

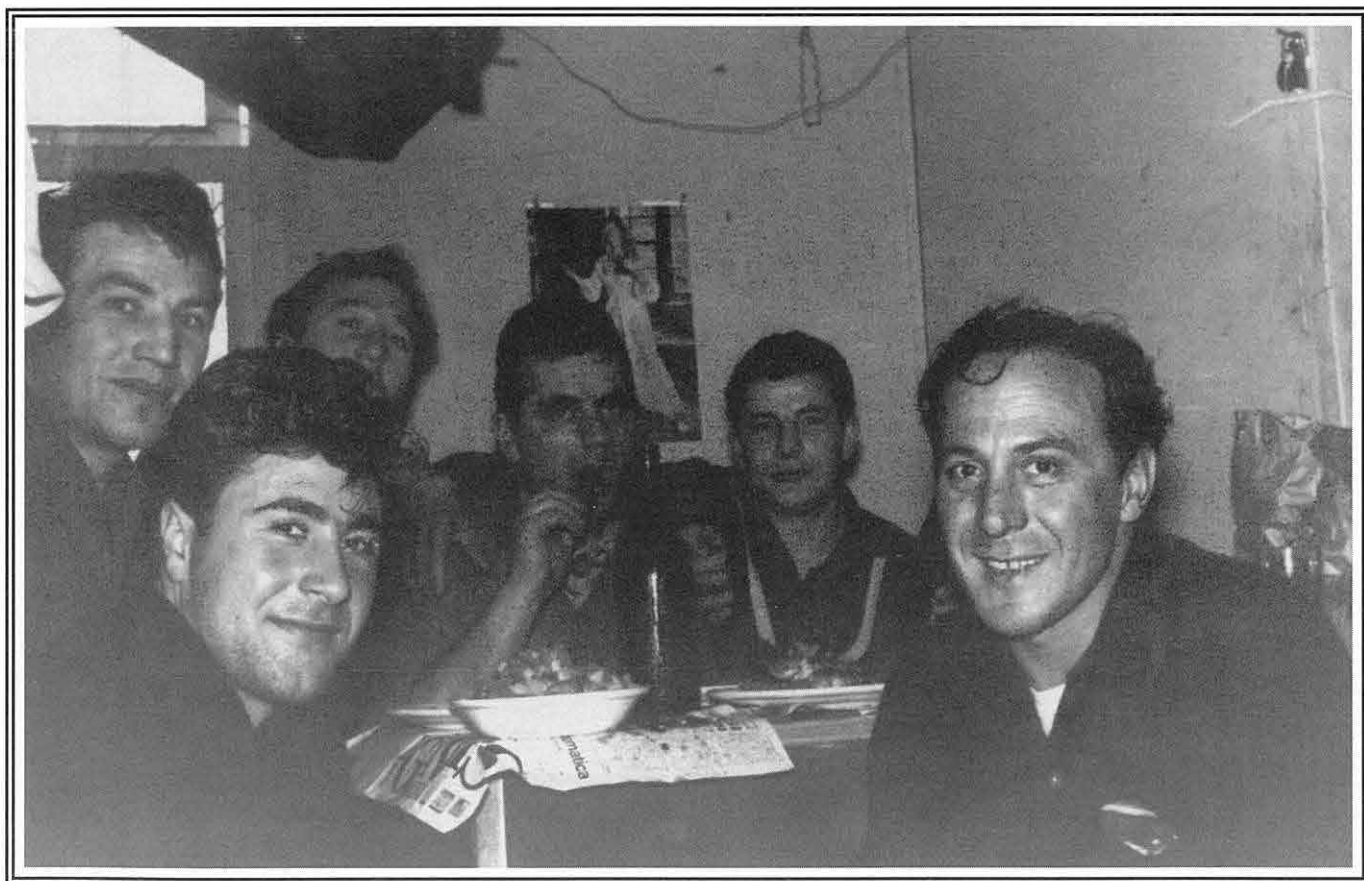


ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JOURNAL

January – December 1998

VOLUME 6, Nos. 1-2



ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

January – December 1998
Volume 6, Nos. 1-2

ISSN 1321-3881

The Editorial Sub-committee for this edition was:
Vince Basile, Doug Campbell, Joan Campbell,
Laura Mecca, Maria Tence

The *IHS Journal* aims to provide, to those interested in the history of Australian-Italian communities, an outlet for the circulation of news and reports, the exchange of information and the notification of future activities. We invite readers to contribute newsworthy articles and short notes. Guidelines for contributors are included.

The views expressed in the *IHS Journal* are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Italian Historical Society. The illustrations not sourced are from the Italian Historical Society Collection.

The *IHS Journal* is published twice a year. Subscription is \$20.00 annually which entitles you to membership to the Italian Historical Society. The Italian Historical Society is governed by CO.AS.IT and is bound by the rules and regulations of the parent body.

Subscriptions can be sent to:

Italian Historical Society – CO.AS.IT
Italian Resource Centre
1st Fl., 189 Faraday Street, Carlton 3053
Tel: (03) 9347 3555 Fax: (03) 9347 8369

COPYRIGHT (C) 1998

The material in this *Journal* is copyright and remains the property of the individual authors. Where the author is not stated, copyright inquiries should be directed to the Italian Historical Society – CO.AS.IT.

FRONT COVER:

A group of young Italian migrant workers in their living quarters at the camp site in the Kosciuszko National Park area in c1964. They were employed by Thiess to work in the Bogong Project of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme. Turn to page 48 for details of the reunion organised by the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority for the 50th Anniversary of the Scheme.

CONTENTS

‘Strangers in a strange land’: A Rural Community’s Experience with Italian Prisoners of War	Page 4
From our Archives	11
The Italian Contribution to North-East Victoria	13
<i>Sempre le Montagne</i> : Early Italian Settlement in North-East Victoria	22
My Grandfather Giovanni Roberto Merlo	29
Family History:	
In Search of a Swiss Role	40
Alfred Lucas: where did he come from?	42
Family history enquiries	43
Pierre Trudeau at the Crossroads	45
News	
The Journey Begins – Victoria’s Immigration Museum now open	47
The Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme: An Important Anniversary	48
Publications Received	50
Our Activities	
Change of Premises	52
Public activities	52
Anniversary of Casa d’Italia	52
New Material	53
Educational activities	54
Italian Historical Society Access Conditions	56

'Strangers in a strange land': A Rural Community's Experience With Italian Prisoners of War

By John Hall

This article is an extract from John Hall's PhD research on Italian POWs in the Inverell area of northern NSW. He has interviewed over 40 people and received written submissions from a similar number as well as conducting extensive research in northern NSW papers. At present, with the aid of an Australian War Memorial grant, he is conducting archival research in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. In early 1999, thanks to a University of New England scholarship, he will travel to Italy to conduct further interviews and archival research.

In July 1944, a meeting of the local branch of the Returned Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Imperial League (RSSAIL) was held in Inverell, on the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales. There were no stirring speeches thundered out by the then Prime Minister, John Curtin, nor by any high ranking military leader. The meeting would most likely have been held in a nondescript room, the kettle boiling, tea and coffee ready to be consumed with a selection of biscuits and cakes. Nonetheless, the issues discussed at that meeting are representative of the many themes and arguments which swirled through a number of rural centres in the latter half of the Second World War. Those years witnessed Australians on the home front coming face to face with enemy soldiers, in the form of Italian Prisoners of War (POWs) who worked without guards on hundreds of farms and properties. Their presence, although initiated by the Commonwealth Government and supported by many farmers who employed them, caused debate on many levels. While the prisoners set about coping with the myriad of farm duties, their presence within these communities was both reviled and applauded.

With a wartime population estimated to be almost 6,200, Inverell slumbered as it always had, nestled between the Great Dividing Range and the western plains.¹ However, Inverell could claim something which many other rural towns could not — it was a centre for the distribution of Italian POWs for farms in the surrounding district. Despite the Government's calming reassurances concerning the prisoners, their place in the manpower scheme, and their suitability to help restore the depleted rural labour force, the citizens of Inverell were not averse to spreading rumours and gossip about the Italians. Thus the RSSAIL meeting on that cold winter's night.



A future prisoner. A confident looking Orfeo Campagner in Libya shortly after disembarking. Despite appearances, most Italian troops were poorly equipped and lacked even the most basic training. Orfeo remembers he was given a uniform, then immediately 'put ... on the boat ... to Libya!' Photo courtesy Orfeo Campagner.

The guest speaker for the gathering was Captain Gibbs, the officer in charge of the Inverell Prisoner of War Control Centre (PWCC) No.19. Captain Gibbs was new to the town, having only arrived the previous month.² His charges, the Italian prisoners, were also newcomers to the town, arriving in mid April 1944. The initial batch were described as 'a fine, alert, decent looking lot' by the Inverell Times, which then appealed to Inverell's citizens to 'make them welcome, as they have suffered much and are actually strangers in a

strange land to whom sympathy should be extended.³ But the plea had fallen on deaf ears.

‘As an officer of the military forces,’ Captain Gibbs told the assembled members, ‘you know it is my duty, and it is your duty to stop false rumours.’ Gibbs had identified that the branch was a focal point for the rumours, which had obviously spread throughout the town and district. He began by refuting suggestions that the prisoners would be allowed to remain in Australia after the war, causing the lowering of Australian working conditions. ‘Nonsense is the answer to that!’ he reprimanded those present, informing his audience that all POWs would be repatriated once the war was finished. Next he tackled the issue of the wages paid to the prisoners. Accusations abounded that the prisoners’ wages (paid by farmers to the Government at the rate of one pound per week per prisoner) were a damning indictment that the Commonwealth was using the POWs to smash union award rates of pay and conditions. While Captain Gibbs did not deny the pay was low, he countered by arguing that hidden costs, paid by the farmer, inflated the cost of employing the prisoners. He further reiterated that manpower was at a premium, and the POWs ‘are here purely as a temporary measure.’ Gibbs, while touting the standard official attitude, injected his own opinions into his speech, adding, ‘we can’t use these coves to fight for us — they are not worth a bumper as fighters, you know that.’ His opinions surfaced again when he said that most of the prisoners believed they would be allowed to stay in Australia. ‘Let them have that opinion,’ he proclaimed, ‘but when the time comes they will be whipped out.’⁴

Gibbs then confronted the most contentious issue surrounding the Italians — the apparent lax attitude from both employer and prisoner towards the rules and regulations which governed the lives of the Italians. RSSAIL branches throughout the state, including Inverell, had complained long and loud that the Italians were enjoying freedoms to which they were not entitled, especially in light of the treatment of Australian POWs in Axis hands. Gibbs remarked that the prisoners were not allowed to ‘wander through the town’, nor were they permitted to attend any social functions, such as dances, parties or the pictures. Any breaches of the rules, he stated, should be reported immediately. Those at the meeting appeared to be placated by the officer’s

assurances, and the general feeling of all present was made evident in the final words of the article: ‘All were agreed that they did not want them [Italians] in Australia after the war’.⁵ As time progressed, however, what would have shocked Gibbs and his audience as to the exact nature surrounding some experiences of POWs in the Inverell district, together with the feelings of those who employed the Italians.

From the declaration of war by Italy against Britain and her allies in June 1940, attitudes of many Australians toward Italians often bordered on xenophobic. Inverell was no different. For example, in the first months of 1942 the *Inverell Times* reported a series of meetings which constantly called for the internment of the many Italians who owned and worked tobacco farms to the north of Inverell up to the Queensland border. The claims aired at these gatherings were reckless and unsubstantiated: Italians had refused to help fight recent bushfires and therefore ‘could not be classed as good Australians’; and five thousand rifles, allegedly hidden in the district by Italian fifth columnists, had supposedly been unearthed.⁶ In May 1942 the *Inverell Times*, like so many other newspapers of the day, added to this atmosphere by reprinting a poem titled ‘The Dago Man’, part of which read:

When I get back to Queensland
I’ll grow ‘tobac’ perhaps,
And I’ll stay and make the money
While the Aussies fight the Japs,
And, if they ask for more money
I’ll say, ‘No unnerstan’.
And they won’t take it from me then
‘Cause I’m a Dago man.’⁷

It was into this charged atmosphere that the POWs entered. The Inverell PWCC was established in March 1944 with a quota of 100 prisoners for the surrounding district.⁸ Before the arrival of the first prisoners in April, a meeting of prospective employers was told the prisoners ‘were scrupulously clean ... all had some experience of rural work and practically all had a trade as well.’⁹ Such comments reassured farmers that the men were suitable for employment, although many were to face the reality that their prisoners spoke little or no English, were anything but farm workers, required constant supervision initially, with some even openly antagonistic towards the farmer and working in general.

If the farmers and their families were relying on the Government and Army to provide them with

sound advice and background on the prisoners, they were to be disappointed. To guide the employers, the Army issued a set of bewildering instructions, which read in part:

The Italian prisoner of war is a curious mixture, in that he can be made to give of excellent work if certain points are observed:

1. He cannot be driven, but can be lead.
2. Mentality is childlike; it is possible to gain his confidence by fairness and firmness.
3. Great care must be exercised from a disciplinary point of view for he can become sly and objectionable if badly handled.

... It is necessary that he be well and warmly clad, both in summer and winter.

... It appears that the Italian harbours no grudge or has no feeling of hatred for us as a race.

... The average Italian is keen on sport and likes nothing better than to go rabbiting (not with a gun).¹⁰

While they are grossly simplistic, patronising and full of misapprehensions, historian Gianfranco Cresciani believes they were a product of the era: 'One would assume that these idiotic generalisations were drafted to tranquillise simple people who had no experience in meeting foreigners, let alone enemy prisoners of war'.¹¹ As well, a Notice outlining the numerous rules and regulations was also handed to each employer. The Notice detailed working conditions, pay rates, living conditions and the like. Security matters were extensively outlined — prisoners could not attend social functions, they were always required to wear their magenta uniforms, they were not allowed into towns, nor were they encouraged to meet with other POWs. The final point was most clear: 'P.W. must not fraternise with members of the public — particularly with women.' While the Italians were allowed to read newspapers and listen to wireless broadcasts, they could not 'under any circumstances, be allowed to have alcoholic liquor in their possession'.¹² However, prisoners in the Inverell district, like many of their compatriots elsewhere, enjoyed a life which was not constrained by mere written words.

A former prisoner from the Inverell district, Alec Luciani, remembers his times as a prisoner with fondness, although much of it was in direct contravention of the rules. Many times he was given a gun, and allowed to go shooting for rabbits and birds, sometimes accompanied by the farmers' children. Did he and his employer know it was



POWs at a swimming hole. 'Alf', a POW on 'Nordale' near Inverell strikes a Tarzan-like pose while fellow prisoners laze in the background. Alf, although popular with the family, was to clash with the other prisoners and was reluctantly returned to camp. Photo courtesy Mrs Laurel McCosker.

against the rules? 'Oh yeah! ... but who was going to see us? And I was not to shoot the kids,' he reasoned, 'because sometimes ... well I used to look after them, you know, because I was the oldest.' Alec also recalled going into Inverell where he and other prisoners regularly wandered about town, sometimes buying flagons of wine (purchased with money they had earned from rabbiting or had been given by their employers) which they slipped beneath their coats. As for fraternising with women: 'Some [prisoners] they had a girlfriend, some they didn't'.¹³ Meanwhile, he and a fellow prisoner, Orfeo Campagner, were given a horse and sulky on one property and allowed to visit other prisoners or attend church by themselves. Orfeo recalls on another Inverell property where he worked that he and another prisoner helped construct a tennis court, which was used by the family, visitors and other prisoners after church each Sunday.¹⁴

Yet, as one family member recalled, trust between the farmer and his prisoner(s) 'certainly wasn't an instantaneous thing', but was earned over a period of time — on this particular farm near Inverell, the farmer lent one of his prisoners some civilian clothes so that he could visit a nearby female 'friend'.¹⁵ Fraternisation with fellow prisoners and the public (especially women) was possibly the most difficult rule to enforce, because often the prisoners were housed well away from the homestead, and night offered convenient protection for all manner of activities, if the Italians so wished.

However, had these prisoners been caught transgressing the rules, they would have been withdrawn from the farm and received detention back in camp at Cowra, while the farmer would have lost his prisoner labour. At other PWCCs, prisoners were apprehended attending dances and pictures, were seen being served and drinking in hotels, and caught at civilian's homes in borrowed civilian clothing. Each week, the army recorded numbers sent back to Cowra and the reasons. While many were on medical grounds, others were for disciplinary reasons. For example, one Inverell POW was returned for disobeying an order to work. Despite receiving the same meals as his employer's family, and being given morning and afternoon teas (as well as a thermos of coffee to drink when he woke up, a request he told the local priest to pass onto his employer), the prisoner still complained about his living conditions. His complaint cost him 28 days in detention.¹⁶ Another prisoner was more honest about his refusal to work on an Inverell farm, saying 'he had worked [so] well on farms he wanted to go back to Camp at Cowra for a holiday.' He was rewarded with a seven day holiday in detention — back at Cowra!¹⁷

Despite some problems on farms, the majority remember the Italians with affection. — 'We loved them ... they were the loveliest young men ... my brother and I just thought they were part of our family,' declared one member of a family who employed three prisoners near Inverell. The prisoners were so attached to this family that when this lady (then a school child) left for boarding school, 'they cried and so did I'.¹⁸

Despite fears to the contrary, the farmers soon realised that any thoughts of escape by the Italians were non-existent. The wife of one farmer remembers their prisoners stayed at home while they went to Church. 'Where would they go?' she asked, and besides, they 'didn't want to escape. They were very happy to be safe and warm and part of an Australian family'.¹⁹ For others, being 'part of the family' meant participating in normal family activities. The daughter of one farmer recounted when her father went to the owner of the local movie theatre at Delungra, near Inverell, and asked if his prisoners could attend. Upon receiving an affirmative reply (even though it was clearly not the responsibility of the owner to say yes), the father 'took them in when the lights went out', and retrieved

them before lights came back up. However, it was a double screening and the second movie was a comedy. In this feature, Laurel McCosker recalled 'they were making a terrible noise laughing. They were so excited, Dad had to go to them and quieten them ... everybody knew they were there but nobody cared'. While admitting the POWs were 'treated better than they should have been,' Mrs McCosker remembers them as 'just young men, lonely, away from home'.²⁰



A happy wartime picture. A group of female visitors to 'Springfield' near Inverell are flanked by two prisoners. Fraternisation of any description, even of this innocent nature, was strictly forbidden. Some POWs found with similar photographs were often placed in detention back in camp. Photo courtesy Mrs Rita Pollock.

These sentiments were echoed by many others, including Edward Fuller. The prisoners on their farm outside Inverell 'were part of the family', and there was no hesitation in allowing the POWs to eat with them at the family table. When the time came for the prisoners to return to camp in late 1945, one clung to his father, quite distraught, and cried: 'I will come back! I will come back! As soon as I can, I will come back!' However, this particular prisoner did not come back, although he was to meet up with the Fullers in Italy when they visited him in 1965.²¹ Clearly, there were fond feelings for the prisoners within many families, which in turn were reciprocated by the Italians. However, the Inverell district did witness a degree of orchestrated opposition to the Italians.

Apart from RSSAIL antagonism, the local branch of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) objected to the use of prisoner labour, asserting that the scheme was an attempt to undermine award wages and conditions for Australian workers,

and further, that it displaced Australian workers — charges rejected by the Government, and continually denied by Army officials, as seen by Captain Gibbs's comments earlier. The Inverell AWU branch, following other district branches, passed motions that their members would refuse to shear sheep on properties where prisoners were employed, and threatened bans on properties where the Italians continued to be employed.²² The threats transformed into actual bans on two district properties in January 1945, resulting in the prisoners on one of the farms (where Alec Luciani and Orfeo Campagner were working with sheep) being returned and allocated to other farms in the area. The threat of bans was a potential death knell for the scheme, and forced the authorities and farmers to avoid confrontation with the union. Farmers were advised not to use prisoner labour for any work associated with sheep or shearing. As a result, many farmers' prisoners 'disappeared' for a few days while shearers worked on the properties, employed at locations well away from the unionists. Sometimes prisoners were even sent to a neighbour's property if the shearing lasted for more than a week.²³

The local community was certainly aware of the struggle between the farmers and the AWU, as reflected by letters to the editor of the *Inverell Times*. 'For Australia', a highly critical opponent of the Inverell AWU branch, stated 'the lack of patriotism on the part of the AWU is extraordinary,' considering the union's actions when labour was short was tantamount to sedition, because the war effort by farmers was being hindered.²⁴ In reply, 'Action Counts' countered by asserting that the AWU was far from unpatriotic, and shearers had completed all the shearing required of them, a feat achieved with one third less men.²⁵ Another letter supporting the AWU came from 'Ex-AIF', who believed the POWs should work, but in large groups in other industries. His concluding comment hinted that labour conditions were not the only consideration in the matter: 'our members are good Australians, and like myself, cannot work in harmony side by side with our past enemy as cheap labour'.²⁶ Another critic 'For Australia' believed that 'the work most of these Italian POWs are doing could have been done years before the war when there were thousands of men begging for work'.²⁷ Probably the writer was referring to the Depression, but his logic was flawed. Many said their farms were still

struggling in the wake of the Depression, a point not lost on the Commonwealth Government's Rural Reconstruction Commission, whose first report in 1943 painted a bleak picture of rural industries:

As supplies of farm necessities and labour became scarce the task of maintaining farm buildings and equipment became greater and dilapidations increased ... perhaps an apt picture of many farmers in 1943 is that of very tired men worried by ten years of difficulty, perplexed by doubts as to their future, but grimly carrying on with the task of the day.²⁸

The attack on the scheme's advocates continued with 'Bush Worker', who wrote in December 1945 that many farmers continued to employ the Italians at a time when 'there are some 30 or 40 rural workers unemployed in the district ... amongst them are returned men with up to five years service overseas'. Further, the writer was supposedly told by one farmer that while experienced Australian labour could be hired, the cheap rates for the POWs meant he could save considerable sums of money. 'The loyalty of some employers of labour,' 'Rural Worker' wrote bitterly, 'is only loyalty to their own pocket'.²⁹ However, for Inverell and most other NSW towns, the controversy was soon to evaporate, since all prisoners were shortly to be withdrawn for future repatriation back to Italy.

Manpower authorities had informed the military in October 1945 of a schedule of closures for all PWCCs in NSW. Beginning in late October, all Centres were to close by the end of the year. The Inverell PWCC, together with 11 others, was scheduled to wind up by December 1945, and by early January 1946, the remaining fifty or so Italian POWs in the Inverell district, including Alec and Orfeo, had been returned to camp in Liverpool in Sydney.³⁰

However, for many prisoners, their stay in camp was to continue for another year before being repatriated back to Italy. Alec and Orfeo, qualified tradesman, together with hundreds of other prisoners, were used in various army quarters on a number of projects (including stacking ammunition, which was clearly against the Geneva Convention).³¹ The eventual return to Italy for many prisoners was marked by depression and anguish — post war Italy was in social, political and economic ruin. Both Alec and Orfeo were eventually contacted by one family, the Kemps at



Life in Liverpool camp, 1946. Orfeo (back row centre) poses with fellow prisoners who formed a soccer team to pass the days, weeks and months before repatriation back to Italy. The boredom saw many prisoners escape from the various camps after the war, security being virtually nonexistent. Most escaped POWs returned voluntarily, or gave themselves up, before the ships sailed from Australian waters.

