neolithic, the era of Ötzi, the mummy of Semilaun.

These eight centuries saw the invention of the plough pulled by animals, of the four-wheeled carriage and metallurgy. The copper was first cold-worked with a hammer; then forged to create axes, arrowheads and ornaments.

Stone continued to be fundamental, but the first usage of metal encouraged trade, new technologies, the training of specialised craftsmen and, above all, the awareness of social status connected with the accumulation and exhibition of goods.

The tomb of Villafranca di Verona represents the oldest example of a pectoral (similar to the Irish gold “lunulae”) in Italy.



The second century B.C. marks the time when the area fell under the rule of Rome. In fact, it is likely that the new conquerors chose Villafranca on the basis of its strategic and commercial importance. For this reason, it was necessary to reorganise the inhabited area in order to guarantee control of the population and borders, as well as promote economic relations.

A fundamental moment in the history of this area is represented by the construction of Via Postumia (148 B.C.). This road was intended to transport men and goods safely and rapidly through a border territory that, bisecting the Po valley longitudinally, allowed the Romans to also take nearby territories.

Due to the lack of studies and research, and also of decontextualised and sporadic discoveries, it is difficult to make assumptions about the role played by Villafranca in Roman times. However, the most significant findings are some inscriptions which, despite their fragmentary nature, document events in the territory's history.

Between 1872 and 1890, four limestone fragments with inscriptions were found near the foundations of the central tower of the castle.

These blocks are of considerable weight and size and retain traces of an inscription honouring the Emperor Tiberius (21A.D.-30A.D.) and because of this, it is likely there was a monument from



the Roman era, which has since been dismantled.

The existence of an inscribed funerary memorial stone (which had been reused elsewhere since) in the canteen of the ancient parish church dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul had been reported since the second half of the fifteenth century. The stele was later brought to the archaeological museum of the Roman theatre of Verona, where it is still preserved.

It was likely used to decorate a family burial place along via Postumia.

Finally, it is impossible to be certain whether the inscription discovered in Rosegaferro confirms the existence of a Roman camp in Villafranca. Only new findings and a more precise research will help resolve the issue definitively. Nevertheless, the Empire collapsed inexorably under the numerous barbarian invasions. Verona and its lands were a constant battlefield and the difficult integration of Latin people and foreigners increased the state of distress of the people.

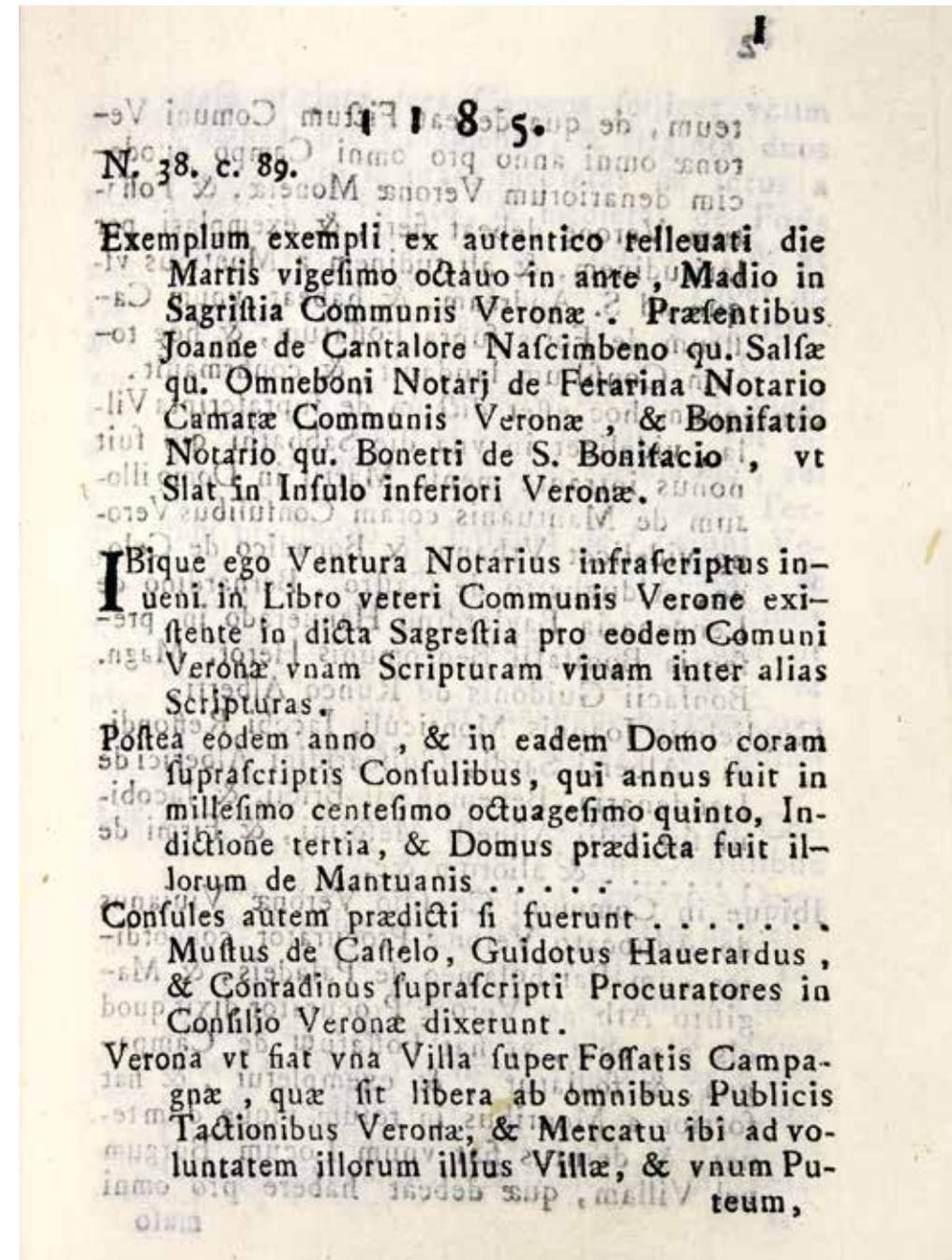
The decadence of public institutions disrupted trade, agriculture and industries and provoked terror and misery. Although the conflicts among the various barbaric populations caused frequent territorial changes, Villafranca, owned by the municipality of Verona, managed to maintain a position of prominence even during the dark times of the ear-

ly Middle Ages. This was thanks to its commercial vocation, territorial integrity and proximity to via Postumia.

The climate of distrust and resentment ended up facilitating the invasion of a Germanic population, the Longobards, but the decisive intervention of the Franks allowed them, instead to assume the role of leading people of the Christian West.

Basically, Villafranca's territory was partially separated from and then aggregated politically to the *Judicaria gardensis* (or "Gardesana"), a district that included not only the Veronese shore of the Lake of Garda, but also the hilly area behind it.

The dissolution of the Carolingian empire (887) began a complex period in which Ottonian supremacy occurred after continuous conflicts. In particular, Verona, in the meantime, became a free town (*comune*) (1136) and was devastated by several wars. However, it always reaffirmed its undisputed loyalty to the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire. As a matter of fact, in 952, Ottone I had recognised its role as a political, economic, social and institutional centre of a large territorial space called "Marca Veronese". However, the situation changed very soon, because in 1154 the new sovereign, Federico I, known as "Barbarossa", came to Italy to reaffirm the imperial rights over the city. At first, these reasons justified the



An 18th century copy of the founding act of Villafranca, preserved in the Balladoro archive in Povegliano Veronese, provided at a trial for tithe matters. Unfortunately, the original act has been lost and no trace can be found. In the last paragraph, the resolution of Verona's councillors: "that in Verona a city should be built above the moat of the countryside, free from any public tax of Verona, and a market according to its citizens' will, and a well".

latent hostility of the Veronese people, then the participation in the *Legna Lombarda* and finally the consequent victory in Legnano (1176). Moreover, when the conflict between Guelphs (supporters of the town's freedom) and Ghibellines (supporters of the empire) worsened, the Rectors' Council of Verona decided to found a new "villa" in the countryside in the south of the town, as a fortification against Mantua, on 9th March 1185. The *Burgus Liber*, then *Free Villa*, therefore *villa franca* was born, mainly for military reasons, but also with the aim of using new lands to cultivate to cope with the widespread famine. As a matter of fact, subsequent resolutions established that this border village, which was free of tax burdens, soon had to acquire a castle, open a free market and give the settlers state lands to be used for cultivation and residence, in exchange for a modest annual fee.

There is no doubt that political-economic reasons contributed to the planning of a concentrated and functionally complex town, because it was founded on walls, wide streets, a castle and the parish church of the apostles, Peter and Paul.

After a quiet period, the rivalries started again and Ezzelino III da Romano, the imperial representative, promoted bloody battles against the Guelphs: in 1233 he besieged Villafranca and mer-

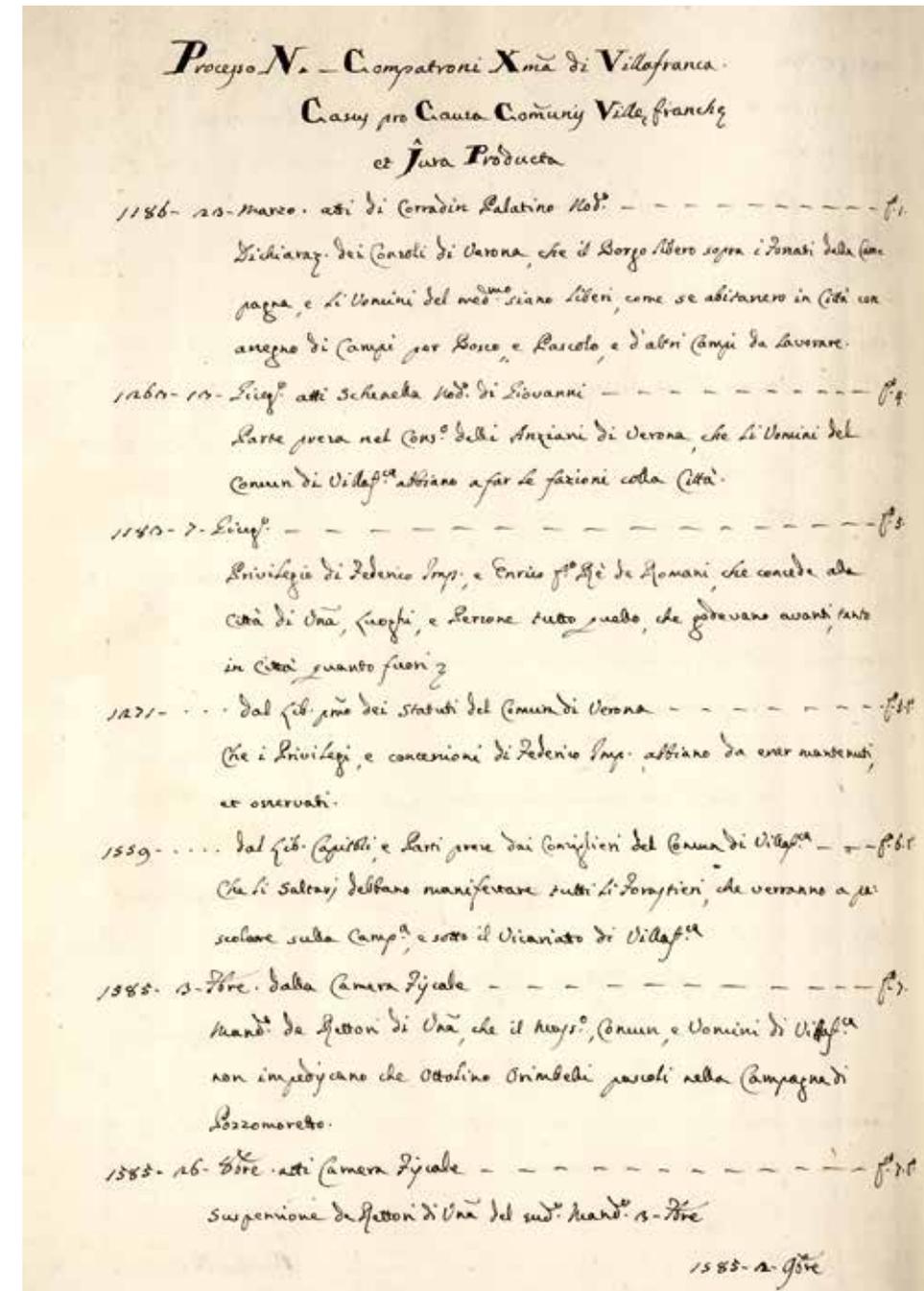
cilessly destroyed a lot of other villas in order to stop his enemies' ferocity.

In these conditions of social and political uncertainty and permanent unrest, the Scaligero Lordship became stronger and stronger. They were a family well-known for their keen organisational sense, which was recognisable in the creation of the first true administrative, social and economic system of the territory. This was based on the rough concept of the virtual equality of citizens and imperial authority.

Lots of written sources remind us that in 1285, Alberto della Scala renewed the founding Act of Villafranca and confirmed the rights, which had been formalised a century before, as well as the expansion of the castle and the erection of the defensive walls called *Serraglio*. These stretched up to Borghetto sul Mincio and protected the south-western side of the territory.

Economic development continued at a steady pace, both in agricultural production and in the breeding of sheep, which were indispensable for the wool industry. However, the conflicts did not cease.

When the town was ruled by the Visconti and the Gonzaga, it was hit hard with raids, fires, massacres and robberies. And after some skilled diplomatic action, the village (*il borgo*) became part of the "Serenissima Republic of Venice" in 1405, which was oriented towards a



The cadastre of the tithe in Villafranca is the register that shows the names of the people who were obliged to pay the tenth part of some crops to the Pieve di San Pietro. It recorded what and how much was produced in the lands of Villafranca.

form of strictly oligarchic government. The administrative structure in the Veronese territory dated back to the feudal period and remained unchanged, because the Venetian domination controlled it only through the occupation of the main positions. Despite the fact that Venice guaranteed stable and lasting power, Verona lost its independence forever.

Therefore, there were four centuries of peace and well-being, which alternated with periods of war, famine and pestilence.

In Villafranca, which had become a rich area, the first brick (*in muratura*) houses were built along the main streets, as well as new monuments like the Church of the Disciplina, San Rocco, and the oratory of San Giovanni della Paglia, while the castle was damaged by of the many raids.

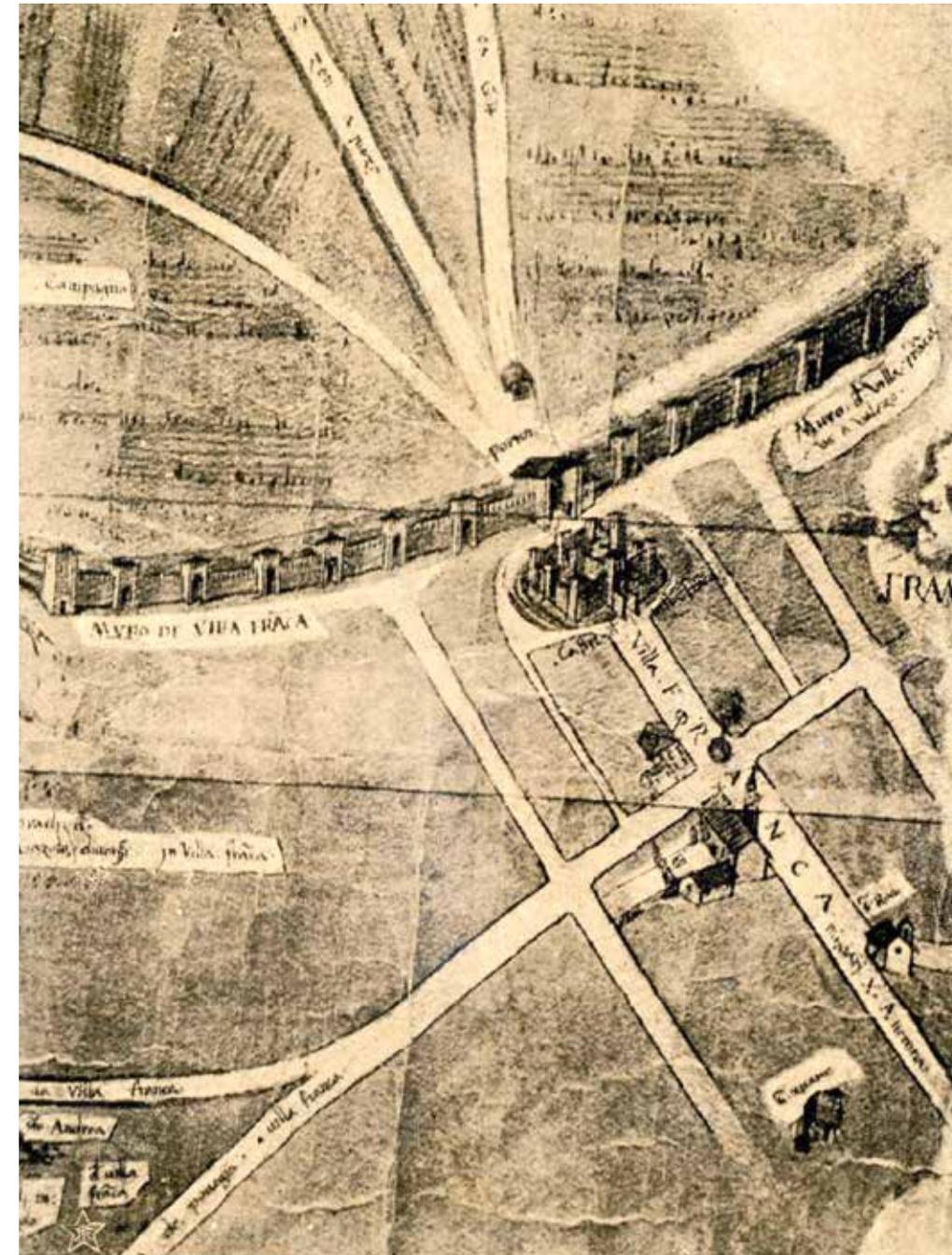
A greater political stability and an increased market freedom brought demographic growth and a greater standard of living for the wealthier classes. This was to the detriment of ordinary people, who were oppressed by the strong financial pressure and by the succession of hard years of poverty and epidemics. However, Villafranca's economy improved, thanks to agricultural labour, the introduction of new crops, the renewal of the working systems, craft activities, trade and finally the processing of silk, which replaced the wool business.

In 1501, the Venetian Republic was attacked by the powers of the *Lega di Cambrai*. It was badly defeated at Agnadello (1509) and definitively entered a phase of slow decadence.

The Venetians were aware of the inadequacy of Verona's defences compared with the development of new firearms. Therefore, they started again to modernise the fortifications and strategically repaired Villafranca's fortress and walls.

The Republic also promoted other positive actions in the town. It maintained the market on Mondays, while on Wednesdays there was the exchange of animal feed and livestock. Then it established a special toll for those who crossed the border from the "Porton" and the complete exemption of taxes for ten years. However, soon the plague broke out, which was brought into Italy in 1630 by the *lanzichenecche* troops at the service of the empire. They were also responsible for fires and raids throughout the territory.

Later, hostilities resumed, and the Spanish war of succession pitted France and Austria against each other. The Venetian Republic had decided to adopt a policy of peace and balance with the various powers to preserve the prosperity of its own possessions. However, Villafranca had to suffer several calamities and difficulties because the high commands of the French



Map of Villafranca (1470) with details of the town: the wall of Serraglio, "el Porton", the Castle, the Palace of the "Consortium", the Palace of Originari, the parish church, San Rocco and San Giovanni della Paglia.

and Spanish imperial armies followed one another into the houses between 1701-1704 and caused problems for the entire town, which was left without any defence.

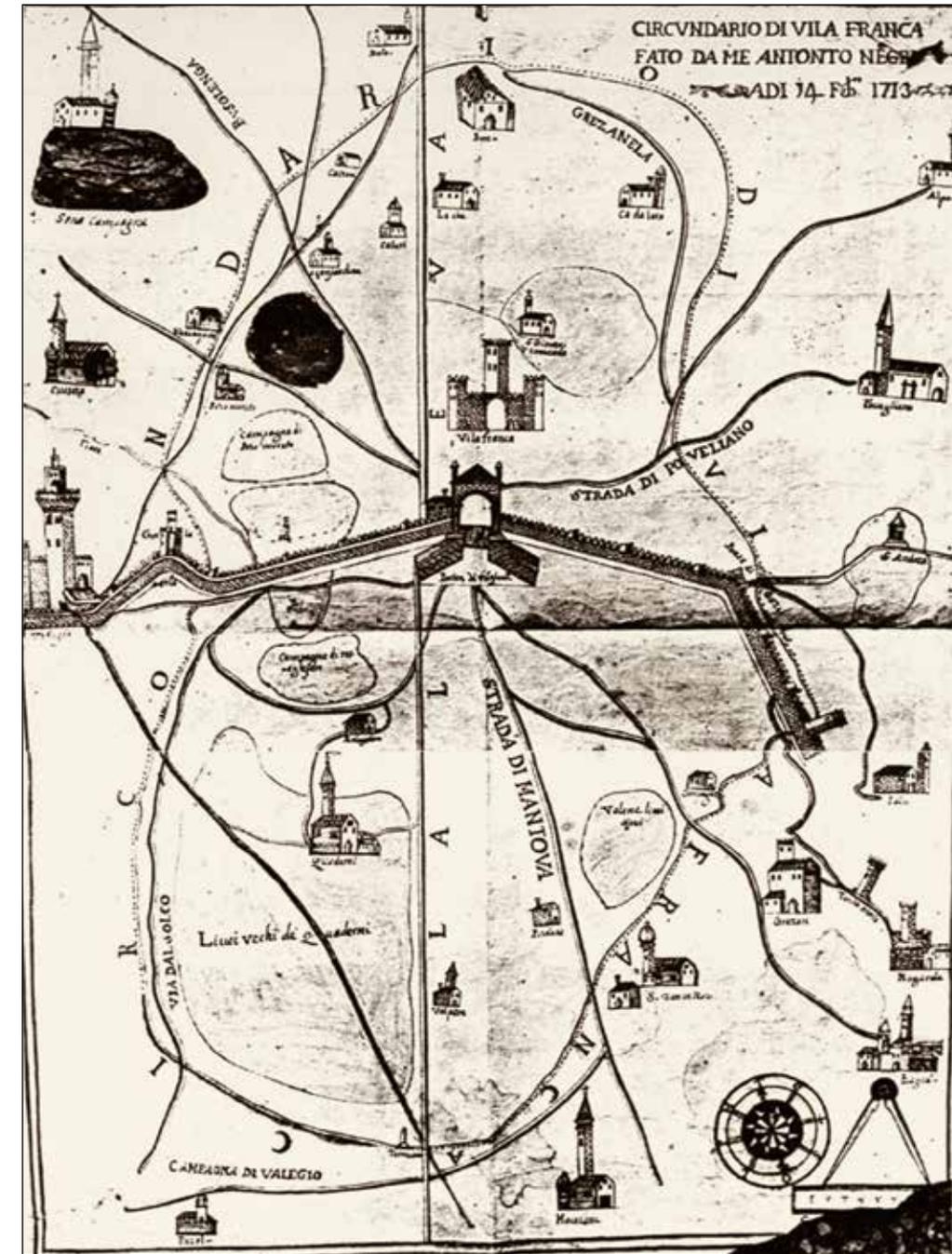
On 31st March 1797, General Napoleon, in command of the French army against the anti-revolutionary forces, crossed the Alps and began the *Campagna d'Italia*. Venetian neutrality was first violated by the Austrian forces, which retreated, and then on 30th May by the French troops themselves, which crossed the river Mincio at Borghetto to hunt down the enemy. The mainland became the scene of confrontation between two opposing factions. Everywhere, the cohabitation between the Venetian troops with the local population on one side, and the aggressive and arrogant revolutionary occupants on the other side, got worse and worse. Despite the ducal proclamations that requested calm, Verona, exasperated, rose up, forcing the French to lock themselves in the fortresses. The government of the Republic still hoped to avoid an open conflict, even if it would cause the loss of the lands, and refused to mobilise the army and send reinforcements to the town. Finally, Verona was forced to surrender on 24th April. The renouncement of an armed defence allowed Napoleon to conquer Venice on 12th May 1797 and the peace treaty of Campoformio was signed.

The Venetian territories, divided politically between the two superpowers of Austria and France, were practically controlled more by the French power thanks to the establishment of the Cisalpine Republic and later the Kingdom of Italy (1805).

When Napoleon's empire fell, the victorious nations gathered in the Congress of Vienna on 9th June 1815 and Veneto, by virtue of its important strategic position, passed directly to the dependencies of Austria, which advocated the restoration of ancient noble privileges.

Nevertheless, over sixty years of foreign domination, a national conscience gradually spread and encouraged secessionist and libertarian ambitions of increasingly larger parts of the population. This became the driving force of the Risorgimento, a rebellion movement aiming for the expulsion of Austrian invaders from Italian soil, along with the political and territorial unification of the peninsula.

The outbreak of war between the small Sardinian-Piedmontese kingdom and the Austrian empire (1848) and the sequence of events that followed would affect the territory of Verona during the Risorgimento. This involved Villafranca in several important phases, due to its position: close the Mincio river and the postal road between Mantua and Verona.



Map by Negri (1713) with a complete representation of Villafranca's area with its villages and the Serraglio. In the map the street "la levà", the Roman "via Postumia", which crosses the whole territory of Villafranca.

However, it was inevitable that both the rural and residential areas suffered damage: destroyed crops, burned-down houses, and army raids passing through the territory further upset the uncertain life of the population who, already oppressed by the economic crisis, tried to survive as best they could.

Historical sources recall some significant episodes in particular.

During the First War of Independence, Villafranca was the location of the Piedmontese headquarters and, from Palazzo Gandini Morelli Bugna, (later called Bottagisio), the General of Tuscany, Cesare de Laugier observed the victorious attack of the Habsburgs in Custoza.

In 1859, the Emperor Franz Joseph took up residence and on 11th July, the armistice known as “Peace of Villafranca” was signed.

In 1866, the city was involved in the Third War of Independence, during the epic conflict that took place near what today is called Via del Quadrato. On 24 June 1866, the 16th infantry division, commanded by Prince Umberto of Savoia, defeated the Austrian cavalry. In the aftermath of the annexation to the Kingdom of Italy (1866), Villafranca, the capital of the eleventh district of the province of Verona, faced some difficulties. The merchant sector had managed to survive, while agriculture, industry and handicraft had been damaged by a terrible economic reces-

sion. Finally, the issue of the disease pellagra added to the substantial loss of human lives.

As a consequence, building activity increased in the following years: for example, the cathedral was finally completed in 1882. Also, facilities for education, assistance and recreation were promoted, and finally important measures were taken for the primary sector thanks to the construction of Conagro, an expensive work of channelling of the river Adige, which was completed in 1886.

At the beginning of the 1900s, the outbreak of the First World War, and the second conflict shortly after, caused many horrors and massacres. The war effort also imposed sacrifices on Villafranca because a lot of young people, who were the main workforce, were enlisted and forced into military service in distant regions.

After leaving their families, they found themselves in inhospitable and unknown places, thousands of kilometres away, where they lived with fear, fanaticism and hatred.

Many of them stayed away from home for many years, and when they returned they were barely recognised.

As for the others, the unluckiest ones, only their memory remains.

In the immediate post-war period, the Italian political and economic situation was very serious, but from the 1960s

Villafranca was able to seize new opportunities.

The primary sector, destroyed not only by the reduction of the number of farms and cultivable areas but also by a reduced population, focused on mechanisation and new technologies.

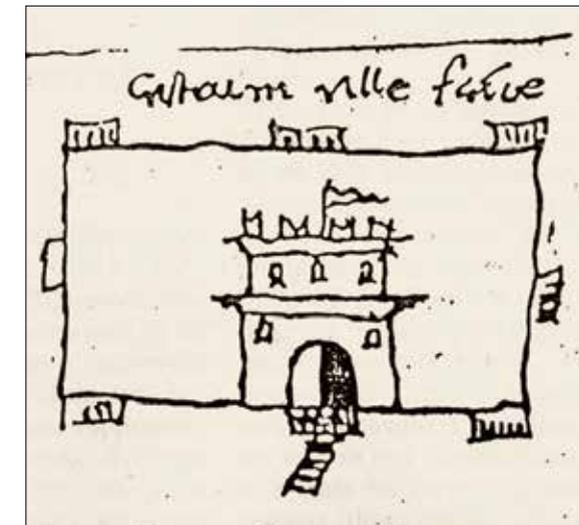
In addition, the commercial sector was traditionally strong: small, medium and large industries developed rapidly in the suburbs and registered a significant growth with numerous investments.

Another area of activity that began a substantial evolutionary process was the building industry, as the civil airport and the Magalini hospital were both built around this time.

Nevertheless, the fervour of renewal caused the destruction of buildings and many of these were distinctive of the historical tradition and the territory's morphology. A rather significant example is the demolition of the eighteenth-century town theatre (1963-66) and of other buildings of the historical centre, which were replaced by more modern facilities.

In contrast, tourism developed later, fostered by the presence of a rich and varied offer from an environmental and cultural point of view.

Finally, numerous non-profit associations operate in the city and promote



interesting and useful projects for the community.

If we look back and reflect on how much knowledge these pages contain, it is natural to consider Villafranca an original, highly significant and dynamic community. This is because because it aims to create conditions for renewal and development. Historical documents, testimonies, monuments and local traditions point to a broad perspective, an overall vision that underlines inevitably deep transformations, contradictions, and light and shade.

Therefore, it is right to hope that such research will continue in order to unveil hidden events or stories of relationships. They will be sought and appreciated not only for the curiosity they induce but above all for the depth of history and heritage they bear witness to.

Illustration of Villafranca's Castle taken from "Itinerario nelle province venete" by Marin Sanudo, 1483, where it was said: "Villafranca is beautiful, adorned with brick houses. Veronese is the Vicar here. A castle, with many houses inside, was inhabited the by Jewish.

VILLAGRANCA AND THE RISORGIMENTO

by Nazario Barone

There are very few Italian cities that can boast the conspicuous record that Villafranca had during the period of the national Risorgimento. This was both due to its geographical position, close to the Mincio line and almost at the centre of the great postal road that linked Verona with Mantua, (two of the major cities of the Quadrilateral), and for the important guests who frequented its houses, streets, cafés and hotels.

1701: Prince Eugene of Savoy, victor over the Turks under Vienna in 1683, stayed in Villafranca with some of his troops because of the conflicts against the French in Verona's territory during the Spanish War of Succession.

1796: in November, General Bonaparte, during the days of the battle of Arcole, stopped in Villafranca after the siege of Mantua. He stayed in Palazzo Comini, now Fantoni, in Corso Vittorio Emanuele.

1814: in February, during one of the last Napoleonic battles, fought on the banks of the Mincio, the Austrian ar-

my's officers who won the clashes were hosted in the rooms of Palazzo Gandini Morelli Bugna in Via Pace.

1824: on the night of 4th February, a procession of people sentenced to prison in Spielberg stopped in Villafranca.

1848: the hotel Il Sole hosted the Piedmontese headquarters and accommodated Carlo Alberto, King of Sardinia, and his son Vittorio Emanuele, future King of Italy.

On July 27th of the same year, General Cesare de Laugier, the hero of Curtatone and Montanara, helplessly watched the defeat of his soldiers by the Austrians in Custoza from the "tower" of the palace in Via Pace, which housed the command of the Tuscan troops.

1859: Palazzo Gandini Morelli Bugna was the Austrian headquarters and the emperor Franz Joseph lived there in the days before the bloody battle of Solferino and San Martino on 24th June. Also, at the beginning of July it was home to the French general Mac Mahon.



Then, on 11th July, the meeting between the emperors Franz Joseph of Austria and Napoleon III of France, took place in the historic palace of Via Pace, and ended the Second War of National Independence.

The meeting, known as "the peace of Villafranca", was the prelude to the unity of Italy.

1866: On June 24th, during the Third War of Independence, Italian troops, including the 16th Infantry Division under the command of Prince Umberto of Savoia, settled in front of the city.

Attacked by the imperial cavalry, the Italian infantry assumed square forma-

tions in their battalions. In one of these, the IV of the 49th regiment of the Parma brigade, Prince Umberto, the future king of Italy, took refuge. This was during a furious attack by the Austrian cavalry which, at the cost of heavy losses, failed to break the Italian infantry or put them to flight.

In memory of these events, a monument was built near the location in subsequent years.

Always deep in the collective memory of Villafranca's community, these events led to the construction of a museum designed to collect and pass on the evidence of that important period of Italian national history.

Reproduction of the meeting that went down in history as "The peace of Villafranca" between the emperors Francesco Giuseppe of Austria and Napoleone III of France.

8-17 July 1859 The Armistice Days in Villafranca

July 8th. In a room of the Tre Corone (Three Crowns) inn, in the Contrada di Mezzo (now Corso Vittorio Emanuele), the Chiefs of Staff of the French, Austrian and Piedmontese armies signed a military armistice which agreed the cessation of war activities in order to open peace negotiations.

1 July. After 9am, in a hall of the Gandini Morelli Bugna house in Via Ghetto (now Via Pace), Emperors Napoleon III and Francesco Giuseppe met to discuss the preliminaries for imminent peace.

July 12th. The “preliminaries”, estab-

lished in Villafranca, were written and signed in Valeggio by Napoleon III. They were brought to Verona by a representative of the French emperor and then signed by Francesco Giuseppe. When they returned to Valeggio they were also signed by Vittorio Emanuele II with the phrase: “... I accept that which concerns me”.

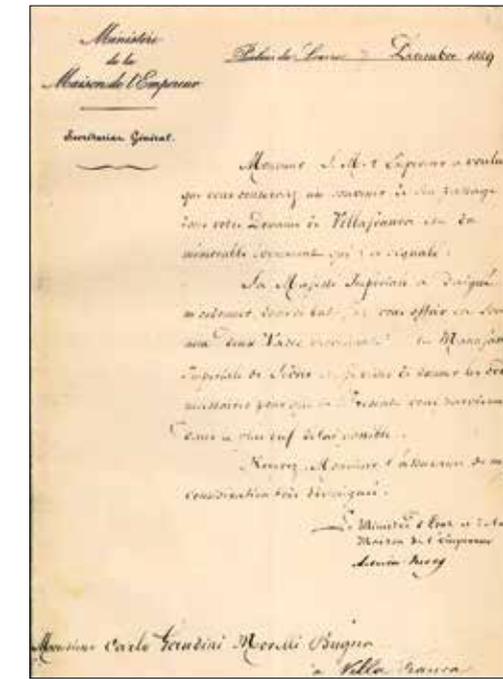
July 13th. Proclamation of Vittorio Emanuele II to the inhabitants of Lombardy to announce the end of hostilities and, with this, the union of Lombardy and the Sardinian kingdom.

July 16th. Napoleon III returns to France. 17 July. Vittorio Emanuele II returns to Turin. In November 1859, Lord Carlo Gandini Morelli Bugna received two

vases made by the Imperial Manufacture of Sèvres, as a gift from the emperor Napoleon III, for the hospitality he had been given during his passage to Villafranca.

The official letter sent on 7th December 1859 and signed by the State Minister, Achille Nelly, arrived at its destination at the end of December after a long journey through the various towns of Villafranca.

The front of the envelope bears the stamp indicating that the letter was sent on behalf of the State Ministry serving the Emperor, and the back is studded with postmarks until it was noted: see Verona for Villafranca (the Treaty of).



From a photograph by Leon Mèhèdin, photographer for the French emperor, the Hotel Tre Corone of Villafranca where the preliminaries of peace took place. In the background the Scaligeri castle without the clock and the tower's battlements; these elements were included when the clock, purchased by the Town of Villafranca in 1890, was installed together with the Ghibelline battlements, which raised the tower's structure.



7th December 1859, covering letter of the Sèvres vases sent by the Ministry of the Emperor's House, general administrative office, to the Gandini-Bugna family as acknowledgement for the hospitality received during the days of the treaty of peace.

VILLAFRANCA TODAY

Known as “little Turin” due to its rectangular shape with streets intersecting at ninety degrees. It is formed by three big streets: via Mantova (now via Angelo Messedaglia), via Di Mezzo (now Corso Vittorio Emanuele), and Contrà de Sora (now via Nino Bixio). Via Garibaldi led from the station and continued from the via Pace square towards Valeggio. The other two streets were vicolo Peroni (now via Gandini) and vicolo Maffei (now via Rinaldo). This is the layout that remained until the mid-1900s, at the end of the Second World War. Following this period, development was initially slow, but became faster with the advent of the economic boom.

The area of Villafranca's territory measures 57.32km², and sits at an altitude of 54m above sea level. It is crossed by the river Tione, a tributary of the Tartar, and located near the morainic hills south-east of Lake Garda. In addition to the administrative centre, there are seven towns: Dossobuono, Quaderni, Rosegaferro, Pizzoletta, Caluri, Rizza and Alpo. The municipal territory

stretches out along the State Road n. 62 “della Cisa” (the ancient via Postumia) in the Mantua-Verona section. This area includes: “Valerio Catullo”, airport of Verona Villafranca, the railway stations of Dossobuono and Villafranca on the Verona-Mantova line, and the motorway junctions between the A22 (Brennero-Modena) and the A4 (Milan-Venice). Villafranca's territory is considered to be among the most competitive in Verona and northern Italy thanks to the entrepreneurial push for the airport and for strategic geographical location of the North-South and East-West roads.

Demographic evolution

All this contributed greatly to the establishment of industrial and tertiary economic activities in Villafranca's territory, with a consequent increase in population. A significant figure, the population increased from 8,729 in 1881 to 33,185 in 2016 with a constant consequential increase following this demographic



evolution: 8,729 (1881), 9,635 (1901), 11,432 (1911), 16,169 (1951), 19,151 (1961), 22,515 (1971), 24,558 (1981), 27,036 (1991), 33,253 (2001), 33,250 (2012) and 33,185 (2016). This total is comprised of the populations of the seven towns of the territory: Alpo 2,551, Caluri 619, Dossobuono 6,390, Pizzoletta 1,353, Quaderni 1,829, Rizza 1,310, Rosegaferro 1,489, Villafranca 11,928, (including 5,701 in the historical centre). A lot of companies were established in the territory with emphasis on the sectors of food, textiles, clothing and construction, along with commercial busi-

nesses. The countryside has specialised in forage crops, cereals, and fruit-growing, in particular peaches and kiwis, since the beginning of the 1900s. The fruit and vegetable market is also present. The local wine is Bianco di Custoza, which has recently enjoyed a significant increase in sales.

Services and facilities

Health services: Hospital, social and health district, rehabilitation centre, phlebotomy centres.

The new hospital after the reconstruction due to the fire of 2003.



*The rest home
"Morelli-Bugna".*

Pharmacy services: Two council-run pharmacies in concession and six private pharmacies.

Social services: Care home for the elderly, nursery school, social centres, educational centres and community holiday locations, foster home, Headquarters of the Civil protection.

Sports services: Golf course, eight sports centres equipped with football fields and tennis courts located in Villafranca and in the villages, bowling greens, tamburello fields, a hockey field, a sports hall, a football stadium, a swimming centre with indoor and outdoor pools, and gyms.

Cultural services: Library and reading centre, Museum of Risorgimento, Nicolis Automobile Museum (privately owned).

School services: Ten infant schools, nine primary schools, three middle schools and five high schools.

Educational services: Two nursery schools and three integrated ...

Tourist reception services: 13 hotels, four farm-stays, eight bed & breakfasts, five room rentals and one farm campsite. More than 30 restaurants, pizzerias, bars, cafés, pastry shops and pubs.

Security services and Armed Forces: Carabinieri headquarters, Italian finance police, Border police headquarters at the civil airport, lieutenantcy of the Italian finance police headquarters at the civil airport, military airport, Italian Military Aeronautical Police.



Branch Offices: Verona Chamber of Commerce, INPS, Financial Offices, Office of Employment, post offices, Coldiretti.

The Alpine House in Valdiporro

The Alpine House in Valdiporro is located in Bosco Chiesanuova (Verona), in the Natural Park of the Lessini Mountains, about 30km from Verona and at an altitude of 1000 metres above sea level.

It is equipped with all the necessary tools to be used in self-catering by groups, associations and communities. It can accommodate 60 people in rooms of 2, 4, 6 or 10 beds.

The large surrounding area (10,000 square metres of forest and lawn with the possibility to camp) and the top floor (used as a games room, gym and small theatre) easily allow for any activity, even in bad weather conditions.

In summer, the excellent position facilitates all kinds of excursions to the surrounding Lessini Mountains and in winter the use of the ski fields (for cross country and downhill skiing) in the nearby winter station of San Giorgio.

This house is easily reachable from Verona: A4 motorway exit Verona Est (Milan-Venice), bypass in Valpantena, Grezzana, Cerro Veronese, Bosco Chiesanuova, Valdiporro, 30km. For information: www.comune.villafranca.vr.it

Valdiporro's alpine house, where generations of young people, families and associations have spent their summer or winter holidays. Now run by the CTG, "Centro Turistico Giovanile di Verona".

The Mayor

In the Italian legal system, the mayor is the monocratic body at the head of the government of a territory, sometimes informally called the first citizen. According to the Consolidation Act of the local authorities' system, the mayor is one of the governing bodies of the municipality, together with the town council and its members.

History

Under Napoleonic rule, a hierarchical system of organisation of the local powers, which reflected the French one, was introduced in Italy. The territory was divided into departments, districts and municipalities. A prefect, appointed by the Interior Minister, was in charge of the department, a sub-prefect was in charge of the district and the mayor was the head of the municipality, and head of the authority and government's delegate.

With the fall of Napoleon and the restoration of the previous monarchical order, the new system of administrative organisation was generally maintained due to its efficiency. The same took place in the Kingdom of Sardinia, whose legislation was then extended to the whole national territory. The territory of the State was divided into

provinces commanded by the Prefect, districts headed by the sub-Prefect and municipalities headed by the Mayor, who maintained the dual role of delegate of the collectivity and local authority of the State.

The Mayor was initially appointed by Royal Decree and was chosen by the town council members. The election by the town council among its members was only introduced in 1889; the mandate lasted four years, with possibility of re-election.

With the advent of fascism, the town democratic authorities were suppressed and replaced by those appointed by the government, and the position of Podestà was introduced. These reform laws established a system where all the functions previously assigned to the Mayor, the Town Council and the Council members were attributed to a single authority, the Podestà, appointed by Royal Decree for five years. However, this could be revoked at any time.

The Podestà was supported by a city council, composed of at least six members appointed by the Prefect, with advisory functions concerning issues indicated by the law and all the other matters submitted by the Podestà.

Following the fall of fascism, the temporary administration of the towns was entrusted to a Mayor and a Town Council, appointed by the Prefect until the restoration of the elective system.

The elective system was resumed on 7th January 1946.

Since 2000, the Mayor has been elected by universal suffrage and directly by citizens residing in the territory, and he is a member of the Town council. All

the electors of any Italian city are eligible as Mayor, as long as they are at least eighteen years old on the first election day; therefore even someone who does not reside in a given community can be elected Mayor.

List of Villafranca di Verona's mayors

Since the Unity of Italy, the town of Villafranca has been governed by:

Rizzini Alessandro	1866-1871	Rizzotti Angelo	1933-1940 Podestà
Bertolini Francesco	1871-1872	Bresaola Vittorio	1940-1944 Podestà
Mendini Vincenzo	1872-1876	Barlottini Giacomo	1944-1945 Pref. Comm.
Canossa Ottavio	1876-1877	Vecchietti Flavio	1945-1946 Podestà
Ciresola Policarpo	1877-1880	Arduini Francesco	1946-1951
Bertolini Francesco	1880-1889	Marchi Giovanni	1951-1960
Valesi Ermenegildo	1889-1895	Brunetto Arnaldo	1960-1970
Angelini Umberto	1895-1903	Musitelli Lisetto	24/8/1970-10/11/1970
Sangiovanni Gaetano	1903-1904	Ceriani Antonio Remo	1970-1973
Tedeschi Augusto	1904-1906	Cunico Roberto	1973-1975
Fantoni Marcello	1906-1907	Bresaola Giulio	1975-1977
Cordioli Giuseppe	1907-1908	Donisi Danilo	1977-1980
Angelini Umberto	1908-1909	Tovo Graziano	1980-1990
Ramponi Luigi	1909-1910	Pellegrini Ermenegildo	1990-1993
Cordioli Giuseppe	1910-1913	Arduini Carlo	1993-1995
Fantoni Marcello	1913-1920	Facincani Maurizio	1995-2004 (direct election)
Scapini Bernardo	1920-1923	Zanolli Luciano	2004-2007
Carozzi Giuseppe	1923-1927 Podestà	Faillaci Elio	2007-2008 (Commissioner)
Rossi Gaetano	1927-1933 Podestà	Faccioli Mario	2008-2018

- Appointed by Royal Decree and chosen among the members of the Town Council
- Elected by the Town Council
- Podestà, elected by Royal Decree for five years but could be cancelled at any time
- Mayor elected by universal suffrage by citizens residing in the territory
- Direct election of the Mayor

The Schools

In 1814, after the fall of Napoleon, the Austrians returned to Veneto, proposing again the pre-existing system as it was before the French Revolution, but with the requirement to order the existing situation. The Normal Regulations for Primary Schools dated 7th December 1818 divided the schools into three categories, minor, major and technical (the latter category never came into being). Minor schools were compulsory for all young people (male and female) aged between 6 and 12. They were organised in the lesser/smaller centres under the direction of a parish priest and they worked with classes of up to 200 stu-

dents (with a couple of assistants for each teacher).

The major schools were organised in the bigger centres to prepare for the technical schools or the world of work.

The aims of the school were very clear in the guidelines: “the teachers must pay special attention to instilling in the pupils gratitude to their relatives, as well as a love of art, a love of the Crown and the homeland, obedience of the laws, respect for magistrates, and above all gratitude to those who provided them with a free education, and tried to improve their character.”

The teachers were obliged to attend a school of methodology, but this was not enough for a greater qualification be-

cause of the prevailing attitude that it was necessary to keep the priests in the position of being the best teachers, for political reasons and reliability.

In 1851, there was a reform that aimed to promote technical schools, but it was not successful because the biggest problem of the whole system was inadequate preparation in the primary schools, especially when they were run by the parish priests. As a matter of fact, the Lombardo-Veneto region reported to the Unity that it had 64% illiteracy, just 4% less than the Italian average.

Here is an interpretation of the Italian school system, in order to better understand the relevant changes over time, by dividing it into four phases.

The first phase of the national cultural identity goes from the birth of the unitary State to 1920. During this time, the greatest concern was the literacy of the population and the homogeneity of the school organisation: to teach reading and writing to the population and to make the school organisation, derived from the pre-unitary State fragmentation, uniform.

The second phase of national pride coincided with Mussolini’s dictatorship. The unity of the school organisation was finally achieved and further progress was made on the instrumental literacy of the new generations.

The third phase of functional literacy culminates with the Parliamentary bills



of 1974 and proposes the institution as a centre for the elaboration and socialisation of culture.

The fourth phase of interculturalism corresponds to the present day and reached its peak with the publication of the school autonomy regulation in 1999. As a matter of fact, each school has its own educational project and organisation, according to the school plans of intervention, which must conform to the standards indicated by the ministry.

