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FRONT COVER:

A 'musical affair' of a group of Italian women from Wonthaggi, Victoria, c1928.
This is one of the many photographs recently donated to the Italian Historical Society.

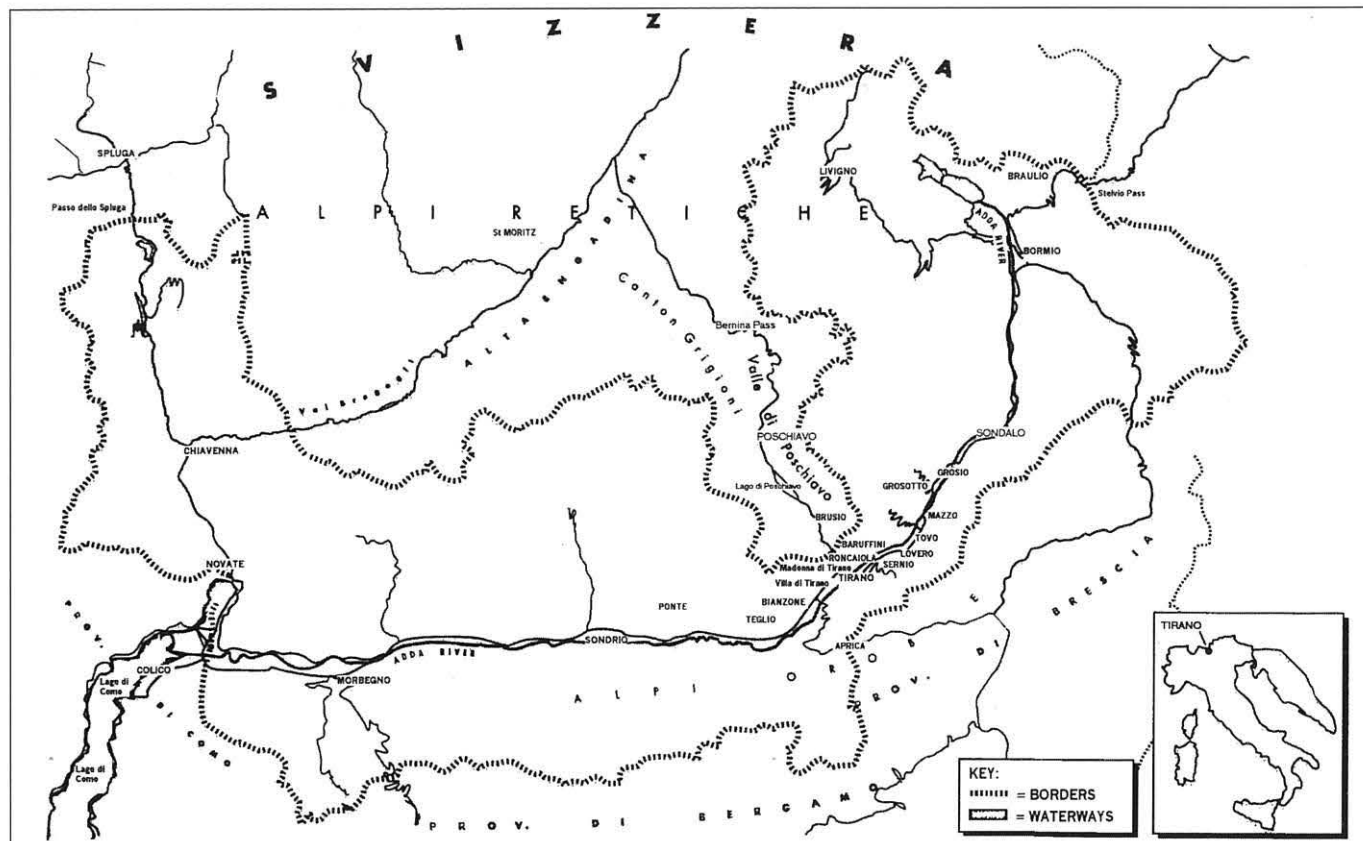
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LISTE DI LEVA — DRAFT LISTS

by Alan Poletti

Alan Poletti is a retired Professor of Nuclear Physics from the University of Auckland. He has visited his ancestors place of birth in Valtellina on numerous occasions during which he has been very kindly treated by the people he has met during his research for records in the local archives. Alan is very interested to hear from anyone whose ancestors have migrated to New Zealand in 1800. He can be contacted by writing to him at 11 Tole Street, Ponsonby, Auckland, New Zealand or by e-mail a.poletti@xtra.co.nz



Sondrio Province, Lombardy Region

Introduction

The forebears of many Australians and New Zealanders of Italian descent can be traced to a small alpine valley (*Valtellina*) in the Province of Sondrio, Lombardy Region. Jacqueline Templeton¹ in her definitive paper has wonderfully sketched the history of Valtellina and the different pressures and opportunities that led to this very substantial migration from such a small region to Australia. The New Zealand connection has still to be addressed.² The map of Sondrio Province, based on that in Templeton's article, shows just how close the area centred on Tirano is to the Swiss border. From its entry into Lake Como, the valley of the Adda runs eastward until it reaches Tegelio, where it takes a north east course until Sondalo.

The terraced vineyards are a feature of the slopes on the northern side of the valley from Novate to above Tirano. The line of the Adda is confined by the Orobian Alps to its south and the higher Retico Alps to its north. Access to the Valtellina is either via one of the mountain passes leading into it, or else via Lake Como. Aprica (1176 m) is the lowest while Stelvio (2758 m) is the highest of the passes on the major roads giving access to the valley.

The migrants were mostly very poor, many were illiterate and of course, almost none knew any English before they landed in the Antipodes. Few of their descendants are now able to understand Italian. Consequently, it is often far from easy to find out much about antecedents from Valtellina

— either of their life before migration or of the first decade of their time in their adopted country. Italian church records can be an extremely valuable source of genealogical information, however access to them, although often readily granted, can be difficult or impossible. They are not public records and are in Latin, often idiosyncratic and at other times virtually indecipherable. Since a majority of the migrants were male, there is, however another source of information, that is the Draft Lists (*Liste di Leva*). These can provide similar information to that in the church records, but contain additional valuable material.

In the Archivio di Stato in Sondrio³, there are great bound volumes — the *Liste di Leva*. These contain a wealth of information about individual men who lived in the Province of Sondrio. The earliest surviving lists are for those born in about 1856. Why do they exist? How were they generated? What information do they contain?

The new Italian State and its search for military security

The organisation of the army of the Kingdom of Sardinia and Piedmont, and in particular, its method of recruitment was similar to that of the Prussians, and carried with it an obligation for military service of ordinary citizens. The system was adopted by the newly independent and unified Italy in 1861.⁴ This was just two years after the expulsion of the Austrians from Lombardy and their withdrawal from Valtellina in July 1859 following the battles of Magenta and Solferino in June of that year.⁵ The system evolved over the next two decades.⁶ However, the essential feature was the placement of recruits who had been classified as able-bodied (*abile*) in three classes:

Class I — these served full time for a period of between 2 and 3 years. At the end of this time, they were posted to the Reserve (*Congedo illimitato*)

Class II — these served for a few months only and were then posted to the reserve.

Class III — although able-bodied, these were exempted from military service for reasons such as, 'brother already serving', 'only son', 'eldest or only son of a widow'.

The mechanics of the *leva*

At the end of January each year, the Mayor (*Sindaco*) of each *comune* was required to provide a list of all young men resident in the *comune*, who had turned 18 in the previous year. This list was sent to the headquarters of the local Military District. For the Comune of Villa di Tirano, this was

the Military District of Tirano which comprised the Comuni of Teglio, Bianzone, Villa di Tirano, Tirano, Sernio and Lovero (Aprica was until 1927, part of the Comune of Teglio). For instance, on 31 January 1883, Ninatti, the Mayor of the Comune of Villa di Tirano, submitted the list of those who had turned 18 in 1882. Of course, these men were born in 1864. They were the 'Class of 1864' and would be expected to appear before the Draft Board (*Consiglio di Leva*) in 1884. The young men were listed alphabetically. Full names were given, the year and place of birth, their occupation, their father's given name and mother's family and given name as well as the father's occupation. Following the submission of the list, it would also be displayed on the notice board of the *comune* for the next two weeks.

The organisation of local government in Italy

In comparison with Australia or New Zealand, Italy has an extra level of local government. There are firstly the twenty Regions, ranging in size from Valle d'Aosta (3,264 km², pop 119,000) to Sicily (25,707 km², pop 5,100,000). Lombardy, the fourth largest Region, at 23,872 km², is the most populous, with 8,900,000 inhabitants. Each region is divided into Provinces (*Province*). In addition to its capital of Milano, Lombardy has ten provinces. Among these are the three alpine provinces of Varese, Como and Sondrio and the three provinces of the Pre-Alps, Lecco, Bergamo and Brescia. The provinces in turn are further subdivided into *comuni*. There are 78 *comuni* in Sondrio Province. A single *comune* will generally contain several population centres, for instance the Comune of Villa di Tirano, has within its borders Villa di Tirano itself on the slopes on the right of the Adda River and on the opposite side of the river, the smaller villages of Stazzona and Motta, as well as even smaller centres. A further subdivision is used by the military authorities — the Military District (*Mandamento*). This consists of several contiguous *comuni*.

Each year, the central government would have decided how many men were required to undergo training from each Military District. Generally this number would be less than the total number who, upon examination, would be found fit to serve. To make the choice fair, before they appeared

before the Draft Board, the position of each man in the Draft List of a given Military District was determined randomly by the drawing of a numbered marble from an urn. This provided the *numero di estrazione*. The number was sometimes drawn by the man himself, sometimes by the Mayor of the *comune* or another official. With this important addition, the Draft List would be verified by the council of the *comune* in mid March and the list (amended if necessary) sent to the Prefect of the Province (in the above case, on 1 April 1883). This new list now included the actual date of birth as well as the number drawn.

The Military District then combined all of the lists from the different *comuni* and ordered it in one list according to the *numero di estrazione*. This became the master list for each Military District. The men would be called before the Draft Board the next year (in the case above, this was 1884) in the order determined by their *numero di estrazione*. Appearance before the Board was in two stages. The first involved a physical examination in which their height and chest circumference were measured and physical characteristics noted (such as hair colour and form, eye colour, skin coloration, state of teeth and any obvious physical defects). The next stage involved a medical examination, appearance before the Board and the final decision. The men were categorised into one of the four following selection categories:

Abile — Men in this category were placed in the three classes described above.

Rivedibile — Men considered as temporarily unfit — to be seen again by the Board the following year.

Riformato — Men who were declared unfit for service.

Renitente — Men who failed to report for the Draft Board interview.

The Draft Lists for Villa di Tirano for the Classes of 1864 – 1869

Signor Fausto Schivardi at the *Casa Comunale* of Villa di Tirano very kindly found for me five of these lists as submitted by the Mayor at the end of January of the year following the 18th birthday of these men. The list for 1866 was not available. I was able to correlate the other lists with those held in the *Archivio di Stato* at Sondrio and reconstruct that for the class of 1866. I have not yet examined the list for 1869 and I have still to examine the entries for three men in the class of 1865. In this sense, the present paper must be considered as provisional. However, the sample

of around 164 names is complete enough to make reasonable statistical inferences.

The analysis of the recruits' heights and chest measurements showed that, on average, they were short and thin. Similar analysis of the notes on the medical examinations revealed a high incidence of goitre.

Of the 164 men for whom I have data, the average height was 161 cm (5 foot 3 inches). Two thirds (111 men) were between 155 and 170 cm. Any men less than 154 cm in height were instantly rejected as being too short. There were 33 in this category. Many in this category would have also been rejected because they were too thin. A chest measurement of 80 cm or less put a man into the *Rivedibile* class. I have data on the chest measurement of only 127 men. Often, these were not given for men who had already been considered to be too short and the hand written entries were often more difficult to decipher than those for height. The average chest measurement was 85 cm (33 ½ inches), while 82 (two thirds of the men) were from 80 cm (31 ½ inches) to 89 cm (35 inches).

Decisions of the Draft Board

Decisions for 174 of the recruits were obtained, that is for essentially all of the classes of 1864 – 1868. This is 10 greater than the number of recorded heights, because heights for those who were *renitente* remained unrecorded since they had not appeared before the Draft Board! The decisions can be classified into the different categories as follows:

174 (100%, total N ^o)	49 (28%, <i>abile</i>)	25 (14%, 1st class – to military units) 2 (1%, 2nd class) 22 (13%, 3rd class)
	41 (24%, <i>rivedibile</i>)	26 (15%, goitre, thought to be curable) 13 (7%, short and/or thin) 2 (1%, unknown reasons)
	74 (43%, <i>riformato</i>)	25 (14%, goitre – bad or 'incurable') 33 (33%, too short) 4 (2%, too thin) 12 (7%, other reasons)
	10 (6%, <i>renitente</i>)	

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this analysis is that only a little over one quarter of the recruits were considered to be fit to serve. By the time exemptions were given, only one half of these actually reported to any military units.