Photo courtesy Orfeo Campagner

'Gowrie', who once employed them near Inverell, offering to pay for their passage back to Australia. Both agreed, bringing with them their young families. They returned to Inverell, now as trusted workers, with the respect and admiration of those who had met them while they had worn the magenta uniform of an enemy prisoner. Both paid their fares back, and brought more family members to Australia, all working on 'Gowrie'. For about seven years, they continued to work, until leaving for other jobs.

Orfeo, a qualified bricklayer, worked in the Inverell district for a number of tradesmen until he was employed in the Public Works Department, where he worked until his retirement. He still lives in Inverell. Alec was offered a chance to manage a property owned by the Kemps, near Ebor, 150kms southwest of Inverell on the Northern Tableland. He eventually purchased his own property in the area, bought cattle and expanded his property, and today lives in retirement near Coffs Harbour. Both he and Orfeo are still in contact with each other, as well as with family members of those who employed them during the war, including Kemp family members who helped them establish new lives in a country that had once labelled them as the enemy.³²

The story of Italian POWs in rural centres such as Inverell is a complex one, and has had an impact on the social and cultural fabric of Australia. The decision to alleviate the acute

labour shortage in many rural industries by placing Italian POWs on farms brought a contact and a cultural experience of the Old World directly into the homes of rural Australians, many of whom had never previously encountered foreigners. These experiences and encounters provided many with a means of escaping their isolation, and contributed to a breadth of awareness and understanding for both the prisoner and his 'captor'.

The impact of the POWs has resonated down to the present day, which probably would have shocked Captain Gibbs, his RSSAIL audience, and various AWU members. Mutual respect and friendship, qualities which were certainly not envisaged or encouraged by the authorities during the war, sprang up in Inverell on many farms where the prisoners were employed. While those who were opposed to the prisoners continued to be vocal at meetings and in the newspapers, those who employed the Italians in the Inverell area persevered and worked with the POWs for nearly 18 months. While they may have initially been 'strangers in a strange land', they are still fondly remembered in the memories of many as friends and *de-facto* Australians.

*A new life.
Orfeo proudly poses
with wife Cesarina,
sons Bruno (back) and
Roberto at their home
in Delungra, near
Inverell in the 1960s.*
Photo courtesy
Orfeo Campagner.



The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the Australian War Memorial, whose financial support enabled the gathering of archival material used in this article.

Notes

- ¹ NSW Government Bureau of Statistics and Economics, *The Official Year Book of New South Wales No.49 (1941-42 & 1942-43)*, NSW Government Printer, Sydney, 1946, p.52.
- ² *Inverell Times*, 10 July 1944, p.4.
- ³ *Inverell Times*, 12 April 1944, p.3.
- ⁴ *Inverell Times*, 10 July 1944, p.4.
- ⁵ *Inverell Times*, loc.cit.
- ⁶ *Inverell Times*, 23 January 1942, p.6; 4 February 1942, p.4.
- ⁷ *Inverell Times*, 25 May 1942, p.4.
- ⁸ A.Fitzgerald, *The Italian Farming Soldiers*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1981, p.173; Australian Archives Sydney (hereafter AA Syd.), Series SP191/1, Item 24989 Part A, 'POW Control Centres 25.11.44'.
- ⁹ *Inverell Times*, 20 March 1944, p.2.
- ¹⁰ Fitzgerald, op.cit., p.33; G.Cresciani, 'Captivity in Australia: the case of the Italian prisoners of war, 1940-1947', *Studi-Emigrazione/Etudes-Migrations*, Vol. 26, No.34, June 1989, p.207.
- ¹¹ Cresciani, loc.cit.
- ¹² 'Notice to Employers of Prisoners of War', Glen Innes & District Historical Society, World War Two file, n.d.
- ¹³ Mr A.Luciani: Interview on 22 May 1998.
- ¹⁴ Mr O.Campagner: Interview on 7 May 1997.
- ¹⁵ Interview No. I-3, May 1997.
- ¹⁶ AA Syd., Series SP1714/1, Item N45633, 'Intelligence Report No.109, POW Camp Cowra, 29.10.44 to 5.11.44'.
- ¹⁷ AA Syd., ibid., 'Intelligence Report No.123, POW Camp Cowra, 11.2.45 to 18.2.45'. It was not recorded if he was subsequently sent out to work on another farm. Often, prisoners were given a second chance after their detention if it was considered appropriate, and were dispatched to a different PWCC.
- ¹⁸ Mrs L.McCosker: Interview on 10 August 1997.
- ¹⁹ Mrs W.Fuller: Interview on 5 May 1997.
- ²⁰ Mrs L.McCosker: Interview on 10 August 1997.
- ²¹ Mr E.Fuller: Interview on 6 May 1997.
- ²² *Inverell Times*, 20 December 1944, p.6; 22 January 1945, p.2.
- ²³ Interestingly, the Inverell bans were not reported in the *Inverell Times*. One was, however, mentioned in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1945, p.4. In a separate action, a farmer in Gunnedah, another northern NSW centre, had his farm and produce declared black because of comments he wrote in defence of Italian POWs. In part he said: 'The Italians I have employed are hard-working, cheerful men, who learn quickly and do not worry about hours, but the average Australian farm worker, nowadays, works for a few days a week for 25 or 30 shillings or more a day and then knocks off. Italian war prisoners in my district and other country districts have saved the day for the farmers': *Northern Daily Leader*, 17 March 1945, p.3. Of further note, a local man, Langley Onus, became the Commanding Officer of the Inverell PWCC during mid 1945, having been transferred from the Tamworth Centre. Unlike one of his predecessors (Gibbs), Onus is remembered as having a fair and respectful attitude towards the Italians.
- ²⁴ *Inverell Times*, 19 January 45, p.3.
- ²⁵ *Inverell Times*, 26 January 45, p.3.
- ²⁶ *Inverell Times*, loc.cit.
- ²⁷ *Inverell Times*, oc.cit.
- ²⁸ Rural Reconstruction Commission, *A General Survey (First Report)*, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, January 1944, p.31.
- ²⁹ *Inverell Times*, 5 December 1945, p.3.
- ³⁰ AA Syd., Series SP459/1, Item 489/3/4451, 'Italian PW – Withdrawal from Rural Industry, 26 October 1946'.
- ³¹ See, for example, AA Syd., Series SP459/1, Item 489/3/5588, 'Distribution of Italian PW Employed at AMF Camps and Installations Without Guards as at 15/7/46'; AA Syd., Series SP459/1, Item 489/3/5680, 'Request for Supplies to HQ Eastern Command, 23/10/46'. Prisoners were also used on other projects which were of little military value, including top dressing sports ovals, preparing new tennis courts and cricket wickets, as well as the maintenance of gardens: AA Syd., Series 459/1, Item 489/3/5588.
- ³² Mr O.Campagner: Interview on 7 May 1997; Mr A.Luciani: Interview on 22 May 1998.

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

*The following document from the **Italian Diplomatic Archives** Collection, in the holdings of the Italian Historical Society in microfilm format, discusses the resumption of Italian emigration to Australia after the Second World War.¹*

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Minister for Immigration

3rd July, 1947.

AIDE MEMOIRE presented to His Excellency the Italian Ambassador in the United [Kingdom] (Count Carandini) by the Australian Minister for Immigration & Information (the Hon. Arthur A. Calwell, M.H.R.)

1. The question of resumption of Italian migration to Australia has been held in abeyance until after the ratification by the Commonwealth Parliament in September next of the Peace Treaty with Italy.
2. It is felt that the most appropriate time for discussions on this question following the ratification of the Peace Treaty, is when an Italian Minister Plenipotentiary arrives in Australia as the first accredited Minister of the Republic of Italy.
3. Italian nationals in certain categories are permitted to enter Australia at the present time. They comprise:
 - (a) Australian born women married to Italian subjects and living in Italy and their minor children, and
 - (b) Italian born women married to Australian residents of Italian birth (whether naturalised British subjects or not), and their minor children.
4. Merchant seamen of Italian nationality captured in Australian waters or brought to Australia after capture in other parts of the world and interned in Australia during the war have been permitted to remain in Australia on the recommendation of Commissioners set up under appropriate legislation. The Commissioner who decided such cases was Mr. Justice Hutchins, of the Supreme Court of Tasmania. Practically every seaman was permitted to remain in Australia, but those who do not desire to remain will be repatriated to Italy as soon as possible at the expense of the Australian Government.
5. Exceptional classes of Italian professional and manual workers will be admitted to Australia between now and the ratification of the Peace Treaty. These will comprise a community of Nursing Sisters of the Religious Order founded by Mother Cabrini, for whom Landing Permits have already been issued, and about 800 timber-cutters whose services are needed for the timber line which supplies Kalgorlie [sic] Gold Mines.
6. The number of Landing Permits issued of persons mentioned in paragraph 3 between November 1945 and May 31st 1947 is 1626 and these Permits cover 2553 persons. 15 Landing Permits have been issued in respect of Jewish persons of Italian nationality and such Permits cover 27 persons. The number of Italian nationals who arrived in Australia in the year ended December 31st 1946 comprised 13 for permanent residence and 14 for temporary residence. The number of persons who arrived in the first three months of this year for permanent residence was 15 and the number who came for temporary residence was 6.
7. All persons for whom Landing Permits have been issued are guaranteed accommodation in their own homes by their Australian relatives, and, where necessary, employment is also guaranteed. The nominators have also made the necessary arrangements for the payment of the fares of their nominees. The difficulty confronting the holders of the Landing Permits in reaching Australia is their inability to secure shipping facilities. There is nothing the Australian Government can do about the matter because Australia owns no overseas vessels and is entirely dependent upon the ability of the British Government largely to carry intending migrants to Australia from England and the Continent.
8. Australian feeling is very definite that all available British shipping should be used to bring residents of the United Kingdom only to Australia at the present time, and for some considerable time to come. There are approximately 400,000 (comprising men, women and children) in the United Kingdom who wish to make Australia their permanent home and the number of berths available on British ships this year will be sufficient to carry only a fraction of this total.

9. It is a rule of the Department of Immigration in Canberra that non-residents of the United Kingdom, and this of course includes Maltese and Cypriots who are British subjects, may travel to Australia in ships carrying other than the British flag, except in such instances where berths become available at ports like Port Said because of the termination of voyages by persons who have embarked in Great Britain.
10. It is suggested that if persons for whom Landing Permits have been issued are to be brought to Australia at an early date, it would be well for some Italian Authority to try to charter ships at Mediterranean ports. There is a movement to Australia on the part of some persons interested in the welfare of Italians to investigate the possibility of chartering vessels.
11. Most of the Italian Prisoners of War held in Australia gave very satisfactory service on the farms to which they were allotted and quite a number of their employers have written to the Department of Immigration suggesting that these men should be permitted

to return to Australia. The question is being held in abeyance until after the ratification of the Peace Treaty.

Because of feeling on the part of Australian parents whose sons died in the Northern African campaign or were killed in air operations in Europe, it is thought that when the time comes to discuss renewal of immigration from Italy the question of preference being given to former Italian Prisoners of War to return to Australia because of their acquired knowledge of Australian farming conditions should not be raised officially.

12. The Australian Government has been helped considerably and very willingly by Comandante Morone who came to Australia to supervise the repatriation of Italian Prisoners of War and was requested to stay on by the Australian Minister of External Affairs (Dr. Evatt) and myself and it is suggested that if he were permitted to return to Australia at an early date, he would be of great assistance to whoever is appointed Italian Minister to Australia.

COPIA COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA Minister for Immigration. 3rd July, 1947 AIDE MEMOIRE presented to His Excellency the Italian Ambassador in the United (Count Garandini) by the Australian Minister for Immigration & Information (the Hon. Arthur A. Calwell, M.P.E.R.) 1. The question of resumption of Italian migration to Australia has been held in abeyance until after the ratification by the Commonwealth Parliament in September next of the Peace Treaty with Italy. 2. It is felt that the most appropriate time for discussions on this question following the ratification of the Peace Treaty, is when an Italian Minister Plenipotentiary arrives in Australia as the first accredited Minister of the Republic of Italy. 3. Italian nationals in certain categories are permitted to enter Australia at the present time. They comprise: (a) Australian born women married to Italian subjects and living in Italy and their minor children; and (b) Italian born women married to Australian residents of Italian birth (whether naturalised British subjects or not) and their minor children. 4. Merchant seamen of Italian nationality captured in Australian waters or brought to Australia after capture in other parts of the world and interned in Australia during the war have been permitted to remain in Australia on the recommendation of Commissioners set up under appropriate legislation. The Commission who decided such cases was Mr. Justice Hutchins, of the Supreme Court of Tasmania. Practically every seaman was permitted to remain in Australia, but those who do not desire to remain will be repatriated to Italy as soon as possible at the expense of the Australian Government. 5. Exceptional classes of Italian professional and manual workers will be admitted to Australia 4116

Notes

¹ IHS Collection of Italian Diplomatic Archives - 1855-1947 Reel No. 7, Documents 4116 - 4118. The original document is held in the 'Archivio Storico Diplomatico', Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Rome, Archivio Personale, Serie IIS, File No. 53 (273).

The document is included in a report sent by the Italian Embassy in London to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome on 2 August 1947 on a meeting held by the Italian Ambassador with the Australian Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell.

The Italian Contribution to North-East Victoria

by His Excellency the Honourable Sir James Gobbo, A.C. Governor of Victoria

The Italian Historical Society Journal takes great pleasure in publishing the George Mackay Pioneer Oration given in the Wangaratta Town Hall on Thursday, 23 October 1997 by the founder of our Society, Sir James Gobbo.

President of the Wangaratta Historical Society, the Honourable Bill Baxter, the Honourable Janette Powell, both MLCs for the north-eastern Province, the Honourable Ken Jasper, Member for Murray Valley, distinguished Council members, other distinguished guests including Fathers Jones and Ware, and ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure and a great honour to be asked to give this oration. Perhaps I should begin by describing in a little more detail some of those links that make me particularly interested in the history of Italians in Victoria.

I had a somewhat strange upbringing in two countries. My parents came here in 1928 and I was born in 1931. My father had a very hard time of it in the Depression as there was no work in his craft of terrazzo making. Life was so hard in Melbourne that my father decided to move to Kerang, about 230 kilometres north north-west of Melbourne. Eventually, because of my father's on-going ill-health, in 1934 we all returned to Italy. I was brought up there until I was 7; we came back to Australia in 1938 because my father and mother were determined to return to this great country to prove that they could succeed. Which they did.

When my parents came back in 1938, my father could not pursue his trade as a terrazzo-maker and contractor, so he purchased a restaurant opposite the Victoria Market, which had the very strange name of the St. Kilda Grill Room. What on earth the St. Kilda Grill Room was doing in North Melbourne, opposite the Victoria Market, we never quite understood. But we didn't change the name to Café Roma or something equivalent because we did not want to frighten away Australian clients. So for years it remained the St. Kilda Grill Room. I thought it must have been some lonely St. Kilda football club supporter who had originally named it, but I later found out that St. Kilda was an island in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland; no doubt Mr. George Mackay would approve of my early links with Scotland through the St. Kilda Grill Room.

Of course the relevance of this to my present visit to country Victoria was that, being opposite the Victoria Market, all the growers from far and wide came into the restaurant right through the succeeding 10 years that we lived there. Many of the patrons were from Werribee, where there were irrigated market gardens, but some were also from this part of the world: in fact, quite a number came from Shepparton and Cobram as well as from the other side of Melbourne and Narre Warren.

So, as a small boy growing up in my father's restaurant and helping to serve at the tables, I came to know many of the customers who were market gardeners and even on occasions I would spend short holidays with them. When an Italian grower had a wedding we were always invited. And you know what Italian weddings are like; everybody gets invited. It is a mortal insult just to ask Mr and Mrs, you have got to ask Mr and Mrs and family and that means right down to the smallest kids. The guest list could include up to six or seven hundred people. Anyway, we were included and I must say as a small child I found it fascinating – that is how I came in contact with Italian growers and people on the land.

My father, however, always said to me *'Impara l'arte e mettila da parte'* – to try and translate that into English is not easy but literally it might mean 'learn a skill and fill the till'. It was very good advice. My advice to people who worry about getting a university degree, which Italians call a *laurea*, is to say that the art or the skill is more important than the degree. If you are very good at your trade in this country, you have a great future. Merely having a degree does not provide employment, but having a real skill, real qualifications, being really good at your job, whatever that job is, is going to advance the person in dignity and in prosperity. That was, therefore, the best advice my father ever gave me. Whatever I did I had the desire, which was encouraged in me, to do it well. Anyway I digress too much on background and I move on to my topic which is the 'Italian Contribution to North-East Victoria'.

The earliest presence of Italians in this area was brought about by the discovery of gold at Jamieson in 1854. One of the very earliest indications of Italians arriving in the area was at a place called Politti's Creek. Politti was one of the early miners. Some of the other early names of those who came here as gold miners, who are still well known around Wangaratta, were the Ribecchis, the Comensolis and the Lardis.

Ribecchi was the master of ceremonies at the opening of the Cassilis Hall in Wangaratta in 1889. Another early family was the Comensolis, and I am delighted that tonight a direct descendant is present here to propose one of the toasts. Bartolo Comensoli came here in 1890, if not earlier. He was a vine grower from near Brescia in Lombardy. First he worked in the gold mines at Chiltern and then settled in this area.

Beechworth was also very important in those early days of gold and the earliest Italian family that we know of who settled there was the De Piazzas who came from the Ticino in the far north of Italy. Battista De Piazza came to Victoria in 1863. His great contribution was that he planted a large number of chestnut trees. In Italy, as we know, chestnut trees are highly valued; they are not only very beautiful but above all you can eat the chestnuts or *castagne* which, with red wine on a cold winter's night, is really a marvellous treat. There are still beautiful chestnut trees in Beechworth today.



Battista De Piazza with his second child, Battista, c1890. From The History and Family Tree of Catherine and Battista De Piazza 1870-1980 by Patricia De Piazza, Mudgegon, 1980.

De Piazza was also instrumental in setting up the Myrtleford Butter Factory Co-operative Company in 1903. De Piazza married Catherine O'Brien and the marriage produced 14 children. It was common for early Italian male settlers to marry Irish women as there were very few single Italian females in the colony. They are both buried in the Myrtleford Cemetery.

A similar marriage was that of Carlo Lardi to Mary Tully in 1862. They had 12 children. Here again Lardi began in goldmining but moved to fruitgrowing, also supplying shoring timber to mining companies. One of his daughters, Adele, was a scholarship student at the Star of the Sea Convent in Gardenvale and eventually became a nun and teacher at the school. Mother Sebastian, as she was known, was Principal of that School from 1928 to 1946. In 1946 Mother Sebastian was appointed Mother General of the Presentation Sisters, an office she held for twelve years. In 1958 she was elected by the various States as Mother President of the newly formed Society of Australian Presentation Congregations. Mother Sebastian was 81 years of age at the time of her appointment as President but age did not deter her from travelling regularly to every State in Australia where there were Presentation Sisters.

Mother Sebastian Lardi was renowned for her holiness, her wisdom and her strength, and was revered. She died on 15th October 1979 aged 102 years. Her memory is perpetuated in the name of the school hall – Sebastian Hall.

One of the earliest Italian settlers in the Bright area was Antonio Masciorini who came to Australia in 1859. He first worked on the Gabo Island Lighthouse and later as a miner in Bendigo. In 1867 he purchased a drapery store in Wandiligong which a photograph shows with the name A. Masheoreny. It is heartening to find that a large store conducted by his descendants in Bright is shown in a 1987 photograph with the sign A. Masciorini, est. 1867. The store is still flourishing and is conducted by John Masciorini, a direct descendant of Antonio Masciorini.

Some of the early miners soon left the goldfields and pursued other occupations in North-East Victorian areas such as Echuca. One such miner was Ambrogio Rapochioli, sometimes Rapacioli. There are still descendants in the Echuca district, the family having produced University academics, tradespeople and war servicemen over the years.

Echuca also benefitted from the skills of a Lombard barge builder called Buzza who built barges to carry timber from his sawmill at Echuca. One barge, the Emily Jane, launched in 1875, was said to be able to carry 170 tons of timber.

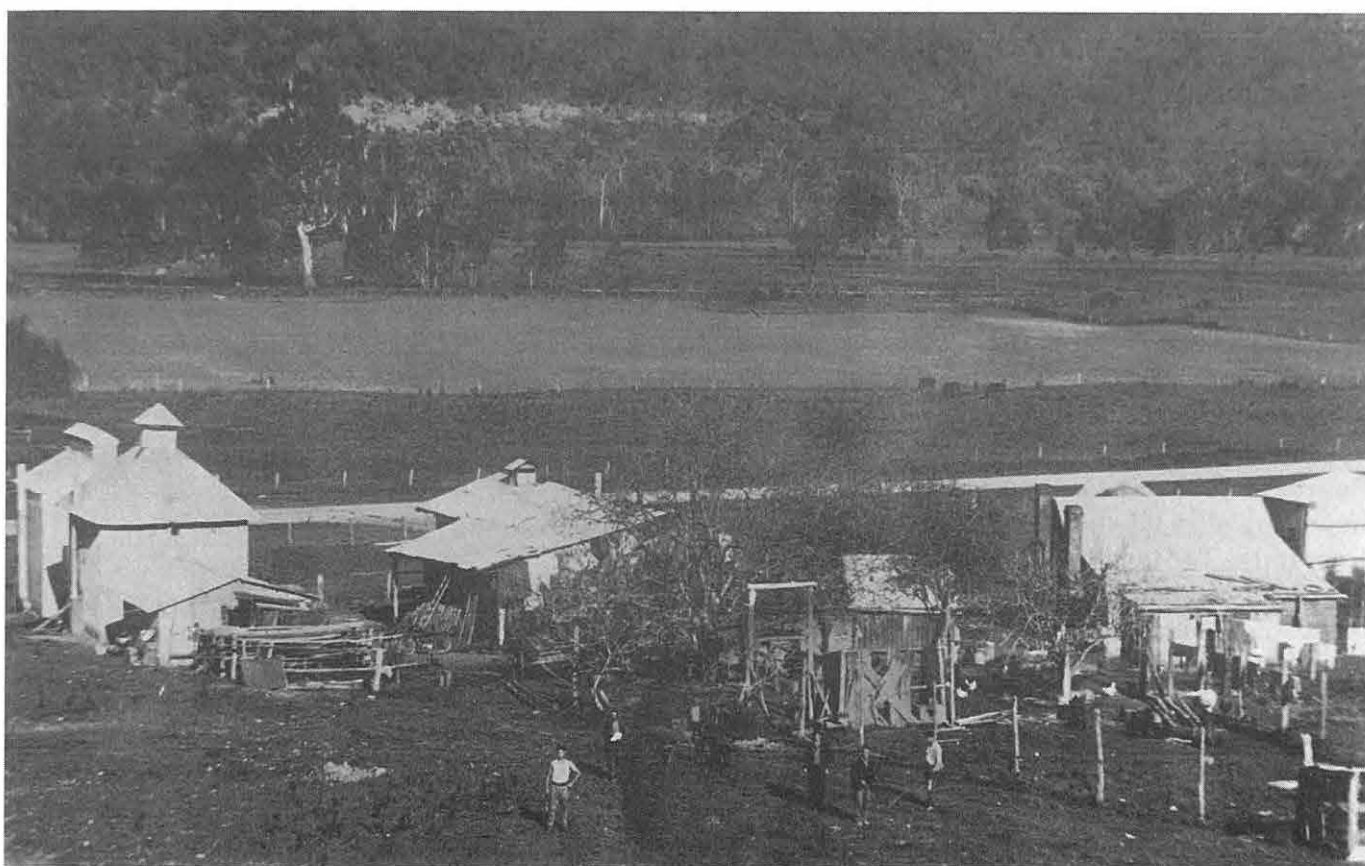
In another part of North-East Victoria, namely Rutherglen, a significant contribution was made, the benefit of which endures to this day. Romeo Bragato, who came to Victoria from Conegliano in the Veneto region, was a qualified viticulturalist. He was appointed the Victorian Government's viticulturalist in 1880 and became especially interested in the North-East of Victoria. The records show that he gave great support to the Brown Brothers whose vineyard was one of the first vineyards at Rutherglen at that time. He set up the Government Viticultural College at Rutherglen in 1896, which still survives and was one of the earliest colleges of its kind. It changed its name to the Victorian Research Centre and more recently was renamed the Institute for Integrated Agricultural Development – it is about seven miles south of Rutherglen on the Chiltern Road. At the turn of the century, it had some 50 students there learning viticulture.

