

Part of the “Inside Tuscany: A Second Time Around” Series

Central Tuscany: Eight Tuscan Hill Towns

A Guide to the Valdichiana from Cortona to Civitella

2018 / 2019 Edition

Scott Tiezzi Grabinger



2018

VERSO

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Cover Photos:

Antipasti: melon, crostini with tomatoes, mushrooms, and crostini nero; prosciutto, salami, and bresaola.

Piazza Grande in Arezzo.

Church in Monte San Savino.

Dedication

*To my cousins, Nando and Marisa.
They taught me to be Italian.*

*Ai miei cugini Nando e Marisa.
Mi hanno insegnato ad essere italiano.*

*Marisa died in 2017.
Marisa è morta nel 2017.*



Acknowledgements

Thank you friends and relatives, American and Italian

None of this is possible without my wife, Jill, who funds my junkets and books and tolerates my long absences. She is my proof reader and takes on the job with far greater patience than I do. Blame the errors on me.

Second cousin Giovanni Tiezzi, his wife Antonella, and daughter Valeria have taken me around Tuscany, showing me some of the lesser known gems including Lucignano, Chiusure, Montefollonico, Chiusi, and great pizzerias in Foiano and Cesa. They house and feed me for several days each year. Angela and Daniele always graciously accept and help me. Cousins Maria Caldi, husband Valfrido, and daughters Gabriella and Alessandra have shown me around the Val d'Orcia, Pienza, and Monticchiello, taken me to restaurants, and hosted my whole American family to wonderful meals.

Thanks also to the patient teachers of *La Cultura Italiana*, who take on the impossible goal of teaching me Italian every year with patience and smiles. They have become close friends as well as teachers: Paola, Laura, and Monica.

The *Tenuta il Palazzo* houses me each year for several weeks. The family operated *agriturismo* and *cantina* shows me great patience and acceptance. Thank you Isabella, Primo, Anna, Alessio, Lorenzo and Allegra.

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Towns, Recipes, and Maps

TOWNS

Town I Arezzo	31
Town II Civitella in Valdichiana.....	127
Town III Monte San Savino.....	145
Town IV Castiglion Fiorentino.....	173
Town V Foiano della Chiana.....	205
Town VI Lucignano	229
Town VII Cortona.....	253
Town VIII Chiusi.....	31

RECIPES

Crostini Nero	14
Risotto Milanese.....	30
Asparagi con Vinaigrette e Capperi.....	34
Artichoke Crostini	80
Porchetta at Home.....	150
Roasted Asparagus.....	214
Basic Tomato Sauce	244
Marisa's Pasta with Sausage, Wild Mushrooms, and Cream	330
Pici al Cinghiale.....	334
Creamy Tomato Sauce	364
Simple Pasta al Forno.....	368

MAPS

Heart of Tuscany Map.....	24
Valdichiana Portion of Tuscany.....	25
Arezzo Map.....	32
Arezzo's Major Churches	56
Civitella Map	128
Monte San Savino Map.....	146
Castiglion Fiorentino Map.....	174
Foiano della Chiana Map.....	206
Map of the Museo della Fraternalita.....	224
Lucignano Map.....	230
Cortona Map.....	254
Map of the Fortezza di Girifalco in Cortona	304
Chiusi Map	314

Table of Contents

<i>Dedication</i>	iii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	iv
<i>Inside Tuscany Books by Scott Tiezzi Grabinger</i>	v
<i>Towns, Recipes, and Maps</i>	vi
<i>I Introduction</i>	13
1 <i>Basics</i>	15
Returning to Tuscany.....	15
Basic Assumption: You've Passed European Travel 101.....	15
GPS.....	15
Costs, Getting Money, and Debit Cards.....	16
Credit Card Strategies.....	16
Italian Oddities.....	17
Photography Practices.....	18
Photo Credits for This Book.....	18
How to Follow My Descriptions of Churches.....	18
Comportment in Churches.....	19
Recipe and Food Information.....	19
2 <i>Inside Tuscany's Principles for Slow Travel</i>	21
Principle 1: Go slow and easy. Plan to return.....	21
Principle 2: Adapt and learn new things.....	21
Principle 3: Travel cheap.....	21
Principle 4: Come to "tour" and to "live.".....	21
Principle 5: Put your camera down and look around.....	22
Principle 6: Fly under the radar.....	22
Principle 7: Does €25.00 really matter?.....	22
Principle 8: Pack light, walk easy.....	22
<i>II Valdichiana</i>	23
3 <i>The Valdichiana Valley</i>	27
<i>Town I Arezzo</i>	31
4 <i>"Live" in Arezzo</i>	35
Why Arezzo? Traditions, Location, and Cost.....	35
Architecture and History.....	36
Artistic Offerings: Museums and Churches.....	36
Festivals and Markets.....	36
Cuisine.....	38
Important Arezzo Locations and Tourist Information.....	38
5 <i>Eating Well in Arezzo</i>	39
Osteria Capannaccia.....	39
Antica Osteria L'Agania.....	45