A similar picture emerges from an analysis of the decisions concerning all of the men in the class of

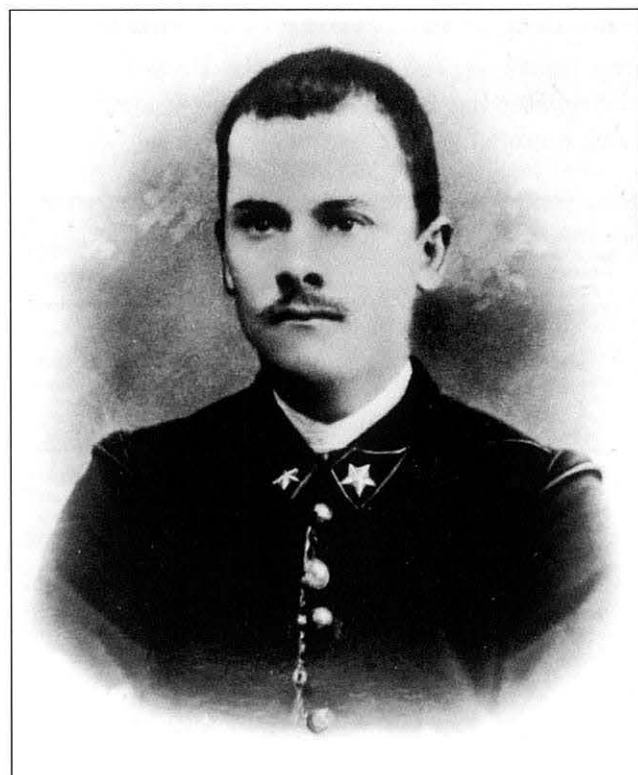
1868 for the Military District of Tirano. This revealed that out of 270 men, only 34 (13%) were finally posted to regiments, a very similar figure to that for the men from Villa di Tirano for the years 1864 – 1868. Of this 34, 10 went to the 5th Alpine Regiment, 14 were distributed among 4 Infantry Regiments, 5 to two artillery Regiments and 2 each to the Border Guards (*Guardia di Finanza*) and the *Carabinieri*. The distribution over nine different regiments, based in different parts of the country, was a direct reflection of the attempt by the new State to create a population whose allegiance was to the nation first, rather than to its component parts.⁷ However the biggest contingent were posted to the 5th Alpine Regiment with its headquarters in Milano. Unlike the rest of the armed forces, the *Alpini* were regionally based and this Regiment drew its men from battalions based in Morbegno and Tirano in Sondrio Province and Edolo and Vestone in the neighbouring Province of Brescia. From 1887 until 1895 there were 7 Alpine Regiments.⁸

The scourges of goitre and cretinism

Fifty-three of the recruits were diagnosed as suffering from goitre (two who were rejected as being too short were also diagnosed as suffering from the condition). At the time, it was thought of as a disease largely engendered by the very poor living standards of the valley. For example, here is a comment made in 1890 concerning Roncaiola.⁹ This hamlet or *frazione* of Tirano is high above the city on the steep slopes at the foot of Monte Masucchio on the right bank of the Adda. It is perhaps 5 kilometres from Villa di Tirano.

Roncaiola is composed of an irregular and filthy heap of hovels, more adapted to housing animals than people. Despite the exceptional healthiness of its position and the strong fibre of the mountain people who live there, many suffer from goitre or cretinism because of the unhealthy ground.

That the incidence of cretinism observed in Valtellina (1 in 100 of the population) was not confined to the valley, but was similar to the incidence in other alpine valleys was noted in 1858¹⁰ by an unknown author writing in the *Almanacco Valtellinese*, published in Milan. This same author also believed that cretinism and goitre had a common cause and even suggested that the experimental addition of iodine to salt should be tried in the valley. At about the same time, Splendiano Morselli¹¹ noted the prevalence of goitre and cretinism in the lower Valtellina,



Giovanni Poletti in 1890 in the uniform of the 32nd Infantry Regiment. The stars on the collar are the insignia of the Italian Infantry.

especially in the towns on the slopes of the Orobian Alps on the south side of the Adda. He also suggested that the cause could have been an iodine deficiency. No one took any notice of either author. In 1881-82, an enquiry by the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce confirmed the incidence of cretinism in the Province of Sondrio as 1% of the population compared to 0.02% for the Lombardy Region as a whole. The comparable figures for the incidence of Goitre were 9% and 3 % respectively. Patriarca¹² notes that for conscripts born between 1843 and 1856, 26% of the *reformati* had goitre, while for those born in the period 1876 to 1883, the figure was 11%. From the figures for the conscripts from Villa di Tirano (born 1864 – 1868), the comparable figure is $25/74 = 34\%$, or even higher.

The causal relationship between iodine deficiency and goitre and cretinism was finally demonstrated by studies in the United States of America in 1917. The first systematic attempt to overcome the problem in Valtellina was made by Giuseppe Muggia, Director of the Psychiatric Hospital in Sondrio in 1922-23. The success of this experiment led to the distribution of iodized salt in all of the Province from April 1925. There were, however, some who were opposed to this. Their complaint was that, if cured of goitre, their sons

An example of an entry in a *Lista di Leva* — from the Class of 1868 for Giovanni Poletti

The figure, reproduced from the Draft List for the Class of 1868, illustrates the information recorded in the master list for Giovanni Poletti. Details concerning three, or sometimes four, men were recorded on each double opening in the Draft List.

1° - Numero assegnato all'iscritto e al collocamento in capo di lista o collocato in serie nella estrazione.	COGNOME E NOME DELL'INSCRITTO	PADRE E MADRE DELL'INSCRITTO Indicandone l'esistenza o la morte 1° - Nome del padre. 2° - Cognome o nome della madre.	COMUNE del DOMICILIO LEGALE dello INSCRITTO	NASCITA DELL'INSCRITTO		RESIDENZA PERSONALE dello iscritto — 1° - Comune. 2° - Mandamento. 3° - Circondario.	CONDIZIONE, PROFESSIONE, ARTE O MESTIERE e grado d'istruzione dello INSCRITTO	INDICAZIONI PER GLI INSCRITTI delle classi anteriori 1° - Della loro classe. 2° - Del motivo del rinvio alla loro attuale... 3° - Del motivo al collocamento in capo di lista o dell'ammessione alla estrazione.	DECISIONE! D'INABILITÀ e motivo della medesima
				DATA 1° - Giorno. 2° - Mese. 3° - Anno.	LUOGO 1° - Comune. 2° - Mandamento. 3° - Circondario.				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1° 11/4	Polletti Giovanni	1° su Bortola	Villar	1° 11/4	1° Villar	1° Agrigola	1°		
2° 1/2		2° su Bongioni Giovanna		2° 1/2	2° Villar	2° Leggere, 1° Scrittore, 2°	2°		
3° 1/8				3° 1/8	3° Londrina	3°	3°		

Explanation

- 1 Number drawn: 117, drawn personally.

- 2 Name: Poletti, Giovanni

Son of late Bortolo and the late Giovanna Bongioni [His father had died in 1868, his mother in 1872]

- 4 Place of legal domicile: Villa ['di Tirano' was often omitted]

- 5&6 Date and place of birth: 17 February 1868, Villa [di] Tirano, Sondrio.

- 7 Where living: Comune of Villa [di] Tirano; Military District of Tirano, Province of Sondrio.

- 8 Occupation: 'farmer', able to read and write.

- 9&10 Not filled in.

might be classed as *abile* and have to serve in the army.¹³ Further analysis showed that the soils derived from the rock of the entire alpine arc were indeed deficient in iodine. This deficiency was even more marked for the Orobico Alps. By 1934, Muggia's successor¹⁴ was able to affirm that 'goitre in Valtellina has become the exception and occurs only in the most poverty stricken or the very old'. However goitre has not disappeared in Italy or any of the industrialized countries.¹⁵

Why were the recruits such small men?

The answer lies in the excessive dependence of the *Valtellinese* economy on one product — wine. For centuries visitors have marvelled at the extensive terraced vineyards on the south facing

slopes of the Valtellina. The labour involved in building and maintaining these is immense. The system, dating from feudal times, of leasing land in perpetuity to a family (*livello*) encouraged this development because the family leasing the land were able to gain directly from their toil. However, it meant that over time, leasehold parcels became more and more fragmented. With increasing population, the average size of these parcels became tiny. By 1850, their average size was about 200 square metres. Although families owned more than one parcel, the average landholding per family was only about 0.4 hectares¹⁶ (about 1 acre, or 4000 square metres). At this time, the leaseholders, through their own hard work, may have just been able to compete

Commissionario di leva		OPERAZIONI DEL CONSIGLIO DI LEVA				SITUAZIONE DELLO INSERITO		SERIE
CONTRASSEGNI PERSONALI		ESAME DEFINITIVO		ARRUOLAMENTO				
		Numero d'ordine delle decisioni del registro sommario	DECISIONI di abilità od inabilità al servizio militare; di ammissione alla surrogazione di fratello; di dichiarazione di renitente; di rinvio ad altre sedute o ad altra leva. — Altre decisioni.	DATA	ASCRIZIONE alla 1 ^a od alla 2 ^a categoria ASSEGNAZIONE alla 3 ^a categoria			NUMERICA
		- 13	14	1 ^a - Giorno. 2 ^a - Mese. 3 ^a - ANN.	15 16	1 ^a - Data della partenza per il distretto militare. 2 ^a - Corpo cui fu destinato e numero della matricola. 3 ^a - Se riformato al distretto o al Corpo per infermità preesistenti all'arruolamento.		per gli inseriti di tutto il circondario
		- 11	12			17		18
1 ^a - Rimandati al Consiglio e loro motivi. 2 ^a - Decisioni sottoposte alla conferma del Consiglio in esecuzione dell'art. 56 della legge sul reclutamento.	Statura metri 1, <i>1.61</i>	<i>1076</i>	<i>abile</i>	1 ^a <i>19</i>	1 ^a <i>1^a</i>	1 ^a <i>9 Nov. 1888</i>		
	Capelli { colore <i>cast.</i> forma <i>ond.</i>				<i>2^a Sing.</i>	<i>2^a 32^a Reg. fant. 4344</i>		
	Occhi <i>cast.</i>							
	Colorito <i>bueno</i>							
	Dentatura <i>guasta</i>							
	Segni particolari				3 ^a <i>1888</i>	3 ^a		
	Periferia toracica <i>0.84</i>							

11 Consig[lio] = recommended that he appears before the Draft Board.

12 Personal characteristics: height 1.61 m; hair chestnut and wavy; eyes chestnut; skin brown; teeth decaying; distinguishing features none; chest 0.84 m.

13 Reference No. for the Draft Board decision: 1076.

14 Decision of the Draft Board: able bodied (*abile*).

15 Enrolment date: 19 June 1888.

16 Assignment to class: 1st class.

17 Date of posting to regiment: 9 November 1888, 32nd Infantry Regiment No. 4344.

with wine that was more easily produced on the gentler land of the Lombardy plains or the Veneto when in 1851, they were struck down by powdery mildew, *Oidium Tuckeri*. In 1838, Sondrio Province had produced 10,600,000 litres of wine. In 1852, it was only 400,000 hectolitres. By 1857, production had dropped further to 330,000 hectolitres.¹⁷ For '14 pitiless years' (1850 – 1863), production completely failed and the Valtellina was almost liquidated.¹⁸ If this were not enough, a succession of unjust taxes were levied on the landholdings of Sondrio Province. These culminated in a new census of 1854, which resulted in a sudden doubling of taxes on land and property. In 1859, Luigi Torell¹⁹ led a commission to study the conditions in Sondrio Province. It found *inter alia*

that real income was less than the taxes imposed and wondered how the people had survived at all.²⁰ Perhaps the last comment on this sad chapter should come from a talk given by Diego Zoia in 1997²¹: 'The 1800s were pretty brutal years for the poor'. It is little wonder that the recruits were small men.

Men in the lists for 1864 – 1869 who migrated to Australia or New Zealand.

A recruit who was declared to be *renitente* could clearly have already migrated. This is certainly the case for three of them: Pietro Bassi, Pietro Pasetti and Giovanni Andrea Poletti.

The first line of each entry gives information from the *liste di leva*, while the second comes

mostly from naturalisation records or indices. The date and place of arrival is given as well as the name of the ship.

Bassi, Pietro, b. 14/12/1868, *renitente*.

Bassi, Pietro, b. 14/12/1869, arr. Melbourne 22/4/1888 on the *Hohenzollern*

Note that he could remember the day and month of his birthday, but got the year wrong when he applied for naturalisation. This is not so uncommon. In the passenger list, the name was A. Bassi, age 22. The passport he used was probably that of his older brother Giacomo Antonio, b. 30/4/1864, who was classified as *rimformato* and therefore not liable for military service.

Pasetti, Pietro, b. 1/1/1864, *renitente*.

From descendants: he arrived at the Atherton Tableland, North Queensland, in 1885, returned home to marry Anna Morelli and in 1888 they came back to Queensland.

Poletti, Giovanni Andrea, b. 28/9/1868, *renitente*.

Poletti, John, b. 1868/69, arr. Melbourne 16/3/1888 on the *Salier*.

He was recorded on the passenger list as Ant. Poletti. That is, under his older brother's name Giovanni Antonio Poletti! The next name in the passenger list was Poletti Pietro — unfortunately, passenger's ages were not given. I have so far been unable to place this second man.

Clearly, Pietro Bassi and Giovanni Andrea Poletti had already left Italy before they were due to be called before the Draft Board. Giovanni Andrea Poletti used his elder brother's name, Giovanni Antonio Poletti, who was born 25/1/1864 and had been classified as *rimformato* because of goitre. Again, a passport in the name of his older brother was probably used. Photographs were not a feature of passports in 1888. In Australia, he subsequently used the name of John.

It is also likely that a further man did not travel on his own passport:

Poletti, Giacomo, b. 25/10/ 1864, *abile*.

Poletti, Giacomo, b. 25/10/1864, arr. in Sydney 9/8/1887 on board the *Orient*, ex Naples.

The name and date of arrival of the ship are from his Naturalisation application, however, a thorough search of the passenger list failed to find him. Whose name did he travel under?

My own grandfather has presented me with a considerable problem:

Poletti, Giovanni, b. 17/2/1868, *abile*.

Poletti, John, (naturalised in New Zealand) arr. Auckland ex Melbourne 1/3/1893 on board the *Rotomahana*.

Less detail was required in naturalisation applications by the New Zealand authorities than was required by their Australian counterparts. I have so far been unable to find his name on any passenger list for a boat arriving in Melbourne, although it is highly likely that he travelled first to Melbourne and worked for perhaps two years at Bealiba, Victoria, before arriving in New Zealand. Family oral history also has it that he came out on his older brother's passport. We will probably never know. Although we have the date on which he was posted to the reserve (1 August 1891), this is not as useful as it might appear, since there is no guarantee that he was in Villa di Tirano at that time.

Public History — a conclusion.