Bragato made a very important contribution by

encouraging the settlers in the area to become interested in vine-growing and by assisting vine-growers in regeneration of vineyards devastated by the phylloxera plague of the 1870s. Some of the replacement vines came from California.

I would like to share with you a link with Californian vines. When I returned to the Veneto in my youth, I noticed that the local wine which was always served, was a very strong, very thick red called Crinto. Crinto I thought sounded a little strange and when I asked was this Crinto a grape variety, nobody could tell me. I was talking to a experienced viticulturist recently and he told me that Crinto was in fact an American grape called Clinton which was brought in from California in the 1880s to replace the phylloxera – damaged vines. The Veneti apparently could not say Clinton, so this much loved local wine is still called Crinto.

Two other areas which were of significance in the story of Italian settlement were Shepparton and Cobram. They became more important in the twentieth century because of the major irrigation programmes. Both Shepparton and Cobram have very high Italian populations. Those areas were made famous because of the cultivation of



Tobacco kilns and farm of Fulvio Valmorbida in the Ovens Valley, in 1920s.

fruit, but above all of tomatoes. I know that the market gardeners brought large amounts of their crops down to Melbourne. Many Italian homes in Melbourne bought cases of tomatoes to make the 'conserva' sauce which was then decanted into beer bottles with crown seals. In our home in Carlton we also used to decant wine into beer bottles from barrels of wine. We never had much trouble with the wine but the sauce bottles sometimes exploded and when a sauce bottle exploded it made a terrible mess in the cellar or cupboard.

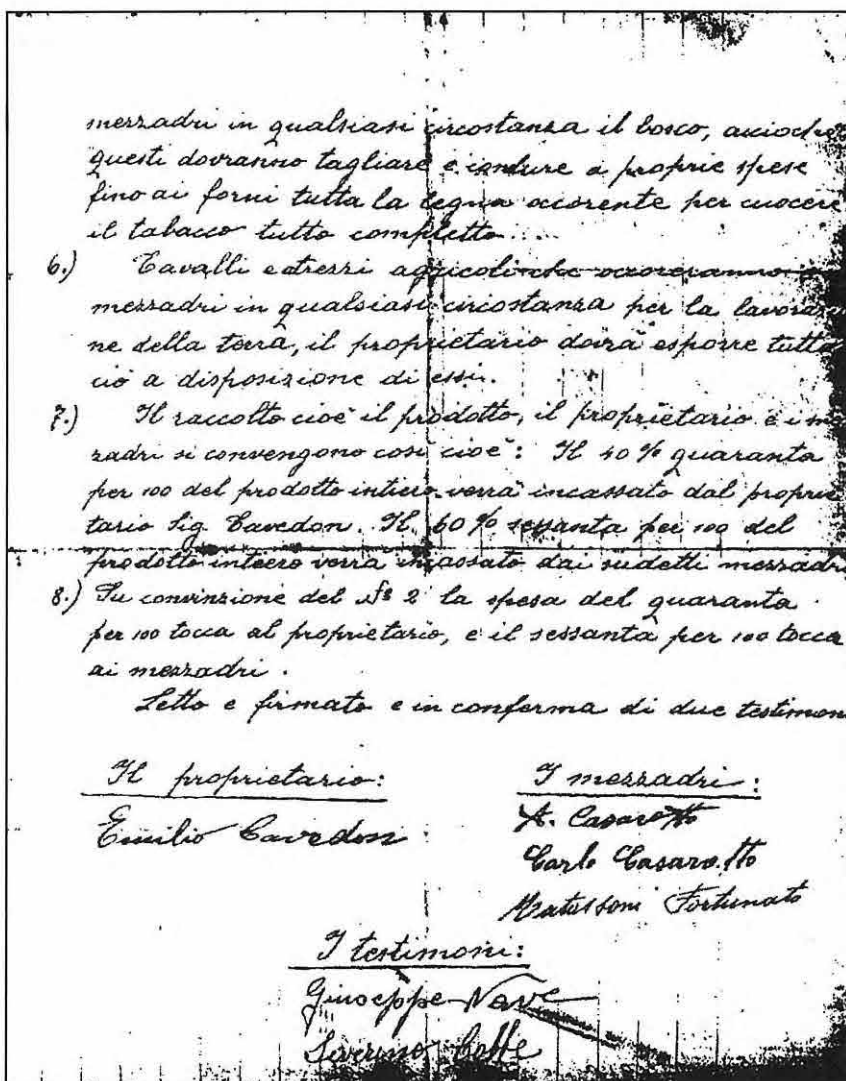
Tatura figures prominently in Italian settlement as many post-war settlers grew tomatoes and fruit there and some were dairy farmers. One such settler was Rocco Villani who first came to Australia in the 1920s from his village of San Marco in Lamis in the province of Foggia. He returned to Italy but came to Australia again in 1939. This time he settled in Tatura where he made steady progress, so much so that in 1947 he was joined by his mother and five younger siblings. The family's achievements and progress are well described in the book *Making it in Australia* by L. Hawthorne.

Let me move on to probably the most significant area of settlement, namely the Ovens Valley area and the tobacco farms there. Now it is a moot point as to who were the first of the Italian farmers in the Ovens Valley, about 1924-25. Fulvio Valmorbida and his wife Agnese, who were both from near Vicenza, came out in 1925 and settled in the Ovens Valley where they grew tobacco. They lived there for about five years, became Australian citizens and then went back to Italy. The Valmorbidas came back to Victoria after the Second World War and eventually set up a flourishing business principally importing olive oil and food products from Italy. The business was headed by Carlo Valmorbida, who became the acknowledged leader of the large Italian community of Victoria. Carlo Valmorbida was one of the main moving forces in the development of the Assisi Centre (hostel and nursing home) in Melbourne and is still its Honorary President.

Alongside the Valmorbida family in

the mid 1920s were the Delboscos. Guido Delbosco, who came from Rovereto in Trento, married a Casarotto from Vicenza and they had two sons and two daughters. One of those daughters is now Dulcie Kennedy and I had a conversation with her only a few days ago. Dulcie is married to John Kennedy who coached Hawthorn and North Melbourne and is the Chairman of the AFL. Dulcie has a marvellous memory of the history of this area and was able to give me very reliable information about the early days.

Another early family was the Cavedon family. Remigio Cavedon came to Victoria in 1927. He started off being a share-farmer for an Australian tobacco farmer and then eventually purchased his own property of some 43 acres at Eurobin. Another property at Eurobin is now the beautiful and successful Emu and Deer Farm and restaurant complex conducted by a branch of the Cavedon family. Amongst those early tobacco farmers in the 1920s was Giuseppe Piazza who



Section of the contract stipulated between Remigio Cavedon and three Italian migrant workers for share farming of tobacco in Eurobin in 1931.

settled in Eurobin. His son Dino Piazza became a councillor and the head valuer of the Tobacco Production Board. And in another group of tobacco growers, this time from Calabria, was the Sciutto family who came from near Catanzaro.

In that pre-war period the settlers that were the best represented, in terms of numbers, were those from Trento, from the Veneto, especially Treviso and Vicenza, Ascoli Piceno, and of course from Calabria. After the Second World War the immigrants came from a much broader selection of Italian regions.

A very detailed and scholarly unpublished doctoral thesis by Dr Daphne Phillips, written in 1968, entitled 'Italians and Australians in the Ovens Valley Area' contains a valuable survey and analysis of the role of Italian migrants in that valley.

One of the principal migrant families in the post-war period was the Pizzini family. Its story and the rigours of tobacco growing are well described in *Memories of Oxley 1862-1994* by Graham Jones. At one stage Arnaldo Pizzini had two hundred and fifty acres of tobacco farm land in the King Valley. Now most of that has been converted to vines and the Pizzini brothers are growing Nebbiolo, Sangiovese and Barbera grapes and producing much Italian variety wine.

When I was a barrister some three decades ago, I had an unpopular brief and I have some hesitation in mentioning it in this company. The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission was building the Buffalo Dam and, later, the King Dam; it acquired some tobacco farms including a tobacco farm owned, if I remember correctly, by one Michellini. The State Rivers, with unfortunate timing, acquired this property at the height of a boom in tobacco. There was a tremendous argument about the price because people were paying very high prices in the 1960s for land in those valleys. I had the task as a barrister for the State Rivers in coming along and trying to defend the rather inadequate offers of compensation that my client was making for this land. Preparation for the case involved me in being flown to the area in a single-engine plane from Moorabbin on a foggy morning. We flew into the Yarra Valley and the fog grew thicker and thicker so that we had to turn back. There was little room to turn and we almost crashed into the trees on the side of the valley as we did so. We

cleared the trees by a few feet. I wonder what would have happened to my young widow and five small children had we crashed! As a sequel the pilot, who was very experienced but also worked as a dentist, was killed in an air crash a few years later.

The life of tobacco farmers was an extraordinarily hard one, especially in the pre-war period, when there were terrible problems with blue mould. Until they discovered that benzol could overcome the blue mould disease, it was not uncommon to lose a whole crop through blue mould. There was an enormous amount of work involved in tobacco-farming, not just the planting and growing of the crops but also the drying process. The early kilns were wood-fired, not the oil kilns or gas-fired ones of today. Those wood-fired kilns required the farmers to sit up all night feeding them with wood lest the temperature fall. They were hard years, but particularly for the women who had to work in the fields, hoeing the tobacco plants. The plants themselves had to be grown to seedling stage somewhere else where they were likely to grow in a more healthy condition.

Dr Phillips' survey of Italian growers in the Ovens Valley shows that by 1961 71% of the tobacco growers were Italian-born and nearly three-quarters of the tobacco industry was in the hands of Italian growers.

The heavy burdens of tobacco growing and other intensive agriculture created many pressures. They imposed social pressure on those men who came as unaccompanied migrants. Last century, generally speaking, they married Irish women but this century they more often went back to Italy to seek a bride. Sometimes they got a wife by proxy (*procura*). I had the pleasure recently of launching probably the only book written in Australia about proxy brides. It describes how these marriages took place in this formal way because parents on the other side of the world would not let their daughters go unless they were already married before they left home. The marriage actually took place in the Church of the bride in Italy with someone – a proxy – standing in for the bridegroom who was, of course, somewhere in Australia. The marriage was not a guarantee that things would work out; there were examples of the boat arriving and the bride refusing to leave the cabin to disembark. Sometimes the man cheated a little and sent a picture of himself that was some twenty years

old. One farmer spoke of being *imbrogliato*, that is, taken in. Some cases which went awry created considerable problems for the priests. Moreover, there were only a limited number who could speak English. Eventually the Church decreed that there were to be no more proxy marriages because of all the problems. I think the last such marriage took place in 1969.

At the book launch in Melbourne I met a number of these proxy brides. They said their marriages worked out because they did not start off with any over-romantic ideas. One said, one did not come because one was marrying a film star, one came because this was something worthwhile. It also offered a start in the New World. Such marriages were often on a sound footing and usually worked out.

In farming, there was a problem for the children too. The demanding life of intensive agriculture created some problems in the upbringing of children. At times, demands were made on the whole family, with everyone having to pitch in. Italian migrants had come with the aim of seeing that their children secured the kind of education which they did not have. So the boys in particular were encouraged to go to, and stay at, school. But if the family were farmers and were busy and prosperous, the boys usually gave up school to work on the farm. As a consequence many young Italians or children of Italians did not pursue their education.

But there were often positive outcomes; for example, as the children grew up, they intermarried, resulting in a mixture of cultures. There is a very interesting book called *Growing Up Italian in Australia* which has a series of stories about growing up Italian. One of them is by Gianfranca Damaschi who describes how her father, who was Italian, and her mother, an Australian, tried very hard to make sure that the Italian linkages were not lost. She gives a splendid description of Christmas dinners in her home. In a way, it is very similar to my own case because I married an Australian not of Italian origin and every year our Christmas dinner was a peculiar mixture of Italian and Australian. We would start with some seafood which is very Australian – oysters, prawns and so on, and then we would have tortellini in brodo, every Christmas without fail. Even if the temperature was 40 degrees we would have hot soup with tortellini in it, then turkey with about six veg-

etables, followed by plum pudding, and then we would revert to the Italian things such as panettone dipped in spumante.

Another aspect to be considered in the life of Italian families here was the role of religion. The Catholic church played an important role for these migrants. There was a tendency in Italy for some Italian men to regard going to church as almost a social event. They would dress up, go to church and sit outside and talk to other men while the women were inside praying. The attitude was that, if one was anti-clerical in Italy, one had to be seen to be anti-clerical. Some of this survived here in Australia in a small way. Interestingly enough, that attitude of anti-clericalism and suspicion of priests was disarmed because Australian priests were very much more open and very much more engaging. Indeed a number of the Australian priests spoke Italian, as we know one of our priests present tonight does, because Australian priests used to go to Italy to complete their training. That was a very big plus although it did present a problem. Archbishop Mannix had a rule, during the War, that there could only be a sermon in Italian if there was also a sermon in English. So, when you went to the Italian mass, you got a sermon in both English and Italian. This was very trying.

The Second World War played a very important part in the settlement of Italian migrants here. When Italy entered the War against the Allies in June 1940, of course there was an Italian community in the country here and in the city of Melbourne. It was very hard for them because, overnight, they became the enemy; in fact a small number of them were interned, although I have to say that in Victoria there was a measure of common-sense. In Queensland, however, all the sugar-cane growers and others were interned, many of them being brought down here and kept in internment camps for most of the War. There is a story about internment of Italians in rural areas told to me by Dr. Jim Cairns, a former Federal Minister. Cairns was a member of the Victorian Special Branch Police Force in 1940 when Italy entered the War. He said that he received orders to go to Werribee with a number of trucks to round up all Italian market gardeners. He said, 'We went into the paddocks and just pulled them in off the fields as they stood in their gumboots and put them on the trucks; they were all taken to Tatura. It was a

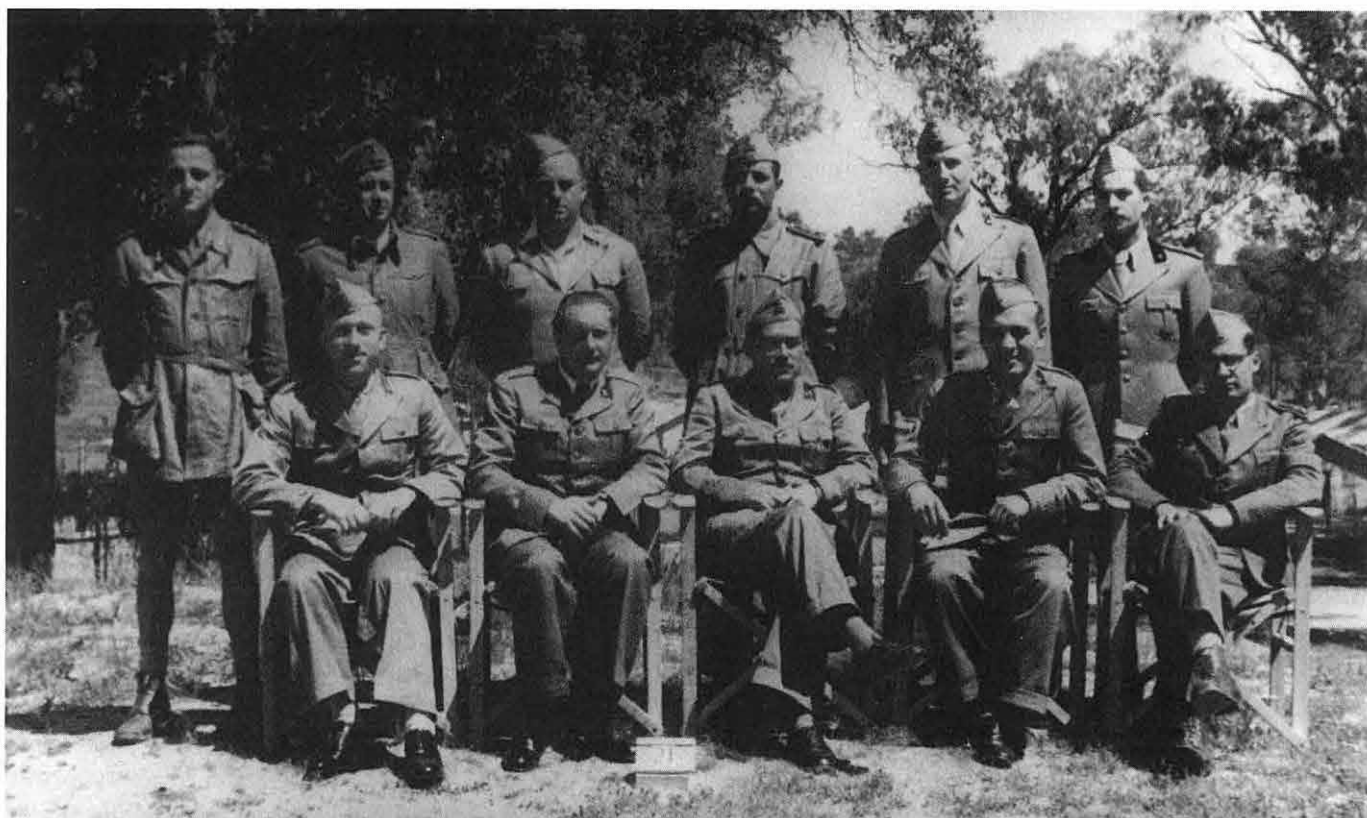
disaster for the womenfolk, for the women could not drive trucks, and so could not get the produce to the market'. He said, 'I have to tell you that fortunately the authorities saw sense. After two weeks there were almost no vegetables in the Victoria Market and we released all the growers from internment'.

I think that happened here with tobacco farmers, for tobacco was regarded as an essential crop for the war effort. But their children were affected because they got a hard time of it at school. Those with Italian names were called 'dagoes' and at one country school where there were a number of Italians the Nun used to let the Italian boys out a quarter of an hour early so that they could get home without being set upon by the others. But all this soon passed.

At that time the North-East was important because there were big POW camps here. There were the Murchison and Tatura camps and, of course, closer to here was the camp at Whorouly. There had been a large number of Italian military personnel captured in the Desert Campaign in Libya; they were supposed to be kept in India but this was becoming very difficult so the British Government asked the Australian

Government if Australia could accommodate some 20,000 of them if Britain paid for the cost of doing so. The Australian Government agreed and built a number of camps around Australia. The original intention was to just keep them in the camps but after they had been there for a while it became clear that they ought to use the prisoners who were very bored and keen to do something. So they were billeted out to work on farms, conducted by non-Italians. Sometimes they even lived on the farms if there was no camp close by. All this was very valuable for the local Australians because many of the men were serving in the War and there was an acute shortage of farm labourers. Generally speaking the officers did not work on the farms.

Whorouly POW camp was about 211 acres in size but it has now gone entirely. After the War it was bought by a man called De Grazia who then sold it to one Pozzi. I do not know whether Pozzi still owns the site but all signs of the camp have disappeared, even though at one stage there were about 2000 POWs and 500 personnel and guards there. When it was disclosed in the local papers that there was going to be a camp built, locals were very up-in-arms about it, saying that they would all have to be armed because the camp



Italian POW Officers at Myrtleford in 1943. From l. to r., standing: Vitellazzi, Solmi, Cerri, Rigon, Ventura and Cipri; seated: Michetti, Lazzarotto, Busetto, Tirania, Alessandra.

would be full of dangerous people who might break out and come on to their farms. When the scheme was underway and POWs were being taken out to farms, locals said they did not want their children to be exposed to them. The Italians were so missing their own families that the thing they wanted most of all was to greet the children. Very soon fears disappeared and friendships began to build up. On one occasion when a wedding reception was taking place and prisoners of war were being taken past, they persuaded the driver to stop. They called out, in Italian, *Vogliamo vedere la sposa* – *We want to see the bride*. The bride, Angelina Marasco, came forward and waved to all the POWs in the trucks. It was just a small incident illustrating how much they valued that sort of interaction with the community. I knew some of these POWs because one of them married my mother's sister after the War. My uncle said that one of the most common songs sung by them, in a mixture of Italian and English, was 'Don't Fence Me In'.

Just this morning, as a matter of fact, thanks to the resourcefulness of my Aide, Damien Farrell, I spoke to a former Italian POW who was in the Murchison Camp. His name is Renato De Pardo and he lives in Melbourne. In 1942 he was a Lieutenant in the Italian Army in the Murchison Camp. Though Officers did not have to work he insisted that he wanted to work on a farm. He learnt a little English, and was allocated to work at the property of a man called Trevor Gadd at Guys Forest near Corryong. They became good friends. When the War ended Renato di Pardo had to go back to Italy, as was the case with all the POWs, but Trevor Gadd sponsored him to come back in 1952 with his wife and two children. Renato eventually settled in Melbourne and became a tax accountant. He is now 80 years of age and when I spoke to him on the telephone this morning told me some stories which I will share with you.

He said that when he came back in 1952 he went into the Walhalla pub and the first person he saw at the bar was the Commandant of the POW Camp, Colonel Chisholm. Chisholm was delighted to see him and they had a beer together. Then he saw the local policeman; he had been a sergeant who was one of the guards at the camp. Di Pardo, who wanted to be able to drive a car, asked, 'Can I secure a licence?' The sergeant, who knew that during the War De Pardo had

been allowed to drive a truck, said, 'Come around to the police station at 4 o'clock'. Di Pardo said, 'But I have not got a car to do a test', and the policeman said, 'No need, just bring 10 bob'. I think that tells you something about the openness and the trust and wonderful feeling that had been built up at that time.