Pasticceria Tiffany.....	47
Good Gelato Sites:.....	47
6 <i>Sleeping in Arezzo</i>	49
Tenuta Il Palazzo Agriturismo	49
La Corte del Re.....	52
7 <i>Pieve della Santa Maria</i>	57
In Short	57
Long Version	58
8 <i>Duomo — Arezzo's Cathedral</i>	65
Four Most Important Features.....	66
Duomo Construction Process.....	67
History	68
Exterior	69
Interior	70
Baptistry	77
Cappella della Madonna del Conforto	77
9 <i>Basilica di San Francesco</i>	81
History	81
Description of the Church.....	82
Apse and Chapels	84
Visiting the Legend of the Holy Cross.....	85
The Panels of the Legend of the True Cross.....	87
Other Images in the Bacci Chapel.....	92
Special Exhibits	92
10 <i>Casa Museo di Ivan Bruschi</i>	95
Ground Floor	98
First Floor.....	102
Second Floor.....	106
11 <i>Museo dei Mezzi di Comunicazione</i>	109
12 <i>Museo Mudas (Diocesano)</i>	115
Ground Floor	117
First Floor: Fresco Rooms.....	119
13 <i>Piazza Grande</i>	123
<i>Ponte Buriano — the Bridge of the Mona Lisa</i>	126
<u><i>Town II Civitella in Valdichiana</i>.....</u>	<u>127</u>
14 <i>Civitella in Valdichiana</i>	129
Background	130
Rocca, Town Walls, and Gates	131
La Cisterna	132
Sala della Memoria and Pinacoteca.....	132
Chiesa della Santa Maria Assunta	134
Civitella Events	135
Civitella and Modern Art.....	136

15	<i>Civitella's Day of Desolation</i>	137
<u>Town III Monte San Savino.....</u>		<u>145</u>
16	<i>Monte San Savino</i>	147
	Events in Monte San Savino	148
	Take a Break.....	149
	City Wifi	149
17	<i>Monte San Savino's Porchetta</i>	151
18	<i>Museo del Cassero e Ceramica Popolare</i>	153
19	<i>Chiesa di Sant'Agostino</i>	157
20	<i>Loggia dei Mercanti</i>	161
21	<i>Amphitheater and Hanging Gardens</i>	163
	Palazzo del Monte	163
	Hanging Gardens and Amphitheater	164
22	<i>Chiesa della Misericordia</i>	165
23	<i>Santuario della Santa Maria delle Vertighe</i>	169
<u>Town IV Castiglion Fiorentino.....</u>		<u>173</u>
24	<i>Castiglion Fiorentino</i>	175
	Porta San Michele Arcangelo.....	177
	Palazzo Comunale and Vasari Loggia.....	178
	Events in Castiglion Fiorentino	179
25	<i>Etruscan Archeological Park</i>	181
	Underground Etruscan Excavation.....	182
	La Torre del Cassero	183
	Museo Civico Archeologico	184
26	<i>Chiesa di San Francesco</i>	187
27	<i>Pinacoteca Comunale</i>	191
28	<i>Collegiata di San Giuliano</i>	199
	Museo della Pieve di San Giuliano	202
<u>Town V Foiano della Chiana.....</u>		<u>205</u>
29	<i>Foiano della Chiana</i>	207
	Porta del Castello.....	208
	Palazzo Comunale and Piazza Cavour	209
	Events.....	209
	Eating in Foiano	212
30	<i>Chiesa di San Francesco</i>	215
	Della Robbia Figures with the Fainting Virgin.....	215
31	<i>Collegiata di Santi Martino e Leonardo</i>	219
32	<i>Museo della Fraternita</i>	223
	Background.....	225
	The della Robbia Madonna of the Snow.....	225
	Other Exhibits.....	225

<i>Town VI Lucignano</i>	229
33 <i>Lucignano</i>	231
Introduction	231
34 <i>Museo Civico and Palazzo Pretorio</i>	235
35 <i>Santuario della Madonna delle Querce</i>	245
36 <i>Collegiata di San Michele Arcangelo</i>	247
<i>Town VII Cortona</i>	253
37 <i>Cortona Background</i>	255
Legends of the Beginnings of Cortona	256
38 <i>Piazza Republica and Palazzo Comunale</i>	259
39 <i>MAEC</i>	261
Highlights	262
MAEC Rooms AE	268
Upper Level: Egypt, Armory, Biblioteca, and Severini.....	276
40 <i>Melone il Sodo Excavation</i>	279
41 <i>Museo Diocesano — Diocesan Museum</i>	281
42 <i>Santuario di Santa Margherita</i>	297
Walking to the Basilica — Two Trails	298
Interior	300
43 <i>Fortezza di Girifalco</i>	305
44 <i>Eating in Cortona</i>	307
Trattoria La Grotta.....	307
Caffé degli Artisti	309
Ristorante La Loggetta.....	310
45 <i>Cortona Events</i>	311
<i>Town VIII Chiusi</i>	313
46 <i>Chiusi</i>	315
Food	316
Festivals	316
47 <i>Museo Archeologico e Etruschi</i>	317
Second Part of the Museum	323
The Etruscan Tombs	323
48 <i>Duomo di San Secondaio</i>	325
49 <i>Museo della Cattedrale</i>	331
50 <i>Labirinto di Porsenna</i>	335
<i>III Useful Information</i>	337
51 <i>Decoding Religious Art</i>	339
Themes	339
Saints and Their Symbols.....	345
Church Classifications.....	349

Relics of Saints	350
52 <i>Travel Basics</i>	353
Water, Wine, and Picnics	353
Transportation.....	353
Using the Phone	354
Electricity and Battery Charging	355
Internet Access — Hotspots.....	356
Medical Help	356
Strikes (Sciopero).....	356
Overnight Options	357
Banks, Foreign Exchange Bureaus and ATMs	357
Before You Leave Home: Packing	357
Documents for Traveling in Italy	358
Automobiles	358
Opening Hours: Sites, Shops, and Restaurants	359
Post Office	360
Polite Cultural Practices when Shopping	360
Kinds of Restaurants	361
Basic Courtesies.....	362
53 <i>Author Scott Tiezzi Grabinger</i>	365
The Writer	365
54 <i>Index</i>	369