There is a growing interest in the history of ordinary people and it has even been given a name — public history. A public historian does not have an easy life. There are no erudite biographies, very few letters, the subjects scarcely figure in parliamentary debates or the reports of the metropolitan newspapers. The problem is compounded by migration from one country to another with a different language and different laws and traditions. The difficulties encountered by these migrants were immense. They tended to remain invisible in the records of their adopted country for a decade after their first arrival. The challenge presented to their descendants in their attempts to understand the pressures that lead to their migration are only a little less daunting. Language is a terrible barrier. Sometimes, however, the ordinary man's progress is registered. For instance, more or less happenstance, records have survived concerning goldminers' rights in the (West Coast Gold fields, New Zealand) Warden's Court Records from 1866 – 1876. One entry in that record concerns a certain J Varney Cossie. An understanding of the flux of migrants from the Valtellina to Australia in the 1850s and 1860s and subsequent further migration to the gold-fields of New Zealand allows us to identify this man with Giovanni Cossi born c1830 in Sondalo, Sondrio Province, Italy. Other information puts him in Daylesford, Victoria in 1866. He probably returned to Italy for a short time and returned to New Zealand via Melbourne, because Giovanni Cossi, age 46, was a passenger on the *Lusitania* to Melbourne in 1877. Another piece of information

is given by his brush with officialdom when he was naturalised in New Zealand in 1896. By piecing together these scraps of information, it becomes possible to understand the broader picture and to illuminate that incredible movement of the ordinary people from one side of the globe to the other — the great migrations from Europe to the New Worlds over 100 years ago.

The *Liste di Leva* will play a major role in this 'piecing together'. Because Italy felt threatened by its more powerful neighbours to its north and by internal disorder, a system was set up which produced a record of every man in the nation in the years immediately following their 18th birthday. As the present little paper shows, these lists allow a statistical analysis of their health and general well being. However, they also give very specific information concerning family connections and birth dates of individuals. Such information is the very basis of the process of 'piecing together the scraps' upon which a broader understanding can be built.

Prospect

Of course, I would like to say that I propose to extend this work to cover the years from 1856 to, say 1900 but I cannot. I must be satisfied with a more modest aim: to extend the information that I have obtained to cover the years hopefully to include the classes of 1860 to 1870. At present, I have an incomplete data file ordered alphabetically of all the recruits from Villa for the classes of 1864 - 1869. I hope to at least complete this work in the near future. There is already evidence that a surprising fraction of these men migrated to Australia or New Zealand. It is harder to find information concerning the time they spent in these countries. As a group, did they tend to remain in Australasia as did their contemporary migrants from the British Isles or did they tend to return 'home'? There is still much to find out.

Thanks

I know that my persistence eventually upset him, but above all others I owe a great debt to Don Remigio, the Archpriest of Villa di Tirano. One very hot July day three years ago, he kindly gave me and my wife Marcia Stenson (she is the real historian) access to the church archives. I was hooked. Fausto Schivardi at the Casa Comunale, Villa, has helped us a great deal. Francesco Palazzi Trevelli of the Archivio di Stato, Sondrio, has been extremely understanding and tolerant. Diego Zoia, Assessor of the Comune of Tirano provided me with some very useful

information and an amazing inventory of Archival Data for Sondrio Province. Bruno Ciapponi Landi of the Museo Etnografico Tiranese has been most helpful and introduced me to Giacomo Ganza. To both of them my thanks.

Notes

- ¹ Jacqueline Templeton, 'The Swiss connection: the origins of the Valtellina-Australia migrations', in *Australian Historical Studies*, April 1995, p 393.
- ² The presence of men from Valtellina in New Zealand as early as the early 1860s has so far been overlooked.
- ³ Largo Mallera Cadorna, Sondrio 23100, Italy.
- ⁴ See, for instance, the article: 'Reclutamento' in *Enciclopedia Italiana*, Treccani, 1929.
- ⁵ D. Benetti & M. Guidetti, *Storia di Valtellina e Valchiavenna*, 2nd ed, Jaca Book, Milano, 1999.
- ⁶ John Gooch, *Army, State and Society in Italy, 1870 - 1915*, Macmillan, 1989.
- ⁷ see Gooch, op cit. This system meant that in the event of war, mobilisation would be much slower. The Chief of Staff, Cosenz, facing a possible French attack was greatly concerned about this in 1888.
- ⁸ *Enciclopedia Italiana*, Treccani, 1929.
- ⁹ Quoted by Massimo Mandelli & Diego Zoia in *La Carga*, p. 83, L'officina del libro, Sondrio, 1998 officina@novanet.it
- ¹⁰ Pierluigi Patriarca, *Storia della medicina e della sanità in Valtellina*, Società Storia Valtellinese, 1998.
- ¹¹ Splendiano Morselli, *Storia della Valtellina e del corso dell'Adda*, a facsimile reproduction (by Atesa Editrice, Bologna, 1998) from *Grande Illustrazione del Lombardo - Veneto*, ed. Cesare Cantù, originally published in Milano 1858 - 1862.
- ¹² Mandelli & Zoia, op. cit., p. 160.
- ¹³ *ibid*, p. 163
- ¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 164.
- ¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 165, footnote
- ¹⁶ see Franco Catalano, *Condizioni economiche e struttura sociale dal 1800 al 1859, in Mezzo secolo di vita politica in Valtellina e Val Chiavenna (1859 - 1913)*, Libreria della Briotta, Bissoni, Sondrio, 1968.
- ¹⁷ Stefano Jacini, *Condizioni economiche Provincia di Sondrio*, Stab. Civelli, Milano e Verona, 1858, p. 23.
- ¹⁸ Bartolomeo Besta, quoted by Templeton, op. cit.
- ¹⁹ Luigi Torelli, born in Villa di Tirano in 1810, participated in the revolt against the Austrians in Milano in 1848 and in 1859 and upon independence, became governor of Valtellina. In that year he advocated the use of sulphur to combat powdery mildew, but had to battle those who considered the disease to be a divine punishment. See *Notiziario, Banca Popolare di Sondrio*, April 1997, p. 205. He died in 1887 and Villa di Tirano's main piazza is named for him.
- ²⁰ I rely heavily on the treatment of this period by Templeton, op. cit.
- ²¹ Diego Zoia, *Cenni sulla storia politica, sociale ed economica di Villa di Tirano e del suo circondario*, Biblioteca Comunale, Villa di Tirano, 1997.

CONSTRUCTING THE ITALIAN CRIMINAL: THE PRESS AND THE PYJAMA GIRL MURDER CASE

by Luisa Spitale

This article is a research essay submitted in December 2000 by the author for the Historical Theory and Research component of her Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree at the University of Melbourne.

The Pyjama Girl murder case was an event that combined elements of intrigue, suspicion and drama. It became front-page news the instant the charred and battered body of a young woman was discovered near Albury in September of 1934. The case remains infamous and is still considered a disturbing chapter in history by commentators who refer to it as 'a crime that shocked Australia'.¹ The most shocking aspect was that the crime was committed by the woman's husband and that he was able to hide the fact for ten years. Antonio Agostini, an Italian migrant from the province of Treviso (Veneto) in Australia since 1927, was the man at the centre

of the murder case. His trial was closely followed by the Melbourne press. Throughout the coverage of the trial, Agostini was portrayed in particular ways and repeatedly misrepresented. However this does not negate the fact that he was a criminal. I will argue in this essay that Agostini was represented not just as a criminal, but as an *Italian* criminal. The journalists who reported the crime (and subsequent commentators on the case) invested stereotypes culturally-specific generalisations and prejudice into the 'objective' accounts, essentially constructing a particular criminal identity around Agostini and the Italian community.



Linda Platt Agostini, Sydney, 1931.



Antonio Agostini, Sydney, 1928.

The case itself still arouses sensationalism and an element of construction. Geoffrey Blainey included it in an article which combined memorable or significant events in our nation's past. The Pyjama Girl slotted neatly into the 1930s alongside the sporting achievements of Opperman, the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the introduction of the foreign cane toads into Queensland.² Instead of evoking a sense of pride or nationalism, the Pyjama Girl murder was portrayed as a startling shock, an event which gripped the interest of a public so scandalised by the crime (at the hands of an Italian migrant). The loss of innocence that authors have tried to publicise was definitely overstated: Australia was recovering from the Depression and the Second World War was in full swing by the time Agostini was brought to trial in June 1944. This was four months after his release from three and half years of internment as an 'enemy alien'. Some perspective or a better understanding of context is required, instead of authors' tendencies to inappropriately overemphasise the case as 'one of the most widely publicised mysteries in Australian criminal history'.³

The story was first publicised in Melbourne on Monday 3 September 1934 with the discovery of a young woman's battered body dumped in a culvert near Albury. *The Sun* featured a front-page spread of eight crime scene photos and included a lengthy description of the woman including the 'expensive canary-coloured Canton crepe pyjamas' that were supposed to assist in identification. The body was preserved in formalin and kept at Sydney University for ten years, during which thousands of people viewed the corpse. Sharpe

made the extraordinary claim that 'viewing the body in the bath almost became the 'in thing' to do in Sydney in the mid-thirties',⁵ indicating the extent to which the era, as well as the case, have been misrepresented. For ten years the woman with head injuries and a gun shot wound lay unidentified, until a police sergeant identified her as Linda Platt, the wife of Agostini, in March of 1944.⁶

At the trial it was revealed that Linda was shot in a struggle at their Melbourne residence in Swanston Street, Carlton (it was not clear whether this was the fatal injury or the severe head wounds she also sustained). Agostini claimed, as did other witnesses, that Linda had a drinking problem which had worsened over their marriage. She was volatile, had tried to commit suicide and left him repeatedly for up to five days at a time without warning.⁷ The day Linda died, Agostini had woken to find a pistol pressed in his face, with his wife threatening his life. When the gun was fired in the struggle Agostini panicked, took his wife and drove away. He dumped the body near Albury, doused it with petrol and set it alight. He then returned to Melbourne. Rain put out the flames and Linda's body was found by a farmer on 1 September 1934. Agostini continued to work in Melbourne and in Sydney, living his life normally for ten years until he was coerced into making a statement to the NSW police after Linda was identified in 1944.⁸ He was convicted, not with murder, but with manslaughter and sentenced to six years jail.

The verdict was reached after a seven day trial closely documented by Melbourne newspapers such as *The Age* and to a greater extent by *The Sun* and *The Herald*. Each day, Agostini's name was cited under a bold headline and the reader was offered brief details of the case: 'Antonio Agostini, 41, Italian waiter, was charged with having murdered his wife'.⁹ This profession was mentioned alongside his name in each article, giving a decidedly false impression. Agostini had graduated in Italy as a wool and textile engineer. Before his emigration he worked in Milan as a journalist for the trade magazine *I.C.V.O.* Soon after his arrival in Australia he worked for some time as a waiter, but his profession was in journalism working for an Italo-Australian publication. The position he held was one of authority and he was respected as 'one of the youngest and most able collaborators of the *Il Giornale Italiano* ... an active and enterprising



I.D. card of Antonio Agostini 'agent and travelling correspondent' of trade magazine *I.C.V.O.* *Indicatore Compra-Vendite ed Occasioni*, 1925.



Agostini's family members in Italy, 1930s.

person, his work has been extremely precious and full of excellent results'. The significance of such an 'oversight' was that the newspaper portrayed Agostini as an unskilled, unprofessional, uneducated migrant working in a menial job instead of the career he had pursued successfully in Melbourne. Blainey went one step further in marginalising Agostini by stating 'in those days a waiter was an unusual occupation, for most people did not sit down to a meal in a restaurant even once in the course of the year'.¹¹ Actually, *Romano's* (where Agostini worked) was a busy restaurant that had been described as 'a favourite haunt of Sydney's 'Café Society' of the 1930s'.¹² It was a popular hangout for even the NSW police commissioner, various detectives and police officers with whom Agostini had had very close contact.

While Agostini's professional past was an omission from the coverage, some of the inclusions also left a notable impression. He was made to appear ignorant not only because of his 'strange' occupation, but also his 'halting English'¹³ when giving testimony. However, Agostini appeared eloquent from the court reporting some newspapers presented. He had no trouble making a statement to the police and the suggestion from the comment again served to make the man seem somewhat deficient and more importantly, a foreigner. His demeanour was examined in the press quite carefully, but sometimes quite contrastingly. For instance, the prosecution's case was printed in full so that when Agostini described his wife's maddening fits, the prosecution urged 'by 'so maddening' did you not mean maddening to yourself?'¹⁴ He was trying to elicit an angry, enraged response to justify that Agostini killed his wife out of blind anger. The account exploited the idea of the volatile, emotional and capricious Italian man, thus forcing a preconceived social and psychological identity

on Agostini on the basis of his nationality. As Stratton articulated, 'nationality was seen in concrete terms: the swarthy moustached Italian 'type' was given a reputation for shiftiness and passion'.¹⁵ In stark contrast, his passivity and lack of emotion was also reported on by the press: 'Agostini showed no emotion when the verdict was announced'.¹⁶ Therefore, we can assume that by not showing emotion, Agostini was represented as a sly and callous murderer. On the other hand, by being innately emotional and passionate, he was acting consistently with his national 'type': the angry Italian male.

The pieces of court proceedings that journalists chose to print revealed ulterior motives, namely to discredit Agostini. Consistent with the notion of isolating national 'types', the press insinuated that he had links in organised crime syndicates (some overtly accused him) undoubtedly because he was an Italian. This was demonstrated by the accounts of Agostini's encounters with NSW Police Commissioner Mr Mackay. He coerced Agostini into making a statement by saying: 'You can trust me. I give you my word as a Scotsman. You know that I am friendly with your friends'.¹⁷ The implication was protection and the knowledge of a secret connection between Agostini and some unmentionable 'friends'. Bold accusations against Agostini were also printed. 'Have you not been threatened by gentlemen known as the *Camorra*? Had you no connection with these people up to then?'¹⁸ Agostini was made to defend his reputation due to the irresponsible claims based on general prejudices. The account tried to present him as a suspicious figure and linked him to behaviours allegedly associated with Italian migrants. As an Italian in the press, Agostini the individual, represented a group. As Stratton claimed 'an ethnic group could be known by its spectacular representation'.¹⁹ The organised crime notion was a marker of cultural difference, and this case demonstrated how *any* form of Italian criminality could be attributed to the old Mafia stereotype (a decidedly 'un-Australian' activity).