Before concluding this paper, I would like to refer to some topics which I believe merit a reference. The Savoy Club at Myrtleford is important, and not just because I am visiting it tomorrow! It was one of the very first clubs of its kind in Victoria. It began in 1955 in a place then called the Continental House, a property purchased in 1951 by Dominic de Fazio. Continental House was built by Mr. and Mrs. de Fazio with their own funds but was always intended to be a club. In 1956 a committee was formed and Luigi Roso, who came to Myrtleford in 1933 from the Vale di Pasubio near Vicenza, became the first President. The property was sold by the de Fazios to the Club in 1978. The Club now has excellent facilities, 526 full members and substantial assets. It is a very important centre not just for people of Italian origin but for the community generally.

Another important Italian group in the North-East of Victoria is the Myrtleford Trentino Folk Group which is present tonight. The Group was the first of its kind in Australia. It presents the folk dances and culture of the valleys of the Trentino in Northern Italy. The Group is splendidly attired and is almost entirely composed of young persons who are second generation Australians from the Trentino.

There is another topic which warrants one or more separate papers, namely, the Italian presence in Bonegilla, which was a few miles from Wodonga. This is the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Bonegilla Camp. There were many Italians who came through Bonegilla but they were not by any means the most numerous ethnic group. There was a major riot there in 1951 and we have many accounts as to what caused the riot. It is agreed that it was largely due to unemployment. Migrants who had been there for some two or three months and were unemployed, rioted. Such were their expectations of this country. But I read a quite different account recently of the reasons for the riot given by one Donnini. Some of you may know Donnini's restaurant in Melbourne in Carlton.

Donnini claims that his father, who was in the camp at that time, said that the authorities made pasta available but that they appointed three Russian 'cooks' to cook the pasta. These cooks were inexperienced and spread a kilo of sugar on top of the pasta. This, it was said, triggered the riot which he describes as the Great Pasta Riot!

All that I have described tonight shows what a special and valuable contribution has been made to North-East Victoria by its Italian settlers and their children. It represents an important heritage. It is a story that must be preserved and I congratulate the Wangaratta Historical Society for its initiative in arranging tonight's function. It has been very rewarding for me. I hope that all of you, whether you are of Italian origin or not, never throw away records and memorabilia of the history of this area. It is very important to keep family papers and those old photographs which are your links with the past. Your children may seem totally disinterested at the moment but you will be surprised sometimes how they or even your grandchildren will suddenly show enormous curiosity. So make sure that material is preserved and the best way to do this is to leave it to a suitable organisation like your own Wangaratta Historical Society. In the case of material about Italian migrants, you may wish to give it to a specialist organisation which is owned and supported by the Italian community. I refer to the CO.AS.IT Italian Historical Society which now has 10,000 photographs of early Italian settlers and many thousands of documents in its collection. It is one of the bodies of which I am most proud as I helped found it in 1980. Hopefully the Italian Historical Society and the Wangaratta Historical Society will be able to work in partnership to collect and use and exhibit some local Italian material.

What emerges from what I have told you is a history of achievement in, and contribution to, a great land by people who managed to keep their ties and their culture and yet became good Australians. By and large they were received with tolerance and goodwill in this generous land. At the moment I am sorry to say that in another part of Australia a certain person is preaching intolerance and ignorance, and whose message runs counter to the experience of the people of this area. May I say that we Italian migrants enjoyed the benefits of a British tradition of fair play and tolerance when we came to this country. Let us make sure that we do not

deny it to those coming now. We must not give them any less than we received. If we do not do that we will fall short. It will cause us great harm and we will fail at the point where we are strongest, namely, in our courage, in our diversity, in our generosity and our freedom.

May I finally express my thanks to all those who assisted me in the preparation of this paper, especially Laura Mecca of the Italian Historical Society. I also drew very heavily on the rich reefs in Charles D'Aprano's book, *From Goldrush to Federation, Italian Pioneers in Victoria 1850-1900*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cecilia, Tito, *We Didn't Arrive Yesterday*, Sunnyland Press 1987.
- D'Aprano, Charles, *From Goldrush to Federation, Italian Pioneers in Victoria 1850-1900*, INT Press 1995.
- Fitzgerald, Alan, *The Italian Farming Soldiers*, M.U.P. 1981.
- Hawthorne, Lesleyanne, *Making It In Australia*, Arnold 1988.
- Jones, Graham, *Memories of Oxley 1862-1994*, 1995.
- Lloyd, Brian and Nunn, Kathy, *Bright Gold*, Histec 1987.
- Phillips, Daphne, *Italians and Australians in the Ovens Valley Area*. Unpublished thesis 1968.
- Robertson, Kay, *Myrtleford*, Rigby 1973.
- Wardrop, Susi Bella, *By Proxy - A Study of Italian Proxy Brides in Australia*, Italian Historical Society, Victoria 1996.
- Growing up Italian in Australia*, State Library NSW Press 1993.
- Myrtleford and District During World War II*, Year 11 local history project, Marion College, Myrtleford High School.
- Whorouly Prisoner of War Camp*, Research Assignment, Victoria College, Rusden.
- Oral history tapes and manuscripts of the Italian Historical Society – CO.AS.IT. Melbourne.

Sempre le Montagne: Early Italian Settlement in North-East Victoria's Ovens Valley

by Jacqueline Verrocchio

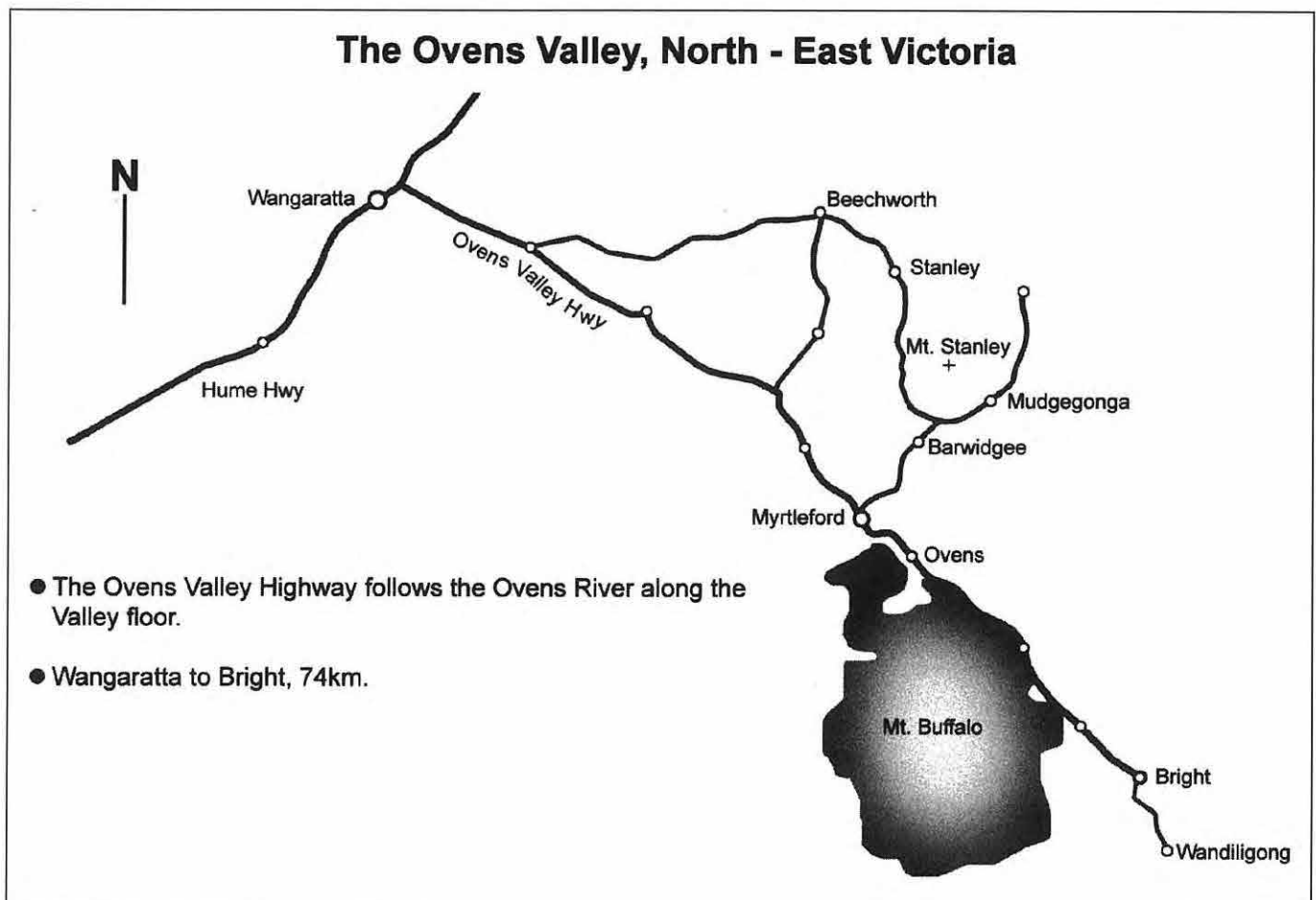
Jacqueline Verrocchio is undertaking an MA in History at La Trobe University. She is also currently working on a cultural mapping of tobacco kilns for the Rural City of Wangaratta. She is the author of Historic Tobacco Kilns in the Rural City of Wangaratta which was recently published by the Rural City of Wangaratta.

She would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Italian Historical Society, and the work undertaken on this topic of history by Melbourne University historian Jacqueline Templeton.

As one drives through the Ovens Valley in Victoria's north-east, it is easy to read the signs that this is a very Italo-Australian part of the countryside. Letter boxes read with Italian names, there are orchards filled with chestnuts trees, and many houses have their own small vineyard. In the streets of Myrtleford, it is not unusual to hear Italian being spoken between friends and business acquaintances. Once the scene of gold rushes during the 1850s, the Ovens Valley is agriculturally reach. Diverse agricultural pursuits range from tobacco farming to orchards and hops. The upper Valley, from

Myrtleford to the township of Bright, is dominated by spectacular alpine scenery, where in winter, the peaks of Mount Buffalo, Feathertop and Bogong are capped with snow.

Although the Italian population of the Ovens Valley has been greatly boosted by post World War Two immigrants, there had been many Italian arrivals here during the 1920s and 1930s. The earliest Italians, however, those who could be considered the pioneers of Italian settlement in the valley, arrived far earlier, with the gold rushes of the 1850s and 60s. A small but intre-



A map of the Ovens Valley.

pid number of adventurous young men came from the Swiss-Italian Canton of Ticino, from the Valtellina in Lombardy, northern Italy, and from the neighbouring Swiss Valley of Poschiavo. Though few in number, as trail-blazers for successive generations of Italian immigrants, the impact of this small group on the future settlement patterns of the Ovens Valley could not have been more significant.

The question of what inspired these emigrants to leave their homelands, and what brought them eventually to settle in north-east Victoria, is a story of relatively unusual circumstances. The answer lies in a few slender details relating in part to the propaganda of some Swiss shipping agents, and how these emigrant people from the European Alps were able to find for themselves a new high country in Australia.

Jacqueline Templeton has noted that 'Australia was not a very popular destination for Italians in the nineteenth century'. In fact, at the time of the 1871 census, when persons born in Italy were counted separately for the first time, only 1772 Italians were recorded in Victoria.¹ Nevertheless, of the even fewer Italians who found their way into the north-east of Victoria, most, it would seem, travelled to Australia on English clippers. Often they departed from the northern port of Liverpool on the 'White Star' line of British and Australian packets. Through the late 1850s and early 1860s, the White Star ships sailed from Liverpool to Melbourne twice a month. The fame of the north-east Victorian goldfields was well publicised by such shipping lines, agents promoting the dream of striking it rich as a means of increasing ticket sales. One White Star clipper was even named *Beechworth*, after the town that formed the administrative centre of the Ovens gold fields.²

One emigrant to travel on a London-based clipper, the *Yorkshire* arriving in Melbourne in April of 1860, was the Swiss-Italian Antonio Masciorini.³ Only seventeen or eighteen years old at the time of his departure, Masciorini had been born in the village of Gudo, near Bellinzona, in the mountainous Swiss Canton of Ticino.⁴ In the same month, Giuseppe Costa, a twenty five year old from the Poschiavo Valley, in the neighbouring Swiss Canton of Grigioni, arrived aboard one of the well-known White Star clippers, the *Red Jacket*.⁵ In April of the following year, the *Red Jacket* docked once again in Melbourne.

This time it carried northern Italians from the Valtellina region, another rugged alpine valley, located on the Italian side of the border. The passengers included Pietro Pini, from the village of Grosio, on the Adda River.⁶

What motivated these men to migrate to Australia? Without doubt, as a destination, the gold fields of Victoria beckoned hedonistic young adventurers desirous of seeking their fortunes. However, as David Goodman has observed, historians have had a tendency to naturalise the decision to migrate to the Australian goldfields, 'as though it were the most natural thing that men should leave all that was valuable to them in one part of the world, to seek for precious minerals in remote regions about which they knew little'.⁷ In reality, a complex mix of economic and political circumstances on the home-front, rather than the opportunity to mine gold, provided many reasons to emigrate.

In Swiss Ticino, the peasants had long been squeezed by the interplay of poor land and lack of capital. They had survived partly by performing seasonal work in nearby Lombardy (then part of Austria), but in 1853, fearing Swiss sympathy for the Italian independence movement, Austria closed the border and sent 4000 Ticinesi home. The economic blockade reduced many Ticinesi provinces to desperation.⁸ Meanwhile, in the neighbouring Poschiavo Valley, a similarly desperate economic situation prevailed.

Across the border in Italy, the Valtellina was, like the Ticino, an agriculturally poor region. Here, farming was comprised mainly of vineyard cultivation. However, laws of inheritance specifying that farms be divided equally among heirs had meant that agricultural land had been fragmented into many separate plots, often too small to provide individual farmers with a satisfactory living. Consequently, as in Ticino, the farmer of the Valtellina had sustained themselves by undertaking seasonal work. In nearby provinces, cotton and silk industries had provided such employment. However, during the 1850s, several excessively poor seasons, followed by the virtual destruction of the region's vineyards due to a vine parasite, devastated farming families. To worsen matters further, a silk worm disease impacted badly upon the silk spinning and weaving industries that had provided seasonal employment. Other political factors also contributed to the general desperation of these farming communities.⁹

It was in these circumstances that Swiss shipping agents became deeply involved in the process of promoting Australia as an exciting destination for prospective immigrants from the Ticino, Grigioni and Valtellina regions. Since 1851, when gold had been discovered in Victoria, European shipping companies had benefited from a substantial trade, transporting people to and from the Victorian goldfields. However, after a few years, they were looking for new localities in which to recruit emigrants to fill their boats. The companies began to target certain regions of the Ticino, in systematic campaigns to recruit emigrants.¹⁰

Between early 1854 and mid 1855, 'An intense propaganda was conducted through advertising in the local press and, in certain towns, company representatives were sent to establish networks of agents'.¹¹ When passages to the Victorian gold fields were advertised, 2000 men responded, raising their fares through mortgages or loans. Consequently, by 1857, the majority of 'unidentified' Europeans on the gold fields were Swiss-Italians from Ticino.¹² However, once in Australia, many of these Ticinesi found themselves poorer than when they had left. Before long, Ticino was flooded with negative reports from Australia, and the desire of locals to emigrate ground to a halt. The shipping agents moved on.

By early 1855, passages to Australia were being advertised in the Poschiavo Valley. Here, newspaper advertisements had claimed that very attractive wages could be earned in Australia by even the humblest of trades persons. Consequently, between the late 1850s and the early 1860s, a very small emigration from the Valley occurred.¹³ More significantly though, in the Valtellina, the people were exposed to the activities and propaganda of emigration agents operating in the Swiss towns just across the border.¹⁴ Substantial migrations from the Valtellina were the result.

Once in Australia, these emigrants met with little success on the gold fields, and quickly took up work as labourers. Unlike the majority of Victoria's Ticinesi emigrants, who settled together in the Daylesford-Yandoit area,¹⁵ Antonio Masciorini went travelling around the colony. Sharing a common language, the young Masciorini, and the equally young Peter Pini met up. They travelled to Gabo Island, as remote and desolate and island wilderness as to be found, located off Victoria's far eastern coast. Here, Pini

and Masciorini were set to work building the Gabo Island lighthouse. With wind and rain their constant companions, day by day they constructed its monumental fifty-five high henna-hued granite tower.¹⁶ This work was completed in 1862.

Most other work undertaken by these emigrants was of a more pedestrian variety. Drawn to the gold fields of central or north-east Victoria, many Italians would work at wood cutting and splitting, or at burning charcoal, at which they could earn a little more than unskilled labourers. In time, a few could buy horses and set up businesses as timber or carting contractors.¹⁷ Those who would eventually settle in north-east Victoria followed such a pattern.

Returning from Gabo Island, Masciorini worked in Bendigo as a miner, and then in Chiltern for a short time as a contractor.¹⁸ Giuseppe Costa apparently also went to Bendigo (Emu Creek), where he worked as a charcoal burner.¹⁹ The charcoal was supplied to blacksmiths for use in their forges. Other Italians included Gaetano Pastorelli, who provided supplies to miners while based in the Beechworth-Stanley area, and Victor Pini from Vernuga, a village in the Valtellina, who also burnt charcoal in Chiltern.²⁰

Eventually settling in a small mining town known as Growler's Creek (now Wandiligong), Masciorini was able to establish a retail trade, opening a tobacconists next to the aptly named Alpine Hotel.²¹ His grandson, John Masciorini, believes that of all the places in Victoria, Antonio Masciorini probably settled in this narrow picturesque alpine valley because it reminded him of his home in Ticino.

Around 1863-64 other Italians also made this mountain valley their home. Battista De Piazza and his cousins Giovanni Trinca and Robustelli, had travelled from Grosotto in the Adda River Valley, Valtellina, arriving in 1863 on board the *S.M. Vittorio*. Unable to find work in Melbourne, the three cousins walked the 300 kilometres to Wandiligong, probably via the bustling gold town and administrative centre of Beechworth.²² In Wandiligong, De Piazza and Trinca, seventeen and nineteen years old respectively, found work gold mining.²³

Writing about such emigrants from the Valtellina, Jacqueline Templeton has discovered that between 1861 and 1871, of 14050 persons liable

for military service in the province of Sondrio, 393 were identified as having absented themselves. Conceivably, Battista De Piazza and his cousins may well have been among the twenty-three people from Grosotto who absented themselves deliberately in order to avoid military service. Simply, 'Avoidance of military service had always been a strong motive for young men to emigrate', and north-east Victoria had already become home to many emigrants avoiding military service in their own country, including Germans who had fled from the Crimean War.²⁴

After some time in Wandiligong, De Piazza became a carter, transporting quartz from the mine to the crusher at Morse's Creek (Bright), on the account of the mining magnate John Wallace. Before long, he had saved enough capital to purchase a horse and dray, and then he carted quartz for himself.²⁵ A Swiss-Italian, Carlo Lardi, also worked at Wandiligong as a carter, and as a mine contractor, timbering Gill's Home Reef mine, and running the Garibaldi mine.²⁶ The naming of a gold mine 'The Garibaldi' suggests that Lardi, and other Italians in the area, although living in Australia, still held an interest in Italian politics.

But these men had not remained in Australia merely to engage in low-paid manual labour. Instead, what motivated them to stay in north-east Victoria were opportunities to escape poverty, to become financially prosperous, and to make a better life for the families and themselves.

Aside from wine, timber had been the only significant export from the Valtellina.²⁷ Therefore, it is not surprising that some of these immigrants established themselves in the familiar business of sawmilling. Among the first of this group to enter into the sawmilling business seems to have been the Swiss-Italian Giuseppe Costa, who purchased the Beechworth steam sawmills in 1864 from another Swiss, Louis Chevalier.²⁸

Having already worked at a sawmill in Ovens, De Piazza moved to Beechworth, where eventually he bought a sawmill in partnership with his cousin Giovanni Trinca.²⁹ The mill was located not far from Beechworth, at the gold mining town of Snake Valley (Stanley). Situated on a hilly plateau some 700 metres above sea level, here they would have found that dustings of snow in winter are not wholly uncommon. Densely forested with peppermints and other

Saw Mills, Waterloo.

Pini and Company,
BEGS to inform their customers and the public generally that they have now on hand a
Large Stock of Timber of
all sizes,

Which they are prepared to deliver in all parts of the district. Excellent timber, suitable for Wheelwrights, including Messmate, Stringy Bark and Mountain Ash always in stock, at a greatly reduced price.

Orders left with Mr Lardi, Wandiligong, or addressed to Pini and Co, Post Office, Myrtleford, will receive prompt attention.

**IN the TRUST ESTATE of
A. MASHEORENY.**

MR CARLO LARDI having purchased the whole of the assets in the above estate, all debts remaining unpaid to this date must be paid to Mr Lardi, or to his authorised agent, Mr A. Masheoreny, and their receipt will be a sufficient discharge.

DANBY & GILMOUR,
Agent for the Trustee.
Melbourne, May 10th, 1881.

NOTICE:

ALL accounts due to above Estate must be settled at once, or else will be sued for without further notice.

CARLO LARDI.
Wandiligong, May 11th, 1881.

*Advertisements taken from The Alpine Gazette,
13 May 1881*

Eucalyptus, the surrounding mountains served their interests well.

After a disagreement with Trinca, De Piazza acquired his cousin's share of the sawmill, and went into partnership with Pietro Pini, and Antonio Crameri, yet another Swiss-Italian from the Poschiavo Valley, who had worked as a teamster after arriving in Australia in 1856.³⁰ By 1875, the three were operating as sawyers 'Pini, De Piazza and Co., Back Creek, Stanley', supplying timber to the area around Beechworth and Myrtleford. At the same time Pini was also operating a mill in Ford Street, Beechworth. The partnership between Pini and De Piazza continued at least until 1880.³¹

However, not all the men went into the sawmilling trade. In 1867, Antonio Masciorini had purchased a drapery store in Wandiligong, where he would stay for the next thirteen years before moving to nearby Bright.³² In 1881, Carlo Lardi took over this shop, converting it to a general store where he sold items ranging from mine explosives to fruit.³³ Lardi also bought out another store, added a wine and spirit license to his enterprise, and established fruit and nut orchards after purchasing adjoining blocks of land. Although some of the fruit was bottled, many of the apples were packed and sent to market in Melbourne.³⁴

Opportunities to establish businesses aside, marriage really helped to settle these emigrants, financially as well as emotionally. In a study of the Ticinesi in Australia, Gentilli has stated that the main problems for these men in their efforts to become established financially were ignorance of the language and a lack of capital.³⁵ While capital could be saved, English-speaking wives would have helped these men to advance their knowledge of the language and to conduct business transactions.