The middle school, Cavalchini-Moro, in via Marconi.



The cultural district with the schools: Liceo statale “Enrico Medi”, Liceo artistico professionale “Carlo Anti”, and Istituto Tecnico “Ettore Bolisani” with various administrative and tourist sections. In the background, “Dante Alighieri” Primary School.

Summary of the Italian School System

The Schools in Villafranca di Verona

Nursery schools

Nursery schools integrate and support the action of families, recognised as protagonists of the educational programme of the service, in order to meet their needs and support them in their educational duties. The aim of this service is purely educational, to promote the harmonious and unitary development of the child's potential by developing a free, autonomous, critical, and emotionally balanced personality. Children are educated to be open to collaboration and social solidarity by removing the gaps due to differences in environmental and cultural stimulation. Nurseries carry out socio-educational activities.

"BON BON" - Villafranca of Verona (VR)

"EBE E ALEARDO FRANCHINI S.M. e Nido" - Quaderni (VR)

"DON GEREMIA CORDIOLI - IL GIRASOLE"
Villafranca di Verona (VR)

"DOREMI" - Villafranca of Verona (VR)

"IL DELFINO" - Villafranca of Verona (VR)

"IL GIROTONDO" - Villafranca of Verona (VR)

"MARIA ZOCCATELLI" - Dossobuono (VR)

"MARIOTTO" - Villafranca of Verona (VR)

Infant schools

Infant schools support the handling of children and their parents with concrete standards and behaviour in a place where listening and interacting with openness are basic values. Therefore, they aim to promote a relationship of mutual responsibility between parents and teachers who share a communal project. Infant schools are committed to the complete formation of children's personalities to make them grow as free and responsible people, involving them in processes of continuous interaction with peers, adults, culture and the environment that surrounds them.

"COLLODI" public comprehensive school Villafranca
"Cavalchini-Moro" - Capoluogo (VR)

"ANGELI CUSTODI" public comprehensive school Villafranca

"Cavalchini-Moro" - Caluri (VR)

"L. STELLA MARIOTTO" private - Alpo (VR)

"M. ZOCCATELLI" private - Dossobuono (VR)

"SAN GIUSEPPE E SANTE TRENTIN" private - Capoluogo (VR)

"E.A. FRANCHINI" private - Quaderni (VR)

"MARIA GORETTI" private - Pizzoletta (VR)

"DON CORDIOLI" private - Rosegaferro (VR)

"MARIA BAMBINA" private - Capol (VR)

Primary Schools (compulsory)

In the town of Villafranca di Verona there are two comprehensive schools which are compulsory: these obligatory state schools are organised into two comprehensive institutes:

- "Istituto Comprensivo Cavalchini-Moro" which includes the Infant schools "Collodi" of Villafranca and "Angeli Custodi" of Caluri with the primary schools of Quaderni, Rosegaferro, Pizzoletta, Villafranca ("Bellotti" and "Dante Alighieri") and the lower secondary school Cavalchini Moro;
- "Istituto Comprensivo Rita Levi-Montalcini" of Dossobuono which includes the primary schools of Alpo, Rizza, Dossobuono ("Locchi") and the lower secondary school of Dossobuono "Rita Levi-Montalcini".

"G. BELLOTTI" public - Capoluogo (VR)

"ALIGHIERI DANTE" public - Capoluogo (VR)

"C. MARCHI" public - Pizzoletta (VR)

"DE AMICIS EDMONDO" public - Quaderni (VR)

"FRANK ANNA" public - Rosegaferro (VR)

"ISTITUTO CANOSSIANO" private - Capoluogo (VR)

"ISTITUTO STATALE" - Alpo (VR)

"VITTORIO LOCCHI" - Dossobuono (VR)

"ISTITUTO STATALE" - Rizza (VR)

Lower Secondary Schools (compulsory)

Scuola Secondaria di primo grado

Also known as "middle school". Pupils from 11 to 14 years old. It lasts three years. It connects?? Infant Schools, Primary Schools and Secondary Schools.

"CAVALCHINI-MORO" - Villafranca of Verona (VR)

COOPERATIVA CULTURA E VALORI

Scuola Media "Don Allegri" - Villafranca of Verona (VR)

"RITA LEVI-MONTALCINI" - Dossobuono (VR)

Secondary High Schools

Secondary School of second degree. Students from 14 to 18 years old. It lasts five years.

"ENRICO MEDI" - public - Villafranca of Verona (VR)

Specialising in: Scientific, Scientific Cambridge International, Scientific and Applied Sciences, Linguistic, Human Sciences, Economic-social Cambridge International, Classical Cambridge International

"STEFANI - BENTEGODI" Vocational High School
Villafranca of Verona (VR)

Specialising in: Services for Agriculture and Rural Development

"CARLO ANTI" - Artistic College and vocational economic and touristic school - Villafranca of Verona (VR)

Specialising in: Commercial Services, Artistic High School (New Structure) 2012

"ITIS" - Liceo Scienze Applicate

Indirizzi di Studio: Elettronica ed Elettrotecnica, Informatica e Telecomunicazioni, Scientifico opzione Scienze Applicate

"ETTORE BOLISANI" (Applied Sciences High School)
Villafranca of Verona (VR)

Evening classes for adults to get a diploma in Business Consultancy (progetto SIRIO).

Specialising in: Administration, Finance and Marketing, Business Computer Systems (SIA), Marketing and International Relationships (RIM), Tourism.

Regional schools

"L. Tosoni" C.F.P. (Professional Centre of Education) has been operating in the territory of Villafranca for about 50 years. Originally specialising in vocational training in the mechanical sector, it later expanded its scope to include to the electrical sector.

With renovated laboratories, open to home automation to offer more opportunities to young people.

SCALIGERA FORMAZIONE SCARL - LOCATED AT "L. TOSONI"
Villafranca of Verona (VR)

Vocational qualifications: Mechanic, Electrician.

School for adults

Literacy in adulthood in a multi-ethnic and multicultural context.

VILLAFRANCA CENTRO TERRITORIALE PERMANENTE
Villafranca of Verona (VR)

Autonomous private schools

ENGLISH STUDIO

It is a school certified with Ministerial note. Education centre recognised by the Veneto Region and ENAC (Ente Naz. Av. Civ.) as a Preparatory TEA Test Centre and training in ENGLISH for AVIATION. For TEA tests and training in ENGLISH for AVIATION.

"ENGLISH STUDIO": Examination and preparation centre for Trinity College London - TOEFL - TOEIC - LCCIEB - CAPLE; Accredited Centre ENAC Preparatory TEA Test Centre - Villafranca of Verona (VR).

Description of activities: ENGLISH STUDIO has been organising and managing services related to the foreign language sector since 1990. In particular: foreign language courses, teacher training with TESOL ITALY, ESF project training, FIC, ENAC, international certifications in the four major European languages and headquarters of examination, linguistic assessment services in the field of personnel selection, translation and interpreting services (included between translators and interpreters at the Court of Verona), internships in collaboration with the University of Verona and the University of Hawaii. Italian for foreigners, English, French, German, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Japanese, Portuguese, Bulgarian, Dutch, Polish, Hungarian.

Pino Passarelli

Sports Facilities

Initially, the only places to play sports were courtyards, streets, squares (especially those near the churches), and the castle and its surrounding areas.

Subsequently, when sports were structured with definite and common rules and assumed a wider value, it was necessary to create dedicated areas and infrastructures for them.

Before football, the first sport to have a field was tamburello, later renamed tamburello ball in the fascist era.

Since the end of the 19th century, Villa-

franca has had its own “*sferisterio*”, like in Quaderni and in Dossobuono, which had their own teams. In Quaderni, they played at a higher level than the others. The first football field that allowed a team to compete in the third-class championship was built inside the Scaligeri castle in 1927. At the time there was already a team of boys, called “Impero”, which took part in “neighbourhood”, independently organised matches, but the first team registered in a regular championship was called “Turris”. As for actual sports facilities, there was a long period of stagnation



Old-time football inside the castle.



due to the “great depression” of the thirties and the Second World War. But it was during the war that a new space became available due to the collapse of the fence walls of the church’s garden in 1940.

The whole courtyard “in the shadow of the bell tower” was used as a playground and the first basketball court was built there when the works in the crypt were completed after the mid-fifties. In those years for the construction work of the Teatro Verdi cinema, a sports area was set up in Via Grezzano ai “Tubi”, which was soon removed to build the “Case

Fanfani”. At the same time, in the garden of “San Giuseppe nursery school” in Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, the football field “San Pancrazio” was also installed, which hosted many football tournaments and sporting activities. The area close to the church, dedicated to San Domenico Savio, was reorganised and inaugurated, but it soon proved insufficient to satisfy the need for areas and infrastructures following the extraordinary spread of sport among young people.

In the mid-sixties, even the largest area of the castle was insufficient for the

The new sports centre “Centro sportivo Città di Villafranca” designed by the architect Foroni, built in the 1980s with football fields, tamburello, tennis, hockey, five-a-side football, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, bowling green, athletics track and multi-purpose area, all approved for national competitions.



*The beginnings
of Villafranca's athletics
in the castle.*

needs of two football clubs and the related juvenile sectors of tennis, tamburello and athletics (within the walls there was a tennis court, a tamburello field and some athletics facilities). Other sports also needed infrastructures: rollerskating (with a new concrete track built in the outer area of the castle, close to the friary), and basketball and volleyball, which could not remain confined in the parish courtyard or in the old gym of the middle school. Fortunately, in those years the construction of the big educational centre of the high schools began. Medi and Bolisani high schools and the new Collodi primary school contained gyms which, as well as the totally rebuilt one of the middle school, were clearly

sufficient for the needs of basketball and volleyball. As for junior football, a field was built between via Magenta and Novara but it lacked changing rooms (for a short time the players used the basement of a kind citizen). So, this was not used for the official tournaments anymore, as soon as the new sport facilities were built at the "Siena". These structures came complete with indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a bocciodromo (similar to a bowling green), tennis courts, tamburello fields and the well-established hockey field that has given our town so much satisfaction. It is worth mentioning that in the same years, Dossobuono, Alpo, Quaderni,

Pizzoletta and Rosegaferro were also provided with new sport facilities and the first of these three were also provided with a Palazzetto dello Sport. We had to wait until 2005 for a regular athletics track (at the sports facilities) and since 2016 Villafranca has been provided with a Palazzetto which allows our basketball and volleyball teams to take part in high-level national tournaments.

Villafranca has come a long way: from the castle to the sports facilities, from the old gym of the middle school to the Palazzetto. However, it is important to continue this growth because without dedicated places there is no sport, and without sport, the development of youth (and others) cannot be balanced.

Rico Bresaola

The interior of the sports arena, with a capacity of about 1,200 spectators; it has recently been approved for sports activities at national level, for concerts and events.



The Ancient Wisdom of Healthy Cooking

From the second post-war period to the present day, the habits and eating behaviour of Italians in general and of Villafranca residents in particular, have abandoned some of the traditional models based on the wise use of available resources. Instead, they have tended to move on to choices typical of an opulent society, with the increasing use of “prestigious” import food models. The result has been to increase the per capita energy average of more than one thousand calories, to increase expenses for the purchase

of food products (most of which come from across the border) and to considerably increase the incidence of certain diseases that are also caused by food choices.

The Venetian diet is dominated by four elements: rice, polenta, beans and salted codfish along with potatoes and vegetables. The rice came from the Arab world thanks to trade, and from the first half of the 6th century, it was cultivated in the vast plains where today the *vialone nano* is produced. Now it is used in about forty different dishes, some of which are known as “*risi e bisi*”. With the discovery of America, we were introduced to corn-



Boiled meat with “*pearà*” and *cotechino*.



meal and beans. Codfish (*stoccafisso*) came from the North Seas, along the Baltic routes, and is perhaps the “unifying” food of Venetian cuisine. In addition to these goods there is a wide choice of products available to housewives and cooks: cured meat, cheese and garden products, including radicchio and onions. The main ingredient of many dishes is the onion known as “*alla veneziana*”.

In order to enhance Villafranca’s local food and wine tradition, the Restaurant Association was founded in 1993. Its primary aim was to promote local cuisine and enhance its traditions through gastronomic and cultural initiatives.

Those who are curious to try one of the typical dishes of Villafranca, without being an expert in the kitchen, should book a table in one of the restaurants in the area or the town, because they are sure to come out satisfied!

Among the dishes and typical products of local cuisine are *gnocchi* (made with potatoes), “*bollito con pearà*”, “*pastisada de caval e de musso*”, and cured meat, *nadalín*, *sfogliatine*, “*polenta infasolà*”, “*risi e bisi*”, “*papparelle con fegadini in brodo*” or Italian sauce and many other recipes that local cooks have made famous beyond our national borders thanks to their creativity.

On the left: in addition to the “sfogliatine”, the characteristic “Nadalín”, stuffed or simple, is always on the table of Villafranca’s citizens.

On the right: “La Taiadela”, following the tradition of “pappardele con i fegatini”, is a dish that has evolved with various dressings according to the imagination of the cooks (duck, sauce, mushrooms, etc.) so that in recent years the various restaurants of the town have competed among them to propose the “taiadela” in many different ways.

The Market

The weekly market on Wednesdays originates in the certificate of incorporation of the Free Village on 9th March 1185. This authorised the citizens of Villafranca to set up and manage a market as they pleased, in addition to tax exemption. Since then, over the centuries, the weekly market on Wednesdays has always been a popular meeting place and the reference point for trade in Villafranca and for the people of all the surrounding villages.



Vintage photo of the traditional Wednesday market in Villafranca.

The fair of St. Peter

The most important event in Villafranca's calendar is surely the fair of St. Peter at the end of June. The fair has its roots in the era of Serenissima; the first reliable news about it dates back to 1714. This is when the festival of the patrons St. Peter and Paul on June 29th was added to the traditional Wednesday street market.

It was a large market during a religious festival, granted to overcome the serious period of crisis. Initiated in the

1930s as a celebration and a livestock trade fair, it gained importance at provincial level. In the years after the war, the fair experienced a period of decline. In 1969, it was even removed from the programme of events and replaced with sporting events and art exhibitions; it became a showcase for the exhibition and trade of artisan and industrial activities.

In the various editions, there were events that have become historic, such as the interregional horse show contest held in the military area inside

the Scaligero castle (1975), the Hurricane Motor Show (1977), and the Dik Dik concert in piazza Giovanni XXIII (1978). This square became the show stage for concerts and shows during the fair.

For a few years, the prestigious Palazzo Bottagisio has become the headquarters of antiques exhibitions at national level, art exhibitions and antique prints. The last evening of the fair has become famous for the fireworks displays that still take place in Corso Vittorio Emanuele II.



1924, vintage photo of the cattle fair in the square of the Scaligero Castle.

The Carnival

When the final period of the last world war had faded, in 1956, the Carnival of Villafranca began a new life inspired by the Aurora theatre company, founded by the vivacious parish priest Don Egidio Baietta. With floats designed and built by young people of the Villafranca's *contrade* and associations, it became a youth festival. Then, the long speeches of the competitors in the elections of the Castellano were famous. He was initially voted only by the *Originari* (the first inhabitants), from the balcony of the *Casa degli Originari* in the centre (the current site of the bank). The Castellano has become the undisputed king of the Carnival, always present at various events such as *gnocolada*, the

visit to the nursery schools, to the old people's home, to the hospital and finally at the great parade of allegorical floats in the afternoon of the last Carnival day. Over time, the parade of allegorical floats has evolved and has been replaced by the impressive parade at night with professional craftsmanship wagons, coming from all over the province and as stunning as the popular wagons of Viareggio. An important part of the Carnival is the "*Rivista*", staged for over 60 years by the Aurora Company, which returned to Villafranca in the new multi-purpose hall Alida Ferrarini after years of exile in Valeggio. It is the moment of celebration, where the merits and the defects of Villafranca's citizens and its emerging politicians are represented on the stage. Evenings sold



Snap-shot of the theatre Company "Aurora" at the end of their performance in 2017.

out, with the profits donated to cultural events and the restoration and conservation of artistic works of Villafranca.

Events

For decades, the Carnival parade and then the Ancient Fair of St. Peter at the end of June were the events that characterised and animated Villafranca. With the new millennium, however, the situation changed remarkably. The two local historical events, in fact, were supplemented with Christmas initiatives based on the tradition of the period. Since then the programme has been expanding little by little with the desire to make Villafranca alive and to propose events to attract visitors in the

shadow of the castle. Particular emphasis is given to the Historic Centre, which is the beating heart of the city, due to both the presence of historical and cultural places and for the concentration of shops and bars. As a matter of fact, Villafranca has become an "elegant and welcoming open-air commercial centre".

Every second Sunday of the month, the Antiques Market attracts thousands of visitors for an exciting walk among precious vintage objects, articles from collectors, and rare publications to enrich their shelves. Then, Villafranca has made the most of its Risorgimento heritage, linking the cultural initiatives with the dates of Italian and local history.

For this reason, the concert of the Risorgimento took place during the anniversary of the peace preliminaries of 11th



An edition of the Equestrian parade of the 4th Regiment Carabinieri on horseback.



*White night
in Villafranca.*

July 1859. The first editions were spectacular: orchestras and choirs performed in front of the castle and the first part of Corso Vittorio Emanuele was transformed into an open-air area of stalls. The 150th anniversary of the Peace was celebrated with numerous events. Among these, there is the historical commemoration of the peace of Villafranca at the House of the Treaty (Palazzo Bottagisio), where on 11th July 1859, the emperors Franz Joseph of Austria and Napoleon III of France signed the historic preliminaries. Now, the restored building houses the Museo del Risorgimento and areas dedicated to artistic and educational exhibitions. Another important appointment for

the local community was “*Par non desmentegar Vilafranca*”. For many years, the characters who have made their mark on the social, political, sporting or artistic history of the country appeared here. The castle has also hosted several editions of the Equestrian Carousel of the Carabinieri of the 4th Regiment *Cavalleggeri*, along with their final attack, in memory of a military episode. On 30th April 1848, the “war squadrons” of the *Carabinieri* were protagonists of the famous charge in Pastrengo that saved the king Carlo Alberto di Savoia. In the last few years, it has been decided to promote popular events, especially those linked with food and wine products or music. For example, there

are the great concerts inside the castle, attended by thousands of fans that every summer enjoy the musical proposals of the “Villafranca Festival”. The culinary tradition linked with *tagliatella* is maintained in late winter and early spring with the programme “*Il giovedì a tavola con la taiadela*”, hosted in local restaurants. A lot of importance is currently given to the markets, where the display and sale of typical products, gastronomic excellences, plants and flowers are of-

ten combined with artistic moments. In this panorama, the highlight has become the Notte Bianca (White Night) on the first Saturday of September. This event is characterised above all by music, food and wine, as well as sport and cultural initiatives such as the “Premio Arte” (Art Award), and transforms Villafranca into an immense amusement park in the historical centre, with tens of thousands of people in attendance.

Giancarlo Tavan

2014, Skrillex in concerto.





Above left: poster of the anniversary.

Above right: the event "Par no desmentegar" in memory of the eminent citizens of Villafranca.

In the photo are the prize-giving ceremony of Villafranca's mayors.

Below right: historical reconstruction with figures to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Peace of Villafranca. In the centre, the museum's director Nazario Barone.

On the next page: 11th July concert with an illuminated castle.





THE HISTORIC ARTISTIC HERITAGE OF VILAFRANCA

*1974, mosaic executed
under the guidance of the
master Angelo Negrini by
the students of the Dante
Alighieri school in via Prina
exposed at the entrance.*

VILLAFRANCA AND ITS CASTLE

by Antonio Benedetti

These pages summarise the text on the descriptive panels that have been recently installed in the castle military area. Their aim is to explain the history of our city castle and make people understand how it functioned as a “military machine”. For a more in-depth discussion of the history of Villafranca, its castle and related documents, you should refer to the previous publications curated by many experts and the beautiful degree theses on the subject, which several graduates have made freely available at the city library. The reconstructive illustrations of the castle derive from the marks on the walls left by long-gone devices but also from a “possibility” that existed, understood in the sense that such apparatuses were foreseen in the military architecture of the time.

“ET HABEAT UNUM CASTRUM DE FORIS, SOPRA FOSSATUM...” “with a castle outside and with a moat...”
So the castle is briefly described in a part of the founding act of Villafranca

village, with no further details. However, in order to understand this founding act, we must imagine that we are in open countryside, relatively abandoned, in a harsh territory where the main human sign is the presence of the Roman consular road, via Postumia.

This still crosses the whole Po valley from Aquileia to Genoa, passing through Verona, and therefore the territory of Villafranca as well.

In 1185, the City of Verona promoted the establishment of the first formation of the town with the name of Borgo Libero. Later, Rinaldo Cavalchini, born in Villafranca, would often quote it as Libero Pagus in his correspondence with his friend Francesco Petrarca. At the same time, it was decided to build a small defensive fortress, approximately in the place where the present fortress stands. It was a defensive system surrounded by a quite big trench (as quoted in the act of 1185). Almost 170 years later, it became a fundamental part of the defensive line of the Serraglio Scaligero that ran



along the river Tione up to the Castle of Gherla and, from here, continued straight up to Valeggio. What we can see today is the result of the last phases after the Della Scala family as well as the Venetian domination and of the eighteenth-century Hapsburg demolitions that affected Villafranca. At its maximum level of splendour, we would have seen a huge and imposing

manor house, in comparison to the residential area.

It was extremely well-equipped defensively and unapproachable and, in the background, had a gigantic, dark and long wall with towers, whose only outlet towards the countryside and Mantua was marked by the “Portòn” of the central tower that framed the narrow road that crossed the castle in

Castle of Villafranca: print signed by Bauernfeind, Closs and Werkmeister dated 1873, com 18.4x13.7.

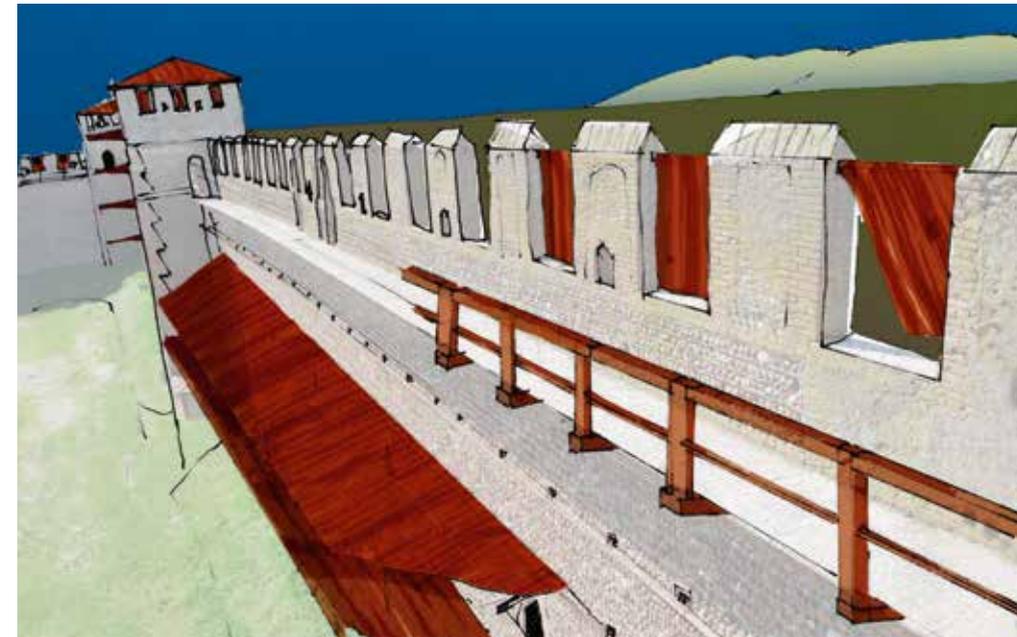
the middle and pointed towards Verona. Today, we see the skeleton of a fortified building that was completed with very elaborate wooden structures and protruding systems. There were balustrades, stairs, roofs for the towers and floors inside them, closing boards between the swallow-tailed merlons. Then the defensive walls had *hourds* (covered wooden balconies), Breton-style towers, galleries, balconies, wooden houses, tool stores, armouries, stables for animals and a church with a probably annexed cemetery). Finally, there were storage areas, stone and/or wooden palisades of division of the court of arms, drawbridges both for the driveway and pedestrian access, metal gates to be closed if required, mighty metallic gates with storm drains (functioning to supplement closure of the entrance ravelin), several wells for drawing water, a furnace and a cereal millstone for the production of bread, and much more.

At that time, there was no electricity or engines of any kind and modes of transport were primitive and not widely available. There was practically no availability of medicines, nor social service structures as we now understand them. The communication systems were not modern at all, artificial lighting was expensive and of poor quality and everything was made by hand. Despite all this, there was great organisational skill

and technological research, at least of a military nature, which was rapidly developing. Then there was a strong desire to improve and secure a future for the children, along with a great push for the arts - architecture, painting, poetry, singing, sculpture etc. This was reflected with great interest in artists, supported by wealthy patrons. How can we forget the friendship between Dante and Cangrande and, before this, Bartolomeo della Scala?

Going briefly into detail, the triangular ravelin at the entrance, the construction of which was an enormous task, might have been defended by two counterweight drawbridges, two mighty metal gates sliding on grooves cut between the walls, other two-leaf metal or wooden gates and sturdy blocking poles from the inside. In addition, there were drains at high altitude for throwing objects on those who were trying to force entry to the aforementioned gates, along with battlements and holes for launching projectiles.

In ancient times, the section that includes the current entrance did not exist, nor did the stepladder that leads to the upper floors. The latter was added when the castle was partly converted into a residence. Even the rooms that now host the so-called "Church of the Christ" (*Chiesetta Del Cristo*) were not present, nor those that now surround the pedestrian access. The same floor



Seen from the top of the battlements and virtual reconstruction of wooden bays, galleries of the median archers and parapets of high-altitude walkways.

was on a different level from the current one. This is evident when we look at the tract of the foundations, cut to open the passage immediately at the foot of the second arched portal, after the one in the main entrance.

There are few, uncertain, testimonies of the castle's first structure, because descriptions of it are almost totally non-existent, except for some brief mentions. We can be certain that the large enclosure was commissioned by the Scaligero family, as well as probably all the towers we can see today.

The original structure, or at least a previous one, is shown by the enclosure surrounding the fortified tower. The presence of walls beneath the main tower, and the wall containing it, mark the shape of the aforementioned enclosure. Basically, it was a rectangular enclosure with two vertices corresponding to the two lower towers and two others, perpendicular to the wall containing the main tower.

The current form of Villafranca Castle was built between 1259 and 1387, mostly by employees of the Scaligero family, undisputed lords of Verona for about one hundred and twenty years.

Historical documentation tells us that the main tower was constructed in 1243. However, it is not certain that it was the current tower, and it is undeniable that long-lasting, important maintenance work and alterations were car-

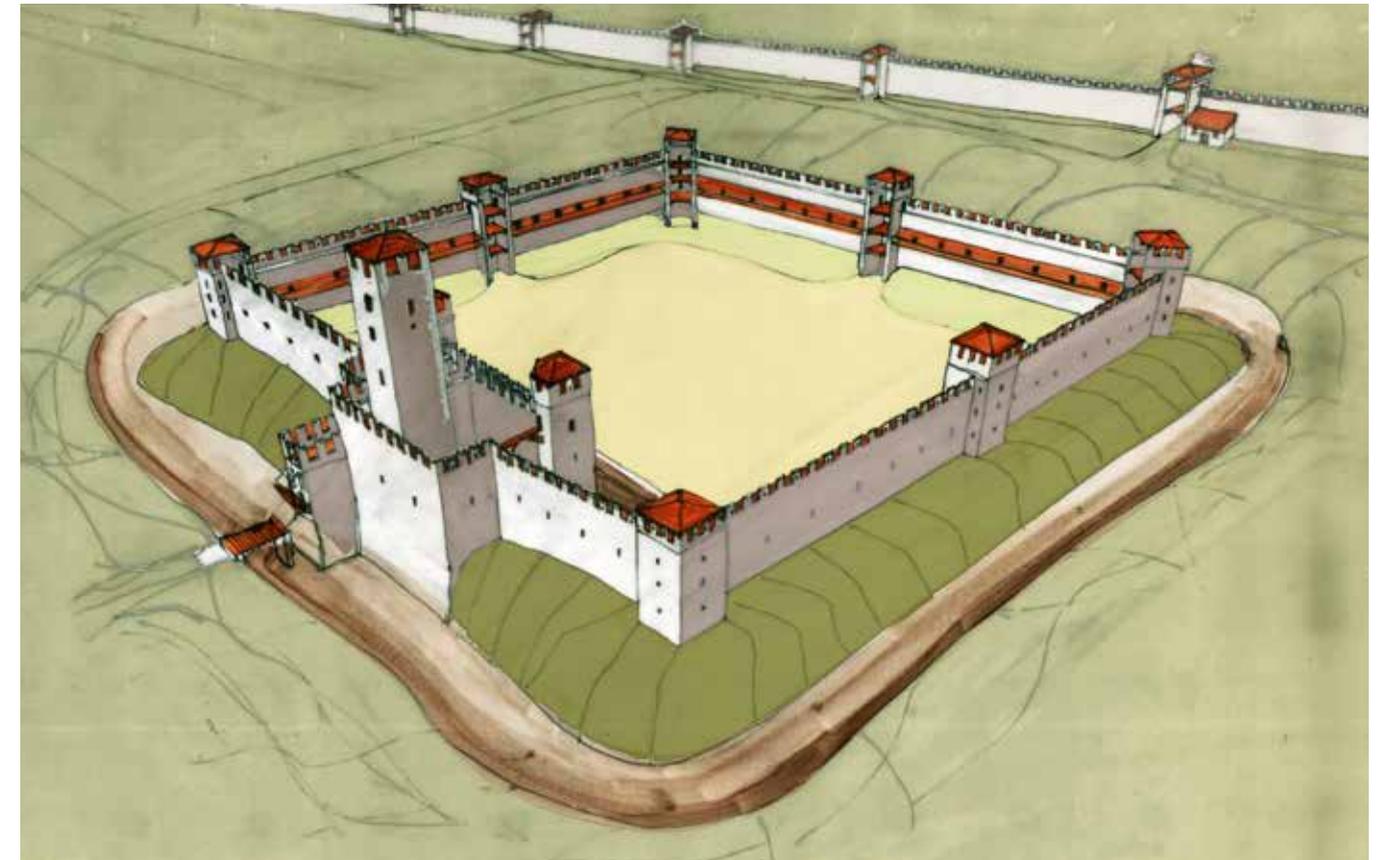
ried out under the Scaligero on several occasions.

So, we can summarise the sequence of the operations for the different building sections as follows:

1. "Original" rectangular enclosure and moat;
2. Main Tower, corner shielded towers, ravelins (triangular fortresses) and defensive walls of the "original" rectangular enclosure;
3. Walls of the military area, earthwork and moat, SERRAGLIO (outer defensive walls);
4. Church of the Christ, transformation of the East shielded court into prisons or houses and construction of the portico in the ravelin's court;
5. Nineteenth-century structures on the ravelin on the south side (in the 1800s).

The end of Scaligero rule occurred in 1387, when Antonio Della Scala was defeated and subsequently fled. After a short period of Viscontese control, a long Venetian domination began in 1405 and it would continue until the end of the Venetian Republic; but not without difficulties.

During this period, only maintenance work was carried out, as medieval castles started to be considered useless because of the use of artillery. As a consequence, the castle and the enclosure



were converted into a toll barrier for the area.

In fact, Venice was much more worried about the fact that the extensive swamps in the southeast and Grezzano were not reclaimed because they were the only passive defence able to counteract the movements of enemy troops.

At that time, the castle was used as a permanent residence for a discrete Jewish community. After being driven out of Verona, they stayed here and then

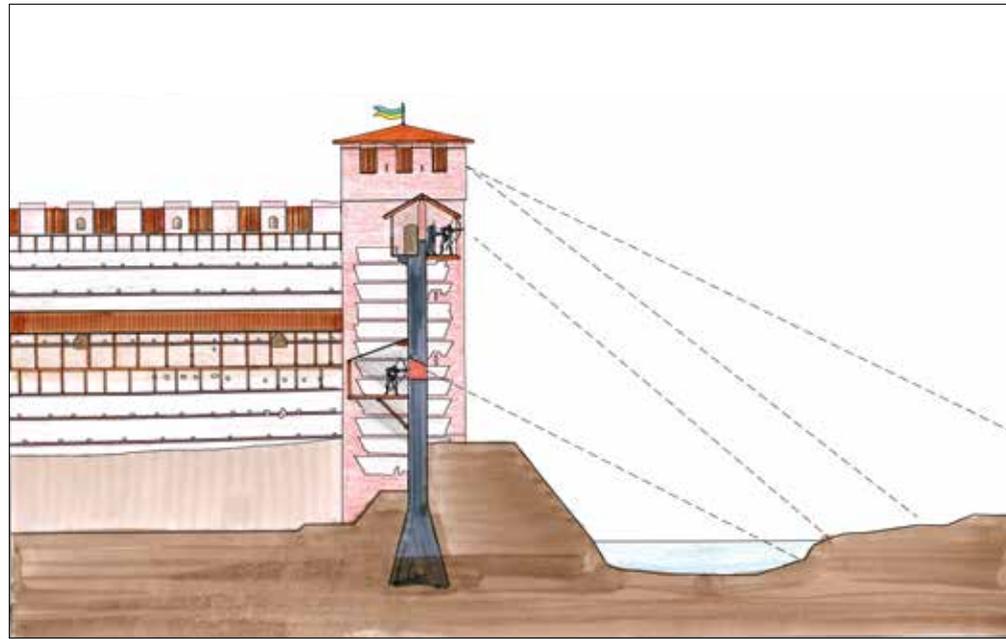
merged into the local community. Via Ghetto (now via Pace) shows evidence of this.

One of the curiosities of the castle is the "strange" positional angle of 45° of the two towers placed at the southeast and southwest corners of the military area.

The purpose of this was to ensure the widest possible angle of defence, of 270°, but without blind spots. The view was much more practical and open than the one provided by a construc-

Virtual reconstruction of the Scaligero castle and the boundary of the menagerie in the background.

Virtual reconstruction of the castle's wooden apparatus: bays among the battlements, roofs of towers, galleries for the median archers and on top of the walls.



In the two images: the current state of the North-East tower of the military area and the hypothetical reconstruction of the probable equipment and defensive installations with wooden structures. Such apparatuses might be modified or enhanced according to requirements and that many parts, in peacetime, might be stored for conservation.



tion perpendicular to the castle walls. In the corner towers, at the level of the first arrowslits, you will notice other two poorly constructed ones, opened by breaching the wall and placed on the sides of the central one. They were created to increase the volume of “fire”, probably due to a temporary situation which worried the owner of the castle (possibly an intensification of military action). The southeast tower, which probably had the same structure, collapsed completely in 1905 and was rebuilt in 1925-1926).

In a much “smaller” world geographically, the Scaligero “state” assumed an enormous geographical, strategic and political importance. Because of this, the successor of Cangrande I, Mastino II, began the construction of an imposing fortification called the “Wall of Villafranca” in 1345, to defend Verona from the attacks of the Mantuan. This was used to build the “Serraglio” which was completed about ten years later, in 1353 under the lordship of his son, Cangrande II della Scala. The project included a great wall, 13km long and about 16 metres high, interspersed with towers every 80 metres. The structure started at Borghetto, continued to Valeggio castle, then descended to the fortified village and then continued along the current provincial road to the locality of “Gherla”. Here there was a polygonal castle (the

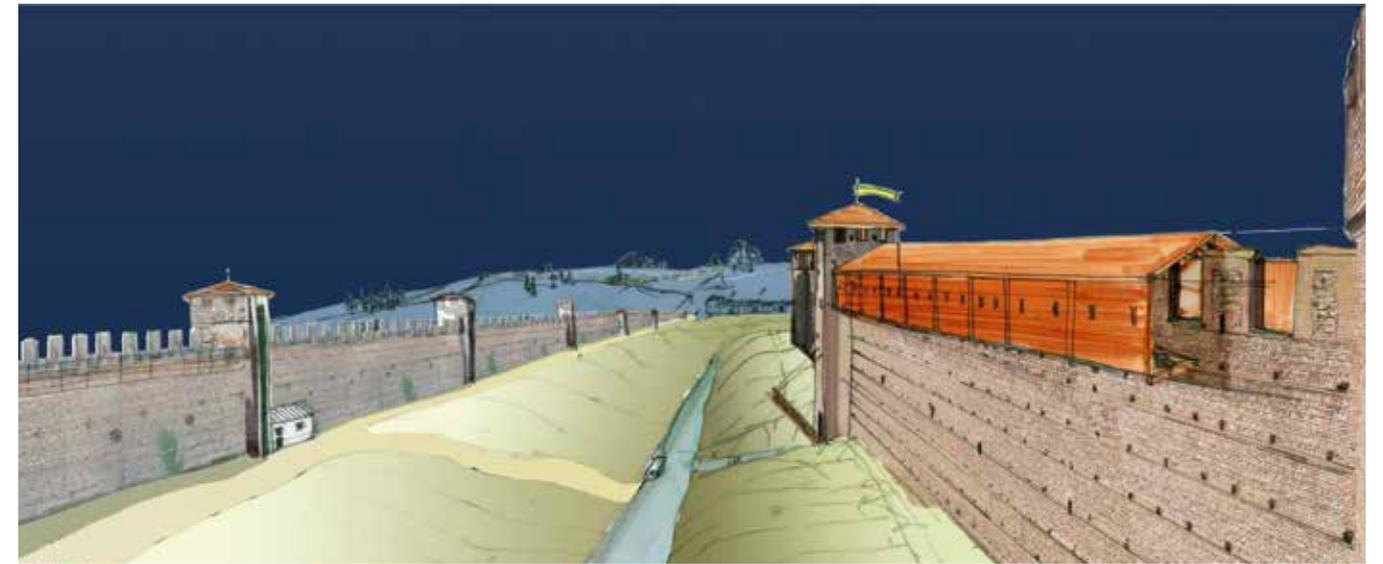
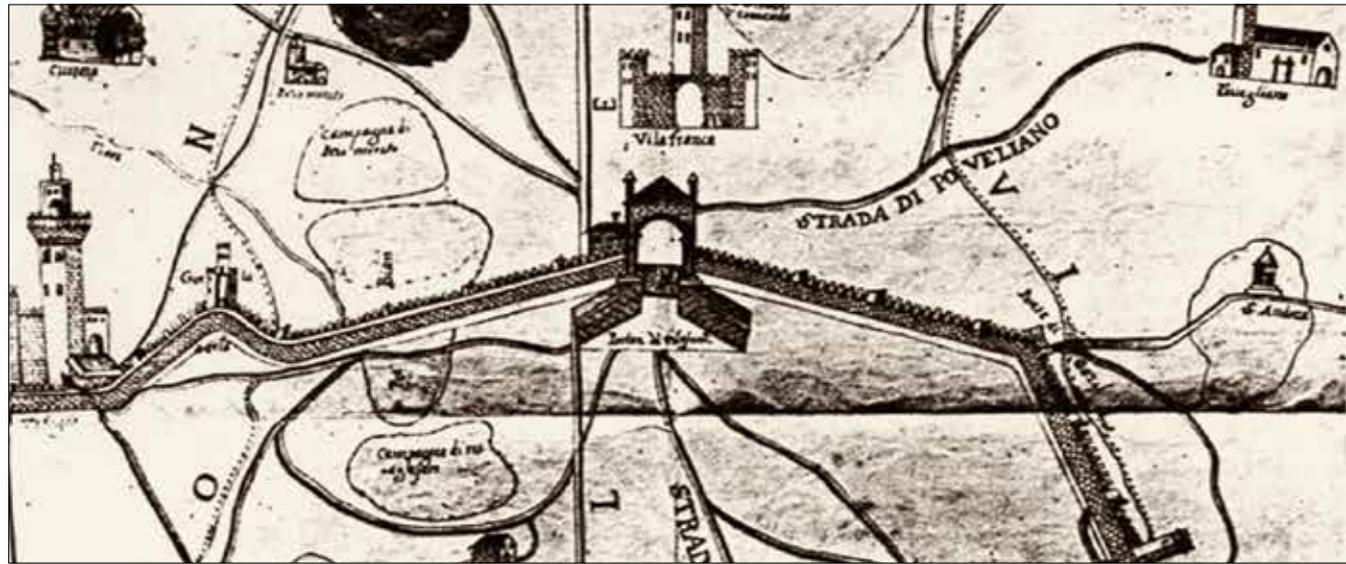
ruins of which are still visible) between Valeggio and Villafranca. Then the “Serraglio” continued on the left bank of the river Tione up to Villafranca. On the left bank of the Tione, which formed a “natural” perimeter up to Villafranca, there was the “Porton de Vila Franca” which was the entrance to the city, not far from the south side of the castle walls.

The city walls were abandoned until the mid-fifteenth century when the Republic of Venice undertook a work of restoration in order to allocate it as a toll barrier, but around 1850, the Hapsburg Empire decreed to demolish the remains because it was considered an obstacle to future military manoeuvres.

In the foundations there are still a few visible traces of this great fortified boundary work, which has few equals in the world.

Other interesting old structures are located below the floor of the hall to the right of the ravelin's entrance (restored and completed in 2007). These give us a clue that other remains might be under the floors of the Church of Christ and the corridor which leads to the court.

The highlighted part concerns the foundations of a mighty defensive wall that ran parallel to the avenue of the ravelin and that was cut off and razed to the ground: we cannot be sure exactly when this happened. This was



perhaps to make room for the ravelin and then for the level of the floor of the existing room.

During the restorations in 2010, a pebble floor was uncovered in the northwest tower, slightly leaning towards the entrance. Maybe this space was used as a shelter for equipment or as a cattleshed. Some coins of the Venetian and Sforza era testify the presence of different rulers and lords, as well as the discovery of arrowheads and a crossbow. Carbon from burned wood, along with the remains of the wooden beams still embedded in the wall today, give evidence of heavy armed clashes with extensive fires and a collapsed roof and floors. Near the northeast tower the scene is similar, but richer in archaeological findings. The heavy consequences of war damage

are evident, both on the wooden structures and on the walls; and at the same time, a more complex use of the tower's environments became apparent. A small well was discovered, probably used for the preservation of foodstuffs. As well as this, the following artefacts were found: floors whose surfaces were covered in broken tiles (known as *cocciopesto*), a large quantity of fragments of ceramics for cooking food, different metallic harnesses for animals, several pieces of glass from oil lanterns, a large amount of bronze coins from the Scaligero era and a Venetian one made of silver, a bone whistle, arrowheads and metal projectiles, and the remains of two animals (a horse and a cow).

In addition, the foundations of several walls were discovered during other

work in the court of arms in the period 2004-2006. The most interesting is the one that extends along the wall at the foot of the embankment, starting from the central tower on the Mantua side, close to the wall of the southeast corner.

The wall is remarkable and imposing, about 1.6 metres wide and made with a similar technique to the visible walls. This makes us think that it was built simultaneously or at least around the same time as the visible ones. Initially it may have been built to divide the court internally, or alternatively it may have been part of a previous castle, then demolished. This may be supported by the results of a survey with a magnetograph that detected the presence of further buried masonry and a

quadrangular structure of about 11x11 meters, perhaps the foundation of a tower along the line that connects the two lighting towers.

Among the archaeological findings, the most substantial and exciting was found in the base of the main tower, formed by large stone blocks from Valpolicella with a Latin inscription. The base of the main tower is in fact composed entirely of a thick plinth made of large stones from a monument dedicated to the emperor Tiberius, probably a gigantic architrave of a remarkable public building.

In this mighty basement, there are other square stones, slightly smaller and reaching the level of around three metres high on the outer surface of the tower. Inside, the wall is brick - this de-

Detail of the defensive walls (Serraglio) from the reproduction by Antonio Negri, dated February 14th, 1713.

Virtual reconstruction of the southern entrance of the Scaligero castle and its defensive walls.

tail is noticed on entering the tower and observing the wall that was cut to create the entrance.

There has been much discussion about the origin of these marbles, among which we can see the corroded remains of Corinthian capitals (ruined by time) and it is assumed they were collocated right here in the territory of Villafranca.

Unexpectedly such an imposing and expensive inscription – the letters were in bronze, engraved with special tenons in the groove of the carved ones – does not find local testimony.

Unexpectedly, there is no proof of such an imposing and expensive inscription – the letters were in bronze, embedded with special tenons in the groove of the carved ones – neither in oral tradition, nor in other closely-related findings in the local territory. It is possible they were transported here from another area, maybe from the territory of Verona, where a similar construction would have made sense, rather than in open, sparsely populated countryside. The inscription contains the following text, distributed on two overlapping rows and partly rebuilt by hypothesis:



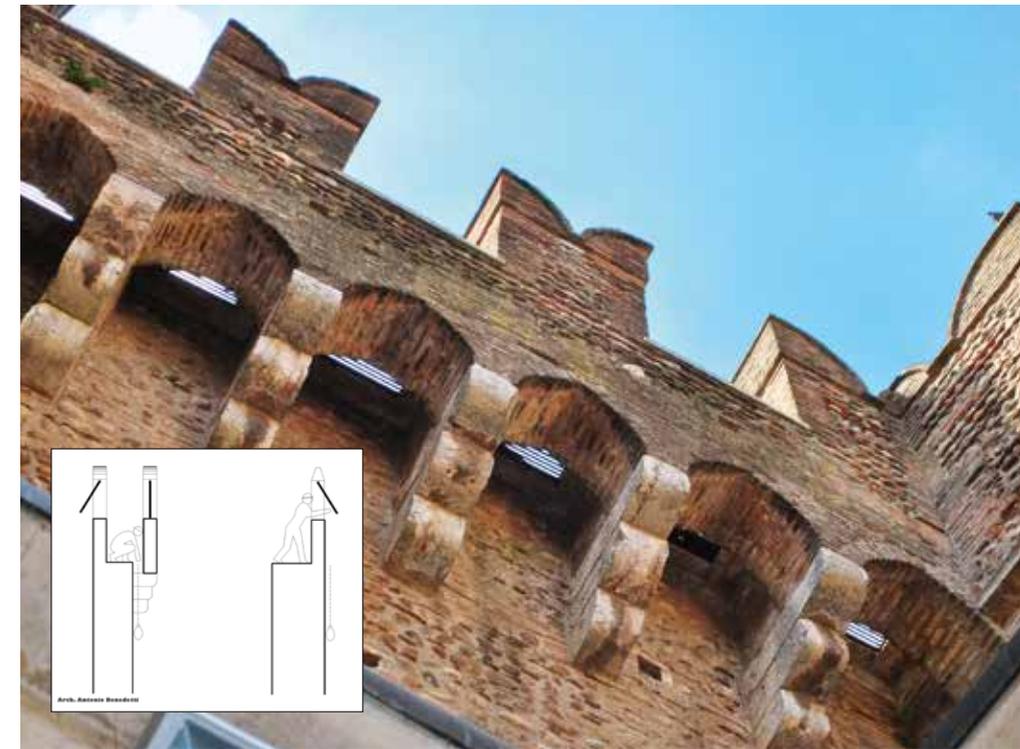
1st row: Ti(berio) Caesari, divi August[ti f(ilio), August]to, ponti[f(ici) max(imo), tri]bunic(ia) po[est(ate) ..., co(n)s(uli) ...]ll, imp(eratori) VIII

2nd row: L(ucius) Cassius, L(ucius) f(ilius), Corneo[lus, prim(us)] pil(us) bis, tr[ib(unus) mil(itum) ...] praefect[us ... Caes]jaris d(e) p(ecunia) s(ua) d(edit)

The inscription is dedicated to Emperor Tiberius by Lucius Cassio Corneolo, son of Lucius. It originated between 21 and 30 AD, and is translated as follows:

1st row: To Tiberius Caesar, son of the Divine Augustus, Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, awarded the ... tribunal power, consul for the third time, acclaimed Emperor for the eighth time

2nd row: Lucio Cassio, son of Lucio, Corneolo, primus pilus (senior centurion) twice, military tribune ... prefect of Caesar, he had it made at his own expense (The translation of the Latin inscription is by Dr. Alfredo Buonopane, professor of Roman History at the University of Verona and it is published on the "Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik")



Above: Reconstruction of the throwing of objects from the drains and gaps between the defensive battlements and, in the picture, supports for the battlements protruding from the wall for the formation of the drains.