The trial of Agostini, and the subsequent press coverage, did not deal exclusively with the offender. The Italian community and Agostini's involvement with it were also investigated. The link to organised crime was already discussed, but newspaper accounts also tried to establish whether Agostini was 'keen in going to the Italian Club'²⁰ and mentioned that at least one man,

MANSLAUGHTER VERDICT ON AGOSTINI

ANTONIO AGOSTINI, 41, Italian waiter, was remanded for sentence by Mr. Justice Lowe in the Criminal Court yesterday after a jury had found him guilty of the manslaughter of his wife, Linda Agostini.

The body of Mrs. Agostini, identified as the Pyjama Girl, was found under a culvert on the Albury-Howlong road on September 1, 1934.

The jury, which retired for nearly two hours, found Agostini not guilty on the charge of murder.

The crowd which filled the public galleries during the trial waited in draughty passages until 5.30 to hear the verdict.

Agostini showed no signs of emotion as the verdict was announced. On the question of sentence, Mr.

Pazio (counsel for Agostini) referred to the fact that Agostini was some years in an internment camp and to his good character.

Manslaughter carries a maximum penalty of 15 years' imprisonment.

During the trial Agostini may not be disclosed until after the City Coroner (Mr. Tingate) has given the order for burial.

Burial Arrangements

ARRANGEMENTS which have been made for the burial of the remains of Mrs. Agostini may not be disclosed until after the City Coroner (Mr. Tingate) has given the order for burial.

Apart from the request by Agostini to bury his wife, it is known that a friend of the dead woman has made provision for the interment, and also that certain instructions have been received from her mother in England.

Possibly the mother's wishes may fit in with the arrangements made by the friend.

The body is not now in the same state of preservation as when brought to Melbourne in a formalin bath after being preserved for 10 years.

Addresses To Jury—Page 5

Castellano, knew of the murder and dissuaded Agostini from going to the police.²¹ The implication was that Italians grouped together, were a cause for suspicion and that Castellano was perhaps another criminally-minded Italian who 'protected' his friends. Just as Agostini's criminal identity was constructed for him, the Italian community was implicated in the crime and portrayed as a suspicious ethnic group which congregated in clubs and protected their own. The most glaring example of such old commentary was written by Krauth in 1993: 'I have been told that influential Italians offered to pay Agostini's fare back to Italy ... to avoid a scandal that would reflect badly on his countrymen ... the crime was held over his head as a 'threat'.²² The insulting coverage in the 1940s facilitated the rise of such damaging statements. Jupp spoke of cases such as this which 'give official and public sanction to general prejudices based on a tiny grain of truth.'²³ More importantly, the Italian community became a suspected minority. Again, the assumption in the press was that an entire community could be judged on the merits (or lack thereof) of one person.

The effect of such constructs, the stylised representations of Agostini and the Italian community, was that the case was embedded with the qualities of a narrative. The myths surrounding Agostini translated well into a work of fiction,

and consequently, the Pyjama Girl case was the subject of two films and at least two novels.²⁴ Agostini had a series of identities: the waiter (ignorant migrant), emotionless man (the cold and callous murderer), passionate (the aggressive Italian) and criminal (the mobster). The constructs were by no means isolated to this case or these circumstances, as Hollingsworth asserted 'mass media are prone to sensationalism and parochialism'.²⁵ Significantly, the newspaper accounts in this case were brief and dealt with generalities, but they had the reputation of delivering the 'facts' as though they were devoid of mediation or bias. The coverage of Agostini's trial proved that the investment of stereotypes led to gross misrepresentation and the construction of the Italian criminal type as well as criminalising an entire ethnic community.

In conclusion, the Pyjama Girl murder was a tragic case and the coverage in the Melbourne press at the time communicated this effectively. Unfortunately, the publicity that Agostini received was effective for different reasons. By selecting, editing and pruning the facts of the story, journalists constructed a criminal identity around Antonio Agostini, as well as implicating the entire Italian community. The stereotypes and culturally-specific generalisations utilised in the 1940s were shown to be enduring as recent commentary on the case exhibited similar tendencies toward misrepresentation and marginalisation. The irresponsibility of the press lay in its capacity to construct a particular image of Agostini not only as a criminal, but as an Italian criminal who engaged in activities that were foreign and distasteful to upstanding Australians.

Notes

¹ See G. Blainey, *The Age*, 23 October 1999, p.6. A. Sharpe, *Crime and Punishment: 50 Crimes That Shocked Australia* (Crows Nest: Kingsclear Books) 1997, p.213. N. Crauth, 'The Pyjama Girl Murder Case' in S. Coupe & J. Ogden (eds.) *Case Reopened*, Sydney, 1993. p.1.

² G. Blainey, *ibid*.

³ N. Krauth, *op. cit.* p.217

⁴ *The Sun*, 3 September 1934, p.1.

⁵ A. Sharpe, *Infamous Australian Crimes* (Milton's Point Brolga Books) 1982, p.110.

⁶ *The Herald*, 21 June 1944, p.3.

⁷ *The Herald*, 27 June 1944, p.3.

⁸ *The Sun*, 24 June 1944, p.5.

⁹ *The Sun*, 24 June 1944, p.3

- ¹⁰ 'Vade Mecum degli Italiani in Australia', *Il Giornale Italiano* (illustrated annual of *The Italian Journal*) Melbourne 28 October 1937, p.29. Author's own translation of original text which reads: 'è uno dei più giovani e più abili collaboratori del *Giornale Italiano* ... persona attiva ad intraprendente — la sua opera è stata preziosissima e ricca di ottimi risultati'.
- ¹¹ G. Blainey, op. cit.
- ¹² A. Sharpe, op. cit.
- ¹³ *The Herald*, 27 June 1944, p.3.
- ¹⁴ *The Sun*, 28 June 1944, p.5.
- ¹⁵ J. Stratton, *Race Daze: Australia in Identity Crisis*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1998, p.125.
- ¹⁶ *The Sun*, 29 June 1944, p.3.
- ¹⁷ *The Herald*, 27 June 1944, p.3.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Stratton, op. cit., p.152.
- ²⁰ *The Herald*, 27 June 1944, p.3.
- ²¹ *The Sun*, 28 June, 1944, p.5.
- ²² Krauth, 'The Pyjama Girl', p.220.
- ²³ J. Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures*, Cheshire-Landsdowne, Melbourne, 1966, p.112.
- ²⁴ P. Bosi (ed.) 'Il Mistero della ragazza in pigiama', in *Australia: ieri oggi domani*, Foreign Language Publications, Sydney, 1985, p.185.
- ²⁵ D. Hollingsworth, *Race and Racism in Australia*, Social Science Press, Sydney, 1998, p.281.

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- 'Agostini guilty: manslaughter verdict' *The Age*, 29 June 1944, p.3.
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LENA SANTOSPIRITO — THE PERSON

by Tony Santospirito

In 1992 the Italian Historical Society acquired the extensive papers of Mrs Lena Santospirito, a woman famed within the Italian community of Melbourne for her outstanding contribution to the welfare of her compatriots during the period 1940 to 1970. Known as the Santospirito Collection, it is now the subject of a PhD history thesis by Melbourne University student Cate Elkner. This article, written by her son Tony Santospirito, gives a revealing account of her personal attributes as well as outlining many of the aspects of the welfare work to which she devoted her life. Tony, a retired lawyer, has volunteered endless hours of his time to the Italian Historical Society cataloguing and numbering the papers.

To all outward signs Lena was, in the words of Sir James Gobbo, an extraordinary person, a living saint, who responded to the needs of thousands of persons in the course of her work in the Italian community of Melbourne.¹ Others have praised her generosity and dedication to this work in similar terms. In June 1950 news of her work spread to Italy through an article by a Mr Gino De Sanctis in which he styled her '*la mamma degli Italiani*'. This article was published in newspapers in Rome, Genoa and Trieste and described Australia as a land of unlimited work opportunities. The article brought forth a series of letters addressed to Lena under the title De Sanctis had given her. The envelopes for these letters were mostly addressed to her at 'Melbourne' but someone at the Post Office knew enough about her to endorse them 'Try 79 Bouverie Street Carlton'.²

Florence Hagelthorn quoted De Sanctis' in her own laudatory article on Lena in the *Advocate*, 28 September 1967, which was in turn referred to

by my sister, Maria Triaca in her article on Lena.³ My sister's article relates that Lena and her older sister Mary assisted Fr De Francesco with welfare work during the time he was Chaplain to the Italian community from 1921 until his return to Italy in 1934. It is not exactly clear what sort of work this involved. There is also amongst her papers a page of 'notes' on Lena by a representative of the then new Italian newspaper, *Corriere d'Australia*. It describes her in glowing terms.⁴

An inspection of the nearly two thousand nine hundred documents comprising her papers, which are now with the Italian Historical Society, will reveal ample evidence of the wide scope and extent of her activities.

It will also reveal the high esteem in which she was held by all those who dealt with her.

Nearly every document yields some evidence to justify everything that has been said about her.

She was already assisting Fr Ugo Modotti SJ in February 1939 in his work of revitalising the spiritual lives of the Italian community in Australia.⁵ Fr Modotti had been sent to Australia from India by his superiors specifically for this purpose only shortly before, in late August, 1938.⁶ It seems that it did not take him long to find out that both Lena and her sister Mary would make worthy helpers.

In 1940 she became engaged in assisting Fr Modotti in the original work of the Committee for '*Assistenza Religiosa Italiana*' which was set up to aid Italian internees and their families. Lena's responsibility was the organisation of fund raising activities, such as bazaars, dances and raffles. She assisted in the collection of



One of the many letters addressed to 'La Mamma degli Italiani, Melbourne'.



Lena (right) with her sister Mary in 1922.

donations of clothing and money for the relief of those suffering from the ravages of war in Italy.

After Fr Modotti's return to Italy early in 1946 Lena became President of the Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief and she also became the person responsible for much of the Church's welfare work among the Italian community in Melbourne. In 1948 the Cabrini Sisters arrived in Melbourne from Italy to take over St Benedict's Hospital and Lena became President of the *St Benedict's Hospital Well-Wishers Appeal Committee* and in 1958 President of the St Frances Xavier Cabrini Hospital Ladies Auxiliary.⁷ In 1959, on her resignation as President, she was elected Patroness of the Hospital in recognition of her work for the Cabrini Sisters.⁸

In the late 1940s Australia's great post-war immigration scheme commenced and from 1949 until her resignation as President of the Archbishop's Committee in 1955 Lena was involved in her major activity of assisting thousands of Italian newly arrived immigrants to find work in a very difficult period, when there was high unemployment in Australia. During

this time she also assisted a great number of Italians who were having difficulties obtaining landing permits. She also managed to find time to organise concerts for the Red Cross and St Vincent's Hospital.

Some idea of the strength of her ardent faith can also be gathered from her papers. She actively supported the Rosary Crusade of Fr Patrick Peyton when that priest came to Australia to promote the Crusade.⁹ She conducted a long lasting exchange of correspondence with Padre Pio's secretary, Fr Raffaele, seeking Padre Pio's advice, prayers and Masses for various intentions.¹⁰ In addition she attended Mass daily, and when the opportunity presented itself, she would attend a second Mass. She prayed much. It was she who passed on the Faith to her children.

All of this is ample justification to label Lena as extraordinary. However, I believe that what makes her so special, and a living saint, and an object lesson for me, is that she is all that, despite the fact that she was no super woman. Her office, which she conducted on the dining room table and a desk, was rather disorganised. She



Lena (left) with her mother Bartolina, brother Vince and sister Maria outside their home in Fitzroy, c1937.

would never have qualified as a modern company executive. She was in fact insecure and lacking in self confidence. She had her mother's example to follow in looking after the needs of Italian immigrants. Bartolina Virgona used to house newly arrived immigrants from the Eolian Islands in her own home until they could find more permanent accommodation. However Lena's great work was not performed without personal cost to her. She needed much reassurance to keep going amid all the difficulties she encountered. She told me after she had become President of the Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief that she 'never did anything' without first consulting the Archbishop. Her insecurity showed also in other ways. For example she told me that she became most upset when beaten into second place at school by another girl. It seemed to me that that event made her ashamed or at least highly embarrassed. Everything she did had to be done perfectly, otherwise she would be dissatisfied with it.

The reason why she felt insecure is difficult to determine at this point. Her parents ran what my sister describes in her article as 'a very religious, warm and sociable family'. Her father, Bartolo Virgona, died in 1915 when she was twenty years of age. We do not know much about his personality. Lena's sister, Mary, described him as hard working. He used to take the family down to Elwood with the family horse and wagon on Sundays for a picnic. After the picnic he would lie down and have a sleep while the rest of the family enjoyed the afternoon.¹¹ Lena told me at one time that her mother, Bartolina, advised her never to marry a man older than herself. 'They get too set in their ways'. Bartolo was eleven years older than her according to the inscription on his gravestone, although only eight years older according to his own statutory declaration in support of his application for Australian citizenship. However, Bartolina was the one who had all the drive and ran the family. She made all the big decisions.

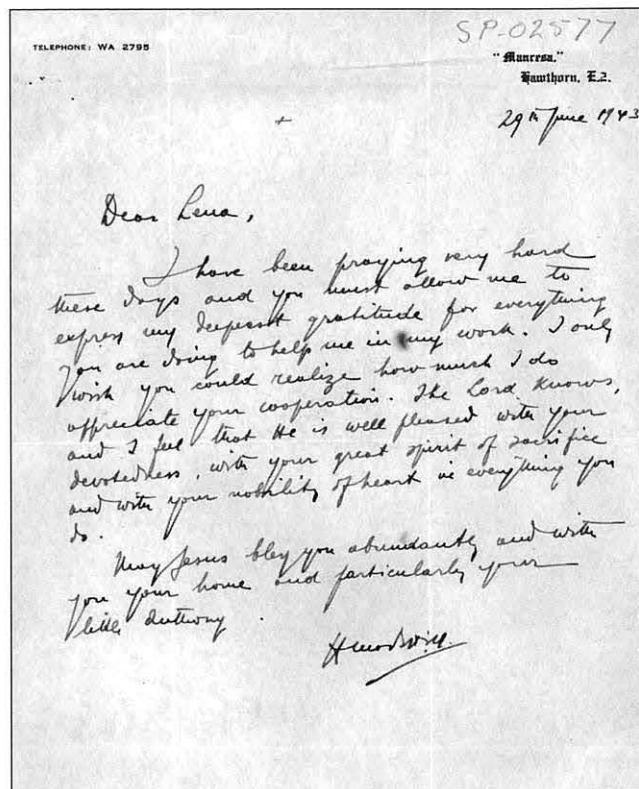
Lena's relationship with her brother Vincent did not seem to be the best. He was about five years older than Mary. Lena told me that he sometimes tried to dominate his two sisters and gave them a hard time. It appears from what Mary says that he may have been adversely affected by the move from Italy. On the other hand there was always a very close relationship between Mary and Lena, and between them and Bartolina. The closeness of the family as a whole can be seen by the fact that when Mary and Lena married and moved out Vincent and his wife Bella looked after Bartolina for many years, including a period when Bartolina suffered a lot from asthma.