As early as 1857, Beechworth's *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, reporting on the wedding of Gaetano Pastorelli to Catherine Boylan at St. Joseph's in Beechworth, had made special note of other marriages between Italian-speakers and the Irish. Battista De Piazza had met his future wife, Catherine O'Brien, while she had been working at the Ovens Valley Hotel. The two also married at St. Joseph's, in 1870. Carlo Lardi had also married an Irish girl, Mary Tully, some years before, in 1862.³⁶ At such a distance from

Italy, the men probably were comforted in the fact that these women were Roman Catholic. Still, not at all Italian in north-east Victoria married Irish women. In 1867, Pietro Pini married Amanda Dubois, a French immigrant who had come to Australia by way of the Californian gold fields with her parents. Giuseppe Costa married a Scot, Sara McTavish.³⁷

While sawmilling around Stanley, the De Piazza family took the opportunity to select land at Mudgegonga, an area of rich rolling hills in the Barwidgee Creek Valley (a tributary of the Ovens), just north of Myrtleford. Under the Land Acts, the 'selector' had to pay 1 pound per acre, but also live on the land, cultivate 10% of it, and improve it to the value of 1 pound per acre. The family worked hard, clearing and fencing the property, and in 1878 they built a substantial twelve-roomed house which they called 'Orange Grove'.³⁸

Significantly however, De Piazza was not the only Italian to select land at Mudgegonga. Pietro Pini selected land adjoining 'Orange Grove', while other Italians, Giuseppe Osmetti, Stefano Saligari and Victor Pini, also selected land in the Mudgegonga-Barwidgee Creek area. All the men had grown up within only two or three miles of each other in the Adda River Valley.³⁹ Their selections at Mudgegonga ensured the beginnings of a small Italian stronghold. Battista and Catherine De Piazza later bought Saligari's land.⁴⁰ Together they built a mixed farming enterprise which was to be the showcase of the district: the property featuring orchards, vegetable crops, tobacco, hops, kilns and drying sheds, a herd of sixty dairy cows, and an output of 200 pounds of butter per week produced using imported equipment.⁴¹

While Masciorini and Lardi maintained substantial retail interests, Pini, De Piazza and Crameri, continued to operate sawmilling businesses at Mudgegonga through the 1880s and early 1890s, expanding the area they supplied to include the whole Ovens Valley.⁴² The combination of mining, property, retail, farming and sawmilling interests brought these men a security and prosperity they probably could only have dreamed of in their native lands.

It is difficult to know whether some of these men knew each other prior to migrating to Australia. Evidence suggests that Carlo Lardi and Giuseppe Costa actually knew one another in



A recent photograph of Carlo Lardi's Store, in Wandiligong.

Switzerland, having served in the army together.⁴³ Pietro Pini may have known Battista De Piazza in Italy: born in villages situated only a few kilometres from one another, it seems more than coincidental that they ended up neighbours in Mudgegonga. Nevertheless, once settled in the Ovens Valley, it is clear that these men maintained business relationships, and probably also friendships, over many decades. In 1881, Carlo Lardi took over Antonio Masciorini's Store in Wandiligong.⁴⁴ In the same year as taking over Masciorini's Store, Lardi also becomes an agent for Pini and Company's saw mills.⁴⁵ Pini, Cramer and De Piazza also appear to have maintained business contacts in the sawmilling trade over a long period.

In north-east Victoria, the substantial modern-day Italian presence was preceded by a handful of Italian settlers, comprising energetic young men who, once in Australia, built prosperous lives for themselves. Although they were too few in number to form a strong regional enclave, these people did create a sense of community, selecting land near one another, and maintaining business and social contact over many decades. Ultimately, they were successful in laying the foundations of a permanent Italian settlement in rural Victoria, their lives proving enormously influential in determining future patterns of immigration. Today, there are few historical sites directly connected with these immigrants: some gravestones, Masciorini's store, 'Orange

Grove', Lardi's store, and perhaps the remains of 'The Garibaldi' gold mine. However, the strong Italian community of the Ovens Valley serves as a reminder of these pioneers who built a connection between the alpine valleys of northern Italy, and the Ovens Valley of Victoria.

Notes

- ¹ Templeton, J. 'The Swiss Connection: The Origins of the Valtellina-Australia Migrations', in *Australian Historical Studies*, Volume 26, Number 104, April 1995, p. 393.
- ² *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, Advertisement for White Star line of packets, 15 July, 1859.
- ³ Gentilli, J. *The Settlement of Swiss Ticino Immigrants in Australia*, Geowest Number 23, Department of Geography, University of Western Australia, 1988, p. 66, p. 125.
- ⁴ *Alpine Observer*, 'Obituary, Antonio Masciorini', 10 January, 1908.
- ⁵ Pers. comm. June Stanley, 1998; Gentilli, J. op. cit., p. 125.
- ⁶ Gibney, B. & M. *Mudgegonga's Hall of Fame*, Mudgegonga, 1988, p. 37.
- ⁷ Goodman, D. *Gold Seeking, Victoria and California in the 1850s*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1994, p. xiv.
- ⁸ Broom, R. *The Victorians, Arriving*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, McMahon's Point, 1984, p. 70; Gentilli, J. op. cit., p. 3.
- ⁹ Templeton, J. op. cit., p. 399-401-2.
- ¹⁰ Templeton, J. ibid, p. 405.
- ¹¹ Templeton, J. ibid, p. 405.
- ¹² Broom, R. op. cit. p. 70.
- ¹³ Templeton, J. op. cit., p. 406-7.
- ¹⁴ Templeton, J. ibid, p. 404-5.
- ¹⁵ Sagazio, C. *Italian Craftsmanship in Australia*, National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Melbourne, 1990, p. 23.
- ¹⁶ *Alpine Observer*, op. cit.
- ¹⁷ Gentilli, J. op. cit., p. 6.
- ¹⁸ *Alpine Observer*, op. cit.
- ¹⁹ Pers. comm. June Stanley, 1998.
- ²⁰ D'Aprano, C. *From Goldrush to Federation - Italian Pioneers in Victoria*, Int Press, Pascoe Vale South, 1995, p. 164-5; Gibney, B. & M. op. cit. p. 36.
- ²¹ Lloyd, B. and Nunn, K. *Bright Gold*, Histec Publications, Brighton East, 1987, p. 91.
- ²² Gibney, B. & M. op. cit. p. 34; Cecilia, T. *We Didn't Arrive Yesterday*, Scalabrinians/Sunnyside Press, Red Cliffs, 1987, p. 188.
- ²³ De Piazza, P. *The History and Family Tree of Battista and Catherine De Piazza, 1870-1980*, Mudgegonga, 1980, p. iv, 1; Sagazio, C. op. cit., p. 27.
- ²⁴ Templeton, J. op. cit., p. 410-412; Reynolds, S. *Yackandandah*, Yackandandah Historical Society, n.d., p. 32.
- ²⁵ De Piazza, P. op. cit., p. 2.

²⁶ *Bailliere's Victorian Directory, Official Post Office Directory of Victoria*, Melbourne, 1868, 1870, listed Charles Larde as a carter at Growler's Creek; Lloyd, B. & Nunn, K. op. cit., p. 89.

²⁷ Templeton, J. op. cit., p. 397.

²⁸ *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, Advertisement, Beechworth Steam Sawmills, 12 January, 1864.

²⁹ Cecilia, T. op. cit. p. 189.

³⁰ De Piazza, P. op. cit., p. 2; pers. comm. Alan Crameri, 1988.

³¹ *Bailliere's Victorian Directory, Official Post Office Directory of Victoria*, Melbourne, 1875, 1880-1; De Piazza, p. op. cit., p. 2.

³² Pers. comm. John Masciorini, 1998.

³³ *The Alpine Gazette*, Notice, 13 May, 1881; Lloyd B. and Nunn, K. op. cit., p. 133.

³⁴ D'Aprano, C. op. cit., p. 167; Lloyd, B. and Nunn, K., 1987, p. 70; *Wise's Post Office Directory of Victoria*, 1891-92.

³⁵ Gentilli, J. op. cit., p. 6.

³⁷ Gibney, B. & M. op. cit., p. 37.

³⁸ De Piazza, P. op. cit., p. 3.

³⁹ Gibney, B. & M. op. cit., p. 34.

⁴⁰ It is unclear what became of Stefano Saligari after he sold his land at Mudgegonga, but in 1884, he is listed as a wine merchant in *Wise's Post Office Directory in Victoria*, establishing a wine shop at 150 Victoria Street, North Melbourne, appearing again in the 1888-1889 Directory.

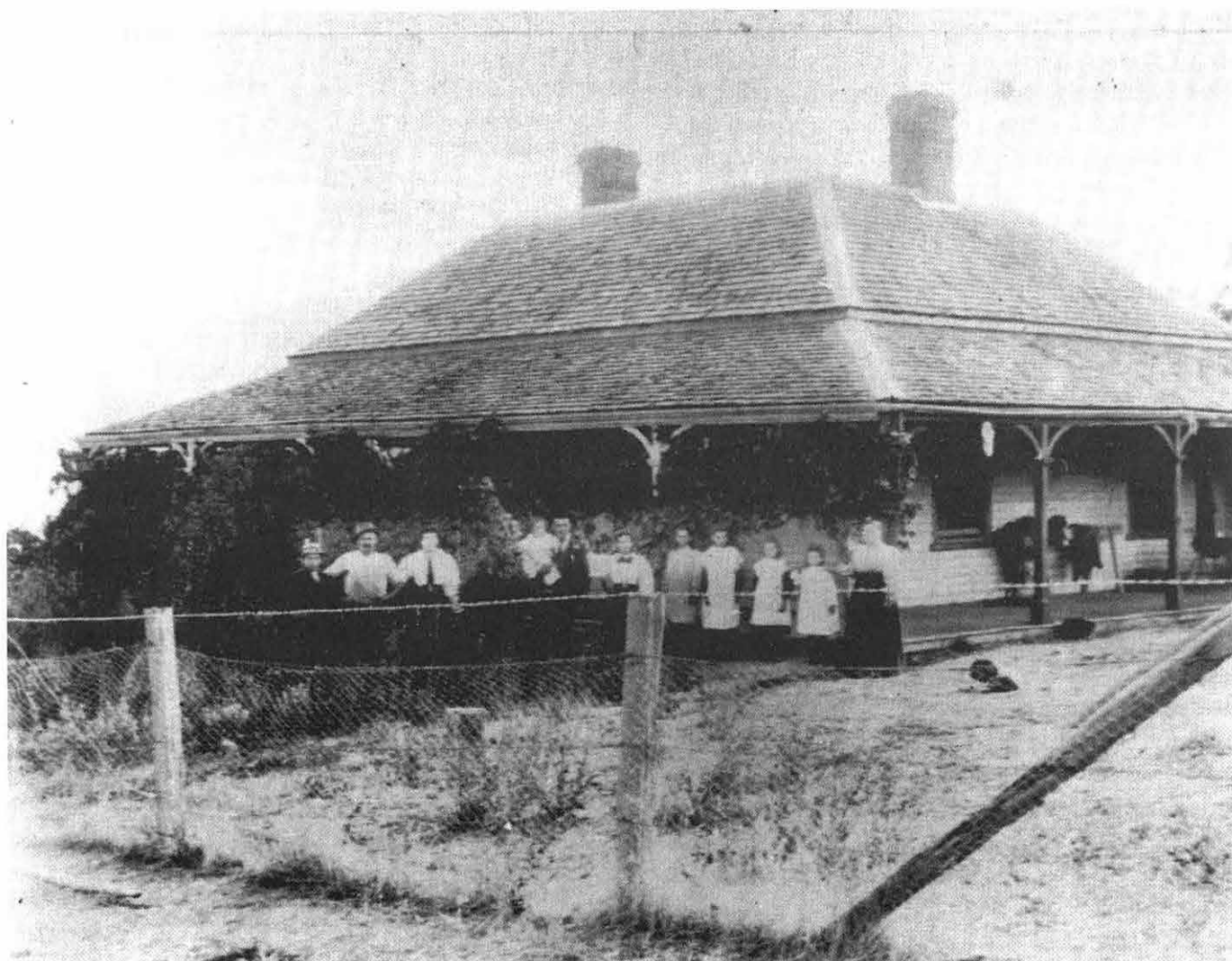
⁴¹ Robertson, K. *Myrtleford, Gateway to the Alps*, Rigby, Melbourne, 1973, p. 101.

⁴² *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1884, 1888, 1891., Antonio Crameri is listed as 'Crammiry'.

⁴³ Lloyd B. and Nunn, K. op. cit., p. 133.

⁴⁴ However one cannot help but suspect that Masciorini's move may have also been precipitated by his wife's departure. A notice in the *Alpine Gazette*, 18 May, 1881, read 'My wife having left her home I will not be responsible for any debts contracted by her in my name after this date'. Mrs Masciorini died in 1891, and he subsequently remarried [*Alpine Observer*, 'Antonio Masciorini - Obituary' 10.1.1908].

⁴⁵ *Alpine Gazette*, 13 May, 1881.



Battista and Catherine De Piazza with their children in front of the family home 'Orange Grove'. From The History and Family Tree of Catherine and Battista De Piazza 1870-1980 by Patricia De Piazza, Mudgegonga, 1980.

My Grandfather Giovanni Roberto Merlo

by Hazel Merlo

During last year, visitors to Lake Eildon in Victoria have been fascinated to see again the remains of a homestead emerge from the waters of the lake that were last seen in the drought of 1983. Some information about this settlement is available at the park entrance and also at a point called Merlo's Lookout which overlooks the site.

We are very pleased to publish this detailed account, which revises existing information and adds new facts, written by Hazel Merlo, a granddaughter of the original settler. In her notes accompanying the article she writes:

I have changed a great deal of previously written articles which I found contained incorrect statements, the worst one being my own. When I wrote the article for the National Park Authority in 1983 when the old home was exposed during the long drought, I quoted from my father's description of building a house. This was, in fact, the 1900 building and not the first one, built in 1883. The latter took one month to finish, not six years. Selectors had one year in which to build a house and had to reside in it for the whole six years of the licence. The story, as now written, is to the best of my knowledge, belief and research, correct and gives the information contained in the selection papers, government files and family papers.

In December 1860, the *Green Jacket*, on its way from Liverpool, England, to Melbourne, Australia, with 150 passengers abroad, called in at Le Havre and picked up eight more, one of whom was my grandfather, Giovanni Roberto Merlo, the son of Pietro Merlo and Ursula formerly Tona, of Tirano, Province of Sondrio, Lombardy, Italy.*

Grandfather's age was listed as 25 but he was, in fact, only 22 and under age by European law. His main reason for going to the other side of the world is not known now. It may just have been a young man's call for adventure, especially with the lure of gold; he may have been unhappy at home; there may have been little chance for employment in his locality or, since he was under age, a natural desire to avoid compulsory military service, especially since Lombardy had been ravaged by war the previous year, resulting from the Austrian occupation of Italy.

The *Green Jacket* arrived at Melbourne in March 1861 and Giovanni made his way to the Ballarat goldfields. At first he had some success but the lucky strike which could have made his fortune eluded him. With little or no gold to buy food and shelter, Giovanni looked for work. So many men had left their employment and their homes to search for the elusive riches that labourers were scarce and good wages were paid to those who

presented for work. Giovanni found employment and good company in the Smythesdale-Ross Creek district, south-west of Ballarat.



Giovanni Roberto Merlo and his wife Mary Ann Tuddenham in c1900.

* Refer Document A

Work, though plentiful, was hard for all the settlers but they regularly arranged entertainments, such as concerts to raise money for a good cause, and dances. Grandfather Merlo, now calling himself John Merlo, joined in the festivities and, at one of the dances, met his future wife, Mary Ann Tuddenham, when she tripped and fell on to his lap.¹ The romance continued, and early in 1867, John and 19 year old Mary Ann were married with her parents consent, at St. Alipius, East Ballarat.

News came of another gold strike, this time in north-eastern Victoria at Spring Creek near the small new township of Alexandra, itself the site of the Red Gate Diggings. John and his new wife packed their belongings and set off on another quest for a fortune.

Arriving at the diggings, John pegged out a claim in Durham Gully itself. (The entire goldfield had adopted the name of the creek where gold had been found). At first they lived in a large miner's tent until John was able to build a hut, but, being a country girl, Mary Ann soon adapted to a life in the open.

Many years later, when reminiscing about those early days, Mary Ann told of the times when no other help was available and she had to winch up the buckets of quartz, as the shaft John was digging became deeper. Hard work indeed, but the time John would have had to spend carrying his heavy buckets up the ladder would be better spent digging for the reef he believed was there. Mary Ann also remembered the good times when John would come home from the mines, she would hold out her white apron and he would drop in the little nuggets of gold.²

Towards the end of 1867, Mary Ann went back to Alexandra where their first child, Ursula, was born.³

Early in 1868, John Tuddenham, Mary Ann's older brother, joined them and the brothers-in-law mined under the name of Merlo & Co. For several years they were successful. One crushing in late 1868 yielding 43 ounces of gold from 30 tons of quartz; in April 1871 they had a return of 60 ozs from 80 tons; in October 1872 they had 35 ozs from 15 tons of stone. Payable gold indeed! And so it went on with lesser yields in between times, but it was a rich mine for some years.⁴

Durham Gully's population increased as news of

the gold yields from the various mines were reported in the newspapers of the day. Shopkeepers opened stores, cafes and restaurants sprang up, and one large hotel even opened with a Grand Ball. When John Tuddenham married Julia Clarke, a local miner's daughter, in April 1871, at Alexandra, 50 guests attended the church, after which the bridal party returned to Durham Gully 'amid a shower of good wishes and old boots', and the whole assembly dined and danced until the small hours.

As the district took on an air of permanence the inhabitants wanted their children to be educated – a right until then denied many of those who had come from the United Kingdom. There were 13 families and 39 children of school age within an eight kilometre radius of the little township so they decided to petition the government for a school. They chose a site near the main Alexandra-Mansfield road, where there was a permanent creek and a good grassy slope for a playground.

There was a set formula to be followed. A meeting of the inhabitants had to be held, a committee formed of representatives of the five major religions of the area, and a Special Correspondent appointed to conduct all correspondence. A suitable building had to be provided with an 'out house' (a pan toilet). The settlers had to arrange for a teacher who was to be paid from fees levied for each child, and parents had to give a written understanding that their children, whom they had to name, would attend the proposed school.

The Durham Gully Rural School began in 1871 but its establishment was not gazetted until 1874, by which time the Education Act of 1872 had come into operation providing free, secular and compulsory education to 15 years of age. This, in practice, had little effect as the years went by. The school had been built with 'green' timber which shrank as it dried and aged. The 'out house', which was built of bark with a calico roof and door, blew over in a storm and was damaged beyond repair as it had not been attached to the ground in any way. In 1879 an inspection by the Education authorities found that palings had fallen off the sides and the roof leaked so much the children became wet and their school books damaged. The school was declared unfit for habitation during the winter months.⁵ Four of the Merlo children – Ursula, Peter, James and John Junior attended the school while the family lived at Durham Gully.

As there was always the possibility that the gold at their claim at Durham Gully could peter out or become unpayable, John spent as much time as he could prospecting in the Puzzle Ranges to the east. Once again he was successful and early in 1880 he lodged a claim for an area in Galatea Gully, one of the heads of Mountaineer Creek. John sank several shafts and having proved there was gold available, drove a long tunnel in to intercept the reef he knew must be there. He called his mine 'Solferino' after the battle of that name in northern Italy in 1859 during the Second War of Independence against the Austrians.



Entrance to the Solferino gold mine as it stands today.

Later in 1880 John Tuddenham, with his wife and their three children, left Victoria and settled at Urana, NSW. John, Mary Ann and their six children left Durham Gully and went to live near the Solferino mine. The older children then attended the school at Doon (later called Bonnie Doon) which had opened in March 1878. Their route lay along the crest of the Puzzle Ranges and down a long spur to the school near Brankeet Creek, a

distance of about 10 kilometres. It was a part-time school, the teacher having to spend half the day at another school.

During his prospecting of the Puzzle Ranges, John could see down to a green fertile valley, watered by a creek and in the distance, by a river. Exploring further one day, he met James Forsyth of Maintoongoon Station, a large pastoral run which originally occupied the whole valley from 1838. James Forsyth advised John about applying for land and the area available for selection. Among the undertakings he would have to give was to build within one year of the date of the licence, a dwelling in which he had to reside in person. There were also provisions regarding cultivation and improvement. John marked out the boundaries of his claim, signed the application form, obtained a Certificate of Registration and paid the fee of One Pound, a large sum in those days.*

The licence was granted in March 1883, and John with his older boys, Peter, James, and John Junior commenced building their future home, a three roomed house of palings split from his own trees with a broad axe which had a 12 inch blade; it had a shingle roof and a hardwood floor. Hessian bags were collected, washed, straightened and stretched over the walls to keep out the droughts as the palings shrank. Later these were pasted over with newspapers and white-washed with pipeclay, of which there was an abundance in the banks of the Perfect Cure Creek which ran through the property.

The house was finished within a month and from then on either John or a family member had to be in attendance as the District Surveyor, or other appropriate official could inspect without notice, and any breach of the conditions of the licence could lead to forfeiture.

Life for the Merlo family was hard. John and his son had to keep mining at either the Solferino or Durham Gully as the new property was not producing any income. Fortunately there were plenty of rabbits for food in the gullies and hills, and many a family would have starved or at least gone very hungry if it were not for the animals which later became a plague as they ate pastures and crops.

In 1884, the oldest son Peter left for New Zealand where he later married and raised a family of three sons.

* Refer Document B



John Merlo and Mary Ann with their children Mary, Paul, John Jr., James, Usula, Lawrence, Joseph and Dominica at 'Glen Hope' in 1888.



'Glen Hope' photographed by Paul Merlo in 1900. From far left: pig sty, pan toilet and boys' bedroom, first old house and the house built in 1900. The vineyard on rise behind the houses and the vegetable gardens in front

The Merlo family had constructed a good path from their dwelling near the Solferino down to the property which they began to call 'Glen Hope'. There was much to do to make the new home habitable and as comfortable as possible: with furniture to be made, vegetables and crops planted, and at long last, John's special pride and joy, a vineyard. It was 1888 before the home on the Puzzle Ranges was finally abandoned, the last of the contents taken down to the valley, with the whole family living together again. Then, as there were still eight growing children to house, a detached two room building (always referred to as the Boy's Bedroom) was erected for the older boys.

The house was a typical settler's home. The main room was a huge kitchen with a large open fireplace constructed of flat rocks and rubble set in clay on which all cooking and heating of water was done. Chains hung from an iron bar placed across high in the chimney, and hooks were provided at the ends for the kettles. The wide hobs were originally made from similar materials which were later replaced by hand made bricks; flat iron bars stretched from hob to hob, across the fire, from the saucepans to stand on while cooking.

The family had their meals around a large table which also doubled as a food preparation area, and after the meals had finished, where the washing up was done. It was indeed a living room.

A huge back log burned night and day. This was cut from a felled and weather-dried tree in one of the paddocks. A chain was attached and it was dragged by a draught horse to a small door on one side of the chimney; the chain was passed across the fireplace and out the small door on the opposite side; the horse was led around the chimney, the chain again attached to it and the log dragged through to its resting place where it usually burned for a fortnight.

At night, when the meal was over, the dishes washed and put away, the fountain was filled with fresh water and slung over the fire to heat for a bed-time wash (if wanted!) or to fill any stone bottles to heat the beds on a cold night. If no bottles were available, a brick could be heated at the edge of the fire, ash dusted off and quickly wrapped in a piece of clean old cloth or blanket.

