

Italian
Historical
Society



Journal



Volume 11 No.1 - January/June 2003

Contents

Essays		
An Italian Experience	Malcolm Webster	4
Vagabonds Rest	Malcolm Webster	7
Migration Patterns from Two Communities in Sondrio Province: Tirano and Villa di Tirano	Alan Poletti and Emanuela Menghina	12
Digging for our Italian Roots	Alan Poletti	21
Profile – Nino Borsari	Elizabeth Broughton	28
From Our Archives		32
Family History		33
Publications Received		35
Guidelines for Contributors		40
Acknowledgements		40



Italian Historical Society Journal

Volume 11 No 1 - January/June 2003

ISSN 1321-3881

The editorial sub-committee for this edition is:

Joan Campbell, Doug Campbell, Lorenzo Iozzi, Laura Mecca, Elsa Paulin

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

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

The Journal is published twice a year. Subscription is \$30.00 annually (GST inclusive). This entitles you to membership of the Italian Historical Society. The Society is part of Co.As.It (Italian Assistance Association) and is governed by the rules and regulations of Co.As.It.

Subscriptions may be sent to:

Italian Historical Society - Co.As.It
1st Floor, 189 Faraday Street, Carlton 3053
Victoria, Australia
Tel: (03) 9349 9000 Fax: (03) 9349 1063
Email: ih@coasit.com.au

© Copyright 2003

The text material in this Journal is copyright and remains the property of the individual authors. Where the author is not stated, copyright inquiries should be directed to the Italian Historical Society - Co.As.It (Italian Assistance Association). The photographs are copyright of the Italian Historical Society - Co.As.It unless otherwise stated.

Front cover:

Santina Saggia and Malcolm Webster in Piedmont, 1945. Santina was a *stafetta* (courier) for the Italian Partisans. Malcolm, of the Australian Imperial Forces, was captured at sea during the Second World War and interned as a POW in northern Italy. He subsequently escaped from a work camp and joined the Partisans, an Italian resistance movement fighting the Nazi/Fascists and their allies in occupied parts of Italy. (See article on page 4.)

A POW in Italy

Part 1 An Italian Experience

by Malcolm Webster

This is a unique autobiographical story of Malcolm Webster as a prisoner of war in Italy. In 1943 he escaped from an Italian work camp and spent the latter part of the war serving as a member of the Italian Resistance Movement, combating the Nazi/Fascists.

Malcolm Webster was born on May 25, 1921. In the 1920s his family moved to a 10 acre farm in Glen Waverley, then a rural area. Malcolm and his 4 siblings contributed to make ends meet in the harsh depression years by helping their parents pick apples from their orchard, milk the cow, grow vegetables and strawberries and raise hens, chickens and ducks.

The announcement - made by the then Prime Minister of Australia, Robert Menzies, on September 3, 1939 - that Australia was at war with Hitler's Germany, had a profound impact on the 18 year old Malcolm who joined the Australian Imperial Forces (A.I.F.) soon after.

On receiving his widowed mother's consent, Malcolm Webster volunteered to join the A.I.F., just after his 19th birthday. He sailed from Melbourne to the Middle East late in 1940 on the *H.M.T. Mauretania*.

Following the evacuation of the British and Australian troops from Heraklion, Crete, he was on the British destroyer *H.M.S. Hereward* which was disabled and finally sunk in the Kasso Straits, due to bombing by the Luftwaffe on the 29 May, 1941. The ship was abandoned at 6.45 am. After five hours in the sea without a life jacket, Malcolm was rescued by an Italian Navy torpedo boat. This action against the *Hereward* cost many lives, mainly through drowning. The air attack that day against the convoy caused the loss of two destroyers, *Hereward* and *Imperial*. Direct hits on the British cruisers *Orion* and *Dido* and the destroyer *Decoy*, resulted in over

one thousand casualties. The survivors of the *Hereward*, taken prisoner by the Italian Navy, were taken to Scapanto, in the Dodecanese Islands.

Many were naked and others scantily clothed. At Scapanto they were given food and water. Later that day they were transported to Rhodes on the Italian destroyer *Francesco Crispi*.

After three weeks on Rhodes recovering from their ordeal, and weakened somewhat by the tight food rationing, the POWs were shipped to Leros Island, where they boarded the *Caleno*, an Italian peace time liner which sailed to Italy via Port Pireus and the Corinth Canal, finally arriving at Bari, Italy on 22 June 1941, the day Russia entered the war against Germany. At Bari, whilst marching to a railway station, the POWs were subjected to a hostile reception, with booing and stones being thrown. Fortunately, the Italian guards did a good job of controlling the situation.

From Bari they travelled across Italy by train to a POW transit camp at Capua, near Napoli, where, after a short stay, they were transported by rail to Bolzano and marched to Prato all'Isarco, close to the Brenner Pass. The concentration camp at Prato all'Isarco was a disused brewery, with old dusty buildings as barracks. It was situated on a steep mountainside overlooking the Adige River, the main road and the railway line which served the German forces operating in North Africa. Life and conditions, although somewhat primitive, were tolerable with sufficient food rations,



Australian troops aboard the British transport ship *Mauretania*, 29 December 1940. Webster is at far right (leaning on mesh).

augmented by food parcels arriving through the international Red Cross. The camp at Prato all'Isarco was vacated on 25 October 1941 and all POWs transferred by train to Campo di Concentramento P.G. 57 at Gruppignano, near Udine, close to the Yugoslavia border.

P.G. 57 proved to be a tough prison camp, efficient, well administered and strictly controlled. The Camp Commandant was a Sicilian Colonel named Calcaterra. He was an avowed Fascist who was formerly in charge of an Italian Police District. In time he would prove to be a very strict and ruthless disciplinarian. His office wall was adorned with a quotation from a Mussolini speech, which, translated, read: 'The English are accursed but more accursed are Italians who treat them well'.

In September 1943, contrary to the Armistice conditions, Calcaterra handed over all the POWs at the Concentration Camp 57 to the Germans. This action later resulted in his execution by Partisan forces. No doubt, this timely execution overcame his possible arraignment as a war criminal.

The camp, situated on the plains near Caporetto of First World War fame, was subjected to strong winds and extreme cold conditions not previously experienced by the Australians. The 1941/42 winter saw a record low of minus 23 degrees centigrade. Insufficient and unsuitable clothing was a problem and caused hardship for the prisoners. This was relieved during March 1942 with the arrival of personal clothing parcels from Australia and supplies through the Red Cross. In February 1942, food rations were dramatically cut by 60% and the Red Cross parcels also ceased for six weeks. Many suffered from malnutrition or Beri Beri, a disease caused by the lack of fruit and vegetables, necessary to maintain the correct body level of vitamin B1. Many prisoners ended up in Udine Military Hospital, including Malcolm Webster, who suffered from Beri Beri and blood poisoning from a foot infection that required surgery. Although existence in Camp P.G. 57 was hard, morale was maintained by many activities such as concerts, debates, education classes, quiz contests, card tournaments and sporting competitions of cricket, football, baseball and athletics between huts and

compounds. All sporting activity was discontinued for some weeks in 1942 due to insufficient food to sustain the body at a reasonable level.

April 1943 saw the despatch of POWs below the rank of Sergeant to work camps. Malcolm, in a squad of 50 men, was sent to a work camp at Oschiena, near Vercelli, in Piedmont, to work in the wheat and rice fields. Accommodation was bad, the wooden barracks were small and overcrowded, with little ventilation because the double doors were kept locked at night. As this situation caused much discomfort on warm nights, the Australians, in typical fashion staged a strike. Gradually conditions were improved, food supply was good with double issue of rations augmented by extra items from the farm. That, together with Red Cross food parcels, soon improved the physical condition of the Australians.

It became apparent that the Italian people were disenchanted with the Fascist regime and the alliance with Nazi Germany. Following the withdrawal from North Africa and the eventual Allied landing in Sicily and the invasion of the Italian mainland at Salerno and Anzio, it was no surprise that an armistice with the Allied forces was declared by Marshall Badoglio on 8 September 1943, enraging the Germans who felt betrayed by the Italians. This day was remarkable, a day of great rejoicing and festivities at Oschiena shared between

Cascina Oschiena, the farmhouse near Vercelli in Piedmont. Malcolm Webster and other POWs were sent here to work in the nearby wheat and rice fields in 1943.



Malcolm Webster, aged 23 years, in the Italian uniform of the Partisans, 1944.

the POW's, the Italian guards and the farm people. It was generally felt that at long last the fascist yoke was broken forever.

However, Malcolm together with his compatriots, quickly became concerned with the German troop activity in the Vercelli area, coupled with the news that all POW camps in Italy were being taken over and the inmates sent to concentration camps in Germany. Rather than let this happen the Australians decided to abandon the work camp and make their own way, some towards Switzerland, some southwards, and others to hide out with the help of farm workers in the vicinity, with the forlorn hope that the Allies would soon land in Genova and free them.

Malcolm joined up with four other Australians, one of whom was summarily executed together with four compatriots, all unarmed, in the mountains of northern Piedmont.

After remaining hidden near Oschiena for six weeks and being maintained with food and money by the people at Oschiena, it became apparent that it would be a tough and long drawn out battle to oust the German troops from Italy, and there was also no Allied landing at Genova. A guide, necessary to lead them through the Alps into Switzerland never arrived despite promises and hopeful contacts. The decision was made to head north from Oschiena unaided, with the hope that a suitable guide could be found in the mountains of northern Piedmont.

Travelling north for some days and finally reaching a refuge hut at an altitude of over two thousand metres, it was learnt that the risks were too great to find a suitable passage into Switzerland at that time of

year. Heading back to the foothills where it was warmer, Malcolm and his three companions were given information that passage to Switzerland was being gained through another area, so back they went into the Alps to find they were again too late, as the last batch had suffered badly with two men dying from "mountain sickness" brought on by the high altitudes.

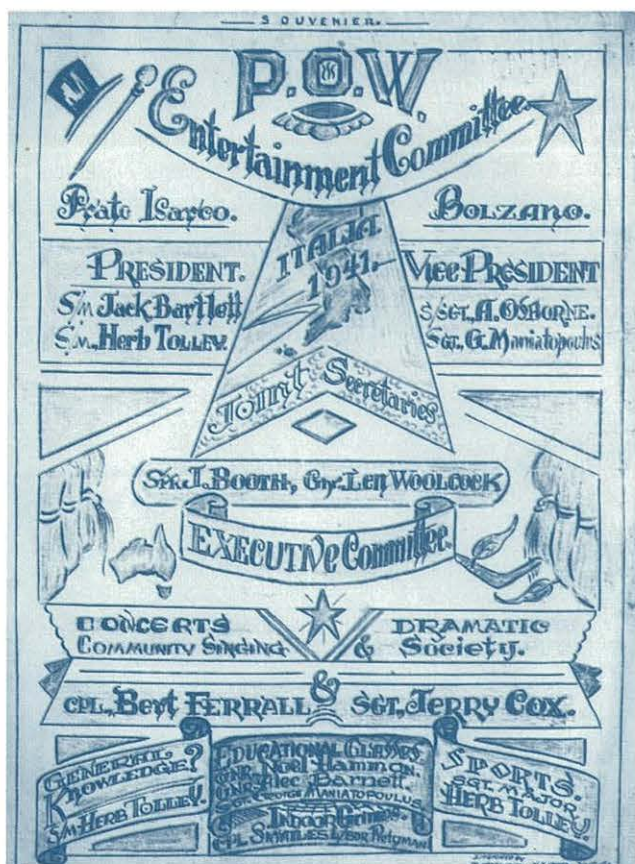
In desperation the four Australians turned south again, across the plains of Piedmont and over the River Po, into the province of Alessandria. Travelling dressed as civilians, the intention was to find or commandeer a boat and hopefully sail to the Island of Sardegna. The closer they got to Genova the German troops became more concentrated, no doubt expecting an Allied landing near Genova. It became difficult to move around without food or money, the local people were terrified and under constant threat from the Germans. In light of the grave situation in Alessandria, with the German Command offering rewards for information leading to the recapture of

POWs from concentration camps, a decision was made to return north.

Because of the difficulty of obtaining sufficient food for four people, they broke up into pairs by drawing a name from a hat. Malcolm drew William Wigglesworth, a former member of his army unit. The other two were Roger Wettenhall and Bert Ridgway. On 24 November 1943 each pair went different ways basically north.

After a few weeks Bert Ridgway gave himself up to the authorities because of ill health, Roger Wettenhall was stopped and arrested by the Italian Police on 17 January 1944 and after interrogation at the Fascist Headquarters in Vercelli, was sent to jail in Novara and later taken by the Germans to Stalag V11A at Moosburg in Germany.

Malcolm and his companion, Bill Wigglesworth, continued to roam the pre-Alpi area of northern Vercelli where they were fortunate enough to find compassionate people who were ready to help in their survival from a ruthless enemy.



'POW Entertainment Committee' brochure designed by Australian prisoners of war at the concentration camp at Prato all'Isarco in northern Italy, 1941.



Propaganda poster published by the Axis Alliance during the Second World War and souvenired by Malcolm Webster during the war.

An Italian Experience

Part 2 Vagabonds Rest

After escaping from an Italian work camp situated in the Vercelli rice fields of north-western Italy, and having failed to reach sanctuary in Switzerland, Malcolm Webster and William Wigglesworth spent twenty months behind the German lines until war's end in Europe.

Their survival was possibly due to the help provided by many Italians who were disenchanted by the Axis Alliance, Mussolini's Fascism, the terrible losses of one hundred thousand men on the Russian front and the knowledge that over three hundred Italians had become POWs during the North African campaigns. This thinking and divisiveness brought on by an armistice, on 8th September 1943, between Marshall Badoglio and the Allies, developed a willingness, particularly amongst the peasants and poorer working

classes, to assist former POWs who had escaped from work camps.

Despite the great risks involved, the attractive rewards being offered for information leading to the recapture of POWs 'on the loose', together with the German Command's threats of reprisal and severe punishment including the death penalty, some very courageous Italian people living in German-occupied Italy continued to provide aid to ex POWs.

After wandering as civilians in the pre-Alpi area of Piedmont, Malcolm Webster and William Wigglesworth arrived at Mezzana Mortigliengo, a small hamlet in the foothills of the Italian Alps directly north of Vercelli, where they were befriended by Celio and Mariettina Confienza, who had two small sons, James and Tiziano. The family was to

play a major part in helping the two Australian escapees for a period of six months - December 1943 to mid-June 1944. For three weeks, the two Australians slept at the Confienza home, but during the day stayed away from the village.

The nearby enemy garrison was determined to recapture the two Australians who always seemed to be one step ahead. Pressure was being applied to Mezzana, even to the extent of completely surrounding the village at dawn with troops. House to house searches were mounted and many questions asked relating to the whereabouts of the elusive escapees. Fortunately, they had already decided to move away and live in the nearby hills called 'Colline Rosse'. A couple of shelters were constructed, but later demolished following the landowners' objections and fear of reprisals. A rocky cave was found but it too, had to be abandoned immediately after a suspect village 'informant' discovered the cave.

In another village close by to Mezzana there were three English soldiers in hiding who had been captured in Tunisia. It was also subjected to a dawn search by the enemy. Two of the ex-POWs got away under fire but the other one was wounded and recaptured. Some of the villagers were taken away, together with the ex-POW, and not heard of again. It was decided by Celio Confienza and a few other trustees then the two Tommies join forces with the two Australians and be maintained together through Celio, as the chief organiser. One of the Tommies, Ern Manners, came from London, the other, Bert, from down Southampton way.

Together, the now group of four discussed at length the need to remove quickly from the villagers the grave dangers of execution and reprisals against their courageous helpers. They talked of a new hideout well away from Mezzana and one that was built underground. This time, after some hours of exploring the countryside about eight kilometres via bush tracks from Mezzana an ideal location was found. It was situated



Celio Confienza (right) and Malcolm Webster with a Volkswagen scout car which was seized from German troops in northern Italy by the Partisans, c 1944.

in a steep sided, canyon-like valley with a pretty little crystal clear stream running through it. The area was called 'Colline Rosse' (Red Hills) because of the red gravelly nature of the terrain which was mostly covered by heath, oak and chestnut trees.

Armed with shovels, a pick, a hoe and an axe borrowed through Celio Confinza, the escapees set to work digging out and constructing a new home. Two days of digging excess soil into concealed areas, produced a side cut into the hillside ready for roofing. Whilst two of them cut trees for the roof, the other two fitted it all into place. It was all packed with gravel, soil, grass and heath and camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding terrain. The internal walls were lined with heath, kept in place by interlacing thin pliant tree branches, held securely by a series of wooden uprights firmly fixed between the earthen floor and the roof. The floor was covered by a thick carpet of heath and dried grass.

The overall dimensions of the dugout were around four metres by three with a ceiling height of over a metre at the head end, tapering to around sixty centimetres at the low part. The only entrance was a 'porthole' just under sixty centimetres square which they naturally crawled through. It was cosy and warm, the four escapees were very pleased with their handy work and hoped that it would be reasonably waterproof during the impending Spring rains. Malcolm suggested their new abode be called 'Vagabonds Rest' as he and his companions certainly looked like 'drifters' and 'vagabonds'. Residence at 'Vagabonds Rest' was taken up on the 31st March 1944 with the fervent hope that this time they wouldn't be evicted.

April, as expected commenced with threatening skies and, in keeping with the Piedmontese people's saying 'In April it rains for thirty one days', the springtime rains descended in all their fury. Soon, the wildflower appeared throughout the hills and valleys painting a colourful scene of blue and yellow from the profusion of wild violets and primroses softening the slopes of the grim red hills. In the meantime, following the pounding from thunder-

storms and torrential rain, it became apparent that the dugout's roof could not handle the heavy rain. Soon, everything was saturated, which forced the four occupants to beat a hasty retreat and find a farmer's suitable hay loft to hole up in whilst waiting for a sunny day to dry out all the gear.

The farmer was an old man who greeted them warmly by kissing in the traditional manner on both cheeks. He got a good fire going and soon dried out all their wet clothes and blankets. Loaves of bread and cheese were supplied, together with the usual home-produced red wine to add an inner glow. After a good nip of grappa, the local white and potent brandy distilled from the refuse of grape skins, the four men burrowed into the farmer's hay loft and slept as if they didn't have a care in the world.

Next day the farmer invited some of his trusted friends to meet the four wandering ex-POWs. They arrived with food and wine and talked of their fear of the Republicans and the Fascist Black Brigades who were notorious for their cruel and sadistic

methods of punishment. However, they were very optimistic about the war's outcome and looked forward to the arrival of the Allied armies. In particular, they expressed their admiration for the Russian successes against Hitler's armies; among which was the recapturing of Sebastopol that liberated the whole Crimea Peninsula. Despite the friendly openness of their new found friends the escapees would not talk about where or how they had lived since leaving the work camps near Vercelli, except to say that they were wandering ex-POWs very dependent on sympathetic Italian people.