There does not seem to be anything unusual in Lena's family situation which would cause her to lack confidence. Mary says Lena had the brains of the family. Lena won a scholarship from St Joseph's primary school Collingwood to the Catholic Ladies College East Melbourne where she did very well academically. At that time Mary left school as she was thought to be anaemic and got a job at a milliner's shop. She learned to decorate hats, which she was very good at.

Lena's academic achievements at school indicate that she would have made a good university student. She told me the question was discussed in the family when she finished school. However they decided against her going to university. It seemed to me that the decision was a disappointment to her, but she accepted it. Her sister-in-law Bella was emphatically against it, I think from a philosophical point of view. There were also financial reasons as there was an outstanding loan from the bank used to buy the shop. So instead of studying for a profession Lena went to work as a telephonist at the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange. She used to walk to work to economise to help pay off the loan.

A comparison of the personalities of Mary and Lena serves to highlight Lena's lack of self confidence. Lena may have had the brains but Mary had all the self confidence. Mary loved music and dancing. She was a good dancer and could play the piano well. She and Lena sometimes went to the dances at Cleveland's dancing school in Carlton with Frank Conti, who was Mary's main dancing partner. Mary was brave enough to go the first time without asking her mother's permission, but unfortunately someone informed on them. Frank and Mary starred on the dancing floor but Lena just went to 'tag along'. Lena was not keen on

dancing. Nor did she show any interest in cooking. In these areas at least she was overshadowed by Mary and Bartolina. It was not just a case of not being keen on dancing. She felt insecure in social situations. Years later, when Fr Modotti had left Australia and the burden and responsibility of his social work fell on her she wrote to him complaining that she was not cut out for social life.¹²



Fr Ugo Modotti expressing his gratitude for Lena Santospirito's work.

Lena's lack of self confidence is demonstrated also at those times when Fr Modotti was away interstate giving retreats and visiting Italian communities in New South Wales and South Australia. In addition to the reference above to her claim of not being cut out for social life his letters to her are sprinkled with references to complaints by her about her 'weak points',¹³ her fear that she may have 'pained' Fr Modotti by the way she had handled some task,¹⁴ her suffering from being over sensitive.¹⁵ Other examples could be given but it is sufficient to add that Fr Modotti himself made the point I am trying to make when he remarked 'You seem to be disappointed with God and with men whenever you seem to fail in anything.'¹⁶ Each time she makes such a complaint he is compelled to reassure and encourage her.

None of this indicates that Lena was not deserving of the high esteem in which she was held. Far

from it. Nobody is perfect. It is our imperfections which mark us out as ordinary human beings. As Fr Modotti felt compelled to advise her: '...sanctity does not consist in not having human frailties, but in not making peace with them and in trying hard to overcome them with humility for the love of Our Lord'.¹⁷ Lena put this advice into practice throughout her life. What makes Lena so noteworthy is not her imperfections, which few remember. What makes her noteworthy is that despite her imperfections she responded to a call to engage in work for those in need in her community, a call which came through Fr Modotti, and she continued that work for many years, supported only by her deep faith and love of God and the encouragement of those she looked up to. This is what marks her out as extraordinary and as a saint. This is what people remember. In the light of these her imperfections become as nothing. The people she helped would have been completely unaware of them. She exemplified what the prophet Isaiah says:

'If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist, the wicked word,
If you give your bread to the hungry and relief to the oppressed,
Your light will rise in the darkness, and your shadows become like noon...
you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water whose waters never run dry'. (Is.58: 9-11).

Sources

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The Santospirito Collection. Documents in this collection are now catalogued and individually numbered SP-00001 – SP-02687. They are also grouped in a number of named series according to topic.

Sir James Gobbo. Address for IHS 19 May 1988, Tape No 37 of Interview of Maria Rodriguez. 29 August 1984.

State Library of Victoria: Advocate newspaper.

Notes

- ¹ Sir James Gobbo. Address for the Italian Historical Society at the Italian Institute of Culture. Pages 13-14. 19 May 1988
- ² IHS. La Mamma degli Italiani Series.
- ³ Maria Santospirito Triaca. 'My Mother: La Mamma degli Italiani'. *Italian Historical Society Newsletter* Vol 1 No 4, September to November 1990.
- ⁴ IHS. SP-02567. Mrs Lena Santospirito. The Woman, the Philanthropist, the Religious.
- ⁵ IHS. SP-02569. Fr Modotti to Santospirito. 28 Feb 1939.
- ⁶ *Advocate* newspaper. 1 September 1938.
- ⁷ IHS. SP-00965. Minutes of meeting of St Frances Xavier Cabrini Hospital Ladies' Auxiliary. 9 June 1958.
- ⁸ IHS. SP-00962. Extract of minutes of meeting of St Frances Xavier Cabrini Hospital Ladies' Auxiliary, 13 July 1959.
- ⁹ IHS. Rosary Crusade of Father Patrick Peyton Series. SP-00424-452.
- ¹⁰ IHS. Fr Raffaele Series. SP-00553-791.
- ¹¹ IHS. Tape No 37, Maria Rodriguez interviewed by Mary Millamaci, 29 August 1984.
- ¹² IHS. SP-02649. Modotti to Santospirito. 4 March 1946.
- ¹³ IHS. SP-02574. Modotti to Santospirito. 20 January 1942.
- ¹⁴ IHS. SP-02587. Modotti to Santospirito. 5 September 1944.
- ¹⁵ IHS. SP-02596. Modotti to Santospirito. 19 September 1944.
- ¹⁶ IHS. SP-02604. Modotti to Santospirito. 8 December 1944.
- ¹⁷ IHS. SP-02574

A VISIT TO LOVEDAY

by Laura Mecca

Laura is manager of the Italian Historical Society. She has collected many photographs, documents and personal accounts on the internment of Italians during the Second World War.

It was on a Spring day last year, on my return from a two-week 'exploration' of outback Australia, when I travelled through the Barmera district, in South Australia. The region, known as the Riverland, encompasses the towns of Barmera

and Cobdogla and the villages of Loveday and Overland Corner. Barmera is a picturesque town nestled on the shores of sleepy Lake Bonney, an aquatic paradise fed by the River Murray via the Chambers Creek wetlands.

The land is very fertile. Extensive cultivation of grapes, citrus fruit, canola, vegetables and wheat bordered the road on both sides. The panorama was breathtaking. The striking yellow of the canola fields against the gentle green of undulating young wheat fields, strong purple splotches of the noxious weed Paterson Curse and the blue of



Above: *Portion of Loveday Internment Camp in March 1943.* Source: Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

Below: *Portion of former Loveday Internment Camp today.*



a cloudless sky accompanied the traveller through an imaginary trip on a painter's palette.

A visit to Loveday was not planned. However, when I saw the road sign pointing to Loveday, I felt that I could not leave the area without visiting the place where hundreds of Italians spent long years of internment during the Second World War.

The Italian Historical Society contains a wealth of information on the internment experience at Loveday. Photographs of Italian internees at work in the fields, the barbed wire around the huts, the hardship of the women who had to work the land or run the family business while their husband and father were interned, a belt made with coloured cigarette paper, oral accounts of the anguish of being suddenly separated from family and friends, the shame the children felt with their Australian peers for having their father taken away as an 'enemy alien' ... these are only some of the testimonials and facts of internment which emerge from the material held in the collection.

I had often wondered what had happened to the buildings which had housed Italian, Japanese and German civil internees and Prisoners of War (POWs) at Loveday from 1941 to 1946.

A visit to the Barmera Travel Centre provided me with directions and an informative pamphlet on the history of the camps, from which I have drawn the following information.

Loveday Internment Camps were set up in 1941. The complex was one of the largest of its type in Australia, and consisted of three main camps (numbers 9, 10 and 14), three wood camps and a Group Headquarters.

The site covered 440 acres of cultivated land and held 5380 internees and POWs at its peak and over 1500 Australian Military Forces personnel. Loveday was very suitable for an internment camp: it had been piped for irrigation; it was near a highway linking major cities; electricity and telephone communications were available; a train service from Adelaide ran near the camp;



Rosario La Spina (first from left, standing) with fellow Italian internees at Loveday, c.1943.



Italian internees at work on the wood pile at compound No. 14C, Loveday, 1943.

Source: Australian War Memorial, Canberra.



Example of a monetary token used at Loveday, c1943.

and it was sufficiently far enough inland away from the seaboard. Its location rendered it less vulnerable from attacks by enemy war ships.

The Group Commandant was Lt. Col. Dean, while a Camp Commandant administered each camp. Under Lt. Col. Dean's guidance, the camp became self sufficient and prospered to become the only camp in Australia which was profitable by selling agricultural products farmed by the internees.

The internees were not obliged to work, and were paid one shilling a day in monetary tokens, which could only be used to buy goods of primary necessity, sold in the camps. The German and Japanese Governments augmented this by making pocket money available for their POWs. Internees were permitted to wear civilian clothing within the compound but outside the camp they had to wear the mandatory army-issued maroon uniform. If one attempted to escape, the colour of the uniform would clearly distinguish him as an



A sketch of Tony Jannucci by Lumberto Yonna in the costume worn in a theatre play staged by Italian internees at Loveday, November 1942.

internee on the run. These attempts were few: only one person escaped through the perimeter fence, nine escaped from working parties outside the compounds and a tunnel built by the Germans was discovered before it was completed. The skills of the famous Aboriginal tracker, Jimmy James the First, were often called upon to recapture escapees.

The International Red Cross conducted regular visits to the camps to inspect the conditions and attend to requests and complaints by internees. Family and friends could also apply for visitor passes. Travel restrictions imposed on Italian immigrants during the war and vast distances made it difficult if not impossible for families and friends to visit their loved ones in the camps. This was especially the case for the relatives of the internees from the sugar-cane farming region of North Queensland or the fishing towns and market gardens of Western Australia, communities from which many Italian internees held at Loveday were removed.

Italians were creative in their pastime activities: they staged plays and held concerts. They also formed an orchestra led by an Italian musician from Melbourne. Lumberto Yonna, an Italian artist from Sydney drew humorous sketches of

everyday events or of fellow internees in theatrical costumes. His work is deposited in the archives of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Many internees made artefacts to ease the boredom, utilising mallee stumps for carving and tin containers for a range of metal trinkets. Others worked the land growing vegetables or attending to the animals. These were natural abilities as most Italians came from rural areas and were skilled farmers.

The contribution made by these men is significant: 21,000 kilograms of seed (mainly tomatoes, beans, beetroot, lettuce and cabbage) valued then at £15,000 were produced at a time when there was a great deficiency in seed produce. During the 1944/45 season 130 tons of tomatoes were supplied to the Berri Packing Union, providing 16,000 gallons of canned juice for distribution to the Allied Forces throughout the Pacific. The camp's nursery supplied 11,500 tomato plants to the Department of Agriculture Experimental Farm at Berri. Over 85,000 tons of wood were felled and sold, mostly to pumping stations.

Under the supervision of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the camps conducted 'secret projects' cultivating rubber plants, opium poppies and pyrethrum daisies. The first harvest of poppies provided more than half the morphine requirements of the Australian Military Forces for 1944. The poppies covered over 160 acres and were estimated to yield between 30 and 35 tons. The camp was the largest producer of raw opium in Australia. Nearly 10 tons of pyrethrum flower heads were harvested for sale to insecticide firms.

The piggery, which was built in 1943, had a capacity to house 760 pigs. Over 1200 bacon pigs, fed entirely on food scraps from the camps, were sold at the market. The poultry farm provided nearly 30,000 eggs and 2800 dressed birds for use by the Military hospital in two years alone. The farm had 5000 purebred birds. More than 110,000 pounds of soap was made from surplus fat and distributed to army units. Army tents and equipment were also repaired at the camps.

It is a great irony that on one hand Australia interned these men because they represented a danger to national security if left in their homes to work their properties. On the other hand they needed them to work the land at Loveday to produce valuable products to assist with the war effort.



Only the recreation hall in the former Group Headquarters and a few ruins of buildings have survived.

Loveday Internment Camps closed in 1946. The campsites were sold off, along with the buildings and are now divided into small, privately owned properties which are not opened to the public. Only a few former buildings are still intact such as the recreation hall in the Group Headquarters. Guided by the map printed on the information brochure of the Barmera Travel Centre, I walked around the perimeters of the properties looking at the ruins, as on a pilgrimage. It was impossible to identify any of the former buildings. I felt a deep sadness lingering in the air and my thoughts went to all those Italians who were taken away from their families. They were deprived of their freedom and rights as citizens of the country they chose to live in. A few of

them did not survive internment to return home, succumbing to sickness and violence.

The red signs marking the campsites stand as guards of honour against the blue sky and as a stark reminder of the madness of war.

The Society has developed a data base of all the Italian internees in Australia with information extracted from the Australian Military Forces' Internees Service and Casualty Forms. The data includes place of capture, date and place of birth, profession, date of release and name and place of residence of next of kin. Access to the data base is available by appointment or by contacting the Society during office hours.



Graves of Italian nationals in the Prisoner of War and Internment Section of the Barmera Cemetery, March 1943.
Source: Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

LUCIANA D'URSO: MY MOTHER (1909 – 1995)

by Dr Salvatore D'Urso

Dr. Salvatore D'Urso has had a distinguished career as an educator. He was Lecturer in Philosophy of Education at the University of New England, Armidale New South Wales, from 1965 to 1970 and Senior Lecturer at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, from 1971 to 1993. He is the founder and editor of Discourse: The Australian Journal of Educational Studies (1979-1992), now subtitled Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education. Dr. D'Urso, now in retirement, would be pleased to assist any one researching the history of Italians, particularly Sicilians, in Queensland. He may be contacted by writing to him at 33 Harts Road, Indooroopilly Qld 4008.