Below: Overview of the front of the castle. In the middle, the ravelin and the Main Tower; on the sides the walls.



The First Public Clock of the Tower

The restoration of the “first public clock of the castle tower “ was the idea of Gaetano Zanotto from Povegliano, the expert who had already restored the clock of the bell tower of his town. Thanks to support from Paolo Francesco Forlati, an expert in antique watchmaking, and Agostino Vigolo, a talented smith from Villafranca, the difficulties of the restoration of a pile of scrap in the local warehouse were immediately overcome.



The complex of the clock after the restoration, which was carried out by the Fanti association in Villafranca with its president Luciano Bresaola, along with the artisan Agostino Vigolo and the supervisor Francesco Forlati.

After making the required requests and receiving the official authorisation of the Superintendent for Cultural Heritage with the related restoration prescriptions, the work and historical research began.

In the first report of 2010, Forlati described “that rusting scrap metal pile as like the classic timepiece of the second half of the 1800s with a hacksaw sound at every hour and half hour”. There followed a detailed and technical description of the mechanism and the structure of the framework, and it was assumed that it came from the area of Francia Corta, Rovato, and that the company was most likely C. Frassoni.

From the local warehouse, the old clock was brought into Agostino Vigolo’s workshop in Vanoni Remelli, while Mario Bonamente was carrying out the difficult operation of welding the cast iron crosspieces in Mozzecane. Agostino dismantled the clock, brushed and labelled even the smallest component, because every single piece had been handmade and would have to be replaced in its exact original position, nuts and screws included.

Since the first intervention, the words “*Ditta Premiata con Medaglia D’Argento*” (company awarded with the Silver Medal) and the date “1890” have emerged, which has allowed the historical research field to be narrowed and

the registers of the local councils of the time to be consulted.

From the notes of the expenses, we deduced that the clock, which originally struck only the hour, had been actually purchased in 1890 from the company Pietro Frassoni from Rovato who had been paid, in three annual instalments, a total of 944.40 Lire.

In the same year, the dial and the related lamps for lighting were bought for 496.14 Lire and the stone frame for 511.31 Lire. Only after thirteen years, in 1903, a second bell to strike the half-hours was bought and the clock certainly worked until 1921, when a new one was bought, to be charged weekly.

The history of the clock stops here. Then it is assumed that it was removed from the tower and it was left abandoned in one of its corners until the beginning of the 90s. When the main tower was restored and its internal staircase was replaced, the clock was taken to the local warehouse where it was found and recovered.

The restorations were more demanding than expected, but they were supported by the supervision and advice of the expert Forlati and the crafts-



manship of Agostino Vigolo. Vigolo rebuilt some of the missing parts and constructed the stand of the clock, besides cleaning and restoring it. Finally, the painter Fides Sometti from Povegliano completed the work by restoring the dial.

At last the clock was ready. On the evening of 11th July 2012, the regiment of the infantrymen of Villafranca, led by its president Luciano Bresaola, returned their First Public Tower Clock to the town, restored and functioning. On that occasion, there was also the Concert of the Risorgimento, which was held in front of the Scaligero castle.

After more than ninety years of silence, it was exciting to hear the “voice” of the gears working again.

Rico Bresaola

The “scrap” of the old clock before restoration.



Villafranca di Verona in *Romeo e Giulietta* by William Shakespeare

Perhaps not everyone knows that Villafranca di Verona is a Shakespearean city, but one only needs to read *Romeo and Juliet* to know this.

The unhappy story of the two star-crossed lovers takes place in the city of Verona and Mantua, but the story also speaks of an “old castle of Villafranca”, *Old Free Town*, where the author makes “the court of Justice” operate; indeed:

Act I, Scene I

Enter Prince Escalus with his Train.
(the Prince reproaches the duellers, calling them
“rebellious subjects, enemies of peace, who desecrate
their swords with the red of the citizen’s blood”)

...

If ever you disturb our streets again
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.
For this time all the rest depart away.
You, Capulet, shall go along with me,
And, Montague, come you this afternoon,
To know our farther pleasure in this case,
To old Free-town, our common judgment-place.
Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.

Exeunt all but Montague, Lady Montague, and Benvolio.

Detail of the statue of Juliet
placed in the courtyard of
Juliet’s house in Verona.

If you translate the words of Romeo and Juliet literally, you would have “Vecchio di Villafranca”, where “old” means the castle, while the terms *Free Town* refer to Villafranca of the late 1500s that was in fact a small town and not a village.

In fact, the Venetian Marin Sanudo, who visited Villafranca in 1483, describes it in this way: “Villafranca è bellissima adornata di caxe di muro non poche. A una rocha con molte caxe dentro, era habitade de Judei.” (Villafranca is stunning, adorned with several wall houses. It has got a fortress with a lot of houses inside, where Jews lived).

When Shakespeare called it *Town*, he implicitly attributed to it a market that made it the centre of the surrounding territory.

That’s why Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*, names Villafranca *Free Town*.

English vocabulary: *city, town and hamlet?*

What is the difference between a city and a town?

Sometimes there are no doubts: London is a city and Quaderni, for example, is a town.

In Italian there are three main categories: *city, town and village*.

In the past, in British English, each of these words had a precise meaning: a city had by definition a university and/or a cathedral, a town had a mar-

ket and a village had a church (unlike a hamlet, which was a village that did not have one).

However, the three concepts have lost these absolute connotations today and instead they define each other in relation to the other: a city is bigger than a town, which in turn is bigger than a village.

Little Sparrows



The classic painting of
Romeo and Juliet's kiss
by the painter Francesco
Hayez. *The Kiss* (1859) oil
on canvas, 112x88cm.

PALAZZO BOTTAGISIO

by Antonio Benedetti

In March 2014, the restorations of the Casa del Trattato di Pace (House of the Peace Treaty), also known as Palazzo Bottagisio, were completed. They concerned the part that overlooks Via della Pace and where the powerful emperors met at the end of the battles of the second Italian Independence War in 1859.

When we described the Casa del Trattato, we tried to give a new slant to the story and to explain and describe how much it has been recently restored from the artistic point of view. We also wanted to give a different first reading of the building as a whole. As a matter of fact, it should be remembered that it was not only a place where events of national importance occurred but, first of all, a private home of a rich and wealthy family, who represented a part of the city's society, with its methods to express itself and its culture.

Therefore, we refer you to previous publications, in which the description of the building in its architectural and historical appearance are referred to, while

we provide the details of the decorative furnishings that adorn its rooms. As a consequence, we invite you to visit it and personally enjoy what we are going to illustrate.

We should also try to understand the context of that time and think that the upbringing and the education of wealthy families could not do without the study and knowledge of literature and classical themes, with all its implications. The underlying story of the paintings is permeated with the sense of beauty and joy of life, with continuous references to life in the open air, to nature, to rural and sunny landscapes; in other words, nothing but happiness.

We do not know which artist or workers took care of the palace's paintings, and have not attempted to find a definitive answer. Actually, the paintings, which were visible at least until the last restorations that renovated a good part of them, are limited.

It is, however, believed that they should be sought in the Verona area, where the Gandini and Bottagisio families lived



after the families were connected by marriage.

It is interesting to note that, in general, almost all the paintings of the palace present the technique of trompe-l'oeil and represent open skies or airy landscapes, in order to give the illusion of an expanding space. The ceilings, which are not very high, forced such a compositional choice.

With a little effort of imagination, we must return to a not too distant past, in

which artificial lighting didn't exist. As a consequence, environments and decorations had to be enhanced optically. Everything was lit by natural light or simple oil lamps and candles.

In the present description, we start from the ground floor and proceed with the description of the paintings; the nomenclature of the rooms is the result of the writer's interpretation and serves to signal "the topic" represented in painting.

Aerial view of Palazzo Bottagisio or the Treaty house with the limestone courtyard, porticoes and guardhouse.

Ground floor

Entrance hall and adjoining room

Two neoclassical columns mark the passage from the main atrium to the small hall, where there is a tempera decoration in various shades of blue, and fake stucco frames, probably the result of a reconstruction, carried out at an unknown time.

Similar decorations can also be seen in the small adjoining room. They are very interesting, and visible in three positions.

In addition, they helped in the discovery of significant traces of very similar decorations in the beautiful Apollo's room as well as the Garden and Music rooms. Perhaps such paintings are the work of the same artist.

Hortensia's room

The paintings show niches and vaults decorated with hortensias and other flowers. The composition is on two levels. One is composed of a large, oval and central frame, which is light ochre. This seems to be supported by four floral patterned plumes made of false stucco at the ends of the main edges.

In the corners, between one plume and the other, the composition is completed by a thin, light *bordeaux* edge, also framed by false stucco.

The four plumes and the red edges are isolated in a rectangular frame, in

which there is the central oval. The trellis is elegant and delicate, and is formed by a mesh of elements, like pairs of half-crescents and low reliefs that connect the patterns.

The Room of Mirrors

The composition winds through a false central rectangular frame, with inverted and rounded corners; it is wide and formed by several concentric, light and dark threadings.

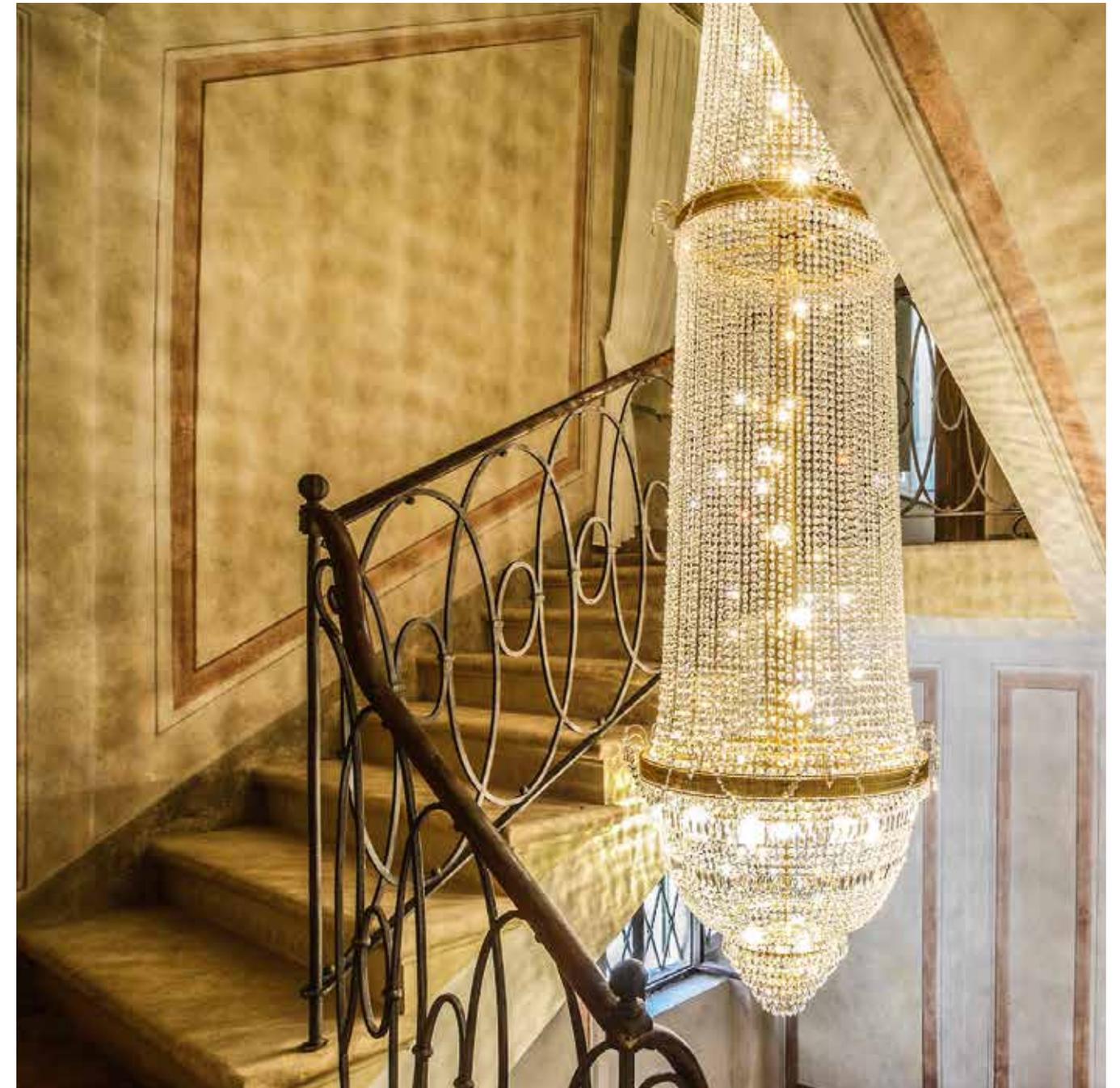
Near this frame there are four other arched ones, which are extended along the four sides of the room to support it. For each of them, there is a bronzed mirror with mottled light blue and rust colours.

There are small elegant niches, which are at the four corners of the ceiling, and show backsplashes with floral compositions in cheerful colours.

The master staircase

After removing a modest modern decoration, which was covered with plain white paint, another one was discovered.

This adorned the ceiling and the walls with flowery medallions and geometric mirrors; the decorations were made with lime and watercolours, in warm tones, ranging from the tuff yellow of the seabed, to the bright pink-red earthiness of the frames.



On the next page: the main staircase leading to the upper floors with the imposing crystal lamp.

First floor

Anteroom of the Treaty Room

The small anteroom that leads to the Treaty Room is entirely decorated with monochrome tempera in various shades of Verona green and with a light grey base, which depict rural landscapes and architectural views.

The depictions, the proposed contexts, the collection of architecture and imaginary landscapes, recall a mixture of renaissance notes in the form

of *trompe-l'oeil* and “chinoiserie” that were so popular until the advent of neoclassicism.

More precisely, the pictorial story is concentrated in two counter-positioned frames on the east and west side of the room.

On the east side, the main subject is a large lake surrounded by low banks and enclosed by mountains and cliffs with medieval castles on top.

Small figures are depicted on a boat and a small bridge. In the second

Anteroom of the Treaty room with monochrome pictures of Verona in green on the walls, representing rural landscapes and architectural paintings.



painting, the environment is characterised by impressive architecture: an ancient triumphal arch with majestic statues, a Renaissance palace, a three-arched bridge with an aperture, and a castle.

These four elements develop on different levels and invite the observer's gaze deeper and deeper.

As a result, observers lose themselves in the ethereal mountains in the background and then return to the first level of the composition, to look across the

river in a beautiful artfully designed game.

The Treaty Room

It was restored in 2009 and has been brought back to the form of the mid-19th century. Several incongruous and low-quality additions have been removed to allow a closer figurative reconstruction of the original form.

Traces of the structure, walls (and even the wall paintings of floral tapestries) and a ceiling that probably belonged

The finely decorated Treaty room.





to the original building and that already existed since before the palace was bought by the family that handed it down to us.

The doors themselves show care and attention to detail; they are delicately adorned with a faux *cipollino* marble motif. The walls are painted in a delicate pink and are complemented by a floral pattern frame.

Immediately above the faux *cipollino* marble slabs, there is a later decoration, similar to the one placed higher. It is enriched with round ochre shapes that portray probably imaginary places in some cases. Some real places are also shown, such as the Ossuary of Custoza and a view of the same Palace taken from via della Pace, then via Ghetto, from the south-west end of the same road.

The beautiful decoration that revolves around the Treaty room. To be noted, in the centre, the reproduction of Palazzo Bottagisio still with the tower (around 1925).

Garden and music hall

The whole pictorial tale deepens on the ceiling. Each of the ten frames show an architecture, on a violet background framed in yellow ochre; the portrayed places may be imaginary.

However, one of them is identifiable and familiar: the Scaligero Castle of Villafranca, as it appeared before the clock was placed on the Main tower in 1890.

Only seven of the ten frames have remained quite intact, while the others have been unfortunately lost in the past, when a section of the vault collapsed.

The centre of the ceiling is completed by a harmonious, wide circle, surrounded by a large strip with small, pink, opposing triangles. This strip is also repeated in the spaces between the

circle and the walls to form sections with the shape of crescents or trapezoids with curved sides. Inside the sections, there are Apollonian symbols, cups and flower baskets, small birds, butterflies, a parrot, and a little bird in a cage.

These symbolise rural life and open air as well as man's control over nature. Then, in four purple medallions there are flying eagles entwined in plant shoots.

Arbour's Room

This small passage room is one of the most evocative points of the first floor and of the entire building.

The pictorial decoration still shows rural landscapes but delicately makes you feel like you are inside a small secluded place: in particular, the wooden hut,

drawn on the opposite wall to the window and in which we see guests.

Apollo's room

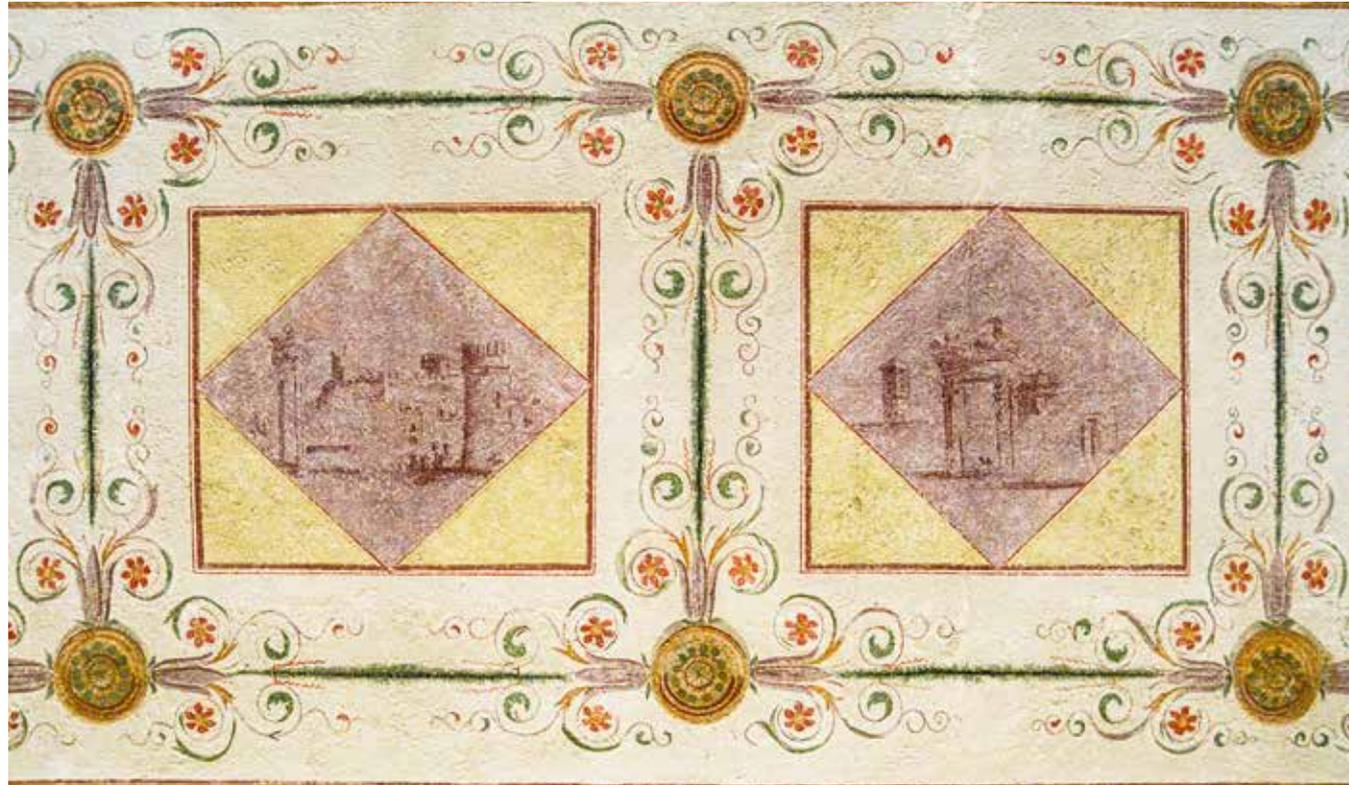
It presents various descriptive elements, both of mythological reference and of ancient Roman inspiration.

When we focus on what is depicted on the ceiling, we are particularly drawn to the depiction of a winged Apollo-Helios, who is protected in a temple flanked by two sphinxes.

These images are repeated four times, on each side of the room at the four cardinal points. On the side of the ceiling facing the east wall, Apollo-Helios is represented with a lit torch, signifying the sunrise, while on the other side, adjacent to the west wall, he is depicted with a lowered torch, indicating the sunset.



Detail of the Ossuary of Custoza painted on a door of Palazzo Bottagisio.



*Detail of the Garden
and Music Room.*

The Zodiac and Artemis' hall

This is connected to the theme of the zodiac and to the myth of Diana-Artemis-Selene.

The former is illustrated in a circle in the middle of the ceiling, while the latter is represented by the female face in the centre of the zodiac and recognisable by the crescent moon on the forehead.

The theme of the paintings is closely related to that of Apollo's room, both in regard to the the Apollo-Artemis brotherhood

and as a logical continuation of sunrise-sunset-night (east-west direction of the sun). It is believed that the two rooms were probably destined to a bedroom and a living room.

In two large specular medallions, Perseus is recognisable with his winged helmet, completed with two rampant snakes recalling Medusa's murder.

On a different point of the ceiling there is Pegasus, the winged horse, similar to the brother Crisaore, with blood trickling from Medusa's neck, killed by Perseus.



*Detail of the decorations
of the Zodiac and
Artemis's room.*

Second floor

The second floor is much more rustic, with simple brick floors. The ornaments are very simple and too worn to be brought back to their early condition and the restorations have uncovered some layers of stratigraphic investigation to testify their presence.

The entire second floor now houses the management offices, the archive that keeps the degree theses and studies of the architectural and historical

sector of Villafranca. This comprises a study centre where this material can be studied and consulted.

The room that is now used to store the Bottagisio archive is the only one with almost all the original ornaments. Below the most recent plaster layer, there is a beige plaster base and some decorations with string art frames and dark brown braids; at the corners of the mirrors.

THE MUSEUM OF THE RISORGIMENTO AND HISTORICAL MUSEUMS

by Nazario Barone

The idea of building a museum of the Risorgimento in Villafranca dates back to 1959, when the Centenary of the Peace in Villafranca was celebrated. On that occasion, the local administration of the time organised an exhibition of prints, posters and historical relics borrowed by



On the left: 11th July 1959, centenary of the Armistice of Villafranca. The Mayor of Villafranca, Giovanni Marchi, receives the President of the Italian Republic, Antonio Segni.

On the right: Postcard with stamp and special postage issued for the event of 11th July.

Leone Carlotti from Cavriana (Mn). It was located at the House of the Treaty and was visited by the President of the Italian Republic, Antonio Segni. In 1959, the first centenary of the historical meeting between the emperors Francesco Giuseppe I of Austria and Napoleon III of France reawakened the interest in that important historical time. This event provided Villafranca with the opportunity to have a proper museum. The mayor, Giovanni Marchi, proposed to make the exhibition permanent by purchasing the owner's material. The collection was bought the following year and arranged in some rooms adja-



Above: Room of the former Museo del Risorgimento in the Scaligero castle.

Below: Room of the current Museo of the Risorgimento, which has been recently arranged and restored at Palazzo Bottagisio.



1989: Senate President Giovanni Spadolini's visit to the Museo of the Risorgimento; he was accompanied by its director, Nazario Barone, and the Mayor of Villafranca, Graziano Tovo.

cent to the *sala del Trattato*, in the historic palace in via Pace. For many years, it was not a consideration to establish a real museum, due to lack of suitable premises and budget restrictions. The material remained at Palazzo Bottagisio until 1981, when it was packed and placed in some rooms of the town hall during the antiques exhibition-market (*mostra mercato dell'antiquariato*). A few more years passed before the prints and the printed material were cleaned up and catalogued by the museum and exhibitions Commission of the local library. They were then displayed

to the public in an exhibition held on the ground floor of Palazzo Bottagisio in the winter of 1986- '87. Then it was the turn of the thorough cleaning and cataloguing of relics, which were also shown to the public in an exhibition held in the following winter. At the same time, the local administration used the restored chapel of the church of the Christ (adjacent to the Scaligero castle) as a museum, with a special resolution and, at the same time, bought show cases to display the findings in a logical way.

On Sunday 19th November 1989, with a ceremony attended by celebrities and the public, as well as the Austrian and French consuls, the Museum of the Risorgimento of Villafranca was solemnly inaugurated.

Over the years, the fact that there was only one large room, despite the good number of visitors, especially students, highlighted the limited size of the exhibition space, and many requests were made to enlarge it.

In 2009, on the occasion of the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Peace of Villafranca, the municipal administration decided to transfer the museum to the rooms on the ground floor of the historic building of the Treaty, acquired years before the municipal heritage.

It was immediately obvious that the transfer was temporary and awaiting

completion of the restoration of the whole building. Once the restoration was completed and the many rooms were usable, the Museum, in late autumn 2015, was re-housed on the floor of the palace. It was solemnly inaugurated in the presence of the city authorities and a large audience on the evening of 11th December 2015. It also includes, in the sequence of the exhibition, the historic hall that was the location of the convention of the sovereigns of two of the major European nations in July 1859. This conference put an end to the bloody war of that year and made the event famous forever.



Historical relics on display at the museum.

Historical monuments

1851. The railway station in the Verona-Mantova-Modena line, opened on 5th April by the Austrians of the Lombardy-Veneto kingdom, east of the town. Over time, the railway slowed down the building development towards Povegliano.

1886. The channel of the Conagro which facilitated the successful growth of crops in the area with the irrigation of the countryside and made the stony, barren lands fertile.

1891. The local school built to a design by Zucchermaglio and considered one of the most modern and avant-garde schools.

1929. The municipal aqueduct, built in the area where there was the first monastery of the Cappuccini friars, later transformed into modest dwellings called Le Ochete; The transformed area, designed by the architect Luciano Zanolli in the current Piazza IV Novembre where the municipal aqueduct stands.

1929. 26th May, the monument to the fallen of the First World War, designed by the architect Ettore Fagioli and by the sculptor Egidio Girelli. After lively debate, the monument is placed in the central square, now Piazza Giovanni XXIII (it was also supposed to erect it inside the castle).

1947. The parish theatre, named after Giuseppe Verdi, designed by the engineer



Postcard of Villafranca Station, which connected Verona and Mantua, inaugurated in 1851.



Ambrosini of Verona, was built with the participation of the entire population. The theatre, after periods of alternating between splendour and neglect, closed in 2000 and is still awaiting restructuring.

1948. On 28th September, the first stone of the Cavalachini middle school was laid. The school was based on a design by engineer E. Ronca.

1961. The inauguration of the civil airport took place. In 1987, it would be named after the poet Valerio Catullo.

1964. On 3rd August, the site of the "Magalini" hospital was relocated from Corso Vittorio Emmanuele, area of the Disciplina, and built south of the riv-

er Tione, near the castle. After several modifications, it was destroyed by a fire in 2003 and has been substantially rebuilt and expanded from 2011 to the present day.

1965. The Cinema Teatro Metropol. The modern cinema Metropol, a piece of history for Villafranca, was designed by the architects Alberto Avesani of Verona and Luciano Foroni of Villafranca. Part of it was transformed into the "Atrium" club, a destination for entertainment for several years and generations. Recently demolished, it will leave its place, designed by the architect Lucio Merlini, for a notable building intervention in which will be a modern multipurpose hall named after the Villafrancan singer Aida Ferrarini.

Postcard of the primary school, designed by the architect Zucchermaglio; among the most modern and advanced buildings of the time. It was opened in 1891.

Square stele erected in memory of the fact that, on 24th June 1866, the soldiers of the 4th battalion of the 49th Infantry Regiment of the Piedmontese army assumed a square formation around the heir to the throne, Umberto di Savoia and his staff, saving them from the siege of Hapsburgs (soldiers of cavalry armed with spears). In 1880, the first obelisk was inaugurated. Destroyed by lightning after eight years, it was subsequently rebuilt according to a design by the engineer Paolo Emilio Zuccalmalio and inaugurated on 28th April 1895. The current obelisk is 17 metres tall.



26th May 1929, the War Memorial of the First World War. Project by the architect Ettore Fagioli and the sculptor Egidio Girelli. The monument was placed, after much discussion, in the current Piazza Giovanni XXIII: it was even considered to be put inside the castle.



Above: National shooting range built in the years 1884-1885, and in operation until the end of the Second World War.

Below: the historic balcony of the "Il Sole" hotel (formerly the Palazzo degli originari, then a hotel, now the headquarters of a bank) with the emblem (the sun) of the original usage of the building visible.

On the opposite page: historical and current photo of the House of Originals.

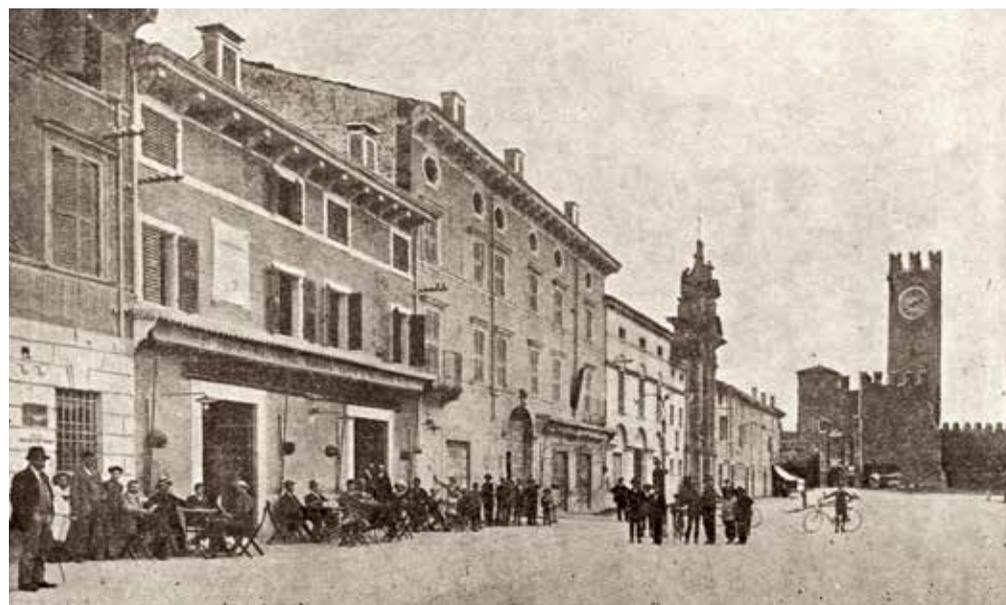


THE HISTORIC CAFFÈ FANTONI

by *Martina Modena*

The story of Signor Giovanni started in the location of the restaurant, by chance. He was born in the 16th century Town Hall (now the hotel “Il Sole”), in the centre of the village - 22 years before what would be the last great Villafrancan personality, Angelo Messedaglia, (renowned economist, university professor in Padua and Rome, deputy and senator from 1866 to '84, president of

the Academy of the Lincei). Thanks to the growing fame of the economist, the birthplace would become a national monument, bringing remarkable added value and more visibility of the commercial merits of the Fantoni company. The highlight came on 13th April 1902, when a commemorative plaque was installed on the façade. The text on the plaque was dictated by Luigi Luz-



A view of Via di Mezzo (now Corso Vittorio Emanuele) with Caffè Fantoni in the foreground (the inscription on the roof is still missing) and then the hospital, the Church of the Disciplina and the castle.



zati, future president of the council of ministers, and the official speaker at the event was Professor Ferraris of the University of Padua.

The commercial activity of Giovanni Fantoni also began around the first signs of the European revolutions of 1848 and, for Italy, the period of the Risorgimento. This period, which by some could be viewed as negative, was instead the starting point for an important, peculiar characterisation of Caffè Fantoni. The undoubted commercial skills of its owner included

the ability to capture the essence of the moment and turn it in its favour. There is the Austrian restoration, and the decor of the Caffè recalls the Viennese environment as much as possible. Then the Risorgimento: the talented Giovanni linked some of his specialities to memorable Risorgimento events, which happened locally, aware that his products would benefit from this association.

There is the “Torta della pace” (cake of peace), in memory of the famous treaty of 1859. Also, it gives rise to the sus-

The façade of Caffè Fantoni after the recent restorations, with giant murals of famous citizens of Villafranca. From top left: the theatre critic Renato Simoni, Marcello Fantoni, the painter Angelo Dall’Oca Bianca, the poet Berto Barbarani, the sculptor Giambattista Troiani, the owner Luciano Nicolis, the writer and journalist Cesare Marchi, the lawyer and philosopher Giuseppe Rensi.



The big mirror in the hall with the historic 1906 carnival carriage painting "The Triumph of Natalino".

picion that "l'Amaro Villafranca" wanted to express the regret that the treaty caused for many.

One of the few glorious moments of the unfortunate third war of Independence is the episode of the "Quadrato". This was when, near Villafranca, the carabinieri prevented Prince Umberto being taken prisoner. To commemorate this, the Cavelli Fantoni produced the "Biscottini Umberto".

In 1911 came Fantoni's new speciality: "I Biscotti della Libia", in line with the Italian colonial adventure. This was designed to be followed by a moderately alcoholic liqueur, which was initially little-known. It rose to national fame and when D'Annunzio received it as a gift during the occupation of Fiume rebels, he named it "Acqua di Fiume" in memory of his Istrian enterprise. Later the liquor would be advertised

nationally with the slogan "in every good Caffè".

In view of this particular skill, it could be said that the Caffè Fantoni has, for a considerable period, reflected the historical events of Italy with its specialities. Undoubtedly, alongside the "commemorative" products that have since gone out of fashion, there are others that have stood the test of time. First of all, there is the "Sfogliatine Fantoni", the symbol of confectionery of Villafranca across the world. Giovanni Fantoni also understood the importance of the image as an advertising vehicle. This was demonstrated at the 1906 Villafranca carnival, when the Fantoni pastry shop won the prize for the best allegorical float with the "The Triumph of Natalino". Evaluated in the press of the time as a superb work of art worthy of participating in the traditional national carnivals, it was based on a sketch by Edoardo Ximenes, then known as designer and illustrator of the Milanese magazine "L'Illustrazione Italiana". Incidentally, the "Natalino" can rightly be considered a forerunner of the confectionery products created by Fantoni. The Cavalier Fantoni also knew how to maintain the friendships that gave him visibility, including: D'Annunzio, Trilussa, Fogazzaro, Renato Simoni, Berto Barbacani, Dall'Oca Bianca and others. But above all, the Caffè Fantoni was, from the start, a privileged meeting point for the

"good" society typical of the province and of those who, perhaps once a year, wanted to "stand out" for a particular occasion. This position of excellence has remained intact to the present day. I believe that if a referendum was held not only among the Villafrancan people, but in the whole territory between Verona and Mantua, asking if the Fantoni can be considered "historic", it would be a foregone conclusion.

So, regional recognition and the more recent restoration were particularly appropriate. The re-opening of the premises was greeted by everyone with a sense of relief: while it was closed, the atmosphere of Villafranca, even for those who were only visiting, was not the same: an important characteristic component was missing.

The Restoration

At the entrance, on the floor, there are four important dates in the life of the Caffè: 1842, when the Caffè first opened, and the three restorations - 1923, 1991 and 2006.

The last two restorations were overseen by the architect Giorgio Forti of Verona. In 1991, the most significant part was realised with an objective: to return the Caffè as much as possible to its original connotation, to its "historical" appearance.



The "Iris" flower with the GF logo (Giovanni Fantoni) recurring in Caffè decorations.



The room known as the Television Room with the huge vintage print depicting the clothes of the 1900s, and including the owner Maria Rosa Ciresola and the archaeologist Giorgio Forti, who oversaw the last two restorations. In the middle: Gino Ciresola, nephew of the comm. Fantoni; to the right, Marcello Fantoni, on the table, a box of sfogliatine with a bottle of Acqua di Fiume.

To do this, old photos and the furnishings of the past have been made indispensable, saved and collected by the owner Maria Rosa Ciresola.

The surviving furnishings were restored and the counter and the furniture behind it were designed in keeping with the “liberty” style of 1923.

The idea behind the new decoration comes from a photo, which shows a multitude of decorative Iris flowers. This is linked to the history of Fantoni by the name of the homonymous liqueur produced in the 1900s.

The upper part of the façade remained original, with the busts of heroes of the Risorgimento, while the lower part was

rebuilt following the Francolli cartoons of the 1900s.

At this point, the restoration work stopped due to the need to reopen the premises.

The floor and hygiene facilities remained incomplete, with the intention of resuming them further on. In 2004, new management took over. They re-examined the restoration work on the floors, since only part of it was in the “liberty” style. Another part was very incongruous, and was made of polyvinyl and large tiles. The entrance was in granite.

The first idea was to find tiles similar to the original 1920s ones on the market,

but unfortunately this was not possible. Therefore, a Venetian style floor was chosen, typical of the Art Nouveau period, designed according to the new layout. Coats of arms with the initials of the founder Giovanni Fantoni were installed, the four above-mentioned dates were placed after the entrance doors and the words “Caffè Fantoni” and “Caffè Storico” were placed on the doorways between the rooms.

At the time of the reconstruction, the floor was lowered to the level of the last room, which was added in the 1950s. This was so people could watch the first television, such as “Lacia or raddopia” or the “Musichiere”. The lowering was

also intended to facilitate disabled access to the hygiene services, which were located internally after this room.

Friezes, also in the Art Nouveau style, were placed on the bathroom doors in 1991.

The outdoor garden, once used a great deal, and adjacent to the former television room, was set up. Its 1950 edifice had occupied a good “devanture” of a shop adjacent to the Caffè, adapting it to the forms. Today, part of the external courtyard is paved with the same stone and brick materials used in the square of the castle. To recover the memory of the Caffè Fantoni on the back of the former television room, a huge print has



Above: 1842-1923, 1991-2006. The dates of the Caffè renovations over the years, with the logo of the founder Giovanni Fantoni (GF).



Below: the historical internal arrangement of the Bancone of Caffè Fantoni.

been placed, depicting the original use of the courtyard. This print emphasises the continuity between past and present that is the “leitmotif” of the restoration. This reminder of the relationship between past and present is emphasised in the photo, with the inclusion of two current and fundamental figures in the restoration. The owner, Maria Rosa Ciresola, and the architect, Giorgio Forti, are shown in their 1900s dress, irrefutably linking the present with the past. In the same image, in colour, a box of puff pastries and a bottle of Acqua di Fiume appear, old and current presences together.



The historic coffee machine, with a display case of memorabilia and bottles of liqueurs. Alongside this, the framed letter of Gabriele D'Annunzio of 21st June 1921 in which the poet declaims Acqua di Fiume liqueur.

The idea was to create a reminder of the past, to bring the space back to life with a restoration that was not intended to replicate the primitive Cafè in detail, but instead recreate the atmosphere of the past. The restoration was fully successful. The customer who enters the room today, on one hand, can enjoy all the technological innovations of our times. However, they also have the opportunity to enrich his feelings in the historical atmosphere. It is these echoes of the past that only the historical Cafès can provide, if revitalised by adequate and precise restorations like the Fantoni.

The sfogliatina

In the second half of the 1800s in Villafranca, the Pasticceria Fantoni (1870) began the production of a particularly crumbly and delicate dessert, which immediately conquered the taste of the inhabitants of neighbouring countries. It became common for wealthy families of Verona to order sfogliatine of Villafranca for baptisms and marriages.

The inventor of the Villafrancan sfogliatina was Marcello Fantoni, who made it known firstly to the cultured guests he received at his home, and then to the whole world. Fantoni and his round creation appeared in the newspapers and in the tourist guides of Verona and other Venetian cities. It was exhibited in important fairs and exhibitions, winning prizes and conquering thousands of palates with its sweetness and fragrance. The sfogliatine of Villafranca were and still are mentioned by many poets, journalists and writers. In 1906, Renato Simoni, theatre critic, wrote in the “Can da la Scala”, the humorous newspaper of Verona, “La sfoiadina is round for love of contrast, having been born in the city of the Square”.



Paparele with Liver

A symbol of Villafrancan cuisine is the “paparele coi fegadini”. This is fresh homemade pasta, which appeared on the menu of a famous “marenda” organised in 1905 by the confectioner Marcello Fantoni, for the appointment of the Mayor. Important Veronese men of culture attended, like the painter Angelo dall’Oca Bianca and the poet Berto Barbarani. Marcello Fantoni was the nephew of the pastry chef who created the typical product of Villafranca in 1842: the sfogliatina, a light dessert made with butter, in the shape of a doughnut.



MUSEO NICOLIS

It is not a traditional museum, but rather a spectacular and modern exhibition of culture and ideas. It is called “Museo Nicolis dell’Auto, della Tecnica, della Meccanica” (Nicolis Museum of Cars, Technique and Mechanics). Opened in 2000 in Villafranca di Verona, it was created by Luciano Nicolis, the Villafrancan entrepreneur and founder of the Lamacart Group. Nicolis brought his great passion for technique and the mechanics into this work; his lifelong dream. It is one of the most prestigious private museums in Italy and in Europe.

Open to various forms of innovation and experimentation, it is an active promoter of culture and a point of attraction for the entire territory. Managed with in a businesslike way, it is recognised as an effective and concrete example of both a museum and a business. It provides non-conventional cultural education that promotes knowledge and innovations without losing sight of growth and development objectives.

The design of the building housing the Nicolis collection intended to provide flexibility for the display of the exhibits: the interior rooms can be freely articulated, adapting themselves to the functional needs of the museum. The large glass façades allow light to enter the interior of this modern building as desired. This fresh, light architecture preserves the wonders of the history of the car.

Through hundreds of cars, motorcycles and bicycles, the museum shows the evolution of this aspect of transport across the last two centuries. But there is much more in this unique museum: cameras and writing machines, musical instruments, objects that cannot be found today.

The numbers of the seven collections are important: there are about 200 vintage cars, 120 bicycles, 105 motorcycles, 500 cameras, 120 musical instruments, 100 typewriters, small aircraft, a rare collection of about 100 Formula One steering wheels and hundreds of works of human ingenuity. They are all



exhibited according to historical and stylistic categorisation. It is no coincidence that the Museo Nicolis is truly one of a kind and is considered emblematic of modern business culture. In fact, the Nicolis family have been entrepreneurs in the recovery of raw materials for over 80 years. The beginning of this period dates back to 1934 when Francesco Nicolis, sensitive to any form of savings and equipped with acute intelligence, decided to collect what others throw away: waste paper.

With the help of his son Luciano, the business expanded quickly and a few years later, the new generation developed it further. They turned the family business into a European leader in the recovery of waste paper and an international point of reference in the field of environmental services.

Concepts like recycling, which have guided the growth of the paper company, are the same that fed Luciano Nicolis’ passion for collecting. This allowed him to find value where the

Entrance of the Museo Nicolis with the bronze reproduction of the legendary “Cotterau Populaire” of 1903. In the background the museum complex, designed by the architect Enrico Zoccatelli.



Historical photo: the Nicolis brothers, Luciano and Nerino, with the first collaborators at the beginning of paper collection.

others saw only scrap. It also helped him in the tireless research that led him to find vintage cars all over the world, to recover them, restore them and bring them back to their original splendour. This passion also transferred to the family and returned an otherwise lost heritage to the history of the automobile.

There are innumerable marvels that visitors can admire, including the "Motrice Pia", the first petrol engine patented by the Veronese Enrico Bernardi in 1882, the Isotta Fraschini of 1929, and the Lancia Astura 1000 Miglia, unique in the world, built specifically for Luigi Villorosi. In addition,

there are hundreds of motorcycles, bicycles, musical and photographic instruments, typewriters and rare objects that tell the story of man and society over the last two centuries.

A dynamic and proactive management team chaired by Silvia Nicolis, daughter of Luciano Nicolis, with a small team of highly professional collaborators, maintains constant dialogue with institutions and the territory, and relations with companies. They also focus on creative collaboration with the media and the world of communication. The enterprise is aimed at enhancing culture in the most current and appealing interpretation of the term



Lancia Astura Mille Miglia, 1938.



“heritage”. Through objects, it tells the history of people, work, relationships, the territory, and of the society that the generations of the past have created for the future.

This is why the Nicolis Museum is also the heart of the Lamacart Group’s relations, today presided over by the

son Thomas Nicolis. It follows in the footsteps of Luciano Nicolis, who has distinguished himself due to his entrepreneurial initiative and great love for vintage cars, and through this, tells the story of our country, of its industry and all those people who have worked for its development.

Luciano Nicolis and his wife Renate Faccioli.

Luciano Nicolis said:

“Now I remember it with pleasure, but as a child I was ashamed of it: when I was a third year, after I finished school in the afternoon I used to go to Mantova to load paper bags. The war had just ended and at 14 years old I cycled in search of fortune, looking for cement bags, the empty ones discarded by bricklayers. I would collect up to 300 of them and go home carrying a 60kg load, sweating. This work improved me as a person and my father was happy. The fascination with mechanics and cars had bewitched me, and I wanted to fulfil my hopes and bring my dreams to life. Whenever I saw a car, I thought - one day I’ll have a nice car too... maybe two... maybe three... “My father, Francesco, had given me a lot of confidence, he was satisfied with me.

This is how we started our paper recovery work.

When I was young, once I had bought my first truck, I enjoyed putting my feet on the steering wheel and I would pee from the corner opposite the windscreen. I would accelerate by hand with the dial under the steering wheel, so the people looking were amazed to not to see anyone driving. I liked to do this stunt then, but today it would be very dangerous.

“I started out like that: my passion was born by dismantling pieces of cars to repair the van I used in the first years of work. In this way, I started to understand mechanics and I became passionate about the technology of cars.”



Above: “The man and the dream”, Luciano Nicolis, autobiography, 190 pages, black and white and colour, Mondadori Printing.

Below: Luciano Nicolis in his studio. To those who asked him about his collections, he answered: “We are not the owners of all this, we are the guardians for the future...”





«We are not the owners of all of this,
we are the custodians for the future»



CARS
Few inventions have accompanied the evolution of society like the automobile, the means of transport par excellence. Its story tells the story of man, of his conquests, of his battles, and of the formidable race for modernisation that marked the 19th and 20th centuries. The Museum bears witness to this evolution through hundreds of perfectly functioning cars, many restored personally and brought back to their former glory by Luciano Nicolis himself.