After drying out back at 'Vagabonds Rest' the roof of the dugout was removed and replaced at an increased slope to help with a quicker run off. A drain was dug along the high side to lessen the water flowing down the hill. All the dugout's internal heath was dispersed and replaced with fresh material and to complete the operation the whole area was again carefully camouflaged. Although another

Mariettina Confinza with POW escapees - two Australians and two British - who joined the Partisans, c 1944. Malcolm Webster is second from left.



heavy downpour created some further problems, it was a lot better, but far from perfect. With the ever-increasing heat from the sun, their gear would dry out quickly but this tended to bring out the snakes including a few vipers which were despatched. One amusing incident was witnessed when Bill Wigglesworth was having a sleep in the dugout when he was joined by a large snake; on discovery, Bill darted out of the porthole, followed closely by the snake; his mates just laughed.

Thanks to the organisation by Celio Confienza and his wife Mariettina, food supplies and newspapers were collected every Sunday night at a rendezvous on the outskirts of Mezzana. Celio would pass over a bag containing the rations, collected from the committee of helpers to cover the escapees' weekly needs. Malcolm Webster, with his better knowledge of the Italian language, would translate the newspapers for his companions. The trip from the dugout to Mezzana and back was around fifteen kilometres along rough and stony tracks, particularly hazardous on cloudy and dark nights. This round trip would take over four hours of walking and was done in pairs, the two still waiting in the dugout would spend a worrying time, hoping and praying nothing would go wrong with their mates. There was always a threat that they could be waylaid by an enemy patrol, or even shot, if fleeing from possible capture.

One particular night Malcolm and Bert arrived at the rendezvous just outside Mezzana and waited a long time before Celio appeared in stockinged feet, without the rations and newspapers. He seemed extremely nervous as he advised them that the village was under strict curfew from 8 pm until daylight next morning. Also, the area was being patrolled by enemy troops with orders to shoot at any person disobeying the curfew. Malcolm was very disturbed by Celio's news and the risk to venture outdoors to meet at the 'pickup' point. He begged Celio never to take such a risk again unless absolutely sure the 'coast was clear' and emphasised that the escapees would not in the future enter the village and endanger the Confienza family. Taking off his boots to overcome any noise on the cobble stones, Malcolm crept back with Celio to collect the bag of rations from

the house. It was a great relief, once Celio was safely indoors. Fortunately, at that time, the Republican patrol was elsewhere.

The thought of being captured was always a major worry as the German SS were well versed in special torture methods to force captives to reveal names of those helping escaped POWs. Despite any resolve not to divulge such information and to protect the lives of others, one could never really guarantee one's reaction until put to the ultimate test of enduring the intense pain of mental and physical torture. The four escapees were well aware of the sadistic treatment meted out by the German SS and the Fascist Black Brigade.

As a stark reminder of the need to avoid capture at all times, news came through in May 1944 that five Australians and one Englishman had been caught by a detachment from the Fascist Militia Legion 'Tagliamento' at Piacone on the Sessera River. Despite being unarmed and not members of the underground forces, the six ex-POWs were summarily executed on the spot.

Malcolm kept a diary on a daily basis. Among many lighter moments recorded, was the episode relating to a 'field mouse' who set up house in the dugout and was most active at nights, gnawing at the food sacks but despite eliminating three of its nests the mouse lived on with the escapees. The little fellow had certainly discovered easy access to a good food supply without much effort involved. In an attempt to minimise the food loss, all bags containing rice, polenta meal and macaroni were suspended from wire hooks fixed to the dugout's ceiling. Notwithstanding, the mouse still managed to get at the food, and continued to chew holes in the bags causing some of the contents to shower down on the sleeping men. It was decided the mouse had to go, irrespective of the many days of friendly association. Malcolm undertook 'Operation Field Mouse'. He rigged up a special weapon which consisted of a reasonable sized rock, tied to a length of cord and suspended by a hook just above a selected spot on the dugout's shelf. At this spot, a lure in the form of a crust of dry bread and cheese was placed on a piece of

newspaper. On hearing the paper rustling Malcolm would release a slip knot and allow the rock to crash down on the unsuspecting mouse. However, when it came to crunch time Malcolm didn't have the heart to trigger the kill, so he pulled it all to pieces and returned the rock to the nearby stream. Next morning he wrote in his diary "Eat to your heart's content". So, their little friend lived on as family, and finally ended with 'Vagabonds Rest' all to him or herself.

Whilst living at 'Vagabonds Rest' vigilance was maintained from dawn to dark, with each person doing two hours on guard and six off. A large oak tree on top of a nearby hill provided a great view of the surrounding area, in all directions for many kilometres. Only twice were patrols sighted, one being German troops, who fortunately stayed on the walking tracks and did not venture near. Notwithstanding, the four escapees, on these occasions would mount their escape plan and move down the valley and lie 'doggo' in the thick heath. As a further precaution, cooking was only done at night by a screened fire, thus preventing showing possible telltale smoke.

Meals consisted mainly of macaroni, polenta made from maize meal, bread and cheese. There was no meat. After the evening meal and the usual chat beside the small fire they would crawl into the dugout to sleep. For a while there would be some good natured banter about snakes, centipedes or scorpions being in one's bed, which became progressively harder as the heath and dried grass flattened out. Ern, the Londoner, would talk about two pork chops and a plate of cakes, Bert of his longing for a feed of Yorkshire pudding covered in 'Bistro' and Bill of the girl back home he hoped to marry when the war was over. Malcolm thought of his trout streams and fly fishing and wondering what tomorrow would bring - peace, capture or just another day in the life of an ex-POW trying desperately to survive behind the German lines in those grim red hills at the foot of the mighty Italian Alps.

Then on 6 June 1944 came that historical day when the Allies established their foothold on Hitler's fortress and launched 'The Beginning of the End'.

When the Second Front opened in France in 1944 the four escapees joined the Italian Resistance Movement, which had become active and increased in numbers because of the young men being called up for compulsory duty with the Republican forces, opting to be Partisans instead. It was time to prevent further hardship and possible imprisonment or death to those courageous people who had so readily provided assistance to so many escapees. After three months spent in the dugout, it was especially urgent to minimise the extremely dangerous situation confronting the Confienza family and the small band of helpers from Mezzana, if they were to be caught by a ruthless and unforgiving enemy. So, a farewell 'Festa' and good wishes given by villagers at Mezzana, the four became Partisans in the Italian Resistance Movement.

Malcolm and William became members of the Detachment 'Dellatezza' and adopted the battle names of Sydney and Melbourne respectively, 'Dellatezza' was commanded by an eighteen year old, Giovanni Gnatta, who was called 'Topolino' and was part of the 110th Brigade 'Fontenella'. Whilst some weapons had been dropped in the zone, it was many weeks before their Detachment was fully armed and able to mount effective guerrilla warfare against the Fascist/Nazi enemy. At one stage



Giovanni (Topolino) Gnatta, at left, and Angelo Saggia of the Detachment 'Dellatezza', 1945.

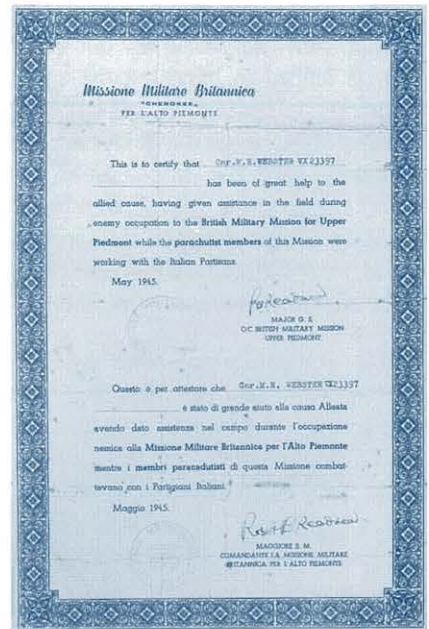
Dellatezza had only one rifle, one shotgun and one revolver between thirty six men and it was a 'cat and mouse' game for some weeks to avoid elimination by the Fascists; and many times the Partisans found themselves withdrawing into the Alps to spend cold nights at altitudes over two thousand metres.

The first few months proved hard and difficult, trying to survive, but the Resistance Movement was a big worry to the enemy. Strong enemy garrison forces were necessary in the area to maintain order and keep the local textile industry working. The Partisans continually harassed the enemy's supply lines and kept pressure on the garrisons. When the British Military Mission, code named 'Cherokee', was parachuted into the zone under the command of Major McDonald in late 1944, radio contact was then maintained with the Allied forces and more frequent arms drops were made. They consisted of mortars, machine guns, light automatic weapons, hand grenades and explosives. Gradually the Resistance Movement became a strong fighting force and an ongoing nuisance to the enemy.

The civilian population was suffering badly with reprisals and atrocities being inflicted on them. Homes were burned down and defenceless villages were subjected to aerial bombing by German Stukas. Many people were imprisoned or executed for providing aid to the Partisans. Hostages were often taken by enemy troops, lined up against walls and threatened with execution if attacked by the Partisans. This tactic frustrated the Resistance Movement somewhat, however attacks were mounted against the enemy at every possible opportunity. Industrial strikes were organised in the factories to hamper enemy supplies, but these strikes were short lived because of the ruthless reprisals against the unfortunate workers.

With the advent of the war's last winter, the enemy commenced a major 'itals' in the zone with numerically and much superior forces in a final effort to eliminate the Partisans, operating in the Biellese zone. The Brigade 'Fontanella' withdrew its forces and dispersed them onto the plains of Piedmont. Malcolm's detachment,

Certificate awarded to Malcolm Webster by the British Military Mission in Piedmont, May 1945.



together with other detachments withdrew eastward across the river Sersia, then turned south onto the plains. Long gruelling marches were made only at night with the Partisans remaining hidden in farms during the day. Food was difficult to obtain and some hungry days were experienced. Where possible food was brought from the farms. Conditions were extremely bad with snow, ice and the bitter cold of Italy's worst winter. The detachment 'Dellatezza' was often under pressure and even survived an enemy attack by crawling along irrigation ditches and hiding concealed only two hundred metres from the German Todt Organisation repairing the bombed out autostrada bridge across the river Sesia, near Vercelli. Eventually the Partisans returned to their zone of operations to continue their ambushes and maintain sabotage of railway lines and bridges.

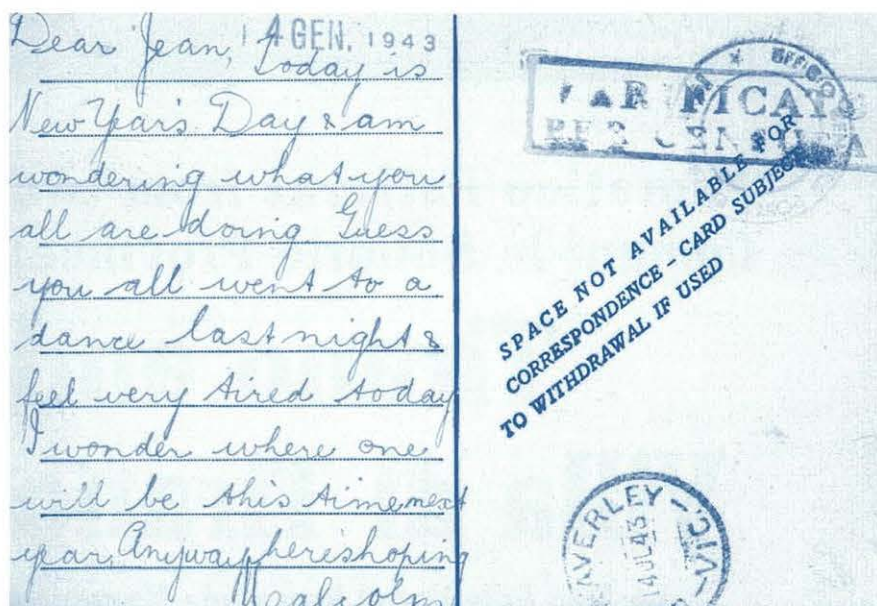
The Allies finally crossed the river Po and General Mark Clark, Allied Commander in Chief in Italy requested that all people rise up and frustrate the enemy's withdrawal. Following this request, the Resistance Movement became very aggressive and harassed the enemy continually. The Republicans were surrendering everywhere and the German forces were completely trapped in northern Italy. When the 'Fontanella' Brigade occupied the city of

Vercelli on 26 April, 1945, there was only token resistance as the Germans had withdrawn westward and set up a line on the Cavour Canal. The Partisans staged a victory march through Vercelli on 1 May, 1945, and cheering crowds in the city centre listened to speeches made by both military and political leaders. Just after midnight on 2 May, mechanised units of the 5th American Army, supported by infantry entered Vercelli and within a few days all German forces surrendered. Suddenly the war in Italy was over, although the cruelty and evil stopped, the pain, the sadness and the scars would remain for a long time.

Malcolm Webster was discharged from the Resistance Movement, May 1945 and immediately became a member of the British Military Mission to northern Piedmont. After some weeks and many sad farewells with those families and friends who helped him so much in his and William Wigglesworth's survival, he was flown from Naples to England aboard a Liberator on 22 June, 1945. Eventually he was reunited with his family in Melbourne, Australia on 8 September, 1945 after being missing, presumed dead for over two years and an absence of nearly five years.

Malcolm expressed great admiration for the Italian civilian population that showed such courage and endurance through the suffering of reprisal and punishment by a ruthless enemy, their example certainly strengthened the resolve and will of all Partisan forces. He pays special tribute to all the people who risked execution or severe punishment if caught, aiding escaped POWs and, in particular, Celio and Mariettina Confienza, originally of Mezzana, who at great risk to themselves, were the main organisers in maintaining Malcolm and his companions for six months. He also recalls the Zampese family of Scoldo, who took him into their hearts and treated him like a family member, the friendship so generously and warmly given by the people despite the terrible risks taken, made it possible to survive a very dangerous period in his life.

All four comrades survived the war, but sadly today only Malcolm remains to relate the story of those three months living in 'Vagabonds Rest'.



A postcard sent by Malcolm Webster, as a prisoner of war in Italy, on New Years Day 1943, to family in Glen Waverley, Victoria.

Italian Migration

Migration Patterns from two
Comuni in Sondrio Province:Tirano and
Villa di Tirano

by Alan Poletti and Emanuela Menghina

Alan Poletti is a retired Professor of Nuclear Physics from the University of Auckland, while Emanuela Menghina after graduating from the Università degli studi di Brescia in 1999, is a high school teacher in the Valtellina. They analyse two lists concerning emigration from neighbouring comuni in the Valtellina. One comes from 'Registri dei nullaosta per passaporti per l'estero' from Tirano for the years 1873 - 1891, while the other comes from an 'Elenco di individui emigrati all'estero' from Villa di Tirano. The analysis of these lists and comparison with the local economy throws fresh light on migration from these two comuni during the earliest years of significant transoceanic migration from Italy.

Introduction

In this first decade of the 21st century we need passports to enter and leave a country. This was not always the case. In the 19th century a passport might be required to leave a country, but Australia and New Zealand, like the countries in both North and South America, gave free entry to all healthy immigrants. It was not until 1916 that a passport (issued within the previous two years) was required to enter New Zealand¹ and then only for those over the age of 15 years. The requirement was issued as part of the War Regulations (10 November 1914) and with variations has remained in force ever since. At the same time, under the pressure of war, similar laws were promulgated by many other countries.

Nevertheless from the very beginning of the existence of a unified Italy in 1859², a passport was needed in order to leave the kingdom legally. To find the departure date of transoceanic emigrants from Italy and their destinations in the nineteenth century, a list of passport applications would seem to be the place to begin. Unfortunately, these lists have been very difficult, if not impossible to find. Trafford R Cole in his book³, *Italian Genealogical Records*, considers these records to be 'one of the most difficult sources to research'.

However, we have recently been able to examine documents containing two such

lists from the contiguous *comuni*⁴ of Tirano and Villa di Tirano in the Province of Sondrio, Lombardy Region, Italy.

The first⁵ document lists passports issued by the *Comune di Tirano* for the years 1873 to 1891, although the list for 1882 is missing. This document, with about 800 entries, has been discussed and analysed extensively by one of us⁶. The second less formal document⁷, from the neighbouring *Comune di Villa di Tirano* is in a small exercise book containing about 500 separate entries on 24 pages. As discussed below, we found that the first 168 names in this document were of people from the *comune* who were known to be abroad at the beginning of 1865. Then there followed lists of passports issued in the years 1872 to 1892. The document from Tirano has also been analysed statistically by Sabrina Albanese for Jacqueline Templeton⁸ and a transcription has recently been brought to our notice⁹.

The province of Sondrio consists essentially of two valleys, the smaller, the Valchiavenna in the west and the larger, the Valtellina, traversed by the upper Adda river in the east. Both valleys open onto Lake Como. Tirano and Villa di Tirano are in the Valtellina and lie approximately 50 km from the lake. Only 7% of the land in the province is cultivable. This hardly provided an easy living and a widespread system of seasonal migration to neighbouring states was the norm for some centuries. Driven by harsh economic reality from the 1850s onwards it is not surprising that people from the province would be among the first transoceanic migrants from Italy. Their destinations were America (both North and South) and also Australia. Jacqueline Templeton in her 1995 paper¹⁰ has discussed the reasons for the marked preference of the Valtellinese to migrate to Australia whereas those from Valchiavenna largely chose America.

The last 500 years in the Valtellina

In 1512, the *Grigioni* from the Swiss Canton immediately to the north conquered the Valtellina and were to rule it

until 1797, except for a brief period from 1620 to 1639. Sondrio province has always been a border land, but for those nearly 300 years, the border was to its south - catholics ruled by protestants. In 1797, the French were welcomed with high expectations, however their rule was much more repressive than that of the *Grigioni*. The border was now immediately to the north and Tirano and Villa di Tirano were right on it. With the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the Austrians became their new rulers. They inherited a desperately poor province with hardly a road worthy of the name and the valley land marshy and subject to frequent flooding. The construction of stop banks along the Adda and the draining of marshes was begun, but more importantly between 1815 and 1828 nearly 300 km of roads were built and a road along the eastern side of Lake Como to Lecco was constructed. Roads were constructed over the Spluga Pass to the north of Chiavenna and the Stelvio Pass to link the Valtellina with the Alto Adige and the road over the Aprica Pass leading to Brescia was reconstructed. However, the economy, already hard hit by the incompetence and repression of the French went from bad to worse.

Wine produced from the terraced slopes on the northern side of the valley of the Adda was overwhelmingly the most important export from the Valtellina. The very good prices for wine in the years 1813 to 1817 encouraged a big increase in grape plantings, so that by 1845, the area of land in vineyards was twice that in 1800. However, inevitably this huge increase in output led to very low prices. That would have been enough, but a 'mistake' in calculating the land tax led to an excessively high tax that was quite unsupportable. Worse was to come. As we discuss below, the grape harvest failed disastrously for 14 years from 1847. Stefano Jacini¹¹ in 1858 called Sondrio province the 'Ireland of Lombardy'. Why did anyone stay? But to leave you needed a passport.