Luciana was born on 20 June 1909 in Mossman, North Queensland. She was the third of four daughters of Giovanni and Maria Rizzo, migrants from Sicily who had settled on the outskirts of the town of Cassowary on a small sugar cane farm. Lucy's life deserves to be commemorated and known to her descendants for the nobility hidden within its apparent ordinariness.

Her remarkable faculty for remembering people, places and incidents long past astonished me.



Wedding photo of Giovanni and Maria Rizzo. Giovanni married Maria at St Mary's Catholic Church, Port Douglas, on 29 November 1904, the day after her arrival.

The earliest photograph of Lucy, taken in a studio in 1914, shows her in an ample white dress and seated on a tricycle, black stockinged feet on the pedals, her fair hair tied in side bows. She is looking away from the camera distrustfully. As a photograph of its time it suggests the seriousness of the occasion.

Her eldest sister, Rosina, was several years older than Lucy, whereas Anna was just one year older; Lucy was to share with Anna a close companionship of childhood on a farm, establishing the basis of a special sisterly relationship which lasted for the rest of their lives. Their mother, Maria, trained her daughters in household tasks from their earliest years. She believed in the disciplinary virtues of labour, for which there was a pressing need on a pioneering sugar farm. These experiences of a farming childhood bred in my mother a life-long affection for domestic animals and the cultivation of vegetables and fruit trees.

Lucy and Anna spent their free hours exploring their rural and bush environment. They became partners in mischief and daring escapades. Lucy told of their raiding the watermelon plot of a Chinese neighbour and damaging his melons to give the appearance of animal intrusions. They became expert in climbing trees without always giving thought to how they might get down again. They ventured into the surrounding rain forest, becoming familiar with its plants and fruits such as the purple quandong. In this splendid world for growing up, Lucy and Anna developed the skill and spirit of tomboys. They became known as the Rizzo Sisters, who could 'stand up for themselves' and they supported each other — with fists if necessary — in quarrels with other kids.

Lucy and Anna lived in a time and place described as 'action-rich' and 'information-poor'

in the lives of children. In the pioneering years of settlement, children were usually called upon to assist in everyday family activities. Unlike today's town and city children, they also lived in closer contact with nature but had far fewer connections to the world beyond their immediate environment. Most of their learning, while working or playing, was first-hand: doing, seeing and exploring. School learning was different — it was abstract and removed from daily life. Reading was the only means of accessing the wider world. With Lucy, learning to read fed her imagination and created a yearning for further education beyond the circumstances of her family and her parent's notions of the proper upbringing of daughters.

The sisters attended a one-teacher bush school, Cassowary State School, which opened in 1913. At first the girls walked three miles along a track to the school, until their father built a sled drawn by their horse, Prince. Other children came to

share the ride to school where Prince rested with other horses in an enclosure until the afternoon return to the farm. At that time, a Miss Hazenkamp was the teacher and Lucy recalled that her teacher's German origins incurred the hostility of local citizens on the outbreak of the First World War. In those days of imperialist sentiment, anti-German feeling was common throughout Australia and was particularly pronounced in areas of German settlement, often being inflamed by jingoistic journalism. However, my mother recalled her school days fondly, reciting lines from her early grade readers with amazing facility. She always regretted the brevity of her education which was a little more than five years.

In 1919, Lucy's father sold the sugar farm to purchase a boarding house with restaurant in the centre of Innisfail. While negotiating the purchase, away from his family, a great cyclone in the early months of 1919, nearly destroyed the



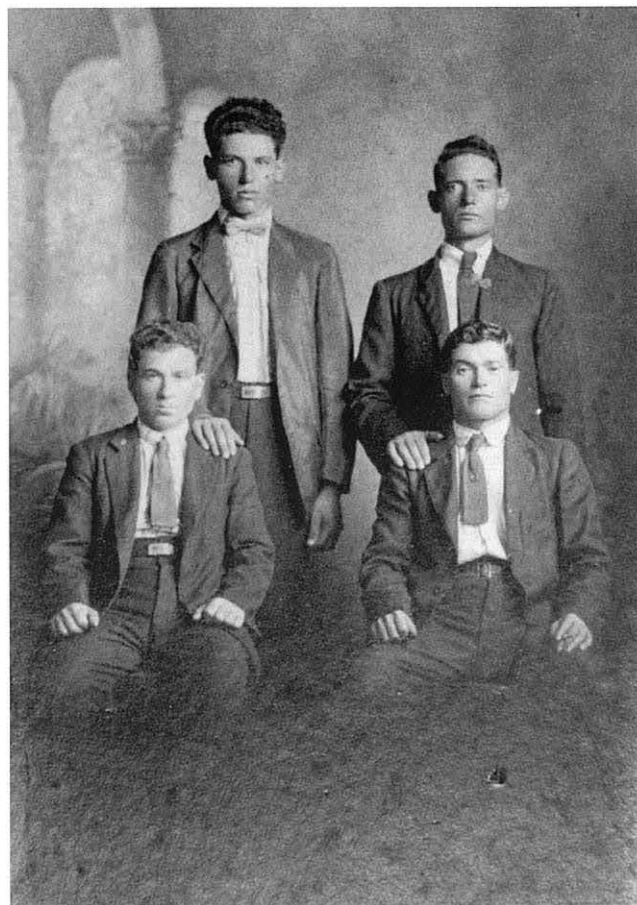
From left. Standing: Maria Scibilia, Bernadetta Rizzo, Luciana Rizzo. Seated: Agnes Saraceni, Anina Rizzo, Rosina Saraceni nee Rizzo and Bernadetta Saraceni. Innisfail, c1925.

farmhouse which was sheltering Maria and the girls. Lucy recalled her mother fastening the rafters of the roof with rope anchored to furniture on which she and her daughters clung for additional weighting.

Rizzo's boarding house became a 'depot' or 'transfer centre' for the flow of Italian migrants to the Innisfail district after the First World War. It acted as a postal address and a source of information on available work. It offered desperately needed help of various kinds in matters such as family relations and money, dealing with civil authorities or meeting the unforeseen exigencies of migration. As only those who have been forced by poverty to leave home would know, it offered a welcoming friendly environment for new-comers to a strange place, most of whom brought little with them other than their eagerness to cut cane. Giovanni had bought the boarding house, which had been the Temperance Club, to preserve the cohesion of his family. He thought it preferable that his daughters should work in a family business, rather than 'going into service' elsewhere, working for others. The girls were put to work on the chores of the boarding house under stern parental authority — making beds, washing linen, setting and clearing tables, preparing meals, sweeping and cleaning. Their duties started before daybreak and ended well into the evening. Lucy recounted that she often acted as an interpreter for new arrivals while they put their affairs in order with different authorities in the town. This was a role that she was to play on behalf of the Italian women of the district in the decades which followed.

Lucy and Annie were enrolled at Innisfail State School for only a brief time during which they attended irregularly, mostly on alternate days as each took it in turns to assist in the boarding house. Thus there was little opportunity for self-improvement although, being addicted to reading, Lucy sometimes hid herself to enter the imaginary worlds of storybooks. She was discovered on one such occasion by her father who promptly destroyed her cherished literature. Her fondness for drawing was also suppressed. She was driven to hide her reading matter to be retrieved at bedtime when the long day's work was done.

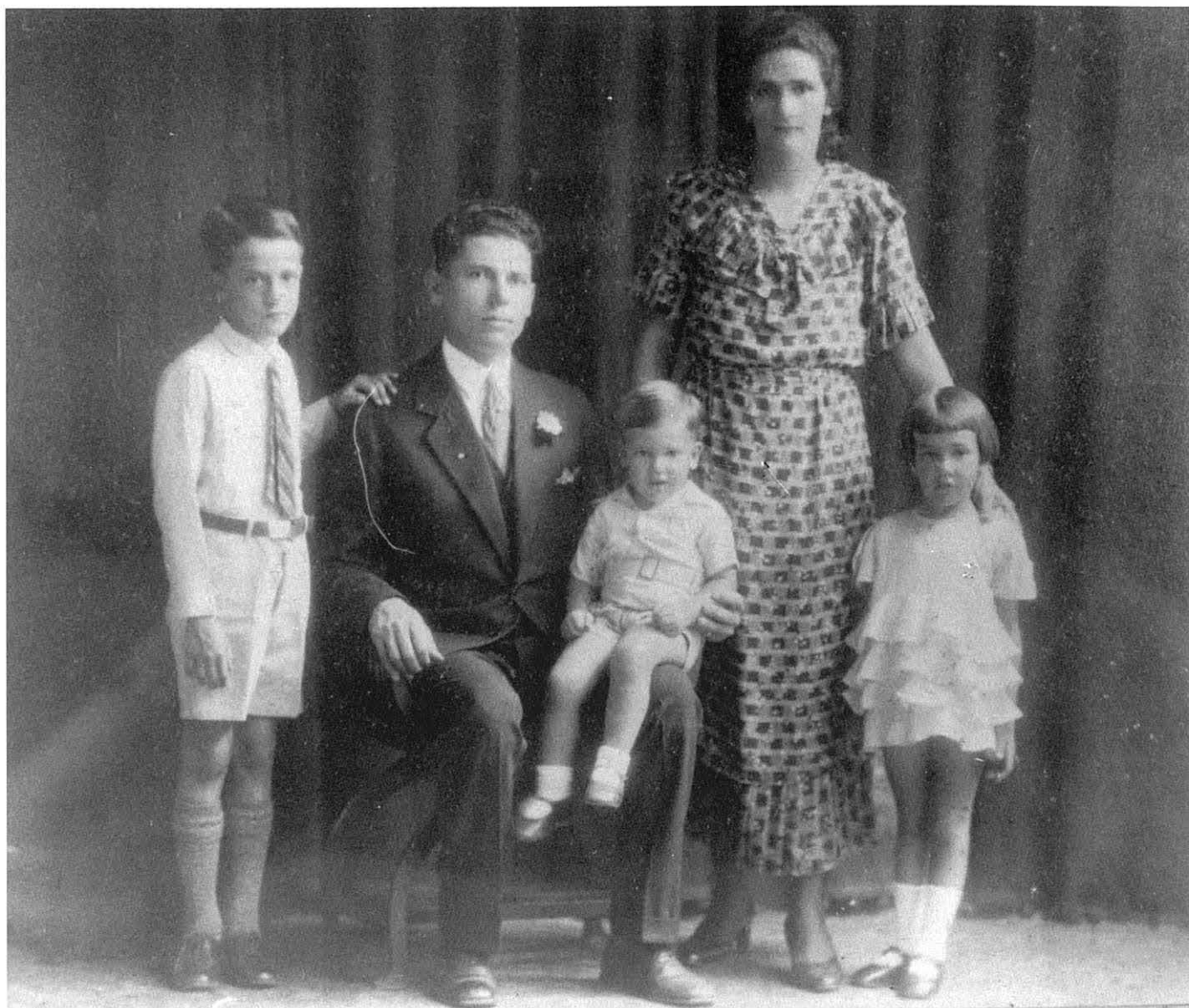
Lucy and Annie came to bear the heaviest of the children's duties in Rizzo's boarding establishment. Rosie, the eldest, departed into an arranged marriage to Antonio Saraceni, at the age of sixteen years, while Nita (Bernadetta), the youngest and



Alfio D'Urso, (first from left) standing, in Cairns, c.1922.

most favoured, was exempted from drudgery. It is not surprising that as they grew into young women, the Rizzo daughters should attract suitors in an Italian community with an excess of single male migrants. In addition to its rooms and restaurant, Rizzo's Building included a barber shop and a billiards hall. Overall, it generated the attractive atmosphere of an ethnic club, within which Lucy and Annie enjoyed the attentions given to women of marriageable age. Lucy was particularly favoured in her beauty. She was tall and slim with a well-proportioned face of broad and high cheekbone, a generous mouth, soft dark eyes, and bronze burnished long and waived hair. In comparison, Annie was short, more thickly built and of darker complexion. While Annie resembled her mother, Lucy was unmistakably her father's daughter.

Among the patrons of Rizzo's establishment was Alfio D'Urso who had migrated from Riposto on the eastern coast of Sicily in 1920 at the age of sixteen years. After a short season in the Childers area, he moved to Innisfail. Alfio stood out among his companions — he was taller, lean in build, of light complexion and curly hair, with eyes that shone with a hint of danger.



Alfio and Luciana D'Urso with their children Salvatore, John and Concetta, 1937.

There was an inevitability about the mutual attraction between Lucy, the strikingly appealing young woman of seventeen with a passionate and independent spirit, and Alfio, some six years older than her, of handsome stature, a tall boy trimmed by hard work, provocative in his youthful masculinity. Maria, Lucy's mother, intended that her daughter should wed an older and established man of the town, a cabinet-maker, through whom she would enjoy not only security but also social position in the Italian community. Lucy rejected her mother's matrimonial intentions — she was determined to choose from her own heart, which was already drawn to young Alfio D'Urso, a humble cane-cutter without any prospects at all, the very type of man whom Maria scornfully dismissed as a possible son-in-law. The course of youthful passion was not to be blocked by maternal interdiction. Lucy and Alfio became clandestine lovers, trysting within an extension of Rizzo Building undergoing

construction. Maria's fury at her daughter's insubordination was unbounded when she discovered it and there was no alternative than to settle the couple's future in Sicily, far from the prurience of the local community. I was born to the un-married couple on 26 May 1928 in Riposto, Catania. In the next two years or so in his native town, my father supported his wife and children by casual labouring. Concetta, my sister, was born in September 1930. In 1931 Alfio and Lucy, weighed with their responsibilities, returned to an uncertain future in Innisfail and to the unforgiving hostility of Maria. Balancing on the edge of poverty as foretold by her mother, Lucy summoned a fierce strength for the survival of her family. Wanting her own dwelling, however modest, she persuaded Alfio to invest their meagre savings in a low-built cottage of four rooms and verandah on the edge of town at 53 Grace Street.