MOTORCYCLES
From the earliest bikes to breathtaking racers. Enrico Bernardi, inventor of "Motrice Pia", the first petrol engine (one of the precious items at the Nicolis Museum) placed one on his son's tricycle and thus created motorcycle. The museum tells its story with 100 unobtainable pieces: the first cycles, the first scooter, first-generation motorcycles, the recent breathtaking racers. A path for fans, for romantics, for experienced Easy Rider fans or those who love the thrill of the track.

BICYCLES

The first forerunners of the bicycle appeared in the 19th century: they were called draisine and were wooden pieces with wheels and a steering mechanism, but without pedals. The first two-wheeled vehicle with pedals was built by E. Michaux in 1865. Since then, the evolution of the bicycle has been unstoppable and this romantic and sporty vehicle has conquered fans all over the world. At the Nicolis Museum a unique and irresistible collection.



CAMERAS

There are over 500 cameras in the museum collection: 500 precious items exhibited with a vast array of accessories and attachments. From Barbara to Daguerre, from Talbot to Wedgwood, to the most complex applications of the Lumière brothers in cinematography. In the rich collection of the Nicolis Museum, microscopes, telescopes and projectors sit side by side with the most ancient and mysterious magic lanterns and modern photographic equipment of the present day.

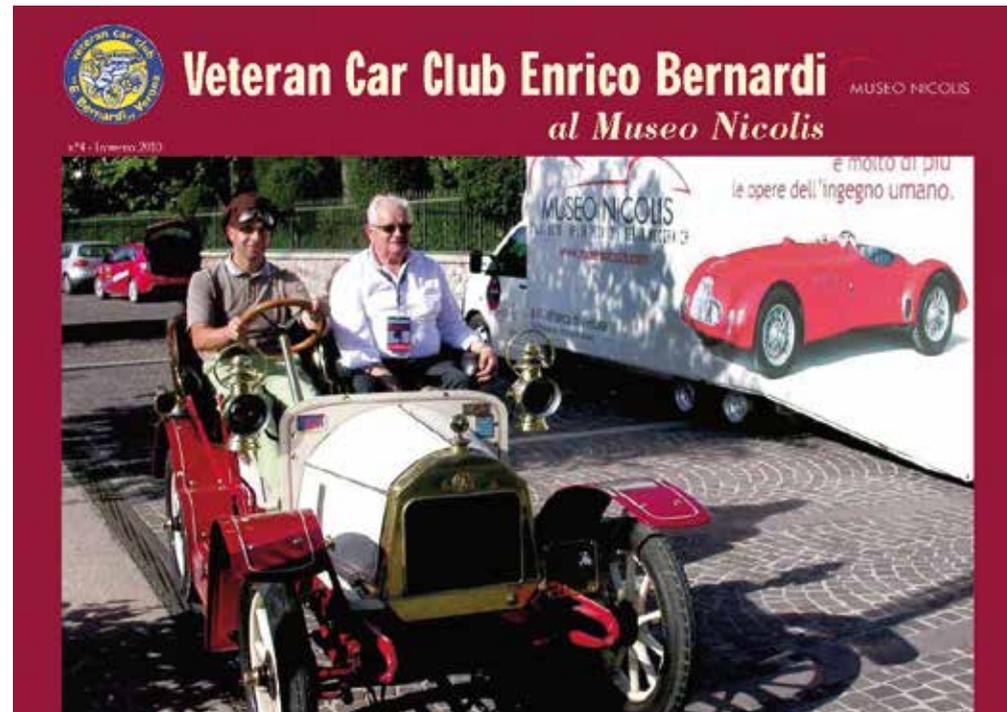




Veteran Car Club Enrico Bernardi

The Enrico Bernardi Veteran Car Club owes its existence to the will of a number of promoting partners, including Luciano Nicolis. The aim was to inform, using exhibitions, publications, rallies and events throughout the territory and the historical motoring world. Since 1965, when the Club was founded, the car has been engraved on the coat of arms of Bernardi, pioneer and inventor of the “*motore Pia*”, the first petrol-powered engine, built in 1882. This lightweight motor would be connected to a sew-

ing machine and presented at the Turin exhibition in 1884, in the engine section. In 1884 in the villa of Quinzano in Verona, Bernardi completed the toy tricycle driven by the Pia engine: this was the first petrol vehicle in history. In the following year, he began his studies and designs for the creation of an engine suitable for “auto locomotion”. In 1893, he connected a cart to his son’s bicycle with the Lauro engine that propelled the first petrol scooter. The following year, he officially presented his three-wheeled vehicle in Padua: the first Italian car. The Club Presidents were: Umberto Pretti Colò, Salvatore Castelli, Antonio



Thomas Nicolis (the driver) with his father Luciano at a gathering of vintage cars organised by Veteran Car Club Enrico Bernardi of Villafranca.



Riva, Saro Rolandi, Luciano Nicolis, and now Silvia Nicolis. Saro Rolandi, a lover of the history of Bernardi, wrote the book “100 years of History of the Veronese Car”, with Luciano Nicolis. The book also tells the story of Enrico Bernardi, born in Verona on 20th May 1841. With the presidency of Luciano Nicolis, initiatives aimed at promoting historic car culture multiplied. The museum is a tangible sign of this. Now, the activity of the Club continues with the presidency of Silvia, daughter of the late president Luciano Nicolis. The phrase that used to be repeated, “We are not the owners of all this, we are only the custodians for the future,” expresses the

aims of the Club Bernardi, which has its headquarters at the Museo Nicolis di Villafranca. The Club Bernardi has 950 members and a fleet of over 1500 cars and motorcycles. It carries out important activity in the fields of organisation, competition, and promotion. It also focuses on techniques for the recovery, restoration and conservation of a heritage of considerable historical value that would otherwise have disappeared. The association is connected to the A.S.I. (Automotoclub Storico Italiano) with headquarters in Turin. The Authority is responsible for the development and control of vintage cars and motorcycles of historical and collectors’ interest.

Gathering of vintage motorcycles organised by Veteran Car Club Enrico Bernardi in the square of the Nicolis Museum.



THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF VILLAFRANCA

*Aerial photograph of
modern-day Villafranca.*

THE HISTORIC TOWN CENTRE

The 1960s for Villafranca were the years of economic development, and the beginning of the realisation of the new urban layout, with the approval of the general plan of 1945. An area north of Villafranca was earmarked as an industrial area with various industrial, artisanal and commercial businesses of different types and dimensions. To the south and west of the centre, there was a considerable expansion of civil construction in the agricultural areas around the capital.

New neighbourhoods were built: Madonna del Popolo and la Cittadella dello studio with the institutions Medi, Anti and Bolisani, old buildings, and a new hospital that was being built after its transfer from the centre of the town. Work also began on the construction of new sports facilities in Località Siena. The east area remained blocked because of the presence of the railway, due to the lack of points

and subways which would guarantee a smooth passage.

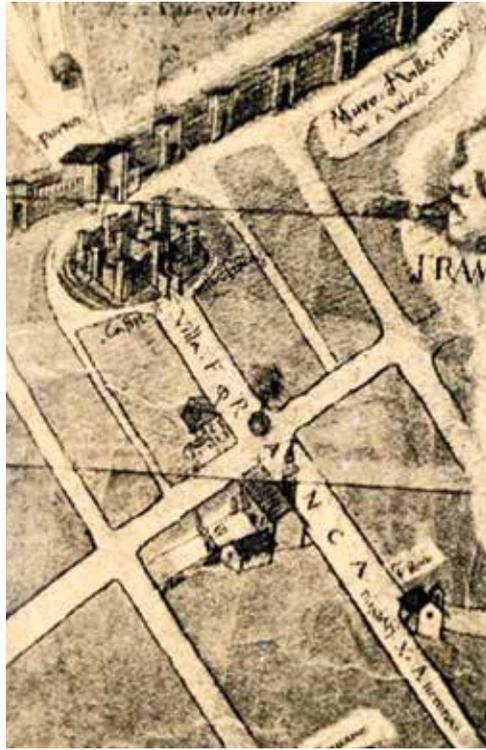
In the historical centre there were interventions to alter the streets, courtyards and squares of the capital: the central square with the demolition of the municipal theatre and parish environments; the area of the former Saira workshops at the back of the Duomo. Ochete, the ancient seat of the first monastery of the Cappuccini friars, gained shops and houses in Piazza 4 Novembre, the gardens of via Rinaldo where now there are municipal headquarters, the municipal technical offices and social centre, the area of the ancient buildings west of via Nino Bixio with impressive civil interventions, the area around the castle with restorations of the same and the surrounding area and the tertiary square in front of the monastery of the Cappuccini friars. The old postcards and photographs are the testimony that sometimes makes us regret the past.



Above: Aerial photograph of the historic centre with the warehouses of Officine Saira at the back of the cathedral. Below: The Metropol Theatre building with the area of Villafranchetta.

Below: Aerial photograph from 1960 with the hospital under construction in the foreground. To be noted, the rural area in the north where the current industrial zone would be built.

The central square



The square (the agora) has always been, in history and civilization, the centre of life of every community; it has lived and continues to live the life of the communities. It is the urbanistic, economic and cultural centre, it has seen the most important historical moments, the happiest and saddest events of the populations. It is generally located at the centre of the road system and has almost always maintained the original structure around which a city has developed. As it is shown in the map of 1660, the general structure of the centre has maintained the original structures for Villafranca too, which developed from the castle to the *Casa degli Originari* (the House of the first inhabitants), from the parish with its structures to the Oratory of San Rocco along the route of Via di Mezzo (now C.V.E.).

In the lithograph by Penati of 1853 we can see the structure of the central square with the old church (later transformed into a theatre, demolished in 1965), and the Casa degli Originari (which became Albergo Il Sole; now it is a bank); then palaces and houses that have maintained the original form with the rather ruined castle in the background.



Above: The crumbling buildings of the parish (the tobacco shop, shops, the "cugitor"'s house (the oldest priest) in need of repair, and the railway station in the background in Via Garibaldi).

Below: moments of the demolition of the municipal theatre

Above: 1965, design of the new square and the parish structures by the architect Luciano Foroni.

Below: November 2017, the square and, on the right, the railway station, that can be seen at the end of via Garibaldi and the intersection with Corso Vittorio Emanuele.



2018 The new square



Realisation of the first part of the redevelopment, which include the enlargement of the square (to include the space of the current pavements), a fountain, a permanent stage for events and a different colour pavement than the area once occupied by the old church. The square will be bigger and more enjoyable for the people, and a vital, central reference point for the city, especially after the realisation of the second part. Designed by the architect Antonio Benedetti. Study and architectural survey by Thompson Simon of Verona.



MURATURE DELLA ANTICA CHIESA
RINVENUTE DURANTE GLI SCAVI SULLA PIAZZA

- 1 - Campanile
- 2 - Cappelle laterali
- 3 - Facciata ex teatro
- 4 - Sepolture

Superintendence of Archeology, Fine Arts and Landscape of Verona, Vicenza and Rovigo, dott. Gianni De Zuccato.

Via Angelo
Messedaglia



Via Angelo Messedaglia in a vintage photograph before the construction of the bridge over the river Tione and the current state.



Villafranchetta



Masterplan of the Citadel of Culture to be built in the area of Villafranchetta with the new Square, residential buildings, the Municipal Library, named after the Villafrancan scholar Mario Franzosi, the residential complex "Metropol", inside of which is the new multi-purpose hall dedicated to the opera singer of Villafranca Aida Ferrarini and the area of Palazzo Bottagisio with its courtyard and garden.

The Theatres



Internal view of the old Cinema Teatro Metropol and the current Aida Ferrarini multi-purpose hall.

Above: Detail of the area before the intervention on the Metropol complex.

Below: Built in 1947, the parish theatre Verdi was for a long time a reference point for drama performances, cinema, conferences and other varied parish activities. In 2000 it closed its doors for renovation.



Above: The Municipal Auditorium, a result of the restoration of the old municipal slaughterhouse.

Below: The new social centre with Piazzetta San Sebastiano and the offices of the municipality: the Technical Office and Traffic Police.



Above: View of the warehouses of the former Officine Saira, before their transformation.

Below: The same area, viewed from the dome of the Cathedral. In the foreground, the statue of S. Peter, patron of the city, and on the left the five towers, designed by Carlo Aymonino, and Piazzetta Lino Tosoni, with the property complex, designed by Enrico Zoccatelli.



FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW AIRPORT

by Pino Passarelli

The Verona-Villafranca airport, named after Valerio Catullo, is located in the territories of the municipality of Villafranca di Verona, in the towns of Dossobuono, Sommacampagna and Caselle. It is about 12km from the city centre of Verona and benefits one of the most important districts in Europe. It is in the middle of an area that includes the provinces of Brescia, Mantua, Rovigo, Vicenza, Trento, Bolzano and Verona. This area accounts for about 12% of the national GDP, with about four million inhabitants. Daily flights leave for Rome, Palermo, Catania, Olbia, Cagliari, Bari, Naples and, seasonally, for Lampedusa as well. As for international flights, it has connections to Amsterdam, Cologne, Munich, London, Paris, Frankfurt am, Barcelona, Brussels, Warsaw, Bucharest, Tirana, Moscow-Domodedovo and St. Petersburg-Pulkovo. The airport can be considered a real driver of the local economy. A study commissioned by Catullo SpA pointed out that the average return generated by

each passenger of Verona Airport is between 120 and 370 euros. As a consequence, there is an annual turnover of around 400 million euros. Moreover, an increasing traffic of one million passengers creates jobs for between 1050 and 3200 operators.

Tourism is an important sector of the local economy. In 2011, the number of tourists registered in Verona and Vicenza totalled 16.2 million, in addition to the over 29.7 million tourists in Trentino. In 2010, the Lombardy region registered over 7.6 million visitors in the area of Brescia, while there were over 930,000 tourists in the Province of Mantua in the same year. Since its birth in October it had been classified as a military airport, but only on 11th September 2008 it took on the status of a state airport which was open to civil traffic.

The history of aviation on the territory between Villafranca and Sommacampagna started in 1911, when there was an important experiment of an aircraft which flew over a military area near the



*On the opposite page:
Aerial view of Villafranca
airport with the runway,
the areas of the military
airport, the station and the
village of Calzoni.*



Deployment of aeroplanes
in the old military airport.

hills of Custoza on the road to Villafranca. At 6:30am on July 11th, an airship soared in the air, flew over the area from Villafranca to Mantua, and then returned to its hangar. The Royal Decree of 13th October 1911 marked the beginning of aeronautical history in the province of Verona. Thanks to this decree, our province was assigned the task to host one of the seven construction sites which were destined to become a base for the airships of the Army and the Royal Navy.

At the end of 1912, the War Ministry entrusted the study for the organisation of military aviation in Italy to the Aviators' Battalion (*Battaglione Avia-*

tori), who had to decide the location of the air squadrons. Verona was one of the chosen cities and the 3rd Command *Gruppo Aeromobile* of the Lieutenant Colonel Resio was deployed in the new field of Ganfardine with two reconnaissance squadrons, along with a bombing section.

With the end of the conflict, the airport lost a large part of its flight activity, which was reduced only to the movements of the Royal Union of National Aeronautics (R.U.N.A.), a sort of Aero-club of the 1930s.

This quiet situation lasted until the autumn of 1943. Following the events related to the armistice on 8th Septem-

The armed forces in Villafranca

In addition to the 3rd Aerial Brigade R.F. (Photographic Reconnaissance aircrafts), called "Gli occhi della NATO", which was the only aerial base in Villafranca, there was an Artillery Group c.a.l. that specialised in anti-aircraft defence with conventional weapons. Over the years, this department changed its name several times (1957-1964 - 3rd DAT Bologna; 1964-1972 - 17th Artillery Regiment called "Sforzesca" Bologna; 1972-1975 - 17th Artillery Regiment called "Sforzesca" Brescia; 1975-1983 - 17th Artillery Regiment called "Sforzesca" Villafranca di Verona). Then it was moved to Mestre, Rimini and finally to Sabaudia.

From 1975 to 1993, Villafranca di Verona was the headquarters of one of the most prestigious regiments of the Italian Army in the offices of Caluri, facing the Command of the 3rd Aerobrigata. In fact, the 17th Artillery Regiment called "Sforzesca" boasts a decorated War Flag with as many as three silver merit medals.

The "4 cats" crest

The idea of the crest of the 3rd Flight Formation dates back to 1940, and comes from a joke made by the Lieutenant Colonel Paolo Moci, Commander of the 28th Group: "always the usual four cats... going around the world". After various, sometimes disrespectful, interpretations of the logo, "the usual 4 cats" are a representation of the department that operates by day (two cats on a light background) and at night (two cats on a dark background).



ber and the establishment of the Social Republic on 23rd September, a tragic event took place for Villafranca, which had never been directly involved in the Second World War since then. Within a few weeks, the English/American forces understood the danger coming from airport number 27 (Villafranca), and from 26th August 1944 there was a long series of bombings, which led to destruction and misery.

When the conflict was over, an inventory of what was left was made in 1949. In addition to the largely destroyed hangars and warehouses, the runway had 50 craters, seven metres in diameter. Nowadays very little is left of the old runway.

When the Air Force decided to regain possession of the area (in the early 1950s), they rebuilt the military airport in its current position. Much of what was once the former Ganfardine airfield was demolished and incorporated by the growing industrial and residential area, with the exception of a few infrastructures and walls that survived the time, signs of a painful past that mark the story.

After the war, Caluri and Villafranca also suffered from the recovery linked to the reconstruction period. New families began to arrive; the airport was rebuilt and became the base for wide-ranging reconnaissance operations.

The airport and the resistance in the Second World War

In the 20 months of the War of Resistance on Villafranca territory, there were two partisan groups: the BRIGADE ANITA and BRIGADE ITALIA. They were recognised by FLNAI (National Liberation Front of Northern Italy) and were connected the CZP (Plain Zone Command), but were not a direct expression of any political party. In Villafranca and in the neighbouring towns, the BRIGADE ANITA operated under the command of Cesare Albertini (battle name GALLO), whose men were organised into three battalions: Lampo (Lightning), Uragano (Hurricane) and Tempesta (Storm). Among the prominent names we must mention are at least the teacher Mario Facincani (SPASSADORA), Giuseppe Corsini (MARCO) and his brothers, Eng. Giuseppe Fadini (Carlo and later Pio), Ugo Vincenzoni, Alfredo Dalfini and above all the parish priest Don Eliseo Contri (battle name ISEO), who was very active and supported the partisans, despite having never picked up a machine gun.

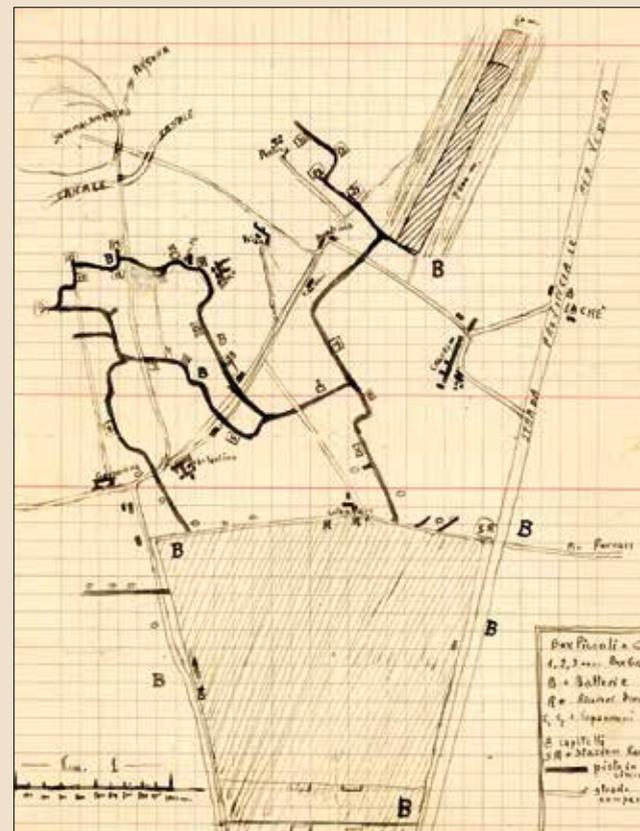


In Quaderni, there was the BRIGADE ITALIA, commanded by Fiorenzo Olivieri (battle name Enzo) and organised in the battalions Burrasca, Uragano and Fulmine.

It is worth mentioning Ezzino Marangoni (TUONO), who became Mayor of Valeggio immediately after the war, Giacomo Franchini (CORIOLANO), Marcello Turrina (MARCELLO and later MORETTI), Raffaele Masotto, Mileo Turrina, Gino Zago (PUA), Giovanni Turrina (MACARINI) Luciano De Bortoli, and Aldo Baldi (THE FRENCH), who became the commander of the two brigades and the division Lorenzo Fava in 1944.

We mustn't forget the French (but German-speaking) Luc Colomb, who joined the partisans of Villafranca in the last period of the Resistance, fought along with them and achieved remarkable success.

The role of the partisans of the Anita Brigade was at first to help numerous soldiers of the Royal Army who deserted. They received some food, civilian clothes and were helped to return home. This was after they had abandoned their supplied weapons, which were hidden in the empty tombs by the Corsini brothers, the cemetery's keepers. Later, they were able to infil-



trate the military airport and carry out several acts of sabotage to the aircrafts or steal weapons and ammunition at night. They were also able to make a very precise drawing of all the military installations around the track and this survey was passed to the allies to help them better co-ordinate the aerial bombardments. The partisans' tasks of the Brigade Italia were many. They managed to enter the factories and military installations located in Valeggio and sabotage and slow down military production. The operational zone of the three battalions extended even to the neighbouring towns of the Mantuan area. They had to impede the traffic of military trucks which travelled mainly during the night, from Mantua along the highway, and supplied the airport of Villafranca with petrol, goods and spare parts. Finally, it should be said that in confirmation of the level of danger they posed, and the annoyance they caused the German occupiers, the German High Command put a price of 100,000 lire on the head of the "rebellious leaders".

CESARE ALBERTINI (GALLO)
Class of 1919. As an officer of the 2nd Alpine Regiment, he took part in operations on the Russian front. After the tremendous retreat from Don in January 1943, he returned to Italy with only 243 survivors of his regiment. In September in the same year, in Villafranca, he founded the first nucleus of partisans who then became Brigade Anita which he commanded until the end of the conflict. In May 1945, the allies asked him to head the battalion of Villafranca della Polizia Partigiana.



After this short experience, he joined the Guard Corps of P.S. (today State Police) where he embarked on a brilliant career, winning several honours. He was promoted to Colonel in January 1973. In July of the same year, he died of the after-effects of a heart attack that had struck him a short time before. He is buried in the cemetery of Villafranca.

FIORENZO OLIVIERI (ENZO)
Class of 1920. He graduated as an electro-technician in Verona at "G. Ferraris" technical institute. He enrolled at university and after 8th September 1943, he returned for a short time to "G. Ferraris" high school as a teacher. He created the Italian partisan brigade Italia in Quaderni and held command until the last bloody battle of Monte Casale on 30th April 1945. In 1948, he emigrated from Italy and went to Argentina where, thanks to his studies, he found a job as a head technician at SNIA Viscosa. He retained his Italian citizenship and hosted all the Veronese priests of the South American mission in his villa, asking them to chat with him in dialect. He never wanted to forget his roots in Quaderni. He came back to his beloved Italy only periodically. He died in Buenos Aires in 2012.



Ugolino Franchini



The first station of the civil airport and departing passengers.

As a matter of fact, in March 1954, the 3rd Flight Formation operative support (*Stormo Supporto Operativo*) moved to the Airport of Villafranca, where it officially took office from the first of July. In the early 1960s, the airport was also used for civil flights with destinations to northern Europe and daily connections with Rome, although it belonged to the air force. Therefore, in December 1978, the management company *Aeroporto Valerio Catullo* of Verona Villafranca SpA was created with input from the neighbouring provinces and Alto Adige-Südtirol. The airport has only got one take-off runway, which is oriented to 044 ° (or 224 ° depend-

ing on the direction) and is equipped with the ILS landing instrument system, while both runways 4 and 22 are equipped with the PAPI system. In 1990, the passenger terminal was expanded to accommodate the constant increase in traffic. The aircraft apron and the car parks were enlarged. Moreover, access to the airport was also improved with a connection to the new Verona ring road (SS 12) during the World Cup.

In 1995, the airport reached the record of one million passengers per year and in 1999 it reached the second level in Italy in charter flights, after Milano-Malpensa and Roma-Fiumicino.



The number of passengers kept on increasing: two million in 2001 and three million in 2006. In response to the constant increase of traffic, it was decided to expand the structures.

In recent years, the management company has rebuilt and extended the runway, the aircraft parking areas and constructed a new arrivals terminal, named Terminal 2, which was opened in May 2006 in the presence of regional and national summits.

This terminal is adjacent to the original structure, known as Terminal 1.

The capacity of the airport has doubled as a result of the expansion programme. Now, Terminal 1 is used only for departures and Terminal 2 for arrivals.

In January 2008, it has been also provided with an innovative flight safety system in case of fog (a first in Italy). This system is used to guide aircrafts to the ground and guarantees optimal safety.

The airport lies inside the controlled area of the ACC of Padua and is managed by the company Aeroporti Sistema del Garda, which also manages the airport “Gabriele D’Annunzio” of Brescia-Montichiari.

In July 2016, the rebuilding of the aircraft apron and the opening of a new Duty Free area were completed. Future developments will also include the addition of three tunnels to the Departures Terminal (T1) (closed mobile connector between gate and aircraft), the integration between the two Terminals with the addition of a top floor and the extension of the aircraft apron. The construction of a railway station on the Verona-Modena line and a new exit of the A22 motorway are also planned. All developments that will make the Valerio-Catullo a first-rate national, European and international hub.



Masterplan of the project for the expansion of the Departures-Arrivals terminal at the airport, which will be soon implemented.



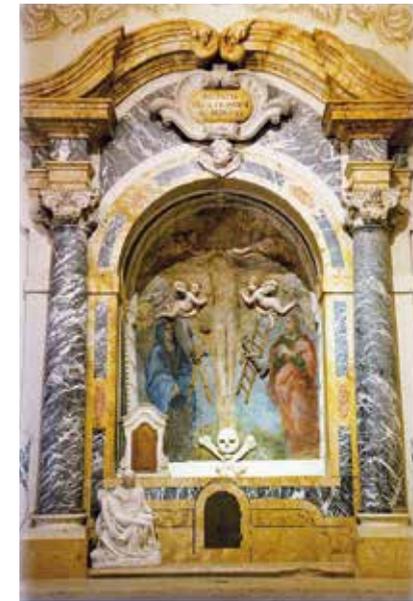
THE CHURCHES OF VILLAGRANCA



THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The church, known as the Church of Christ, inside the castle, under the main fortress, is the first church of the Villafranca district. Currently little used for religious practices; some marriage and holy masses, especially during Holy Week for the

“circuit of tombs”. This includes the church of the friars, Church of Christ, Discipline, the Cathedral, and San Rocco. It is often the venue for art exhibitions and niche events. Over time, until 1806, it underwent several restorations. After a long period of abandonment,



Above: “Il Cristo trionfante”, painted on the choir’s ceiling, fresco, 178x178cm, in a plaster frame and attributed to an unknown artist of the 18th century.

Above right: the wonderful altar of the little church of Christ, which was built with polychrome marble. The recess above the altar preserves a fresco of the 13th century: “The Crucifixion” fresco, 150x103cm. The pictures of Mary and the plaster were created later, in the 18th century.



Below: the inside of the church after the restoration, with copies of the altarpieces by G.B. Lanceni, now in the Sala Giunta of the Town Hall in Villafranca.



In the sacristy, angels are shown holding the artefacts of the Passion.



the final restoration of 2003, by architect G. Cristinelli, returned it to its former glory. The niche above the beautiful polychrome marble altar preserves a 13th century painting depicting the Crucifixion, a fresco of 150x103cm. The images of Mary and St. John and the stuccos were made later, in the 18th century. On the right wall, three paintings depict: The Scourging, The Coronation of Thorns and the Ascent to the Calvary

of Christ. They are the work of Giovanni Battista Lanceni (1659-1735). The originals are currently preserved in the Sala Giunta in the Municipality of Villafranca. The church is owned by the Municipality of Villafranca and has always been since the act of its foundation attributed its care and costs to the city population. This is evidenced by legal documents and confirmed by the epigraphs posted on the walls.

The Sacristy

An ancient cupboard welcomes the visitor to the small sacristy with its deconstructed walls where little angels stand, holding the artefacts of the Passion: *La Veronica*, *The column with the rooster*, *The consoling angel before the tomb*, *The weeping angel*, *The angel with the scourges*, *The Ladder*, and *The crown of thorns*. These works are attributed to Germano Prendaglio (1735-1809).

The Choir

On the ceiling, there is a painting within a 178x178cm stucco frame depicting the triumphant Christ rising from the tomb. This is by an unknown painter of the 18th century. It was the site of the museum of the Risorgimento for several years until its relocation to the new headquarters of Palazzo Bottagisio (2009).

Three altarpieces depicting, from right to left: "The scourging of Jesus", "Christ derided and crowned with thorns", "The ascent to Calvary". Works by G.B. Lanceni (1659-1735). The originals are in the Sala Giunta of the Town Hall in Villafranca.



THE CAPPUCCINI FRIARS

by *Gianna Negrini*



The crucifix that dominated the main entrance of the Scaligero Castle, over the drawbridge, now in the monastery of the Cappuccini friars. Work by Jacopo Tomicelli (1764-1825). Oil on wood, 160x94cm.

The Order of the Frati Cappuccini Minori originated in 1525 as a reformed movement of the Franciscan order. It marked a return to the spirit of the rule of St. Francis, especially with regard to absolute poverty. Pope Clemente VII officially approved it with the bill “*Religionis zelus*” on 3rd July 1528.

In the 13th century, St. Francis started an order of evangelical life in poverty and fraternity, which he called “Frati Minori”. There were numerous Cappuccini monasteries in the province of Verona: Verona, Legnago, Caprino, Peschiera, Monteforte, Lonigo and Villafranca. Besides Verona, Villafranca is the only city that has preserved the monastery of the Cappuccini Friars throughout the years.

A historical outline may assist the understanding of the period in which they started their apostolate in Villafranca. In 1540, the friars of the monasteries of Mantua and Verona, which are famous in the order’s history, needed a place as a stopover at the midway point of a journey. This requirement, reported to

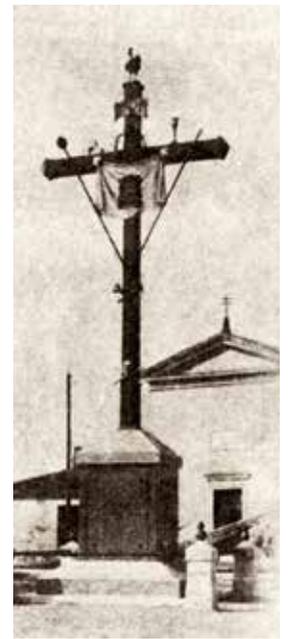
the authorities of Villafranca, was welcomed with enthusiasm and the friars were hosted in the hospital, where they took care of the ill.

On 28th January 1586, the monastery of the Cappuccini Friars of Villafranca was founded and on that day, they placed their Cross there. The community of Villafranca covered the cost of the land, the building of the church and the monastery. The maintenance of the friars was also provided for in this way: by 1588, the monastery was already hosting a great number of friars and visitors. The second floor was divided into 12 cells for the friars and six cells for the visitors, while on the first floor there was the refectory, known as the “caneva”, and the kitchen. The construction of the new church also started around this time, and it was consecrated in 1599 by Alberto Valier, Bishop of Famagosta and long-time assistant of Cardinal Agostino Valier, Bishop of Verona. The church was comparatively large for the time: it measured 18 metres in length, in addition to the presbytery and choir and, to



the right, the Chapel of the Madonna. The complex, situated in Via Custoza (now Piazza IV novembre), remained active there until 1810, when Napoleon Bonaparte abolished the religious orders and confiscated their goods. On 15th May 1606, however, the Cappuccini Friars were driven out by the government of the Republic of Venice. This was because they defended the rights of the church: they refused to submit to the republic laws that impelled the clergy and religious orders not to obey the command of Pope Paolo V, who responded with excommunication. The next year, the parties reconciled and the Cappuccini returned to their monastery, enthusiastically greeted by the local peo-

ple, and they stayed, peacefully, until the arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1810. In the years 1629-1630, during the war between Venice and the German imperial army for the conquest of Mantua, many people were taken prisoner by the German army. However, thanks to the prayers and actions of father Amedeo from Monte Forte, they were freed. Documents of the time report that over 100 people of different ages sheltered in the monastery, got as a pass a “trombetta” (small trumpet) and walked to Verona to ransom various prisoners. After the plague of 1630, it is reported “that in Villafranca before the plague there were eleven clergymen in the monastery and afterwards only four,



Above left: the ancient monastery in Via Custoza (now Piazza IV Novembre) before the demolition.

Above right: the old cross, now replaced, with the artefacts of the Passion transferred from the old monastery.



The old church donated by Marquis Bonifacio of Canossa. The square, the cross, the cells of the monastery and the countryside that extended beyond via Nino Bixio are to be noted.

two priests, a cleric and a layman (idem Vs).” Between 1644 and 1697, numerous and important works took place for the construction of the monastery.

In 1678, Father Antonio Maria from Vicenza, a guardian friar, wrote: “I attest with my oath, that this monastery of Cappuccini of Villafranca receives no alms as per public decree of the Serenissimo Principe, but only the alms of 1500 Lire a year by this remarkable community, always after annual prefectural licence from Verona, in part for meat, part for wax, part for oil, with the obligation to offer a preacher for Lent as well as for Advent.”

We have no remarkable or certain information about the life led by the Cap-

puccini friars in this monastery, until the Napoleonic suppression of 1810, because the monastery archive was destroyed. The Cappuccini friars assisted and defended the population, who were living in conditions of extreme poverty, from the oppression of those in power. In 1832, work began on the construction of the new monastery, on the right side of Scaligero castle.

Fra Raimondo from Venezia writes “this church and convent built at the expense of Bonifacio di Canossa began in 1832”. The name of the Marquises Canossa will always be linked to the Cappuccini monastery, because they gave them the possibility to come back to Villafranca.



The Canossa family had ancient origins and includes prominent figures both in the preligious and political spheres. Bonifacio, who lived between the 18th and 19th centuries, was a religious man and wise administrator of both his property and public affairs. Bonifacio’s sister, Maddalena, was born in Verona in 1774, and left the family home to devote herself to the service of the poor and the care and education of girls. She instituted the order of the “Figlie della Carità” (Daughters of Charity) under the patronage of Our Lady of Sorrows, approved by Pope Leo XII. On 10th September 1837, “the solemn opening of the new monastery... was announced to

the noble Marquis Bonifacio di Canossa” (Arch. Conv. Dossier 1). The conditions, instigated by the provincial priest, Fra Giobatta da Venezia, and imposed by the Marquis, result from the following letter... “my monastery, with the church and the full orchard, or that part of it that can be convenient for their constitutions, will be freely enjoyed by RR. PP. the Cappuccini friars, without any duty or burden, and for me the assignment will be perpetual...”. The letter was signed in the presence of two witnesses, Father Ambrogio da Villafranca and Mr Carlo Morini. There followed the official inauguration of the monastery and the new church dedicated to St. Joseph. Af-

The current church of the friars, dedicated to Saint Joseph, built in the 1970s to arch. Luciano Foroni’s design, with the little Madonna by the sculptor Livio Conta, donated in 1996 by Gruppo Biondan.



Marquis Bonifacio of Canossa who gave the Cappuccini friars the church and the vegetable garden in 1832 "without obligation and burden as perpetual concession".

ter this, both the church and the monastery became a pilgrimage destination for many people in the area. The monastery also became the seat of the Seraphic Seminary for the education and formation of the future sons of St. Francis. On 7th July 1886, all religious orders and congregations were suppressed in Italy, with the order to abandon the monasteries and cease religious activities. The monastery of Villafranca, after a strenuous struggle with the government of the time, was the only one to survive as a property of the Marquises of Canossa. Over time, other transformations and uses of the monastery developed. In 1958, the new Seraphic Seminary was built, with a new chapel for the formation of the lay Cappuccini brothers. It was designed by the architect Alpagò Novello, and would remain active until October 1967. Later, the structure was given to the municipality of Villafranca. Firstly, it became the site of "E. Medi" high school and then, until 1993, the "Aldo Moro" secondary school. In the years 1971-72, the old church was modified and restructured following a project by the architect Luciano Foroni. It was consecrated on 20th January 1988 by Msgr. Andrea di Verona. At the end of 1993, the wing of the seminary was removed from the "Aldo Moro" school to give space to the "Studentato". It became home to the three-year preparation of young friars for the priesthood, with

the establishment of a two-year philosophical-theological study, dependent on the Laurenzianum Theological Study of Venice, affiliated to the Pontifical Ecclesiastical University "Antoniano" of Rome. From 1996 to 1997, the chapel of the seminary was restructured to a more suitable form for the liturgy of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. It was enhanced by a large apse fresco depicting the Transfiguration and other paintings of iconographic style: works by the young friar Nathanael Theuma, who also designed the new chapel. In September 2008, the training of young Cappuccini was moved from Villafranca to Cremona and the wing of the "Studentato" began to be used for other study initiatives. It is currently the site of the Catholic Scuola Media "Don Allegri". The constant tradition of the Cappuccini monasteries to dispense a daily meal to the poor led to the construction of a refectory that allowed the poor to eat a meal, sheltered from bad weather. The tradition continues even today, the friars collaborate with the people and the catholic institution Caritas. The generous population of Villafranca still provides, in the most varied ways, for the sustenance of the friars and the poor, following the Franciscan tradition.

From: *"I Cappuccini in Villafranca nel centenario di un convento 1837-1937"* by Father Lino M. da Rovigo, minor friar.



Dated picture of the inside of the church of the friars before the demolition.



The inside of the current church of the Cappuccini friars.

ORATORY CHURCH OF THE VISITATION OR OF THE DISCIPLINE

by *Elisabetta Benassuti*



Relief of the façade of the church of the Discipline realised by the architect Lucio Pavan.

The Oratory Church of the Visitation, or of the Discipline, is so named because both outside and inside there are works depicting the visit of the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. The name “Church of the Discipline” comes from the congregation that it hosted until 1806, following the suppression of the Confraternities carried out by Napoleon. The “discipline” was a tool of penitence, which consisted of a bunch of cords gathered around a handle with knots at the ends or wooden balls. It was used in the Middle Ages to re-enact the flogging of Jesus Christ, to ask for forgiveness of sin and as a reminder to live in simplicity and poverty.

The Brotherhood “dei Disciplinati di Cristo” was founded by Raniero Fasani in Perugia in 1260. It spread throughout northern central Italy in a short time, with followers devoting their life to the service of the poor, “pauperes Christi”. This chapel came into the possession of The Disciplinati or Disciplinati following the donation of the noble Giorgio, son of Tommaso

de’ Maffei, in the year 1499. The same Brotherhood restored it in 1779. An inscription preserved on a wall in the sacristy documents the event.

The initial function of the oratory was that of assistance and charity, giving material and spiritual hospitality to the travellers who came from Verona to Mantua and looked for a straw bed and a warm meal. Over time, the main purpose of the Brotherhood became that of “assistance”: to the sick, in the “hospital” annexed to the Palazzo Maffei, to the poor, to the orphans, to families in difficulty and in providing a small dowry to poor girls to be married.

It took almost three centuries to build the Oratory of the Visitation and to complete the monumental baroque façade. On the portal, there is the bas-relief of the “Visitation”, in which we see Mary and her cousin Elizabeth and two small angels on the flanks. At the sides, you can also see the statue of an unknown Pope on the left, while on the right there is the statue of St. Francis of Assisi (as a reference to poverty and



The beautiful baroque façade of the church of the Discipline dating back to the 15th century. On the tympanum, the sculptures of two friars by an unknown sculptor of the 18th century. In the centre, the statue of a pope (left) and Saint Francis (right).

Above: particular of the low relief supported by two cherubs, over the portal, representing the visit of the Holy Virgin to Saint Elizabeth.



Above: polychrome wooden group by a master artisan of the 16th century, representing the visit of the Holy Virgin to Saint Elizabeth. The small flap on the womb of Mary, where prayers were inserted by worshippers, especially pregnant women, is to be noted.

Beside: "Nativity with Saint Elizabeth". Oil on canvas, 156x111cm, by an unknown painter of the 16th century.



charity). At the top, there are statues of two unknown friars. Then came other interventions by the Parish of Saints Peter and Paul, with the contribution of institutions and individuals: the restoration of the statues of the wooden mortuary group (1995), paintings, the restoration of the altarpiece, and lastly the façade (2002).

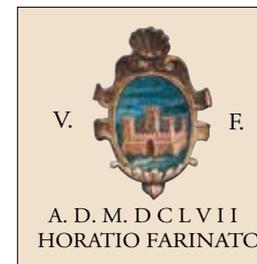
The nave, which looks bare and poor compared to the external façade, is rectangular and it is the result of the arrangement of existing structures. Probably, that space was originally a courtyard where the travellers were welcomed by the Disciplinati. The restorers noticed some differences in the plaster of the walls, that the axes of the walls are not

orthogonal to the road and some windows, that overlooked the courtyard of the buildings next door, had been filled in.

Today, we can find the following in the nave: 14 small paintings dating back to 1750 and located along the walls; the Via Crucis, which consists of 14 sheets engraved by a very famous Venetian workshop in 1700 (J. Wagner); above the altar, the altarpiece of the "Visitation" of Mary to Elizabeth (oil painting on canvas) painted in 1607 by Orazio Farinati.

On the left wall, there are two statues in polychrome wood of Mary visiting Elizabeth, dating back to the 16th century. The wooden slot that Mary has on her lap is of interest, because at one time, women who were struggling to have children put their prayers to Mary in here, in the hope that she would listen to their pleas.

Below, the aedicule with the two statues contains a window protected by an iron grate: it is the "Sepolcro" that preserves the "Mortorio", the most precious treasure of the Church. This is a group of nine polychrome wooden statues dating back to the second half of the 15th century, crafted by an anonymous sculptor. Behind the altar, we find a large meeting room with a barrel vault and stucco, dating back to 1400, probably the first church of the Disciplinati containing the presbytery and the choir.



The altar of the Church of the Disciplina, with the altarpiece by Orazio Farinati (1559-1616). It was commissioned by Zambattista and Ogniben Bellesio da Vila Franca. It represents the visit of the Holy Mary to Saint Elizabeth.

On the right side, Saint Zaccaria and Saint Joseph. In the background, the triumphant arch with the district's emblem and the signature of Horatio Farinato (1607) on the left column. Oil on canvas, 300x291cm.

The Lamentation of Christ

Of considerable historical and artistic interest is the wooden group placed inside the crypt of the Church of the Discipline or Visitation, better known as the "Lamentation of Christ".

This is one of the first works that the Disciplinati commissioned when they came into possession of the oratory, following a donation by the nobleman Giorgio Tommaso de' Maffei in 1499. Historically, the iconographic theme of the "Compianto" or "Pietà" developed in Italy after 1300, with the creation of life-size statues, generally arranged in a semicircle around the fallen Christ. They were known as "Mortori", "Compianti" or "Sepolcri", and represented the Gospel narration of the moment after the deposition from the cross and before the burial. The Catholic Church used these wooden groups to "speak to the believer" as "a means of evangelisation", because at that time, both the Eucharistic celebrations and processions were in Latin, which the faithful did not understand. Looking at the statues, they could experience the feelings of the protagonists, think about the evangelical episode and reflect on their own condition.

In the case of the mortuary of Villafranca, the aim was to remind those who looked at this scene of Christ's death, of the inevitability of physical

death, of the Son of God who shared our human condition, of the Father who does not abandon his Son but raises him. It was like saying to believers: "keep hoping, have courage, because the separation from our beloved ones imposed by death is not definitive: just as the Father did not abandon the Son, but he raised him up by giving him the Spirit, so those who are in the Son *"will be raised up on the last day"* (ref. Jn 6,39-40)".

The polychrome wooden group of the Discipline is located in the crypt on the left wall of the Church, protected by an iron grate. It is composed of nine statues dating back to the 15th century. Eight of these represent the canonical figures of the characters who, according to Gospel accounts and religious tradition, took part in the last stages of the Passion of Christ. These include the "three Marys" (*the Holy Mary, Mary of Cleofa and Maria Salomè*) in the middle of the room, kneeling before the fallen Christ, the *Magdalene*, on the right, in a state of considerable decomposition, and the apostle *John* on the left, in prayer. There are also the two male protagonists of the deposition, *Joseph of Arimathea* on the left, recognisable by the act of holding the crown of thorns and the nails and *Nicodemus* on the right, at the feet of Christ, with a sheet on his arm. The fallen Christ appears in the centre of



the crypt. His face does not show the suffering of the passion, but instead transmits the peace and tranquillity of one who died and returned to God as a son. "Father in your hands I entrust my spirit" (ref Lc 23.46); the statue has blackened feet, burnt long ago by a light left on. Then there is the statue of a kneeling cleric, with priestly vestments, recognised as the devout *Giorgio Tommaso de' Maffei*. At that time, it was a common custom that the donor

was portrayed within the work of art. This statue makes the mortuary of Villafranca unique compared to the others present in the Province of Verona.

There are then four additional characters painted on shaped wooden tables, 18th century additions, representing the Roman soldiers placed to guard the tomb.

The wooden statues, still being studied, are attributed by some experts to an anonymous Veronese sculptor of

Detail of the precious wooden statues of the mortuary. The three Marys: the Holy Virgin, Mary of Cleofa and Mary Salomé.

Details of the mortuary statues.



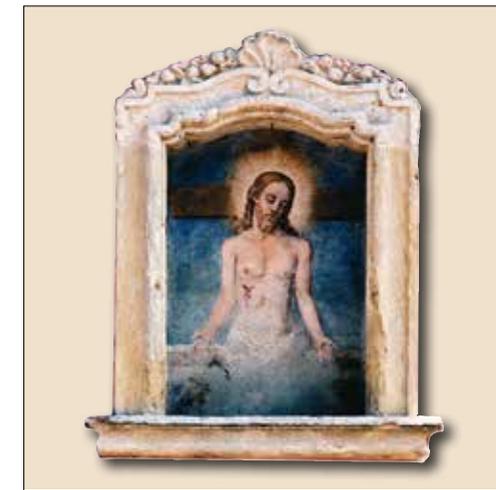
Pages 158-159: Mortuary statues of the church of the Disciplina, dating back to the 15th century. The characters: from left to right, Joseph of Arimathea, Saint John, the three Marys, (the Holy Virgin, Mary of Cleofa and Mary Salomè), the "donor" Giorgio Tommaso de' Maffei, and Nicodemus; also, four characters painted on wooden boards of the 17th century that represent Roman soldiers.