Nineteenth century Italian passports

These passports were one page only and valid for one year. Their main features are seen in the extract (Fig. 1.) of that of Ettore

Checchi, issued at Florence in March 1876. Issued in the name of Vittorio Emanuele II, King of Italy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs 'prayed' that the authorities would grant free passage to Checchi who had declared that he was going to New Zealand. His age (23 yrs) was given as well as height in the most general terms (tall) and details concerning hair and eye colour. In addition, his profession (engineer), place of birth (Pisa) and present domicile (Firenze) were also listed. This general one page format remained in use from before the 1850s until at least the first decade of the 19th century. The present multi-page format with a photograph of the bearer was in use before 1920.

Legal and illegal emigration

Before issuing a passport, the authorities sought assurance that, among other things, the would-be emigrant owed no debts, was not leaving a family without support and perhaps most importantly was not liable for military service. A passport would not be issued to a young man in the year in which he turned 18, that is, the year in which he was required to register for military service. If drafted, he had two years of service to complete before he could expect to apply successfully for a passport,

but even then had to inform the military authorities where he was going. A person who did not meet these requirements would need to leave the country illegally (*emigrazione clandestina*). For a border province like Sondrio in the Lombardy Region, this was not so difficult. The border with Switzerland was immediately to the north of the province. Being in mountain terrain, it was largely unpatrolled and the population knew the mountains well. Transhumance, in which animals were taken to alpine pastures in summer was part of their very life. By the second half of the 19th century smuggling across the mountains from Switzerland was widely practised¹². The best paths across them were well known. Someone who was fit could climb from the centre of Villa di Tirano to the Swiss border near Lughina in two hours.

A young man still liable for military service could still obtain a passport. An application by a brother not liable¹³ for such service would be made. The very general nature of the passport description would then allow the young man to migrate apparently legally. Stories of such happenings are common among their descendants. Evidence from the matching of naturalization applications, passenger lists,

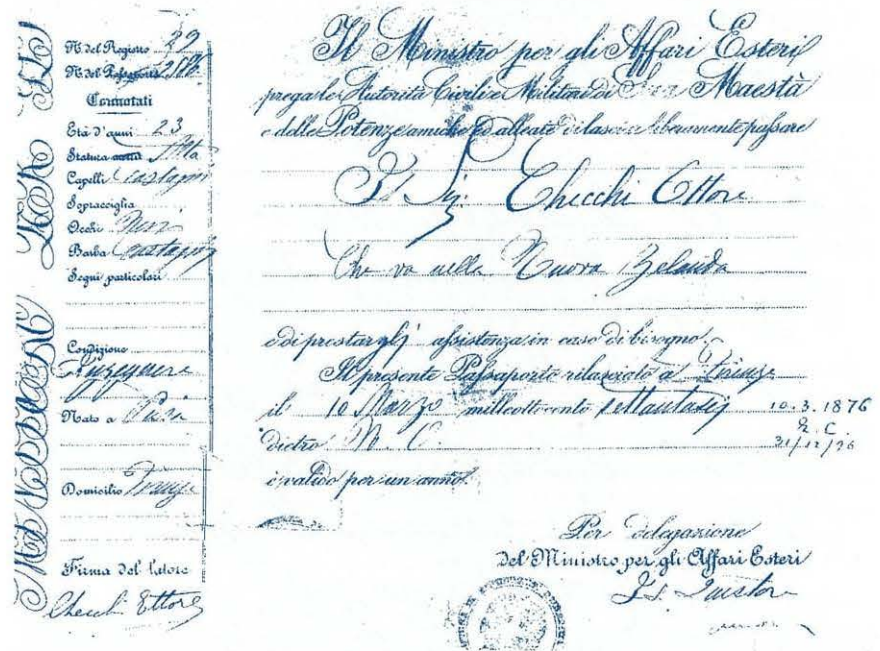


Fig 1. An extract from the passport, issued 10 March 1876, to Ettore Checchi, passenger on the Fritz Reuter, departed from Hamburg 12 April 1876, and arrived at Wellington, New Zealand, 7 Aug 1876. Although an engineer, he was described as a labourer on the passenger list. After a short time in Wellington he went to Melbourne, where by 1892, he was Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department.

vital records in both Italy and Australia, as well as the lists we are discussing provide several examples.

Other archival sources

We were able to understand the first part of the document from Villa di Tirano by reference to a census¹⁴ carried out as of 1 January 1865. This 'Registro di Popolazione' lists all members of the comune by family. The first entries are for families in the *Contrada*¹⁵ del Ragno (nearest to Tirano) and then they move successively down the valley, sequentially listing families from *contrade* like Valpilasca, Sonvico, Maranta, Derada, San Antonio, Pedosi, Dessedo, Campagna and then across the Adda to the *contrade* of Stazzona. Even if a member of a family was abroad, they would still be listed together with their country of residence. A similar census¹⁶ exists for Tirano - a 'Ruolo Generale' dating from 1834. Both censuses were

updated for some time. Military draft lists ('Liste di Leva') survive (with some gaps) for the years subsequent to 1856 in the Archivio di Stato, Sondrio. These effectively list all males who survived until the age of 18. For those migrating after the mid 1870s these easily accessible records can be used to identify individuals with more certainty, especially in the Villa di Tirano list which is not as detailed as that for Tirano.

What did the two documents look like?

Neither the *Registri dei nullaosta* nor the *Elenco di individui* were compiled with great care. Consequently it was often difficult to decipher them. Poor handwriting and abbreviations were also problems. In the case of the list from Villa di Tirano, parts of some entries were in faded pencil and parts of other entries were written over or crossed out, increasing the difficulty.

Elenco di individui emigrati all'estero 1892, Villa di Tirano

Extracts from this document are shown in Figs. 2a and 2b. The first page (see Fig. 2a) began with an overall heading and column headings. There then followed two sections. The first was a list of 101 names which are of individuals from Villa di Tirano¹⁷ itself, while the second was a list of 67 names headed 'Stazzona'. Only one date (1863) appeared anywhere in these two lists (see Fig. 2a). Comparison with a sample of entries in the *Registro di Popolazione* enabled us to identify the way in which these two sections were constructed. They are the names of all those who were known to be abroad at the beginning of 1865 as noted in the *Registro di Popolazione*. A comparison with passenger lists for arrival in Melbourne, which places the date of departure of many of these individuals in the years 1859 - 1864, confirms this inference. These two sections are therefore

*Elenco
degli individui Emigrati*

<i>N°</i>	<i>et�</i>	<i>Cognome e Nome paterno e figli</i>	<i>Condizione</i>	<i>Paese</i>
1	12	<i>Agosti Felice fu D.</i>	<i>celibe</i>	<i>Australia</i>
2	13	<i>Agosti Giacomo fu Ruggio</i>	<i>celibe</i>	<i>Australia 1863</i>
3	16	<i>Guazzi Agost. fu Giacomo</i>	<i>celibe</i>	
4	21	<i>Agosti Giacomo di Martino</i>	<i>?</i>	
5	26	<i>Merlo Benedetto Paolo di Gio.</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>Australia</i>
6	24	<i>Merlo Benedetto Paolo di Gio.</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
7	34	<i>Canobbio Filippo fu Gio. - fu Canobbio</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
8	41	<i>Canobbio Paolo fu Paolo</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>

Fig. 2a. An extract from the *Elenco degli individui emigrati*, Villa di Tirano. As discussed in the text, entries 1 - 8 list emigrants from the *contrade* of Ragno and Valpilasca who had left before 1865. Entry no. 7 is for Filippo Canobbio. After arriving in Australia in 1860, he moved to New Zealand in 1865 where even as late as 1916, it was noted that he was a gold miner.

1888

28 Gennaio - Karante Giovanni di Giovanni
 " " - Poletti Antonio di Antonio
 " " - Poletti Pietro di Domenico
 22/2 - Bogno Giovanni di Giacomo
 " - Zappalà Giovanni

Fig. 2b. This second extract lists the first five passports issued in 1888. The second, to Antonio Poletti, actually allowed his younger brother, Giovanni (b. 28 Sep 1868) to migrate to Australia and avoid the draft.

particularly interesting as they document the very first transoceanic migrants from Villa di Tirano in the middle of the 19th century. A third section, arranged chronologically, listed passports issued in the years 1872 - 1892. A further loose leaf had a short list headed *Rimpatriati nel 10 gen[naio] 1888* (Returned as at 10 January 1888). In all but one case the 8 people in this list can be associated with a return to Villa di Tirano of people in the rest of the document. This could have been either temporary or permanent.

Registri dei nullaosta per passaporti per l'estero, Tirano

Unlike the document from Villa di Tirano, this consisted of several sub-documents with varying formats. The list of passports issued before 1883 was in a single book. This was not in tabular form and mixed in with the passport applications were those for permission to carry firearms etc. No list labelled 1882 has been found. Whether lost or whether applications made in 1882 were merely added to those in the list

labelled 1881 is not known. However, there was a separate register for 1883 and each subsequent year. The tabular format of these registers is shown in Fig. 3.

Information in the two lists

The more detailed of the two lists is that from Tirano. As its title implies, it is indeed a list of those to whom passports were issued and each entry generally gave the family name and name of the applicant together with that of their father. Age or

N.	Data della progr. richiesta	Cognome, Nome e Paternità	Luogo e Data di nascita	Professione	Stato Civile	Destinazione
1	2 Jan.	Marchionni Nicola di Giovanni	Tirano 1857	muratore	celibe	Nizza - Genova
2	5 Gennaio	Tenni Andrea di Giac.	Tirano d'anni 25	Agricoltore	coniugato con prole	Melbourne / Australia
3	5 " "	De Luis Carlo di Pietro	Tirano d'anni 31	"	coniugato con prole	Melbourne / Australia

Fig. 3 An extract from the *nullaosta*. It is for the first three applicants in 1884 and gives the left hand page only. On the right hand page were three further columns, one for the date of departure, the next listed the documents needed to support the application. The third was available for any comments. Andrea Tenni and Carlo De Luis boarded the *John Elder* at Naples about 18 January 1884 and arrived in Melbourne on 26 February. Their passports were issued on 7 January.

year of birth was recorded as well as occupation and civil status (married, single, etc.). Beginning with 1883, the *comune* of birth was also given. As expected, this was mostly Tirano. The country or city of destination was generally given. If a married couple or a family group were applying, in general a single passport would be applied for and issued. For the years 1873 - 1879 and 1883 - 1893, the application date is also given, while from 1883, the departure date is given as well. The difference between these two dates was generally less than a month and sometimes was less than a week. It appears that the passports were issued within a few days of the request.

The origin of the first two sections of the document from Villa di Tirano has been outlined above. They were exactly what the title claimed: a list of emigrants. Like the document from Tirano, the third section covering the years 1872 - 1892 refers to the issuing of passports. For 1882 and the subsequent years, direct comparison between the actual date in the list and the date of departure of the ship for Australia was possible for some of the people in the list. The date given in this list generally preceded the ship's departure date by less than a month and was sometimes little more than a week. By comparison with the Tirano list it could be either the application date or date of issue.

- a Of this total, 3 were for New Zealand.
- b Of this total, 14 were for Uruguay.
- c Both 'America' and 'North America' included.
- d More than one (or an unspecified) destination, or a destination not included in the table.
- e All to Australia
- f Of this total, 2 to Peru, 4 to Mexico, 1 to Chile, 5 to Brazil

	TIRANO		VILLA	
Destination	no. of migrants	% of migrants	no. of migrants	% of migrants
Northern Europe	26	3%	16	5%
'Australia'	314 ^a	35%	174 ^e	51%
'Argentina'	302 ^b	34%	41 ^f	12%
'America' ^c	66	7%	101	30%
Switzerland	130	15%	2	1%
other ^d	54	6%	7	2%
totals	892	100%	341	~100%

Table 1: Declared destinations from Tirano (1873 - 1891) and Villa di Tirano (1872 - 1892). The few whose destination was given as 'Italy' or 'interno' are not included.

Databases extracted from the two documents

In order to make the information in these documents more widely available in Australia and New Zealand, we have written a brief Report¹⁸ which contains databases extracted from each document and deposited it in the archives of the Italian Historical Society, Melbourne. The Report begins with a brief introduction, then for each *comune*, the original lists have been transcribed and also sorted alphabetically by family name to produce lists which allow individuals to be more easily found.

Comments on the document from Tirano

A transcription of the complete *Registri dei Nullaosta per passaporti per l'estero* from Tirano which gives additional information is given in the *Tesi di Laurea* of one of us, (Emanuela Menghina¹⁹). Since they were not needed for the purpose of the thesis, neither the date of issue or departure is included in this transcription. A copy of the thesis has also been deposited with the Italian Historical Society, Melbourne. In most cases, despite the decipherment difficulties the information given for each person gives an unambiguous identification.

Declared destinations

Australia has been the preferred destination for migrants from the region of the Valtellina centred on Tirano. See for instance Templeton (1995)²⁰. The analysis of the declared destinations from both *comuni* confirms this, however, the patterns are slightly different as shown in Table 1 and Fig. 4. To simplify the presentation, 'Australia' includes three *tiranese*²¹ who gave New Zealand as their destination while 'Argentina' includes 14 who declared for Uruguay. Twelve *villaschi*²² with destinations in other South American countries (or Mexico) have been added to the number for 'Argentina'. 'America' includes destinations specified as America, North America and 'Stati Uniti'.

In round figures, for Tirano, one third chose Australia and a further third chose South America, of whom most declared their destination to be Argentina. Only 8% chose 'America'. For Villa di Tirano, the preference for Australia was stronger. One half chose that country, with one third for 'America'. Only 12% chose South American destinations. The two charts illustrate these differences. The significant fraction of *tiranese* with Switzerland as a destination is related to an established seasonal migration, mostly in March and



Fig. 4 Declared destinations

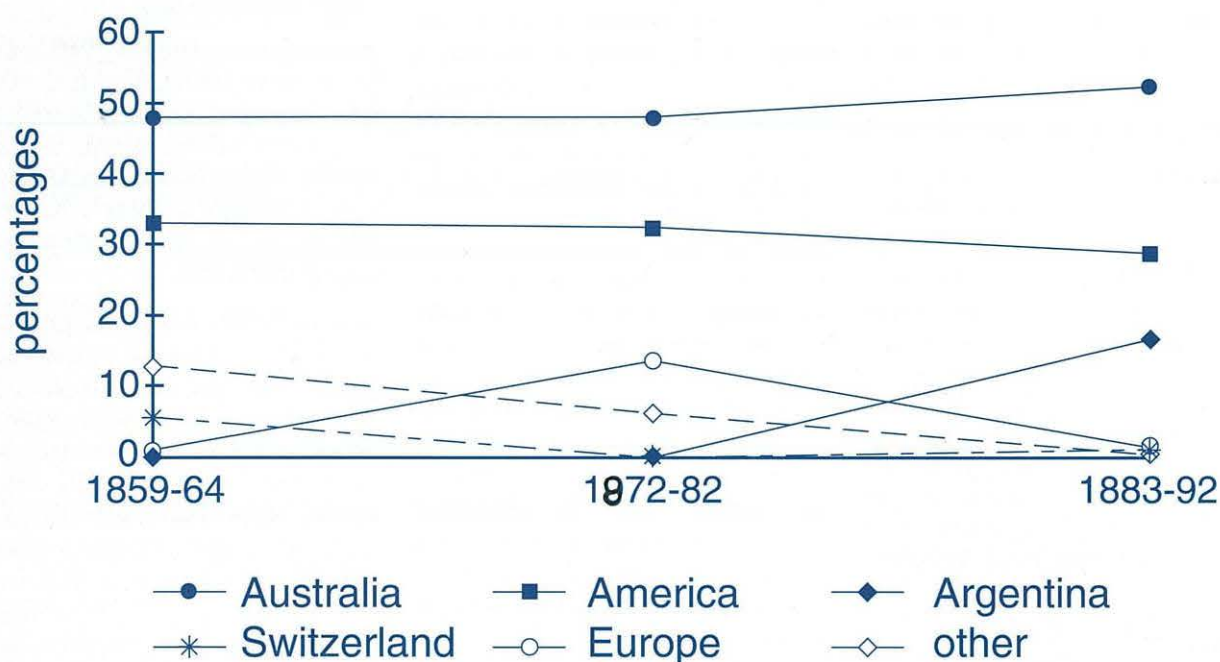


Fig. 3 Villa di Tirano, declared destinations

April. The corresponding migration of the *villaschi* was to the alpine pastures in the Alpi Orobie to its south - no need for a passport²³. It was not until 1881 (Tirano) and 1884 (Villa di Tirano), that Buenos Aires appeared as a destination. Its popularity grew quickly among the *tiranesi* and for the years 1883 - 1891, Argentina attracted more migrants than Australia. For the *villaschi*, this was never the case, although its popularity did increase.

From Table 1, for the years 1873 - 1891 after subtracting those going to Switzerland, total migrant numbers were 762 and 322 for Tirano and Villa di Tirano respectively. These are 12% and 9% of the 1881 populations²⁴. Not too much can be read into the difference between these numbers, what is significant is that about a tenth of the populations of both *comuni* migrated in those years - mostly to transoceanic destinations.

Villa di Tirano – destinations over time

The information from Villa di Tirano spans more than three decades when that from the first two sections of the document is included. The relative preferences for 'Australia' and 'America' changed only a

little in that time as shown in Fig. 6. For all three epochs, as illustrated in the figure, 'Australia' was preferred by about one half of the migrants and America by about one third. Only in the last epoch were there a significant number, still only 17%, choosing 'Argentina'.

Migration from Villa di Tirano to Australia in the years 1859 - 1864

We searched passenger lists for arrival in Melbourne of men in the first two sections of the document from Villa di Tirano and found the year of departure and arrival for a total of 46 of them. As Table 2 shows,

following a trickle in 1859, there was a strong peak in 1860 with over 20 departures, followed by declining numbers in the four subsequent years. As discussed above, the relative preferences of the *villaschi* for the different transoceanic destinations changed only a little over three decades. If we assume this applies from year to year, we can get a rough estimate of the total numbers leaving Villa di Tirano in each of the years 1859 - 1864. The last column in Table 2 gives this estimate. Of course the total is equal to all of those, (109 + 61 = 170), in the first two sections of the document from Villa di Tirano.

Year	no. departing in year	no. arriving in year at	total departing per year
	from Villa	Melbourne	from Villa
1859	5	3	18
1860	24	22	89
1861	9	7	33
1862	6	12	22
1863	1	0	4
1864	1	2	4
total	46	46	170

Table 2: Migration from Villa di Tirano to Australia in the years 1859 - 1864.

