

Location: Orta San Giulio

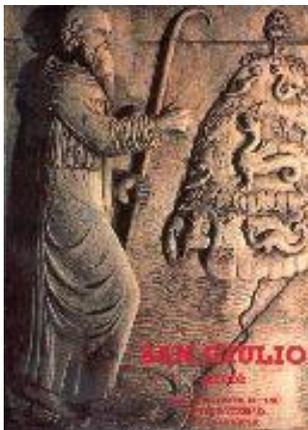
Before leaving for Europe Carol and I attended a function to celebrate the 50-year anniversary of TWB. The founder of the firm, Morrie Trytell gave us a colourful story about the beginning of the firm. All former and current directors, along with most of the current staff were there to celebrate the occasion. Many of the people present were not born back on the 1st July 1968 when the business opened its doors for the first time.

We still have the first receipt book used by the business, the very gratifying thing is that there are some client names (or their descendants) there in the first year who are still on our client list.

We arrived in Milan late on Sunday night, the first of July and headed off to Orta San Giulio where we were welcomed with a fireworks display, I didn't know a celebration of our arrival had been planned! It did however make it extremely difficult to get to our hotel - all roads into the centre of town were closed to cars. Fortunately, our driver went far beyond the call of duty and walked us to the hotel: a great welcome back to Italy for us.

Usually on our walking trips we move from village to village each day doing a 'Lenny and George'. This time, for at least part of the trip, we are staying at villages for 2 to 3 days then moving on. I will be doing blogs the same way, reflecting our stay in each village.

Orta San Giulio is on Lake Orta being a smaller version of its more famous neighbour Lake Como. No sightings of movie stars or their weekend retreats at Lake Orta. Orta San Giulio is named after a Greek priest who was exiled from his homeland for his heretical Christian teachings. He and his brother worked their way through Italy building churches on their travels. They built their 100th church at Lake Orta and then decided to make the village their home.



Giulio was made a saint because of the miracles that happened on the island, Isola Di San Giulio, just off Orta San Giulio (see below). I imagine that this would have been quite a magical and mysterious place before there were buildings erected on the island, just the place for young lovers to visit.



On our first full day in Italy we needed to stretch our legs, so we headed off on a walk around the peninsula and up to the scared mountain above the village. This mountain top is dedicated to Saint Francis of Assisi who appears to follow us throughout our journeys.

Next year we are travelling to Japan to do the Nakasendo Way, will he be honoured there as well, after all he did travel to China.....

The area on the Mountain is dotted with nine small chapels in a beautiful treed park. Each chapel has ceramic sculptures depicting a

part of Saint Francis' life. I have made a cursory examination of his teachings and his life, but I hadn't appreciated just how much patronage he received from the church hierarchy. I had perceived him as a bit of a rebel but quite clearly he was venerated in his own time as many of the sculptures represented him being presented to very senior priests in the church, one of whom went on to become a pope.

It is a very tranquil setting with marvellous views over the lake, for those so inclined, a nice place for a bit of self-contemplation.

This is an example of the many beautiful buildings on top of the mountain.

Next day (3/07), our third day in Italy, and time to do some serious walking. A climb up out of Orta San Giulio to two villages Miasino and Ameno then back down to a short walk beside the lake.

Our lunch destination was Convento di Mesma. Miasino and Ameno are both pretty little villages away from the busy tourist areas; both having some very interesting architecture.

Below are some remnants of an old building probably part of an old church that has been replaced.



The climb out of Ameno to the convent was quite arduous as we climbed up through a well-established lush Beech forest. It was a hot day, but we came across a few spots with small creeks and little fern gullies which provided welcome relief from the heat. We hadn't done enough training for this walk and combined with the heat we were feeling

the stress in the legs.

But as always effort is rewarded, and we finally reached the top to some outstanding views over the lake and the surrounding forest. The trail we were on was the original walking track up from the village to the convent and the church, as in most cases built on the highest ground in the immediate vicinity. Living in those times, you wouldn't need expensive gym fees or personal trainers or the latest fat buster diet. There wouldn't have been any need for the proliferation of self help books as one book was considered to provide all the answers. Life may have been much simpler but was it better?

This is an old olive tree which was growing outside the church enjoying the views for eternity. Glimpses of Lake Orta can be seen to the bottom right of the photo



We whiled away a pleasant hour, having our lunch and resting up for the climb back down to the lake. On arrival it was difficult to stop Carol jumping in, clothes and all. In any case she needs to have the "itzy bitzy dot bikinis" that all the mature ladies wear around the lake.



The flowers are in full bloom now and the hydrangeas are particularly brilliant as this shot shows. Purple is the most common colour, but we have seen some white and crimson ones, all equally rich in colour.

Tomorrow we head off to Stresa for a three day stay, so far, I quite like this staying for a couple of days, you can settle into your hotel and

enjoy the village more.

But there is no sense of being on a journey which you get with a village to village.

Here is something for the younger ones, a model of an accawocca; they indeed do exist.