Our home consisted of two bedrooms, 'living room' and kitchen. The small open front open verandah provided some playing space. The floors were uncovered and the walls unlined. There was a wood-fuel stove but not connected electricity or water. A laundry shed and 'dunny' stood at the rear shaded by a large mulberry tree. Within this modest domain, Lucy's undaunted spirit presided.

After a few years of the most scrupulous budgeting, certain improvements made our home comfortable particularly when electricity and water were connected, the verandah was closed in, and the house raised, which permitted a cemented utility area underneath. We were a working-class family in a working-class neighbourhood that included mostly Italians, some Greeks, Maltese, Chinese, and Anglo-Celts. There was tolerance and a taken-for-granted social equality among these plain-living people and a spirit of endurance in the tough times of the 1930s.

It was only due to his reputation as the foreman (ganger) of a team (gang) of formidable cane-cutters that Alfio received cutting contracts in the depth of the Great Depression when priority or preference was to be given to those of British descent. The labour of cutting green cane was gruelling, the rates were low, and the season all too short to provide income for the off-season, known as the slack. In these hard pressed circumstances, Lucy displayed her striking resourcefulness as a housewife: she cultivated a vegetable garden; she kept chooks and ducks in a backyard enclosure; she patched and sewed clothes; she traded the coupons of brand name products, patiently accumulated, for the manufacturers' kitchen linen; she prepared several meals from meat such as cheaply priced skin bone. The rules of the household were: eat it up, wear it out, make do, go without. She avoided the entrapment of debt, purchasing by cash alone.

We saw little of my father in the 1930s. He lived with his gang in barracks on cane farms during the season, cycling to and from home on the weekends. During the 'slack' he earned money through his gambling skill as a card player.

Lucy was the abiding presence of my childhood, the mother of Mediterranean tradition — nurturing, guiding, comforting, and correcting recalcitrance with a stern discipline. My brother, John, born in mid-1933 was incorporated into the regime of the household of which I vividly recall one ritual

in particular: our Friday night bath time, which Lucy conducted with relentless efficiency. She scrubbed each of us in turn from head to toe with a cake of Sunlight soap, poking her fingers into nostrils and ears, ignoring cries from soap-stung eyes, vigorously rubbing groins and back-side, and between the toes, lifting a stunned and dripping body from the tub to the kitchen floor, enfolding it with a clean towel to be dried with skin scorching rapidity. Fitted into fresh pyjamas and glowing from Lucy's bathing treatment, there followed the scarcely less excruciating procedure of hair combing, ear cleaning, and nail cutting.

My father's health deteriorated sharply in the mid-30s. Misdiagnoses of his condition by local doctors eventually led to specialist examinations in Brisbane and Sydney which virtually exhausted my parents' financial resources. Convinced that his occupation was the source of his debilitation through sinus infected digestion, specialised medical advice recommended he leave the cane fields for some other livelihood. After briefly managing an unprofitable card club, Alfio opened a billiards saloon in September 1937 in the main street of Innisfail in a building constructed by his brother-in-law Antonio Saraceni, husband of Lucy's sister Rosina. Antonino Passalacqua, husband to Annie, simultaneously opened a hairdressing business in the same building adjacent to the billiards saloon. When Lucy's parents bought a small house in Surry Hills, Sydney, to spend time away from the northern summer, she was asked to become the resident manager of the Rizzo Building, which had been rebuilt after it was severely damaged by fire in 1934. My father strongly favoured the move from our home in Grace Street to the centre of Innisfail since it gave him a couple of minutes' access to the billiards saloon. In 1940s we moved into the flat which Lucy continued to occupy when later widowed.

In February 1942 Alfio was interned and spent two years at Loveday Internment Camp, in South Australia. During his absence the billiard saloon was kept open through the employment of a Ceylonese man, Mr. James. On learning that American servicemen of a Signals Unit stationed at Etty Bay were seeking a laundry, Lucy and Annie decided to run a domestic business. Annie was also living in the Rizzo Building following the internment of her husband. The business was a profitable one and the nest-egg that had been laid in his time away surprised my father on his return from internment in January 1944.



Alfio D'Urso in front of the billiards saloon he opened in Innisfail in 1937.

Lucy's hard work and the greatly increased returns from the billiards saloon during wartime, provided the basis for the family's subsequent security. Another two-storey house was built adjacent to the old house, the two properties yielding a double rent. This resourcefulness greatly assisted the family. After the hardship of the 1930s, the postwar wellbeing was a happy change of fortunes.

I left home early in 1945 to continue my secondary and tertiary studies and pursue a teaching career. The same year, in April, my sister Diane Delanie (Dee) was born. I saw my mother in vacation times which I invariably spent at home. I recall the constant demands on her time, freely given, by Sicilians in need of interpreting services on legal, medical and financial matters. My parents'

home became a calling station for assistance which was never refused. It was entirely appropriate that in her twilight years her commitment and service was recognised by the presentation of awards by both the Queensland government and the Johnstone Shire Council.

Lucy continued as the manager of the Rizzo Building's business with its tenants. Tragedy struck in 1951 when her youngest sister Nita, despairing of her daughter's recovery from poliomyelitis, ended her daughter's life and her own. It was left to Lucy to meet her parents in Sydney on their return from a visit to Sicily to inform them of the double blow. It was Lucy who tended to the rapid decline of her father who died a year later and who cared for her mother now reduced to a near catatonic state from the deaths of her daughter, grand-daughter and husband in so brief a time. Virtually incapacitated in the last years of his life by continually infected legs, Alfio nevertheless lived on to the grand age of 87 years, dying in November 1990. His wife cared for him with devotion and patience and remained the stalwart helpmate of her youthful lover to the very end of his days. After Alfio's death, Lucy continued to live in the Rizzo Building until she passed away in May 1995. She was the last and longest-living member of her generation.

With the marriage of her children, the birth of grandchildren and of great-grandchildren, Lucy and Alfio became established as the progenitors of an impressive lineage of descendants. That they achieved this familial stature from their humble origins can only be seen as an astonishing 'success story' of migrant contribution to the evolving formation of Australian culture.

I will remember my mother as a human being of passionate intensity and an absolute integrity of vision. It will be inevitable that the fourth and subsequent generations of descendants will be probably unaware of or indifferent to their Sicilian ancestry. This sketch of Lucy Rizzo D'Urso is written in the hope of the preservation of a memory of her.

NEWS

Vale Mietta and Giorgio

The past six months has seen the sad loss of two friends and supporters of the Italian Historical Society: Mietta O'Donnell and Giorgio Mangiamele.

Melbourne's community was shocked at the sudden death of celebrated restaurateur and food writer Mietta O'Donnell. Mietta lost her life in a fatal car accident in Tasmania on Friday, 6 January 2000. Many of the Society's members and friends had enjoyed her company just two weeks before at an elegant function at Government House to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Society.

Mietta's family history is forged into the culinary history of Melbourne, many aspects of which are held within the Society's collection. Mietta was a familiar face at the Society. She used it as a resource for her own research, the most recent contributing to the publication of her latest book *Mietta's Italian Family Recipes*.



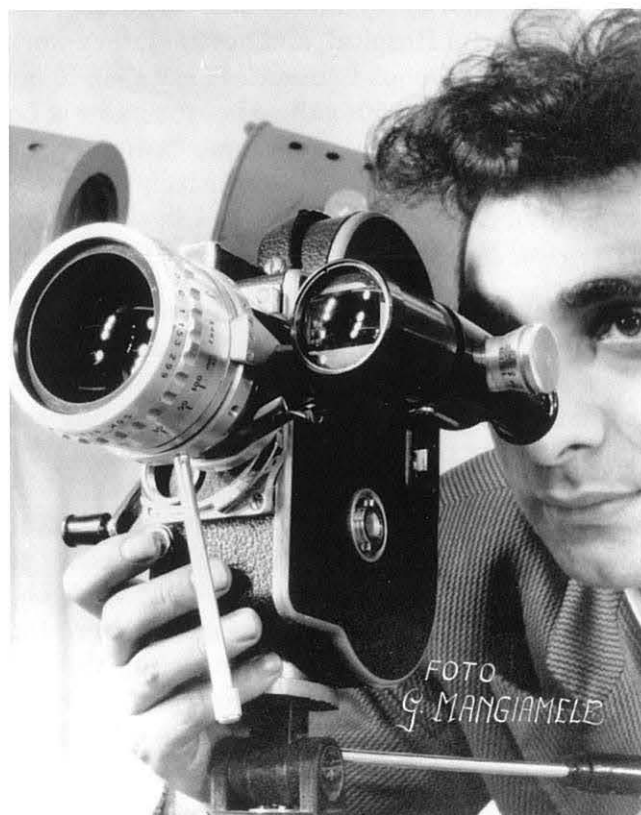
Mietta (centre) with Rhonda Barro and Maria Tence at Government House, 19 December 2000.

Mietta inherited the passion and understanding of good food and wine from her maternal grandfather, Mario Viganò, founder of one of Melbourne's renowned family restaurants, *Mario's*, in Exhibition Street. Her creativity and appreciation of the Arts was strongly influenced by her grandmother, Teresa, who was a respected painter particularly for her skill as a portraitist. Mietta will be greatly missed by the Society.

Giorgio Mangiamele, died at the age of 74 on 13 May 2001 in his beloved suburb Carlton, where

he lived since his arrival in Australia in 1952. Giorgio's achievements as a photographer and film-maker have remained relatively unknown to the wider public. As a photographer he documented important milestones in the life of Melbourne's Italian community. He was a photographer with a difference: he captured the essence of a person with amazing visual poetry.

Giorgio's achievements extend beyond the photographic lens into film production. Giorgio pioneered art films in Melbourne from the 1950s. His work was critically acclaimed and in 1965 his film *Clay* was chosen to represent Australia for the first time at Cannes Film Festival. *Clay* was shot for £11,000 and Giorgio mortgaged his house to make it. Despite the success of *Clay* in Europe, Mangiamele could not find a distributor on his return to Australia. His other major works include the silent film *Il Contratto* (The Contract 1953), *The Spag* (1962), *Ninety-Nine Per Cent* (1962) and *Beyond Reason* (1970).



Giorgio Mangiamele.

Giorgio's endeavours into the Australian film industry were ill-fated at a time when Australia's appreciation of immigrant skills was limited to and singularly focussed on the manufacturing industry. Giorgio was too early for his time, in terms of his creative skills within the Australian

film industry and his unwillingness to compromise his artistic principles.

Many of his photographs have been used in exhibitions celebrating the heritage of the Italian community. His small but significant contribution to the Australian film industry is hopefully now being officially recognised and documented by the industry and peers.

Women Shaping the Nation

The nomination made by the Italian Historical Society of two important Italian women, Lena Santospirito (1895-1983) and Elda Vaccari (1912-) was accepted in April 2001 for inclusion in the *Victorian Honour Roll for Women*. The Honour Roll acknowledges the contribution of women to the development of Victoria and Australia. Mrs Santospirito and Mrs Vaccari are well known entities in the Italian community for their work and exceptional contribution.

Lena Santospirito's commitment to raise funds for many charity organisations, including the Xavier Cabrini Hospital, and her voluntary work with the Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief in the 1940s and 1950s gained her the name of *La Mamma degli Italiani*. Her contribution to the Italian community has been extensively presented in a number of articles published in the *Italian Historical Society Journal*, including this issue.

Elda Vaccari, who arrived in Australia in 1937 from Vervo (Trento), played an important role in the establishment of the Italian welfare organisation CO.AS.IT. of which she was also the President for twelve years. As a trustee of 'The Gualtierio Vaccari Foundation' — established in 1971 by her late husband Gualtierio — Elda was instrumental in the foundation's decision to endow the chair of Italian Studies at La Trobe University. Many other organisations were the beneficiaries of major grants including the Art Foundation of Victoria for the acquisition of important examples of Italian art; Casa Elda Vaccari Hostel for frail elderly Italians in Victoria; the State Library of Victoria for the acquisition of the historically significant painting 'Melbourne 1998-1999' by Jan Senbergs and the Scotch College Language Centre for the teaching of Italian language to students and adults.

We also congratulate Mrs Bianca Baldassi and Mrs Domenica Rossi for their inclusion in the *Honour Roll*. Their nomination was made by the Ethnic Community Council of Victoria.

The Zanardelli Code and the Queensland Penal Code

At first thought, the relationship between an Italian penal code and the penal code of Queensland could seem unlikely, but in a detailed research paper written by Alberto Cadoppi, Associate Professor of Penal Law at the University of Trent, the fascinating history of a strong relationship is clearly drawn. Professor Cadoppi's paper is the result of a study visit to Brisbane in the months of December 1994 and January 1995. The final version of the Zanardelli Code was promulgated by the Italian Parliament in 1889 and has been described as being 'second to none in Europe for technical excellence...'. Since that date it has been widely used throughout the world.

Sir Samuel Walker Griffith in his role as Queensland Chief Justice acquired a copy of the Zanardelli Penal Code of Italy when he had just begun the codification of the criminal law in Queensland. Considering the Zanardelli Code 'to be in many respects the most complete and perfect Penal Code in existence', he made it the basis of the Queensland Criminal Code of 1889. In this undertaking he was also particularly influenced by the earlier work of Sir James FitzJames Stephen in England and David Dudley Field in America, whose code became the basis for the penal codes of the states of California (1871) and New York (1881).

Certain important issues addressed by the Griffith Codification were those of criminal responsibility, the offences of 'interference with political liberty', 'disclosure of official secrets', 'abuse of office', and 'public attacks on religious creeds'.

As a young man, Griffith spent a scholarship year in Europe in 1866, studying Italian language and classic literature with a passion that endured into later life when he translated into English the entire *Divina Commedia* and other works by Dante Alighieri. Born in Wales in 1845, he migrated with his family to Australia in 1853. After practising as a barrister in Queensland he adopted a political career becoming Attorney General and then Premier of Queensland in 1883. He was to become Chief Justice in that state in 1893. It was on his initiative that the University of Queensland was founded. His distinguished career expanded to involvement in the movement for Australian Federation at the close of the nineteenth century and his contribution to the framing of the Federal Constitution. This

culminated in his appointment to the office of the Chief Justice of Australia, a position he held for 16 years until 1919, one year prior to his death.