Migration numbers over the years

Fig. 6 gives the number of migrants per year for both *comuni* obtained from Tables 2 and 3 (see below). But remember that we have estimated the numbers for Villa di Tirano for the years 1859 - 1864 and there is no data for Villa di Tirano for the years 1865 - 1871 and for Tirano for the years 1859 - 1872 and 1882 and 1892. Nevertheless, the pattern for Villa di Tirano is striking. There must have been a huge exodus in 1860. Even if we just average the number of migrants for the years 1859 - 1864, that average is exceeded for only four subsequent years. For the two decades beginning with 1872, the migration numbers from Tirano and from Villa di Tirano showed a remarkably similar pattern. A peak in 1873/74 was followed by a trough which lasted until 1880/81. There followed a peak in about 1884 with a minor decline and a peak in 1888/89. With this similarity of patterns for the two *comuni* for these two decades, it seems likely that Tirano, like Villa di Tirano, would also have had a significant migration peak in 1860.

This peak (see Fig. 6) in the early 1860s is clearly related to almost complete failure of the grape harvest in the Valtellina in the years 1850 - 1863. From 1851 until the use of sulphur was found to control it, powdery mildew (*Oidium Tuckerei*) so devastated the harvest that, for example, in 1857, wine production was only four percent of that in 1847²⁵. As Bartolomeo Besta²⁶ observed, 'for 14 pitiless years production completely failed and the

Valtellina was almost liquidated.' The man responsible for demonstrating the effectiveness of sulphur in combating this disease was Luigi Torelli, born in Villa di Tirano, who for two years from December 1859, was Governor of Sondrio Province. Adulterated sulphur and an inexact knowledge of the required application rates gave rise to considerable scepticism concerning the effectiveness of the treatment. Torelli refuted this by a direct demonstration of its worth in a vineyard he had rented for this purpose. By September 1860, he was able to record with some pride²⁷ that this vineyard was 'a beautiful green oasis amidst the destruction caused by the powdery mildew.' With this demonstration and the immediate widespread application of sulphur, wine production increased and the decreased migration over the years 1861 - 1864 can be understood.

The smaller migration rates in the 1870s are a reflection of the gradual improvement in the provincial economy, but with the generally worsening situation for all agriculture in Italy in the 1880s, migration can again be seen as an attempt by the desperately poor *contadini*²⁸ to escape the extreme poverty of the country. This trend was exacerbated in the Valtellina by falling prices for wine and by the advent of another mildew, *peronospora* or downy mildew. The higher migration rates in the 1880s from both Tirano and Villa di Tirano reflect these new disasters. At least the province was spared from the ravages of *filossera* (phylloxera) until the beginning of the 20th century.²⁹

The men who were not in the list from Villa di Tirano

Needless to say, *emigrati clandestini* do not appear on the list. At least 15 of these from Villa di Tirano are known from comparisons between records in Australia and New Zealand and in Sondrio province. It was convenient to have a passport to leave Italy, but far from necessary. Here are some of their stories.

Although **Andrea Bassi** *fu* Giovanni (b. 27 Jan 1871) was issued with a passport on 22 February 1888 and was found as A. Bassi on the *Hohenzollern* which arrived in Melbourne on 13 April of that year, he did not arrive in Australia until 1891. Instead it was his brother, **Pietro Bassi** (b. 14 Dec 1868) who spilled the beans when he applied for naturalisation in 1904. He had been the one on the *Hohenzollern*. Of course, Pietro was declared to be *renitente*³⁰ when he did not appear before the draft board in 1888, as was Andrea when his turn came in 1891. Probably Andrea just found it inconvenient to apply for a passport. Certainly, his name is not in the lists for 1890 or 1891.

On the passenger list of the *Reichstag* when it arrived in Wellington, New Zealand from Hamburg on 6 August 1874 were four men whose home was given as Villa di Tirano. Three of them are in the passport list for that year, however **Giacomo Negri** (b. 8 Oct 1847) is not. It was easier for him to cross into Switzerland and pick up the train for Hamburg in St Moritz than to go to the trouble of applying for a passport.

We don't know just how **Giovanni Poletti-Trott** (b. 17 Feb 1868) made his way to Australia in 1891. He certainly did not apply for a passport and he does not appear on passenger lists for arrival in Melbourne. Nevertheless in 1891 he joined his older brother, **Bortolo** (b. 2 Oct 1864), then living in Bealiba, east of Bendigo. In 1890, Bortolo had however done the right thing and applied for a passport for his voyage to Melbourne. A family story that he then posted his passport back for his brother, to use seems unlikely since his passport would have expired. Is the following a clue? Giovanni was certainly involved in smuggling from Switzerland and would have known the mountains well. In two hours he could have made it to Switzerland

Year	Villa	Tirano	Year	Villa	Tirano
1872	6	n a	1883	41	76
1873	7	69	1884	29	91
1874	13	49	1885	28	61
1875	0	20	1886	16	56
1876	3	9	1887	18	46
1877	5	7	1888	14	98
1878	3	11	1889	47	88
1879	4	12	1890	27	58
1880	20	25	1891	14	49
1881	5	67	1892	14	n a
1882	30	n a	total	344	892

Table 3: The number of people for whom passports were issued per year for each comune for the two decades from 1872. No data was available for Tirano for the years 1872, 1882 and 1892.

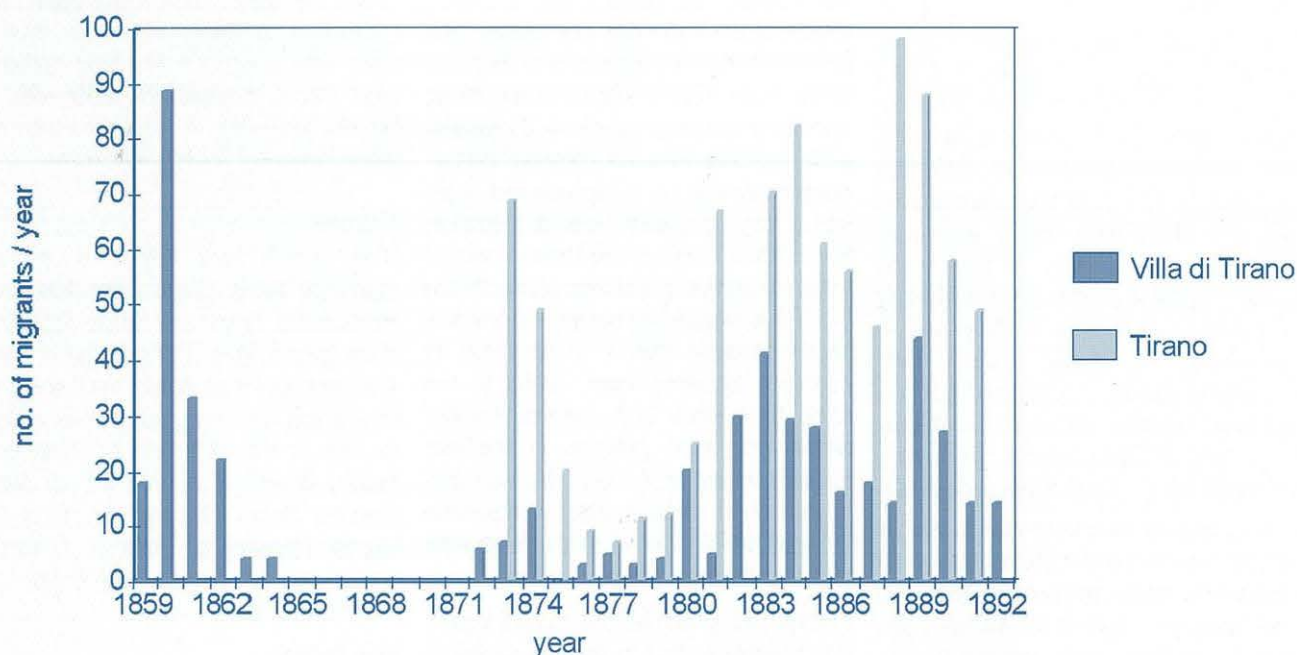


Fig. 6 Migration from Tirano & Villa di Tirano

from Villa di Tirano. Subsequently, he could have travelled by train to London and caught one of the Shaw Saville liners which called at Hobart on their way to New Zealand. From there he would have travelled by an inter colonial steamer to Melbourne. Bernardo Maffescioni from Teglio who arrived in Dunolly in early 1890 used this route. Dunolly is 21 km south east of Bealiba.

Except for those who used their brother's passport, almost all of these *emigrati clandestini* boarded ships in northern Europe, emphasising that they would have crossed the border into Switzerland before travelling by train to one of these ports. Just when **Domenico Moratti** (b. 15 Aug 1862) first migrated to Australia is uncertain, but in 1882 he was recorded as *renitente*, nevertheless he returned to Villa di Tirano and in 1901 presented himself to the draft board and was duly enlisted. That he had skipped the draft 19 years before did not appear to be held against him.

The earliest transoceanic migrants from Villa di Tirano

Here are thumbnail sketches of three of the 46 we have identified.

The earliest migrants we can certainly identify are **Battista Genetti** (b. 4 Mar

1832) and **Tomaso Damiani** (b. 3 April 1837) who left Liverpool on 5 February 1859 on the *Marco Polo* and arrived in Melbourne on 13 May. Genetti married Hannah Walsh in 1876, bought land and settled in Bealiba, about 90 km west of Bendigo in Victoria. By 1892 he had 5 acres of grapes and at his death, owned over 200 acres (81 hectares) of land at Bealiba. However, the rest of the tale is tragic. His only son died when one year old and his wife in 1887. Although his three daughters were alive when he died in 1908, all were dead within a year. We have been unable to find any further record of Damiani in Australia.

As they go through life, some people seem to turn up in all of the official records. **Filippo Canobbio** (b. 5 Mar 1839) is one of these. He arrived in Melbourne on the *Red Jacket* on 27 April 1860 along with seven others from Villa di Tirano. In October 1865, he crossed the Tasman sea on the *Gothenburg* to Hokitika, Westland and was soon mining for gold in that province. According to the Italian Consulate at Melbourne he was still there in 1868. The Italian censuses in 1877 and 1880 placed him at Waimea, Westland and still mining for gold. At his naturalisation in 1896, the name of Waimea had been changed to Goldsborough, but his

occupation was the same. Despite his naturalization, he was registered as an alien in 1916 and at the reputed age of 80 was unmarried and still a gold miner, by now at Kumara, where he died in 1920.

The name of a certain **Giovanni Poletti-Riz** *fu* Giovanni is the last entry in the 'Stazzona' section of the document from Villa di Tirano. He was either 'Giovanni Politti' [sic] on the *Persian* or 'Greani Politto' [sic] on *Commodore Perry*, which both arrived in Melbourne in 1860. Sometimes official records can lead you astray: when a Giovanni Poletti married Annie Stewart at Jamieson in 1868, his birthplace was recorded as Ancona which is a seaport on the Adriatic coast of Italy. Actually he was this Giovanni Poletti-Riz (b. 14 Nov 1823). His bride, aged 25 got a much older man than she thought, since he declared his age to be 35 instead of 44. Nevertheless by 1888, they had nine children, all born at Jamieson, a gold mining town now situated on the shores of Lake Eildon in Victoria. He must have expected his sons to follow him as gold miners from an early age, since he and two of his sons are listed as directors of the 'Queen of the Alps Quartz Mining Company' when it was registered in 1872. The ages of his sons would have been one and three years!

Conclusions

Most of those who migrated from the area centred on Tirano to Australia and New Zealand in the latter half of the 19th century spoke no English and had only their bodily strength to offer their new countries. Many were illiterate. Memoirs are rare and letters have mostly been lost. Often the only sources of information concerning these people are spread thinly in public records both in Italy and in Australasia. In many cases, their movements can be reconstructed, but only by linking together pieces of information from many of those sources, particularly across the Italian-English language divide. In this paper we have been able to directly demonstrate the rather different choices of destination made by people from two neighbouring *comuni* in the Valtellina and directly confirm their preference for Australia. However, from 1883, Argentina became the preferred destination for the *tiranesi*. We were able to deduce the way in

which about one third of the document from Villa di Tirano was constructed and found that the people referred to migrated in the years 1859 - 1864, making those with transoceanic destinations, the earliest such migrants from this *comune*. Further analysis allowed us to deduce that there was a very significant peak in migration from Villa di Tirano in 1860 and to relate it to the disastrous loss of wine production in the 1850s caused by powdery mildew. It is highly probable that a similar peak in migration occurred from Tirano at the same time since both *comuni* showed similar migration patterns in the two decades beginning in 1872. We have also been able to make a direct comparison between the number of migrants and the total population of the two *comuni*.

Knowing those who left the *comuni* legally, it is possible to find those who appear in records in Australasia who did not. We have also commented on these *emigranti clandestini*.

These analyses depended upon the production of easily accessible lists of those who emigrated. We have gathered these into a companion paper with an introduction which is deposited with the Italian Historical Society, Melbourne.

Thanks

Many people have helped us, but we especially thank Diego Zoia, Assessore, Municipio di Tirano and Fausto Schivardi, Municipio di Villa di Tirano who found these records for us. Again, the first author remembers the many kindnesses shown to him in the Valtellina by Francesco Palazzi Trevelli of the Archivio di Stato, Sondrio, Bruno Ciapponi Landi of the Museo Etnografico Tiranese, Giacomo Ganza and the Moratti and Poletti-Trott families of Villa di Tirano.

Alan Poletti:

a.poletti@xtra.com.nz

Emanuela Menghina:

menghina@virgilio.it

Notes

- 1 *New Zealand Gazette* (No. 90, August 21), p. 2806, 1916.
- 2 This is the year when as a result of the armistice of Villafranca on 11 July, Lombardy was ceded to Piedmont by the Austrian rulers. In the Valtellina, a spontaneous uprising at Sondrio on 29 May had caused the remaining Austrian garrison to flee to Bormio while in the succeeding month the Piedmontese moved 12,000 men into the valley and Garibaldi and his brigade arrived on 27 June. At first the passports were issued in the name of the King of Sardinia, but by 1861, they were issued in the name of Vittorio Emanuele II, King of Italy.
- 3 *Italian Genealogical Records - how to use Italian civil, ecclesiastical, & other records in family history research*. Trafford R Cole, 1995. Ancestry Incorporated, PO Box 476, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA
- 4 The *comuni* are the basic units of local government in Italy. Their sizes vary widely from, for instance, that of the *comune* of Rome with some millions of inhabitants to ones like Semio which neighbours Tirano with fewer than 500 inhabitants. There are 78 *comuni* in the province of Sondrio.
- 5 *Registri del rilascio di nullaosta per passaporti per l'estero*. 1873 - 1891. *Sicurezza Pubblica*. "Registri di legittimazione" Sez. 1870 - 1893. b.93, fasc. 1. Archivio Municipale, Tirano.
- 6 Emanuela Menghina, *L'emigrazione a Tirano dal 1860 - 1914*, Tesi di laurea, Facoltà di economia e commercio, Università degli studi di Brescia, anno accademico 1998/1999.
- 7 *Elenco di individui emigrati all'estero 1892*. Archivio Comunale, Villa di Tirano (SO), Italia, Cart N. 109, Titolo 13, Fascicolo 9.
- 8 *Dalle montagne al bush - l'emigrazione valtellinese in Australia (1860 - 1960) nelle lettere degli emigranti*. a cura di John Lack, trad. di Paola Teresa Rossetti, Museo Etnografico Tiranese, Piazza Basilica 30-23030 Madonna di Tirano (SO), Italy.
- 9 'Passport Applications - emigration from Italy, ANAL'. This list was evidently compiled by an English speaker. In quite a few cases, it gives different interpretations of both family and given names. For 1873 - 1879 and 1883 - 1891 the month of application is given, while for 1883 and succeeding years the month of departure is given as well. This and a photocopy of the original document has been deposited with the Italian Historical Society in the material originally collected by Jacqueline Templeton. We thank Anna Davine, University of Melbourne for bringing this material to our notice and Laura Mecca, IHS, for making it available.
- 10 Jacqueline Templeton 'The Swiss connection: the origins of the Valtellina-Australia migrations.' *Australian Historical Studies*, 26 393 (1995).
- 11 Stefano Jacini, *Sulle condizioni economiche della provincia di Sondrio*, Stab. Civilli, Milano e Verona, 1858, reprinted in 1963 by Banca Popolare di Sondrio.
- 12 Massimo Mandelli & Diego Zoia, *La carga - contrabbando in Valtellina e Valchiavenna*, l'officina del libro, Sondrio, 1998.
- 13 Exemptions were granted for several reasons, such as 'brother already serving' or 'eldest son of a widow', but a much greater fraction (about 2/5) were rejected for health reasons.
- 14 *Registro di Popolazione (1865)* - Archivio Comunale, Villa di Tirano (SO), Italy.
- 15 A *contrada* is a further subdivision of a *comune*.
- 16 *Ruolo Generale della popolazione di Tirano*, 1834, Archivio Municipale, Tirano (SO), Italy.
- 17 There are two main population centres in the *Comune* of Villa di Tirano, that on the north bank of the Adda which corresponds with the ecclesiastical parish of Villa di Tirano and the parish of Stazzona on the south bank. These two lists are allocating the applicants to the appropriate parish.
- 18 Alan Poletti & Emanuela Menghina, 2003, *Passports issued at Tirano (1873 - 1891) and Villa di Tirano (1859 - 1864 & 1872 - 1892)*. This list is deposited at the Italian Historical Society.
- 19 Emanuela Menghina, *op. cit.*
- 20 Jacqueline Templeton (1995), *Australian Historical Studies*, 26, April 1995, 393, *op. cit.*
- 21 People from Tirano
- 22 People from Villa di Tirano
- 23 Giulio Perotti, 'Emigranti e villeggianti in Valtellina e Valchiavenna nell'ultimo decennio del sec. XIX dalle relazioni dei parroci', *Bollettino della Società Storica Valtellinese*, No. 46, 227 (19930)
- 24 In 1881, the populations of Tirano and Villa di Tirano were 6199 and 3501 respectively.
- 25 Stefano Jacini, *op. cit.* p. 23.
- 26 Bartolomeo Besta, quoted by Templeton, *op. cit.*
- 27 As quoted by Giulio Spini (p. 30), in *Atti del convegno - Luigi Torelli nel primo centenario della morte 1887 - 1987*, ed Bruno Ciapponi Landi, Società Storica Valtellinese, Sondrio 1991.
- 28 *Contadino* is often translated by the English word 'peasant'. It is rather wider than that and is more 'a person whose livelihood depends on agriculture'. A large fraction of the *contadini* in the Valtellina actually rented land in perpetuity (*a livello*) and were often referred to as *proprietari*.
- 29 D. Benetti & M. Guidetti, *Storia di Valtellina e Valchiavenna*, Jaca Book SpA, Milano, 2nd ed 1999.
- 30 *Renitente* - did not appear for his military draft board interview.