1500. Others believe they are by another workshop of Veronese sculptors, also anonymous, because at that time it was customary to commission religious works to artists little known, as they required low compensation. Other works are located in Caprino, Bussolengo, Verona in the Convent of San Bernardino and in the church of Santa Toscana. Generally, mortuaries were used by the various brotherhoods of the Disciplinati for religious purposes and

penitential exercises. In addition, they were used for liturgical activities for the people, such as the procession of Giovedì Santo (Maundy Thursday). It is said that, a long time ago, the "veci villafranchesi" (the elderly of Villafranca) tried to remove the statue of Christ several times, during a procession on Holy Thursday, but a violent storm broke out, accompanied by lightning and hail. Therefore, the statue was returned to the crypt, where it has remained since.



These sacred works of art should always be viewed after theological preparation and with consideration of the Gospels. Art can communicate messages on questions that man asks about God, can make us reflect, give answers and show the meaning of life, talk about the pain before death, the joy of birth and the hope for Resurrection.



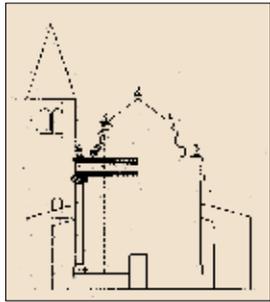
Above: the group of statues of the mortuary seen through the nave's grating.

Beside: fresco representing a risen Christ inside a recently renovated tuff frame that is on the façade of the former Monte di Pietà on the left of the Church of the Disciplina.



THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH

by Pasquale Cordioli



Above: drawing of the façade of the old parochial church.

On the side: the old parochial church's façade can be seen in a rare picture from Via Pace of 1859 by L. Mèhèdin.

Created as “Borgo Libero” (Free Quarter) by a resolution of the Consiglio dei Rettori di Verona (Council of Rectors) on 9th March 1185, Villafranca saw the development of both civil and religious activities. This is documented in the Bill of 1145 by Pope Eugenio III, which also mentions Saint Andrew's chapel, in Fontanile, in the suburbs of Villafranca, where now only the Saint's stat-

ue remains. The foundation of the first church in Villafranca, with a hospital and with St. Peter the apostle as Patron Saint, took place between 1185 and 1188, in the same period of the foundation of the Borgo Libero. The prestige of this Church over the centuries is represented not only by the amount of tithe, the cause of ferocious conflicts, but also by the role of the local clergy, composed



of clerics, canons of the chapter and monks of the monastery of Villafranca, all reporting to the parish priest.

A little-known fact is that Matteo Bandello, who inspired William Shakespeare's tragedy “Romeo and Juliet”, set up the meeting of Giulietta Cappelletti and Count Paride of Lodrone, her fiancé and official consort, in the Church of Villafranca.

The exact date of the building of this Church is uncertain, but it already existed in the 13th century, because a document of 1292 mentions a man named Ogniben degli Azzoni as canon of the parish church of Villafranca.

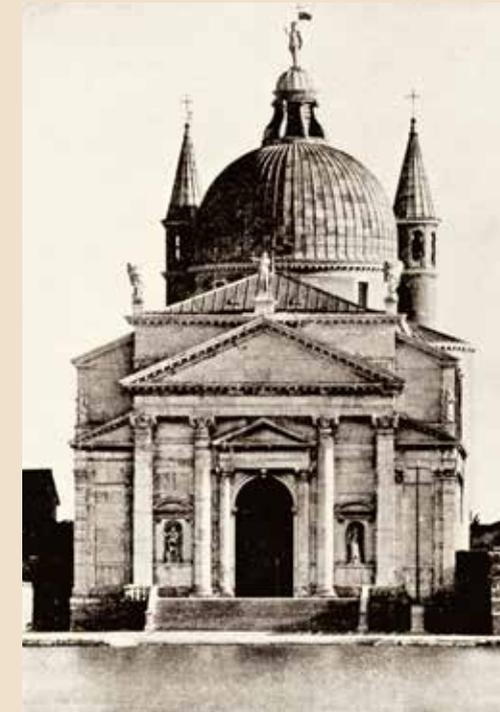
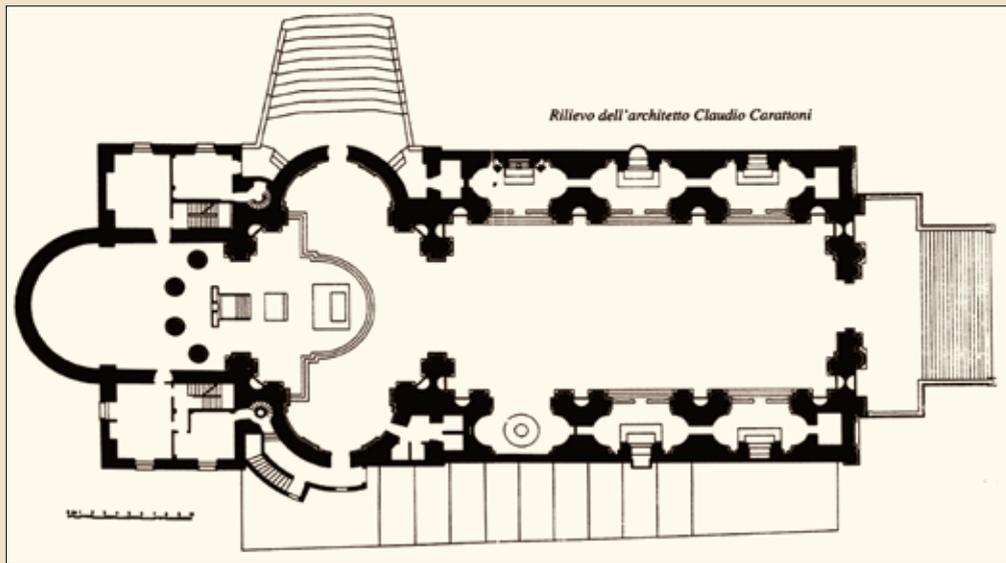
Only at the beginning of the 16th century do we find further evidence, that of some “Ducali” of the Serenissima Republic. In these documents, the Doge of Venice issued his dispositions and we understand that Don Venceslao from Spinimbergo was appointed as parish priest of Villafranca. He died in 1531 and was succeeded by Simone Zavarise on 13th January 1532.

Four years later, Zavarise stepped down and entered the “Ordine dei Riformati” (Order of the Reformed) in Venice. The bishop of Verona, Matteo Giberti, then recommended the famous Adamo Fumano, who was later to become one

In the artistic picture by Renato Begnoni, the silhouette of the parochial church.

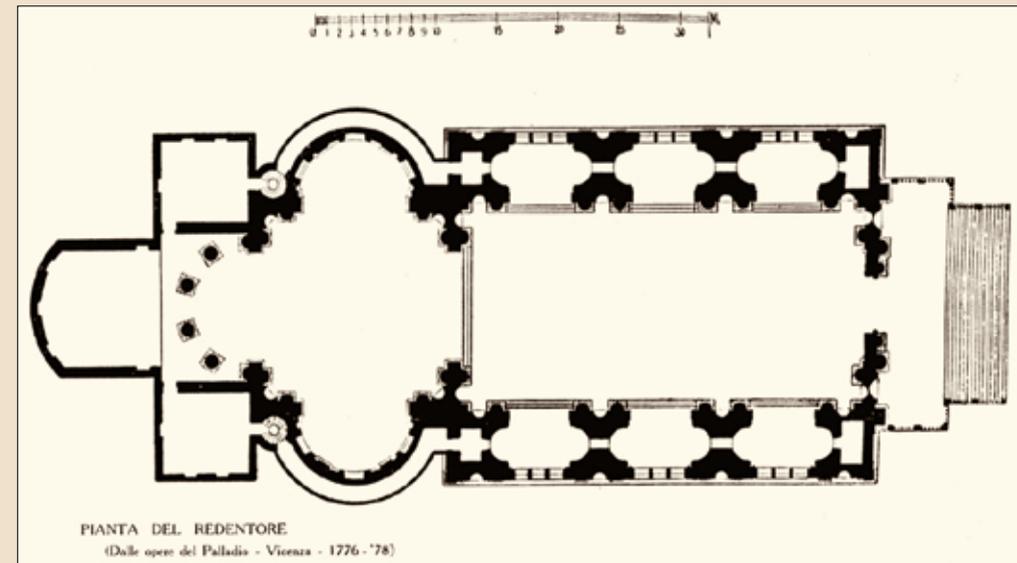
The Cathedral

On the dome: St. Peter with the keys of the city.
 On the tympanum: Three statues representing Faith, Hope and Charity, probably acquired in Venice in 1843.
 On the left side: Low relief representing St. Peter with Anania and Safira falling dead for the deceit against the Head of the Church.
 On the right side: Low relief representing St. Peter and St. John healing a paralysed man.
 Below: Statues representing St. Peter (left) and St. Paul (right).
 Measurements: 80m in length from the staircase to the choir and 68.6m from the door.
 The front: width 28.80m, height 18m, height of the small dome 36m.



The Church of the Redeemer in Venice

On the dome: Statue of the Saviour made of wood and covered in lead.
 On the tympanum: Three statues representing Faith with the Cross in the centre and two angels on the sides.
 On the left side: St. Lorenzo Giustiniani I, patriarch of Venice.
 On the right side: St. Antonio from Padua.
 Below, on the sides of the gate: Statues representing St. Mark (left) and St. Francis (right), works by Giusto Le Court (1627-1679).





Rare picture taken during the construction works of the cathedral with the bell tower demolished in 1890.

Part of the material was used for the building of the primary school (1891). On the left, the absence of the primary school and the castle, quite devastated without the clock, can be seen.

of the most important figures of the Cathedral of Verona. On 14th March 1537, don Adamo Fumano was appointed parish priest of the Church. Don Adamo Fumano was a great scholar; he translated moral and ascetic works by St. Basil from Greek into Latin: Areta's Commentary of the 35th Psalm and other works of minor importance. His masterpiece is a didactic poem about logic, "Logicae, libri quinque", which became, despite the aridity of the subject, one of the greatest monuments of Latin poetry of the 16th century.

The original building of the Parochial Church of the 12th century became inadequate for use, because of the damage of weather and wars, and the constant growth of the population. So, in 1340, it was restructured, and this version remained until 1882, when the new church, the current cathedral, was consecrated. The cemetery area was also situated around the church until the inauguration of the new cemetery on 12th January 1813, which was situated, after much debate, halfway between Villafranca and Povegliano.



Detail of a print of 1860 in which the construction works of the cathedral can be seen.

The former parochial church was given to the Town Council in 1782, without any written contract, against a subsidy of 4,000 Lire (divided into 4 payments) decided by Council resolution. The parish priest Don Pietro Allegri proposed some clauses: the church should not become a theatre, considered at the time not a suitable place for the education of people, and the bell tower with the bells should remain property of the Fabbriceria (those responsible for building the church). None of these conditions were respected.

On 28th January 1890, the Town Council, without consulting the priest, decided to demolish the bell tower, because it was deemed unsafe. The resulting material was used to build the elementary school of Villafranca. The terracotta bricks of the bell tower's pinnacle were used to build the wall of the garden of the nursery school in Corso Vittorio Emanuele.

The old church's building, initially intended to be used for meetings and school exams, was transformed, to the priest's dismay, into a communal theatre



1965, moment of demolition of the old "Teatro Comunale".

that was active until 1967, the year of its demolition. In 1969, on the initiative of the priest Pietro Comino, the construction of the new church began. Without consulting several architects, it was decided to propose, perhaps under pressure from the friars of Villafranca, a replica of the Palladian temple of the Redeemer of Venice, as an offering for the plague that struck Venice in 1577. The works lasted over 100 years, with great commitment and despite problems caused by wars, plagues and financial difficulties. To free up economic

resources, five of the altars from the old parochial church were sold to the churches of Castagnaro and Vangadizza in 1877 and in 1880 for 6,000 Lire. The construction was finally completed on 7th October 1882, with solemn consecration of the temple by Cardinal Luigi of Canossa and the parish priest Don Allegri.

Don Germano Alberti described the new church with enthusiasm in the "historical notes about the parish church of Villafranca" in the manuscript of 1927: "the construction as a whole is great and solemn. The groups of Corinthian columns that rise up impressively to the cornice, the perspective of the arches of the lateral altars elegantly intersected by columns, niches and frames, and above all the superb dome that majestically rises above the four triumphal arches of the cross vault forms a truly classical architectural complex, with perspective effects of a wonderful harmony".

From this moment on, the decoration of the church continued: altars, altar-pieces, wooden and marble statues in the niches, adjustments of the organ, recasting of the bells, a heating system and lights, and the artistic stained glass windows. Of course, in addition, all the ordinary maintenance of such an imposing structure has taken place up to the present day, including the restoration of the fourteen paintings of the Via Crucis by Eleonora Cigognetti.

The altars of the old church

To support the construction of the new church, and with the altars being inadequate for its structure, the sale of the altars of the old church was decided in 1877 for 6,000 lire. Five altars went to the parish of Castagnaro, and in 1880, the main altar and the statues of St. Val-

entino and St. Giovanni Nepomuceno to Vangadizza. The inscriptions on the back of the small temple show the date of the transfer from Villafranca to Vangadizza as 1880.

An altar was dedicated to St. Biagio, protector of the throat after a terrible epidemic that struck Castagnaro and Menà causing the death of 149 young



D.O.M.
 PIORVM ELEEMOSYNIS
 VILLAE FRANCHAE
 QUORUM NOMINA SCRIPTA
 SVNT IN COELIS
 HOC ALTARE
 DICATUM EST
 MDCCLIX
 PIORVNQUE SUMPTIBUS
 VANGADITIAE
 IN HANC ECCLESIAM
 TRANSLATUM
 MDCCCLXXX
 J.B. CHIAFFONI PAR. o

Above: The inscription behind the temple of the altar showing the date of transfer (1880).

Below: The sumptuous altar, larger than the old one that the parish church of Villafranca later sold to the parish of Vangadizza.

people. The painting was realised by Luciano Nezzo and dates back to 1884. The painting represents a woman with a child in her lap begging for the Saint, with some angels beside her, while, from above, the Virgin Mary prays for his salvation. In the background, clearly visible, are the church and the square of Castagnaro. The altar dedicated to St. Francis is among the

most precious and beautiful altars of the church, in terms of materials and technique. The altarpiece represents St. Francis in the act of receiving the stigmata. It was probably created by an artist of the school of Moretto, in the late 16th century. St. Joseph's altar: the typical craftsmanship of the 17th century, marble, the inlaid columns that recall those created by Bernini for St.

Peter's Cathedral in Rome, the refined paliotto. The illustrated altarpiece "Transito di S. Giuseppe" is a work by Gaetano Pasetti from 1879 and is reminiscent of that of St. Joseph's altar in the cathedral of Villafranca. St. Giovanni Battista's altar made of red marble of Verona and yellow marble of Mori. The painting by Gaetano Pasetti, dating back to 1882, represents St.

Giovanni Battista in the act of baptising Jesus. The precious altar of Maria Immacolata with four enormous columns, the paliotto with red marble from France with a splendid "Madonna con Bambino" in Carrara marble, a tabernacle in decorated marble that is reminiscent of the old Greek temples. In the niche there is a golden statue of the Virgin Mary.

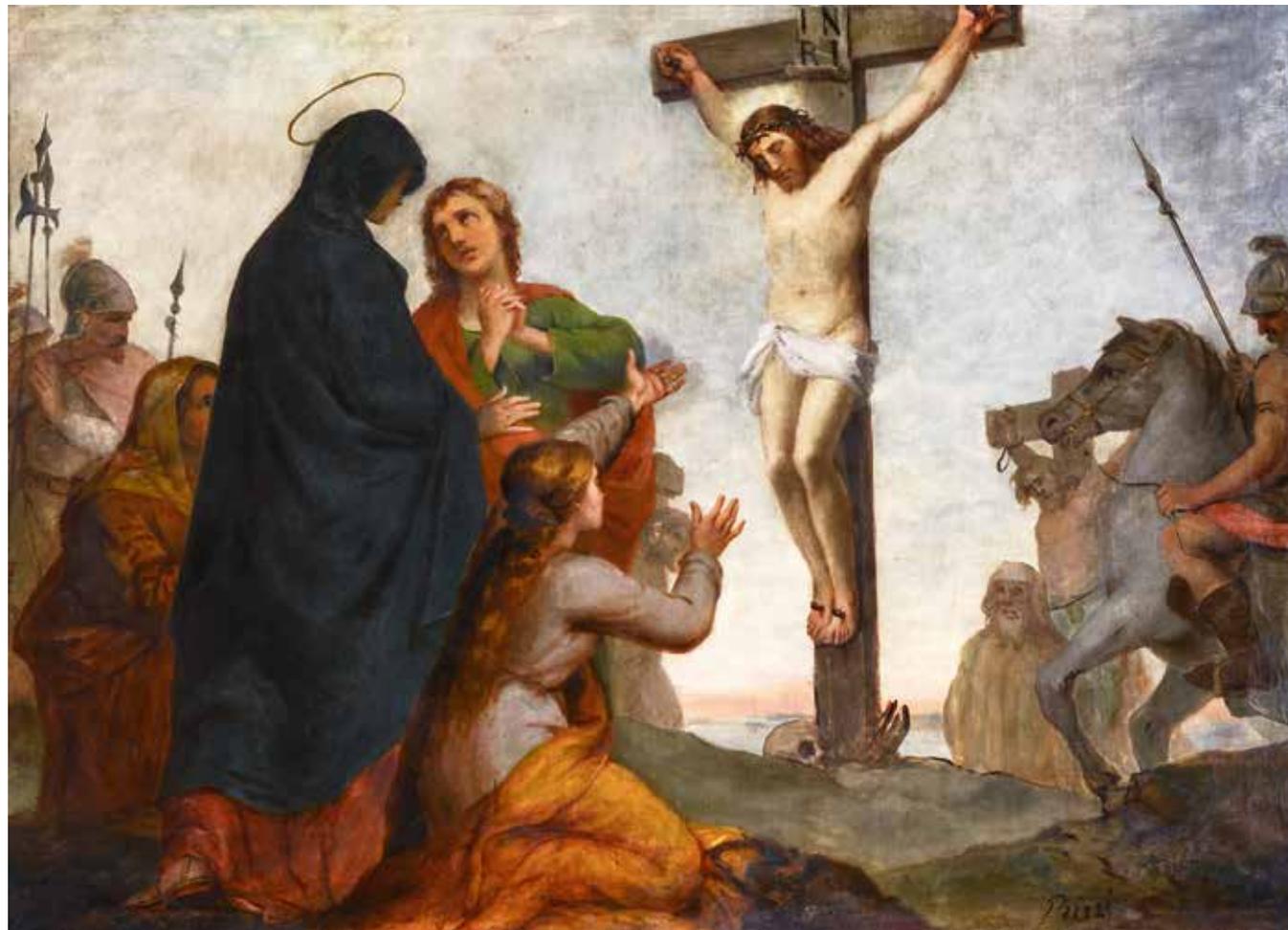
The old parochial altars sold to the parish of Castagnaro: from the left "St. Biagio", 1884 by Luciano Nezzo. "St. Francis" and "St. Joseph", 1879 by Gaetano Pasetti, "St. John Baptist", 1882 by Luciano Pasetti, "Immaculate Mary".



The Via Crucis

The Via Crucis, or Stations of the Cross, consists of 14 paintings on canvases and depicts the stations of the path that Christ covered with the Cross on his shoulders, from the court of Pilate to the place of the crucifixion, on the top of Mount Calvary. The paint-

ings are placed along the nave of the church, in niches at a height of about seven metres from the ground, and are quite large. Unfortunately, the original frames in carved and gilded wood have been lost to the past, and only the golden wooden cross remains in the centre of the niche. These are high quality paintings by Lorenzo Rizzi



(1830-1893), a painter who also created an altarpiece in a side altar of the Cathedral, depicting St. Peter, St. Andrew, St. Luigi Gonzaga and St. Elizabeth, dating back to 1890.

An interesting detail is that on the 14 canvases, five signatures of the painter Rizzi were found, with the years 1890 and 1891. In general, the paintings were in a poor state of preservation with colour lifts, fungi and mould, deformations, lacerations and blackening of the paint that made it impossible to see the subject.

The frames of the paintings are the original 19th century ones (with original

nails), which however have been cut and modified to allow the joint in the niches. Unfortunately these modifications are not dated.

As a result, even the paintings were redesigned to fit the reduced size of the framework, bending pictorial portions and “brutally” cutting the surplus canvas on the back of the frame. The meticulous restoration ensured the consolidation of the paintings and the colour and the accurate cleaning recovered the original colours, revealing a painting of considerable skill.

Eleonora Cigognetti

Two of the best paintings of the 14 stations of the recently restored “Via Crucis” by the painter Lorenzo Rizzi (1830-1893) including signature and date 1890-1891.

This is the last intervention of the long series of restorations and changes to the centennial structure and life of the cathedral, always cared for and loved by the people of Villafranca.

The choir and the grand organ

The imposing choir of the parish church includes a series of inlaid stalls originating from the old church. On the cymatium of the central stall, there is the (now restored) inscription MD-CCLXXI (1771) while the year 1736 is inlaid on the central bookrest. The

impressive organ, among the best of Verona, was restored on the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the cathedral.

The organ, built by the firm of Domenico Malvestio and sons in the position of the choir of the old church, is accompanied by a second organ placed above the double door. The vicar was don Eugenio Bottura.



The Brusazorzis

Riccio Domenico (1515-1567) and his son Felice (1539-1605), called the Brusazorzis, were associated in the creation of the Chapel of the Baptistry in the cathedral of Villafranca. Domenico: the fresco representing the Holy family with St. Giovannino, 117×99cm, was detached and saved on a panel at the demolition of the old vicarage in 1967.

The the architect Lorenzo Chiarelli's theory about a work by Brusazorzi was verified by a restoration done with modern technology. Prof. Maurizio Tagliapietra discovered the initial letters of the signature and the date: D. R. B., Domenico Riccio called Brusazorzi, and the date MDIXX (1519? - probably 1539). Felice: altarpiece, 333.5×193.5cm, *St. Antonio Abate between the saints Bovo and Martino di Tour and Madonna with Child in glory between Saints Francis and Peter*. Work commissioned by the "Consorzio degli Originari di Villafranca" (Consortium of the Founders of Villafranca) intended to affirm its own superiority over others: proposing the saints Antonio Abate, Bovo and Martino di Tour referred to their social status and activities: breeder and farmer. St. Bovo, on the right, protector of animals with a banner depicting

an ox. St. Martino di Tour, on the left, patron of the winegrowers and grape harvesters. St. Antonio, in the centre, protector of farmers and breeders with the book of the scripture. At the top, among clouds and glorious angels, the glory of the Virgin Mary with Baby Jesus between Saint Peter (patron of the city) and Saint Francis (referring to the presence of friars on the territory).



Above: Domenico Brusazorzi, "Holy Family with little Saint John".

Beside: Felice Brusazorzi, altarpiece "Saint Anthony Abbot between the saints Bovo and Martin di Tour and Holy Virgin with Baby Jesus in the glory between Saints Peter and Francis". Work commissioned by the Originari of Villafranca.

The bell tower of the old church

Before its unfortunate demolition, the bell tower of the old church of Villafranca boasted the appreciation of one of the greatest architects and international experts of the 1800 restoration: Camillo Boito. Besides being an architect, Boito (1803-1880) was also a writer. From one of his novels, "Senso", Luchino Visconti drew the screenplay for the homonymous, famous film. However, his brother Arrigo, musician and writer, was more famous than him.

Camillo Boito enjoyed the bell tower of Villafranca during a visit in August 1877 to the places where the battle of Custoza was fought 11 years earlier. He liked Villafranca and its inhabitants because he described them with sympathy in the book "Gite d'artista". "In the square formed by the first cross of the streets," he wrote, among other things, "two coffee shops are opposite each other, and of course, they compete with each other.

But, the townsfolk are less chatty than those of many others, less lazy; its inhabitants are active men, focused on business. They go around all the markets in the Veneto region and beyond, and they do good business. Two churches can also be seen in the same square; the first large, not yet completed, approximately modelled on the Venetian church of the Redeemer (the least appreciated of Palladio's masterpieces). The second one, destined to be demolished as soon as the other one is completed, is a small, baroque, old place, next to an ancient bell tower, which would be a pity to destroy. The new church seems to dwarf the dying little church, as if it were already trying to crush it underfoot; but the little church, spiteful to make up for its small size and disbelieving of its own demise, peeks out at the impertinent neighbour from the corner of its eye, and murmurs under its breath: "Big frog, crack".

"Villafranca", continues Camillo Boito, "has experienced some wonderful events, before and after the peace that made Cavour cry. It has seen triumphant armies and defeated armies pass from his lands; it noted the difference between the gait of the chaser and the gait of those who flee; it heard the bands play the song of victory and the wounded send the last laments. But, considering its history, Villafranca suffered very little: the cannon balls flew around, appearing to respect it". However, certain nefarious municipal administrations, from



the union of Veneto to Italy until today, did not do that. A variety of mayors and municipal councils, more criminal than short-sighted, have destroyed most of the past of Villafranca with the complicity or silence of artistic leaders and prefectures. After the ancient bell tower and the old church were demolished, some monuments were gradually deleted from the urban map. They included the historic Tre Corone, where the ceasefire of the Second War of Independence was decided before the meeting of the emperors, the Cappuccini church of 1848 (built by Canossa), the vestiges of the sixteenth century friary monastery (the Ochette), many historical courts (Custoza court and the complex included) and palaces and ancient dwellings. What "masterpieces" of modern architecture have been built in their place are there for all to see.

Morello Pecchioli



Above: detail of the pulpit, placed in a central position in the nave, impressive work by Luigi Novelli (the creator of the double door) supported by columns, with five paintings "The four Evangelists and Christ talking to the crowd in the centre". On the seatback, three paintings of saints with cymatium, work by the mute Salomoni.



Below: the main altar before the transformation of 1970 with the balustrade, the two big candle holders in red marble under the statues of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, the six artistic candle holders in bronze and the four marble bouquets, the four small candle holders in bronze with, in the middle, five small vases, the armchairs on the right for the priests and on the left the arm with the altar lamp.

THE ORATORY CHURCH OF SAN ROCCO

by *Luca Ceriani*

Located in Villafranca di Verona, at the beginning of the city's main street for those who come from Verona, the old church of San Rocco has the Scaligero Castle in the background and represents an excellent artistic achievement dating back to the second half of the 1400s.

There are no certain records of the date of construction of the small church. However, it is thought to have been built between 1485 and 1511 as an ex-voto following an outbreak of plague which afflicted those in the Veronese countryside. In his historical and artistic guide to the city and province of 1909, Simeoni dates the building of the Oratory to the end of the 1400s, but it was more likely to have been built a few decades later, during the plague of 1511. The only documents mentioning the church are those which record pastoral visits. These include the first visit the vicar of the bishop Matteo Giberti paid to the parish of Villafranca, and a second one in 1532, during which the church was described as "quite decorat-

ed and belonging to the city and the citizens of Villafranca".

The worship of Saint Rocco started in 1485, when the body of the saint was moved to Venice and placed in a church of the same name. From here, the worship of the saint extended to Verona and its surroundings, where he was invoked against livestock disease, natural catastrophes and epidemics.

The Oratory was built as ex-voto according to the will of the people, grateful to the saint who stopped the terrible plague in 1480, which reduced the population of Villafranca by ten times. Artists following the school of Domenico and Francesco Morone, two of the most famous painters in Verona between 1400 and 1500, were entrusted with the decoration of the Oratory. This resulted in one of the best expressions of fresco paintings of the region as for quality and the dimension of the pictorial area. The motif of the façade fresco represents the front of a Greek temple, whose geison follows the vault course of the church. The decoration



Above: 1930, the church of San Rocco with Marcello Fantoni, a man passionate about art, loved by the Villafranchesesi; he held the office of first citizen for three legislatures. Note the old plants of via Quadrato and the church's plinth still with exposed stones before the stone plinth done during the restoration of 1933.

Below: the church after the last restorations.



Above: The façade, under the tympanum the benedictory Christ in a garland of flowers and fruits.



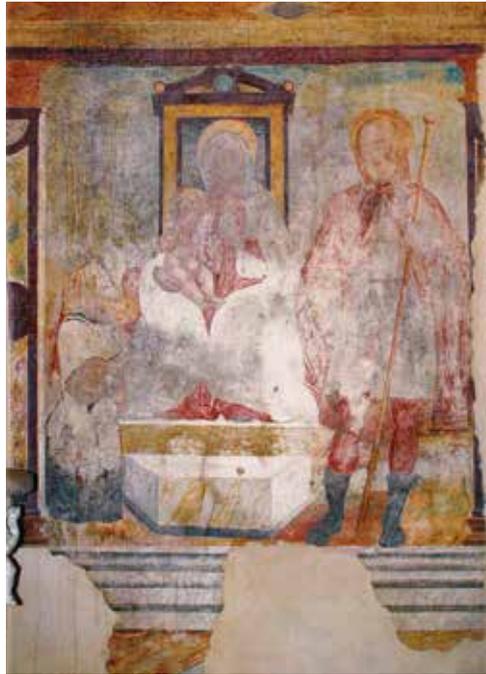
Below: a rather ruined fresco of the crucifixion with the Holy Virgin and Saint Antony Abbot below the cross and Saint Sebastian (left) and Saint Rocco (right).

Opposite page: overview of the presbytery after the recent renovation curated by the "Fondazione Compagnia Aurora" with placement of the Madonnina of 1500 in a theca on the side and the pose of the crucified Christ of the 18th century over the altar.

is supported by two lateral columns without a plinth and of imprecise style. In the richly decorated tympanum, the central geison shows a medal of a benedictory Christ, surrounded by a wreath with leaves and fruit. In the middle of the façade, in the recess above the portal, there is a fresco of a saint, who is probably Saint Rocco, with a rural view and a tower in the back-

ground, which may represent the castle. Easier to read, on the left, is the motif of the Crucifixion, which is represented by a fresco with the Virgin Mary and Saint Antonio Abate at the cross, with Saint Sebastiano and Saint Rocco. On the right, above the window, the "Madonna on the throne with Saint Sebastiano and Saint Rocco." This fresco is very faded and difficult to see clearly. Below, on the right, the beautiful window offers the possibility to admire the inside of the "chiesetta" of Saint Rocco. The writing "L'elemosina per San Rocco 1784" ("The Alms for Saint Rocco 1784"), on a marble plaque, is located on the windowsill. To understand the pictorial value of the small church of Saint Rocco, it is necessary to go inside, into the nave, restored to its original beauty after restorations of the whole building. The episode of the Annunciation is illustrated in the triumphal arch in which Mary bows down after the announcement of Archangel Gabriel, who is standing on her left, wrapped in a bright garment. God the Father dominates the scene from above. He is framed by a wreath of leaves and fruit and blows on the Virgin. On the left wall, there is the fresco "Fuga in Egitto" (Flight to Egypt), separated from the arch by a false pilaster: in the middle, there is the Virgin Mary, seated with the Baby Jesus on the donkey. It is an unusual representation for the time,

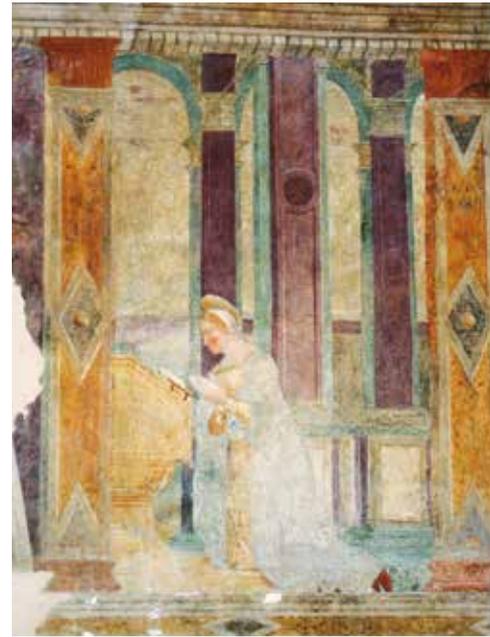




but it is an omnipresent illustration on the frescos of the church. The figure of Saint Rocco stands out in this panel, as in others, and is depicted in a frontal view, in the act of showing the wound of the plague to the devotees. He was actually affected by the plague, and he is represented wrapped in the traditional mantle, the “sanrochetto”. He is holding the cane of the pilgrims and he is wearing a typical hat on his head. Under the fresco, which is partly ruined, by a little window, there is the “Madonna in trono con Bambino” (Madonna with Child on the throne) and next to this, there is another depiction of “Madonna with Child on the throne” with San Rocco and a devotee kneeling, probably a patron.



Above: “Madonna with Child on the throne and Saint Rocco and the worshipper kneeling”.
On the side: the archangel Gabriel, wearing gaudy yellow clothes, announces the event to the Virgin in prayer.



The vault of the apse finely decorated with the symbols of the evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Madonna of Mercy evokes the motif (by Piero della Francesca) recurrent of the Holy Virgin who protects the faithful, and a landscape in the background.



Madonna with Child in polychrome wood of the 15th century. This is one of the most important artistic expressions of the time, by the Veronese sculptor Francesco Badile III. The statue probably came from the old parochial church and remained in the entrance of the Oratory for a long time. After the first restoration in 1993 it was placed on the altar, where it remained until 2014 when, after a successful renovation, it was placed inside a display case near the altar.



On the right wall of the altar, ruined by damp, there is the “Madonna with Child on the throne”, beside an extremely damaged fresco “Madonna with Saint Rocco” and in the superior register Saint Rocco showing the sore on the left thigh.

The apse is another very important frescoed zone with the symbols of the four Evangelists: Saint Matteo, who is represented by an angel, Saint Marco by a lion, Saint Luca by a bull and Saint Giovanni by an eagle.

All are depicted on *clipei* (shield-shaped surfaces), decked with leaves. In the light of the eaves, on the left side, is shown the Madonna of Mercy, who protects the praying faithful behind her ample mantle. A walnut closet closes the choir. This cupboard is dated 1747 on the back of the beautiful and inlaid capstone. In the small entrance hall, some paintings illustrate the restoration work carried out over time by the San Rocco Committee and the wheel, with the “clapper” of the bell restored in 2002.

The cycle of Oratory's frescos is the result of pastel colours, from the brightest red to ochre, green, light blue and purple. These colours do not take anything away from the Franciscan simplicity and whiteness of the interior, and they continue to fascinate visitors.

Pictures and statues of the Oratory

Among the paintings still preserved, the most important is the altarpiece recently attributed to the Veronese painter Giovanni Crescini, who was pupil of Alessandro Tucci. The altarpiece depicts Saint Rocco, Saint Onofrio and Saint Sebastiano. They are saints of charity. Other paintings on the walls of the nave include: *The last supper* by an unknown painter of the 18th century; *Saint Carlo Borromeo*, saint of charity, by an unknown painter of the 17th century. *Fiar with Breviary* from the 17th century. On the sides in the niches, there are statues in polychrome wood of Saint Rocco



Above: painting of Madonna with Child with Saint Filippo Neri in adoration, by a Veronese painter of the 18th century. Oil on canvas, 101x80cm.



Below, on the left: the disciples at Emmaus meet Jesus after the resurrection; rare representation of the characters walking with the landscape of the turreted city in the background.

Below, on the right: altarpiece with Saint Onofrio with Saint Rocco and Saint Sebastiano on the side; attributed to the painter Giovanni Crescini (1605-post 1660) representing the saints of charity and commissioned maybe after the plague of 1630. Oil on canvas, 179x109.5cm.

from the 17th century and of San Sebastiano of the 18th century. Above the entrance compass, two tempera paintings on the table with images of the Passion. The “Madonna with Child and Saint Filippo Neri” is attributed to Pietro Antonio Perotti (1712-1793) who was a pupil of Antonio Balestra. It is oval shaped, and maybe came from another church or reshaped by a canvas.

Saint Carlo Borromeo, saint of charity, and *Firar with Breviary* both by unknown artists of the 17th century. Two paintings of the 18th century, perhaps by the same artist, *The last supper* and *The meeting on the road to Emmaus* attributed by Stefano l’Occaso to a Veronese painter, but of French origins Giuseppe Le Grù (1715-1775): to note the peculiarity of the meeting on the road to Emmaus represented not by the three characters at the table but on the road with the landscape and the city in the background.

On the entrance door there are two tempera paintings on the shaped board, both are by unknown artists of the 19th century. Those paintings show an angel carrying Veronica and another carrying the crown of thorns.

The statues of church deserve a mention. The oldest remaining artistic work is the precious statue of “*Madonna with Child on the throne*”. It is made of polychrome wood, and dates back to the early 1500s. It was placed on the altar after the renovation of 1992, and now, since

the renovation of 2014, has been stored in a crate. This statue is considered one of the most important sculptures of the period, and is attributed to the Veronese sculptor Francesco Badile III.

On the altar, there is the 18th century crucifix, returned to its former glory since the restoration of 2014.

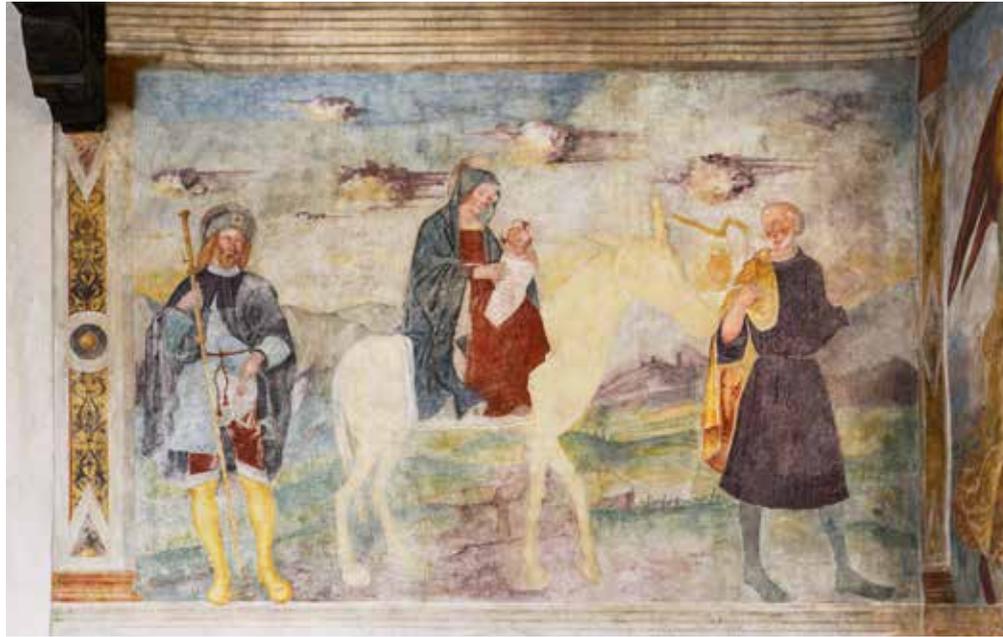
There are two other statues in the alcoves of the nave, also in polychrome wood and sculpted to a high standard: Saint Rocco is from the 18th century, while that of Saint Sebastian is from a little later.

The historical renovation of the Oratory

The church was built with only one aisle and apse. This information was recorded by a cartographer of Villafranca of the 1600s, who depicted the church of Saint Rocco in open countryside near the road which lead to the castle. The two lateral rooms, the “sacristies” and the other room, were added at the beginning of the 1700s. At the same time, the four lateral windows were built too. In the 1800s, an adjacent building was extended above the apse. In 1933, another renovation was undertaken on the external façade and the roof, without plaster and with the stone visible. Since the 1960s, various interventions have been undertaken, on both the structure and the frescoes.



Important built-in wardrobe in walnut wood surmounted by a beautiful cymatium, dated on the back 1747.



(H)OC OPUS F(ERI) F(ECIT) M(A)T(H)EVS Q(VONDAM) B(AR)TOLOMEI
DE CRESCIMBEN(I)S = DIE 14 ME(N)SI(S) IVNI AN(N)O D(O)M(I)N(I) ...

“Quest’opera venne fatta realizzare da Matteo del fu Bartolomeo
de Crescimbeni nel giorno del 14 giugno dell’anno del Signore...”

“The Flight to Egypt”, possibly the best-preserved fresco and the most enjoyable of the pictorial cycle. It represents the Holy Mary with the Child wrapped in bands sitting on the white donkey led by Saint Joseph to Egypt. Saint Rocco, always present in the frescoes of the oratory, represented with his traditional clothes, almost extraneous to the scene, shows his sore. Below: the writing discovered during the recent restoration of 2014.

The original floor has been replaced with ceramic tiles, the roof has been waterproofed and other conservative maintenance works have taken place. Since 1994, with the foundation of the Committee of Saint Rocco (which from 2000 would get legal status), there has been continual and constant renovation work of the building, pictures, statues, frescos and management of Oratory. The Committee, local bodies and associations, the council administration and the Cariverona foundation supported

the different renovations. They have an important deadline from 1904 to 2009. 2014 marks a particular year for the Oratory, due to the intervention of Fondazione Compagnia Aurora. This includes the restoration of all the frescoes ruined over time due to leaks from the roof and the floor, and the Madonnina being returned to its former splendour. This has been given a new location in a case on the left side of the altar. Also, the cross dating back to the 1700s has now been returned to its former glory on the altar.

But the most striking result of this intervention was the discovery of an inscription under the aegis of the Flight to Egypt by the restorer Eleonora Sigognetti, highlighted by the ultraviolet rays. It was inscribed by the commissioner of the fresco by Matteo del fu Bartolomeo de Crescimbeni in the month of June of the year of Our Lord. A reconstruction of Crescimbeni history was carried out by Luca Dossi, the important Villafrancan,

with care and attention to detail. This, coupled with careful study by the Inspector of the Superintendency, Luca Fabbri, found that further paintings, which have always been considered as painted by an unknown artist, were by the same person. We can say that this was the pinnacle in the history of the restoration of the Oratory of San Rocco, which restored it to its former glory for the joy of the people of Villafranca and its many visitors.

The beautiful, wooden crucified Christ of the 18th century, “forgotten” on the wall next to the entrance, now returned to its former glory after the restoration of 2014 and placed on the altar.



The bell by Soletti in the church of Saint Rocco in Villafranca

It is very simple to describe the perfect fusion of this musical instrument dating back over 260 years, restored in the structure that supported it in the bell tower in 2002. It has six designs in the shape of crucifixes. It has a mouth diameter of 57cm and weighs 106kg. Its note is a natural E. In 1755, the bell was created by the smelter: Pietro Soletti and his son Alberto. At the base, a circular floral band dominates another one with the inscription "CHRISTUS REX VENIT IN PACE ET DEUS HOMO FACTUS EST", "Christ the King comes in peace and God became man". There follows the date "MDCCLV" (1755).

Above the sound ring, the emblem of the house that probably commissioned the bell is represented and, in a diametrically opposed position, a plaque with the smelters' names.

Moreover, in the centre of the bell there are eight images of saints and martyrs. They are: Madonna del Rosario, Saint Rocco and Saint Zeno, Saints Fermo and Rustico, Saint John the Apostle, Saint Sebastian, Saint Eusebio (not clearly identifiable) with the emblem of the commissioner at the base. The uncertainty about the image of Saint Eusebio is due to the fact that, in the past, the smelters changed the features of the wax images of the saints, if they did not have any particular characteristic, to satisfy the commissioner. Finally, there is a magnificent crucified Christ.

The discovery of information about the smelters of this great work is a little more difficult. With the help of the smelter Luigi Cavadini and his colleague and tireless historian Luca Chiavegatto from Sanguinetto, we managed to recover some data about the Solettis' dynasty and their work. This was with a certain difficulty, due to the limited number of works created by them in the area. The Solettis were originally from Brescia and they generally created their pieces in the place where the works were commissioned. For this reason they were known as nomad smelters.

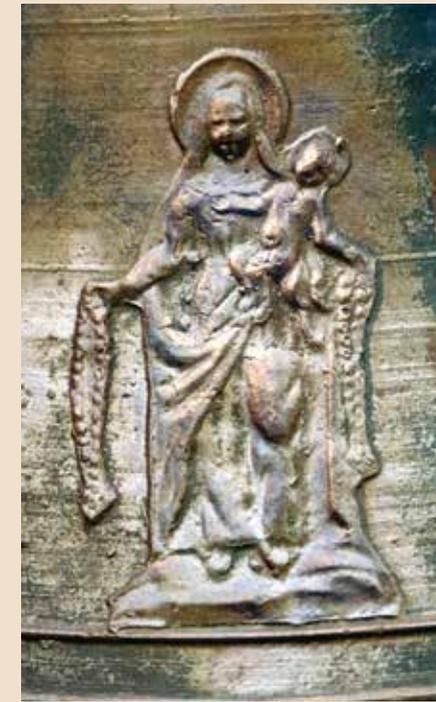
They were very popular in the Mantuan and Brescian area, in Rovigo and Venice, but in the area of Verona they smelted few bells because the competition was very strong. It was actually a great period of for the smelters Magi, Poni, Crispi, and Larducci. Also Ruffini started to make his first bells at this



time. All of these craftsmen possessed a foundry, while the Solettis went from one location to another with their instruments loaded on wagons. To be precise, this type of function gave artistic satisfaction too. In fact, some researchers confirm that, while the fire was burning under the crucible, before the final smelting of the bell, a people used to throw gold



Saint Sebastian



Madonna del Rosario



Saint Rocco

jewellery into the cauldron. This was not to improve the bell's sound quality, but in order to feel sentimentally connected to the bell's ring, and also to their faith, which was and still is a source of solace for the population.

San Rocco's bell in Villafranca, after the restoration curated by the Committee of Saint Rocco and the firm Sabaini Francesco & C. snc, was placed back into the church bell tower on 20th April 2002.

The original wooden pieces are preserved in the room next to the small church. Also, from this hard wood, well-worked for the time, and from the lovingly made nails, we can deduce that this bell was originally positioned in this bell tower in 1755, the year of its creation.



Giovanni Brentegani

SAN GIOVANNI DELLA PAGLIA

by Luca Dossi and Luisa Vantini

It is one of the oldest churches of Villafranca, even if it is strict an oratory, and it seems to date back to the middle of the 15th century. It was probably built on a pre-existing place of worship, but the first mention of this property, that was a part of the “*Commenda di san Vitale*”, dates back to 1491.