Never go on trips with anyone you do not love.
Ernest Hemingway

Wine Making



Il Valdichiana



*The steeple of the Chiesa della Misericordia in
Monte San Savino.*

*He who would travel happily must travel light.
Antoine de St. Exupery*

Valdichiana Portion of Tuscany





Remember, after buying a copy of the book you can send an email to the author and receive a free color pdf copy. (Scott.Grabinger@gmail.com)

3 The Valdichiana Valley

THE AREA

The landscape is mostly flat, lined on the east and west with steep hills. The average altitude is about 405 m (1329 ft) above sea level.

Summers tend to be warm and humid and the winters cold and humid — much like the midwest in the US.

Spring and autumn are mild with periods of rain (especially between late October through December and between April and May). Snowfalls are rare.



The Valdichiana plain.

PREHISTORY AND THE ETRUSCANS

The first record of humans is from the late Paleolithic and Neolithic eras near Cortona and Foiano della Chiana. One finding is a 100,000 year-old skull. Other findings come from the Bronze and Iron Ages when the Etruscans (7th through 3rd centuries BC) created the first complex, sophisticated civilization of towns, agriculture, industry, crafts, and transportation.

The industrious Etruscans spread throughout the valley's hills because most of the Valdichiana was a dangerous, malarial-ridden swamp. They began the first reclamation project creating a system of canals to drain the swamp that turned the valley into the “granary of Etruria” and building significant settlements at Castiglione Fiorentino, Lucignano, Arezzo, Chiusi, Monte San Savino, and Foiano della Chiana.

ROMANS

The Roman Empire began contact with the Etruscans in the fourth century BC and brought the entire area under its control in the mid third century BC. The Etruscans and immigrating Romans quickly assimilated each others cultures, with Rome adopting Etruscan religious practices including foretelling the future by reading a chicken's entrails and use of the purple toga for royalty. Rome always alternated battlefield victories with building extensive social and business connections, and a sophisticated



The Battle of Marciano/Scannagallo by Vasari. (WMC)

Germany, and eastern Europe.

infrastructure to encourage cultural integration. Rome created a network of roads going north through Italy and from coast to coast, all intersecting near Arezzo. During the fourth and third centuries AD, the valley was often a battlefield with Rome fighting off invaders from Carthage, Gaul,

MIDDLE AGES

The fall of the Roman Empire dealt a harsh blow to the Valdichiana. As northern tribes passed through, they plundered the towns and destroyed the canal system, turning the valley back into a dangerous swamp. Without Roman engineers and continuous investment the sophisticated infrastructure slowly disappeared. The entire economic system collapsed plunging the area into centuries of poverty, misery, fear, disease, and depopulation, like the rest of Europe. Those who remained moved their settlements above the unhealthy swamp to defensible high hills. These became the foundations for the development of the Tuscan cities in the latter Middle Ages.

By the thirteenth century, as Europe began to emerge from the Dark Ages, fighting among Tuscan cities settled between two factions: the Guelfs, in Florence, and the Ghibellines, in Arezzo.

MODERN AGE

In the sixteenth century, Florence gradually assumed total control of the area after the Battle of Marciano/Scannagallo (2 August 1554). The Medici began a program of reclamation of the swampland based on a map that Leonardo da Vinci drew in 1503. Later, the Tuscans had to throw off the chains of the Austrians and French (end of the 18th, beginning of the 19th c.).

The Florence to Rome railway (1862-1866) opened the area to trade and industry as well as agriculture. The area suffered a setback during World War II when the nazis retreated north destroying much of the canal system and infrastructure to slow

the advance of the Allies. Today, the area has recovered its ancient wealth and status and is again the “granary of Italy.”

CUISINE AND WINES

Throughout the centuries Tuscans found themselves sandwiched between periods of prosperity and longer periods of hardship, so their recipes are based on seasonal foods without waste.

Many popular dishes discovered by tourists were simply ways of using leftovers, e.g., *acquacotta* and *ribollita*. Literally every part of barnyard and wild animals was used — thus the Tuscans became masters of making cured meats and cheeses, like prosciutto and pecorino.

The white *chianina* breed of cattle has gained international fame equal to Japanese kobe beef. It is a fast growing breed raised without antibiotics and hormones. The mouth watering, tender steaks are cooked simply over a wood fire with oil, salt, pepper, and finished with a squeeze of lemon juice.

Not world famous like Brunello, Chianti, and Vino Nobile, the wines of the Valdichiana are light and fruity. There are two primary DOC (Denominazione Origine Controllata) wine areas: the DOC Valdichiana and DOC Cortona. Valdichiana wines, straw yellow in color, must reach an alcohol content of 10%. They are dry with a light flavor, perfect for summer quaffing, made from 60% to 80% trebbiano Toscano and 20% to 40% of a white grape such as malvasia, grechetto, pinot bianco, or chardonnay.

The Cortona DOC applies to red and rosé wines. Flavors are a combination of varieties including canaiolo nero, sangiovese, chardonnay, sauvignon, merlot and others. Alcohol content must be at least 11%.



Tagliatelle with prosciutto and truffle from the Osteria le Botti in Lucignano.

Risotto Milanese

This risotto is the traditional, some believe the first, risotto made. Saffron makes this dish a bit costly.

