



Ciao a tutti,

By now most of our members must have read the historical origins of Barga. Located half way up the Serchio valley it has been sitting there trying to stop invasions from the valley floor and from the Apuan Mountains. As a result our hardy ancestors were always able to face adversities, even if it meant going away to England, Scotland and the Americas for a while.....they knew that we, their children would be back. Regardless, I thought I would add....

A little bit of History

- **180 BC:** the Romans, based in Pisa, definitively defeat the Ligurians; the Roman penetration into the Valle del Serchio begins.
- **7th cent.:** Barga is the fief of the Lombard Rolandinghi family. Later it is part of the Tuscan marquissate as a free Commune favoured by the countess Mathilde of Canossa; the privileges are granted by the Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa.
- **13th cent.:** Barga, helped by the Pope and the Pisans, fights to free itself from the rule of Lucca. But in 1236 Lucca, backed by the strength of money and arms, expands its dominion over Garfagnana, dividing it into the three vicarages of Castiglione, Coreglia and Barga. In 1298 Lucca destroys the city walls to punish the smuggling of Barga merchants who, evading custom duties, furnished the Florentines with wool, silk, and sheep's milk cheese.
- **1328:** upon the death of Castruccio Castracani, lord of Lucca, Barga voluntarily submits to the Florentine Republic. The deed (1331) is the consequence of the political crisis in Lucca, and Barga takes advantage of it. The union with Florence brings economic benefits to Barga, such as exemption from many taxes and duties.
- **1436-37:** Piccinino, a condottiere under the hire of the Visconti of Milan, lays siege to Barga, using bombards for the first time to open breaches in the walls. But Florence sends another famous condottiere, Francesco Sforza, to help its loyal subjects, and he liberates Barga from the siege. Under the protection of the great military and financial might of Florence, Barga enjoys a long period of peace lasting until the Napoleonic occupation.
- **1859:** the Unification of Italy causes serious economic damage to Barga, which suddenly loses its flourishing trade with the nearby towns belonging to the states of Lucca and Modena. A period of depression ensues, inciting many people to emigrate from Barga.

Barga's history reads like a "Who is who" in the annals of Italy's history....some names are now famous and part of the fabric that later became the Kingdom of Italy.

Francesco Sforza is one of those that made history, perhaps the equivalent of Superman in our present world, but he was real! And Julius Caesar; I wonder if he stopped by the Ponte Vecchio in Barga to have a dish of Zuppa di Farro on his way to conquer France and England?

Barga in my mind is what made the Garfagnana.....a region where the wolves and cinghiali roamed the mountains (and still do) searching for the black and white truffles common in the area and in turn being hunted by the "boscaioli" that made a living in the great chestnuts forests surrounding the town. Those boscaioli must have come back to Barga occasionally to choose their mates, ladies as strong as beautiful as the land that gave them birth.



At the top and still part the Garfagnana region is the Lunigiana region, perhaps God's gift to Italy, a land of valleys and sea and forests and sun and white sparkling Carrara marble and the poetry of the "Cinque terre". Slowly this part of Italy is being discovered by the rest of Europe....a pity for the rest of us.

I wonder how many people know that Napoleone Buonaparte's family came from the Lunigiana region. In fact the family were originally nobles from San

Medici. In 1527 there was a Buonaparte backed the wrong later were reinstated by

A branch settled in Tuscany and from there, after settled in Aiaccio, Corsica, Eventually Corsica was ceded old, became French. The rest hour away from Barga and that I will stop there on the picture I enclosed of their yearly festival will have to suffice.



Miniato and were close friends of the rebellion, (the Guelfi and Ghibellini). The side and were kicked out of Florence, but Alessandro dei Medici.

Sarzana, located in the Lunigiana region of backing the wrong side once more, they which at the time belonged to Genoa. to France and Napoleon, when 15 years is History. Sarzana is only one and one half when I go to Tuscany again I tell myself way to Viareggio, but I never do..... The

Since I last wrote one of my blurbs, we have had an influx of new members.....great! Some of our members unfortunately lost people close to them. I think both of Pete who lost his mother recently and Donna who lost her Jazz virtuoso husband. We will say a prayer for them. In some of the correspondence we talk about another reunion in Barga, but then the will power seems to flag. I actually think I know why..... Ken is afraid of our



so he is quietly boycotting the reunion.....but I think he is using his famous family to race me with a C 24 Caproni caccia. Ken, what do you think, a horse race at il Ciocco in Barga instead? Pete, Jim, Roberto, Brian, Jack, Julia, what do you think? Next year? When the figs are ripe? Or when the grapes are being picked nel Pieve del Chianti (close to Florence?)



Lo scribacchino