The name *Commenda* (of which the plot of Saint John was a district) refers to cultivated lands corresponding to 184 Veronese fields (a Veronese field measures 3,002 m²). These included



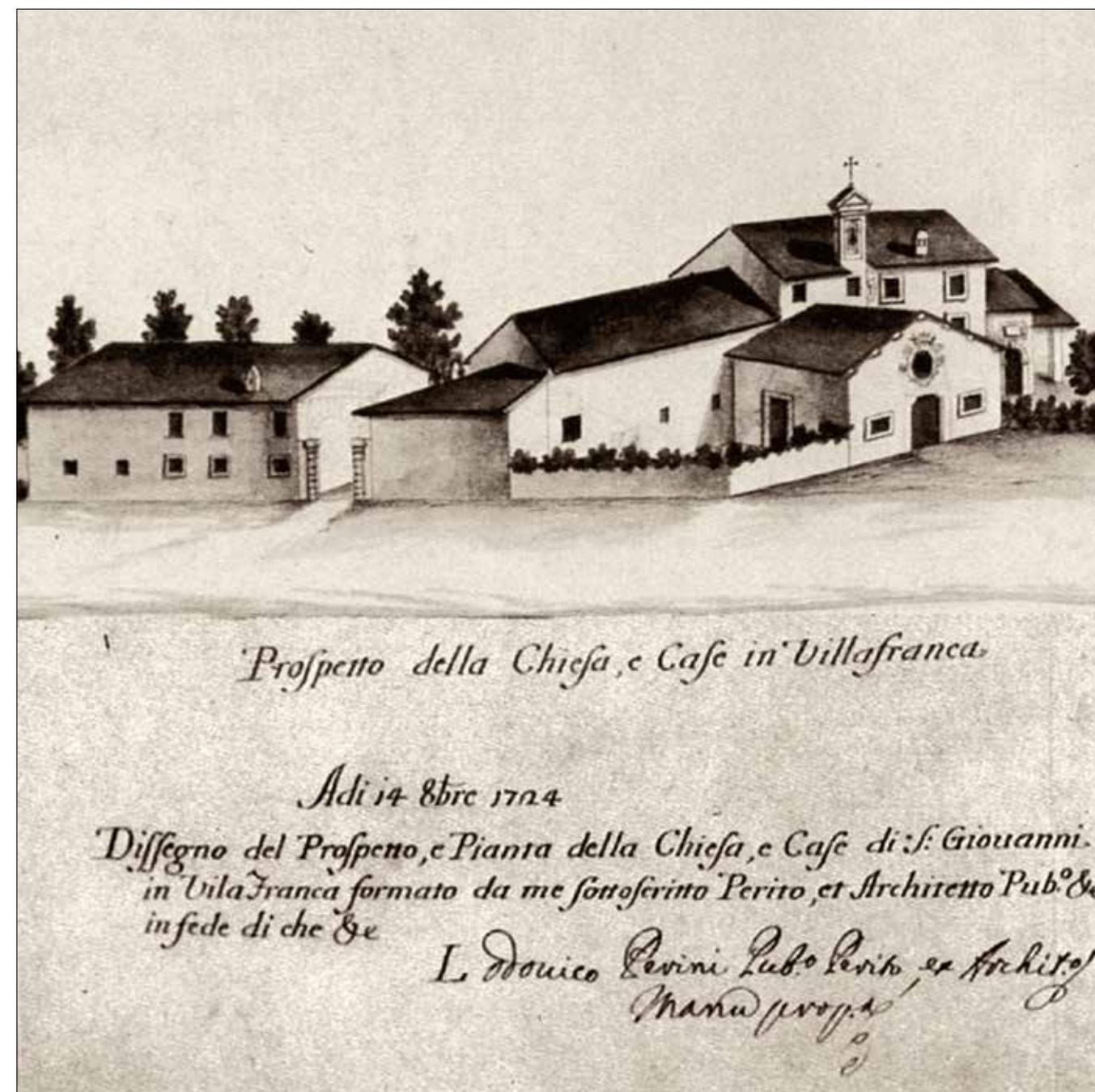
Fragment of marble plaque rediscovered during the restoration of 2007. The names “Ciaia” and “Vitalis” refer to the *Commenda di San Vitale* and Father Bernardino.

On the next page: the little church of San Giovanni della Paglia and the surrounding houses in a drawing by Perini from 1724.

farm buildings and free lands, property of the *DOMUS TEMPLI* of Verona, originally under the jurisdiction of the Templar knights that had their site in the church of Saint Vitale in Verona (now disappeared).

After the suppression of the order of the Templar knights in 1312 following the papal bill by Clemente V, all the *Commenda di san Vitale* was included in the properties of the *Ordine Ospedaliero di San Giovanni Hierosolimitano* (Hospital Order of Saint John of Jerusalem) that had Saint John the Baptist as protector and was devoted to the cure and the assistance of poor pilgrims and people in need in their “hospital”.

After the fall of the overseas crusading kingdoms and of Cyprus, the order moved to the isle of Malta and changed its name into Knights of Malta. Although the *Commenda di san Vitale* had become the property of the Ospitalieri (*Commenda del Santo Sepolcro*), it continued to be called *Commenda di san Vitale*.





The oratory of
San Giovanni della Paglia.

The Oratory still has an altarpiece attributed to Antonio Balestra (1666-1740) of the School of Prendaglio, in turn a disciple of Paolo Caliari, known as the Veronese. It shows the Baptist wrapped in a red garment, with a lamb under his right arm and a cane in his left hand; in the lower corner there are two angels. One of them holds a shell in the right hand and a sword in the left.

The historian Lorenzo Tacchella reports about the visit to the church of Monsignor Alberto Valerio, Bishop of Verona in 1594. He states it “was formed by two naves and inside there were two bare altars. The small bell tower lacked

the bell, that had been stolen. Water penetrated the ceiling and the adjacent house was in ruin”. The Bishop ordered the Church and the houses to be restored so that they would not collapse and that the church was kept closed¹. Also, other records of the *Commedia di san Vitale* from 1618, 1744 and 1774 refer to the small church of San Giovanni della Paglia and describe the lands surrounding the Oratory and the annexed buildings.

¹ L. TACCHELLA, *Il Sovrano Militare Ordine di Malta nella storia di Verona*, Genova, Ed. Bozzi, 1969, pp. 50-52.



The valuable altar in polychrome marble of the church with the imposing altarpiece made by Balestra (1666-1740). It shows an aggressive John the Baptist with a lamb under his arm, wrapped in a scarlet cloak that emerges, imposing, from the dim light. Nice group of two little angels, in the foreground with sword and shell of the pilgrim.



The engineer Nereo Vantini, following personal research on works by Balestra at the Museum of Castelvechio di Verona, the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, the Quadreria of Padua and the book "Balestra" by Marco Pollazzo (published by Cortina 1978) supports the following:

- 1) the attribution of San John of Villafranca to Balestra due to the vine leaf painted lower left, as this was his signature;
- 2) Balestra often included his self-portrait in his paintings and Saint John di Villafranca reproduces features similar to the paintings mentioned above.

On assignment of the Knights of Malta, these properties, for a certain period, were administered by Father Bernardino della Ciaia from Siena. He initially had the property rebuilt or restored and then designated a consultant and the expert Ludovico Perini

to do an inventory of the goods of the *Commenda* in Villafranca, Verona and Legnago and commit everything to a map. This became the "*Cabreo della Commenda di san Vitale*" that is now in the State archive of Verona and constitutes a precious resource to learn about this corner of Villafranca.

This source was confirmed in 2007 by the discovery of a fragment of marble headstone with the clear names "Ciaia" and "Vitalis". This evidently references the *Commenda di San Vitale* and Father Bernardino who wanted to leave evidence of the restoration.

The maps by Ludovico Perini show that three buildings existed: the little church with the emblem of the Knights of Malta, a dominical house with farm buildings, vegetable garden and well and the worker's house with farm buildings and well. During the restoration of 1970, two memorial stones came to light, with the cross of the order of the Knights of Malta and a fragment of a headstone with the

same symbol. While the precise date of these is unknown, they are another confirmation of the historical importance of this place between the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Ages. It is probable indeed that the name "*San Giovanni della Paglia*" refers to the habit of offering hospitality with food, water, and a pallet of "straw" for the night to the pilgrims.

The property was later bought by some noble families of the Verona area. The last of these were the earls Cavazzoca-Mazzanti who sold the property to Daniele Vantini in 1919. Vantini went to live there in 1921. For a long time, "San Giovanni" was also a meeting point for jugglers and storytellers that, during the fair of Saint Peter, stayed at court for a week or more, and were hosted by the families that resided in the houses near the little church.

During and after the Second World War, occasions to celebrate became less frequent and the ancient tradition to provide hospitality was also abandoned. The Oratory, as it is today, is similar to the original appearance, with bare walls, with the exception of the altar dating back to about 1570, the marble parts of which were restored in 1661, as the overhanging black headstone shows.

The interior of the church, however, is the result of the important restoration

of 1970, as proved by the headstone date A.D. MCMLXX. The intention was to preserve the structure from a possible collapse, which made it necessary to demolish the unstable plaster. Consequently, there was the loss of the parietal paintings of the large green amphorae and the barrel vault, which were decorated with yellow rosette motifs on a blue background.

The conditions of the paintings of the walls, the ceiling, the floor and the altarpiece, were such as to make a conservative recovery, as we know it today, impossible. We can consider that the maximum that the technology of the age would allow was achieved. Currently, the church is open to the public on 24th June, Saint John the Baptist's birthday, and on 29th August, day of the Saint's martyrdom, for suffrage masses for the harvest or the deceased, during the prayer of the holy rosary in the month of May and for the celebration of weddings and baptisms.

An important tradition for the farming families of the area is the little bell that now is rung at the approach of summer storms, as an invocation to God to save the countryside from the scourge of hail and as an invitation to pray. This little church, often unnoticed for its small size and unfortunately almost unknown, has a very interesting history, partly still to be discovered.



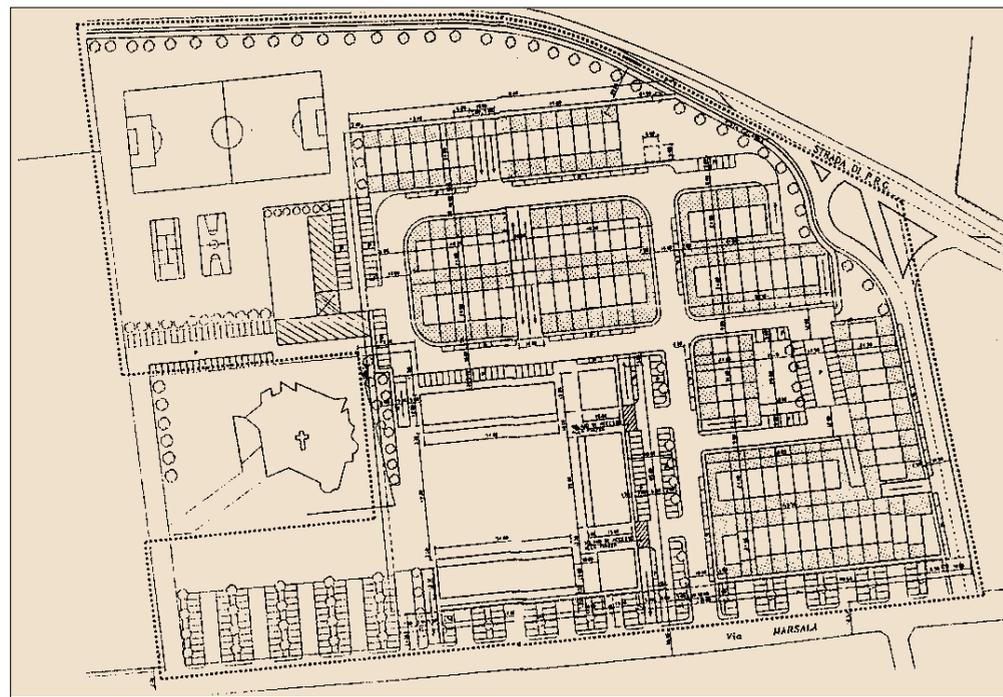
The detail of a vine leaf painted at the bottom left represents the signature with which Balestra authenticated his paintings.

THE QUARTER AND THE CURCH OF MADONNA DEL POPOLO

by Alessandro Marconcini

The Quarter of Madonna del Popolo is located the territory to the west of the historical centre of the city. It takes its name from the parish built on 1st November 1977, by decree of the bishop of Verona, Monsignor Giuseppe Carraro. In those years of considerable popula-

tion growth, the need to dismantle the historical parish of saints Peter and Paul was required, as it was felt that it was unable to meet the religious needs of such a large community. The archpriest of the period, Monsignor Ireneo Aldegheri, chose the name



Plan of the quarter of Madonna del Popolo: at the top, the area owned by the municipality and below, the church area, car park, and green space. On the right, the civil interventions and the square.

On the next page: aerial view of the Madonna del Popolo district.





The complete church in its structure stands out, solitary, in the area still occupied by the countryside. The urbanisation of the area is already being planned.

“Madonna del Popolo” to honour the followers of Mary, deeply rooted in the territory. The choice was also influenced by the fortuitous finding of a medal with the effigy of the Holy Virgin in August 1972. She is shown with a sceptre in her hand, a crown on her head and the Child in her arms holding a globe, surrounded by the inscription “Mary, Mother of God, protect your people”. On the back it shows Saint Peter’s keys intersected by Saint Paul’s sword, symbols of the patrons of Villafranca, contoured by the inscription “Offering of the people of Villafranca 1881”, that greatly troubled Monsignor Aldegheri. In the diocese of Verona, moreover, there was no parish dedicated to “Madonna del Popolo”.

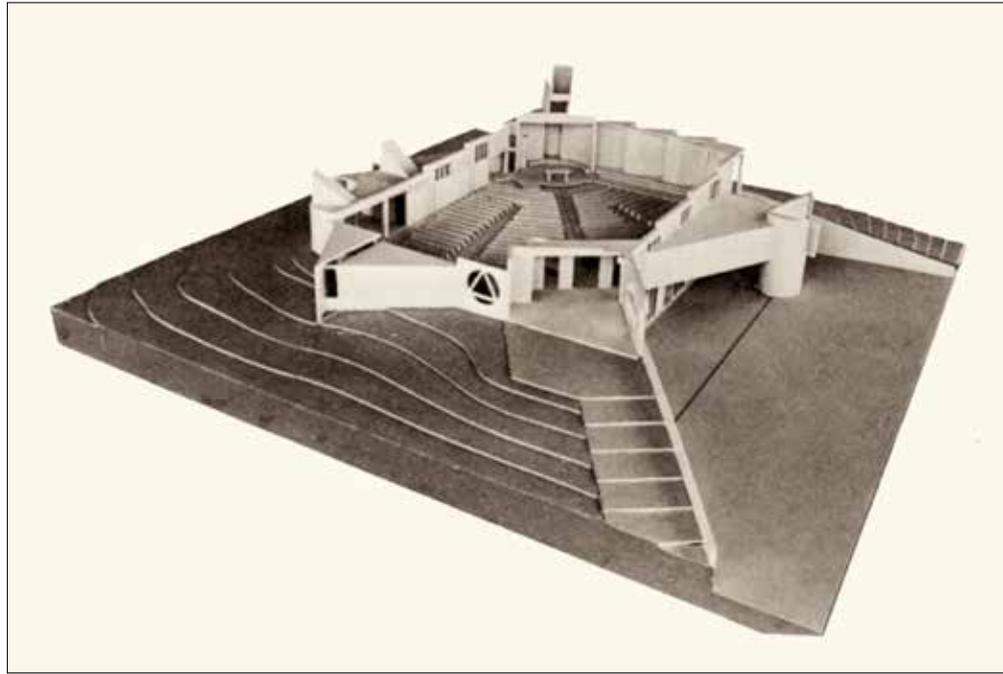
The new community was assigned a territory west of Via Luigi Prina and Via Tione, including the territory outside the central residential area located on that side. Following the directions of the municipal building plan of the 1970s, that included a new church and a cemetery in the west district of the village, the suitable area for the construction of the new church was identified. In October 1982, the works began on land donated by the municipal administration and followed the architect Lucio Merlini’s design. The new church, built in open countryside, on the margin of the future high school area, was completed in stages. The weekday chapel and the rooms for parish activities, located downstairs, were opened to the



Aerial view of the Church dedicated to the “Madonna del Popolo”.

community and blessed by the bishop Monsignor Amari on 9th September 1984. The upper part, the main church, was opened to worshippers and then completed with furniture and decoration. The parish of the Cathedral contributed to the building of the church, donating part of the legacy of Dr Martinelli, acquiring the parish house in Labriola street and donating some artwork for the furniture. The same parishioners contributed to the works through voluntary donations. With the birth of the new church began the formation of the new district that was limited to the northwest by the ring road of the inhabited centre for vehicles coming from Valeggio to Sommacampagna and Verona and vice versa.

At that time, the new high school (Medi) was built next to the Bolisani Institute and the Carlo Anti Institute, forming a high school complex which thousands of students attend and which offers many extracurricular sport activities in the school gyms. From a residential point of view, at the time, units were already being completed provided by the subdivision “via Labriola”. This was approved in 1974 and construction began in 1975. Within the perimeter formed by the planned road, north of the church, there was an area of municipal property almost 40,000 square metres in area and in the shape of a trapezoid. A Plan of Economic Popular Construction was put in place as a public ini-



Sketch of the interior of the church designed by architect Lucio Merlini. Note the shell shape that accompanies the view of the faithful at the main altar.

tiative, as a completion of a socio-cultural complex, in which infrastructures and new activities of the tertiary sector were provided. This was done with the intention of forming a new centre, in contrast with the historical centre.

The intervention was designed starting from the identification of a central qualifying public space, to enhancement of the church, a large square accessible only to pedestrians and destined to become the cultural social centre of the district, approved by the city administration in February 1995. In a few years, the whole area was built.

To the west of the church, green spaces and equipped sport areas were cre-

ated, while in the eastern part, a large parking lot was built to serve both the church and the neighbourhood during events.

Residents of the district, mostly young families, probably because they saw the new zone grow with them, have developed a great sense of belonging. Therefore, many associations and activities have been initiated, almost all connected with the parish, of which they use spaces and rooms.

Volunteer groups were formed to collaborate in the maintenance of the parish and the neighbourhood and to organise different activities. The biggest event, which involves almost all



residents and employs volunteers of all ages, is the patronal festival of the “Madonna del Popolo” that takes place on September 8th.

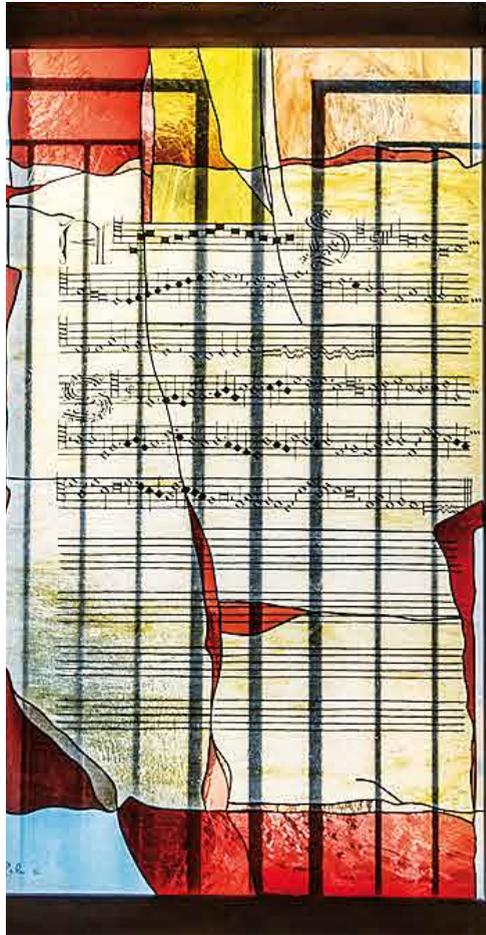
Conceived in 1980, as a moment of aggregation among the residents of the newly created parish, the celebration has been gradually increasing, finding appropriate spaces in the new district and involving participants from the entire Villafranca district. The festival, thanks to gastronomic stands and

games, organised by volunteers, allows the collection of funds that are donated to charitable causes, as well as the maintenance and improvement of infrastructures serving the community. After less than forty years from the first spark that gave new life to this area of Villafranca, we can certainly affirm that the goal to create a new centre was widely achieved and, from a socio-cultural point of view, “Madonna del popolo” has become the beating heart of community life.

Moment of a patronal feast.

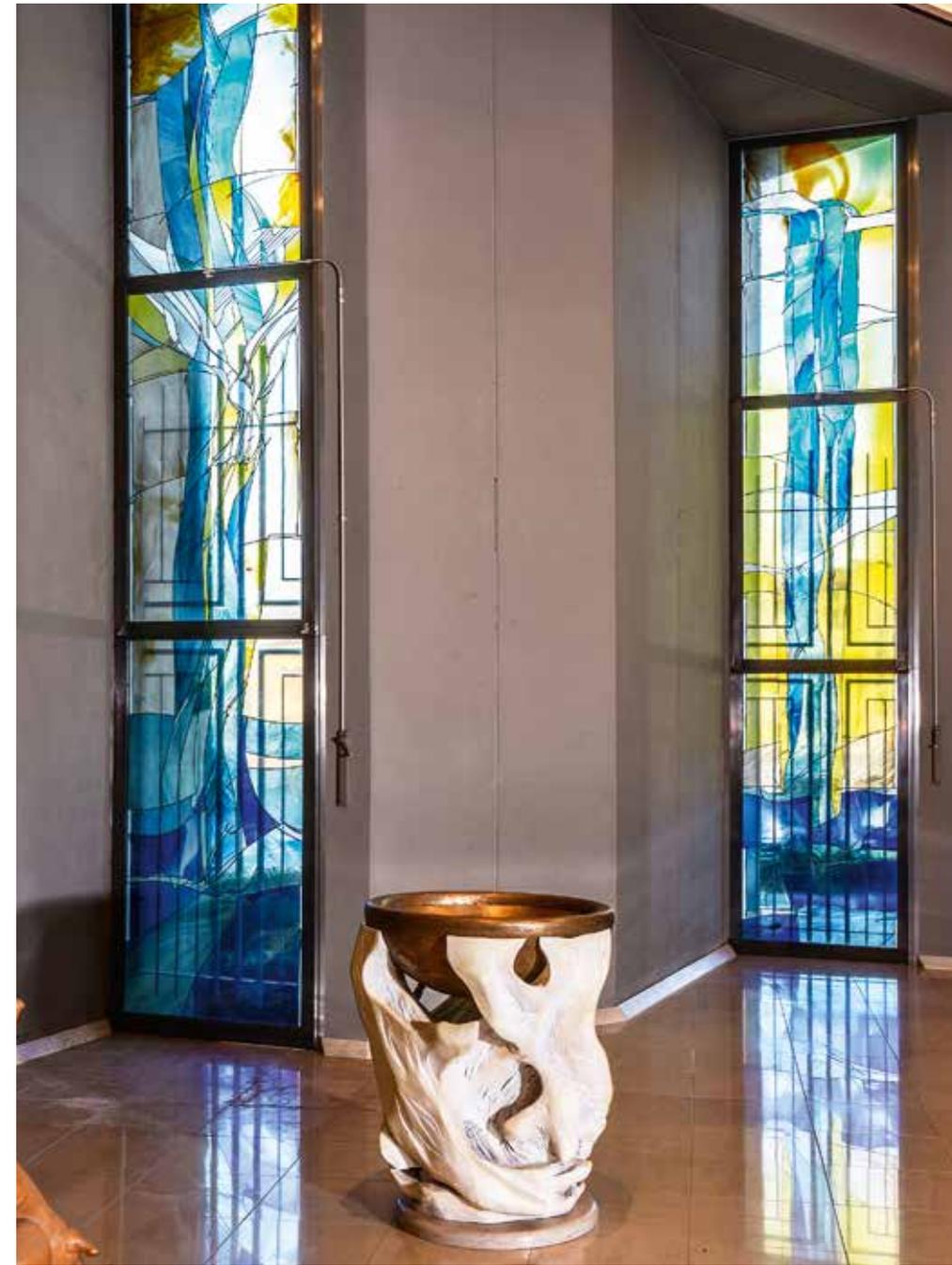
The interior of the church

A long ramp leads to the entrance of the upper church. The wooden door with a beautiful frame of coloured glass leads to the entrance. The back of the stained glass windows, representing the meeting of the Virgin Mary and Elizabeth, appears to reflect the reception that the church gives to its worshippers. When



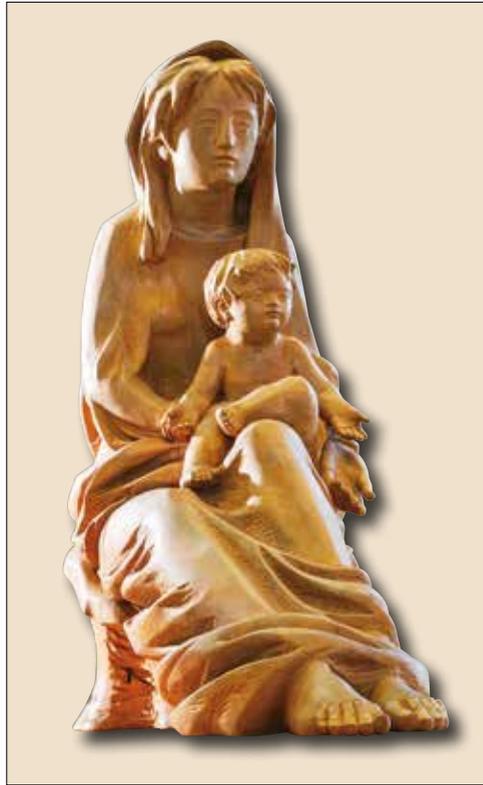
Work by Albano Poli. Detail of the window dedicated to music. "The parchment with musical notes recall the place and the song of the music where the God is praised, where the unison of voices and sounds of instruments soar in the light that rises towards the sky. The musical sheets are an invitation to encourage the participation of the assembly in song, an invitation to sacred and spiritual action." A. Poli

entering, we are surprised by the spacious, shell-shaped room overlooking the altar, where the sumptuous statue of the risen Christ is, like all the others sculptures of the church, created by the master-sculptor Paul De Dos Moroder from Ortisei. Windows decorate the church with different motifs to symbolise the infinite love of God welcoming his children. From the left: the façade rosette, symbol of the Trinity, continues into the blue of the universe and travels down with a vital flourish that creates the world; the niche with the statue of the *Madonna del Popolo* and the beautiful blue window. On the left of the tabernacle, the Eucharistic windows with the symbols of grapes and spikes. On the right of the altar, the artistic baptismal font with the two blue windows to symbolise the purifying water and the spirit of God that hovers over the waters. This leads to the music corner and the entrance door towards Pentecost. The windows are all works of the Arte Poli Project of Verona, developed by the master Albano Poli and made with Lambert glass, handcrafted with the ancient procedure of mouth-blowing. The Via Crucis is a characteristic feature, created in the early years of the church by the first parish priest, don Giuseppe Righini, with the collaboration of the boys of the catechism groups and their teachers. On the floor below are the chapel and rooms for associations and parish activ-



The baptismal font: work of the sculptor of Ortisei Paul de Dos Moroder. Bronze bath with lost wax casting made by the artistic foundry Fabbris and Folla of Dossobuono, Verona (2004). The windows of the baptistry: the waters, a primordial element. "The spirit of God hangs over the waters. The splendid expression with which the book is opened describes the origins of the world and humanity. It evokes the absolute transcendence and presence of God the Creator who gives meaning and content to the reality of life and of the whole Cosmos. Water, the main element of creation, depends on the initiative of God, it is the sign of fertilisation and life. It accompanies the whole history of salvation, constitutes for man the sign of a profound reality. Spirit and water, two essential elements of Baptism: water and the Spirit that fertilises it ". A. Poli

Above left: Sculpture of the Madonna "Mother of the People". Here, the Madonna becomes the mother of humanity, holding the baby Jesus in her arms, an ordinary child who could also be one of us. Sculpture carved in pear wood left in its natural state. Ortisei, 1998. By Paul dē Doss Moroder.



Above right: Font made by the Villafrancan craftsman Ezio Zanchi. In the background, the stained-glass window of the entrance representing the Madonna's encounter with Saint Elizabeth.



Alongside: Votive medal of Our Lady of the People. An example of the coin fortunately found in 1972 by the son of Mario Ferrari in a court of "Contra Mantoana", and donated to the parish of the cathedral.

On the front, the 20x24mm medal shows the Madonna with a sceptre in her hand, a crown on her head, and the child holding the globe in her arms, surrounded by the inscription "Maria Mother of God, protect your people". On the back, the keys of Saint Peter are intersected by the sword of Saint Paul, symbols of the patron saints of the city surrounded by the inscription "votive of the people of Villafranca 1851".



Above: Detail of the statue of the risen Christ, work of the sculptor Paul dē Doss Moroder.

Below: General view of the internal side east of the Church, from left, the Pentecost, the burning bush, the door of the sky, the decorative band of the windows with the Stations of the Cross, which were already present in the first primitive church of via Tione.





Cappello and Pozzomoretto

From April 1946, the people of the districts Cappello and Pozzomoretto, which are part of the Parish of Madonna del Popolo, have celebrated Liberation Day and the danger that they escaped in April 1945, when the fleeing Germans breached the barracks, above the village, fully armed.

It was in 1957 that Don Egidio Baietta came up with the idea of the Villafranca Carnival, with the foundation of the Aurora Company and the parade of allegorical floats involving the population, but especially all the young people. This tradition also started for Pozzomoretto and Cappello, and continues to this day. The creation of the allegorical floats is now at a professional

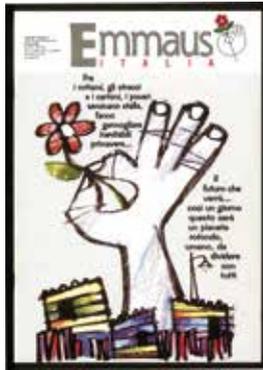
level. The activity has evolved and, over time, two groups have been formed: the "Cappello Pozzomoretto Carnival Group" which operates exclusively in the design and construction of wagons. The other is the "Cappello-Pozzomoretto Cultural Group", and has a more cultural purpose, with the organisation of events such as: Santa Lucia, the Nativity, the Feast of the *Befana*, the festival of 25th April and sports competitions. The proceeds are always donated to charity, with the motto "live with joy and sharing". With almost seventy years of activity, the two united groups, despite generational and organisational problems, continue with their original purpose of connection, solidarity, and social and civic engagement in the community of Villafranca.

Above: The logos of the Gruppo Carnevale and the Gruppo Culturale Cappello Pozzomoretto.

Alongside: moment of the awards ceremony of the "Memorial Marco Ceriani" (cycling race) and Michele Mattioli, a young man from Pozzomoretto, tragically missed by the community.

On the next page: Villafranca carnival, Pozzomoretto Cappello group.





The old school of Pozzomoreto, where the first people were welcomed, proved to be no longer adequate and it was necessary to find a larger place to “widen the reception” and organise the work of collecting and selling used material. The commitment has also been extended to support reception and development projects in various parts of the world. As the Abbé Pierre said: “the problem of housing is not a problem of goodness and good heart... it is a question of justice, a sacred question and we are cowards if we turn it into charity. Justice is not alms. It is a sacred duty, because there cannot be worthy life without decent housing. All inequality comes from the absence of homes or inadequate housing.”

The Community of Emmaus

Renzo Fior and his wife Silvana Nogarole, after vocational work in Villafranca, in which volunteer youths from various nations had participated, decided to stay and create a stable place to live according to the spirit of the Abbé Pierre, founder of the communities of Emmaus. The founding idea was of service to man in respect of his dignity, not out of charity or goodness but with the intention to live together, work together, and exist in solidarity with those who have been marginalised. They were welcomed by Fr Giuseppe Righini, the first parish priest of Madonna del Popolo, who introduced them to a group of people who have been active in the service with a collaboration that still continues. Don Giuseppe did not stop there, but made available a space in the church, still under construction, to the



first used goods markets. The old school of Pozzomoreto, where the first participants gathered, proved to be no longer adequate and it was necessary to find a larger place to “increase the reception” and facilitate the gathering and sale of used goods in the best way. The commitment has also been extended to support reception and development projects in various parts of the world. In Villafranca, Emmaus actively participates in the social life with the establishment of the Cooperativa SOS Casa, because as Abbé Pierre said: “The problem of housing is not a problem of goodwill or good heart... it is a question of justice, a sacred question and we are cowards if we turn it into charity. Justice is not alms. It is a sacred duty, because there cannot be a worthy life without decent housing. It is from the absence of homes, or houses that are too inadequate, that all the inequalities start.”



Above: Aerial view of the current headquarters of the Emmaus community of Villafranca with the workshop, the exhibition of the market, the Renzo Fior family house and the guest quarters.

Below: The Renzo Fior family, guests, and friends of the Emmaus community of Villafranca on the occasion of a visit of Abbé Pierre.

ODE TO VILAFRANCA

Hurray, hurray, Villafranca! Queen of towns. Everyone bows to her for her history.

*Famous for the Treaty between Francis and Bonaparte Here King Umberto
with the (episode of the) Square was greatly honoured!*

We do not talk about her beauty because there are few towns so majestic: she really seems like a city!

For trade it almost certainly resembles it (a city) Here lots of people live with fairs and markets.

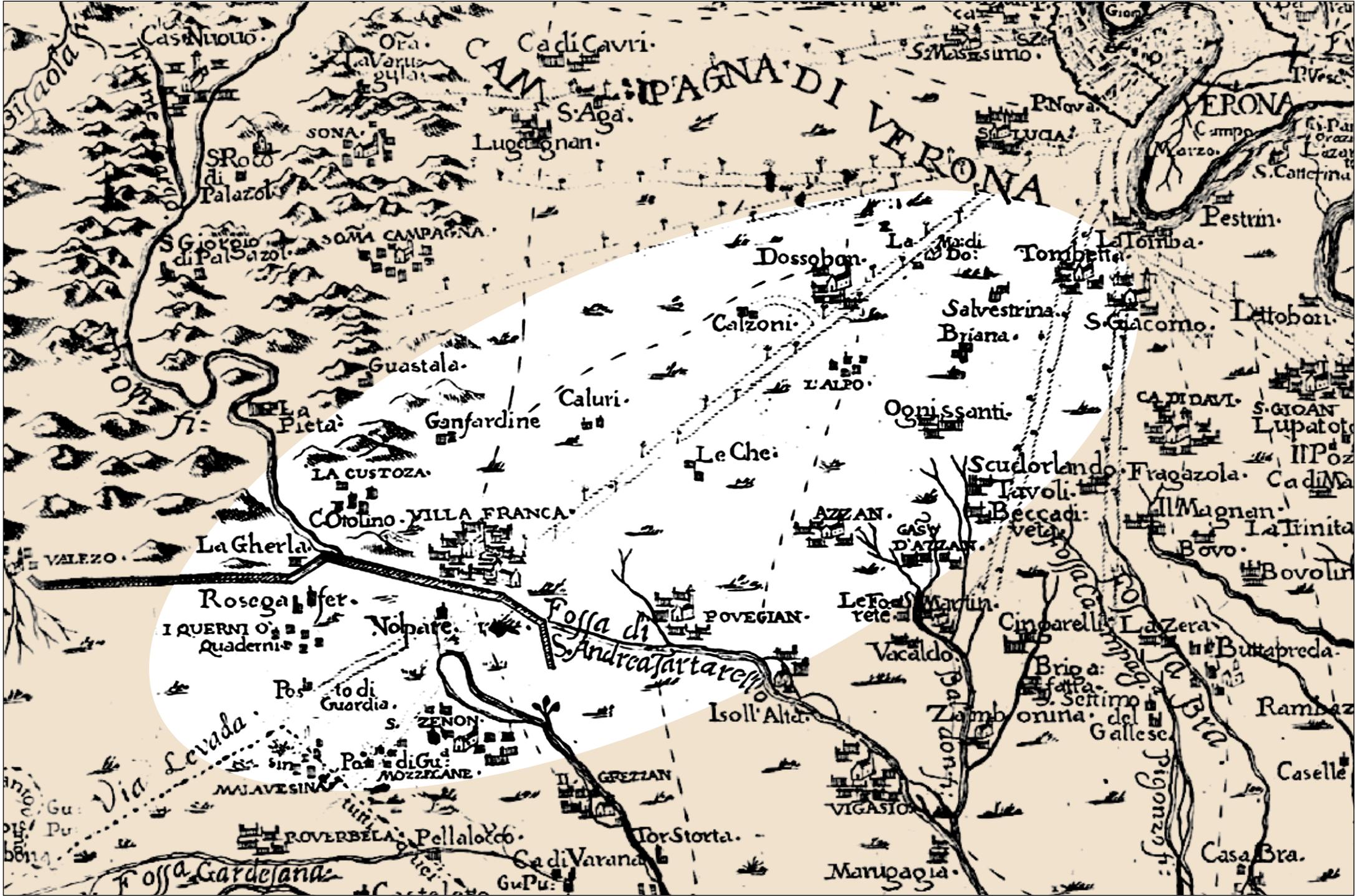
*And then it seems like a city because of the modern church, impressive and well-designed;
and because of the ancient Castle.*

So hurray Villafranca Queen of towns Everyone bows to her she really seems like a city.

1911 - Maestro Gaetano Marchiori



TOWNS AND DISTRICTS



Overview of the "Verona Campaign" crossed by the "Via Levada" the Roman road via Postumia that intersects Villafranca and its hamlets.

THE TOWN OF QUADERNI

by *Ilaria Malini*

Quaderni, a little hamlet of Villafranca, is 5 kilometres from the main town and as of 31st December 2016, numbered 1829 inhabitants. The name “*Quaterni*” or “*Quaterna*” is of Roman origin. It is linked to the ancient division of the land following the end of the “*Bellum Perusinum*” (41-40 BC).

Most probably, in fact, the Republic of Rome, after the confiscation of the Mantua territories owned by the “*Cesaricidi*”, had decided to create plots of land in the “*Vicus*”, to assign to veterans in the measure of “*Quaterna iugera*” or rather “four *iugeri* of land” (each of 2500 square metres).

In the middle ages, it became controlled by the “*Burgus Liber*” (9th March 1185), but only on 4th July 1583, was the church built in the autonomous parish. In 1671, there was a quarrel concerning the payment of tithes because the inhabitants of Quaderni refused to pay taxes to Villafranca. They cited a privilege in force before 1407, but then had to pay a penalty of five hundred *ducati*. In the following centuries, the town

continued its growth in the style of the capital of Veneto. Quaderni boasts the presence of many monuments, including some historical buildings.

The structure of the inhabited centre is simple; there is the square and a few secondary roads.

It is advisable, however, to start a visit from the church of San Matteo, the most famous architectural structure, which owes its origins to the primitive chapel under the jurisdiction of the parish church of Villafranca, restored and enlarged from 1713.

The facade evokes the form and values of a severe and repetitive classical art, while evocative Baroque interiors are decorated with frescoes by Federico Bellomi and the paintings of local painter Dima Orando (1959/1979-1983).

Certainly not to be missed during a visit is also the Villa Suzzi-Gazzola, which still requires some restoration.

The majestic building complex (built in 1600 but renovated in its current form around 1800), retains the geometric symmetry of its parts, in the choreog-



raphy of the large garden surrounded by arcades and crowned by the Oratory of St. Joseph, the unmistakable sign of a certain classical taste.

Finally, of great suggestiveness and full of significance for the history of the small town are the countless votive structures built along the streets. They were built as a sign of devotion to the saints or in memory of popular

religious beliefs handed down over the centuries. In relation to what has been said, we remember that near the outskirts there is an ancient oratory built in 1637 and dedicated to the “*Regina Pacis*” which houses, inside, a statue of the Madonna unearthed from the ground.

But Quaderni is also a town that is very sensitive to the promotion of cul-

Panoramic view of Quaderni.



"Compianto sul Cristo morto", oil on canvas, unknown artist, 16th century, m77x96 cm.

ture and territory. There is great desire to show the vivacity and the love for theatre, music and the game of *tamburello*.

These activities have often created close bonds for many reasons, guaranteeing the continuation of many leisure activities.

Fundamental for the musical formation of young people was the *Corpo Bandistico*, a group among the oldest in the Veneto region, which, assisted by the Majorettes (1975), celebrated its 170th anniversary in 2013.

Particular care and attention has been given equally to the sporting needs of the inhabitants by enhancing the range of existing services and creating new

opportunities for socialising and leisure activities.

Since 1971, the *Polisportiva Quaderni* has been active as a non-profit association which aims to promote sport in all its forms. But the town was also for a certain period the "Italian capital of *tamburello*", due to the supremacy of A.T. Belladelli who won six consecutive titles in the Serie A national championship between 1961 and 1966. We must also mention the *Sagra di San Matteo*, a traditional village festival linked to the patron saint and held at the end of September. This is an event that embodies the culture of the area and offers visitors and residents many opportunities for fun and entertainment.



The pictorial cycle of the parish church, of which don Gaetano Quattrina is the priest. The important pictorial cycle is the work of the painter Federico Bellomi.

In the apsidal basin is painted "The glory of St. Matthew", a large tempera of 45 square metres in which the apostle Matthew is depicted in the centre. He is shown in the act of writing his gospel, surrounded by angels and prophets of the Old Testament who pay homage to the tax collector elevated to the honors of the altars. Above the entrance door "The vocation of St. Matthew" which refers to the school of Athens of Raphael in the Vatican with characters of the village, another large tempera of 25 square metres. On the vault of the nave, there is the representation of the mysteries of the Holy Rosary and on the sides, the expulsion of Adam and Eve, and Christ the New Adam and paintings of the countryman Dima Orando representing the Archangel Raphael and Tobias.





La banda di Quaderni

The first evidence of the Quaderni band dates back to 1845. It is a lithographic representation, in the historical archive of the “*Bacanal del Gnoco*” of Verona in which the band participated.

Around 1900, there were two band organisations in Quaderni: “The band of the priests” and “The band of socialists” which always competed with each other.

In the village feasts, they performed in front of the tobacconist with the master Arturo Barlottini and in front



of the church with the master Sante Magalini or the curate don Angelo Bertelli.

During the Fascist period, the spirit of the band faded and during the war almost disappeared.

Activity was limited to only a few elements, mainly because many young

people had left for the war. After the nefarious period of the war, with the arrival in Quaderni of a young curate, Don Giuseppe Tosi, musical activity was increased, also with the support of the *Direzione Didattica* and the enthusiasm of the maestro Domenico De Rossi.

On the previous page: The band and the majorettes group today.

Below: The band in a photo of 8th August 1940.



1972 marked the entry of some girls as instrumentalists and, in 1975, great innovation with the formation of the “Corpo bandistico folk con majorettes di Quaderni”.

This led to renewed life of the group, who combined music of all kinds, arranged by the master Jan Langosz and directed by maestro Domenico Rossi, with folk performances by the majorettes. This facilitated ever-expanding success in Italy and abroad.

Currently the group is made up of thirty band members and twenty majorettes, who continue the free courses of modern dance, rhythm and parades. After almost 170 years of life,



between alternate periods of success and difficulty, the “Quaderni Band”, now “Corpo bandistico folk con majorettes di Quaderni”, continues and improves its activity in the line traced by the founders.

To the side: Detail of the lithograph “Bacanal del Gnoco” of 1845, in which the band of Quaderni is also represented.

Below: The band and majorettes with maestro Domenico Rossi in a public show.



The “Puoti”

In Villafranca there are the sfogliatine: round, elegant, multi-layered and made with butter. They are an important sweet treat and all the Villafranchesi are proud of them.

But also, not far away, there is a sweet that is slowly making its way beyond the borders. These are the “puoti” of Quaderni, the traditional dessert of Santa Lucia. It is a very simple recipe with few ingredients: eggs, milk and flavourings. In the old days, during the long winter, work in the fields was suspended, as snow covered everything in abundance. There were no games rooms and the place where people met was the stable. Here, the stories and events of the village were retold, and the children learned nursery rhymes dedicated to Santa Lucia: “Santa Lussia la vien de note con le scarpe tute rote...”.

Little girls dreamed of receiving a rag doll and little boys a wooden toy for children. Then there was the sweet treat, with the much-discussed taste: the “puoti”.

They were short pastry cakes with an anthropomorphic shape, mixed with flour, eggs, lard and sugar. Each family had its own secret recipe and its own “puoto” shape.

Then there were apples that represented health and beauty, the anti-evil, and walnuts, like both a fruit and seed at the same time, and therefore a sign of life. In the morning, there was a party, a show of gifts, a little taste of the “puoti”.

Many years have passed and still today the tradition of “puoti” in Quaderni is more alive than ever and the Vanoni oven has been the guardian of this tradition for over seventy years.



THE DISTRICT OF ROSEGAFERRO

by *Maria Cristina Cordioli*

The district of Rosegafarro, situated in the south of Villafranca, numbered 1489 residents on 31st December 2016. It is recurrent in geographical maps like that of Almagià (1440) and others. In the fresco map that represents Veneto in the gallery of geographical maps



Il contenuto specifico dell'epigrafe, decifrato solo in parte a causa della scomparsa di alcune parti del testo, riguarda il permesso di sepoltura accordato dal locale comandante della stazione ad un tale "Sosius".

Riportiamo il testo contenuto nell'epigrafe con la parziale ricostruzione fatta da Franzosi:

D(is) M(anibus) PERMISSM NATIMS(impum)

IUMENTARIOR(un) PORT(ea) JOV(iae) (.....)

SOSIUS (.....) (...) SSFN(...) (...)URNNO (...) (...) ? (.....)

La traduzione probabile è:

"Agli dei Mani, con il permesso dei trasportatori di carri,
aventi sede alla porta Jovia.

Sosio dedicò il sepolcro... (ad un tale il cui nome termina con "urno")"

*The funeral tomb "il sasso"
was rediscovered in 1968
by the teacher Mario
Franzosi.*

of Vatican museum (1480), the town is marked with the name of Cauriana (or Cavriana). Tradition dictates that the name Rosegafarro derives from the fact that the particularly stony land of the surrounding countryside consumed many of the citizens' ploughs, and from this comes the expression "*rosega el fero*".

The first residential settlement dates back to the Roman era, as shown by the funerary tomb from the second century AD. It was found in 1968 by the historic Villafrancan Mario Franzosi, and is still visible today in the perimeter wall of the complex known as *Palazzo o Corte Roma*.



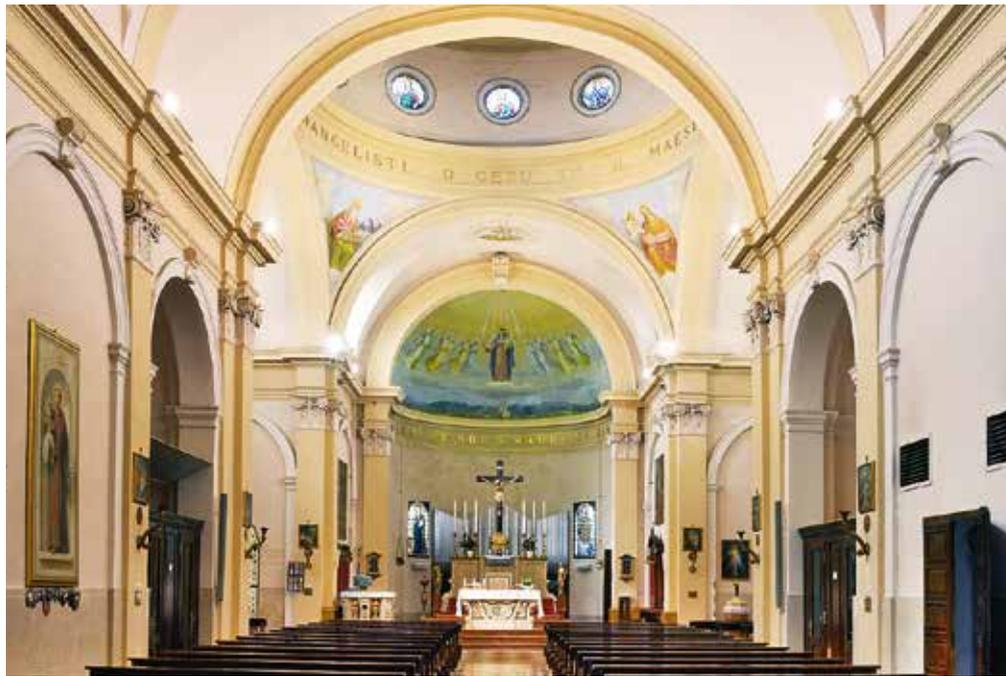
The epigraph recalls the existence of a "*statio*", for the exchange of horses of Roman couriers every 10 miles (15km), which is the distance of Villafranca from Verona on the via Postumia. The first settlement was developed around the first oratory church, located at the beginning of the village (via Dossi). Not much information is available about this church, only that was dedicated to St. Ignatius of Loyola and property of the Marquis of Canosa. Later, it was passed to the Zamboni family and then deconsecrated after the construction of the new church (1754). Around the new church, built in Baroque style

and dedicated to San Girolamo Doctor, the urban context of the village has developed, forming the only long artery, today via Principe Amedeo, which overlooks most of the houses in the village. In the 1800s, Rosegafarro was in the middle of bloody battles of the Risorgimento. In terms of religious affiliation, the town was part of the parish of Saints Peter and Paul of Villafranca, which had a parish priest or dean.