Ingredients

2 c arborio rice
1 can vegetable broth
1 c white wine
water, wine, or broth to equal 3-½ cups
¼ c olive oil
½ c chopped sweet onion
¼ c white wine (separate from above)
pinch of saffron threads, make into a powder with a mortar and pestle
1 T butter
¼ c fresh parmigiano reggiano

Directions

- Steep the saffron in 1/8 c of warm water — save for the end.
- Add oil to pressure cooker over medium heat.
- Add onion and sauté until onion is soft and translucent.
- Add rice and sauté for a few seconds to get it hot and coated with the mixture.
- Add ¼ c wine and let alcohol burn off.
- Add rest of liquid.
- Put the top of the pressure cooker on and heat the pan on high heat until the rocker begins to move ever so slightly. Start your timer for 6 minutes.
- Gradually turn down heat to keep the rocker moving as slowly as possible.
- After six minutes remove from heat, put the cooker into the sink, and run cold water over the top. When the pressure has been released, open the top.
- Stir in the butter and saffron.
- Add parmigiano and stir thoroughly.
- Cover lightly and let rest for five to ten minutes to infuse the saffron flavor and then serve.

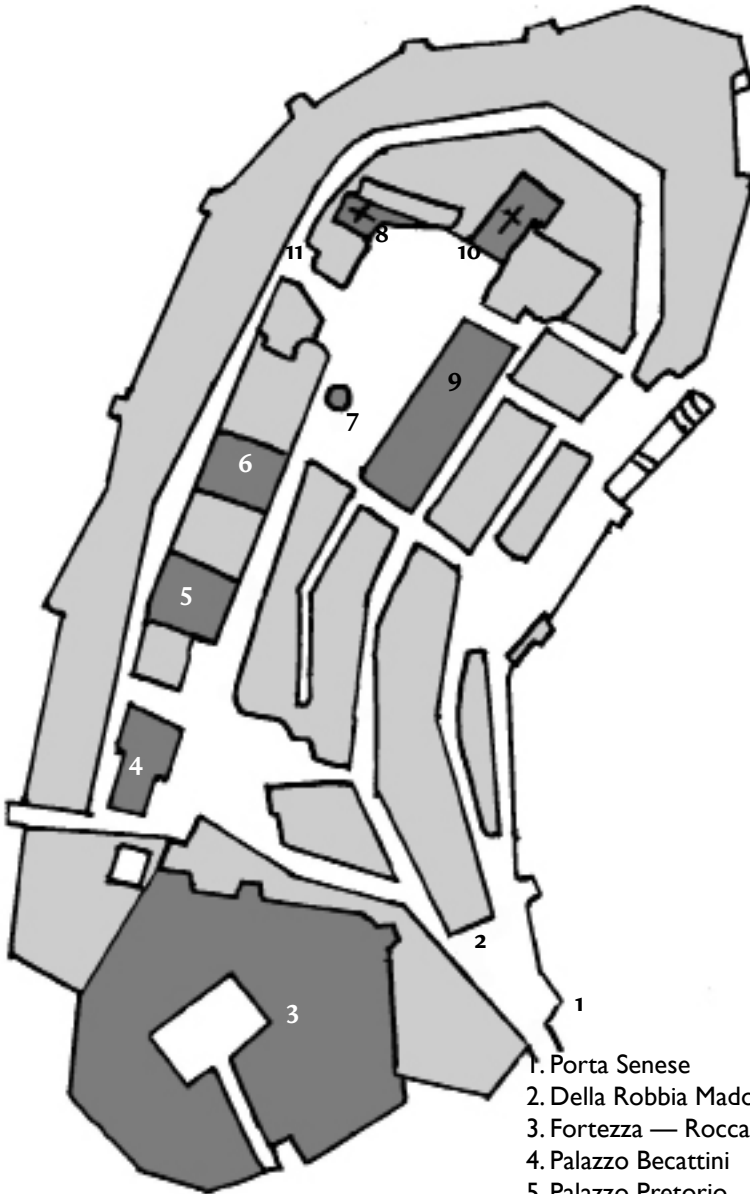
Town II Civitella in Valdichiana



At one of the walls in the Civitella Rocca complex: the author, Bill, and Beth.

*The world cracks open for those willing to take a risk.
Frances Mayes*

Civitella Map



1. Porta Senese
2. Della Robbia Madonna and Child
3. Fortezza — Rocca
4. Palazzo Becattini
5. Palazzo Pretorio
6. Palazzo della Cancelleria
7. Cisterna
8. Chiesa della Confraternità
9. Palazzo Ninci
10. Chiesa di Santa Maria
11. The shootings and Danielle Tiezzi's escape statue

14 Civitella in Valdichiana

Location:

43.41758, 11.72350

Tourist Information:

Comune di Civitella in
Valdichiana
Via Settembrini, 21
www.civichiana.it

The TI is in the city
hall in the center of
the town opposite
the old cistern. The

TI is also a memorial set up by families
of victims of a WW II massacre with
several photo exhibition rooms. The
town holds an annual modern sculp-
ture festival.

Time to visit: One to two hours to
give it justice. It is small — tiny —
and you could do it in an hour, but
it deserves a more thoughtful and
respectful approach. The whole town is
a living memorial to a massacre com-
mitted by German troops on 29 June
1944.

Reasons for a visit: It's a beautiful
town with one of the best views of the
Valdichiana towards Cortona. There
are ruins of a Rocca on one end and a
church and memorial on the other. A
unique feature is the modern sculp-
tures scattered throughout the town.