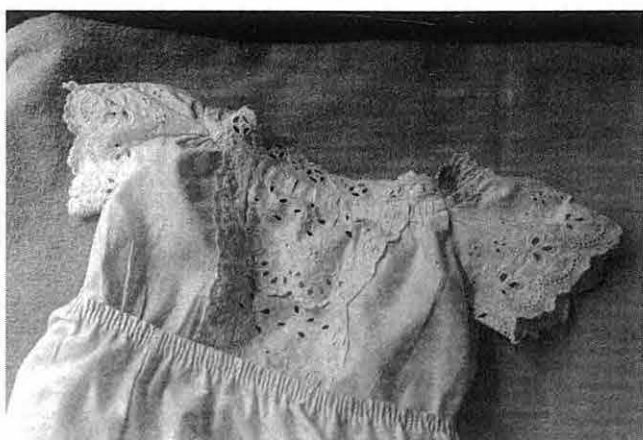
When the fire has died down and the little ones were in bed, the hobs were cleared and used as seats by one or two of the children. Out would

come the mending, the darning needles and the knitting wool. Both the boys and girls had learned to knit socks, and as they often went barefoot around the house and farm when young, this was enough to keep them reasonably shod to attend school and for special occasions. The girl also knitted pullovers, cardigans and patterned socks of white cotton. In later years when her sons married, Mary Ann gave to each bride a hand-knitted white cotton quilt of a lacy pattern. As the grandchildren were born, and eventually reached school age, on the day of their First Holy Communion, Mary Ann (and later Ursula) presented each one with a pair of hand-knitted white cotton lace-patterned socks to be worn on that special day.

Mary Ann also made and sold broderie anglaise. The first length she finished had been made into the bodice and tiny sleeves of a christening robe in which Ursula and in turn the other children were baptised. The skirt has long since vanished but the little bodice is the prized possession of a grand-daughter.



Paul Merlo's children wearing the patterned socks given to them by their aunt Ursula Merlo in 1924. Hazel Merlo is third from left.



The hand made broderie anglaise on the bodice of the christening robe made by Mary Ann Merlo in 1867, and worn by her eleven children.

As education was now compulsory for children to the age of 15, a school had to be found for the younger Merlos. Doon was too far away; the Devil's River school on the Delatite River was described as alive with snakes; another involved crossing the river on a log. A school was eventually built on the Maintoongoon leased property which was only four miles by the valley track but six in winter when lagoons filled the flat country and the children had to use another route further up the hills. By 1895 only Mary, Minnie, Joseph and Nina went to the school. The others were above age and Phillip, the baby was too young.

'Glen Hope' was on the road from Alexandra to Doon and Mansfield which neighbouring settlers, visitors and others travelled along. Most called in and some stayed the night. No one was refused shelter. Food was shared and help was given without question. News and information was exchanged but, above all, their company was appreciated by the family in their lonely lives.

By 1889 when John applied for the first 14-year lease, that is for his 100 acres, the farm was well on the way to be self-supporting. There were horses, a flock of sheep, several dairy cows, pigs and poultry. The vineyard produced large bunches of luscious grapes which were sold, and sometimes bartered for other goods. The cellar contained casks and bottles of wine which were available for sale.

Grandfather John selected two additional blocks, one of 200 acres and the other, just across the road, of 20 acres, giving in all 320 acres which was the maximum holding. In turn, he obtained each of the three 14-year leases which he was able to pay off without ever having to ask for an extension of time. The gold he still mined at the Solferino

and occasionally at his old claim at Durham Gully contributed to payments. However, crown grants of land could only be made to a British subject.* When the leases were fully paid, he applied for and obtained titles for each block.

Mary Ann had skills other than housekeeping. She could read and write. John, though fluent in spoken English, could only write in Italian. As few, if any, government officials could read Italian, all letters supposedly written by John about his selections, were in fact written and signed by his wife. As they both used copperplate script their writing was identical and was never questioned. Naturally, John had to sign in person all documents which needed to be sworn, or otherwise witnessed by a Justice of the Peace.

By this time, the rabbits which once were their staple diet, were now in plague proportions, drawn to the farm by the vegetables, crop and vineyard. In an attempt to protect the property, the Merlos built a rough paling fence around 60 acres. Each morning the boys went around the perimeter plugging holes, and putting down baits of S.A.P. (strychnine, arsenic and phosphorus). Rabbits were poisoned and shot by the score, but still they came.



Phillip and Joseph Merlo with their catch at 'Glen Hope' in c1900 photographed by their older brother Paul.

* Refer Document C and D



John Merlo Junior took this photo of grape harvesting at 'Glen Hope' in c1900. His mother Mary Ann, brother Paul and father John Merlo are featured.



Phillip Merlo, on buggy, and neighbour Harry Pearce loading rabbits at 'Glen Hope' in c1909. Paul Merlo was the photographer.

In 1899 it was decided to build a second house in front of the first and joined to the old one at the large kitchen by a covered way. It was more substantial than the 1883 one, having two more bedrooms, a dining room, store room and an attic under the high roof. The outer walls were of palings, once again split from his own trees with a broad axe; the house was lined with palings and the cavity in between rammed with clay.⁶

John and his sons made tools and equipment for work on the farm: a dairy chain made from horse shoes; a smoothing knife (for palings) made from a long file which was sharpened on one side and fitted with an upright handle at each end; a spade-hoe, a combination of a small hoe welded to the back of a spade blade, with a heavy but smooth handle attached at right angles.⁷

The boys became proficient in blacksmithing and woodwork. Paul made chests of drawers for his sisters' bedroom in the new house and a new body for the buggy when years of hard wear began to show. He taught himself how to repair clocks and watches; he also made delicate tiepins and brooches of gold wire, which he could sell.⁸

Jack (John Junior) and Paul also were self-taught photographers – they would send for books from Coles Book Arcade in Melbourne, a treasure house of knowledge. Jack built his first camera using a spyglass for a lens and a concertina for the bellows. In the 1890s, both spent time travelling around the country with their cameras and equipment. In the early part of the Twentieth century, both the brothers photographed scenes around 'Glen Hope'. Jack's photographs included one of his parents and Paul picking grapes in the vineyards, a family group which included a visiting cousin, Elizabeth Tuddenham, outside the homestead; and a distant scene of 'Glen Hope' from the vineyard side, showing the two houses, boys' bedroom (by then holding hay), the barns and the dairy-cum-cellar. Paul took a series of scenes beginning at the summit of what is now called Blowhard and continued at intervals down the spur to the farm itself, which he photographed from the opposite side to that of Jack's.

As the girls grew up they often found employment at the large homesteads. Ursula would go to 'Wappan' where Mrs Annie Bon was a kind and considerate mistress and Mary would be employed at 'Maintoongoon'. The latter station also had a store and was a post office where the district mail

was left and where the children of the settlers would call for their family's letters on mail days.

Indian hawkers made regular visits, carrying in their carts dress and curtain materials, haberdashery, combs, brushes, ribbons, and other articles a housewife might need. They were welcomed by settler and squatter alike.

There had been little, if any illness in the family, and it was a great shock, in 1905, when Joseph, aged 19 became seriously ill. He was admitted to the Alexandra Hospital then sent to Melbourne by train, a long and distressing journey. There he was taken to Mrs Maddern's Private Hospital in Nicholson Street, Fitzroy. Unfortunately, treatment was unavailable and Joseph died. He was buried in the Alexandra cemetery.

As the family grew older, it was clear that the farm, though prosperous, could not fully support eleven adults. Ursula, Jim (James), Jack and Paul found work in Melbourne. Laurence went to work for the O'Rourke family who had a large sheep property at Thornton. Philip, the youngest, stayed at 'Glen Hope'. Mary, Minnie and Nina married local men and also left the farm.

When the girls and their fiancés went to arrange the weddings they were asked to provide evidence of age. They found, upon enquiries, that only Ursula and Mary had their births registered, as Mary Ann had gone to a midwife in Alexandra on both occasions.* Most children born in a remote mining settlement or on a selection well beyond the limits of a township were not registered and had to rely on their baptismal certificates in later years. These were always accepted as evidence of age and birthplace. Parents knew that a clergyman of their faith would visit them on his pastoral round and baptise the latest baby. Should the next member of his far-flung congregation be many miles distant, he would be invited to stay the night and share the meals. He would carefully enter into his Baptismal Registrar the child's name, date and place of birth, both parents' names and those of two sponsors. He would conduct the night prayers and, in the morning, would bless them all before saying farewell.

Grandfather John's health began to fail in 1910 and Paul returned to the farm. In March 1911 Grandfather went to a Melbourne specialist

* Refer Document F



Paul Merlo took this photo of himself at 'Glen Hope' in c1908.



Barns at 'Glen Hope' photographed by Paul Merlo in 1909. The wagon was made by John Merlo Senior years earlier.

about a rash causing severe itching. In April he returned and was admitted to St. Vincent's Hospital for treatment of liver failure, the cause of the rash; he also had a kidney ailment which resulted in severe hypertension, untreatable in Grandfather's time. John returned home. As he grew weaker in 1912, John and Mary left 'Glen Hope' and went to stay with their daughter Mary and son-in-law William Meyers at their home in Alexandra, so they could be near the doctor and the hospital.

Paul had left the farm to return to Melbourne and take up a permanent position working on the O'Shannessy aqueduct for the Board of Works. The family kept in touch by letter. In June 1912 Nina wrote to Paul that they were having very heavy frosts and the cattle were dying. Two months later Mary Ann wrote to him that they had lost nine dairy cows, 'and the best at that' as well as twenty pigs. Fortunately they had already gathered in the oats and she said, sadly, she hoped they would soon be free of debt. But she knew that no credit is extended to a dying person - even the hospital demanded payment before they would admit her husband.

Grandfather John died on the 14th November 1912 and was buried in the Alexandra cemetery with his son Joseph.*

Mary Ann tried to keep the farm going with the help of Phillip and a young assistant but in 1914 Jim, the executor, decided the best thing to do was to mortgage the property and lease it for grazing. This was done. The crops and vines were trampled down and the buildings left empty. Ten years later Jim as executor sold the property to a local man, Herbert Coller, who sold it two years later to his brother Alfred, who in turn gave it to his son Leigh at the time of his marriage. The Collers named the property 'Benara' and it became a very successful Corriedale stud.

When Mary Ann left 'Glen Hope' in 1914, she went to Melbourne and stayed in turn with her daughters Minnie and Ursula. She regularly paid welcome visits to her sons, where she taught her grandchildren all the wise sayings she herself had learned from her mother, and showed at least one granddaughter how to knit, using four-inch nails and a long length of wool. Every year on her birthday, all her available children and grandchildren gathered wherever she was living

at the time, and entertained her with music and song. In April 1931, at the age of 83, Mary Ann went to her eternal rest, greatly loved to the last.

The Devil's River valley is now filled with the waters of Lake Eildon. The surrounding land is a national park. The long dark tunnel of the Solferino mine is still in its gully on the Puzzle Ranges; the spring where the Merlo children filled their wooden buckets, is now the watering hole for the wildlife of the Park.

The road from Alexandra leads down from Haines Saddle (Hell's Gap as the old-timers called it) to Lake Eildon and along both sides. Where it crosses the long spur from Blowhard there is a clearing - Merlo's Lookout - and its descriptive notice.⁹

Early in 1983 when the waters of Lake Eildon had receded so much in the drought that the old home was exposed for many months, four of us (all Merlos) visited the house. The framework, which had been erected in 1900, had been preserved by the water which had covered it for over 25 years, except for a short time in the 1968 drought. The vegetation which once had surrounded the place was all dead - the shrubs, the trees and the last vine from the old vineyard which still clung to the back wall.

Complete silence covered the valley and we were the only ones there. No wind stirred. No bird sang.

We went back over the hard-baked clay of the dry lake bed and up to Merlo's Lookout. Softened by the distance, the old home seemed to be clad once more in its paling walls and shingle roof, hiding forever the long years of hard work, the joys and the sorrows of our ancestors. We silently paid our respects to the Grandmother we remembered and the Grandfather we never knew, then quietly walked away.

* Refer Document G

Children of Giovanni and Mary Ann Merlo (formerly Tuddenham) and place of birth:

Ursula Maria	28.11.1867, Alexandra
Peter John	25.11.1869, Durham Gully
James Stephen	25.06.1872, Durham Gully
John Robert	02.07.1874, Durham Gully
Paul William	07.11.1877, Durham Gully
Lawrence Ashton	01.09.1879, Durham Gully
Mary Catherine	29.08.1882, Alexandra
Rebecca Dominica (Minnie)	03.12.1884, Puzzle Rangers
Joseph Sylvester	27.02.1887, Puzzle Rangers
Johanna Florence (Nina)	04.09.1889, Glen Hope farm
David Phillip (Phil)	22.01.1892, Glen Hope farm

Notes

- ¹ There are no photographs of Grandfather as a young man, but if the intense blue eyes and good looks of three of his sons were inherited from him, perhaps the tripping was not accidental.
- ² Information from Laurence's wife, Hannah, who had long talks with Mary Ann.
- ³ The birth certificate for Giovanni's first child, Ursula, gives his name as father as Giovanni Merlo Lena and Mary Ann, as Informant, gives her name as Mary Ann Merlo Lena. On Grandfather's marriage and death certificates his father's name is noted simply as Pietro Merlo. If Pietro Merlo subsequently died and his widow (Ursula Tona) then married a Lena, this may be the explanation of the two surnames (Merlo and Lena) that Giovanni used for a time. After the birth certificate, the surname Lena was not used officially in Australia again, although it was still known to the family.
- ⁴ Reports of the Mining Surveyor and Registrar:

Alexandra. From the first quarter of 1868 to the third quarter of 1880. *Alexandra Times* extracts from various reports in this paper were made by the National Parks Ranger, Fraser National Park and given 30 years ago to H. Merlo. Reports cover January 1871 to March 1877.

- ⁵ Information about the schools given by the Merlo family and Education Department Files on Durham Gully Rural School No. 117, Devil's River School No. 1323 and Maintoongoon School No. 2757.
- ⁶ Information from Paul Merlo and his sister Ursula.
- ⁷ With the exception of the dairy chain, the other tools are at Canterbury.
- ⁸ Personal knowledge of Hazel Merlo.
- ⁹ This was the initiative of Ron Turner, National Parks Ranger at Lake Eildon during the sixties. He was instrumental in collecting the memories of the older inhabitants of the Alexandra district and in persuading the Park authorities to give the name Merlo to a distinctive place.

Documents submitted with Merlo Story:

- A. Passenger list of Green Jacket December 1860 - three pages only.
- B. Selection papers:
 - a. Application for licence
 - b. Certificate of Registration
 - c. Surveyor's plan of selection of approx. 100 acres
 - d. Application for lease of 100 acres (3 pages)
 - e. Copy of lease.
- C. Memorial for Letters of Naturalisation.
- D. Letters of Naturalisation.
- E. Statement from Australian Archives re. John Merlo.
- F. Birth certificate of Ursula Merlo (wrongly indexed as Cristoa) giving parents' surnames as Merlo Lena.
- G. Death certificate of John Merlo Senior.



The former 'Glen Hope' in 1968 when it emerged from the waters of Lake Eildon during the drought.

FAMILY HISTORY

In Search of a Swiss Role

by Allan John Parker

The following informative article documents the success story (and perseverance) of a Western Australian descendant of Swiss Italians in tracing his family history.

During my early adult years I was aware that, despite my English surname, the maternal side of my family had in its background the surnames of McMahon and Maggetti (of Irish and Swiss-Italian origins respectively). In a nation like Australia, possessing such a very strong British flavour, both appellations were somewhat quaint, and at other times, good conversation pieces.

It was not until my interest in family history surfaced that I realised what a challenge descendants of non-British families in Australia faced, particularly when few third generation, Australian-born people have studied more than a few months of any European language at school. Even fewer had taken the exercise seriously at all. For myself, I had had twenty years exposure to ecclesiastical Latin, and had made an extensive study of Latin over three years at high school. I could still hazily conjugate verbs and, at a pinch, just work out to which of the four declensions Latin nouns belonged.

And so I set out on the journey of researching the topic of my Maggetti forebears. My mother knew only snippets about her mother's Maggetti background. However, mum had visited the home of her grandfather, Alberto Maggetti, in the Whipstick near Eaglehawk, a few miles from Bendigo, Victoria, in 1936, prior to her marriage.

Fortunately mum had been able to meet the living members of the first generation of Maggettis born in Australia, (Alberto himself having died in 1913). Using her trusty Kodak Brownie box camera she had taken some great photos of the existing family at 'Maggetti's Wine Hall'. Today they are prized possessions in the family album. The Wine Hall had served as a drinking hole and social centre for the miners of Wallace's Reef and Miller's Flat, especially those of Italian and Swiss-Italian background. Sadly, the timber building was demolished in 1948 and only a little rubble and the local historical society's identification pole mark the spot today.

Once in touch with cousin Kevin Magetti in Melbourne, I found that he had known the Wine Hall well as a child. His grandfather, Charles Albert and Aunt Angelina had run the Hall after their father and mother had died. Another aunt, Cecilia Anne, had migrated to Western Australia with a sister, Rosina Margurita, who was my mother's mother. No one really knows why, but Charles Albert's son, Charles Argus Magetti, changed the spelling of their surname by dropping one 'g' about 1920. Kevin Magetti was able to put me onto Joseph Gentilli's 1988 UWA publication *The Settlement of Swiss Ticino Immigrants in Australia*. I understand that Gentilli may have Ticino origins himself. The Ticinesi were the Swiss-Italian people from the Canton of Ticino – it being the only part of Switzerland using Italian as its primary language. The Maggetti's village of origin, Brione sopra Minusio, near Locarno, overlooked the beautiful Lake Maggiore area of southern Switzerland bordering on northern Italy. I found that the Ticinesi migrants from the south west had actually walked across Europe to Liverpool, UK, to embark. Alberto Maggetti's group voyaged on board the *Mindon* to Melbourne, landing in July 1856. This I confirmed by obtaining copies of the Passenger Lists when I next visited the Melbourne Public Records Office.

Many Maggettis from the north east of Ticino had migrated to America. Recently I have found some thirty Maggettis listed in the US White pages – mostly in California. At the closest they might be distant relations to my Australian Maggettis. Other US Maggettis are highly unlikely to be related at all, having migrated to the US from the Abruzzi region of south-eastern Italy.

Interestingly, Gentilli also gives many other references to consult to answer the question of the Ticino migration around the world. His explanation of factors like the below-replacement levels of the Ticinesi men, many of whom did not marry once in Australia, helped me understand the small size of the modern-day Magetti/Maggetti families. Another useful feature of Gentilli's work is the cross-referencing of the Ticinesi men with the women they married in Australia. Their strong Catholic beliefs made the single Irish women in the Colony philosophically very compatible, and therefore likely prospects – and so it was with

Alberto, who married Mary Ann Hanrahan at St Kilian's Catholic Church in Bendigo, in 1864.

Returning to my main focus, it was now 1992 and 136 years had gone by since the emigration of Alberto, so contact with any Maggetti family in Alberto's homeland had been long lost. No living relative in our family knew any person, nor was cognisant of any authority to contact in Switzerland, to authenticate our heritage.

Working my way through Victorian records I was able to find Births, Deaths and Marriages for all the members of the Australian-born Maggetti family in Victoria, and I was able to meet cousin Kevin's close and extended family, all with the single 'g' spelling of their surname. Interestingly, in October 1997 I found a Maggetti in the New South Wales White Pages but have not as yet had an answer to my letter. One of the frustrations we genealogists have to take in our stride!

The spelling of these Maggettis' surname suggested that they were descendants of some of the other Maggettis who had migrated to the Victorian goldfields in the same Goldrush era, but who may not have been directly related to the Magettis we knew today in Victoria. Interestingly, some of the original Swiss migrants returned to Switzerland to live out their lives.

Shifting my focus to Western Australia, I found the few relevant Births, Deaths and Marriages, plus a copy of Albert Maggetti's Naturalisation Certificate in 1894. I was grateful that some Australian State repositories have copies of early documentation from other States. The International Genealogical Index gave me a historic list of Maggettis in Switzerland itself, but not knowing who was who, and knowing only the names of Alberto's parents, I had little to hang my genealogical hat on.

Nothing seemed to happen for some time.

I felt that I was stymied, even after hours of poring over maps, and ploughing through Gentilli's book many times. I noticed in the text some details about the city of Bellinzona, and its role as the central registry for the Ticino region. Each Canton would provide, for a fee of \$A30, a three-generation family lineage called a *Familienschien* (family certificate), and so I applied, in English, for a copy. Many months went by, and I grew despondent about the likelihood of getting a reply. In talking with an Italian friend of the family, she

advised me that Swiss officials may not be above reproach, and could have pocketed my funds! So, with greater determination I wrote back again, explaining my need once more, and asking if there was a higher authority to which I would have to refer the matter!

Four weeks later I received my copy of my *Familienschien*, entitled *Registro della Popolazione del Comune di Brione*. It unfolded to a double A3-sized document with names, ages, religions, district, dates, 'Births, Deaths and Marriages' and relationships. There was also a useful column of 'osservazioni' on each person about whom some personal details had been known. And it covered 224 years of family lineage! My Maggettis were recorded from 1777 to 1901, many of whom I could not identify. But there,, right before my eyes, was Alberto Maggetti, son of Pietro and Guglielma Pedroia. He had been the eldest of nine children. On this document the Italian was so fundamental and self explanatory that I could read most of it the first time without a dictionary.

But, as wonderful as it was – what now? I had to make contact with someone in Switzerland! And so it was off to the State Library to consult the Swiss White Pages. In and around the little town of Brione sopra Minusio in Canton Ticino, not far from Bellinzona, I found a number of Maggettis listed, and laboriously took down addresses. Phone numbers were of no use for I spoke only about ten words of Italian and some of those would have caused me to have been hung up on! And so I approached my Italian family friends again to translate my draft letter into Italian. Then I sent off eleven letters, using what my family calls my 'scatter gun' approach – hit enough people in the area with a letter and invariably one will reply with some knowledge to help me along. At best they will know they are related because they had also been researching into the family themselves, hoping that one day an overseas cousin would contact them to complete the link. It had worked with my research into the Parkers of Lancashire, although it had taken persistence, and some fifty letters, to achieve the desired result.

My letter to Switzerland also worked! Back came a letter from Claudio Maggetti in the village of Brione sopra Minusio, which by now I had found out meant 'Brione (the town's actual name) above (on the hilly slopes) the town of Minusio',

situated on the shores of Lake Maggiore. The postcards Claudio enclosed confirmed that the area is beautiful beyond belief. I was over the moon, for here was my answer at last. I quickly tore open the envelope only to find that my 'maybe' cousin had answered in fluent Italian! He neither spoke nor wrote English. Even though my French was limited and my German non-existent, I had somehow reasoned that had Claude known one of these other languages, it would have offered me some sort of hope. Changing gears in my mind back into Latin, I battled through enough of the Italian to work out that Claudio did not know much about his heritage, but that he did have a *nonna* (grandmother) who might know something. He would go and see her specially to ask. I would have to wait for another letter from him. The suspense was killing me! Failing that, he would consult with other Maggettis in the district, some of whom he knew. At least I had captured someone who was not just going to ignore or dismiss me altogether.