There were many distinguished rectors, who left their mark until 18th November 1928, the year of construction of the parish. Among them, the venerable don Giuseppe Girelli stands out, first

*Aerial view of the centre
of Rosegafarro.*

The parish church of 1754 transformed into the current form (parish priest Don Enrico Favalli). Inside there is a large fresco in the apse of Gaetano Miolato (1885-1960) *Madonna Ausiliatrice* with angels at her feet with the surrounding countryside and the church of Rosegafarro also shown. On the portal, a fresco of the last supper by Fides Sometti. In the presbytery, paintings of: on the left, "San Girolamo, San Sebastiano and San Rocco with angel" of the 17th century. On the right, San Girolomo painting, attributed to Antonio Giarola, known as the Cavalier Cup (1595-1665) from the old Oratory. On either side of the altar there are two painted porticos from the 16th century, surrounded by a frame of colored marbles depicting San Pio on the right and San Gaudenzio on the left. On the left, view of the chapel that preserves the remains of the venerable Giuseppe Girelli.



rector and then the first parish priest of Rosegafarro.

The small properties, the industriousness of the population, and agriculture (peaches, wheat, kiwi, cattle) brought a certain wealth into the hamlet.

The various parish priests who followed made various transformations in the parish structures and in the church, transforming it and embellishing it with frescoes by Gaetano Miolato. In 1986, with Don Silvio Cordioli, there came the *Circolo Noi*, the new rectory, the children's school and several associations.

The various associations: Noi, Ana, "Il Sasso" group, the folk choral group

"I Campagnoli", 3P group, Alpo and Fidas are the sign of a community always ready and willing to improve life in Rosegafarro.

Folk groups of Rosegafarro "Il Sasso" and "I Campagnoli"

The folk culture group "Il Sasso", started in 1962 from the enthusiasm of a group of young people who, as a fun activity, decided to build a rudimentary carnival wagon. This has continued over the years with subsequent generations.

The maestro Quintino Cordioli, founder of the choral folk Group "I Campagnoli" in performance among the peaches in bloom.



More than 150 people participate; among them designers, painters, welders, mechanics, tailors and dancers: they all offer their skills and experience in the winter months, up to the carnival, for the construction of allegorical wagons that are entirely designed and built in the town.

From the first simple and rudimentary wagons, the construction has gradually refined over time, until today you can see to the use of mechanical, hydraulic and lighting effects that are used in the allegorical floats. These are widely admired and often win prizes in Veronese and

non-Veronese carnival competitions. The masks of the group are the King and the Queen of the Stone, inspired by the traditional stony land of Rosegafarro.

“We will call them *I Campagnoli* (The Countrymen), we represent the country in which we live”. With these words of the master Quintino Cordioli, who died prematurely, the group’s life began in 1972. Their repertoire includes original songs and dances of the past, typical of Veronese and Veneto folklore, enriched by original sounds and colours. All this is the result of very meticulous



Photo of the group “I Campagnoli” posing at the castle of Villafranca.

research among the people of the town and texts of the sector. In fact, the participants wear the “daytime” dress of the early 1900s, typical of the Villafranca Veronese area.

Now the maestro Adalberto Ferrari and President Ettore Cordioli direct the group, which consists of about twenty men and women of considerable skill. During these years, editions of the “International Festival of Folklore” were organised and numerous events participated in. The name of Rosegafarro always has always been represented with honour and pride in Italy and abroad.



Above: Allegorical chariot on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the group “Il Sasso”.

Below: Allegorical chariot of 2006.

THE DISTRICT OF PIZZOLETTA

by Gianni Tovo and Elisabetta Zanolli

The district of Pizzoletta is located south of the capital and includes three districts: Pizzoletta, Volpare di sopra and Volpare di sotto. As of December 31st 2016, there were 1553 inhabitants. The village is located in an agricultural area with crops of peaches, kiwis, and other food products.

Its name probably derives from the noble family Picolus, perhaps derived from the generic name of the lower Latin *placola* (*piazzola*), attested in various writings starting from the 11th century.

In a parchment from the year 1035, there is a *Pizolo Kaura*; in Acts of the 1600s and 1700s (Municipal Archives of Villafranca in the Verona State Archives section) the Picoleta, the Via del Picol, and, in contrast to the Picos, recur. The hypothesis that the etymology has a geographical justification with the meaning of “Small tongue of land” is not to be dismissed.

The main agglomeration develops along the main road 62 that connects Verona to Mantova, and a perpendicular road



The square of Pizzoletta with church, rectory and nursery school.



that develops towards the east. The main infrastructures are: church, kindergarten and primary school, community centre, bank, post office near the church and the respective square. On the secondary artery, the residential part develops, reaching the two hamlets: Volpare di sopra and Volpare di sotto. Here, there is a church and monument in memory of the fallen built by the inhabitants of the district with the collaboration of Ancr. The

“Caseta de le Volpare” was blessed on November 1st 1952. The expansion of the town has always been limited only to small subdivisions adjacent to the existing area, as well as small reorganisations of the existing town. The history of the community of Pizzoletta follows the life of the parish that before (1911) was separate from the parish of Villafranca and assigned to San Zeno di Mozzecane. From 1951, there was the ambitious project of

View from the top of the cross that from the center of the village (the state 62 of the Cisa) leads to the towns of Volpare di Sopra and Volpare di Sotto.

the architect Magnaguagno and the surveyor of Pizzoletta Giuseppe Ferrari of a new church and parish structures.

On November 1st 1952, the first stone was laid and blessed for the construction of a “church-like hall”; its construction was a business in which the whole population participated enthusiastically. On 5th July 1953, there was the inauguration by the bishop of Verona, Monsignor Girolamo Cardinale and subsequently, the works for the rectory were finally completed on April 25th 1954. The bishop’s curia named the new parish Mary Immaculate of Pizzoletta, and

appointed the parish priest Don Eliseo Moschini, who made his official entry on September 12th 1954.

In 1962, the parish cinema was built and the “church-hall”, which had to be temporary, definitively became a church, abandoning the ambitious initial project. In 1999, commissioned by the architect Luciano Zanolli, the parish rooms were upgraded, transforming the façade in classic style with a rosette with the theme of Mary. The church was consecrated on 7th December 2003 by the bishop of Verona, Monsignor Roberto Carraro, and parish priest Don Alfonso Trettene.



The old church before the transformation by the architect Luciano Zanolli.



Above: The social centre of Pizzoletta with theatre, activity rooms and large courtyard for parties.

Below: “La ceseta de le Volpare” dedicated to Madonna Assunta with the monument to the fallen, built in 1952 by the inhabitants of the town and by the association of veterans.



THE DISTRICT OF CALURI

by *Lorenzo Antonini*



The district of Caluri is the smallest of the Municipality of Villafranca, due to the number of inhabitants who, on 31st December 2016, numbered 619. It is about five kilometres from the capital and rises north of the resurgence line to 63m above sea level.

Its origins are lost to time and there are different hypotheses on the meaning of its name: quadrivium (crossing of four roads), columns (kernel), quernus (oak), but none are truly convincing. It is most likely that the meaning is to be found in Cà Luri as a contraction (Cà Lauri) of



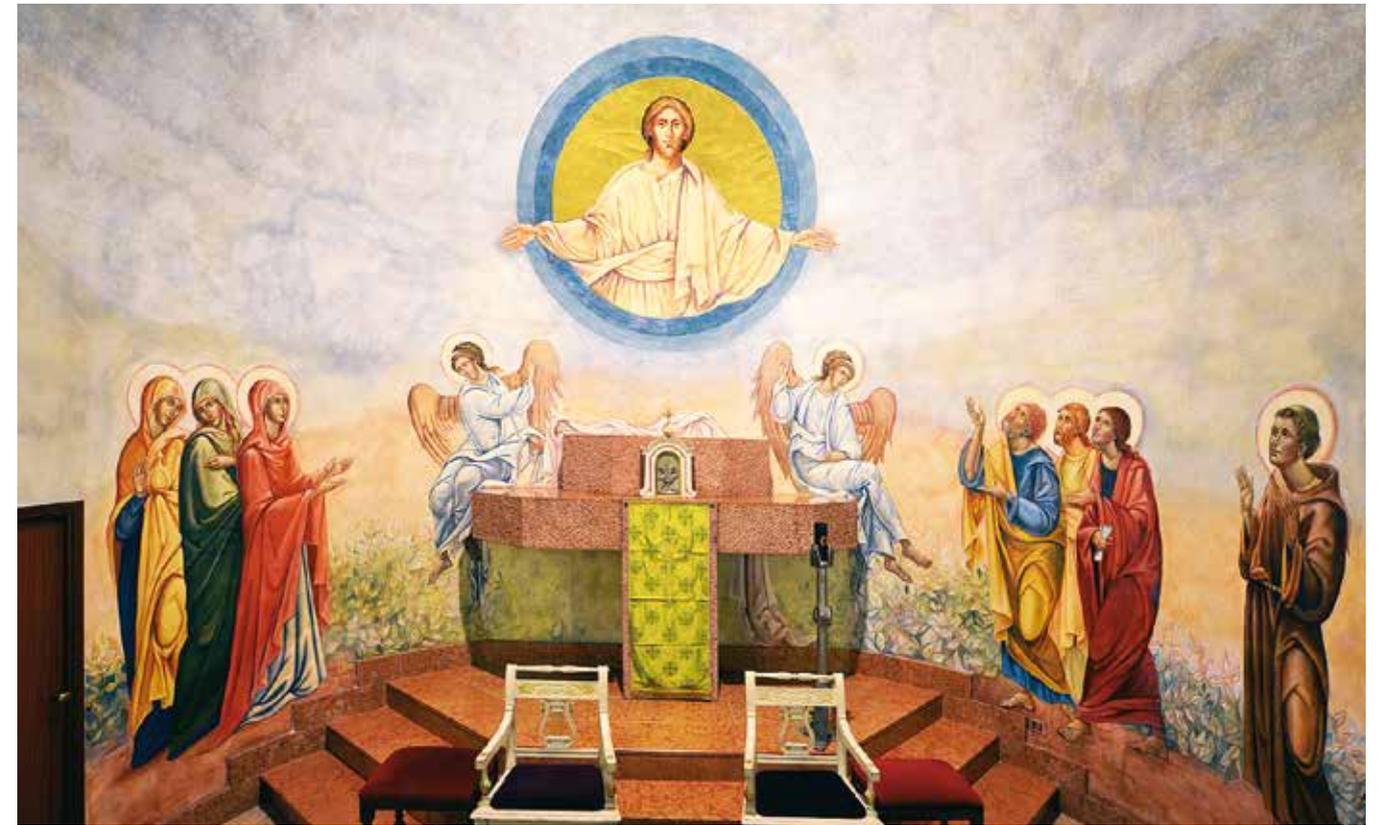
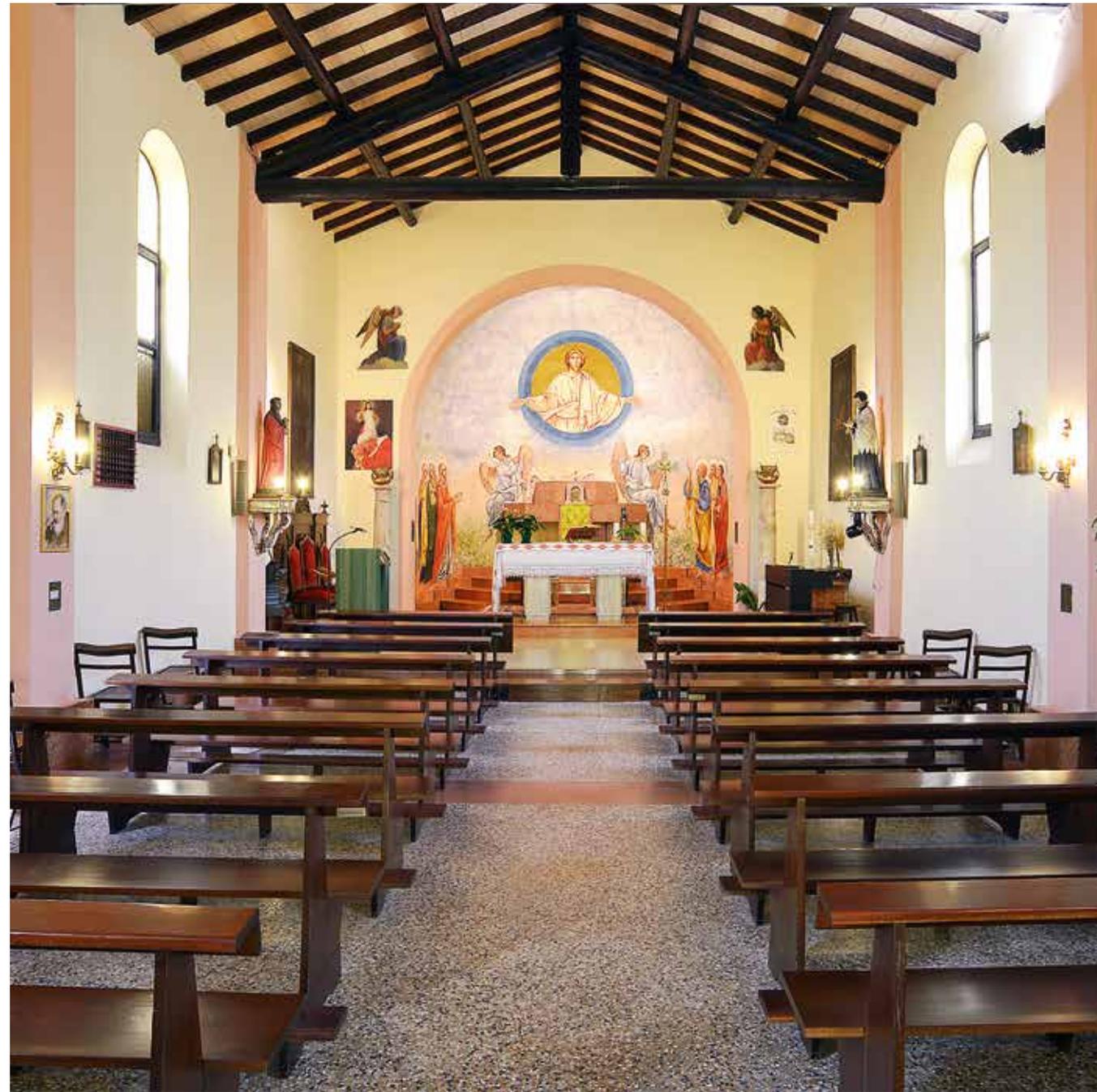
The new church and the gravestone to commemorate its consecration on 26th March 1911. You can see the old neglected oratory between the cultivations; now privately owned.



some toponym that could refer to the cultivation of the laurel or to a sacred place dedicated to the god Apollo. The first written documentation, as far as we know, on this location dates to 1530. This is when the bishop of Verona, Gian Matteo Giberti, after visiting the parish of Villafranca on Wednesday, October 15th, on his return journey to Verona, stopped in Caluri to visit a small private oratory church, which was open to the public that attended the parish church of Villafranca. In the first decade of the 1900s, a new church was built on a piece of land near

the old oratory church. It was consecrated on 26th March 1911, as a wall plaque on the front attests. Some of the furnishings of the previous oratory were brought, including two canvases, into the new church. The two canvases are positioned on the sides of the presbytery's arch and represent Saint Francis, receiving the stigmata, and Saint Anthony of Padua with the Child Jesus. At the end of the Second World War, the reconstruction of the new airport resumed with the assistance of new families. The increase of the population brought some services like a preschool,

Overview of the village of Caluri with sports facilities in the foreground and the aircraft runway above.



the elementary school (1974) and also some new buildings (1977). These were built in the area previously used by the military, connected to the airport. In the church dedicated to St. Anthony of Padua built in 1911, there was the reconstruction of the presbytery with the new altar (1988) and the apse fresco by the Cappuccini friar Natanaele di Villafranca. This shows the risen Christ with two angels on the sides and two groups of witnesses of the resurrection: on the right the apostles Peter, James and John

and on the left the Madonna, Mary Magdalene and Mary of Cleophas. The development of the airport has had an impact on the life of the small community of Caluri, which nevertheless keeps the social context alive with new young families, the provision of modern sports facilities, the activities of sports clubs, the annual festival, and the care of the centenary parish Church. Taken from "Caluri nel tempo" from the 16th to 20th centuries by Lorenzo Antonini.

On the previous page: general view of the inside of the church.

Above: In 1988, the new altar with the fresco in the apse of the risen Christ with the two angels on the sides and the witnesses of the resurrection. On the left, the three Marys and to the right the apostles Peter, James, John and Saint Anthony of Padua, patron of the parish. Work of the Cappuccini friar Father Natanaele di Villafranca.

THE CONTRADA FORNACI

by *Pietro Spellini*

To the east of Villafranca, between the Via Postumia and the Grezzanella, is the district of Fornaci, a town bound by the Superintendency of Artistic and Environmental Heritage for the 18th century court complex, the Sundials and the church. In 2008, during excavation work near the court, in order

to lay a methane pipeline, a wall was discovered. The work of the archaeologists brought to light a rectangular structure of about 5x6 metres similar to the Roman furnaces found in via Albere in Verona. Also during the same works, three small sites, three tombs, were found. Two of



The ancient Roman furnace discovered in 2008. After the ritual reliefs, it was adequately covered.



them were empty, but the third contained remarkably complete contents. Along the southern side of this tomb, the bones of a dog were found; the master and his dog lay nearby. The tombs, with a certain date indicated by the coin, pointed to the Roman origins of the site and to the evidence of settlements in the area. The documentary history of the district, to date, begins with an act by which the abbot of San Zeno di Verona, Riprando, renewed the fiefdom to Carlaxario di Cavra, indicating a plot in the locality of Fornase containing vines.

The main court

A major turning point in the history of the district took place in 1739, with the purchase of the company by the Betti brothers. They proceeded to renovate the court, building a manor house in 18th century style, with Venetian palladian floors, square beams and walls with frescoes. These were all part of the Betti restructuring, which incorporated a dovecote from the 1600s, a stable with studded tuff pillars and a *castaldo* house with a series of sundials. Near the court, a beautiful church was built in pure 18th century style.

Exterior of the courtyard with the dovecote to the south and the 1744 manor church to the north.

The church

Inside the church there is a copy of the cross by Pietro Tacca, the bronze Madonna by Annachiara Spellini, the precious altar in polychrome marble and the 18th century altarpiece depicting Madonna with Child, Angels and San Giovanni Nepomuceno.

The small church, by Betti, dates back to 1744. The correspondence for civil authorisation between Betti and the Doge Aloisio Pisani, and between Betti, the bishop of Verona Giovanni Bragadino and the parish priest of Villafranca don Giuseppe Volpe for the ecclesiastical part, is present in the archive of the Curia of Verona. The church, capable of holding about 80 people, contains

a floor according to the Veronese tradition, a chequered board in red and white Verona marble pieces. A step leads into the area of the altar which in turn is elevated two steps up. The altar with inlaid marble, then precious and of canonical dimensions, is made of the stone of Ranghieri, operating during this period in Verona.

The attention to detail and the pure 18th century style of the façade and the interior make one think of a renowned

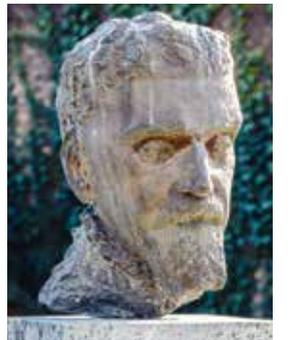


The sundials

architect. Since then, the church has always played its institutional role, connected to the parish of Villafranca and, a few years ago, Caluri, for holy masses and the various religious ceremonies for the inhabitants of the court and the surrounding villages. Every May, the Holy Rosary is recited and at the end of the month, there is the Holy Mass with the procession among the houses of the district. The Christmas Eve Mass is always very popular.

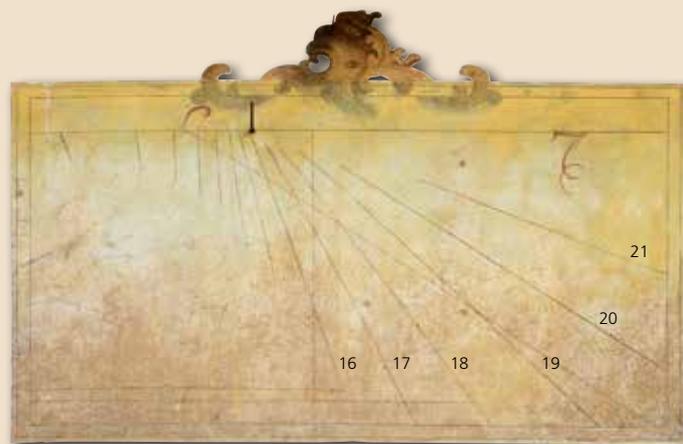
Characteristic of the court are “the sundials that, inside the court, mark the movement of the sun”, as Barbarani wrote (sculpture at the back of the court). (*Le cante de le bele nosse: le do ciese te terzo libro, IV canzoniere*).

They represent the various ways to count the hours that were in fashion in the 18th century. There is no similar site in Europe with such a variety of sundials.



Sculpture of Berto Barbarani created by Luigi Spellini.





1 - Italian hours, the noon is at 6:00 pm, photo taken in October at midday, (TME), the numbers have been added to the photos.



2 - French or ultramontane hours, the midday is at 12.



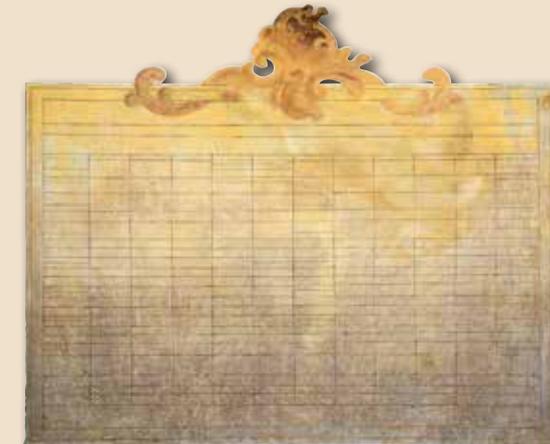
3 - Seasonal sundial, photo of early December.



4 - Babylonian sundial, moving hours, rises about seven in the TME, (beginning of the day), the noon of the TME, arrives at five of Babylonian hours.



5 - Lunar meridian, present very few specimens in Europe.



6 - Summary or explanatory framework.

The sundials

The first marks the Italian hours, the particular time structure followed in Veneto and Friuli in the 1400s, which lasted until the defeat of Napoleon. The sunset marked the end of the day and the beginning of the following day. There were 24 hours from sunset, and the time of midday varied with the changing of the sunset time.

The second marks the ultramontane or European hours, a system in vogue in northern Europe. The day started at midnight, and after twelve hours there was noon. They are also called French hours, because Napoleon imposed them in most of Europe by removing most of the other types from the walls. Today it is the type of sundial that we are used to seeing painted on the walls of houses.

The third marks the seasons of the sun, the "seasonal timepiece of an agricultural nature" as defined by Forlati. (P.F. Forlati, Segna-tempo "veronensis" pg. 78-85, ed. Cariverona). There is a part of a sundial with French hours between the sign of the summer and winter solstice and crossed by the equestrian line. As the length of the shadow varied at midday on the dial, the seasons could be identified.

The fourth marks the hours of Babylon or Boheme, or of the east, where the sunrise marked the beginning of the day and then to count the hours, the Italian system started from sunset, the Babylonian from dawn. The hour read at noon was variable with the changing of the sunrise. It was in use more than 2,500 years ago by the Babylonians, and is unknown when it arrived in Europe. We know that the Emperor Charles V, in 1360, decreed that such hours be adopted in Bohemia and Hungary.

The fifth meridian is a lunar nocturnal timepiece. The time between two new moons is around 30 days. The moon makes its shadow in the same place, but every day rises an hour later, which is why it climbs a sundial line. For this reason, it is not possible to write hours that move every day on the sundial. It seems to be the only example in the world.

THE DISTRICT OF DOSSOBUONO

by Lorenzo Antonini

Inhabitants as of 31st December 2016: 6,390.

In our time, as memory becomes shorter and shorter, talking about the past can mean discussing things that seem distant. Especially for us, accustomed to thinking of ourselves as products of civilisation and progress, it is difficult to feel connected to the past,

convinced as we are that before there was only ignorance and misery. Thus, a sense of self-sufficiency arises in men of our time that makes them feel a lack of “belonging” and this is very often the cause of the deep crisis of our lives. So we will try to rediscover, as far as possible, that umbilical cord that, whether we want it to or not, ties us to the



The first church of Dossobuono “piantata e costruita” on 27th March 1311, dedicated to the worship of Maddalena with the old parish asylum on the right.



past, convinced that our identity will emerge clearer and more defined from this rediscovery.

The story of Dossobuono, as far as we know, started about 1,000 years ago from a parchment containing a deed of gift, in 1037. However, we must go back a few centuries to be able to reconstruct, with more precision, the lives of the people who mainly worked the land. They were a few families of peasants who worked on land owned by others, but despite this, felt so alive that they belonged to a community with its own identity. This sense of community was solidified with the construction of the church in 1311, thus creating a place and a space that

everyone could gather to discuss and make decisions about their problems. This assembly, called “vicinia”, was made up of the heads of the families who elected a *massaro*, or administrator of community property, and some councillors.

At a time when the state did not provide any kind of assistance, but was punctually present to collect taxes, it was necessary to provide for the maintenance of roads, to help each other in case of bad harvests or destruction due to the passage of troops, to provide for the maintenance of the church and the priest’s salary.

The town was formed by the progressive unification of three distinct nuclei,

18th century map of the town of Dossobuono, made for a trial between the Municipality of Villafranca and the Vertua family regarding the opening of a tavern by the two contenders.



Villa Alessandri is so called after the last owners, the Alessandri brothers who left their possessions to build the children's hospital in Verona, as they had no heirs. This villa, with its adjoining agricultural properties, was to supply milk and organic vegetables to the hospital's kitchens.

once called *contrade*, which were respectively Torre, Maddalena and Dossobuono. Each had particular social and administrative aspects that distinguished it from the others.

The district of Torre in fact developed around a *domus dei Templari*, enjoyed administrative autonomy, forming an autonomous commune. In the 18th century, the Alessandri villa was built in the middle of a vast property belonging to the Zignoli family.

The Maddalena district developed around the old church and, from the 16th century, enjoyed fiscal and administrative autonomy through privileges granted to the Vertua family. The district of Dossobuono, which is located

halfway between the other two, where the new parish church now stands, developed around a court of the Vertua and was administratively dependent on Villafranca. If we analyse a little more closely the community of Dossobuono in the 17th and 18th centuries, we see that it was made up of about 200 people, divided into about 20 families. Of these families, five or six, owners of few fields of land, constituted the stable core, while the rest, linked to sheep farming or to manual labour, stayed in the area when circumstances allowed.

Frequently, in fact, the workers were subject to the seizure of assets, since they were obliged to pay taxes in mon-



ey or in kind, even in case of drought, hail or destruction of crops. They stayed in the community for a few years, then moved elsewhere and began again.

Membership of the community came about in two ways: either by direct membership, as was the case of the few families who owned land, or by hospitality, and this was the case of the majority of people. However, no-one felt excluded. This no longer happens in our "civil" society where each of us, uprooted by his own past, is concerned with building barriers and defences, often leaving those who are more of a burden out on the margins, or struggling to accept our rules of existence.

This situation did not end at the beginning of our century, giving rise to events that prove, for better or worse, the vitality of the town. In fact, there were also envies, rivalries and gossip, fuelled by the overbearing desire for someone to emerge, but there was also reciprocal support, based on the sense of belonging to the same social group. Two events are significant.

As previously mentioned, the main concrete sign of the community was the church. All the townsfolk were committed to its improvement and enlargement, often in competition with other communities. When the church needed work, as far as possible, the best available craftsmen and materials

The parish church of Dossobuono, a gift from Augusto and Adele Maria Mariotto, designed by the engineer Enea Ronca and consecrated on 25th October 1945. Imposing and majestic, with the pictorial cycle of Gaetano Miolato (1885-1960) inside: in the basin of the presbytery the Christ Pantocratore adored by the angels, on the sides "the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes" and "The Last Supper", above the entrance portal "Jesus enters triumphantly in Jerusalem" and other frescoes inspired by Giotto and Fra Angelico. Also canvases from the old church "Mary Magdalene in ecstasy" - work by Pietro Liberi (1605-1687) and "Altarpiece with five Saints" by Anselmo Predaglio dated 1778 and commissioned by the Vertua family. Further, two canvases donated by Msgr. Alberto Piazzini in 1998 and in 2013 a representation of "La vergine con Bambino a figura di Santo", probably the work of the friar San Felice da Cantalice (1515-1587) and the other, "Vision of Sant'Ignazio di Loyola with the Holy Family", attributed to Saverio Dalla Rosa (1741-1821). A classic crypt that recalls Roman basilicas. At the entrance, the chapel of the fallen with the altar of the old church.



The majestic presbytery with the Christ Pantocratore with baroque altars at the side with wooden statues of Madonna and of Sacro Cuore from the church of San Sebastian in Verona (adjacent to the civic library). It was destroyed during the second World War.

were sought, and often with very heavy costs. In order to obtain the necessary money for such works, the inhabitants devised two sources of income that engaged everyone.

The women were allocated the role of processing hemp, which they spun in the evening during the so-called «*filò*», and was then sold in the city; while the men, during the winter, went with carriages to collect stone from the «*ma-*

rogne» to fix the roads or to build the railway embankment. The proceeds of all this work naturally went into the coffers of the community. Volunteering is therefore not just a novelty of our time. On the other hand, a definite voracious opposition characterised the community every time someone tried to tarnish their rights or alter their identity. This feature seems to have considerably diminished, almost certainly due to the

progressive blurring of the collective identity. The capacity for gestures of solidarity remains, however, and is rooted in a distant past, when it was very often required.

It was the collective taxation that provided for the parish priest, from the 16th to the 18th century, and the constitution, in the last century, of a rural fund that financed the purchase of seeds and tools for agriculture, and the construction of houses for the poorer members of the community.

It was just before the disappearance of this environment and this climate that some initiatives took root in the last century, among which the Band and the Little Fraternity deserve to be remembered.

The band of Dossobuono

One morning in 1921, there was an exchange/bet between a group of young people and the parish priest, Fr. Angelo



The private oratory, dedicated to the Holy Cross, is part of the adjoining Pantini-Bembo Ruzzenenti court in the Calzoni district, towards the airport. The construction work began in 1688, at the initiative of Don Giovanni Pantini, and ended in February 1690 with the celebration of the first mass. During the wars of the Risorgimento, it was also used as a parish church, when it was too dangerous to frequent the state road travelled by the armies. Inside, a canvas (182x99cm) by an unknown artist of the 18th century represents Christ crosses with eight mourners at the foot of the cross.



Menegazzi, who immediately accepted the provocation. The young people would take part in a parish meeting if the priest would lay the foundations for founding the band. Although initially there were difficulties, in the end it led to the young band's participation in festivals and parties in the district.

After the crisis of the war years, in 1945 the activity of the band resumed thanks to Giacinto Fantoni who, with Battista Massagrande and the young priest don Alberto Piazzini, recovered instruments and music scores and set up the band again. Since then, the history of the band has continued uninterrupted until today; a story that has impacted upon the life of the community of Dossobuono. In 1952, the Band Corps was

named after the young Dino Fantoni, son of Giacinto, who died of serious illness at only 15 years old. The master Giuliano Bertozzo and the president Roberto Perrone, following the tradition of providing spaces for young people, they founded the young people's band ("Bandina") in 1994. This revitalised the group by setting ever more motivating objectives such as: regional, national and international competitions, up to the global competition of Kerkrade in the Netherlands. The *Banda Dino Fantoni* has grown and some young members have become masters of other bands in the surrounding area, bringing quality and enthusiasm in various connected activities and exhibitions in Italy and abroad.



Historical card for a show of the Banda of Dossobuono at Santa Lucia of Verona in 1952.



Above: Show of the Banda of Dossobuono at Arena of Verona.

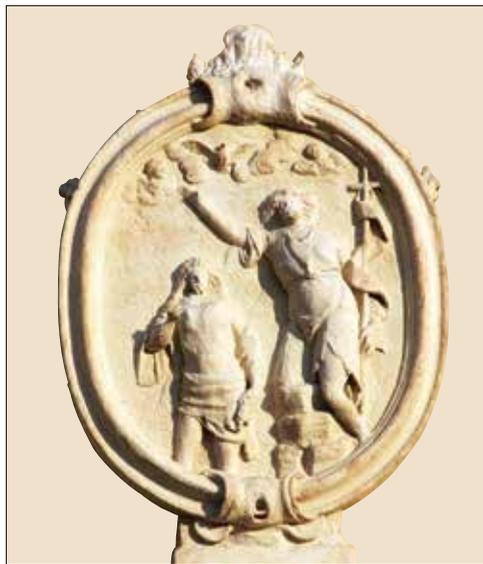
Below: The "Bandina", the youth band, in a recent competition for Juvenile Bands.

THE TOWN OF ALPO

by *Nedda Lonardi*



Residents at 31st December 2016: 2551. It is located north-east of the capital, on the border with Verona, almost at the limit of the Veronese high plain which ends in the Chiodo district, where the Piombina pit is located. From the Roman period to around 1000AD, the vast plain was unpopulated; later it was taken over by groups of families who built their homes, from the south to the north.



Relief on the door of entrance of the church representing Jesus' Baptism.

The medieval via Mantoana, which lead from Verona and crosses the country to Mantova, was important for the development of our territory.

This street is mentioned in "*La campagna I Verona dal secolo XII alla venuta dei Venziani*" (1405) by Giannino Ferrari. The author talks about the designation of boundaries by Grumerio, podestà of Verona, which took place in 1178. In that context originated the Latin term "*tegete omniun Sanctorum que est in campanea*", ie at the existing structure then at Ognissanti.

Alpo was not only city centre, but also included the villages: Ognissanti, Dosdegà, Cadellora, Comotto, Ronchi, Ca' Bianca and Chiodo. They each have their own story, starting with the construction of Ca', agricultural areas.

The name Alpo is old and rich in history. Probably it came from a single community of the Middle Ages, maybe a remote nucleus of Lombardy people. See the "*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Diplomatum Regum et Imeratorum Germanie*", pag. 485, for one "*Privilegi-*



um Heinrich IV: ...et decimationer ville que vocatur Alpo" of 18th June 1084.

The original document is located at the Biblioteca Capitolare of Verona.

In an old parchment of the 1300s, at the State Archive of Verona, the *Guastaverza* reports "*de domo Alpi de Campanea Verona*". Dosdegà also has its origins in very distant times. In a notarial document dated 18th May 1227, it is named Doso de Guà. It is cited due to 25 fields between the *Pertinenza* of Sommacam-

pagna and the *San Giacomo alla Tomba* Hospital. Its history is linked to the Dal Verme family, documented in Verona since 1226.

In 1239, the boundaries of the properties of Niccolò dal Verme were defined. In the last decades of the 14th century, the rich family controlled several villas. In 1405 they took ownership of the Villa Alpo with Dosdegà and the area of Torre (*Domus dei Templari*) in Dosobuono.

View of the parochial complex. The church, the new parish, the Noi circle and the adjacent zone for sporting and recreational activity.



General view of the interior of the church.

The properties of Dal Verme in Alpo, Dossobuono e Dosdegà were confiscated by the municipality of Verona in 1442. (ASUR, Camera fiscal, busta XXV, proc. N. 165)

With that, in 1444, the *Vicariato* of Alpo became extinct.

“*Ex concessioni ducali*” was united to the *Vicariato* of Villafranca. (ASUR, Comune di Alpo, Atti del consiglio, reg.56, c.4r).

From the 17th century until the advent of Napoleonic domination, Alpo and Ognissanti with Ca’ of Fontana, identifiable as the current location of Chiodo, were an independent municipality.

Then, on 20th October 1701, Torre, Dossobuono and Custoza lost their au-

tonomy and became part of the municipality of Sommacampagna.

During the Austrian domination, after a variety of situations, following a new territorial compartment by the Royal Imperial Government, in 1818 the structure that still exists today was put in place: Alpo, Ca’ dell’Ora, Ca’ di Fontana, Dosdegà and Ognissanti passed to the Municipality of Villafranca.

In 1833, the old cemetery, which was located close to the current church, was considered inadequate by the *Cogregazione Municipale* of *Regia Città di Verona*.

The contract for Alpo’s new cemetery and relative works was entrusted to the engineer Giuseppe Delaini.



The left wing of the presbytery, representing “Birth of the Holy John the Baptist”. In the centre, a woman with the child (John the Baptist) surrounded by people, Santa Elizabeth assisted by women and, on the right, Holy Zaccaria in an act of gratitude. Oil on canvas, 135x190cm, by Giuseppe Buffetti (1751-1812).

On 10th January 1831, the expert Giuseppe Morelli fixed the cost at 2,063.65 Lire.

The cemetery was built on the Malaspina estate, next to the consortium road called Scaiole.

In the years 1836, 1849 and 1855 came the spread of *Cholera Morbus*. The care of the sick was almost always charged to the owners of funds. Among those of Alpo were the nobles Cattarinetti, Ballardoro, Piccoli and also Anna Bonuzzi, Lorenzo Aprili, the counts and brothers Antonio and Paolo Erbisti, the successors Beghelli and the brothers Bassani.

In the hope of occupying Verona, on 13th June 1848, the Piedmontese positioned their army between the towns of

Calzoni and Ognissati. In the Megalini house, seat of the general district, Carlo Alberto (King of Sardinia) stayed overnight as mentioned in one epigraph located on the house’s frontage.

The event was part of the war operations that took place in Villafranca during the first war of national independence.

The vote for the cessation of cholera is from 1856.

The pastor Pietro Albieri, in 1963, was instructed by Paolo VI to celebrate the votive festival in honour of the *B.V. Maria Salus Infirmorum* on 31st July each year.

On 14th October 1867, the municipality of Villafranca set out the new plan for the establishment of the elementa-



Altar of Madonna del Rosario: the mysteries of Santo Rosario (15 pieces) attributed to Lanceni al Gobbini (oil on cloth, first half of the 17th century). They are on the sides of the niches with a modern statue of Madonna with Child in the interior.

ry schools of the *Capoluogo*. In the following year, on 16th March, the council approved the plan for boys' and girls' schools in the districts of Alpo, Dosobuono and Quaderni. The appointment of teachers was the responsibility of each district. There was also an obligation to teach evening classes for adults. In the 1871 census of the population and houses built by the Municipality of Villafranca, we can see that in Alpo there were 400 inhabitants, in Ognisanti 303, in total 703 inhabitants. There were 141 families. Alpo included Dogsegà, Termine and Comoto. Ognisanti included Ronchi, Ca' Bianchi, Chiodo,

Rizza, Casotto, Canove, Pimombine. On 6th August 1877, the Verona-Legnago-Rovigo railway line was inaugurated that, for a stretch, passed through the town.

To have a complete story of Alpo's church, we need to read the written note by Paroco Don Cunego on the occasion of the visits to Pastorale of Vescovo Avogadro on 26th September 1793, and to the Pio Racconto Originale by Giovanni Battista Banal, on 5th January 1834. Both documents, even after various stages of interpretation, confirm that it was the Church of San Zuanne in Campagna that changed its name, not the town, as was then erroneously interpreted.

The note of the parish priest Fr. Domenico Cunego, on the occasion of the visit of Bishop Avogadro, affirms that there are no certain foundations of the primitive church. It is believed that it was a public Oratory named San Giovanni in Campagna.

According to a testament of the 1400s in the villa of Sirmione by Nicolò dell'Alpo, it was equipped with about 40 fields of land.

The Pio story of Banal, dated 1834, explains: "those few families that in ancient times came to establish their residence, they devoutly built the first church dedicated to Saint John the Baptist... called vulgarly for many years S.Zuanne of Campagna. There is no record of the date

of its construction, nor which church was subject. As the number of inhabitants increased, they lengthened the façade of the church. It was equipped with the entrance of the two pieces of land, called Scale, and Teminon, by the devout founder Nicolò dall'Alpo, living in the town of Torri sul Lao di Garda, an important family at that time. Therefore the church took the name of Alpo and ceased the aforementioned in Campagna the year 1400. Parish was erected, around the year 1520".

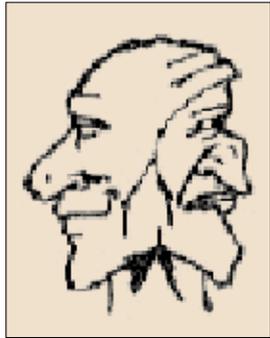
The Pio Racconto adds that in 1714, the choir of the little old church was lengthened. There were four altars: the Major, of Maria Santissima, of San Girolamo Dottore and of San Carlo Arcivescovo, destroyed in the year 1779 by common consent, reserving the presbytery and the choir that served as an oratory to the *Confratelli della Venerabile Compagnia del SS mo Sacramento*. The presbytery, part of the walls of the space for the faithful, is part of the original church, part of the bell tower located in the current sacristy. An arch is visible between the presbytery and the part of the faithful, probably above the altar. A terracotta floor is located about 50cm below the current one. The construction of today's church began in the year 1754, and ended in October. It was blessed the same month on the 28th day of the year 1772, and was consecrated on Sunday in Albis of 10th April 1774 by the Bishop GB Morosini.



In April 1799, at the foot of the altar of Maria Annunciata, Principe Federico di Saluzzo was buried. He was a 19-year-old young man enrolled in the French army, who fell while fighting near Verona.

The ancient villas of Alpo, country residences of noble families, were not well-preserved. Among the historical owners were: the Pindemates, the Erbisti, the Zorzi, the Malaspina, the Cattarinetti, the Cabianca and Chiodo, the Alcenago the Piccoli, and the Bortolani. On the territory various associations currently operate, engaged in social, humanitarian, artistic and sporting activi-

"Annunciation" altarpiece, oil on canvas, 218x131cm. School of G.B. Cignaroli, 18th century.



ties, among which are: the Noi Club, the Alpine Group, the Fidas, the Aido, the Unitalsi, the Polisportiva Alpo, and the Committee Sagra that in the third week of June organises the feast of the patron Saint John the Baptist. In via Piazzola, there are the municipal sports facilities where the football matches of the two teams of the village are held, as well as Volleyball, basketball, 5-a-side football matches and gymnastic activities.



Sketch and mask of the *Muso da du musi*.

Completion of the Pala-sport dates back to the end of 1994. The tennis club, founded in 1968, also benefits Alpo, in via Saluzzo da Angelo Aprili, considered for expansion and among the largest in the Verona area. In the arena, equipped with tribunes, several important tournaments took place national level and, in the 1990s l'A.T. Verona played the Serie A championship there. The local masked ball, "*El muso da du musi*", was conceived by the maestro Orlandi, a brilliant artist with musical, pictorial and educational talents. Music and masks were combined in a bacchanal around 1930, at the festival of wagons in the Arena. For the occasion, a shirt was created with two collars and two ties for two faces, one in front, the other behind the head. The figure still today represents the mask of the village. The story of the "*Muso da du musi*", written by the master Preite, was a socio-political satire, the eternal conflict between they who hold power and they who suffer it, all written in Veronese language. In order to keep the tradition alive, a group has recently been formed that has its representation in the Lords of the Alpo. The allegorical chariot from this, inspired by the cartoons of Disney, has won three "*Bogon d'oro*" at Verona and the position of the first place in various editions of the Veronese Carnival.



Above: The wagon "*The Ice Age*", winner of the "*Bogon d'Oro*" award for the best wagon of the Verona show.

Below: The group of organisers, gentlemen of Alpo, with the trophy "*Bogon d'Oro*".

THE HAMLET OF RIZZA

The hamlet of Rizza is situated in the suburbs in the north-east of the municipality of Villafranca and on the border with Verona. As of 31st December 2016, there were 1310 inhabitants. The original name of Isola Rizza was “Insula Porcaritia”.

“Insula”, because the village stood in a flat area outside the woods and swamps that surrounded the area; “Porcaritia, intended as a pigs’ hut, as this was a place where the breeding of this animal was practiced .

Over the centuries, “Porcaritia” became “Porcarizza”.

In 1872 the inhabitants changed the name of the village in Isola Rizza, forgetting the old name that was considered almost vulgar. Later, they recovered *the sow with the rice in the mouth* in the municipal crest of 1932, which resumed the old symbol of the community that is reproduced at the foot of the bell tower from 1535.

The earliest evidence of a place named “La Rizza” is found in a document dated 1686 in a drawing made by the

Surveyor of the Heritage of Venice, Francesco Cuman, on behalf of Count Nogarola who needed new wells to irrigate the fields and run the mill.

The life of the community developed around the church. The first church, dedicated to Madonna of health, was completed in 1818 by the Zenati family for the religious practice of their employees in the periods of greater work and in the winter.

It is known that on 28th April 1837, the bishop of Verona, Giuseppe Grasser, visited this church.

On 16th December 1950, during the visit of the bishop, a proposal was put forward for a new church for the parish. Gerolamo, bishop of Verona, proposed the new church, with a structure adapted to the new requirements of the hamlet. Alberto Bianchi was appointed for the project. After years of tension and a lot of economic problems overcome by the population and the priests of Azzan, Don Ippolito De Battisti and Don Egidio Baietta. To encourage the fai-



Above: The new church of 1959 with the new theatre on the right and the site of the Noi Circle.

Below: The old oratory of 1819, now partly surrounded by civil dwellings, donated by the Zenati family to the inhabitants of the village.



The interior of the parish church.

thful, Don Ippolito said, “*With the hen and the egg we will build the church and the bell tower*” Monsignor Giovanni laid the first stone on 1st November 1956 and on 3rd October 1959 blessed the church.