Accessibility: After entering the town
from the parking lot below the wall, it
is mostly flat. Access to the Rocca is
up a rough ramp, but not too steep.
It's very good for a hill town.



Top: Civitella from below the hill.

Above: Madonna and Child by Giovanni della Robbia, 1422 at the Porta Senese entrance into the town.



*The Rocca of
Civitella.*

BACKGROUND

Civitella in Valdichiana is a tiny, peaceful walled village located on a high ridge between the valley of the Chiana to the south and the Val d'Ambra to the north, providing spectacular panoramas in both directions. Like all Tuscan towns it has a lengthy history with archeological evidence of first settlements back to the Etruscans.

After the Roman era, the Lombards from the north invaded Italy. Civitella is one of the best-preserved of the network of Lombard fortresses of the sixth and the seventh centuries in central Italy.

Civitella owed its historic importance to its strategic location along the routes toward Siena and Arezzo. It played the role of a garrison town for Arezzo. The Aretine bishops had established their residence in Civitella as a military refuge in case of attacks on Arezzo. Because of its military importance to the bishops it was named “Civitella del Vescovo” (Bishop’s City).

Like the other small Tuscan hill towns that provided a network of castles for security in the Middle Ages, Civitella lost its importance during the nineteenth century when villages expanded on the plains. The seat of the *comune* moved to Badia al Pino in 1917.

Few live in the town today, but almost 9000 people live in the surrounding area. The economy is based on the production of cereals, chestnuts, grapes, olives, and industries producing wood products and clothing.

The most important event in Civitella’s history occurred on 29 June 1944. Over 250 citizens of Civitella, Cornia, San Pancrazio (Bucine today), and countryside farms were massacred by the German SS Hermann Goering Division, in retaliation for the killing of three German soldiers by partisans. I learned of this history through one of the survivors. (See the next chapter for the whole story.)

ROCCA, TOWN WALLS, AND GATES

Coordinates:

43.41709, 11.72255
Western edge of town.

The Civitella Rocca, or stronghold, probably dates back to the settlement in the ancient Etruscan and Roman Eras. Its prominent position overlooked most of the Valdichiana all the way to Lago Trasimeno on the southern border of Tuscany.

It was first destroyed in 1252 and later restored by bishop Guglielmino degli Ubertini.

A simple Rocca (fortress or stronghold) was probably first built upon Etruscan and Roman ruins. In the sixth century, during the fall of the Roman Empire, the invading Lombards reconstructed it and surrounded it with massive walls. In 1182, the stronghold came to look like a tower. Guglielmino degli Ubertini, bishop of Arezzo, restored the fort in 1252 and built a second set of walls separating the Rocca from the town. Houses for troops and servants, and stables were built within the Rocca against the inner walls. In the sixteenth century, Paolo da Castello enlarged the town walls creating several bulwarks that can be seen today by driving along the road around the city. The walls were again restored in 1969.

Under the rule of Bishop Guido Tarlati (14th c.) two entrances led through the walls. The Porta Aretina, reached by the street Madonna di Mercatale, was destroyed by a bombing in 1944. The surviving gate is the Senese gate, next to the parking lot. Directly in front of you as you enter the gate is a *Madonna and Child* from the workshop of Giovanni della Robbia (1552). It's surprising that a della Robbia masterpiece worth millions sits freely in the open.

The German army used the Rocca during World War II and it was almost entirely destroyed by an Allied bombing in 1944. It has never been rebuilt; however, restoration of the tower and walls



*The Rocca of
Civitella.*



*The old cistern
to collect rain
water.*

there were no water sources or wells within the town walls, the cistern collected rain water dripping from the roofs and running down the square. Unfortunately, it usually dried up during the hot months of July and August. Then, the Civitellini had to fetch water from sources located a long distance from the town. The damaged structure and base were completely reconstructed in 1849 with a hydraulic pump. The cistern remained the water supply until the 1920s.

SALA DELLA MEMORIA AND PINACOTECA

Hours: The entrance is free and it is open on Saturdays and Sundays. To visit it during the week you can call 0575.448112 (Secretary). For a guided tour you can call the local library 0575.445303. However, every time I've visited Civitella during the week the *Sala della Memoria* has been open but unstaffed. This is a solemn place, a memorial to a massacre. Please act respectfully and refrain from taking pictures.

Accessibility: No steps to speak of but the aisles are narrow and the glass cases are about four-feet above the floor.

During the second world war, Civitella and neighboring Cornia and Gebbia were victims of a nazi massacre carried out on June 29, 1944 (see next chapter). All this area, homes, church and public buildings was bombed and destroyed. 176 unarmed people were murdered.

In 2004, the people of Civitella opened a "Memorial Room" on Piazza Don Alcide Lazzeri to remember the event. The room

is ongoing to make a public space for meetings, exhibitions, and theater.

LA CISTERNA

Location:

Piazza Lazzeri
Halfway between the church and Rocca.

The big eighteenth century cistern was for centuries the meeting place of the women of the village. Since

graphically displays the horrors of the massacre. Elements in the room:

- Pictures of Civitella around the turn of the century.
- One of the intended victims was a seminarian, Don Daniele Tiezzi (a possible relative of mine). The exact point of his escape is marked by a statue near the piazza.
- There are many letters and copies of articles written about the day.
- Two of the cases are particularly horrific. One holds a blood stained handkerchief with a bullet hole. There is a wallet and blood stained holy cards found on a victim's body.
- A second case has the vestment worn by Don Alcide Lazzeri (parish priest) as he said mass that day, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

As a priest he could have been spared; the nazis were not to kill priests. However he volunteered to replace one of his parishioners and was murdered by a nazi bullet to the back of his head.