Genealogical Hints

Digging for our Italian Roots

by Alan Poletti

This is a revised version of the talk given by the author to the Società Dante Alighieri in Auckland on 1 December 2002. It will be of great assistance to anyone with Italian ancestry researching their family history in New Zealand and Australia. Alan can be contacted by e-mail at a.poletti@xtra.co.nz

Introduction

Seeking our Italian roots needs to be more than a search for the place and date of birth of our ancestor. It is an important first step. But then we must try to understand the society of which they were a part, the history of their region and what drove them to migrate to *la fine del mondo* - to New Zealand and Australia. I will talk about the places where we can find the information. The best place to start is 'at home' - with family records (written or oral) if you can. Official records can often give answers to some questions, though they, like the family records can be incorrect or misleading. Accessing Italian official records can be done by mail, but it is more fun and you are more likely to get results if you go there. Using illustrative examples, I will discuss some of the archives and the material they are likely to contain.

Where to start

First, arm yourself with an exercise book and a pen - a laptop will do instead. As your hunt develops, record the date, what you are doing and what you have found. If you have not found anything - record that too. It is at times as useful to know what you haven't found, as it is to know what you have.

Now it's time to talk to that very old aunt or grandmother. What do they know? Write it down. You will find that some of what they tell you is quite right, but commonly some will be exaggerated, some events telescoped, some attached to the wrong

person and so on. Nevertheless, write it all down. Even almost mythical stories can hold important clues. Sometimes there has been a family reunion. With a bit of luck someone will have produced a small family history. Get a copy. Again, as your search continues, some of the things may turn out to be not quite right, but even these can give you very useful clues. Keep on writing it all down. You may even know of the descendents of other Italians who migrated to New Zealand or Australia who may have interacted with the subject of your search. See if they know anything. Write it down.

It's now time to look for information in the many archival sources which are available. But keep on writing.

Example

The descendents of Domenico and Maria Moratti held a reunion in 1983 and for the occasion, Fred Moratti, one of their grandchildren, wrote a family history of a few pages. Of Domenico and Maria's early life he said:

Our Grandfather, Domenico Moratti, born 1850, came from Lombardy, Italy. Our Grandmother, Maria, born 29th February 1859 - died 8th September, 1939 (80 years), formerly Maria Turchi, came from Leghorn, Tuscany, Italy. They emigrated (government assisted) to New Zealand from Germany on the *Reichstag*, landing in Wellington, 6-8 August, 1874, continuing on to Jackson Bay.

They presently came to New Plymouth where they were married on 12th June 1879. They settled at Ratapiko, where they bought a rough farm on Tariki Road, which at that time was heavy dense bushland.

He also mentioned:

Little is remembered of our Grandfather other than that on a return visit to Italy in later years, he fell ill with Pneumonia and died... Granny made several trips back to Italy, during lonely years after Grandad died....

My own father, writing of his father, Giovanni Poletti from Villa di Tirano, Sondrio Province, Lombardy, who arrived in New Zealand in 1893, mentioned Domenico and Maria:

... he got in touch with a family of the name of Moratti. This couple had come from Villa Di Tirano, so to New Zealand he sailed and landed in Auckland. From there he took passage in a coastal vessel which brought him to New Plymouth. The Morattis lived at Tarata....

Starting with these few facts, I have been able to piece together an amazingly complete history of Domenico, Maria and their parents and to discover exactly where they came from. I have learnt a great deal about their migration to New Zealand (Maria's parents and family were not on the *Reichstag*, but on a later boat - the *Gutenberg*). I have learnt something of their early life in the country as well as that of Maria's father. I have been able to flesh out the reference to Jackson Bay. It was actually Jackson's Bay in the far south of Westland. Maria's parents and family spent over two terrible years there. Domenico never went near the place. There are other inconsistencies and Maria's date of birth must be wrong.

But these extracts illustrate very well the strengths and weaknesses to expect in family histories. What is correct? What is supposition? Have events concerning one person been attached to another? Have events been transposed or telescoped? Is it possible to confirm the several statements? If not, can their origin be understood and explained?

These questions and similar ones concerning others who migrated from Italy to New Zealand or Australia have also given me a good excuse for travelling to Italy several times in the last few years. The food is good, the wine is great and I have made some very good friends. What more could I ask of these searches? But now to work.

Archival sources in New Zealand and Australia

Where can we check up on these family histories and flesh them out? In general, most civic libraries contain a wide variety of archival material and many have family history sections. National Archives, Wellington and its various branches hold many records detailing the interaction of individuals with the government of New Zealand at many levels, as of course does National Archives of Australia. You will find more general material both in university and civic libraries.

Births, deaths and marriages

For Australia, computer searchable indices have been produced by each state and the Family History section of most city libraries can be expected to have them. Having found the index entry, a photocopy of a certificate might cost around A\$18. For New Zealand a project to produce a similar searchable index has just begun, however indices by year should be available on microfiche in most city libraries and Births, Deaths and Marriages Registries. In this case a photocopy of a certificate will set you back NZ\$30. You need to be selective. (For New Zealand, birth certificates were compiled quarterly and indices to the

Registers can be used to find the place of registration - perhaps you can do without all birth certificates?) These certificates can at times be extremely useful. At times, the information they lack can be extremely frustrating. It can also be wrong. Marriage certificates in the state of Victoria from as early as 1865 were quite detailed. However those for two men from Villa di Tirano illustrate the problems: the birthplace of Martino Borserio (b. ~1838, married 1865) was given merely as Lombardy, while the birthplace of Giovanni Poletti-Riz (b. 14 Nov 1823, married 1868) was recorded quite wrongly as Ancona which is on the Adriatic coast. So - don't forget that exercise book. It will let you check one source of information against another.

Before 1880, Marriage Certificates in New Zealand didn't record the place of birth or the names of parents of the bride or the groom. The search is just that little bit harder. The image below is that of Domenico and Maria's marriage certificate. Ages were generally given, but not always - sometimes age was recorded as just 'full'. Witnesses' names were however recorded and for Domenico and Maria's marriage, they were Carlo Turchi, labourer of Inglewood and Carolina Turchi, spinster of Inglewood. What was their relationship to Maria?

MARRIAGES IN THE DISTRICT OF NEW ZEALAND 1879

No.	DATE, NAME, AND WHERE	NAME AND RESIDENCE	AGE	DATE OF PRESENT	RESIDENCE	NAME OF WITNESSES	DATE OF PRESENT
15	June 12 th	Domenico Moratti	20	Present	Resident	Carlo Turchi	1879
16	In the City of New Zealand	Maria Turchi	20	Present	Resident	Carolina Turchi	1879

Married, after the delivery to me of the Certificate required by the Act of the General Assembly of New Zealand, intitled "The Marriage Act, 1854."

This Marriage was solemnized between us,

In the presence of us,

Carlo Turchi, Labourer of Inglewood

Carolina Turchi, Spinster of Inglewood

C. A. Whiteman, Clerk of the District

I declare that the above is a true Copy of the Entry in the Register Book of Marriages kept by me.

Reg. No. 15-17

Marriage certificate of Domenico Moratti and Maria Turchi, 12th June 1879, New Plymouth

1 July 1882	Maria Agostina	Domenico Moratti	12 June 1879	Maria Moratti	Domenico Moratti
Tariki Road	Not present	Tirano	New Plymouth	Inglewood	Tariki Road
Switzerland		Lombardy	New Zealand	Switzerland	Switzerland
		Italy		Italy	Italy

Birth certificate of Maria Agostina Moratti, born 1 July 1882

Birth certificates can sometimes be unexpectedly useful. That for their eldest daughter (born 1882), gave Domenico's birthplace as Tirano (which was nearly correct) and confirmed Maria's birthplace. I will talk about death certificates later.

Passenger lists

Vogel's assisted migration scheme brought over 100,000 people into New Zealand in the 1870s. They travelled on more than 350 ships and passenger lists exist for essentially all of them. Photocopies are available in National Archives, Wellington. They have also been microfilmed, for instance, Auckland Museum has them in this form. That for the *Reichstag* (from Hamburg) revealed Domenico and six other Italian names, but not Maria.

The extract from the passenger list below illustrates a number of 'traps for young players'. Three of the four Italian surnames are spelt incorrectly. They should be 'Borserini', 'Moratti' and 'Pasini'. While the ages of the first two are correct, Pasini's should have been 42 (not 39). I remind you that this is actually a very clear list. Others give wildly idiosyncratic spellings. Misinterpretations by compilers of indices can compound the problem.

Of course, there are other passenger lists and there are even indices for some of them. Also, as ships arrived, the local papers would publish such lists, but most of our ancestors would probably have been in the section: '... and 37 passengers in steerage class'.

35	1	Lindauer Gottfried	35
36	2	Haverber Hans Aug	29
		Ernestine	30
		Anna	
37	2	Joachim	35
		Mari	31
39	1	Grünke Carl	22
40	1	Berg Arnold	23
41	4	Borserini Giovanni	30
		Moratti Domenico	24
		Pasini Carlo	39
		Negri Giacomo	26
132			31 31 24 18

Extract from passenger list of *Reichstag*, arrived Wellington, 6 August 1874. The last four names are 4 of the 7 Italians aboard. Respectively Giovanni Borserini, **Domenico Moratti**, Carlo Pasini and Giacomo Negri. Note the uppermost name on this extract: Gottfried Lindauer, renowned for his portraits of Maoris, who gave his occupation as 'gardener', the four Italians gave theirs as 'farm labourers'.

Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives (AJHR)

All of the voyages under this assisted migration scheme are recorded in AJHR (available for instance in University of Auckland library). Passenger lists for other ships from Hamburg were examined and finally on the *Gutenberg* we found Carlo Turchi, his wife Santina and their seven children. Further digging in the National Archives revealed that indeed they were from Livorno (Leghorn) and that Carlo and his family moved to Jackson's Bay in July 1876. (Both the recruitment of Italian

settlers from Livorno and the settlement of Jackson's Bay are immensely interesting stories in themselves, but we will need to put these aside.)

Italian censuses in Westland in 1877 and 1880

Sometimes you get lucky. Bruno Ballara wrote and published in Auckland a charmingly idiosyncratic book in Italian, *La Presenza italiana in Nuova Zelanda*. In it was a much reduced facsimile of one of these census forms. I do not know how he came by them or where he found them, but he deposited them in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. They are a goldmine of information. I have written a little paper¹ on them. In particular, Domenico and also Carlo Turchi, with his family, figure in them together with quite detailed genealogical information: parents' names, dates and places of birth. Carlo was from Campiglia Marittima while Domenico's birthplace was given as 'Vella'. Note that Carlo's wife was listed under her maiden name. The practice continues to this day. If you can't find a married woman's number in a telephone directory in Italy, look under her maiden name. There are other examples.

6	Turchi Carlo	45
	Santina	25
	Maria	14
	Carola	13
	Enrico	9
	Louisa	8
	Emma	5
	Caterina	3
	Francesco	1 1/2

Extract from passenger list of *Gutenberg* arrived Wellington, 23 March 1876. Carlo Turchi and his wife, Santina, with their children: Maria, Carolina, Enrico, Louisa, Emma, Caterina and Francesco. Carlo gave his occupation as 'labourer'.

I found Carlo Turchi and one of his sons, but not Domenico. In general the files concerning all naturalisations are available at National Archives, Wellington. (Compared to Australian naturalisation records, New Zealand files are not as complete - still you take what you can get). At least Carlo's birthplace was confirmed.

Domenico and Carlo both appeared in 'A Return of Freeholders of New Zealand as at 1st October 1882' and 'New Taranaki Crown Grants - an index to land records': Domenico with 161 acres and Carlo with 70 acres, both in the Huiroa survey district.

There are still other sources - contemporary newspaper accounts, gold mining records (National Archives, Christchurch), Register of Aliens (1916), Post Office directories, etc. But the thing to stress is that we have found out a great deal about these people and we have not left New Zealand.

Many Italians who finally ended up in New Zealand arrived first in Australia. Clearly, similar archival sources are available there - some of them much more accessible. For instance National Archives of Australia's web site (<http://www.naa.gov.au>) allows you

to search for records of individuals, held not just in Canberra, but also in the state capitals. Public Records Offices in the different states have web sites of varying quality. For instance that for Victoria (<http://www.prov.vic.gov.au>) allows you to search passenger lists. We have already mentioned the computer searchable indices to births, deaths and marriages.

If you are serious about further searching, then *Italian Genealogical Records* by Trafford R Cole is a must. Many city libraries would have it and 'Amazon Books' stocks it (amazon.com is its web site). Cole gives much very sound advice and suggestions as to how to do it by mail. Since I have been able to travel to Italy, I took a different tack. I have written letters (in my best Italian!) to the archives I hoped to visit. They have always worked. However, I must admit that whenever I visit these archives and introduce myself: '*Sono Alan Poletti di Nuova Zelanda e ho scritto una lettera..*', in almost all cases the archivist reaches for my letter (generally in the second drawer down), re-reads it and smiles to himself. But on every occasion they have indeed been most helpful.

These are not public records. It is as a favour that the priest helps in these searches. All of the records I have encountered are in church Latin, which

makes life a little interesting. A knowledge of Italian helps, even if, like me, you never learnt Latin. In all cases, the priests have been most obliging. Sometimes, the archives have been indicated to me and I have been invited to search myself. At other times, the closest I got to the records was to look over the shoulder of the priest while he searched. On other occasions, the priest, although at first reluctant, ended up being more enthusiastic than me in the hunt for a particular 'act'. In general there are no indices, so you need to have some idea of the year of birth or marriage. Every last bit of genealogical information you have managed to glean from New Zealand or Australian sources is often needed.

As it turned out, my first searches for Domenico Moratti in the Parish Archives of Villa di Tirano were fruitless. My father was wrong about the birthplace of Maria - was he wrong about Domenico's birthplace? (I did later find the marriage of Domenico's parents. This *atto di matrimonio* is so beautifully written, that I just have to show it to you).

But before we go on, I had better digress for a moment and explain a little about Italy's local government divisions. (See the box on the next page.)

A *comune* is perhaps similar to a New Zealand county, but it has wider responsibilities. In particular, it is responsible for the registration and recording of vital records. A letter to the mayor (*sindaco*) of Villa di Tirano led to my

Jacobus Moratti
A
Blancotti fatherina

Anno Domini 1846, die 21. Sept. denunciaverunt in hac et in Ratis Natione
 missis Pater 13. post Pauli, Pater S. Mund, et Pater 14. post Pauli. inter alios
 Johannes, nullaque delecto legum impedimento, huius Ratis Nationis, Franciscus
 Andreolas de hac Sed. Pater, et Laurentius interrogavit suorum, Moralli, fil. Pater, et
 Aug. 2. Moralli, ex hac Natione (n. d. 18. Dec. 1821) et filius, Franciscus, fil. Pater
 et huius Ratis Nationis (n. d. 24. Sept. 1844) communiter multos habiles consensu
 eos per verba de presenti et in matrimonium solemniter coniunxit, eisque in
 huiusmodi, presentibus per huiusmodi, fil. Pater, Franciscus, huius Ratis Nationis, et
 quod per, Moralli, ex hac Natione.

Marriage of Giacomo Moratti & Caterina Biancotti, Villa di Tirano, 21 September 1846

(Isola, Piazza, casale o casa sparsa)
COMUNE DI Villa di Tirano

REGISTRO DI POPOLAZIONE

Foglio di Famiglia N. 187

Via dei Pedosi

Casa N. 418

Numero d'ordine delle persone che compongono la famiglia	COGNOME	NOME	PATERNITÀ	SESSO	RELAZIONE di parentela o di convivenza col capo della famiglia	PROFESSIONE CONDIZIONE MESTIERE	LUOGO della nascita	DATA della nascita	STATO CIVILE	DATA dell'ingresso nel Comune	LUOGO del domicilio legale	LUOGO di residenza od abitazione	LUOGO dell'ultima residenza	DATA della morte	OSSERVAZIONI
1°	Moratti Macaco	Giacomo	furono Domenico e Moratti Agostina	m	Capo famiglia	Prestinaio	Parr. di Stazzona Com. di Villa	16 Dicembre 1821	Marito di Biancotti Caterina 18.9.1846	1 Gennaio 1865	Villa	Villa	Brescia 1867		1867 il 15 luglio iscritto nel registro di popolazione nel Comune di Fiumicello assieme ai figli. Attestato 1867 n. 55
2°	Biancotti	Caterina	furono Giacomo e Bertola Lucia	f	Moglie	=	Parr. Com. di Villa	24 Settembre 1819	Moglie di Moratti Giacomo 18.9.1846	1 Gennaio 1865	Villa	Villa		21 settembre 1866	
3°	Moratti	Domenico	di Giacomo e Biancotti Caterina	m	Figlio	=	Parr. di Stazzona Com. di Villa	3 Gennaio 1850	Celibe	1 Gennaio 1865	Villa	Villa	Brescia 1867		
4°	Moratti	Maria Lucia	di Giacomo e Biancotti Caterina	f	Figlia	=	=	18 Marzo 1852	Nubile	1 Gennaio 1865	Villa	Villa	Brescia 1867		

meeting Fausto Schivardi and he has been an invaluable source of information. As a long shot, I asked him if Domenico had perhaps died in Villa di Tirano. Yes he had - in 1920. But more than that, he introduced me to the 'Registro di popolazione di Villa di Tirano, 1865' - a census by household of every family in the *comune* in 1865. Actually, it continued to be updated for some years and even if a certain member of the family was *al estero*, they would still be listed and the name of the country they were living in given. (The clarity of the form above is due to the skill of Giovanni Battista Moratti of *Poletti Tipografia*, Villa di Tirano, but all of the details are quite clear in the original.)

Now all was clear: my father was right, Domenico Moratti had been born in the *comune* of Villa di Tirano, but in the *parish* of Stazzona. (Does 'Vella' in the 1877 Italian census tell us something of the regional accent?) Furthermore I now know that in 1865 he was living a few doors down from the house of Giovanni Poletti's parents! But look at all the other information on the form - parents' and grandparents' names, dates and places of birth and even the fact that in 1867, after the death of his wife, Domenico's father moved to Brescia.

Parish archives (again)

Having failed in my first attempt to find Domenico's baptismal act, I had to follow this lead and with the help of a friend, we made an appointment to visit Don Cirillo, the priest in Stazzona at 9 am on a Monday

morning. The archives were impeccably organised and the baptismal acts of Domenico and of his father were quickly found and photocopied. By 9:30 am we were finished. We chatted for a while and then Don Cirillo asked if we would like a 'vodka'. Good manners dictated that a 'yes' was required. Don Cirillo did not join us, but it was the best grappa I have ever tasted. What sacrifices you have to make in pursuing Italian roots! (We later found out that Don Cirillo had been an expert mountaineer as a young man and had guided many refugees to safety over the alps to Switzerland in the second world war. At that time, the parish he cared for was very poor. It was Bratta, high above Bianzone, the neighbouring *comune* to Villa and very close to the Swiss border. To assist with its financing he had even turned to smuggling - but that again is another story.)