Professor Cadoppi's paper, translated by Justice Kerry Cullinane of Townsville Supreme Court, is of major interest to anyone researching the history of criminal law. We are indebted to Judge Garry Forno of the Queensland District Court for depositing with the Italian Historical Society a copy of the paper.

The Italian Consul General visits North East Victoria

A display of photographs and memorabilia recording the contributions of Italian immigrants to north east Victoria was a feature of a civic reception luncheon held in honour of the Italian Consul General Dr Gianni Bardini on his visit to

Wangaratta on 16 March 2001. Dr Bardini's visit was organised by Wangaratta councillor Rozi Parisotto, who welcomed him at the civic reception. Some of the items remained on display at the Wangaratta Historical Museum until 6 May 2001. This cultural presentation was curated by Val Gleeson, president of the local historical society (Telephone 03 5721 3222).

San Marco in Lamis History Fund

The San Marco in Lamis Social Club (149 Canning Street, Carlton, 3053 — Telephone Lou Soccio 03 9857 6532) is seeking the sponsorship of individuals and organisations to enable the publication of the history of migration from San Marco in Lamis to Australia. The book is to be published in bilingual format — Italian and English. A donation of \$100 will entitle the sponsor to a copy of the book.



St George's Primary School pupils on their Communion day, 1941. Inclusive in the photograph are Joseph and Peter Bevilacqua whose father first migrated to Australia in 1926 from San Marco in Lamis, returned to Italy in 1931 and re-entered Australia in 1936. His wife and four sons followed arriving in Australia in 1939.

FAMILY HISTORY

TOO POOR TO RETURN HOME

by Laura Mecca

In the decade between 1850 and 1860 a small but significant number of Italians from the northern regions of Italy made their way to Australia to seek fortune in the goldfields of Victoria. Most of them originated from the northern valleys of Lombardy, however a few came from Piedmont and Liguria.

In time some of these pioneers made sufficient money to go back to their village. Those who decided to remain in Australia bought property establishing themselves as farmers or opened a small business. Others went to New Zealand at the news of discovery of gold in South Island. Many however remained destitute in a foreign land, far away from their families and unable to find the means to pay for their return to Italy.

This is the story of Domenico Forno. He was too poor to return home.

Domenico was born in 1815 in the town of Belforte Monferrato, Alessandria (Piedmont). He sailed for Australia at the end of 1855 with his sons Giovanni, aged 17 and Giacomo, aged 15, on board the *Goffredo Mameli*, the first Italian ship to enter Australian waters. The captain of the vessel was Nino Bixio, a hero of the Risorgimento. Domenico left behind another son, Giuseppe, and wife Maddalena (nee Pizzorno). Also on board the ship was Giuseppe Pernigotti from the same town. They arrived in Melbourne on 28 March 1856.

By 1870 Giovanni had emigrated to New Zealand and Giacomo had moved to Queensland. Domenico Forno lived in Victoria for 42 years. Little was known about his life in Victoria until his descendants contacted the Italian Historical Society for assistance with their research.

A perusal of the Italian Diplomatic Archives (1850-1940) held in microfilm format by the Society revealed that:

- On 27 June 1865 the Italian Consul in Melbourne Mr Biagi received a request from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for information on 'a certain Domenico Forno who left Italy for Melbourne in 1855 with two children'. The Ministry explained that Domenico had kept in regular contact with his wife for a number of years but she had not heard from him for a number of years and did

not know his whereabouts. The death of her father-in-law [Domenico's father] had left her in financial difficulty. She wanted her husband to return home as soon as possible. The Consul was asked to locate Mr Forno and inform him of his wife's plight.

- On 25 July 1865 Consul Biagi replied that he had information that Domenico Forno lived in the Dandenongs area, where he earned a living selling charcoal.
- On 25 August 1865 Consul Biagi reported to the Ministry that:
Forno does not live in Dandenong as previously believed. He lives in Woodend, approximately 48 miles from Melbourne, where he sells firewood and charcoal. Mr Forno has visited our office. We asked him to return to Italy, but he replied that his gains in this Colony are too small and he cannot return home as a destitute. He asked [the Consul] to help him migrate to America in search of better fortune. His wife can sort out the inheritance affairs with the proxy sent two years ago. He cannot afford to send her any money, however he hopes to be able to do it soon. He will seek the help of his sons Giovanni and Giacomo with whom he is in good terms. For work reasons they do not live with him: Giovanni works in the mines of Arrow River, New Zealand, and Giacomo works as a stockman in Sandhurst, near Bendigo. Mr Forno has promised to write home more often and wants the enclosed letter to be dispatched to his wife.

Four years passed during which Domenico did not return home, nor did he write to his wife or send her any money. In February 1869 Consul Biagi wrote to the Ministry confirming that Forno continued to live in Woodend and that he did not show any intention of fulfilling his wife's request to return home. The 'Forno Affair' concluded in April 1869 when the Consul forwarded to the Ministry a letter from Domenico in reply to the numerous notices received from the Consulate. Unfortunately no mention is made as to the content of this letter.

Domenico Forno died on 15 January 1898 a pauper at the Convent of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Northcote, Victoria.

Giovanni (John) Forno

Giovanni left Victoria for New Zealand c1868. Little is known about him. The records in New Zealand show that in 1874 he worked as a carrier and lived at Balclutha, a town near the mouth of the Clutha River in South Otago, Southland. In



Giovanni (left) and Giacomo Forno

the same year of his arrival in New Zealand he married Christiana Cameron. The children born were Mary Ann (b.1869), John Duncan (b.1874), Donald Cameron (b.1876), James Cameron (b.1880) and Christie Cameron (b. 1884). The last three children were given (as second name) the family name of their mother.

The white pages directory of Telecom New Zealand lists around a dozen Forno. Almost certainly they are all descendants of Giovanni.

Giacomo (James) Forno

Giacomo went to North Queensland c1870. In 1873 he married Elizabeth Hurley at Cardwell, a town on the coast between Ingham and Innisfail. Ten children were born out of their marriage. For a number of years Giacomo owned and managed hotels in Townsville, Argentine, Ravenswood and Woodstock. In 1890 he bought a farm at Woodstock and successfully cultivated tomatoes to produce Forno's Tomato Sauce. The sauce received a special mention for its good quality at the Charters Towers Show, which was then an important mining centre. Unfortunately the success was short lived: in 1892 the crop was destroyed by floodwaters. The family moved to Ravenswood where Giacomo died in 1905.

The grave of Giacomo Forno remained unnamed for many years. However, some of his descendants recently managed to locate the site and paid tribute

James Forno
6.9.1844 – 9.1.1905
Husband of Elizabeth

*"We know you not from memory
But by the swelling of pride in our hearts."*

Lovingly placed on his grave in 2000 by some of the descendants of James and Elizabeth as a tribute to their pioneer forebears.

FORNO'S TOMATO SAUCE.

A FEW TESTIMONIALS.

CLUBB, 20 November, 1890.

EAR SIR,— According to promise I send you these few lines to inform you that the Doctors state Tomatoes have all the good properties of calomel for liver complaint, without any of its bad effects. See Hooking's Garden Manual, page 42. I think your Tomato Sauce is first rate.

Yours faithfully
JAMES GORDON.

Mr J. Forno, Woodstock.
TOWNSVILLE, 10 June, 1891.

Having used Mr Forno's Tomato Sauce for some time past, I have much pleasure in testifying to its excellent quality and consider it superior in flavor to any Tomato Sauce in the market.

CHAS. S. ROWE.
Alexandra Hotel.

TOWNSVILLE, 5 August, 1891.

DEAR SIR,— I have used your Tomato Sauce for the last twelve months, and I consider it one of the best in the market, and can recommend it with pleasure.—Yours truly,

JAMES R. NOBLE.
Blacksmith.
Southern Cross Hotel.

Mosman Street,
Charters Towers,
September, 4 1891.

To Mr F. Forno
Sir,—Having tried your Tomato Sauce I can testify that it is the best I have ever used in my experience as an Hotel keeper.

Signed,
P. MOLLOY.
MR JAS. FORNO obtained Special Prize at Charters Towers Show.

to their ancestor by installing this plaque on his grave:

The descendants of Domenico Forno and of his children Giovanni and Giacomo

Today there are some 700 descendants of these three men mainly in Australia, but also in New Zealand. Many of them have achieved high professional and/or social standing, such as Judge Garry Forno, who has been appointed to the District Court of Queensland since February 1988. Judge Forno had a large part in the organisation of a reunion of the descendants of Giacomo in Brisbane in October 1999.

The Italian Historical Society is grateful to Judge Forno and Lyn Roadley for sharing the



PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

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

ENGLISH LANGUAGE BOOKS

The Changing Face of Australia: A Century of Immigration 1901-2000

Kate Walsh, Allen and Unwin, Crow's Nest, 2001. A visually appealing chronology of the various waves of migration to Australia between the years 1901 to 2000. The Italians are well featured with photographs from the Italian Historical Society Collection.

Santamaria: The Politics of Fear

Edited by Paul Ormonde, Spectrum Publications, Richmond, 2000. Price: \$24.95.

A collection of critical reflections by Xavier Connor, James Griffin, Val Noone, Paul Ormonde and Colin Thornton-Smith of the driving forces behind Bob Santamaria's stand against communism, his place in the Catholic church of Australia and the split in the Australian Labor Party.

Crusade or Conspiracy: Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia

Bruce Duncan, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2001. Price: \$49.95.

This book claims to be the first comprehensive account of the Australian Catholic Church's response to Communism from the 1930s to the early 1960s and of the events leading up to the split of the Australian Labor Party in which Bob Santamaria played an important role.

Fighting the enemy: Australian soldiers and their adversaries in World War II

Mark Johnston, Cambridge University Press, Oakleigh Victoria, 2000. Price: \$43.90.

Based on the war-time journals and assorted writings of Australian soldiers, this book examines the way these soldiers interacted with troops from the four major powers engaged in the Second World War such as Germany, Italy, Vichy France and Japan. It also delves into the opinions these so-called 'enemy soldiers' held about their Australian counterparts.

Charlie's book: The Life and Times of a Country Town

Lynn Sunderland, Melbourne University Press, Parkville, 1999. Price: \$32.95.

A vivid account of the history of logging, charcoal burning and saw-milling in the township of Lyonville, Central Victoria. The Italian contribution in these endeavours is captured, with family names such as the Debernardi, Marcellia, Scala and Cabassi being mentioned.

Claiming a Continent: A New History of Australia

David Day, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2001. Price: \$27.50.

The author gives a different view of the history of our nation along side a reinterpretation of the major events that have shaped Australia from 1788 to the present day, including Italian migration, Italians in the goldfields and Italians in politics.

Eaglehawk & District Pioneer Register: Volume 3, J-M

Annette O'Donohue and Bev Hanson, published by A. M. O'Donohue, Maiden Gully, Vic. 2001.

Third volume of a well compiled register of the pioneers of Eaglehawk district from 1850 to 1880. All three volumes are available for consultation in the Italian Historical Society library.

Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia

John Murphy, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2000. Price: \$32.95.

This informative work explores the values of Australia's middle-class that kept Menzies in power and examines the government policies that nurtured them, including citizenship, immigration, assimilation, Aborigines and the White Australia Policy.

One hundred to one: An Australian Journey

Kyla-Jane Hunt and Clarie Wallace, Storm Publishing, Viewbank, 2001.

In order to celebrate diversity in the Centenary of Federation, the two authors of this book came up with a fascinating concept: one hundred portraits for 100 years of Australian history, from 1901 to 2000. Each page features a black and white photograph of a person with a brief account.

The Farm Viganò, South Morang (Fairview Manor) Heritage Assessment.

Nigel Lewis in association with Context Pty. Ltd. An interesting and comprehensive report

commissioned by the City of Whittlesea to establish whether 'The Farm Viganò' at South Morang has sufficient cultural heritage values to justify statutory planning protection. The farm was purchased by Mario and Teresa Viganò in c1934 and extensively rebuilt in various stages by the early 1950s. Mario was the patriarch of Melbourne's most prominent restaurant families and his restaurant in Exhibition Street Melbourne, and 'The Farm' at South Morang were the principal venues for his contribution to Australian society. The property is under threat of demolition.

ITALIAN LANGUAGE BOOKS

Il contributo italiano alla diffusione della civiltà del vino nel mondo

Biblioteca Internazionale "La Vigna". Centro di Cultura e Civiltà contadina, Vicenza, 2000.

A collection of papers on the contribution of Italians from different parts of the world to the development of viticulture and wine-making written for a conference held in Vicenza in 2000. Chapter 6 was presented by the Italian Historical Society.

Mercanti di mare: Salina 1800-1953

Marcello Saija and Alberto Cervellera, Trisform, Messina 1997.

Why did so many inhabitants of the island of Salina, one of seven Aeolian Islands off the coast of Sicily, leave its shores to settle in other countries? This book investigates such a phenomenon against the backdrop of the shipping vessels that exported both cargo and people to all areas of the globe.

Australia, l'Occidente agli antipodi: bianchi, gialli e aborigeni, oceano pacifico, anzi agitato, giochi non solo olimpici.

Edited by Michel Korinman & Lucio Caracciolo, Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Rome, 2000.

This is a unique edition of a periodical, given that all chapters are written mainly by Italian journalists in Italy on Australian topics such as Australia's position in the Asia-Pacific region, Aborigines, multiculturalism and immigration.

Istria: un calvario senza redenzione

Lidia Cernecca, Unione degli istriani, Edizione Due Emme, Cosenza, 2000.

An emotional account of the determination and courage of the author to bring to justice Ivan Matika, the man she and the Italian authorities

held responsible for not only the political murder of her father Giuseppe, but also the massacre of hundreds of other Istriani. Entwined is the story of many Italians from the region of Istria which was handed over to the Yugoslav government after the Second World War.

Dietro gli scogli di Zara

Nicolò Luxardo De Franchi, Libreria Editrice Goriziana, Gorizia, 1999.

Nicolò and Pietro Luxardo were the fourth generation of the Luxardo family to produce Maraschino liquor, and the second to manage a multi-million dollar distilling plant in Zara before the Second World War. In the 1940s with the Yugoslavian occupation of the Zara region, one brother is murdered and the other kidnapped by Yugoslav partisans. This is the story of the family who awaited for news of the capture of the culprits and for the whereabouts and safe return of the missing brother.



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