

## The story of Anghiari

The history of Anghiari is not dissimilar to that of many Tuscan hill towns and describing it gives us the opportunity of reliving that special atmosphere of the past. To start with there are many different local theories about the origins of Anghiari's name; Lorenzo Taglieschi (an important local historian who lived from 1598-1654) records various opinions, one of which says that the name could come from Angleria, a centre in Lombardy. Others claim that the name is Roman coming from *castrum angulare*, referring to the angular form of the castle or fortress; the other main theory is based on the geophysical nature of the terrain, Anghiari coming from *ghiaia*, or gravel, because the town is built on a hill of gravel left behind from the Ice Ages. The first definite documentation is from 1048, on a parchment (kept in the Archives of Città di Castello) where it says *curte nostra de Anglare*.

At that time the castle of Anghiari, ruled by the lords of Galbino, was a small, walled centre containing a noble's house, the church and some houses of minor vassals; within the '*curtis*' there would have been places for the serving classes as domestic slaves or servants, soldiers or craftsmen. In 1104 Bernadino di Sidonia left all his goods and chattels to the Camaldulian Order on the understanding that they built an abbey dedicated to San Bartolomeo Apostolo. Bernadino's Will granted freedom to the slaves and a third of the rights to the 'castle' of Anghiari to the men who worked there (the men of the '*Masnada*'), making the origin of the constitution of the Comune during the Consolato phase which was part of the rapport with the feudal lords of the Priore di San Bartolomeo.

The social structure was based on two classes, *major* and *minor*, the first being the men of the Masnada who would become the future local gentry, as they owned land which they could cultivate themselves or rent to the freed slaves or *minors*. The *Consoli* were elected from amongst the *majors* with the Priore di San Bartolomeo. The role of Arezzo as the ruling force of the entire area including the High Tiber Valley, greatly increased at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. In a battle in 1175 the Arezzo army destroyed both the castle of Anghiari and that of Montorio. The reconstruction of the town, favoured by the Consoli of Arezzo, began in 1181 with the building of the second ring of walls and was completed in 1204. In 1224, on his way back from La Verna where he had received the sacred Stigmata, St. Francis of Assisi stayed with his friend, the Lord of Montauto, at his castle

He left behind his tunic or cassock in which he had received the signs of the stigmata as a memento and it can now be seen in the Church of La Verna. As a record of this period a tabernacle was built in memory of his passing through the area but gradually, over time, the simple tabernacle was added to until it became an entire Franciscan Monastery (the Cenacolo di Montauto) the Renaissance structure of which, we can still admire today. In 1228, with the participation of the adjoining Comunes, major improvement works were carried out in the valley below Anghiari's walls, to make the land more productive and suitable for cultivation. A series of stagnant ponds were linked up with an artificial canal along the banks of which were built eleven mills giving an enormous impetus to the agricultural activity of the High Tiber Valley. The most important work however, was carried out in 1259. The governing bodies of Anghiari and Sansepolcro decided to change the course of the River Tiber. The river originally ran near Anghiari but it was diverted towards Sansepolcro in the lower part of the valley. In exchange for the benefit that Anghiari had given to Sansepolcro, it was able to enlarge its boundaries by a mile and a half. In this same period the status of Anghiari changed from Consoli to Podestà (Magistrature), a change which allowed greater governmental power to the main land owners of the area and thus a greater equilibrium of power. The first Podestà or Magistrate was Guido Gottifredi, probably from Anghiari. The *STATUTI* or Statutes of the town date back to 1300 and correspond to the period of greater development towards a free Comune and to the composition of different roles and interests expressed in terms of the Podestà as the representative of the rights of the lords and Imperial leaders, the Consiglieri del Comune (Council) representing the people and then the Priors.