- There is a picture of one of the Germans responsible, Heinz Barz, an officer in the ruthless Hermann Goering division.
- Another case is filled with pictures from the time period, especially the victims.
- Many pictures on the wall show the aftermath, the bombed buildings and destruction to the church and town. One picture is of coffins waiting burial and mounds of earth at the grave site.
- Below the display cases are military objects: canteens, mess kits, helmets, bayonets, artillery shells, and shrapnel.

In the second room you can see some exhibits from the victims, a lot of photos of the little town before and after destruction including document archives, historical research, evidentiary objects, judicial inquiries, books, and videos recorded during the war years.

The Memory Committee asks all visitors to respect site and to sign the register and record your reflections. The *Presidente della Repubblica*, Carlo Azelio Ciampi, signed the register on 7 October



The memorial for the seminarian Daniele Tiezzi who, after being shot, escaped the massacre.

2004 during his visit to Civitella to pay homage to the war victims in Arezzo province. Civitella was not the only site of nazi atrocities. Each town has its own horror stories to tell.

NOTE: Please leave a donation. Take no pictures and don't violate the victims' privacy. This is a memorial, not a museum.



CHIESA DELLA SANTA MARIA ASSUNTA

Coordinates:

43.41825, 11.72316
At the eastern end of town.

The original church was a Benedictine priory in the eleventh century and rebuilt in a Romanesque style in 1252. It was first restored in 1765 and then enlarged in 1875. In 1944, two small side naves and a bell tower were added when the church was rebuilt after the destruction from both an allied air raid and the massacre of 29 June. Because of

the 1944 destruction it is now an odd mix of modern and ancient styles and stone and brick building materials.

EXTERIOR

- Above the side door in the lunette is a fresco commemorating the massacre. In the center of the façade is a bronze door (contemporary Florentine artist Bino Bini) showing the Crucifixion in bas-relief.

INTERIOR

- To the right of the entrance is a small niche that is a shrine to *St. Father Pio*, a twentieth century Capuchin priest from Pietrelcina, Italy. The stained glass in the niche depicts Saint Jacomoni Enrico. The painting on the right probably depicts St. Scholastica, sister of St. Benedict.
- On the end wall of the right aisle is a painting of the *Crucifixion* among Saints Nicholas from Bari, John the Baptist, Catherine, and Mary Magdalen (Teofilo Torri di Arezzo, 1602).

- The right side altar is dedicated to 117 of the Civitella civilians killed during the German massacre along with at least 100 more from the surrounding area including Cornia and San Pancrazio.
- Above the high altar hangs a Gothic fourteenth century *Crucifix*. Mary is at one end of the cross and John the Evangelist at the other. At the top is the Risen Christ.
- Behind the altar in the apse are four stained glass windows. The two in the center represent the *Annunciation* with the angel on the left and Mary on the right. The tabernacle sits in the middle of the apse.
- The left side altar is the Marian Chapel with a statue of *Mary and the Child Jesus*.
- To the left of the entrance is the baptistry, a small niche with an ancient baptismal font and stained glass of *St. John the Baptist*.



CIVITELLA EVENTS

Tiny though the town is it has no shortage of festivals during the year.

STORIE DI PAESE

January and February. A competition for amateur theater.

IL PIACERE DI LEGGERE

March. A children's book trade show.

Top: The list of names who died in the massacre.

Above: The Gothic cross over the church's altar.



SCULTURA MODERNA PER UN PAESE ANTICO

June. Modern sculpture exhibition.

ESTATE A CIVITELLA

August. A festival of theater, music, and film.

FEAST OF GRAPES, OLIVE OIL AND WINE

Second week of September. Time to taste some fine typical courses accompanied by good local wines.



CIVITELLA AND MODERN ART

One of the things that you'll notice as you walk through town is many pieces of modern sculptures. The town has dedicated itself as a center for modern sculpture in Tuscany and celebrates each year with a festival in June.

15 Civitella's Day of Desolation

"Will we go to Civitella?" an upcoming client asked.

I said, "Sure, we'll go wherever you want." The client is always right. However, I knew it would take all of ten seconds to tell him everything I knew about Civitella in Valdichiana — if that long. I hadn't even planned to include the tiny town in my next guide book, so I had to make a scouting trip before the client arrived so I'd know what I was talking about.

The first part of October is one of the best times of the year in Tuscany: cool and mostly dry, fewer crowds, and a low sun that makes it possible to take good pictures all day long. The leaves are changing into shades of yellow, gold, and glowing red. So I left Arezzo on one of those gorgeous mornings, turned on the GPS, circled Arezzo on the periphery, and headed west.

As I approached Civitella in the northern part of the Valdichiana I stopped at the foot of the dense chestnut forested hill to take in the view as the early morning sun radiated off the town's walls and buildings in a soft gold. The town dominates this end of the Valdichiana sending out the message that it was supposed to during the Middle Ages, "I control this valley."

After a few pictures I drove up the switchbacks to a parking lot below the arched Porta Senese (Siena Gate), passed through the ancient wall, and walked up a short fifty-foot street that ends at the town's flat, main street, the Via Martiri (Way of the Martyrs).

I stopped briefly at the *Rocca* and then walked to the church on the opposite end of the elliptically shaped tiny town — a short, flat, two-minute walk. At this point I was thinking of discouraging the client from visiting.