To date our correspondence has been minimal but Claude tells me that one of his elderly friends is currently writing a history of Brione sopra Minusio, and Claude intends to give him all my materials to help the research. Perhaps the writer will have some information to help me make a direct connection. As I write this I still await a copy of the book, whose launch was initially planned for Christmas 1997.

One bonus will be from Victoria, with an impending publication – the Eaglehawk Pioneer Register in two volumes, put out by local historians and writers O'Donoghue and Hanson, tracing the lives of 2100 migrants and settlers in the Eaglehawk, Victoria area between 1852 and 1880. In itself it is a huge undertaking, and will be a great tribute to these early settlers in our land. It will be with great pride that I will be able to read of the lives of my Maggetti predecessors.

So, when your European research goes in fits and starts, expect it, for it is perfectly normal. Perhaps, I could tell you about the very limited success I have had with researching into my father's maternal Westhoven forebears in Germany, but I have recently found fifty-two of them in Germany's White Pages on the Internet.

In case you're wondering, some letters have already been sent to Germany.

The publications mentioned in A. J. Parker's article are available in the 'Family History' Section of the Italian Historical Society's Reserved Library.

Please refer to 'IHS Access Conditions' published in this Journal for information as to library hours and conditions.

Alfred Lucas: where did he come from?

by Damien John Hynes

A good example of knowing extensive details of the life of an ancestor in Australia, but not being able to locate the place of origin in Italy.

Alfred Lucas and three later generations were miners in the area around Omeo, Victoria and elsewhere.

The official records begin in 1860 with his marriage at Bruthen to an English immigrant, Elizabeth Thayer. At that time Lucas was a stockman on Gelantipy Station, in north-east Gippsland, a very remote place then, and today still sparsely populated. Elizabeth was a domestic on this station. On the marriage certificate, Lucas's profession is stated as marksman. The first two of nine children were born on Gelantipy. Six survived infancy and three did not. Two of these deaths are referred to in the book *Lonely Graves of the Gippsland Goldfields*, 1994, ISBN 0 646 17805 9.

Some time after his marriage, Lucas returned to his former profession, that of a miner, and typically so, a number of moves happened in the area but with Omeo mostly being the central town where the family mined and lived.

Following the death of his wife in winter of 1877 at (Upper) Swifts Creek, Lucas married again at Omeo in 1882 the widow Sarah Hibbs. There was but one child of this union named Rosabella who died of tuberculosis aged 14 years in a hotel in Prahran. I have traced down all lines of the family both of the first and the second marriages and their descendants which unravel nothing more as to his Italian origin.

In all the certificates he is always shown as Alfred Lucas but on one certificate he is given as Alf Lucasa. In all of them he gives Livorno or Leghorn as his place of origin, but for one certifi-

cate he gives Lucca. He is not the informant on the family records and I had thought this would be because of his illiteracy at least in English. On his second marriage certificate he does sign his own name. Then in 1884, following the introduction of legislation in 1883, he passed a test for an engine driver and I understand there was both a written and a practical test.

At the time of his first marriage he provided his age as 24 years but on the second marriage he gives his birth date as 25 December 1833, which makes him 27 years old when he first married. I have his death certificate, a copy of his Will and the obituary from the *Omeo* paper. Alfred died in 1897 at Brookville and was buried in the Omeo cemetery. At the time of his death he was managing the Chalet Hotel. James Fletts' book *Pubs and Shanties of the Goldfields* states that the licence was in Mrs Lucas's name for Lucas had not been naturalised. However, the hotel may have been Sarah's for she was left property from the estate of her first husband.

It appears that Lucas had little association in east and north Gippsland with other Italian speakers. There are many entries for him in mining registers which commenced or survive from around 1867 and these are with anglo-saxon names making up the parties. There is a small number of Italians in these registers or in other records who settled in north Gippsland prior to the turn of the century. One of them was one Charles Paleari, better known in the early days of his arrival in Australia as 'Italian Charlie'. He died at Nariel, south of Corryong, in 1902 and was the storekeeper. He was from Lombardy and was in Australia from circa 1852. Paleari, like Lucas, never naturalised.

Lucas is featured in several newspaper accounts. The *Omeo Standard* centenary edition, 17 January 1935 describes 'Italian Lucas' as a pioneer miner coming to Omeo in 1854. Two earlier articles, the oldest in the *Omeo Telegraph* of 30 March 1888 relates a story of the lost Tomahawk gold reef and members of a party who went to search for it albeit unsuccessfully. Lucas was one of the party, along with Charles Paleari, an American Indian named Blevin and a man named Burgess.

As to Lucas's parents his father's name is stated as also being Alfred Lucas whose occupation was vigneron and his mother as Rosa Maysena, probably incorrectly spelled. I have not been able to

locate any record of Lucas's arrival in shipping records of Victoria, either from the United Kingdom or other European ports. Similar enquiries in New South Wales and South Australia public records did not produce results.

It was suggested to me that Lucas could be a Jewish name. His first wedding was celebrated in the Church of England and I believe also the second. He is buried in Catholic ground. Other enquiries via the records of the Latter Day Church did not give me any useful information as to Lucas's origin or family in Italy.

At this point I am almost deadlocked as to what might be done to settle the remaining question of origin. A letter written in English to the Collegio Araldico in Rome two years ago brought no response. Any suggestions or readers' response would be welcome.

My address is 47 Arthur Street, Eltham, Vic., 3095, Tel. (03) 9439 6187 (evenings).

Family history enquiries:

Giuseppe Ingegneri, aka Engegneri, Ingigneri and, after 1880, Incigneri.

Giuseppe was born in Riposto, Catania, Sicily in 1838. On his marriage certificate his father was named as Francesco Ingegneri (master mariner) and his mother as Santa Guarrera. It is believed he was a cabin boy who jumped ship (name unknown) when it arrived in Melbourne in 1856. In Melbourne he was a fisherman living first at Queenscliff and, after he married in 1866, at Hastings. He never became naturalised and died in 1896 leaving his second wife, Annie, and eight of their ten children. His house in Hastings was used for some years as the centre of Catholic life with the first Mass in the parish and a number of marriages being celebrated there. Apparently, after the Second World War, a relative in Sicily made contact with one of Giuseppe's daughters and some correspondence followed. Unfortunately, a few hours after her death a zealous relative burned all her personal papers and consequently contact with the family in Sicily were lost.

Mrs Angela Incigneri would be delighted to hear from anyone who knew the family in Hastings or who has any information about the marriages or Masses which were celebrated there. She would also like to contact anyone who comes from Riposto and would like to find some photos of

Riposto which she could borrow to copy for her family history. Angela can be contacted at 23 Gareth Drive, East Burwood, Vic., 3151 or Tel. (03) 9802 5289, Fax. (03) 9886 1459, E-mail bjn-cig@ccr.org.au.

Bernardo Costa and **Louisa Marsana** aka Marsano, Marsarno, Marsarns, Marsarin.

They were married in 1864 in the Beechworth area, Victoria. Bernardo died in 1915 and Louisa died in 1897 in Wodonga.

Children:

Annie Alberta b. 1866 Yackandandah;
Rosa Maria b. 1868, d. 1869 Yackandandah;
Angela Ellen b. 1869 Yackandandah, Vic.;
Louisa b. 1872 Yackandandah;
Laura b. 1874 Yackandandah;
Maria Vittoria b. 1876 Yackandandah;
Gertrude, b. 1879 Kiewa, Vic.;
Florence, b. 1881 Tallandoon, Vic., d. 1882 Wodonga;
Bernard Victor b. 1882 Wodonga, Vic.;
[A boy, at last!]

Edgardo Raffaele Arpante aka Arpentì. Born in 1860, Naples. Son of Marquis de Castellano and Michelina, from Bologna. Arrived in Sydney 1881 on the 'Italian majestic warship' Europa. Married in 1886, died in 1926. Descendant researching the family history: Frank Wiseman, 64 Clery Crt., Clayton, Vic., 3169. Tel. (03) 9544 5506.

Stefano Belli, Swiss-Italian born in 1856 in Vogorno, district of Locarno, Canton Ticino. Arrived in Victoria in 1876 on board the ship Loch Katrine. Married Cammillia Georgi, aged 17, in 1877 at St. Peter's Church in Daylesford, Victoria, profession miner. The place of residence given on the marriage certificate is Eastern Hill, near Daylesford. The name Belli was later changed to Bellin. One son, Stephen Bellin, was born in 1876 and died in August 1957. His direct descendant Laurie Raftery, 60 Lucerne Cres. Alphington, Vic., 3078. Tel. (03) 9499 4169 is interested to hear from anyone who may have information on Stefano Belli and on the village of Vogorno.

Giovanni Antonio Tognazzini, Swiss-Italian born in 1839 in Someo, district of Valle Maggia, Canton Ticino. He married Ellen Vaughan. Enquiry from Robert Marshall, 3 San Michelle St., Tugun, Qld., 4224. Tel. (07) 55342 165.

Giovanni Battista Sanguinetti. Born in Rapallo, Genova, in 1836. Came to Melbourne in 1857 on board the Morning Light from England. where he had resided and worked for a number of years as a tailor for his uncle Biagio. In 1860 he married in Melbourne Harriett Fisher, an English woman. In 1863 he opened a tailor shop at 182 Russell Street, Melbourne, then moved to 30 Little Collins Street East in 1866. From 1873 to 1888 his business was located at 125 Little Collins Street. In 1889 he opened with his son Alberto Sanguinetti another tailor shop in Little Charles Street, Abbotsford where he operated until his death in 1905. Enquiry from Richard Sanguinetti, 57 Malin Street, Kew, 3101, Tel. (03) 9819 1625 who is interested to trace the family history back in Italy.

Pasquale (Charlie) Lacava and **Barile/Barrile**. Both were accomplished musicians. Lacava came out with his parents early this century, aged 14. He played the flute in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and for the Capitol Theatre for a number of years.

Barile emigrated from Viggiano to Australia in the 1890s. He lived in the city and then in Carlton. Descendant Jenny McNeice, 1089 Burke Rd. East Hawthorn 3124, Tel. (03) 9813 0004 is interested to hear from anyone who may have come across these names in their family history research.

Giovanni Lironi was born in Lemna, Como, Lombardy. He was a stained glass maker and the family still holds his 'secret formula' for etching on glass. He came out to Australia from Scotland in the 1860s, where he was engaged to work at the windows of a new cathedral. His Scottish wife came out with him. In Melbourne he set up a glazier workshop in Flinders Lane. Two children were born in Melbourne. Enquiry from Peter Knights, 16 Shane Cres. Croydon, Vic., Tel. (03) 9870 5942.

Ester Martelli nee Savieri or Slavieri left Leghorn, Tuscany, for New Zealand in 1875 on board the Taranaki with three daughters and one son. Her husband Alessio did not travel with her and could have been in New Zealand already. She settled in Westland, South Island, New Zealand. Robert Glover, Tel. (03) 9789 5009 is interested to hear from anyone whose ancestors migrated to New Zealand in the 1880s.

Pierre Trudeau at the Crossroads

by James Panichi

James Panichi is a journalist and professional writer. He joined SBS Radio as a part-time Italian-language journalist in 1987 and from 1993 worked for a number of years in the central newsroom and at the 'Worldview' English-language current affairs radio program. He is now Media Trainer for SBS Radio.

The following article explores some linguistic aspects of cross-cultural identity, and proposes some interesting solutions.

There are several meanings to the Italian word 'incrocio', as I soon found out. Having moved to Italy from Australia at the age of 9, my new classmates used it, quite affectionately, to refer to my family environment. With an Italian father and an Anglo-Saxon mother, the word took on the meaning of 'mixture, or 'cross-breeding'. The word was also used when commenting on my name – English my Christian name, Italian the surname. *Madonna, che incrocio!* – what a mixture!

However, the meaning of the word which has always fascinated my sister and me is another. 'Croce', a cross, 'incrociare', to cross, 'l'incrocio', the crossroads, the intersection. It is where two thoroughfares meet, the point from which you can see down both roads. It may be the scene of many an accident, but for those prepared to stay alert, to understand and anticipate the erratic patterns of the traffic flow, life at the crossroads can be an exhilarating existence. This is where I was born, and where I have always lived: *l'incrocio*.

The fate of most people in Australia with one Italian parent is usually the same: no matter how firm initial resolutions, the common language will dominate – English becomes the household 'lingua franca', and soon any day-to-day use of Italian falls by the wayside. The Italian-speaking parent will communicate with the children in English, and the children will come to know that parent through a language once-removed, through words which often are not adequate to translate what the parent is thinking. This would have described my own family situation perfectly, had my father not decided to embark on what is now given the trendy appellation of *immigrazione di ritorno* – return-immigration. In other words, my father reversed what had been a firm decision to go on a one-way trip. Dad had left Italy thirty years before in anger, so I think his decision to return with a young family must have been as traumatic as a practicing Catholic requesting a marriage annulment. Dad

was forced to turn to Italy to give his children the one thing he and Australia could not: an understanding of his language and culture.

I was about to finish grade 3 in Australia, and arrived in Italy mid-way through their grade 4, or *quarta elementare*. Within six months I was conversing with my class mates in a Tuscan dialect, in less than a year my sister and I spoke to each other in nothing but Italian. Mum cried for days, lamenting the 'loss' of her children. Dad reassured her by saying that we would chose neither culture, we would forget no language. We would be both. My sister soon became the 'language police' of the family. She had sensed what I came to understand only much later – that the groove of bilingualism could become a rut of confusion; that one language could become a crutch for the other; that intellectual laziness would leave us neither here nor there. When my sister was around, a sentence begun in Italian could only end in Italian. When she wasn't home, Dad would teach me the language he had learnt among Australia's Italians – a *miscuglio* rather than an incrocio of languages, two soluble elements coming together, a mixture without order, a jumble. English was used to give emphasis, an Italian sentence was repeated in English to highlight its significance. We both loved it, but Dad also respected my sister's approach – after all, we were the ones at the crossroads, while if my father ever had to jump, he would have landed firmly on *Via Italia*, the Italian Way.

I first came across the figure of Pierre Trudeau while travelling in Canada. He had become one of a handful of Canadian 'elder statesmen', a point of reference for journalists searching for a quotable quote from an important figure of a different era of Franco-Canadian political life: the *Revolution Tranquille*, the Quiet Revolution. Unashamedly upper-middle-class in his tastes and wealth, Trudeau's family background was both French and Anglo-Saxon. His maternal

grandfather, Mr Elliot, was of Scottish descent (Trudeau insisted on signing his name *Pierre Elliot* Trudeau), while his father was in the jargon of today's national chauvinists, a *quebecois* pure laine, 'pure wool', a man completely of French heritage.

Trudeau enjoyed life at the crossroads, graduating in law at the *Université de Montreal*, studying economics at Harvard, politics at the Sorbonne, then a bit of both at the London School of Economics. He was what my sister would call 'profoundly bilingual' – in other words, he could express the most difficult and challenging notions in either language, and did so most passionately over the many years of his prime-ministership.

His philosophical outlook was what I would refer to as 'cosmopolitan' – in other words, he was a true child of the Enlightenment. He believed in a liberal, bi-lingual state, capable of providing both the anglophone and the francophone populations with the framework in which to live and prosper, no matter which language they chose. He had himself experienced the exhilaration of the mixture of cultures in his native Montreal, although my guess is that he failed to fully understand just what a feat it was to bring about a peaceful co-existence of such different cultures. To him it came naturally simply because he knew no other way of expressing his 'Canadian-ness'.

Trudeau's vision of the truly cosmopolitan bilingual man and woman failed to become reality, but he became an important point of reference for me in dealing with the perceptions of others. In both Italy and Australia when I was asked 'Italian or Australian?', I would calmly point out that the question is flawed. Australia is the state to which I belong, the state of which I am a citizen, the country of my birth. My cultural identity, on the other hand, is both Anglo-Celtic (English and Scottish) and Italian (Veneto and Tuscan). 'Then are you English or Italian?' The answer is simple: both. No crises, no mixed feelings, no 'neither-here-nor-there', no 'if-you-have-to-choose' scenarios. Simply both.

This is not a political statement, not a remediated digging in of heels, a *presa di posizione*. This is simply where I was born – with two languages, two cultures, two distinctly different ways of seeing the world. That which is perceived by others as odd is all grist to the cultural mill of my everyday life. One's identity is not like

a computer with limited memory space, with room only for one program. Yet my schoolmates in Italy had an almost biological view of '*italianità*': you either are Italian, or you're not; blood is thicker than water, after all. Well, it was never like that for us – there was never a clash – just my desperate attempt to be on top of the detail of so demanding a 'heritage portfolio'.

On the eve of the 1980 Quebec referendum on independence, Trudeau spoke in French to a packed 'federalist' gathering, with bright Canadian and Quebec provincial flags being waved by a supportive crowd. He accused the *separatists* of forcing him to choose an identity – of having to decide whether he would accept a Scottish grandparent over a francophone father. It was a choice, he claimed, no-one should have to make, and no one need make. The nation-state advocated by the separatists was demanding that the scrambled-eggs be unscrambled. Trudeau had taken his cultural ancestry seriously enough to study both languages, and had no problem in finding a place for himself within the structure of a tolerant modern democracy.

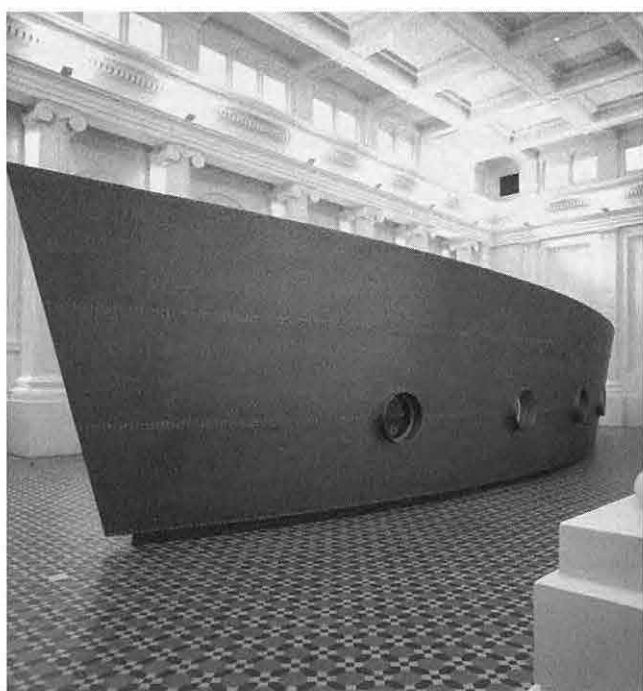
I dare compare myself to Trudeau in one way only: his downfall was that he just did not understand how deep his country's cultural divisions actually ran. From the vantage point of the crossroads it is easy to forget how terrifying it all appears to speeding traffic approaching from all sides. To my mother, the fact that neither my sister nor I chose one culture over the other was certainly not obvious at the time, and understandably caused her great concern. For me, it has simply been a great adventure.

My sister now lives in Italy, is married to an Italian and has just had her first child, whom she named Timothy Alexander James. True to her reputation as the 'language police', she speaks to him only in English, and answers him when he speaks English – although he is encouraged to speak Italian to his father. Sure, it's all a bit of a burden for an 18 month-old child, but this is the only reality my sister knows, the only upbringing she can relate to. And perhaps one day a very Italian Timothy Alexander James will be proud that like his mother, he was born at the crossroads.

NEWS

The Journey begins – Victoria's Immigration Museum now open.

Situated at 400 Flinders Street and housed in one of Melbourne's oldest and grandest public buildings, Old Customs House, the Immigration Museum opened to the public on 14 November 1998. It brings to life the human dimension of the immigration experience through personal stories or recollections. The Museum explores immigration through moving images, voice, music, objects, lighting effects and computer animation involving visitors through sight, sound and touch, including the sensation of a ship's voyage.



The Boat in the Long Room of the Immigration Museum.

The many contributions of immigrants in shaping the cultural fabric of Victoria are explored together with the rich culture of indigenous communities, and the impacts of immigration upon Aboriginal people living in the region now known as Victoria.

The personal stories told within the Museum cover a range of cultural backgrounds and experiences, detailing the aspirations, achievements and disappointments of those who migrated to Victoria.

The Director of the Immigration Museum is Ms Anna Malgorzewicz with whom the Society has been associated in the past for the successful Carlton Exhibition.

The Sarah and Baillieu Myer Immigration Discovery Centre

As part of the Immigration Museum's facilities a centre for research on immigration and cultural studies was opened on 21 January 1999.

The Centre offers information on researching family histories, a library on subjects of settlement and migration, a database of people commemorated in the Tribute Garden, as well as computer links to other specialist museums and archives around the world.

The Centre will be a focal point for special events and education programs, as well as for individual research projects. Over time, resources for investigating family histories will grow so that people can use this as a central point to embark on their own journey of discovery.

The EMC Library is a rare and significant resource on the documentation of the immigration experience in Australia and cross-cultural issues. The Library was donated to the Immigration Museum by the Ecumenical Migration Centre.

The Centre is sponsored by Sarah and Baillieu Myer, as a tribute to their ancestors Sidney Myer, James George Baillieu and Anthony Hordern, who migrated to Australia more than 100 years ago. Entry to this Centre is free.

The Tribute Garden

The names of nearly 3,000 immigrants to Victoria have been immortalised in a major outdoor artwork located in the northern gardens of the Immigration Museum.

The Tribute Garden records the names of people, past and present, who migrated to Victoria, including the family of Sir James Gobbo, Governor of Victoria and founder of the Italian Historical Society.

Designed by Melbourne artist Evangelos Sakaris, the Garden features names engraved in granite, over which a gentle stream of water flows. As visitors move through the garden, they symbolically recreate the voyage across the water. The arrival point is marked by the names of the indigenous language groups from the region now known as Victoria.

The names were collected between January and June last year. Of the 3,000 names registered, 537 have indicated Italy as their birth place. A new drive for names is open until 30 April 1999. This second stage will start to fill the walls, with names etched in a wave-like pattern on stainless steel. For a contribution of \$100 or \$200, people can nominate the name of an individual or family who migrated to Victoria, to be permanently recorded in the Tribute Garden. An application form is enclosed in this Journal.

The Schiavello Access Gallery

The Schiavello Access Gallery is an integral part of the Immigration Museum that allows community groups to stage their own exhibitions that further explore subjects of cultural diversity and identity. The Gallery bears the name of an Italian family. By donating the display features, businessmen Tony and Joe Schiavello wanted to honour the memory of their parents who migrated to Australia from Calabria early in the 1950s.

The Italian Historical Society is grateful to the Museum for hosting in the Access Gallery the inaugural exhibition **La Dote: Preparing for a Family**, which was officially opened on 16th November 1998 by Mrs Carmencita Bardini, wife of the Italian Consul General for Victoria and Tasmania. The exhibition was mounted to coincide with a network of exhibitions to reflect the complexity and diversity that makes *The Australian Family*.

This exhibition traces through time the tradition of providing a dowry and its importance in preparing for a family. The objects on display illustrate the effects and impacts that social and industrial changes have had on the dowry tradition and to what extent the tradition is practised amongst Australian-Italian families today. The exhibition draws on the stories of a number of Italian-born women and their daughters together with a diversity of exhibits, handcrafts and handed down heirlooms.

