

**Parco di Montevecchia e del Curone:**

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

**Round walk Butto Ca Soldato Centre of Montevecchia**

Participants will be met by the Park Rangers at the parking area of the Montevecchia municipality and will be guided to visit the modern Visitor Center which will be opened especially for our visitors; the interactive museum is located next to the Park main office and visitors will have the opportunity to enjoy the 360-degree panorama from the esplanade located just behind the building.

Having completed the visit of the Butto area we will take a dirt road, mostly surrounded by woods and closed to general traffic, through the farm-house Val Fredda (Cold Valley) where we will enter a path through the woods which will lead the walkers to the Park Rangers site called Cà Soldato (Soldier's house).

After visiting the small natural museum and relaxing in the beautiful surroundings of Cà Soldato the visitors will start the ascent to the Piazzetta di Montevecchia that will be reached via an ancient steep path that will lead us to the centre of the village where two important eighteenth-century villas are located and, having climbed the 178 steps, we will arrive at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel sanctuary with a splendid view over the Park, the Alps and in the clear days the Apennines.

**Total difference of altitude 300 m. approx. We suggest clothes and shoes suitable for walking on paths. The Park and the Park Rangers (GEV) are not responsible for any kind of damages.**

**Santuario & Via Crucis**

A church dedicated to St. John the Baptist, of medieval origin, built on the ruins of a Roman signal tower was destroyed in 1570's, when a fire due to "a careless pastor" (as mentioned in the St. Charles Borromeo visit report) completely ruined it along with the sacred vessels and vestments.



**The Sanctuary: photo taken from Monte Chiaro in 1920; practically the panorama is unchanged**

For nearly a century Masses were officiated in the chapel of San Bernardo, until 1630 when the sanctuary was rebuilt but in a smaller size than at present. Expansions with the addition of the vestry on one side and large rooms for the residence of the officiating priests (which occurred between 1650 and mid 1700) have led the sanctuary to its current size. In 1924 the sanctuary was dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and consecrated by Cardinal. Schuster in November 1954 to be later completely restored by local volunteers between 1985 and 1990. The building is currently used only for religious functions for organ concerts and as a home for spiritual retreats. Note that on the eastern side of the church was an old building called the "cà del reet" used until 1940 as a school of embroidery. The sanctuary is surrounded at its base by the Via Crucis with votive chapels carved in

high relief in the local stone Molera recently beautifully restored and a few meters below a beautiful living botanical garden called The Garden of Eve and some horrendous radio antennas erected at the beginning of the 70's repeating the signals of some local radio stations in Lombardy and Brianza area,

In the thirteenth century Montevecchia was part of the parish of Missaglia, this period coincides with the beginning of a process of agricultural transformation of the hills that leads to the formation of the typical terraces. The eighteenth century is characterized by the return of the Milanese patrician families to land with the construction of 'villas of delight', including the villa Albertoni Agnesi-Azzoni, and villa Archinti Ottolina-Vittadini, with the court open to the valley and the main body porch



**Villa Agnesi now Azzoni**

### VILLA AGNESI E MARIA GAETANA

In villa Agnesi was inhabited by the well renowned Milanese mathematician Maria Gaetana Agnesi (1718-99), without any doubt the most famous person we have ever had in Montevecchia. Pietro Agnesi son of Giacomo, silk merchant with a shop in Via dei Mercanti d'Oro in Milan in 1717 married Anna Brivio, thus uniting two large estates, he then wanted to acquire a title through the purchase of the estate of Montevecchia thereby gaining the status to join the best Milanese aristocracy.

Thus Pietro Agnesi could open his parlor in Via Pantano in Milan to the Borromeos, the Simonettas, the Castiglioni and the members of the Archinti academy and a long line of scholars attracted by his eldest daughter Maria Gaetana that charmed all by mastering Greek Latin French German Hebrew learned as a young girl in long periods of study in Montevecchia. Maria Gaetana did not limit her knowledge to languages but soon became famous for philosophical mathematical and scientific studies which were then published in 1738 as " Propositiones philosophicae " and two volumes of "Analytical Institutions for use by the Italian Youth". In 1752 and only after the death of her father, he to whom Maria Gaetana would have never disobeyed, she withdrew completely from public life to devote herself to the care of the poor, the sick and the study of Sacred Scripture. Maria Gaetana Agnesi made her home a refuge for the sick and she became a servant and nurse, opened a small hospital, and went to live directly with the patients and to meet the costs, after selling all her possessions turned to acquaintances, to the authorities, to the charities. Finally, thanks to a donation of Prince Don Antonio Trivulzi Ptolemy, the Pio Albergo Trivulzio was established in 1771 in Milan (A Hospice for the elderly still functioning today and commonly called by the Milanese "The Baggina"), and Cardinal Giuseppe Pozzobonelli invited Maria Gaetana Agnesi to hold the office of the Visitor and Director of especially sick Women.