I paused to examine the unusual façade of the church of Santa Maria Assunta. The façade had been restored with new blocks of ivory and gold Tuscan stone. The skinny bell tower behind the



The memorial at the spot of the massacre.



The Church caretaker who told me the story of the massacre.

church was of a mismatched, rough, light red brick. The front entrance had been remade into a small, simple arch with a brass door depicting the crucifixion. The overall effect of old and new didn't feel right — it was like looking at two feet, each with a different shoe. Although I thought that it was strange, I wasn't thinking enough to ask myself, "Why?"

I entered through the side door and found the same incongruous style: modern white plastered walls, altars that were simple with twentieth century straight lines contrasting with a thirteenth century Gothic crucifix over the altar and new stained glass windows.

The right side altar is a modern slab of stone sitting upon ancient Corinthian columns. Above the altar is a large crucifix with gold beams radiating from the intersection of the arms of the cross. In the curved niche behind the cross hang seven tall grey tablets carved with names, in red, of Civitellini who died in World War II — not unusual since most Italian churches have memorials to those who died in wars. However, I was about to learn that this list is unique.

A couple from Israel had joined me in examining the names. There were four Tiezzis (the name of my maternal grandparents) on the list, so I snapped a couple of pictures.

Just then the caretaker in red sweater and faded jeans, looking to be in his late seventies, walked up to us. He greeted us and I replied in Italian and asked about the Tiezzis and that was the key. He became excited that I could understand Italian and began to tell me the story of Civitella and I translated for the Israeli couple.

He moved us to the side of the altar and pointed up to the center tablet behind the crucifix. The title said that this altar was dedicated to the Civitellini who died on 29 June 1944 — 176 people — all in one day. He began to tell us the history of that horrific day from the point of view of one of the survivors (he was around 7 at the time). The story that follows is a mix of what the caretaker told me and research I did after returning to the US.



A painting in the church to commemorate the massacre.

The event began on 18 June 1944. The Germans were losing. They had lost Rome on 6 June. But they were fighting tenaciously and with great skill. The allies had to fight for every inch of ground and suffered higher casualties than anywhere else on the western front. Liberation for the Italians was slow in arriving.

In the hot, humid afternoon, four German soldiers who had lost contact with their unit, climbed the hill to Civitella, which was still under German control. They stopped at the “*Dopolavoro Club*” (After Work Club) off the central piazza and proceeded to get drunk before returning to their unit.

At sunset Italian partisans crept into town and attacked the soldiers to take their weapons, not to kill them. However, the Germans resisted and two of them were killed immediately and another wounded. The unharmed man made his way down the hill with his wounded friend who later died from his wounds.

The next day the Germans demanded that the town name the culprits within twenty-four hours. At the same time the Germans started searching homes in Civitella, Cornia, and San Pancrazio (today Bucine) for partisans and weapons. No civilian dared collaborate so most of the residents, out of fear of retaliation, fled into the forests. Those remaining tried to show to the Germans their disapproval of the partisan attack by holding a memorial for the three dead soldiers. The next day came and went without any punishment. It seemed that the city would be safe from German retaliation. General Schmalz assured the town that there would be no reprisal, suggesting that a number of partisans had been killed in other clashes and that that was sufficient to avenge the three soldiers killed the day before. It was, however, a trap to encourage the hiding Civitellini to return home.



Don (Father) Alcide Lazzeri was the parish priest who volunteered to take the place of another towns person. The piazza is named for him.

children. When they reached the church they drove the people attending mass out into the central piazza and divided them by sex and age. They pushed the women and children aside and lining up the men in groups of five and wearing rubber aprons to avoid staining their uniforms, began to shoot them in the head. The priest, Don Alcide Lazzeri, would have been spared since he was the parish priest, but he chose to join the fate of his townsmen taking the place of another. After the shootings, the Germans looted, bombed, and burned homes and public buildings.

The killing was also going on in San Pancrazio and Cornia. In Cornia, it became an uncontrolled slaughter with women and children dying alongside the men. They also took a small group of men and women to Monte San Savino to question about the partisans, their number, arms, and location. All the cities were looted and bombed. Later that day, the roaringly drunk troops returned to Monte San Savino carrying bicycles, food, china, silver, and almost anything that wasn't nailed down.

At the end of the 29th, there were more than 170 known dead in Civitella, 67 from San Pancrazio, 45 from Cornia, and an unknown number from local farms. In all the number killed was estimated at 250 (numbers vary in different accounts; however, it is agreed that more than 250 died).

THE STORY OF DANIELE TIEZZI

On the morning of June 29, 1944 Daniele Tiezzi, then a seminarian, was captured in church along with parish priest Don Alcide Lazzeri and all of the people. Driven to a corner niche next to the piazza in front of a firing squad he was shot in his neck. Bleeding severely, Daniele moved like light-

Ten days later, at dawn on 29 June, during an important feast day celebrating Saints Peter and Paul, SS units of the Hermann Goering Division surrounded Civitella and the nearby small burghs of Cornia and San Pancrazio. In Civitella, they charged through the town gates and, moving from house to house, broke through the entrances and shot down men as they jumped from their beds in front of their wives and

ening, striking the elbow of his executioner, and fleeing to the left side of the road. In his race he stepped over a dead person and then was shot in the back and fell to the ground. Again he had the strength to get up and managed to reach the nearby ruins of the city walls where he jumped. The killers continued to shoot at him, but Daniele, instead of running into the open fields below, hid in a spot near where the terror were occurring. He lost consciousness from loss of blood.