The exhibition was curated by Ingrid Unger with the assistance of Maria Tence and Laura Mecca.

The Society wishes to congratulate its former coordinator, Maria Tence, for her appointment as Manager of the Access Gallery. Much of the success of the Dowry exhibition is due to Maria's personal involvement in the preparation and presentation of the event.



Mrs Carmencita Bardini, at the microphone, and Ms Anna Malgorzewicz at the official opening of the Dowry Exhibition.

The Immigration Museum is located at:
Old Customs House
400 Flinders Street, Melbourne
Inquiries: (03) 9927 2700
Open every day 10am - 5pm.
Admission to Immigration Museum exhibitions:
\$7 adults, \$5.50 concession, \$3.50 child.

The exhibition *La Dote: Preparing for a Family* at the Immigration Museum closes 28 February 1999.

The Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme: An Important Anniversary

Fifty years after the first blasting shot was detonated, the men and women who built the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme have been invited to come back. The Anniversary Celebrations are being hosted and organised by the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority (SMHEA). The Italian Historical Society is collaborating with the Authority to promote the event among the Italian migrants and their families who worked on the Scheme.

The 100,000 people who built the Scheme over 25 years between 1949 and 1974 have been urged to attend what could be Australia's biggest reunion this year.

The reunion, to be held at Lake Jindabyne on Sunday 17 October 1999, will mark the 50th Anniversary of the start of the Scheme.



Fernando Lamberti sent money to his family in Italy from this Bank at Kiandra. He worked for two years early in the 1960s on the Bogong Project of the Snowy Mountains Scheme.

Other events of the Anniversary Celebrations include an Australia Day function in Cooma; a festival across the Snowy Mountains; the release of a commemorative book and a travelling photographic exhibition. A special exhibition will also be staged at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

The Snowy Mountains Scheme is still considered by many one of the world's major engineering achievements.

Two thirds of the workforce came from over 30 countries, mostly in the 1950s and 1960s, in the aftermath of the Second World War. There were Italians, Germans, Polish, Norwegians, Czechs, Spaniards, New Zealanders, South Africans and many more. They worked in the toughest conditions imaginable; in harsh mountain country with snow and ice in winter and under a blazing sun in summer. While the Scheme pioneered advanced mining and construction techniques, much of the work was sheer hard labour with picks, shovels and crowbars and machinery that depended on physical exertion.

The American and Norwegian companies which won the contracts for much of the Scheme's con-

struction introduced the idea, almost unheard of in post-war Australia, of large scale contract labour and wages based on performance. Thiess became the first Australian company to win a major contract for the Scheme in 1958 and they went on to build a quarter of the whole Scheme, including the largest dam in the Southern Hemisphere at Talbingo.

Thousands of Italian migrants worked in this massive project. Most of them were young skilled and unskilled men who were attracted to the Scheme by high salaries. The money earned was used by many to sponsor their families or proxy brides to Australia, to buy a house or to set up their own small business. Unfortunately some of them lost their lives in work-related accidents.

The Italian Historical Society would like to record as many personal experiences as possible from Italian workers, or members of their families, who were involved in the Scheme. Please contact Laura Mecca on (03) 9347 3555.

To register the participation to the reunion, call 1800 623 776 (toll free).

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

This list outlines the book received by the Society by gift or purchase. The books may not necessarily be recent releases. The recommended retail price is indicated where available. The book can be viewed at the Italian Historical Society, 1st Fl., 189 Faraday Street, Carlton between 10am to 4pm Tuesday to Thursday.

The Society has acquired a set of Italian language publications on the social history and traditions of the people of the province of Belluno, published by Comunità Montana Feltrina, Centro per la Documentazione della Cultura Popolare. Belluno is a city bordering the Alps, north of Venice. Its province is the largest of the Veneto Region. Migration to other European countries, the Americas and Australia has been part of Bellunesi life since the 1850s. The publications are in Italian and in the local dialect. They are beautifully illustrated and very informative.

L'Abbigliamento popolare tradizionale nella provincia di Belluno. (Traditional clothing of the populace from the province of Belluno). Details on the fabrics, styles and special occasions are included. Of special interest are the trousseau lists, some of them dating back to 1700.

Balie da latte: una forma peculiare di emigrazione temporanea. (West-nurses: a particular form of temporary migration). The women from this area were quite popular in Europe for their 'skills' as wet-nurses. Very often they would leave their newly-born child with their family to travel to other Italian regions or European countries for a temporary job with wealthy families.

Ciòde e Ciodéti: Un'emigrazione stagionale di donne e ragazzi dal Bellunese al Trentino. (Seasonal migration of women and young boys from the province of Belluno to Trentino). Domestic work or employment in the farms in this region bordering the province of Belluno was for many years a popular destination for hundreds of Bellunesi women from late last century to the 1930s.

Canapa e Lana: Tecniche tradizionali di produzione e lavorazione nel Feltrino. (Hemp and Wool: Traditional production and processing techniques in the Feltre region). A detailed description of the process involved and of the tools used, many of them hand-made.

Scrivere per non dimenticare: L'emigrazione di fine '800 in Brasile nelle lettere della Famiglia Rech Checonét. A moving account on the life of a migrant family in Brazil at the end of last century is recorded in a collection of letters of the Rech Family.



The following Italian cook books will answer to the requests of many descendants of Italian gold rush pioneers who are eager to know what their ancestors' food was like before they emigrated to Australia last century. The books include traditional recipes from the Valtellina and Valchiavenna areas, north Lombardy, together with folk tales and a gastronomic itinerary. Wine, chestnuts, walnuts, barley, rye, beans, cheese, mushrooms, milk, cured meat and polenta have featured in the cuisine of the Valtellina for centuries.

La Cucina di Valtellina e Valchiavenna. By Guido Margiotta. Bissoni Editore, Sondrio, 1991.

Racconti e Cucina di Valtellina. By Piero Antolini. Franco Muzzio & C. Editore SpA, Padova, 192.

Piedmont Down Under. By Giorgio Jannon. Associazione Piemontesi Victoria Inc.,

Holmesglen, 1998. Available from Sergio Sappa, P.O. Box 70, Holmesglen 3148.

Tel. (03) 9807 0681. Fax (03) 9563 4779.

This is the English translation of the successful book *Oltre Gli Oceani*, published in Italy in 1996, on the story of migration, settlement and contribution of Italian migrants from Piedmont, whose presence in the sugar cane districts of North Queensland dates back to the 1890s.

Tears, Laughter and The Revolution. By Charles D'Aprano. Insegna Publishers, 410 Moreland Rd., Brunswick West, Vic. 3055, 1998. The early years in Australia and the Second World War challenge the main character into difficult choices of identity that will leave a deep and lasting political thirst for acceptance. For those who personally know the author and his past political involvements in the peace movement, it is difficult to establish if this is a work of fiction or an autobiography. The author refutes the latter. However, there are many parallels between the character Jim Roman and the Ital-Australian writer Charles D'Aprano who migrated to Australia with his father in 1937 at the age of 14.

From Capers to Quandong. By Zita Carew. Country Idylls, PO Box 197, Salisbury SA 5108. Available from the Zita Carew, Unit 11, 2 Pantan Street, Salisbury SA 5108.

This is the story of the author's lifetime journey. Born in Salina in the Aeolian Islands, she emigrated with her family to Australia in the 1920s. She traces her family's life in Melbourne during the depression, their move to Mildura where she salvages the family business and her return to Melbourne during the Second World War. In her seventies she returns for the first time to her beautiful island of Salina where the capers still grow wild.

Charles Grinter of Somerset 1837-1903.

By James T. Grinter Self published, 1997.

A thoroughly researched and well layed out family history of Charles Grinter, his ancestors and descendants, which include the members of two Italian pioneer families: Monti and Fasoli.

Historic Tobacco Kilns in the Rural City of Wangaratta. By Jacqueline Verrocchio. Published by the Rural City of Wangaratta, 1998. A well illustrated and very informative study on the history of tobacco growing and curing in the Ovens and Kings Valleys. Many old kilns survive in the area and they are testimonials of a bygone area of involvement and hard work of many

Italian migrants. The study aims to foster an understanding of the cultural heritage values of tobacco kilns, and to encourage their conservation.

Eaglehawk & District Pioneer Register 1850-1880, Volume 2 D-I, 1998. By Annette O'Donohue & Bev Hanson. Enquiries and mail orders from O'Donohue & Hanson, P.O. Box 1012, Maiden Gully 3551. \$49 plus P&P \$6.50.

As with the first volume, this second volume contains a wealth of information for family history researchers.

A Heart in Two Places, Un Cuore Diviso - Italian Settlement in Proserpine 1908-1998. Compiled by Proserpine Italian Research Committee. Available from K. Pini, MS 398, Proserpine, Qld., 4800. \$25.00 plus postage. This is a wonderful example of what a group of dedicated people of Italian origin can achieve in writing the history of their community. The book is beautifully illustrated with many family photos and documents.

How to Find Shipping and Immigration Records in Australia. By Cora Num. Self published, 1998. The book is designed to help the researcher find shipping and immigration records, naturalisation records, arrival and departure records and indexes, etc. It also includes a useful listing of Internet sites of Australian archives and museums, Public Record Offices, genealogical societies. etc.

Bendigo Advertiser Personal Notices 1896-1910. Volume 3. Compiled by Betty Jackman. Available from the author, 19 Boronia Cres., Bendigo 3550 at \$48 plus postage (Vic \$6, NSW & SA \$8, Qld \$10, WA \$11, Tas \$8) 1998. Hard cover book of 500 pages with entries covering Bendigo and district. The Bendigo Advertiser was established in 1853. It was one of the first newspapers printed and published on any Australian goldfield. Since 1856 it has been published daily. Some of the information in this book is available from Government indexes and other sources, but these notices printed in their entire text give us further details of where and when the event occurred, often telling us which country our ancestor may have come from, with address, occupations, cause of death and also many names of relations. It includes an index of all the persons mentioned in the notices and many photographs. Also available Volume 1 1854-1880 & 36 + \$5 postage; Volume 2 1881-1895 \$39 + \$5 postage.

OUR ACTIVITIES

Change of Premises

Changing premises unfortunately appears to be one of the Society's regular activities! In the second half of last year, the Society has moved twice. Hence the delay in the publication of the *IHS Journal*.

We are now located at
1st Floor, 189 Faraday Street,
Carlton, Vic, 3053.
Telephone (03) 9347 3555
Facsimile (03) 9347 8269
E-mail coasit@vicnet.net.au

Public activities

An exhibition of images taken by professional photographers of women at work from the Liguria Region was on display at the Society's premises for a month, from 11 August 1998. The photographs in the exhibition titled *From Thread to File* illustrated the contribution made by Ligurian women to the development of their Region from the 1880s to today. The exhibition was presented by the Society in collaboration with the Melbourne Branch of the Association of Ligurians in the World and the Italian Resource Centre of CO.AS.IT who prepared the activities for schools. The opening ceremony was officiated by a prominent Ligurian woman, Mrs Carmencita Bardini, wife of the Italian Consul General. A selection of traditional regional foods was served at the opening by the Association's Committee Members.

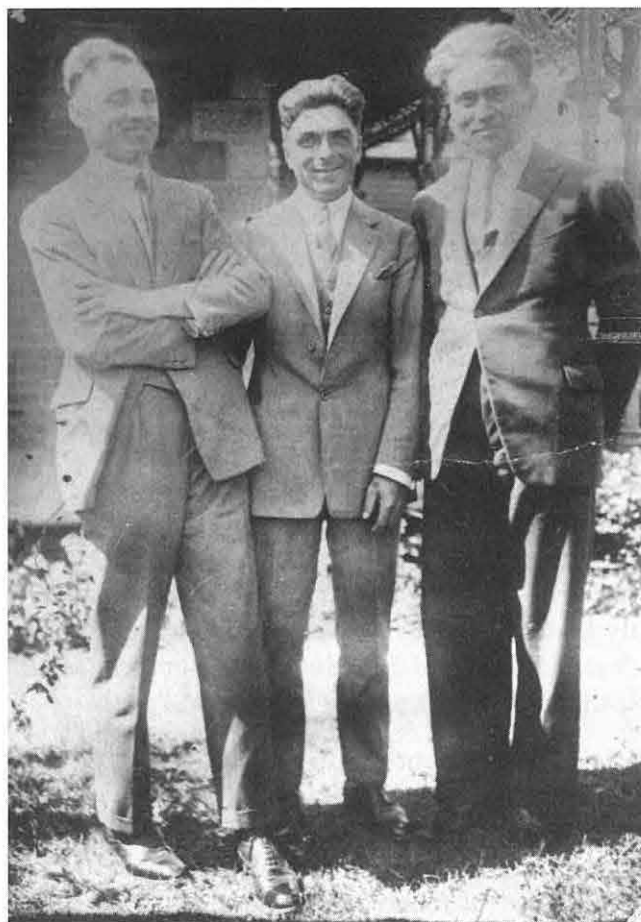


A group of Year 12 Italian language students from Xavier College during their visit to the Ligurian exhibition

Anniversary of Casa d'Italia

The Society celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the founding of the anti-fascist 'Casa d'Italia' with a reunion and a visit to the original building which housed the Casa.

Casa d'Italia was officially opened at 119 Palmerston Street, Carlton on 12 June 1938. It became the meeting place of the members and sympathisers of the 'Italian Group Against War' which strongly opposed Fascism, and the Spanish and Abyssinian wars. Amongst them were Prof. Omero Schiassi, Matteo Cristofaro, Luigi Stellato, Raffaele e Irma Sabatino, Carlo Simeoni, Giovanni Corso, Guido Canteri, Ottavio Brida, Pietro Grotto, Antonio Zearo, Gino Moretti, Angelo Colladetti, Ruggero Vinco, Boris Franceschini and Attilio Cecchin. The premises were owned by the Australian Labour Trust Society Limited of the Trades Hall, Carlton. The lease contract, stipulated with Carlo Simeoni, Antonio Zearo and Pietro Grotto, was for a term of three years at £160 per annum.



From left: Bill Ermacora, Pietro Grotto and Carlo Simeoni, 1930s. Simeoni was nicknamed 'Carlön' by Melbourne Italians who opposed his political views.

Mr Ottavio Brida, 97, and Mrs Irma Sabatino, 85, were at the reunion. It was a moving event for these two people whose opposition to Fascism was strongly and openly expressed at public demonstrations and meetings organised by the Casa members. In 1939 Irma was given a silver tray by the Casa 'in appreciation of her anti-fascist activity.'

Casa d'Italia ceased to be operational in September 1940, two months after Italy's declaration of war. The wave of Australia's anti-Italian sentiment, which peaked with the internment of 4700 people of Italian background, and the danger of acts of vandalism and violence against the Casa and its members, forced the closure of this important 'monument' which holds an important place in the history of the Italian community in Australia.

The descendants of the founding members present at the reunion were Carlo Canteri, son of Guido; Bruna Bonomi, cousin of Ruggero Vinco; Marie Varrenti, daughter of Raffaele Sabatino; Bill Simeoni, nephew of Carlo Simeoni.



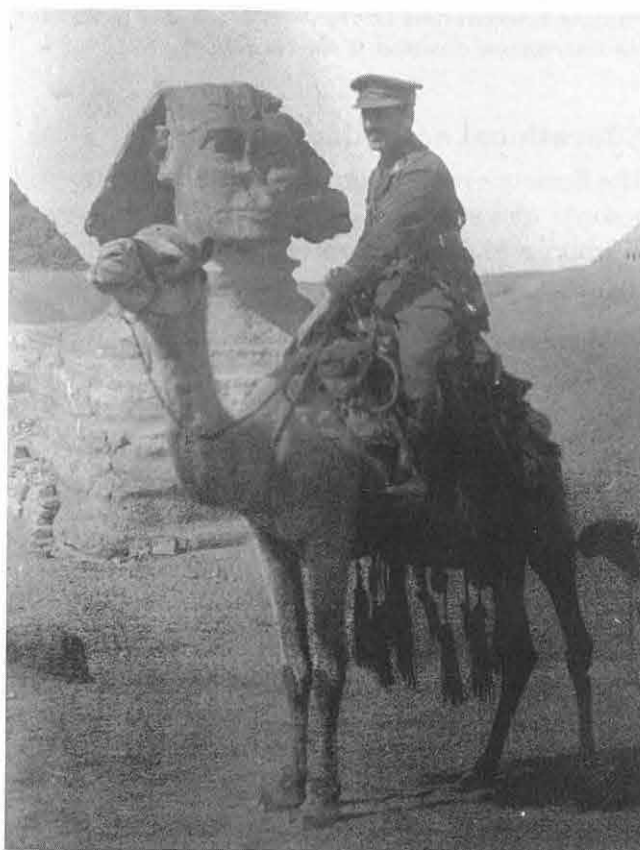
Ottavio Brida and Irma Sabatino in front of the anti-fascist Casa d'Italia in Palmerston Street, Carlton. Irma displays the gift received in 1939.

It is with deep sadness that we announce the death of Ottavio Brida who passed away in January 1999. Ottavio was a great friend and supporter of the Society, to whom he donated a large amount of photographs documenting his life as a migrant in Australia. Our deepest sympathy to his wife Anna and sons Luciano and Rony.

New Material

A visit to Pauline Checchi in Willaura, near Ararat, last September, generated some material of exceptional historical value. Pauline is the granddaughter of Ettore Checchi, who arrived in Australia from Tuscany in 1876. He worked as a civil engineer for many years for the Water Supply Department in Melbourne. With him also came Pietro Baracchi, who reached prominence as Head Astronomer of the Melbourne Observatory, and Carlo Catani who designed the St Kilda foreshore. Ettore maintained, over the years, a close relationship with Baracchi.

Checchi's son, and Pauline's father, Cyril was a well known figure in Willoura. He graduated as a general practitioner at the age of 21 at Melbourne University in 1914 and practised in Willoura for over 65 years. He served in the First World War in Egypt. Cyril died at the age of 104.



Cyril Checchi in Egypt during the First World War

To the collection of paper material deposited with the Society a few years ago, Pauline has now added more photographs, Ettore's chess board and pipes and the 'Student' Microscope which Pietro Baracchi gave to Cyril in 1908, at the beginning of his medical studies.



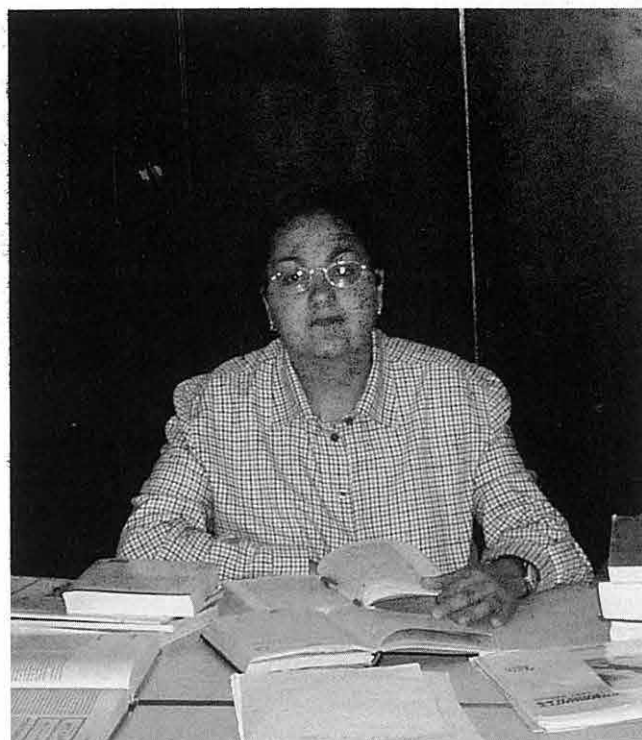
Pauline Checchi and Laura Mecca with the pipes and the microscope donated to the Society.

Educational activities

The Society's reputation as a unique repository of records and archival material on the history of migration and settlement of the Italian community in Australia has truly crossed the oceans.

The number of overseas students and scholars who have accessed the Society's collections for their research studies in the last twelve months has increased dramatically. They have come from France, Italy, Holland, England and the USA. The time spent at the Society varied from one week to six months. Some of them sent a copy of their thesis for our Library. All those who have completed their studies have achieved high marks!

The Society was also very popular with local and interstate tertiary students and researchers. Many students from Melbourne University History Department researched aspects of Italian Carlton for their work. A selection of the best essays will be published in future editions of the *IHS Journal*.



Paola Burgio from the University of Catania, Sicily.



Patricia Dachary from the Université Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux, France spent six months at the Society researching 'The Italian Community in Melbourne since 1945'.



Students and Academic Director Crystal L. Zibas from the School for International Training, College Semester Abroad, Vermont, USA during their visit to the Society in October 1998.



Students from Liceo Scientifico Copernico – Sezione Linguistica, Prato, Italy.

ACCESS POLICY
as from 1st January 1999

ACCESS CONDITIONS

The **Library** of the Italian Historical Society (IHS) can be accessed under consultation and supervision of the Society's staff between 10am and 4pm, Tuesday to Thursday. Books cannot be borrowed.

Material held in IHS Collections includes rare books, thematic vertical files, photographs, manuscripts, newspaper clippings, Italian diplomatic and political archives in microfilm format and other archival resources. Access to the IHS Collections is available to students, bona fide researchers, scholars, historians and the general public upon application and compliance with appropriate access conditions and payment of access fees. Access restrictions apply to the oral history collection. **Appointments are necessary for material to be prepared in advance.**

Requests for the **reproduction and/or publication of material held in IHS collections** are dealt with individually and need to comply with formal application procedures and conditions as set by the Society. Restrictions apply to some material.

SCALE OF FEES:

Access to IHS Library:

Books may not be borrowed and may be consulted under supervision only.

Members of the Society and of the Italian Resource Centre-CO.AS.IT have unlimited use of the IHS Library to conduct research at the Society's premises. IHS membership is acquired through subscription to the *IHS Journal* or CO.AS.IT's magazine *Millennio*.

Non members may access the IHS Library upon payment of a fee, as set out below:

- Regular fee \$4.00 per single visit
- Secondary and tertiary student's concession (with current ID) \$2.00 per single visit

Photocopying of text books is allowed, subject to Copyright Laws at \$0.20 per A4-A3 page (one side). A coin operated photocopier is available.

Viewing of material in IHS Collections

The following fees apply to viewing only of the material held in the collections.

- Regular access fee \$10.00 per single visit
- Secondary and tertiary student's concession (with current ID) \$4.00 per single visit

Photocopying of material in IHS Collections

(Restrictions apply to some material)

The following fees apply :

- Regular fee \$2.00 per page
- Secondary and tertiary student's concession \$1.00 per page

Publication/Reproduction of material in the collections

(also for production of multimedia, such as films, videos, CDROM, etc.). Restrictions apply to some material.

- Publication/reproduction fee \$50.00 per item
- Photograph work 8½ x 10½ B/W \$25.00 per item
- Scanning (images and documents) \$15.00 per item
- Handling fee \$10.00 per order

Consultation Fee

\$35.00 per hour

Research Fee

\$70.00 per hour