

Toscolano Maderno, 1st June 2007

The Valley of the Paper Mills: a unique monument of Italian historical-industrial heritage, restored to its original splendour thanks to the efforts of the town of Toscolano Maderno, the Toscolano Paper Mill and the Association of Retired Paper Mill Workers.

Home to traditional production that began at the end of the 14th century, the centre of paper manufacturing in the Venetian Republic and a fertile land of original entrepreneurial activities in the centuries that followed, the *Valley of the Paper Mills* is undoubtedly to be considered as one of the most representative cases of Italian historical-industrial heritage. Traversed by the Toscolano river within the Brescian Alto Garda park, the Valley offers an account of its past in an environmental setting in suggestive contrast to that of the adjacent Riviera. The charm of the landscape is mainly due to the wealth and variety of vegetation, interspersed with the remnants of buildings, once occupied by an industry that, at the beginning of the 1900's, began to abandon the area.

It was in fact 1906 when the Maffizzoli family built a new mill on the banks of Lake Garda, as opposed to those of the river, to allow for the delivery of large quantities of wood needed for the autonomous production of pulp which they then ceased to import. The new establishment, the present day Toscolano Paper Mill, was also positioned to make use of the electricity generated by a hydroelectric power station in the nearby town of Camerate. Profoundly affected by the dismantling of the 1930's, the Valley of the Paper Mills entered a period of abandon, particularly so in the 1960's when production came to a complete halt. In the years that followed the Valley was shunned by the local inhabitants of Toscolano Maderno and tourism suffered greatly.

A new chapter opened when, in 1989, the Vicenza based Marchi Group purchased and recovered the Toscolano Paper Mill and in 1993 sold the Valley of the Paper Mills to the town of Toscolano Maderno at a symbolic price. Various initiatives were also begun including the recovery of Lusetti House, reserved as a rural retreat for groups of young people and shortly after the restoration of the small local church, the construction of the "Bassa Via del Garda" between Salò and Limone, that traverses the Valley; the Garda Mountain Community project regarding the restoration of pathways in the Valley and in particular the "restoration and development of the Valley of the Paper Mill's environmental and historical heritage".

In the knowledge of being part of a centuries-old local tradition, the Toscolano Paper Mill plays an active role in local council initiatives that have included, together with the key contribution of the Association of Retired Paper Mill Workers in 2002, the opening of a Paper Museum at the ex-Maina Inferiore mill.

This in fact was the first step towards the design and construction of the new “World of Paper” training and knowledge Centre, **inaugurated** 2nd June 2007. **modificare anche l'italiano.**