The baptismal act confirmed the information in the 'Registro di popolazione', but one of the Godparents, Domenica Spandoni, the wife of Giuseppe Zanolari is from Brusio which is in Switzerland. This is not so surprising when it is realised that for nearly 300 years until 1797, Brusio in Val Poschiavo and Villa di Tirano in the Valtellina had both been part of the Grigione Canton. In 1850, Villa was under Austrian rule, but Brusio was in Switzerland.

Now - could I find the baptismal act of Carlo Turchi. Campiglia Marittima was a small *comune* south of Livorno - again a letter to the priest, Don Marcello Boldrini.

Regions, provinces, comunes and contradas (Regioni, province, comuni and contrade)

In comparison with Australia or New Zealand, Italy has an extra level of local government. There are firstly the twenty Regions (*Regioni*), ranging in size from Valle d'Aosta (3,264 km², pop 119,000) to Sicilia (25,707 km², pop 5,100,000). Lombardia, 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 (*capoluogo regionale*), Lombardia 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 *comunes* (*comuni*). There are 78 *comunes* in Sondrio Province, among them, Villa di Tirano. 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. Each of these centres can be subdivided further into *contrade*. Certain small areas of a *comune* may also be referred to as localities.

1850.

A. 1.
 Anno Domini millesimo octingentesimo quinquagesimo die
 quarta mensis Ianuarij; Ego Genui Alojzjus Parochus
 Moratti Propositus baptizavi infantem huiusmodi natum ex legit-
 timis conjugibus Jacobo Moratti filio Dominici, et
 Catharina filia Jacobi Biancotti de Massima, cui
 impositum fuit nomen Dominicus. Patris fuere
 Roserini Petrus filius Abundi, et Dominica Span-
 doni uxor Jacobi Carolari de Arupio.
 Genui Alojzjus Parochus Propositus.

Baptismal act of Domenico Moratti, born 3 January 1850, Stazzona Parish, Villa di Tirano

This time, however, a project to produce an index to baptisms from ~1600 had been completed and there it was (I've abbreviated the entries.):

There were four children of Cosimo Turchi (Carlo's father):

Giovanni Carlo Lorenzo,
 born 1828, mother: Caterina Degl' Innocenti

Carlo Vincenzo Giov Luigi,
 born 1829, mother: Colomba Chini,

Maria Colomba,
 born 1835, mother: Caterina Innocenti,

Maria Fidelma,
 born 1836, mother: Maria Caterina Degl' Innocenti,

What on earth is going on? There is Carlo. The mother of three of his siblings was the woman he gave as his mother in the Italian Census in 1877, but his mother is someone else again! Had the person generating the index been confused? Was some dark secret of polygamy in deepest Tuscany now brought to light after two centuries? Well it was neither of the above. I had to check this out and in July 2002 I revisited Don Marcello and the parish archivist, Gianluca Camerini. The answer was quite simple. The parish priest those 170 years ago had absent mindedly written the name of Carlo's maternal grandmother instead of his mother.

Diocesan Archives, Livorno

Here I am indebted to Tessa Duder who had been previously helped by the archivist Maria Fogolare. After writing 'in my best Italian' to Maria, and a visit to the archives, she found for me two things I never expected to find: the baptism of Maria Turchi (b. 27 Feb 1859) and of her mother, Maria Rosa Artemisia Anna Giannoni. (b. 2 Nov 1840). With four saint's names, it is no wonder she was called 'Santina' in the family.)

Liste di Leva in Archivio di Stato

A further archival source which can be extremely valuable stems from the method adopted by the newly unified Italian state to recruit its soldiers. At the age of 18, all young men were registered with the

military authorities and in their 20th year were called before a draft board. There are gaps in these military draft lists, but for men born after around 1860, they can be extremely useful. You can hope to find them in the Archivio di Stato in the capital of each province (Trafford Cole gives all of their addresses). In Sondrio province, for instance, the earliest list is for those born in 1856 (*classe di 1856*), there is a gap then until 1860, with further gaps for the classes of 1879, 1892, 1897 and 1899. Here is an example of the information they can give.

This man is actually a cousin of 'our' Domenico Moratti! Born the 15 August 1862 in Villa di Tirano and the son of Domenico and Agostina Del Dosso-Vanari, he and his father lived in the gold mining settlement of Walhalla, Gippisland for some time² in the latter half of the 19th century.

Numero d'ordine	Cognome e Nome dell'iscritto	l'esistenza o la morte 1 NOME DEL PADRE 2 COGNOME E NOME DELLA MADRE 3	DATA 1 giorno 2 mese 3 anno	Luogo 1 Comune 2 Mandamento 3 Circondario	1 Comune 2 Mandamento 3 Circondario	arte o mestiere 1 dell'iscritto 2 di suo padre	presente PER L'INCRUTTO DELLA CLASSE PRESENTA 1 se si è presentato alla iscrizione 2 se è stato iscritto d'ufficio o al istesso del padre, della madre, del tutore o di qualche autorità	padre, dalla madre, o dal tutore in occasione della sua iscrizione sulla lista
1	Moratti	D. Domenico	15	Villa di Tirano	1	Agostina Del Dosso-Vanari		
2	Domenico	Del Dosso-Vanari	15	Tirano	2	Agostina Del Dosso-Vanari		
3	Agostina	Del Dosso-Vanari	15	Verona	3	Agostina Del Dosso-Vanari		

Actually, he had already left Italy at the time the above document was compiled, for he was recorded as being *renitente*, that is, he had not turned up for his draft board interview.

Note that very specific genealogical information is given as well as both his and his father's occupation (*agricola*). Whether the recruit could read or write was also often stated. A continuation on the facing page gave details concerning the recruit's health, height and chest measurements (if he had appeared before the board), the decisions of the draft board and details of his posting to a military unit. Other Registers also exist, for instance, for those born in Sondrio province after 1875 and who were drafted, there is even a full record of their actual military service.

The least reliable public records: death certificates

Do these two records refer to the same man?

Death certificate	
name:	John Poletti
father:	Peter Poletti
father's occ'n:	shoemaker
mother:	Marietta Poletti
born:	~1868
Birth certificate	
name:	Giovanni Poletti
father:	Bortolo Poletti
father's occ'n:	contadino
mother:	Giovanna Bongioni
born:	17 February 1868

Yes - he was my grandfather who was killed in a traffic accident in 1929 near New Plymouth.

Moral: be suspicious of information in a death certificate especially if the death was unexpected.

Bortolo, an older brother of Giovanni's, who had never married, died in Victoria in 1938. Not even imaginary parents were given on his death certificate:-

Parents - 'unknown'.

Place of birth - 'Lombardy' and that was about all. Surprisingly his age was right - at 73 years.

There is more chance of family details being right if the person was married to a fellow Italian or lived in an Italian community. Generally the information on the family of unmarried men tends to be sketchy or non existent.

Stated ages on marriage certificates can often be wrong: Bortolo Presa from Villa di Tirano, reckoned he was 32 when he married his bride of 19 in Victoria in 1896. He should have admitted to 37. Giovanni Poletti-Riz, who we met earlier, gave his age as 35 instead of 44 at his marriage.

Moral: any public records can also lead you astray!

Conclusion

I hope that this talk has given you some idea of the archival sources available in both Australasia and Italy. At first sight it would seem that it would be much more difficult to trace ancestors in Italy, than in the British Isles. Language is indeed a huge barrier. However in some respects, the searching can be easier. I have been generously helped many times by people who have been most intrigued by this strange person with his terrible Italian who has come from *la fine del mondo* to find out something about people who had left Italy two centuries ago.

Naturalisation applications can be invaluable. There is of course nothing comparable for those who were already British subjects! Furthermore, church records in Italy go back in many cases as far as the 16th century. In comparison in Ireland, for instance, civil marriage records go back only as far as 1845 and birth records only to 1864. Most earlier records were destroyed when the Dublin archives were burnt during the civil war in 1922.

I must now admit, that I have discussed the easy part of an attempt to find our Italian roots. It is rather more challenging to understand the pressures that drove our antecedents to seek their future at the furthest ends of the earth and to understand something of the society which nurtured them and of its history. The information exists. At the regional and

local level it is not easy to track down and of course it is in Italian. But the rewards are there. But think of the added bonus. What a marvellous excuse to visit the land of our forbears in an attempt to find it.

Thanks

As well as the people mentioned in the text, David Retter at Alexander Turnbull Library kindly provided photocopies of the Italian census forms. Don Remigio, the arch-priest at Villa di Tirano was the first priest who had to cope with our strange requests. We will always remember his reply to our first stumbling request to consult the parish archives: 'Venga, venga.' We followed him up the stairs to his study and there he said: 'Help yourselves - I am not so interested in the archives myself.' At least that was our interpretation. We were hooked. Francesco Palazzi Trevelli at Archivio di Stato, Sondrio and his assistants have been most helpful in my work on the *liste di leva*.

Notes

- 1 Italian Census in Nineteenth Century New Zealand, *Italian Historical Society Journal*, Vol 9, No 2 (2001).
- 2 Winifred Guatta, 'Walhalla Italians' in *Italian Historical Society Journal*, Vol. 8, No 1 (2000).

Profile

Nino Borsari

by Elizabeth Broughton

Elizabeth Broughton is currently studying honours in History at the University of Melbourne. As part of her undergraduate course last year, Elizabeth elected to complete her placement for her university subject, 'History in the Field', at the Italian Historical Society, where she undertook conservation, cataloguing and research on the Borsari Collection. One of the outcomes of Elizabeth's work on the project is this essay on the life of Nino Borsari.



Nino Borsari, who became known as the 'uncrowned king of Carlton', for his extensive involvement in the organisation of sporting, cultural and charity events within the Italian community in Carlton and wider Melbourne, 1970.

In 1932 Nino Borsari aged 20 years, successfully competed as a cyclist in the Los Angeles Olympic Games. Alongside fellow team-mates, Cimatti, Pedretti and Ghilardi, Borsari won a gold medal in the 4 x 1000 metres cycling event, beating France by two seconds.¹ At the time, he was already considered a cycling champion in Italy and Europe. Borsari's home-town of Cavezzo, 25 kilometres north of Modena, honoured him by naming their velodrome 'Stadio Comunale Nino Borsari'. He would later become a prominent figure in Carlton and wider Melbourne, well-known for his extensive work in sport and involvement in the community.



A postcard commemorating a visit in 1983 by Nino Borsari, of Melbourne, to his home-town, Cavezzo, in the province of Modena. In 1975, the Cavezzo Stadium was renamed Stadio Comunale Nino Borsari in his honour.

Political and social issues of the time are significant to Nino Borsari's story, as they undeniably shaped his experiences and the community in which he lived. Nevertheless, the story of Borsari's migration to Australia seems to differ from those of other Italian immigrants at the time. Most notably, it seems that he did not originally intend to migrate to Australia. In 1934, Borsari competed in the 'Centenary Cycling Road Race' in Melbourne, winning



Nino Borsari, Olympic gold medal cyclist, on the race track, 1935.

the 1,700-kilometre race. In 1940, he returned to Australia as a guest of the Australian Cycling Federation. It was during Borsari's stay that Italy entered the Second World War against the Allies. Due to the nature of his visit, Borsari was not relocated to an internment camp, unlike many other Italians in Australia at the time.² Nevertheless, he was unable to leave Australia. After the war ended, he decided to stay in Melbourne. This preceded the peak period of Italian migration to Australia which occurred during the 1950s and 1960s.³

Nino Borsari married Fanny Cester in 1940 after a three-month courtship.⁴ Nino and Fanny had two children, Diana and Nino (junior). The Borsaris lived in Kew, and later built a house in Ivanhoe. Fanny, an opera student, was born in Pasiano di Pordenone in the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy. She had migrated to Melbourne in 1937, ten years after her father, Ernesto, had arrived in Australia. He had worked as a shoemaker, cook and tobacco grower in rural areas of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

Borsari owned two stores in Lygon Street, Carlton: 'the Borsari Emporium' and 'the Borsari Bicycle and Sports Centre.' The Borsari Emporium was opened in 1941, at 201 Lygon Street, Carlton. It played a significant role during the peak of Italian migration to Carlton. The emporium specialised in a variety of goods, including jewellery, household items, hunting equipment and imported Italian magazines and newspapers. Borsari said: 'I pawned everything I owned'⁵ to set up his business. As it grew, he advertised extensively – particularly in local newspapers. In 1961 the emporium was extended to include 'Borsari's Bicycle and Sports Centre' at 193 Lygon Street, where Borsari sold sporting goods and his own range of bicycles.

In order to settle in an unknown country, it is vital that each immigrant has access to advice and support. As there was no official welfare organisation for the Italian community in Australia at this time, the surrounding community played a vital role for the newly-arrived Italian immigrant. 'Migratory chains' formed the basis of much Italian migration, where individuals would join family members or neighbours in a particular rural or urban location.⁶ Thus, on arrival in Australia, the Italian immigrant could often join an existing network of friends and family. Nearly six million Italians left Italy between 1946 and 1965. The Italian government encouraged emigration, as a method of dealing with issues of poverty in the South and post-war

structural instability.⁷ Meanwhile, the Australian government set up the first Australian Immigration Department, with the desire to bolster the Australian labour force. After Britain, Italy became the largest source of migrants to Australia in the 1950s, with approximately 360,000 Italians arriving in Australia between 1947 and 1976.⁸

Carlton held the earliest concentration of Italians in Melbourne during the peak of Italian migration.⁹ The need for employment, food and household items within the community was met by an increasing number of institutions and Italian businesses formed during this time. Businesses that offered familiar produce, or staff who spoke the immigrant's first language, made the transition to a new country significantly smoother for the immigrant. For example, one could find traditional Italian produce from a number of grocery stores, including one owned by the Varrenti family.¹⁰ Caff  Sport, and later University Caff , provided space to socialise and keep in touch with friends and current news in the community.¹¹ The local Catholic Church, St George's, was a place where one could attend church, as well as confirmations, holy communions and weddings. The church hall also served as a venue for concerts and dances.¹² These establishments and businesses were not only significant for the goods and services they provided, but also for the opportunity they gave individuals to connect with community networks.

The emporium played an important cultural role in this growing community. Borsari recalled newly-arrived Italian immigrants asking him such questions as 'Nino... where do we buy spaghetti?'¹³ It seems that Borsari recognised the potential for a store like the emporium in Carlton. It was a place where immigrants could seek advice on everything from where to wash one's clothes, to finding employment.¹⁴ As well as providing the latest items one needed to set up a home, services such as lay-by and ANZ savings facilities were available at the emporium. Many imported Italian items were sold at the emporium, including traditional jewellery for cultural and religious occasions. It was also a place where one could hear news from the homeland, through current editions of Italian magazines and newspapers, or at gatherings held at the emporium before Juventus soccer matches.¹⁵



The Juventus Soccer Club, from Melbourne, arriving in Adelaide for a competition match. Nino Borsari [president], is pictured in front at right, 1958.



Interior view of the Borsari Emporium, 201 Lygon Street, Carlton, showing the household goods section, 1960.

It is significant that Nino Borsari was able to open the emporium during the war – at a time when the freedoms of Italians were restricted in Australia. In the absence of official social services for the Italian community, the emporium became a point of contact for newly-arrived Italian immigrants. In an interview with the Melbourne Observer in 1971, he stated that: 'After the war, I devoted my time to helping Italian migrants.'¹⁶

As a cyclist, sport was Nino Borsari's passion, but he also assisted individuals in their sporting pursuits, including racing car driver, Alfredo Costanzo.¹⁷ Borsari was actively involved in the running of sporting clubs, including the Juventus Soccer Club. He was president of Juventus in the years 1949-54, 1956-60, 1965-66 and 1971-72. The soccer team won the first division premierships every year from 1952 to 1956, and the state league championships in 1958 and 1960.¹⁸ Borsari was named 'patron' of the Victorian Soccer Federation for his extensive involvement in the sport of soccer.¹⁹ He was also active in other sporting groups, including the League of Victorian Wheelmen, and founded the Basketball Team Club of Victoria, the Amateur and International Cycling Club and the Professional International Cycling Club.²⁰



Nino Borsari [centre] with two professional boxers in a publicity photograph for a bout promoted by him, 1958.

Nino Borsari was also active in organising sporting events. As a well-known sportsman and former Olympian, Borsari helped secure the Olympic Games for Melbourne in 1956. In 1967, as the founding President of the Australian Boxing Federation, Borsari travelled to Europe and Asia, meeting with other boxing federations.²¹ Alongside sports-promoter Bill Long, Borsari arranged for cyclists and boxers to compete in Melbourne; in particular, he brought out Italian boxer Gilberto Biondi, who later decided to live in Australia.

However, not all events were successful. In March 1970, Italian boxer Nino Benvenuti arrived in Australia to compete in a fight against American boxer Tom Bethea. The fight at Olympic Park attracted much ridicule for Benvenuti's 'shocking performance [which made] boxing look a sick sport in the eyes of the paying public...'²² Bill Long believed that this fight caused his 'own future as a Promoter [to be] at stake.'²³ *La Gazzetta dello Sport* claimed that the defeat caused 'great sorrow to the half a million Italian migrants [in Australia].'²⁴

Despite the 'failure' of the Benvenuti venture, both Borsari and Long continued to seek out promising athletes to compete in Australia. In July of the same year, *La Gazzetta dello Sport* stated that Borsari was 'today the most qualified person in the Italian community, sporting and recreational and cultural fields' to contact organisers, promoters and professional boxers.²⁵ While the fight may have momentarily embarrassed the Italian community, it now seems insignificant amidst other successful sporting events organised by Borsari. Interestingly, this episode may reveal more of Borsari and his personality. Borsari's continued enthusiasm after the Benvenuti-Bethea fight demonstrated that his passion was based in working for the good of sport and the community.

Fanny Borsari played an important role in the success of the family business, and was a strong support in her husband's

community and sporting pursuits. While Nino Borsari was purchasing items for the emporium and the Italaustralia Import-export Company, Fanny Borsari ran the emporium. Nino Borsari spoke of the period when he opened the emporium, stating that it was 'about then [that] I met my wife. We married after a three month courtship, and from then on, things got better.'²⁶

As well as working alongside her husband, Fanny Borsari was involved in sporting and community activities in her own right. In the 1950s, she became the first woman to be president of a soccer club, accepting the position of president at the Geelong Soccer Club at a time when the club was threatened with expulsion from the Victorian Association. Four years later, a journalist credited her with putting the club 'back on its feet again.'²⁷ She was also Vice President of Co-As-It from 1970 to 1971, and President of the Royal Children's Hospital Italian Auxiliary. Fanny Borsari was honoured with a life-membership of the Juventus Soccer Club, for 'services of the highest order... over many years, with rare spirit of sacrifice and unselfishness for the advancement of the Italian Community in the field of sport.'²⁸

As a prominent figure in Carlton, Nino Borsari was involved in strengthening cultural bonds within the Italian and the wider community. Alongside his involvement in Italian community groups such as the Casa d'Italia, he participated in the Italian and Australian Association



Nino Borsari and his wife, Fanny [nee Cester], 1940.