He was found by chance in the afternoon by a cousin in search of her mother. Daniele was miraculously saved. His cousin later wrote:

When I was lead to the firing squad, I saw Daniele lying on the ground, his neck slashed, in a pool of blood. Every time I open the little pages of my yellowed diary, written after the massacre, hastily by candlelight, I find a few sentences of my parish priest; phrases that impressed and remain with me: "We priests win by dying," and on another day he told us children: "I remember that if I die, someone will take my place." Daniele had heard those words and picked up the spiritual heritage of his pastor. He later found in the ruined rectory, hung on a wall, one of the cassocks of his mentor Don Lazzeri. He put it on and became a priest.

A FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT OF THE MASSACRE:

"While we were in the square, we were frisked by the German soldiers who took our wallets and our watches and put them in their pockets. A German screamed in Italian: "Cinque! (Five)." So five Italians were led towards the backyard of the school.

Then a German soldier came ahead with a gun and aimed it to the back of the man's neck who was on the right side of the row, Don Alcide Lazzeri, then he pressed the trigger. The soldier passed along the line,



In memory of John Percival Morgan, Father O'Shea and their friends of the 8th British Army, who gave precious aid to the survivors of 29th June 1944 Massacre. Civitella, 6 May 2001.



behind the Italians from right to left.

In the square we were grouped in five and led towards the backyard of the school. So, the same German soldier raised up his revolver. I saw Daniele Tiezzi, who was one of the five in the row, throw himself to the left and run. I was the second from the left. My turn had arrived. I saw him aiming the revolver to my head. I put my hands on both sides of my face and I turned towards the left. Immediately I felt a piercing pain on both of my hands, my face, my mouth and my throat, and, realizing that I was still alive, I slid down to the ground and laid there pretending to be dead."



Bartolucci Gino
English Inquiry Commission
15 November 1944

RELIEF: CAPTAIN MORGAN AND FATHER O'SHEA

Top: The destroyed church. Middle: Fr. Clement O'Shea (photo courtesy of Douai Abbey Library and Archive). Right: Captain John Percival Morgan (Photo courtesy of the Morgan family).

The horrific nature of the attacks is all the greater for three reasons. First, the massacre came ten days after the incident catching the town in the church during a festival day. Second, the Germans were in full retreat. It was

clear that they were not only losing the war in Italy but were losing the war on all fronts; yet they continued wreaking murder and destruction on innocent civilians on a monumental scale. Third, the area was liberated by the British 8th Army only a few days later.

After learning about the brutal behavior of the nazis, the caretaker's story wasn't over. He took me outside in front of the church to show me a street sign with an English name on it. He told me



A modern sculpture representing women and children fleeing from the Germans. The sculpture is next to the church.

how a few days after the massacre a member of the British 8th Army, Captain John Percival Morgan, came to help them. Captain Morgan and Fr. Clement O'Shea brought food and medicine and supplies to the starving people of the town. As a young child at the time, the caretaker remembers Morgan (or perhaps another soldier) giving chocolate to the children. The British 8th army cared for the citizens of Civitella for five months as the army unit stayed in the area.

On 6 May 2001 Civitella named a small street next to the church to honor their guardian angels:

Costa Capitano John Percival Morgan

In memory of: "Captain John Percival Morgan, Father O'Shea, and their friends in the 8th British army who offered precious help to the survivors of the slaughter of 29 June 1944.

Though Captain Morgan has died, his son returns for the yearly memorials honoring the victims.

JUSTICE WAS SLOW

The town was awarded the Gold Medal for Civil Valor in 1963 — it hangs on the center panel of the memorial in the church. It wasn't until October 2006 that Nazi SS commander Max Josef Milde was convicted by the Italian military court in La Spezia for his role in the Civitella massacre. In October 2008, the Italian Court of Cassation ruled that Germany was to pay one million

euros to the victims of the massacre. Germany protested. Nothing has been paid.

[Note: During the war in Italy, the Germans committed over 400 mass killings involving the loss of over 15,000 civilians.]

Suddenly the town that I thought had little value now was at least as important as Arezzo, Cortona, Montepulciano or Rome. Civitella deserves time to see its buildings and, more importantly, to learn its terrible history. My client? He was visibly touched by the visit.

The massacre still weighs heavily on the memories of the Civitellini. The town holds annual memorials and there is a dramatic and touching bronze bas relief sculpture by Mario Moschi on the gold Tuscan stone wall outside the church. The sculpture shows fleeing women and children in front of a silhouette of a burning Civitella. The memorial describes the event in a poem by Franco Antonicelli:

THE MISERY OF JUNE 1944

The morning of the 29th was a feast day in the parish for Saints Peter and Paul.

But the day that opened beautifully became dark with smoke and blood and the thunder of machine guns and shouts of the dying.

To be men meant death and the killers were not men but crazy beasts

The parish priest fell, sacrificed while blessing the people

The shells of the houses are burning the living and the dead

“Goodbye Civitella, what will become of us?” was the lament of the women remaining alone

Now Civitella has risen from the fires and stinging nettles.

The tears have dried on the flower’s petals

The babies that I saw pale and quiet are growing

The memory is ash that a wind scatters from day to day

But the crime that torments the helpless is not forgotten. The guilt that stains the innocent has flown

The crime and guilt are injustice and intolerance

The father and mother of war.

For more information on the Civitella Massacre find Dee La Vardera’s *The Road to Civitella, 1944: the Captain, the Chaplain, and the Massacre* (Fonthill Media, 2016).