The *Castello* of Anghiari now had its own territory, *curia* or *districtus*, of about three or four kilometres in all directions and with well defined borders. In 1321-22 the Bishop of Arezzo, Guido Tarlati, conquered Anghiari and appointed his brother, Pier di Saccone di Pietramala, as *Signore* or governing lord. The Bishop enlarged the Market Place, adding the Loggia and the fountains. And it was his idea to make the foundations for the major road that links Anghiari with Sansepolcro, this being an expression of the political unification of the territory that was reached under the Tarlati rule. In 1337 however, there was a new treaty

which put Anghiari under the dominion of Perugia for 10 years, and at the same time changed the ancient monastery of St. Bartolomeo into the *Rocca* or fortress.

In 1352 Pier Saccone Tarlati, protected by the Bishops, took Anghiari over again and it was definitively assigned to his son Bartolomeo in 1383 with an Act of 'partnership' with Florence.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1385 the Republican government of Florence took over Arezzo and its environs, constituting the *Vicariato di Anghiari*. By sending a *Vicario* to Anghiari Florence wanted to 'institutionalise' the newly conquered territories of the republic with a presence that was capable of representing the government against any kind of currents and back swellings, in a region notable for the presence of castles and of feudal lords loyal to Florence like the Barbolani or Montedoglio. The role of the *vicario* was filled from amongst the patricians of Florence and changed every six months. He was paid and lodged by the Comune together with his chancellor and exercised both civil and criminal jurisdiction. The first was *Ranieri di Aluigi Peruzzi* who came to Anghiari on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1386 and the position continued right up until the end of the 1500's. Anghiari is a border town, wedged between Montefeltro and the Papal States, far from the splendid life of its capital. The town and its countryside were strategically useful but far from the heart of the Republic, trampled on by enemy armies, forced to pay harsh taxes, hit by famine and plague. It is worth remembering the 'Black Death', the terrifying plague epidemic which hit the whole of Europe in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, decimating the population. Anghiari certainly did not escape untouched and reading the *Cronache* (Chronicles) *del Taglieschi* you understand that they were terrible years where superstition became the ruler.

One particular event has been handed down to posterity and that is the celebrated Battle of Anghiari, which occurred on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1440, where the troops of the Florentines, Venetians and the Pope joined in league to stop the Visconti of Milan. The battle became a historical event because it allowed the Florentines to establish their domination over Tuscany, and a cultural one because of a fresco by Leonardo da Vinci. *The Battle of Anghiari* was painted by Leonardo in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence but because he used an unsuccessful, experimental technique for the fresco, it was lost before it was even finished and there has been a halo of mystery around it ever since.

In 1512 the Anghiarese fought strenuously before surrendering to Vitellozzo Vitelli, an ally of the Florentines who governed this part of Tuscany. The repercussions of the bad government and the strength of the Medici family in Florence were felt even in Anghiari and two factions were formed, for and against the Medici. The struggle between these two factions resulted in the murder of Illeoneo di ser Paolo Taglieschi, a wealthy supporter of the Medici.

The troops of Francesco Maria della Rovere attacked Anghiari in 1517 in an unsuccessful attempt to conquer it. Then, with the creation of the *Granducato di Toscana*, on the command of the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo, the community of Anghiari expanded its borders up to "*aldilà del Tevere, comprendendo anche il popolo di Montedoglio*" ("the other side of the Tiber, also including the population of Montedoglio").

Documents in the town Archives show that during the Napoleonic era there were three schools in Anghiari and that they were quite well attended. The town was, in fact, truly bilingual with all the official documents being in both French and Italian. It was also during this era that the biggest transformation was made to the old *Piazza del Mercatale*, with some of the old loggias being knocked down to create an open space which is still today called the *parterre*.

After the events of the Napoleonic and Restoration periods, Anghiari became actively involved in the Risorgimento. There was a lively and combative circle supporting Mazzini and a conspicuous number of Garibaldi supporters who fought alongside the General in the war of Italian Unification. Anghiari was, in fact, the first town in Italy to put up a monument to Garibaldi, only fifteen months after his death. Finally, in the Plebiscite of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> March 1860 Anghiari voted its allegiance to the Monarchy of Savoy.