**Piazzetta of Montevecchia and Villa Agnesi entrance in a 1930 photo**

## San Bernard Chapel

The Chapel of St. Bernard dates back to at least the sixteenth century and the first record was documented in 1571 during the visit of St. Charles Borromeo in Montevecchia. when it was admirably represented by an unknown cartographer, in a map descriptive of the main buildings and streets of the countryside. The church was consecrated in 1589 and later enlarged and its founder, Antonio Canonico Scaccabarozzi was buried there in 1593.

Also very important the restoration that took place from 1994 to 2000 which attracted the attention of the Corriere della Sera having reported in 1997: Montevecchia SOS for the church of San Bernardo: Fund-raising for the restoration of the church of S. Bernard Montevecchia continues. Some volunteers have been knocking on all doors of the homes of residents to raise the money necessary for the work. "This is a small church, which dates back to 1589 - Eugenio Mascheroni, mayor of Montevecchia declared -. And 'the last building in the whole district, which needs restoration and a group of people decided to make the effort not only to raise the necessary resources (at least one hundred million lira) but also to provide labor, coordinated by the superintendent, for a first intervention. "The fascinating story of the restoration and recovery of important frescoes of the late 500 is described in a book by Joseph Sgobbi recently published and available for purchase at the same church.



**La Cappelletta di San Bernardo (LC120-00164)**

## General considerations on the Park, an island under siege!

The Park of Montevecchia and Curone Valley was always besieged, first by glaciers, which modeled our territory and, after melting, leaving behind an island which plays the role of sentinel of Brianza, than by urban expansion.



Today the siege is driven by the construction industry targeting high added value building thus trying to occupy the most scenically attractive areas, the park seems to be able to defend itself with boundaries which are well defined by the contrast "lights outside dark inside". The siege is made even more disturbing by the pressure of the oil companies who want to extract oil from deep below the park (reserves are estimated to be present at 3000 m and 6000 m just below us).

The park Curone and immediately north the Monte Brianza (Genesio) is a green and hilly area in

Brianza a territory which is now completely invaded by hypermarkets and overbuilding. This area still remains a natural green space just 35 km from Milan and is thus also a valuable asset for a city so short of green spaces within it. The area is valuable for the presence of invertebrate species related to the underground environments and has a significant abundance of endemics species (found only at the local level) which have evolved in areas not covered by glaciers during the Quaternary. The park is between an altitude from 240 to 500 meters above sea level and is emerging as a mosaic of forests, meadows and cultivated fields with portions characterized by strong aridity, but also some small but important wetlands. The local habitats range from Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey - loamy (Molinion coeruleae), to oak forests.

St. Genesio and Montevecchia Curone Valley are also distinguished by ecological processes related to virtuous forest practices (management of the natural cycle of forests and wood). Among the vertebrates we find the presence of important populations of species of herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles) these are on the IUCN red list or protected by EU directives. Among the birds we have the find the hobby, the nightjar, the green woodpecker and tawny owls. The area is home of several species bats, red squirrel (re-introduced) and the badger. In brief, a notable exception to the chaos that has invaded the Brianza area (hypermarkets, warehouses, distributors, etc...).

### **Acknowledgment and Bibliography**

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Foto recenti: **Archivio GEV del Parco.**

The only scope of this summary, prepared for the exclusive purpose of Rangers' organized visit to the Park, is to trigger interest and appreciation for our territory and ultimately help to defend it from improper use.

(Document prepared by the Park Rangers Michele Villa e Carlo Cavenaghi; Apologies for the translation: your corrections and suggestions would be most welcome)