(IAMA) and the Italo-Australian Welfare Association. In order to raise funds for an IAMA Sporting Centre, Borsari organised a 'Champion's Night' showcasing famous sportspeople in cycling races, boxing, acrobatics and wrestling matches.²⁹

Nino and Fanny Borsari participated in many charitable and civic organisations. The Borsaris often opened their home for fundraising events, including one for Yooralla in 1974. Borsari was also involved in the Royal Children's Hospital and the Salvation Army, and organised a 'Cycle for Sight' fundraiser for the Blind Appeal of 1974.

'Civic duty' was important to Borsari as seen in his extensive involvement in community groups such as the Carlton Police and Citizens' Youth Club (of which Borsari was vice president) formed to 'provide sporting and recreational facilities... for young lads of the district who are our future citizens.'³⁰ In 1969, he stood as the Australian Labor Party candidate for the Victoria Ward in the Melbourne City Council Election, in which Borsari aimed to preserve housing in Carlton and develop a Carlton Community Centre.³¹ He was however unsuccessful in this seat, which was won by John King.

At times, it can be difficult to see beyond an individual's public persona, especially given the lists of Borsari's achievements. However, his give an insight into what he valued and his self-perceptions.

Borsari's early Olympic gold medal win when aged 20 years was a great achievement, which naturally carried through his life. The Olympic Rings, used as the symbol of the emporium, were printed on the underside of jewellery case lids and on store receipts and to this day, one can see the neon sign of Borsari on a bicycle, on the building where the emporium used to be.

But Borsari also converted this love of sport into active community involvement. For him, sport bound people from all backgrounds together. An advertisement for the Borsari Emporium in a sporting handbook states that 'fraternity through sport is [Borsari's] creed' and emphasises that: 'No matter who you are, where you are from, or what you believe, you are Nino's friend if you are interested in sport.'³²

Borsari's Italian heritage remained an important motivation, as seen on the occasion when responding to a suggestion that he trade under another name, he said: 'No, I am a world champion – people know my name.'³³ At the same time, Borsari valued being Australian, stating in 1972: 'I still consider myself to be Italian while at the same time being proud to be Australian. I am both ways.'³⁴

Through his business and involvement in sporting clubs in the Carlton community, Borsari stated that 'I come to know most

people, and the people call me "Cavalier" or "Knight."³⁵ In 1978, Borsari was knocked from his bicycle in a road accident and suffered fractures to his skull. He subsequently underwent surgery at the Austin Hospital. The numerous letters and telegrams wishing him a quick recovery signified his popularity.³⁶ Recognition of Borsari is also evident in numerous cartoons that were printed in newspapers, highlighting his role in organising sporting events and as a businessman. A cartoon from the Age in 1963 labelled him the 'uncrowned king of Carlton.'³⁷ In 1962, Borsari was recognised by his homeland, receiving the 'Italian Order of Merit' for his involvement in the Italian community.³⁸

Nino Borsari died in 1996 at the age of 84, eight years after the death of his wife, Fanny. The Nino Borsari Emporium became a jewellery store in the 1980s. This closed in 1992, and was turned into the 'Borsari Ristorante.' A bicycle store still exists at 193 Lygon Street.

Nino Borsari was an important figure during the period of mass Italian migration to Melbourne. Through the efforts of Nino and Fanny Borsari, the emporium served as an unofficial, but vital site of community and welfare for the Italian community. Because Borsari valued both sport and community, he saw these two areas as united, and demonstrated this in the way he spent his life.

NOTES

- Italy 4'53"; France: 4'55"
- Michael Ryan, 'The olden goldie!' Sunday Press, 20 Jul., 1986, p. 18.
- Table 1.2 'Net Migration of Italians and Southern Europeans: Australia 1947-1980', Helen Ware, A Profile of the Italian Community in Australia, Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs and CO.AS.IT., Citadel Press, Hawthorn, Dec., 1981, p. 17.
- 'Italians' [title incomplete], Melbourne Observer, 19 Sep., 1971, p. 11.
- ibid..
- Stephen Castles, 'Italian migration and settlement since 1945', Australia's Italians: Cultural and community in a changing society, eds. Stephen Castles, Caroline Alcorso, Gaetano Rando and Ellie Vasta, Allen & Unwin, 1992, pp. 36-37. Castles, op. cit., pp. 41-2.
- ibid., pp36-7.
- ibid., pp. 38-9.
- ibid., p. 50.
- Bridging Two Worlds: Jews, Italians and Carlton, ed. Dr Diane Carlyle, Brown Prior Anderson, 1993, p.12
- ibid., p.12
- ibid., p.26
- ibid..
- 'Italians,' op. cit..
- Gualberto Gennai, interview conducted at the Italian Historical Society, Aug., 2002.
- ibid..
- Nino Borsari, Testimonial for Alfredo Costanzo, Sept. 12, 1977.
- Egilberto Martin, Juve! Juve! Elabor Helena Nominees, Brooklyn, 1990, p. xi.
- ibid., p. 55.
- George Yelland, 'A man of the people,' Soccer News, Aug. 21, 1969, p. 5.
- Cecil Cripps, 'Bid to help boxing, cycling,' The Australian, Jul. 29, 1967, page unknown.
- Letter from Bill Long, Bill Long Promotions, to Secretary General of Palazzo Delle Federazione, Rome, Mar. 25, 1970.
- Letter from Bill Long, Bill Long Promotions, to Cav. Nino Borsari, Carlton, Apr. 2, 1970.
- 'L'Australia rinvole Benvenuti (che non si fa trovare...)', *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, Venerdì 24, Luglio, 1970, translated by Lorenzo Iozzi, Italian Historical Society.
- ibid..
- 'Italians,' op. cit..
- Ken Knox, 'NSW has a UN Soccer Team,' The Herald, Jun. 7, 1960, page unknown.
- Letter from S. Manenti, President of the Juventus Soccer Club, to Fanny Borsari, date unknown.
- Programme from Champion's Night, Italian and Australian Association, West Melbourne Stadium, Sept. 28, year unknown.
- Carlton Police and Citizens' Youth Club pamphlet, printed by York Press, date unknown.
- Nino Borsari, pamphlet for Melbourne City Council Election, Victoria Ward, August 1968.
- 'Stadium news, boxing tournament pamphlet, 2, date unknown.
- ibid..
- Richard Zachariah, 'When is an Australia an Australian?' The Sunday Australian, Apr. 16, 1972, p. 4.
- 'Italians,' op. cit..
- 'Vi sono molto grato,' Il Globo, Apr. 10, 1978, page unknown.
- 'Make the Wheels Go Round,' The Age, Jan. 21, 1963, p. 17.
- Ricordo del Santuario di S. Antonio e dei Fondatori, Santuario di S. Antonio, Melbourne, 1969, p. 161.

Italian Boys Busking in the Streets – 1888

From Our Archives

The following documents, originally written in 1888, are drawn from the Italian Historical Society's Archives and are a transcript of two Victoria Police reports on the growing number of Italian boys busking in the streets of Melbourne during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The reports express concern at the young age of the boys and at the fact that, in many cases, their parents are untraceable. The concern may have been justified if we consider that at the time a great number of musically gifted children - in the main from the town of Viggiano in Basilicata, southern Italy - were separated from their families to travel to other parts of the world to sing and perform on the streets as a source of income. Today these children have been referred to as 'the little slaves of the harp'.¹

VICTORIA POLICE

No 1 Division

Russell Street Station, Melbourne

17 August 1888

REPORT by Constable Thomas Wardley
Relative to Italian boys singing and performing in the streets.

I have to report that I have made inquiries regarding Italian boys whom I have observed performing about the streets. It is extremely difficult for any one, excepting those acquainted with the boys, to obtain any particulars regarding either them or their parents because, in almost every case, they are unable to speak the English language. I forwarded the names and addresses of a few boys whom I observed playing a fiddle in the streets, in a report which I furnished some time ago. I am well acquainted with the addresses of nearly all the boys who perform about the streets, and went round to their different residences last night in order to compile a list. I obtained the names etc. of three only which I will submit; but in every other case, when I went to the boys' residence, their parents and the other inmates of the house informed me, through an interpreter that they refused to give any particulars regarding themselves or their offspring, and wished to know the reason why their names, and also the names of their children who were performing in the streets were being taken. They nearly all made a firm refusal, stating if the Italian Consulate wished to know anything about them, let him (the Consul) come himself and they would speak to him.

The names of those I obtained were:

Rose Barrile, native of Basilicata, Italy, 8 years of age, a dancer. Her father's name is Giuseppe Barrile, native of Basilicata. Their address is 64 Exploration Lane, off Little Lonsdale Street East, Melbourne.

Pietro Marino, native of Naples, 10 years of age, a musician, and Joseph Marino, native of Naples, 14 years of age. The name of the father of the latter two is Rocco Marino, a native of Naples, and their address is 4 Exploration Lane, off Little Lonsdale Street East, Melbourne.

There are also some boys who perform in the streets, living with their parents at 94 Little Lonsdale Street East. Their father's name is Michael Gazelle, but he will not give their names, nor say anything regarding them. There are others living in Cumberland Place, and also in McCormack Place, off Little Lonsdale Street East, but those who have charge of them refuse to give any particulars.

A number of Italians live at the addresses I have given, and nearly all the boys who perform about the city and suburbs live with them.



Three members of the Labattaglia family [left to right]: Leonardo, Scipione and Prospero Labattaglia in Basilicata c1892. The brothers travelled to Melbourne some time after this photograph was taken and settled here, performing for many years as Labb's String Band.

VICTORIA POLICE

West Melbourne Station

5 September 1888

REPORT by Constable Stubbs

Relative to playing music in the streets

I have to report that about half past twelve o'clock today I saw two boys one had a violin and the other had a harp in Hawke Street. They gave me their names as Loterzo Carlo, aged 10 years, and Loterzo Giuseppe, aged 13 years, both natives of Naples at present stopping with their father at 96 Little Lonsdale Street East. They follow the occupation of musicians for a livelihood.

NOTE

- 1 John E. Zucchi, *The Little Slaves of the Harp*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1992.

Genealogy

Family History

The following are some of the enquiries received during the last six months from descendants of Italians and Swiss-Italian pioneers. The Italian Historical Society is happy to advise on how to further the research for records in Italy and Switzerland. In many occasions the Society is also able to put in touch individuals from different Australian states researching the same family name.

Lorenzo and Antonio RESTA

Lorenzo and Antonio Resta were born in Lombardy, Italy, c1838/1840. Their parents were Giacomo Resta and Madeline [Maddalena] Maio. The father's occupation was miller. Great-grand daughter Muriel Resta was not able to find out the name of the village or the province in Lombardy from which Lorenzo and Antonio originated. Oral history sources reveal they were from a small village in the northern areas of Lake Como. Both brothers left Italy in 1860. Lorenzo sailed from Amsterdam on the *Jacoba Christina*, arriving in Melbourne on 5 May 1860. There were only 14 passengers on this passage, 13 of whom were of Italian or Swiss Italian origin: all were single males. Some of the other passengers on the same ship were Giacomo, Andrea and Benedetto Rossi and Luigi, Marco and Pietro Fontana.

Antonio Resta sailed from Liverpool on the *Red Jacket* arriving in Melbourne on 27 April 1860. On this ship there were several single males from Poschiavo, giving their profession as 'labourers'.

It is believed that Lorenzo and Antonio headed for the goldfields in Victoria. However, by 1864 they were both in New Zealand, where they are well documented especially in the gold mining areas of Otago, Macetown, Arrowtown and Queenstown. Muriel Resta has obtained copies of marriage certificates, births of their children, naturalization papers, death certificates and many more legal papers. However, none of these records mention the place of origin, other than 'Lombardy, Italy'.

Letters have been written to churches and city councils in the Lombardy area, but to no avail. Messages posted on several Italian sites on the Internet have given some encouragement, but no positive results.

Can any one help Muriel Resta? She may be contacted by snail mail at 3 Graham Street, Bonny Hills NSW 2445 or by email at mresta@bigpond.com

The Italian speaking passengers who travelled to Australia on the Red Jacket in April 1860, are listed at the end of the

Family History section of this Journal. According to an extensive research conducted by Dr Alan Poletti on pioneer immigrants from the district Sondrio in Lombardy to Australia and New Zealand, Lorenzo and Antonio Resta were from Villa di Tirano. Dr Poletti is a regular contributor to the IHS Journal and two of his articles are published in this Journal.

Giovanni COMISARI

Eileen Clark is researching her grandfather, Giovanni Comisari, from Lombardy. From his naturalization certificate, he arrived in Melbourne on the ship *Green Jacket* in 1860. In 1863 he went to New South Wales and afterwards to New Zealand. In 1869 he was back to New South Wales.

There is very little information on his marriage or death certificate. Eileen does not know who his parents were nor the name of the place where he came from. She was also unable to find anything on the *Green Jacket* ship.

If you can give any assistance to Eileen Clark, please write to her at 83 Kelly Street, South Grafton, NSW, 2461.

Shipping records held by the Public Record Office Victoria show that the Green Jacket had only two voyages from 1861 to 1862, one in March 1861 and the other in June 1862. However, Giovanni Comisari is not amongst the passengers for either year. Out of a total of 230 passengers who arrived in Australia on this ship, only seven were of Italian or Swiss Italian background and they all arrived in March 1861. They were: Santo Baldrino, Antonio Borma, Emile Cerruto, Fozenla [sic] Pietro, Giovanni Merlo, Pietro Morelli and Giovanni Ranino.

Giovanni Marchetti

Warren Smith from Nedlands, Western Australia is keen to obtain from Italy records on the family of his ancestor. In his enquiry he writes:

'Giovanni Marchetti was my great-grandfather. He was born in 1835 in Venice. He came to Australia from England as Convict No. 4042 having been convicted in

UK and sentenced to transportation to Western Australia.

He duly obtained his freedom and became a successful farmer at Greenough, Western Australia, and raised a family of nine children. He died in Perth on 19 June 1897 and is buried in the Old East Perth Cemetery.

I have a summary of his court proceedings in UK regarding his sentencing and in this respect let me say there is no reference anywhere to his personal details such as age, home address, reference to relatives/family or anything which might give a lead to tracing family history.

On his sentencing to transportation he arrived in Western Australia aboard the ship *Runnymede* in 1856. He was employed in various places including York and Newcastle, now Toodyay, before taking up 1000 acres at Greenough. After clearing the land, he established a farm. On 26 November 1861, he married Rose Mary Ainsworth, daughter of William Ainsworth.

Giovanni had originally been a merchant seaman but again his early records do not refer at all to any ship he may have served on, otherwise I might have been able to check his merchant seaman's records.

To complete my records I sought his home address in Venice and any other lead which might point to his family connections and history. The only reference I have is as shown on an attached sheet which states 'Giovanni Marchetti son of Bernard and Mary, farmers of Venice'. Here is where the problem becomes difficult as marriage, birth and death record were at that time held by parish priests and there were seven parishes in Venice. Also, there was no farming in Venice as such, so one could assume that, perhaps, the parents had been farmers on nearby mainland, or were either retired or absentee farmers.

I might add that Giovanni Marchetti was convicted in a Liverpool Court of manslaughter, but in fact he had been called upon to help stop a fight.

Warren Smith's address: 15 Leopold Street, Nedlands, WA, 6009 – Email warrensmith@bigpond.com

This is a difficult one! When tracing a family history it is also important to acquire some basic information on the

history of the region or district from which the ancestor originated. In the 1850s Italy was not a unified nation as it is today. It was divided into several states under foreign dominations. Lombardy and Veneto regions were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The effort to unify Italy, which began in 1820 and concluded in 1870, was at its peak in the 1850s. It is known as the 'Risorgimento'. During this process of unification, many young Italian men opposing the Austrians fled and sought refuge in England which was very sympathetic to the cause of freeing Italy. Giovanni Marchetti may have been one of these young and passionate Italians who had previously worked as a merchant seaman. This would explain why he was in England.

As to his place of origin, Venice could well be the district and not the specific town from which Giovanni came. The Lagoon of Venice includes a number of islands, many of which were inhabited by farming communities, such as Torcello. Vegetables, wheat, corn and dairy products were produced and sold to the people living in the city of Venice. Most of these islands had their own church and would have recorded baptisms, marriages and deaths of their parishioners. Thus Giovanni's parents could well have lived on one of these islands where their son was born. Most of these churches are not operational today and it is likely that their records have been deposited with the Catholic



Publicity poster for Baumgartner, an emigration agency in Basel, Switzerland, c1860 (From the book *L'emigrazione ticinese in Australia*, Vol 1 by Giorgio Cheda, publisher Armando Dado, Locarno, 1979.)

Archdiocese of Venice. It would also be worth writing to the Birth, Marriage and Death Record Office (Ufficio di Stato Civile) of the Comune of Venezia to ask for a birth certificate of Giovanni Marchetti. It may well be that under the Austrians the record keeping of these events were in place before the introduction of compulsory civil records in unified Italy. The Veneto region was the last of the Italian regions to be annexed into the Kingdom of Italy in 1866, followed by the Papal States in 1870.

Italian and Swiss-Italian passengers who travelled on the Red Jacket arriving in Melbourne in April 1860

Source: Extract from Index of Inward Passenger Lists from British and Foreign Ports 1852-1899, Public Record Office Victoria, accessed at www.prov.vic.gov.au 17 June 2003.

Family Name	First Name	Age	Family Name	First Name	Age
Cannobi.....	Filippo	21	Pola	Battista	25
Cannobi.....	Giuseppe	28	Pola	Battista	22
Costa	Giuseppe	25	Pola	Domenico	32
Direiffino [sic]	Antonio	21	Rampa	Antonio	31
Gervasi	Antonio	27	Realo	Lorenzo	23
Giudici	Giovanni	20	Renti	Jole	35
Mazzeletti	Mary	24	Renti	Stefano	24
Merlo	Giovanni	20	Resta	Antonio	21
Morachinelli [sic]	Andre]	26	Rampa	Luigi	29
Moranichelli [sic]	Carlo	20	Runcho [Ronco ?]	Giovanni	29
Pianta	Antonio	20	Vogno	Giuseppe	29
Pianta	Carlo	24	Zanoli	Andrea	32
Pianta	Giuseppe	36	Zanoli	Lucio	26
Pianta Giovanni	Giovanni	26	Zanoli	Pietro	26
Pianta	Martino	24			

Publications Received

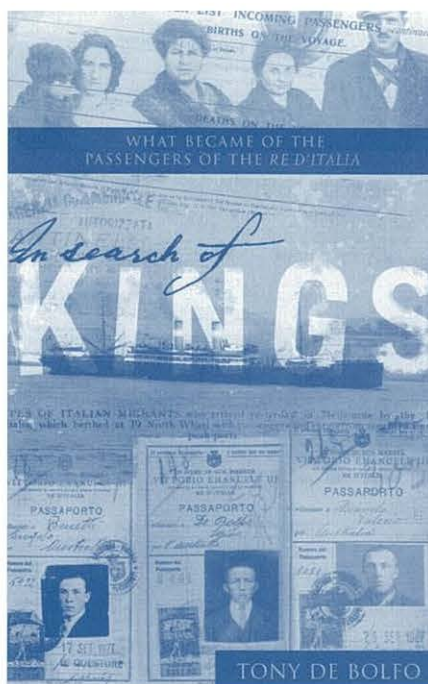
The following publications have been recently purchased by or donated to the Society. They may not necessarily be recent releases but every attempt is made to acquire all current publications in the field of Italian-Australian history.