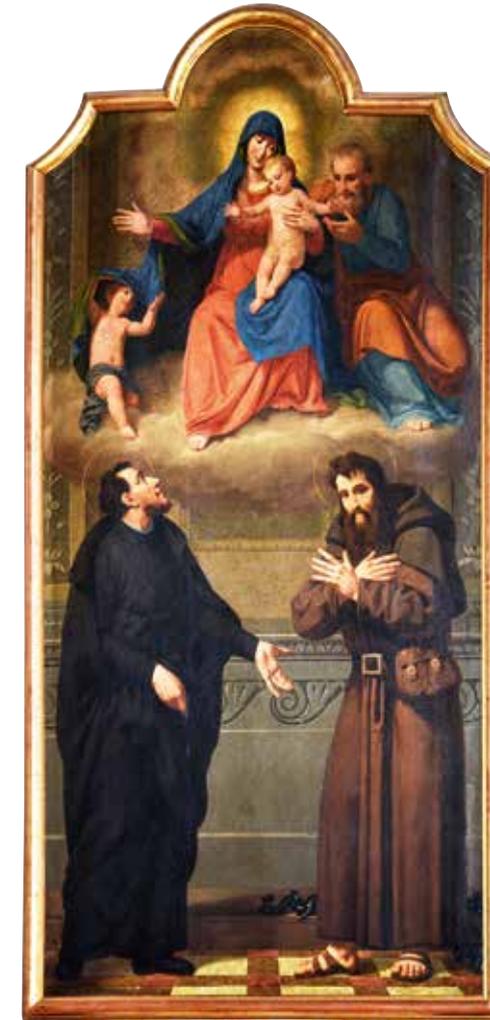
It was dedicated to Our Lady of Succour and Danilo Rudi of Azzano, the new priest, was assigned to the church. The hamlet developed into a suburb of Verona. This was mainly due to farm-

ing activities, including growing strawberries and rearing livestock, and subsequently, the industrial activity of the area also developed.

In the 1960s, the theatre (1961), the shelter and the primary school (1968) were completed.

In the 1980s, new associations and buildings were created and developed in the parish: the “*Co be f*” *Comitato Benefico Festeggiamenti*”, for festivals and feasts

of the community, and the *Polisportiva* for sporting activities. In the 1990s, with the birth of the Anspi club (now Noi), the old recreational area was restructured and the old theatre was adapted to the new rules of the law; buildings were now managed by the new association “*Ingranaggio*” (1996).



Between 1999 and 2004, with the Cobef and the community’s commitment, an old shed was transformed into a multipurpose room of 250 seats with a room for 50 more people.

The outdoor area was also transformed for community feasts including the creation of a multi-purpose area for recreational activities. As in many small villages, the life of the community gravitates around the parish, its surroundings and the numerous associations and initiatives, always ready for innovation and always available to develop and improve the “well-being” of the community.



On the left: “*Madonna with Child and Saint Joseph*” altarpiece and, at her feet, San Gaetano from Thiene, patron of the parish, and San Gualfardo.

On the right: “*Madonna of Perpetual Succour*”.

Timeline

Eneolithic period - (Third-second millennium BC). Some finds, especially those of 1913 of a tomb with a rich funeral outfit dating back to 2500 BC. approximately, suggest the presence of an Eneolithic settlement in the area where Villafranca now stands. Numerous findings in the nearby territory of Povegliano confirm that the area offered ample conditions of habitability, including water due to the presence of resurgences, hunting and pastoralism.

Roman Epoch - Numerous epigraphic testimonies. Before all the "slabs" of stone at the base of the castle dating back to a building from 20-30 AD, the discovery of coins and other objects, some toponyms of clear Latin matrix (Quaderni, Prabiano) confirm the presence along the Via Postumia (from Genoa to Aquileia crossing Cremona and Verona) that crosses the territory of Villafranca, of a "castro" or of a "mutatio", a small centre for the change of horses ten miles from Verona.

1084 - Alpo is named in a historical document "monumenta germaniae historica" at the Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona;

March 9, 1185 - Birth of Villafranca, the Council of Verona, due to a proposal by Viviano degli Avvocati, resolves to have a new villa built in the countryside south of Verona;

1233 - The Ghibelline troops of Ezzelino da Romano besiege and destroy Villafranca;

1311 - Dossobuono, construction of the old parish church dedicated to Santa Maria Maddalena;

1345 - The Serraglio, from the start to the construction of the Serraglio completed in 1355;

1405 - The dominion of the Serenissima Republic of Venice begins;

1517 - Dossobuono, negotiations for the Treaty of Noyon;

1583 - Quaderni, erection of an autonomous parish. Church of the 17th-18th century. 17th century Regina Pacis;

1530 - Caluri, there was already an oratory dedicated to San Francesco;

1585 - Dossobuono, the parish church is erected in the parish;

1586 - Cappuccini friars set up in Villafranca in the area of the current complex of Piazzetta IV Novembre;

1592 - The Serenissima Republic of Venice grants the weekly market to Villafranca;

1630 - The tenth plague of Villafranca. 900 deaths were recorded out of 1700 inhabitants. **1688** - Calzoni, construction of the Oratory of Santa Croce;

1714 - Feast of St. Peter, 29th June, first documented testimony (Capitoli della Beccaria);

1754 - Rosegaferro, new church dedicated to San Girolamo

1754 - Alpo, beginning of the construction of the current church (consecrated in 1774);

1786 - Start of work for the new parish church (completed in 1882);

1796 - Napoleon in Villafranca, which he makes his headquarters for a short time;

1799-1815 - Villafranca passes under the Cisalpine Republic (Department of the Mincio), then under the Kingdom of Italy (French) and, after the Congress of Vienna, under the Austrian dominion;

1813 - Construction of the new cemetery;

1842 - Giovanni Fantoni founded the historic Caffè Fantoni and conceived the "sfogliatine";

1845 - Quaderni, first news of the Quaderni Banda;

1847 - The Hospital and the Monte dei pegni are established in Villafranca

1848 - Villafranca is the scene of the first war of independence;

1851 - The railway that connects Villafranca with Verona and Mantova is inaugurated

11 July 1859 - End of the second war of independence and signature of peace between the emperors Napoleon III of Franca and Franz Joseph of Austria at the Gandini Moorelli Bugna in vai Ghetto house;

1860 - Two Villafrancans, Luigi Prina and Luigi Zanini, fight alongside Garibaldi in the impresa dei Mille;

1866 - Episode of the Square of Villafranca, one of the most celebrated of the Third War of Independence;

1866 - Villafranca, with Veneto, is united with Italy. The first mayor of the unit is Alessandro Rizzini;

1867 - The Municipality takes the name of Villafranca di Verona;

1877 - Alpo, inauguration of the Verona-Legnago-Rovigo railway line;

1890 - Demolition of the old bell tower of the parish church;

1900 - The municipality grants the hall of the municipal theatre (previously the church) for the covered market.

1911 - Pizzoletta becomes a parish with San Zeno in Mozzo

1911 - Caluri, new church

1917 - The alpine Vittorio Bozzi prints in the Adamello trenches, with his portable press, the newspaper "La Mitraglia";

1918 - At Ganfardine, at the beginning of the battle of the Piave, a runway on which two square formations lined up. King Vittorio Emanuele III meets the American troops who intervened alongside Italy;

1921 - To celebrate the enterprise of Gabriele D'Annunzio, Marcello Fantoni creates the characteristic Acqua di Fiume liqueur;

1921 - Dossobuono, foundation of the Band;

1927 - Vittorio Bozzi, the Adamello Alpine, founded the A.N.A group of Villafranca; he would be president until 1971.

1928 - Rosegaferro, constitution of the parish;

1933 - Giovacchino Forzano makes the film "Villafranca" in the streets of the town;

1945 - Quaderni, Band and Majorettes group foundation;

1945 - Dossobuono, consecration of the new church;

1947 - Giuseppe Verdi designed the parish theatre;

1952 - Pizzoletta, the first stone laid of the new church and little church of Volpare;

1954 - Pizzoletta, new parish;

1954 - Transfer to the Villafranca Air Base of the 3rd Wing, which would remain until 1999;

1956 - Rosegaferro, enlargement of the parish church;

1960 - The cyclist Sante Gaiardoni won gold medal in the speed and distance race from a standing start at the Olympics. Professional world champion in 1963;

1962 - Caluri, a parish church built, dedicated to Saint Anthony of Padua;

1965 - Inauguration of the Metropol Cinema Theatre;

1966 - Demolition of the Municipal Theatre, of the parish structures and construction of the new square;

1972 - Rosegaferro, foundation of the Campagnoli folk group;

1982 - Blessing of the first stone of the parish Madonna del Popolo;

1986 - The civil protection ANA, Zona Mincio with manager Gianfranco Maraia is started;

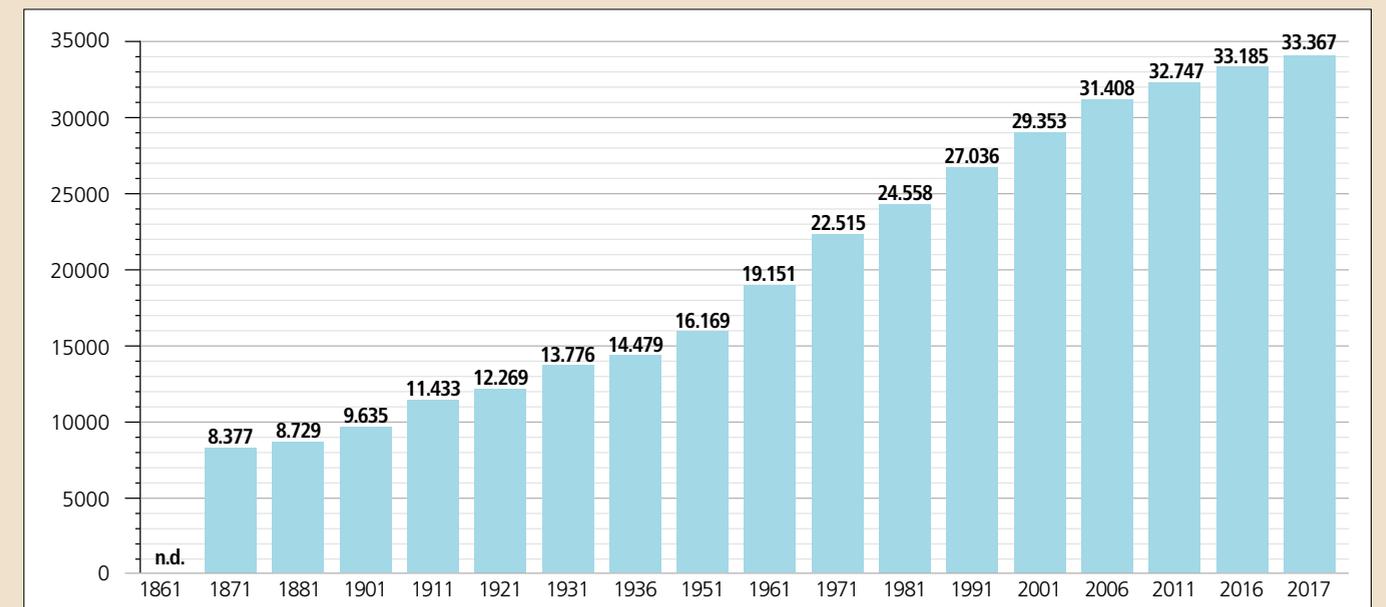
1988 - Ettore Gallo, born in Naples, but raised in Villafranca, becomes president of the Constitutional Court;

2008 - Airport becomes civil airport;

2015 - New Metropol, library, etc ...

Explanation of the Population Graph

Significantly, the inhabitants go from 8,729 in 1881 to the following demographic evolution: 8,729 (1881), 9,635 (1901), 11,432 (1911), 16,169 (1951), 19,151 (1961), 22,515 (1971), 24,558 (1981), 27,036 (1991), 33,253 (2001), 33,250 (2012) and 33,185 (2016) located in the seven towns of the municipality: Alpo 2,551, Caluri 619, Dossobuono 6,390, Pizzoletta 1,353, Quaderni 1,829, Rizza 1,310, Rosegaferro 1,489, main town 11,928 of which 5,701 lived in the historic centre.





DISTINGUISHED
CITIZENS
OF VILLAFRANCA



GIULIETTA DÈ CAPULETI (1284-XXX)

Heroine of the play of William Shakespeare who recalls the Scaligero Castle of Villafranca in the tragedy "Romeo and Juliet". Prince: "If another time you dare to upset our districts in this way, I will make you pay with your life for the infraction of peace. For today will be like this: all of you here: you, Capuleti, follow me and you Montecchi, tonight you will find yourselves in the old castle of Villafranca, where our ordinary court is and you will know my resolution on the subject. Go away from here, I repeat, on pain of death".

CAVALCHINI RINALDO (1291-1362)

Litterate and pre-humnist

Son of the notary Oliviero, better known as Rinaldo da Villafranca. In 1332, Rinaldo moved to Verona, where he became a tutor in the service of the Scaligero Court. Here, he educated the son of Petrarca. Hi epitaphs for Cangrande I and Mastino II are well-known. The lineage of Cavalchini finished at the end of the 1400s.



POMEDELLO GIOVANNI MARIA (1478-1537)

Engraver, painter, medallist

Born in Villafranca in 1478. He worked for Federico II, Marquis of Mantua, for the Venetian Giovanni Emo, governor of Verona, and for Lodovico di Canossa, bishop of Bajoux. Six paintings dated 1510-1534 can certainly be attributed to him.

One of his paintings, which is located in the church of San Tommaso Cantuariense in Verona, represents the *Madonna dello spasimo* with St. Thomas. It is called "*Pomedellus villafrancorum aurifex veronensis fecit 1524*". Pomedello travelled to Rome to create some artistic pieces from the artefacts of ancient Rome. From a drawing depicting a sarcophagus of the Pantheon, Giovanni Battista Piranesi was inspired, while Giovanni Battista Maini was inspired by it for the construction of the tomb of Pope Clement XII.

PRENDAGLIO GERMANO (1735-1809)

Painter

Germano Prendaglio was born in Villafranca on August 15, 1735. In order to practice his painting, he attended the study of Giambettino Cignaroli in his school, where he also lived. His teacher's sudden death forced him to become self-taught in the art of painting, and particularly oil paintings. His works are found in: Valeggio in the fresco representing the Divine Redeemer who drives out the vendors from the temple; Villafranca, his hometown, in the small church of the crucifix at the Castle, where he depicts moments of the Saviour's passion. Then in Castelgoffredo for several years Prendaglio was fascinated by miniatures on parchment; art learned from a Cappuccini friar. On his return to Verona, he had no great requests for this art, even if his works are to be compared to those of Girolamo dai Libri, praised by his contemporaries for his subjects such as: beautiful heads of devout and gracious Madonnas, landscapes and atmospheres, or fantasy. Prince Eugenio, Viceroy of Italy, having seen two of these miniatures, bought them for ninety coins. Prendaglio was an excellent

miniaturist, in his compositions he depicted contrast and light with opaque and bright colours. He was connected to the Academy of painting until August 15, 1802. The chronicles describe him as a "most honest man of Christian piety, who lived unmarried until his sudden death on May 21st, 1809, at the age of 64".

TUMICELLI JACOPO (1784-1825)

Painter

He moved to Milan at the age of twenty to refine his artistic skills and learn the secrets of miniature. He painted some portraits in oil, including that of Ippolito Pindemonte. He then moved to Padua, where he died at forty years old. Of his art, there remains a painting showing Jesus on the cross, originally located above the entrance of the Scaligero Castle of Villafranca and currently at the Monastery of the Cappuccini Friars of Villafranca.

MESSEDAGLIA ANGELO (1820-1901)

Economist and Politica

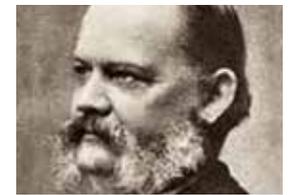
He attended the high school in Verona, which today bears his name, and graduated in law in Pavia in 1843, where the provisional government of Milan in 1848 appointed him professor of commercial law. He then taught economics and statistics in Padua and Rome.

From 1866 to 1884, he was deputy and senator of the Kingdom. he published numerous works of statistics, monetary and cadastral analysis. His scholarship led him to perform studies of plumbing and geology and to try both prose and poetry. He collaborated with several magazines, including *Nuova Antologia*. He was a member of Parliament for Verona from 1866 to 1883 and was appointed senator on 10th May 1884. He died in Rome on 5th April 1901.

ZANINI LUIGI ANTONIO MARIA (1823-1889)

Son of Giovanni, a tailor, and Maria Arduini, was born in Villafranca, at number 22 of the district of Mezzo, now Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, on 28th September 1823.

In the summer of 1835, at the age of twelve, he moved to Verona together with his family. Little is known of his youth, only that after practicing his father's trade, he performed with a company of actors who travelled through the cities and towns of Lombardo-Veneto to earn a living. This made him aware of the search for greater freedom, expression, association, and press, then denied or censored by the laws of the Imperial and the royal Austrian government. Disappointed by the outcome of the war of 1859, which made him a foreigner in his homeland, he worked in Lombardy for some time, and then became Italian thanks to the Peace of Villafranca. At the beginning of May 1860, he was in Genoa together with hundreds of volunteers, young and old, who had responded to the call of the general Garibaldi to come to the aid of the Sicilians in revolt. He joined the 6th company *dei Mille* and took part in the battle of Calatafimi on the following 15th May in which the victory was due to the intervention of his department. After Calatafimi, he fought in Palermo, Milazzo, Messina and went to Naples until November of that year when, after the war campaign, the army of Garibaldi was dissolved and the volunteers returned to their hometowns. Zanini returned to Milan, where he



had long settled with his wife and continued his career as a theatre actor. In 1866 he replied to the General's appeal and at the age of 43 he donned his red shirt once more and enlisted in the Italian Volunteers Corps that was engaged in Trentino.

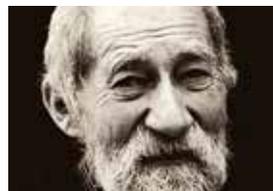
From 1865, he had a secure income: the pension of a thousand Lire a year that the government had assigned to the survivors of the *Mille*. This came to about 83 Lire a month, which helped to maintain a decent life. In the grandiose theatre Dal Verme, inaugurated in Milan in 1872, capable of holding 3400 people, he worked as a porter and remained there for the rest of his life, well-liked and respected by those who knew him. He died in Milan, at the age of 66, at one thirty on Tuesday 24th October 1889.



PRINA LUIGI (1830-1877)

Patriot of Garibaldi

Luigi Prina was born in Villafranca on 18th March 1830, the son of a shoemaker and the second of nine brothers and sisters. After attending primary school in Villafranca, he was able to continue his studies at the Don Mazza Institute as he had gained excellent results. In Verona, in autumn 1848, he was expelled from the school, probably for having carried out patriotic "propaganda". Therefore, after having worked for some time in his father's workshop, in 1851 he was called up to the Austrian army, in Archduke Sigismondo's Regiment n.45 in Innsbruck. In 1855, due to economic difficulties, he enrolled in his career in the Habsburg army. On 3rd June 1859, on the eve of the battle of Magenta Luigi, he deserted the Habsburg army as he did not want to become an "Italian assassin". Fascinated by the charisma of Garibaldi, shortly after, near Varese, he enlisted among the "Hunters of the Alps" with the rank of Sergeant. After the Second War of Independence, Luigi followed the General in the Company *dei Mille*, from the departure from Quarto on 5th May 1860, until the meeting of Teano on 26th October 1860. Prina was not the only Villafrancan to take part in the epic of the Red Shirts, there was also his fellow countryman Luigi Zanini. Prina's discharge finally came in Asti on 18th February 1861 with the rank of lieutenant, but since Veneto was still under Austrian domination, the former "red shirt" was forced to live in exile in Lombardy until 1866. In fact, at the outbreak of the Third War of Independence he again enlisted, he fought on 3rd July 1866 at Mount Suello. After the Italo-Prussian success, he finally returned to Villafranca on 25th March 1877, to great affection and the respect of the townspeople but without official recognition by the political authority.



ZULIANI GIOVANNI (1837-1892)

Painter

Son of Giuseppe, author of the famous dictionary of the French language "French grammar without a teacher", Giovanni Zuliani worked on the Austrian railways when he was very young, but then devoted himself completely to art. He moved to Turin, where he opened a painting studio in 1862. He spent time in Paris with his friend Tommaso Juglaris from 1875 and subsequently he moved to Florence and Rome. He died still young and in misery in the Poveri di San Salvario hospital in Turin. His few remaining works are currently preserved in private collections and at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Turin.

TROIANI GIAN BATTISTA (1844-1927)

Sculptor

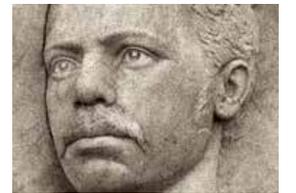
Born in Villafranca on 12th February 1844 in Contrà di Sopra, now via Nino Bixio, at number 303, later changed to 360. His mother died in 1852, and his father remarried with Vincienza Chiese, which increased the family by another 11 children. Giobatta, as he was called within the family, who had a mild nature, was directed to the studies by the priest Don Gaetano Bellotti, teacher of the village, who helped him to enter the Don Mazza Institute. He studied in Verona at the Academy of Painting and Sculpture (the current Cignaroli) and specialised in Venice at the Imperial Regia Academy of Fine Arts. His major work is the statue of Sammicheli in piazza Pradaval in Verona, but his works are present in Boston, New York, London and Cagliari, where he spent most of his life before retiring in his hometown of Villafranca. He was buried in the city cemetery in 1927. In Villafranca, he has been commemorated with the naming of a street after him and a publication by Renato Adami in Studi Villafranchesi (n 17).



ZOCATELLI GIOVANNI (1866-1892)

Painter

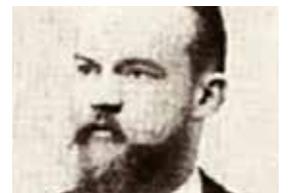
Born in Scuderlando (Castel d'Azzano) to a family of labourers. At the age of 10, he moved to Dossobuono. At 14, he attended the Accademia "Cignaroli" of Verona. In the academic year 1882-83, he received an honourable mention in "*pieghe di dipinto*". In the 1884-85, he won a bronze medal for painting nudes, but especially heads. He had Napoleon Nani as a master of painting and Giuseppe Poli for sculpture. In 1884, he exhibited three paintings at the biennial exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts in Verona. In 1892, the last year of his life, ill with tuberculosis, he died before being able to enjoy the success of the last two works: "*Giugno in soffitta*" and "*Capitale di Rosa*", which were exhibited in honour of the centenary of the Savoy Cavalry. The City of Verona bought the latter painting, which is now exhibited at the Palazzo Forti Modern Art Gallery. Four years after his death, in 1896, inspired by his master of painting Nani, a small monument was erected in the cemetery of Dossobuono, of which today remains a medallion of marble with the portrait of Zocatelli, work of the sculptor Cesare Poli.



RENSI GIUSEPPE (1871-1941)

Lawyer and philosopher

Among the major Italian philosophers of the twentieth century. He studied in Verona and graduated in law in 1893 in Rome. At 24, he edited the socialist newspaper "*Lotta di Classe*". In 1898 he emigrated to Switzerland where he worked as a lawyer and became a deputy in the parliament of the Canton of Ticino. He returned to Italy after the Great War, and held the position of professor of moral philosophy at the University of Genoa. He published numerous essays on philosophy, among other things: *Lineamenti di loso a scettica* (1919), *La Filoso a absurdo* (1924), *Autobiogra a intellettuale* (1939). Opposed to the fascist regime, after 1925 he was dismissed from teaching. He died in Genoa in 1941. At his funeral, the few friends present were scattered and fled; even when he was dead he disturbed the power. An epigraph on the tomb in the Staglieno cemetery sums up his lifestyle and his intellectual independence: "*Etsi omnes non ego*" (although not all of me).




GIRELLI DON GIUSEPPE (1886-1978)

Priest - "The apostle of prisons"

He was born in Dossobuono, where he attended elementary school, then went to the Stimate di Verona Institute for five years of gymnasium. In 1903, he entered the Diocesan Seminary and in 1910 he was ordained as a priest by Cardinal Bartolomeo Bacilieri. After a first priestly experience at Villa d'Adige, which lasted eight years, was transferred to Rosegafarro where he remained for the next 31 years as rector (1918) and then as parish priest (1928) until 1951. Here he organised the "*Pia Unione Sacerdotale per le missioni negli Istituti di pena*" (Pia Clergy Union for Missions in Penal Institutions) and began the preaching in the prisons. In 1947, he founded the newspaper "Croce Bianca", a bimonthly publication for prisoners and their families. In 1951, he relocated to Ronco where he opened the Casa San Giuseppe for former prisoners, and founded the "Sixth Opera" in 1958 to assist former and current prisoners. On 9th June 1959, the Minister of Grace and Justice, Guido Gonella, awarded him the gold medal with a diploma of the civil merit of Social Redemption. In September 1977, he retired to the hospital of Negrar (Verona) where on 1st May 1978, at the age of ninety-two, he died while going to celebrate Mass. He was buried, by his express will, in Maguzzano (Brescia) in the bare earth where he would remain until 30th April 1988. Then his remains were solemnly re-interred in the parish church of Rosegafarro. The diocesan process for his beatification is underway, thanks to the interest of Cav. Danilo Donisi. He was declared Venerable by Pope Francis on 27th January 2015.


ANTI CARLO (1889-1961)

Archeologist and university professor

He graduated in archeology in Bologna and later enhanced his studies in Rome. He was an officer of the Italian army during the Great War. In 1922, he won the university chair of Padua, from where he promoted studies on ancient art and participated in numerous archaeological missions in Greece, Asia Minor, Libya (Cyrene), and Egypt (Tentyris). From 1932 to 1943, he was Rector Magnificus at the University of Padua, enriching the archaeological museum with the purchase of private collections.


BOZZI VITTORIO (1892-1977)

Alpine printer

Known as the "Alpine printer" for having printed a war sheet in a cave at 3,400 metres altitude between the trenches of the Great War at Corno di Cavento sull'Adamello. He was an apprentice typographer with a passion for writing, and enrolled at a young age in the 6th Alpine Regiment stationed in Verona. He was sent to the front in the snow of Adamello where, with the help of his friend Lieutenant Marcello Garagnini, also a typographer, he founded the newspaper "La Mitraglia". The little newspaper, distributed in the trenches, was composed of a sheet folded in two, four little pages, the only contact between the soldiers and their nearest and dearest. The last edition ended with the news of Vittorio Veneto's victory and the end of the war. When he returned to Villafranca, he dedicated himself to typography, competing with Arnaldo Mondadori in the 1930s. In 1944, after his house and typography equipment had been destroyed by the bombing, he restarted the activity and integrated his great-grandchildren, Enrico and Davide, into the company which, by destiny, is based in via Adamello in Villafranca. His commitment, as a good alpine man, also extended into the civil sphere; he founded and was president of the National Alpine Association Section of Villafranca for many years. Also, he

committed himself to the creation of public gardens in the Scaligero castle vault, which now bears his name. On his death, he donated his house to the town of Villafranca, which became headquarters of the Co-operative Socialisation Centre for daytime activities for people with disabilities. In 2013, the Histoire Foundation, a member of the Co-operative, purchased the property from the Municipality, while maintaining the purpose of activities for the disabled.

ZAGO LUIGI (1894-1952)

Printer

Self-taught and later a pupil of the painter Vector Zanetti Zilla Predilige. Favoured landscape painting. Participated in numerous prestigious national and international exhibitions: Venice Biennale in 1928, 1930, 1940, Rome Biennial, and Turin Quadriennale. He became the definitive painter of visions of peace by painting war landscapes; in the renowned Milan exhibition "*dal Timavo all'Adamello*". His works are present in museums of modern art and in many private collections. He moved to Argentina in 1949, working for the ministry of fine arts. He is also known as "the painter of Evita Peron". He died suddenly in Buenos Aires in 1952. Villafranca paid homage to him in 1953 with a large posthumous exhibition and in 1954 with the laying of a plaque on the façade of his home Zago in via Pace. In a letter to his friend G Lastronile, he expressed his nostalgia and his love for Villafranca: "*Così solo, tanto solo / butà dentro stà Argentina / el cor ciapo a man franca / e lo buto a Villafranca*".


DE MARTINI ANGELO (1897-1979)

Cyclist

In one of the "*dei laurenti*" houses of the court Bembo a Calzoni, a modest marble plaque commemorates the birth of Angelo De Martini, cycling champion and gold medallist at the 1924 Paris Olympics in the team chase trial. In 1926, he finally made the leap to professional cycling, with numerous successes. Angelo is famous for his home-strait rush: a wriggle, then a prodigious leap to the arrival tape. He soon became an international idol. He won in the "25 hours", in the American (pairs), in speed, in the middle distance in Italy, in Germany, and in France. In 1929, in Berlin De Martini, he excited the crowd in the individual race on the track: 15 meetings, 15 victories. In 1930, he also succeeded in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. He died in 1979.


CIRESOLA TEODORO (1899-1978)

Latinist and poet

Native of the town of Quaderni, from a very poor family, he studied at the Don Mazza Institute and received the "honours" diploma, with the average mark of 9, at the Liceo Scipione Maffei of Verona. In 1922, he graduated in letters and classics at the University of Pavia. He was a founding member of the International Union of Latin Studies and collaborated with numerous literary magazines (Latinitas, Palaestra Latina, Vox Latina). In his long career, he won several awards: he won the Amsterdam Academy thirteen times, Certamen Capitolinum of Rome and the Certamen Vaticanum. In Milan, where for many years he taught at the high school Giosuè Carducci, there is a school dedicated to him in viale Brianza. In Villafranca di Verona, the town where he was born, there is a street dedicated



to his memory. He died in Milan in 1978. In 1992, Teresa, daughter of Teodoro Ciresola, donated her father's archive to the Academy of the Agedo. This archive contains exhaustive documentation concerning the biography of Ciresola, his works, articles of magazines and newspapers concerning his activity and prizes. It is said that he often collaborated in the Vatican in the extension of official documents in Latin and that he also had a strong connection with Pope Paul VI.



PAVANATO ALICE (1902-2001)

Painter

She was orphaned at a very young age and went into the care of her Aunt Angelina Fumagalli. She attended courses at the Accademia Cignaroli and at the state-run Liceo Artistico. The story of Alice painter began with frequent attendance at painting lessons, which, for five years, from the early 1920s, Zancolli held in Villafranca on Tuesdays. Here, she took her first teaching post in 1935 and remained until the age of 70. She took her the trestle bicycle, palette, and colours, and went on "ecological excursions" in search of corners, glimpses, colours in the gardens and in the countryside of Lafrancais. Participated in various exhibitions: Rome, Padua, and Venice, and also earned an invitation from the "Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa" of Venice to participate in the Rome Quadrennial, at the biennials of Padua and Verona; all without letting herself be influenced by economic issues. In 1987, Villafranca dedicated an anthological exhibition with a catalogue to her, at Palazzo Bottagisio. Lived in Villafranca until her last day (2001), painting everyday life.



MARTINELLI GIOVANNI (1904-1974)

Pharmacist

He completed his elementary and middle school studies in Villafranca and then attended the Liceo Classico Maffei in Verona. He graduated in 1931 in Pharmacy at the University of Padua and took the State Exam in Bologna in 1932. From 1st January 1938, he replaced Dr. Maraschini in the management of the pharmacy "Alla Rosa" in Corso Vittorio Emanuele. In 1939 becomes owner and manager, changing the name to "Farmacia Martinelli". He died in Villafranca on 3rd August 1974. On his death, he left the remarkable property (pharmacy, house, paintings) to the Municipality, the Morelli Bugna nursing home, the Parish and people who had been close to him. The legacy of the Parish, the pharmacy, would contribute to the construction of the new church in the Parish of Madonna del Popolo in Villafranca.



ABBÈ PIERRE (1912-2007)

Founder of the Emmaus community

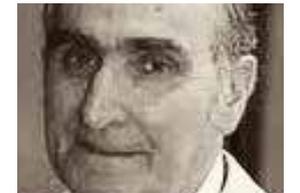
Henri-Antoine Groués, known as Abbé Pierre, was born in Lyon in 1912, the fifth of eight children, to a wealthy family. At 15, during a trip to Assisi, he decided to become a Cappuccini friar. At 19, he entered the monastery of Lyon, after having distributed his inheritance to the poor. In 1942, he began a rescue action for the victims of Nazi tyranny: using false passports, he became a mountain guide and transported the fugitives in danger through the Alps and the Pyrenees. Hunted by the Gestapo, he returned to Paris and set up a laboratory for the production of false documents. He was arrested, but managed

to escape to Algiers hidden in a postal sack. After the war, he founded the Universal Movement for a World Confederation. In 1949, he welcomed ex-prisoner George, who thought of suicide, into his home. Thus began the movement "Emmaus", the movement of the *Straccioli-Costruttori*, now active all over the world. In Villafranca, there has been an influential community of Emmaus since 1985. In 2005, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the presence of Emmaus in Villafranca, he was granted honorary citizenship as an important and influential citizen of Villafranca.

GALLO ETTORE (1914-2001)

Lawyer

Born in Naples to parents of Roman origin. He became an orphan (his father died during the First World War near the Pasubio), and at the age of three moved to Veneto, to Villafranca di Verona, to his uncle's house. After graduating from the Liceo Classico, he graduated in Law and Political Science, and won a judiciary competition. Called up to the army on 8th September 1943 (a *carrista* of the then *Regio Esercito*), he joined the partisans, in Veneto; joining the Action Party with the *nom de guerre* "Maestro". Captured by Nazi troops and sentenced to death, he was saved by the arrival of the allies. After the war, he left the judiciary and open a lawyer's office in Vicenza. A professor of Criminal Law, an attentive and passionate scholar, and author of numerous publications. He was nominated Constitutional Judge by Parliament on 30th June 1982 and later, in 1991, a member of the Constitutional Court. From 1992, he was an honorary citizen of Villafranca, therefore considered a citizen of Villafranca. Died in Rome on 29th June 2001 at the age of 87.



FRANZOSI MARIO (1915-2002)

Teacher and historiographer

He completed his primary studies (eight classes) in the elementary school of Villafranca; a student of the teacher Elena Bozzi. As a young boy, he showed a propensity for history, geography, and linguistics. He completed his studies at the Collegio degli Stimmadini in Verona and graduated as a teacher in July 1938 at the "Carlo Montanari" Institute in Verona thanks to the immense sacrifice of his mother, a widow. Started teaching in state primary schools. During the war, he served as an officer in the 87th Infantry Regiment division "Friuli", stationed in Arezzo. With good fortune he evaded capture by the Germans, and after the war began the series of transfers as a teacher in various countries and localities in the district, until 1965 when he was assigned to the schoolyard of Villafranca, where he remained until retirement. Numerous production of monographs and studies on Villafranca and neighbouring towns, in connection with the glorious "Le guide" of the Vita Veronese publishing company. In 2004, a biography by Giuseppe Franco Viviani, Mario Franzosi the Maestro, was published by Croma Srl, Dossobuono. Villafranca, to honour him appropriately, dedicated him the new Municipal Library in Piazza Villafranchetta.



MARCHI CESARE (1922-1992)

Writer and journalist

Born in Villafranca. Gained a degree in letters in Padua, and for years he taught in middle school. Curiosity, beauty, a sense of history, and an extraordinary ability to write led him to write historical, linguistic and traditional essays. He supported the activity of writing with that of a renowned journalist collaborating with the most prestigious newspapers. The book that gave him more fame



by opening his television studios was “Learn Italian” (1984). Indro Montanelli never forgave the fact that a Venetian had taught the Italian language to Italy. Carried out all its activities without ever leaving his beloved Villafranca, where he suddenly died on 7th January 1992.



PIAZZONI MONS. ALBERTO (1924-2015)

Prefect of the Capitular Library of Verona

He was born in Dossobuono on December 15, 1924, the last of eight brothers. He completed humanistic and theological studies in the bishop's seminary of Verona. He then attended the School of Historical Sciences “*L.A. Muratori*” in Verona. Parish priest in Vigasio and for over twenty years archpriest and vicar in Lonato. Here he dealt with historical and artistic research and conservation and restoration of the artistic heritage. In 1982, he was named Prelate of Honor of His Holiness, in 1983, canon of the Cathedral of Verona, prefect of the Capitular Library and president of the diocesan Commission for the Sacred Art. Between 1990 and 2001, as archpriest-president of the Chapter of Canons, he promoted the recovery of the canonical houses, the expansion of the library and the museum and the restoration of the cloister.

From 1988, he was a member of the Council of Triveneto for cultural heritage and delegate for the libraries and archives of the Tre Venezie. In 1989, he was made member of the Academy of Agriculture, Sciences and Letters of Verona and of the “GB Cignaroli” Academy of Verona. From 1989, for a few years he was the national director of ABEI (Association of Italian Ecclesiastical Librarians). He produced a series of sixteen catalogues and other monographs published by the Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona. He wrote in newspapers, specialised magazines and in “*L'Osservatore Romano*”. There are many of his writings. The Academy of Agriculture, Sciences and Letters of Verona has edited a bibliography (1952-1998) and, in collaboration with the operators of the Capitular Library and the Cathedral's Catholics, a rich miscellany of studies, written in his honour in 1998 by university professors. He retired to Dossobuono in 2010, and died at the Negrar hospital on 20th October 2015 at the age of 90.



PRETTO GLAUCO (1928-2016)

Teacher and writer

Glauco Pretto born in Albino (Bergamo) on 7th April 1928 to Veronese parents. He lived all his youth in Povegliano Veronese, a municipality that in 2008 gave him honorary citizenship for the enhancement of the territory in much of his literary production. A teacher in vocation and profession, Pretto spent most of his life in school, first as an elementary teacher, then as a professor of literature and principal in the middle school. He always carried out social, civic and cultural activities with equal enthusiasm, cultivating personal relationships with various cultural institutions, groups and voluntary associations

An author, from the 1970s onwards, of works of humanistic and scientific dissemination for important national publishing houses. This experience, combined with a particular poetic-narrative sensitivity in the literary field, from the 1980s led him to compose a body of nearly two thousand poems, *nursery rhymes*, and epigrams, as well as dozens of stories, prefaces and several books of a historical character, in the desire to share the many facets of his life and his culture of belonging.

A former student of the Don Mazza Institute in Verona, he always made himself available to give his service in all the fields of the Mazzian world. He was editor of the magazine and writer for the publishing house, and chairman of the board of directors. Until a few weeks before his death, he was director of the Antonio Spagnolo Library, to which he dedicated a generous and effective service for over twenty years. With the Mazziana publishing house in Verona, he published numerous texts, among which one in particular, by his admission, was very dear to him: the book of poetry “*A desligar figure e sentimenti*” (1985). He passed away on Friday 27th May 2016 at the age of 88.

NICOLIS LUCIANO (1933-2012)

Entrepreneur and founder of Museo Nicolis

When he was at school, he collected empty cement sacks from construction sites, collaborating with his father Francesco and his brother Nerino. In 1951, he bought an old military truck, which allowed him to considerably increase his work. In June 1963, he established the Lamacart company of Luciano Nicolis (Processing of Paper Material) by hiring three workers. In 1967, he purchased 10,000 square metres of land in the industrial area of Villafranca and built his first warehouses. In 1968, he married Renate Faccioli and from the marriage, Elena, Thomas and Silvia were born.

In 1978, the Lamacart company became a public company. It led the industrial group of the same name to become leaders in the field of collection and recycling of waste paper. In 2012, they received the most coveted international recognition, the “Papyrus Award”, awarded for the first time to an Italian company, from the BIR (Bureau of International Recycling), an association that brings together the most important international companies operating in the recovery sector. He set up and led other companies in the paper sector. In 1966, he was one of the founding members of ASI (*Automotoclub Storico Italiano*) and in the early '80s was also one of the founders of AIV (Association of Employers of the Villafranca district).

There were numerous awards, certificates, honours and awards received over the years, including: *Apollo d'Oro* in 1972, *Cavaliere della Repubblica* in 1976, *Grande Ufficiale* in 1993, *Commendatore* in 2004, *Laurea honoris causa* in industrial sciences in the field of work, and the Louis Vuitton Classic in Paris in the years 1990, 1998, 2001 and 2003 in the context of the collection of historical cars. In 1985, the dream of his museum began to materialise. Inauguration took place on 9th September 2000. It is a museum unique in Italy and among the very few in the world managed by private individuals with entrepreneurial criteria. Today, the management of family activities continues with his children Thomas and Silvia.

GAIARDONI SANTE GIOVANNI - Villafranca di Verona 29-6-1939

Cyclist

The explosive muscle power of this super sprinter has allowed him to make great statements, especially as an amateur. In an exceptional career, the two Olympic championship titles obtained in Rome in 1960 stand out (speed and distance, 1.07.27 world and Olympic record). In that same season, he added the world title on the Leipzig track, after coming second in 1958 and 1959. In the national team, he won the Italian tandem title in 1958 (with Bianchetto) and in 1959-1960 (with Zanetti). In the Mediterranean Games in 1959 he won both the sprint and distance. He won the following Grand Prix: the Gardiol



Trophy in 1957, Aarhus 1958, London 1959, Paris 1960, Copenhagen 1960 and the Memorial Ellegaard in 1960. As a professional (1961-1970) he had a memorable race with Maspes on the Rocourt track in 1963, in which he managed to take his only world title (he came second in 1962 and 1970, and third in 1966 and 1969), Champion of Italy in the speed race in 1964, he won the Grand Prix in 1961, winning at Roubaix, Amsterdam, Aarhus and Rome. He lives in Milan.



ZENARI CARD. MARIO - Villafranca di Verona 5-1-1946

“The cardinal with the suitcase”

Mario Zenari, a Villafrancan from Rosegaferro, was born in 1946, the third son of peasant parents. He completed his studies in the seminary, and was ordained priest in 1970. After six years of ministry in the diocese of Verona (he curated at Buttapietra and Cerea), in 1976 he was sent to Rome where he attended the the Ecclesiastical Academy and in 1980 he graduated with full marks in canon law at the Gregorian. He then began his true mission: five years as nunciature secretary in Senegal and Liberia and three years as adviser at the nunciature in Colombia. In 1988, he went to the nunciature in Bonn in Germany where he lived in 1989, and witnessed first-hand the fall of the Berlin wall. of which he still keeps a piece in his house in Rosegaferro. In 1992, he went to Romania and stayed in Bucharest for three years. He then moved to Vienna (five years) as a permanent representative to the International Organisations of Vienna (multilateral diplomacy), where for the Holy See he was a member of the Atomic Agency. On 12th July 1999, in Vienna, he received his nomination as titular Archbishop of Zuglio (ancient diocese of Friuli) and Nunzio in the African continent, for which he returned to Burkina Faso and Niger in Ivory Coast and stayed there for five years. In the summer of 2004, he travelled to Sri-Lanka, site of the immense catastrophe of the tsunami. Since April 2009 he has been in Damascus, in Syria, site of tragedies in recent years. Received the purple cardinal from Pope Francis on the occasion of the consistory of 19th November 2016 on the eve of conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy. For over thirty years, he engaged in Vatican diplomacy in all the continents, and rightfully was called: “the Archbishop with the suitcase”. He has now become “The Cardinal with the suitcase”



FERRARINI ALIDA (1946-2015)

Opera singer

Born in Villafranca on 9th July 1946. After her musical studies at the Conservatory “F. E. Dall’Abaco” in Verona under the guidance of Maestro Enzo Cecchetelli, she participated in numerous singing competitions, winning several trophies.

In the summer of 1975, she made her debut at the Verona Arena in Bizet’s “Carmen” and subsequently the most important theatres in Italy, in Europe and in the world saw her as protagonist. Her commitment, perseverance and skill led her to increasingly expand her repertoire and be appreciated in the international arena, with the most famous opera singers, such as: Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, Balsa, Bruson, José Carreras and in the early La Scala in Milan with direct footage by Rai. Alida Ferrarini was one of the most appreciated international performers, particularly in the role of Liù in Giacomo Puccini’s “Tyandot”; performing in: Buenos Aires, Sidney and Tokyo, among other places. The Puccini heroine delivered more than 160 performances of Micaëla in the “Carmen” in the top Italian and European theatres. At the Arena in Verona in 1986, she was awarded the presti-

gious “Giovanni Zenatello” Award. The definitive soprano Alida Ferrarini was given the name “*La celeste Alida*” by the newspapers in Bordeaux on the occasion of the “*Lucia di Lammermour*”. Died in Villafranca on 26th June 2013. On 11th December 2015, the Municipal Administration of Villafranca named the new municipal theatre in her honour.

BEGNONI RENATO - Villafranca di Verona 12-2-1956

Photographer

Among the most important and esteemed Italian photographers, he has been engaged in research photography for a number of years. His artistic activity is remarkable, leading him to exhibit in many spaces in Italy and abroad. His works are found in public and private collections and museums. in: Italy (Alinari Museum in Florence, Museum of Photography in Brescia), Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, Poland, Argentina, Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, USA, Principality of Monaco, Canada, Germany, the Soviet Union, and the Republic of San Marino. In 1995, he participated in the XLVI International Biennial of Art in Venice in the exhibition “The I and his double - a century of portrait in Italy”. Exhibited in 2000 at the Milan Triennale. In 2002, he won the Friuli Venezia Giulia national prize for photography. In 2009, he went to St. Petersburg and Moscow with the exhibition: “Italy 1946-2006; from the reconstruction to the new millennium”. In 2011, he returned to Venice in the LIV edition of the International Art Biennale, Italy Pavilion. Exhibited in Sweden with Italian photography at the Museum Nordiska in Stockholm. In 2015, the Municipality of Villafranca di Verona dedicated a retrospective “The perception of life”, showing works from 1985-2015, at the House of the Treaty of Peace, Palazzo Bottagisio. Lives and works in Villafranca di Verona.



GRIGOLATO GLORIA - Villafranca di Verona 18-1-1971

Elite international dancer

Gloria was born in Villafranca di Verona. At the age of 12, she was selected to attend the John Cranke Schule Academy in Stuttgart in Germany. At the age of 18, she graduated and began her career as a dancer. She was awarded a contract for the Dresden Opera, where she was promoted to first soloist. Afterwards, she was awarded a contract by Uwe Scholz for the Leipzig Opera, dancing all the main roles of her choreographies and classical repertoire. After some years, she moved to London and joined the English National Ballet, with she performed in the world’s major theatres: in Europe, America, Japan, China, and Russia. In Russia, she was invited to the R Nureyev festival where she was awarded the prize for best dancer of the festival. Gold Medal in the Dance Europe competition and the Rugantino Award. She attained a diploma in London as a professional teacher. Currently, she is a member of the Birmingham Academy and a talent spotter in Italy.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would like to offer thanks and a homage to all the people who have contributed over the years to the research and development of our city's community in a quiet and anonymous way. This work is intended to inspire young people especially, for them to know and rediscover our territory's history, distinctive features and remarkable artistic beauty.

It is necessary to thank the various administrations, public bodies and parish priests who have succeeded each other over the years and have taken care of the construction, management and maintenance of the precious cultural heritage of our Municipality, with their sacrifice.

In addition, we'd like to thank Pasquale Cordioli, editor of the book, along with friends and sponsors who have contributed to the publication. Finally, it is necessary to make a special mention to the photographer Renato Begnoni, who has embellished the book with his work, and to Dr. Pino Passarelli, who helped organise our story chronologically.

Eugenio Turrini
President

San Rocco Committee of Villafranca di Verona



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e Negrelli Luigi
Consulenti Finanziari



di PORCHETTI CARLA
Oggettistica dell'Aeronautica Militare





LA GRAFICA

Printed in May 2018
by TIPOGRAFIA LA GRAFICA EDITRICE
of Vago di Lavagno (Verona) - Italy

lagraficagroup.it