BOOKS IN ENGLISH

In Search of Kings: What Became of the Passengers of the Re d'Italia

Tony De Bolfo, Harper Collins, Pymble, 2000. \$30.00

Tony De Bolfo has achieved an amazing feat by retracing the individual stories of the Italian passengers - 108 men, women and children - aboard the ship *Re d'Italia* which berthed at North Wharf, Melbourne, in November 1927.



In 1994 Tony consulted the shipping list for the above voyage in order to trace the history of his ancestors. Little did he know that this initial research was to become an all-absorbing project lasting eight years and resulting in a major and important book. Each story in this book is filled with the human experiences of migration. Our history has been enriched by Tony de Bolfo's work.

Silvagni

Steven Silvagni & Tony De Bolfo, HarperSports, Sydney, 2002. \$35.00

Silvagni is a household name in the world of Australian Rules Football: it has been associated with the Carlton Football Club for almost forty years. Stephen Silvagni, in collaboration with sports journalist Tony De Bolfo, has now given us a personal account of his life in AFL football, an involvement which began with his father Sergio, who made his football debut with the club in 1958. Stephen takes us through his own career from his first senior game in 1985 until his retirement in 2001, a career best defined by the honour awarded him as 'fullback of the twentieth century'.

Nicolina's Story: A Woman of the Land

La Contadina Nicolina with D. A. Davies, BEA*MAR Productions, 2002. \$40.00

This is the autobiography of La Contadina Nicolina [the name the author uses to refer to herself throughout the book], who migrated to Australia as a teenager from Varapodio, Calabria in 1947. The author uses simple, uncluttered language to describe her everyday existence and rather harsh life spent working the land for over 60 years, both here and in Italy.



The Italian Influence on the Parade

Diana Chessell, City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters, Kent Town, Sth. Australia, 1999. \$10.00

A brief history of Italian settlement in the central shopping area of The Parade, in the Norwood suburb known as "Little Italy". The book includes a smattering of migration stories from the various Italian families in the area as well as a listing of the various Italian businesses in The Parade.

📖 ***Dancing in the Kitchen:
Portraits of Collingwood's
Older Women***

[Ed.] Andrew Lindsay, North Yarra Community Health Inc., Collingwood, 1994.

📖 ***When Fish Had Feathers:
Portraits of Collingwood's
Older Men***

[Ed.] Andrew Lindsay, North Yarra Community Health Inc., Collingwood, 2002.

Reminiscences of female and male participants of the Yarra Community Health Centre's Over 60s Group, some of whom are of Italian background. They give an informal look at how they managed to create a "new home" for themselves and their families in the inner suburb of Collingwood.

📖 ***I Campani in Sud Australia:
A History of the Settlement of the
People of the Italian Region of
Campania in South Australia***

The Federation of Associations of Campanian Emigrants in South Australia (FAECSA), Adelaide, 1989. \$15.00

An insightful read into the history and settlement of migrants from the Italian region of Campania to South Australia. The book offers a listing of the religious, cultural and political associations in South Australia which relate to Italians from this region.

BOOKS IN ITALIAN

The following is a selection of books on migration in the Italian language received over the last six months.

📖 ***In Nome del Padre***

Giose Rimanelli, Torcuato S. Di Tella Michele Castelli, Cosmo Iannone Editore, Isernia, 1999.

This very interesting book is a collection of biographies of three Italian migrants as told by their children, all university professors in North and/or South America. The book displays different genres of writing: biographical, narrative and poetical. The first essay is of Torquato Di Tella, an industrialist and political activist in Argentina. This is followed by the story of Giuseppe Castelli of Caracas and lastly, the story of Vincenzo and Tina Rimanelli.

📖 ***Trieste Emigrata***

Mario Maranzana, Demetra, Florence, 2002.

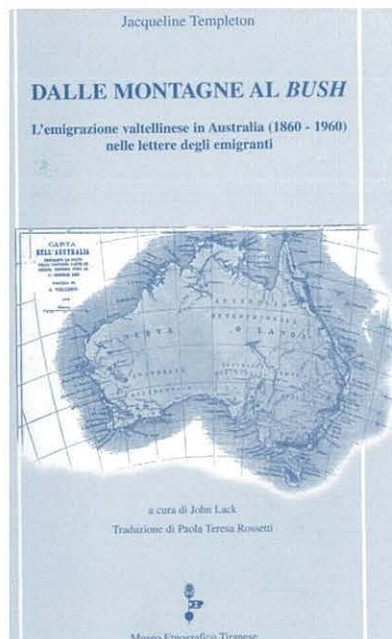
Narrative of the passengers aboard the ship *Toscana* in March 1954, set sail from Trieste to Australia. The story follows them on their 28 day voyage and reveals their hopes, dreams, anxieties.

In the final chapters of the book, we meet up with a few of these migrants who, 40 years later, board an aeroplane to take them back "home" for a holiday.

📖 ***Dalle Montagne al Bush:
L'emigrazione Valtellinese
in Australia (1860-1960)
nelle Lettere degli Emigranti***

Jacqueline Templeton, Museo Etnografico Tiranese, Tirano, 2002.

This volume analyses the history of migration from Valtellina to Australia, from the 1850s to the 1920s, through the myriad of letters written by Italian migrants in Australia to their families in Valtellina.



📖 ***Gente di Toscana:
Nostre Storie nel Mondo***

Regione Toscana. Consulta Regionale dei Toscani all'Estero, Regione Toscana, Florence, 2000.

This book which includes a CD-ROM gives a pictorial history of Tuscan emigration to various parts of the world. It is a catalogue of a travelling exhibition of the same name which was recently held at the Toscana Club in Melbourne following its launch in Florence late last year.

📖 ***Cammina per me Elsie:
L'epopea di un Italiano Emigrato
in Australia***

Flavio Lucchesi, Guerini e Associati, Milan, 2002.

The life of Joe Maffina, the protagonist of this book, is an extraordinary and fascinating one. In 1909, at the age of 23, Maffina left his native Valtellina, a tiny hamlet in northern Italy, to emigrate, first to America and then to faraway Australia. Here he experienced many difficulties before he could call Australia 'home': the isolation of living in outback Western Australia; internment during the Second World War as an enemy alien; the Great Depression; and the Kalgoorlie Riots. As the subtitle suggests, his migration journey was indeed 'epic'.

All this has been beautifully and vividly documented in the memoirs of Joe Maffina's daughter Ersilia [Elsie] Enright, who was born in Western Australia. Her memoirs form the basis of this book. Professor Flavio Lucchesi, an authority in the history of emigration from the Valtellina area, has edited and translated Elsie's personal reminiscences into Italian. He has also added another dimension to the text by providing a scientific component to each chapter, thereby placing the events of Joe Maffina's life in a broader historical context. The book can thus be approached on two levels: a personal narrative and an historical analysis, elements which make this work appealing to all readers.

The book has been published in the first instance in Italy, which is indicative of its interest to a wider public, but, given its significance to the history of Australia, it is hoped that there will be an English version in the near future.



Joe and Maria Maffina and their children (from left): Joe Junior, René and Ersilia (seated), Western Australia, 1933.

**L'emigrazione Italiana 1870-1970:
Atti dei Colloqui di Roma**

Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali,
Direzione Generale per gli Archivi, Archivi
di Stato, Rome, 2002. 2 volumes.

Published account of the four meetings held in Rome on 19-20 September 1998, 29-31 October 1990, 28-30 October 1991, 28-30 October 1993. The papers presented at these various conferences all relate to documents on Italian migration found in Italian state archives as well as other archives around the world. Chapters relating to Australia include documents on Italian migration held in public and private archives.

**Storia dell'Emigrazione Italiana:
Partenze, Arrivi**

[ed.] Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi Emilio Franzina, Donzelli, Rome, 2001. \$84, 2 volumes.

This amazing 2 volume set was commissioned by the National Committee Italy in the World under the auspices of the Ministry for Cultural Affairs. It covers current research and theory into Italian migration. Vol. 1 [Departures] endeavours to synthesize the major questions of why, when and where Italians migrated while Vol. 2 [Arrivals] delves into the specifics of each country of reception. The Australian chapters are written by Adriano



Boncompagni. There are also 2 CDs of images and songs of migration.

THESES IN ITALIAN

**Imprenditorialità Italiana nello
Stato del Victoria**

Annachiara Caon, Venezia, 2002.

A thesis presented for a Bachelor's Degree in Commerce [Foreign] at the University Ca' Foscari. It concentrates on the development of small to medium size Italian-Australian companies in Victoria from pre-WW2 to the present day, including areas such as the building, agricultural and food industries. The author further delves into the successful development of a company within each of these sectors.



BOOKS IN ITALIAN AND ENGLISH

Italiani nel Mondo

[Ed.] Emanuele Stolfi, Mondadori Electa, Milan, 2003.

The catalogue of the travelling exhibition entitled *Tante patrie, una patria: l'identità italiana nel mondo attraverso l'emigrazione* [Many homelands, one homeland: Italian identity in the world through migration], was inaugurated at the Vittoriano di Roma, January 2003. The catalogue depicts many aspects of the Italian migration story from departure through to settlement and the creation of a national identity on a world wide scale. The book is also translated into Spanish.

**Emigrazione Sanfelese in
Australia: Storia
dell'Associazione Lucania :
The Sanfele Emigration to
Australia: The History of
the Associazione Lucania**

Luisa Arezzo, Edizione l'Ed, Rome, 1992.
Donated by Leo Santomartino.

Brief account of the history of migration to New South Wales of people from San Fele, Potenza, Basilicata.

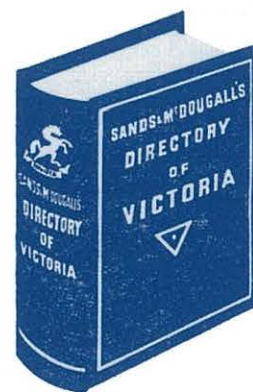
Angelo Taranto in front of his business,
Taranto's Continental Gelati and Ice Cream
Company, West Melbourne, 1962.

SPECIAL ACQUISITION

Sands and McDougall's
Street Directories of Victoria

[1951 -1974]

Microfiche format



The Italian Historical Society is very fortunate to have acquired the above records from the State Library of Victoria with whom the Society has a collaboration agreement. The major joint project under this agreement is currently the conservation and cataloguing of the IHS Photographic Collection. The Directories will greatly facilitate the work of the Society enabling cataloguers to incorporate valuable information in the database entries. The resource will also be well utilised by researchers.



Primelife Donates \$10,000 to Griffith Italian Museum

The Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre in country New South Wales received a boost on Saturday night when senior living provider Primelife announced a \$10,000 donation toward its development.

The announcement was made by Primelife Managing Director Ted Sent when speaking at a dinner held to celebrate Italian National Day. Mr Sent presented a giant cheque for the amount to Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre Vice Presidents Mr Tony Zorzanello and Cr John Dal Broi.

Mr Sent said the donation was representative of the company's philosophy to become a part of the communities in which it operates. Since announcing its plans to build and operate Trowella Gardens, Primelife has supported a number of local community organisations and events.

"As a company we believe it is vitally important to support the local communities in which we establish our facilities. We never develop a facility without first assessing how we can make a contribution toward helping to meet community needs," he said.

"We recognise the extraordinary contribution that the Italian community has made in the growth and development of Griffith and we see the Italian Museum and Cultural Centre as an excellent means of acknowledging and celebrating this contribution."

The first large groups of Italian immigrants arrived in Griffith when farmland was opened up in 1912. Many were drawn to the area because of its similarity to the rural areas of Italy where they had come from and they were able to pursue the type of farming they did in their homeland. Since then, Italians have lived and worked in the area, encouraging friends and relatives to migrate. Their input has enriched the area to such a degree that it is now regarded as one of the most successful multicultural communities in the country.

The Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre aims to recognise this history and communicate the story of Italian work and life in Griffith from the early 1900s and to present the rich Italian heritage of the area.

Primelife's donation to the Museum coincided with an information and carnival day held by Primelife at its Trowella Gardens Senior Community Living development site in Sidlow Road, Griffith.

Kay Hull, Member of Parliament for Riverina, officially turned the soil on the site which will feature 142 independent 2 and 3 bedroom units, 60 low-care (hostel) suites, 90 one bedroom units, a community centre with communal lounge and dining areas, a kiosk and café, hair salon, medical consulting rooms, and recreational facilities, all surrounded by beautiful landscaped gardens.

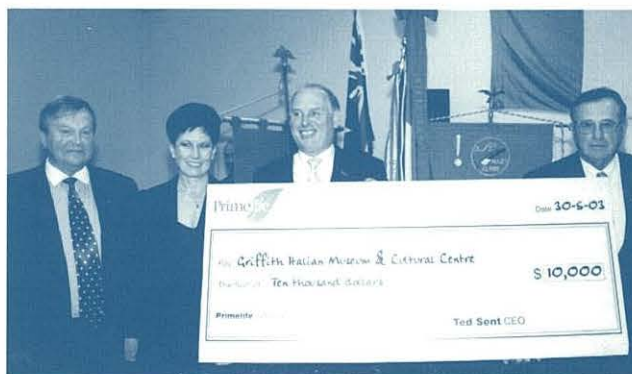
Close to 500 people made the trip out to the site in Sidlow Road, Griffith to enjoy the family friendly atmosphere, which included jazz music, face painting, a jumping castle, Rocky the Magician, clowns, and a special visit by Humphrey B Bear. Information regarding the layout and specific features of Trowella Gardens were also on display.

Mr Sent said that the large crowd and the interest in the development had exceeded all their expectations.

"Since coming to Griffith we have been overwhelmed by the support that we have received. There was a tremendous atmosphere at our Open Day that was generated by the large number of people who attended and their belief in this project. It has more than vindicated our decision and we look forward to increasing our presence here."

Mr Sent said that one of Primelife's hopes for Trowella Gardens is that it replicates the tremendous cosmopolitan culture that has been generated in Griffith by the influences of such a diverse population.

He added: "Griffith is a unique place in Australia. Just look at the contribution this community has made to the national economy. And look at the diversity and rich cultural values. The community here is quite special and that is what will make Trowella Gardens special too".



(l-r) Primelife's Managing Director Ted Sent and Marketing Manager Grace Sent, with the cheque for \$10,000 presented to Griffith Italian Museum and Cultural Centre Vice Presidents Tony Zorzanello and John Dal Broi.

According to the 2001 Census, 22% of the total population living in Australia was born overseas and originated from more than 200 different countries.

More than 9 million Australian Residents have one or both parents born overseas.

Another interesting statistic is that of the 18,972,350 people living in Australia, 218,718 were born in Italy and 353,605 Australian residents speak Italian.

Primelife is aware that Italian born Australians represent the largest and the fastest ageing non-English speaking group in the country. Also Primelife recognises the need to consider the culture of Italian people in the delivery of care and the risk of social isolation due to the language difficulties and cultural barriers.

Until a few years ago there was a low number of Italian people in Residential Care facilities. For many, residential placement "meant they had entered the tomb before the time of Death". Primelife is now changing this negative attitude with the provision of Residential Care facilities designed especially for them.

With Villa del Sole in Glenroy, Lexington Gardens Hostel in Springvale, Trevi Court in Essendon and Medina Manor in Thornbury, the Italian community can now taste Italy and the lifestyle they richly deserve in the Heart of Melbourne.

To be eligible to enter these fully accredited hostels (low-level care), approved by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged care, you must be assessed by the "ACAS" (Aged Care Assessment Service) as being in need of low care.



Villa del Sole

73 William Street,
Glenroy 3046
Telephone: 9304 3200

Trevi Court

95 Bulla Road,
Essendon 3040
Telephone: 9374 3500

Medina Manor

200A Smith Street,
Thornbury 3071
Telephone: 9416 8700

Lexington Gardens Hostel

114 Westall Road,
Springvale 3171
Telephone: 9574 6699



Freecall 1800 674 383

www.primelife.com.au

I.H.S. Journal Guidelines for Contributors

1. The journal of the Italian Historical Society is produced for a general readership. Preference will be given to articles which increase an understanding of the history of Italian immigrants and their descendants.
2. The IHS Journal is published twice yearly. The deadlines dates for articles for each issue are:
 - June issue: 30 April
 - December issue: 30 October
3. The IHS Journal accepts unsolicited articles but may decline publication for various reasons. Articles are equally welcome from both professional and amateur historians and writers.
4. The Journal does not pay for contributions.
5. All materials submitted may be subject to editing.
6. Articles should be normally submitted on a white A4 paper, typed with double spacing. Contributors are also encouraged to submit work on IBM compatible format. In general articles should not exceed 5000 words.
7. Articles should be accompanied by appropriate and clearly captioned illustrative material wherever possible. This may include good quality illustration, maps, diagrams, or other materials such as advertisements, programs, etc.
8. All material submitted for publication must be accompanied by permission to publish and must meet copyright requirements. This include both textual and illustrative materials. Unless otherwise stated, the author/s of the material provided will be credited with copyright.
9. All articles should give sources and references where appropriate. These endnotes should be grouped at the end of the article and may refer to sources or amplify material in the main body of the article. The reference numbers for endnotes should appear in the text at the end of the sentences.
10. The bibliographic style favoured for citing books, based on the Style Manual for authors, editors and printers of the AGPS is: name of author, name of book in italics or underlined, name of publisher, place of publication, year of publication.
For citing journals: name of author, title of article, name of journal in italics or underlined, volume number and year, page number/s.
11. Contributors should retain copies of all materials submitted. Illustrative material will be returned if requested.
12. Contributors should provide a very short personal description outlining current interests.



ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ACKNOWLEDGES THE GENEROUS SUPPORT
OF

**MAJOR AUSTRALIAN
SPONSOR:**

Primelife

**PRIMELIFE CORPORATION LIMITED
MELBOURNE**

**MAJOR ITALIAN
SPONSOR:**



**FONDAZIONE CASSAMARCA
TREVISO**