



By Anne Marshall

BIBBONA, HILLTOP TO SEASIDE

There are three "b"s in Bibbona and there are in fact three Bibbonas, Upper and Lower like villages in the Cotswolds and Bibbona Marina which is Bibbona by the Sea. All three Bibbonas span twenty four centuries from Etruscan origins at the top of the hill to the modern resort along the sea shore. It is almost as though a giant hand had put the ancient, the medieval, the Renaissance and the ottocento into a sack and then shook it open so that the buildings fell higgledy piggledy down the hillside. The Town Hall is perched at an odd angle above part of the thirteenth century walls beneath the old fort in which a haphazard array of little windows and washing lines suggest apartments have mushroomed. The old part of the little town is pure medieval with archways and flagstoned and cobbled streets as you climb up to the church of Sant'Ilario. Next to the church is Palazzo Gardini belonging to Umberto Mannoni, partner of Lodovico Antinori of the famous wine-making family and today it is the administrative offices of Tenuta di Biserno with enchanting frescoes in every room. The wines can be tasted in The Little Wine Shop made out of a grotto in the main street of Bibbona from four in the afternoon until ten in the evening. For beer drinkers there is Brandibirra where Felix Zelger has an impressive collection of artisan beers further up the street. It almost seems as though the Renaissance church of Santa Maria della Pietà fell out of the sack and rolled all the way down to the foot of the hill as this splendid church stands today at a crossroads op-



posite what used to be a garage surrounded by terraced villas and garden gnomes. In fact, over one door is the Latin inscription "Terribilis est locus iste" - this is a terrible place - but this could have a much more intriguing context as the same inscription is to be found over the door of a church in Rennes-le-Chateau in France and much has been written about Bibbona's connection to the Knights of the Holy Grail. Sant'Ilario

was the patron saint of the Templars and there are symbols in stone scattered all over Bibbona which prove that this was an important site for these legendary knights in the Middle Ages. The church of Santa Maria della Pietà was built by Vittorio Ghiberti who worked with his father Lorenzo on the Gates of Paradise on the Baptistery in Florence although its striking architectural features such as the cupola on a Greek cross have suggested to historians that Leonardo da Vinci could also have been involved. The church in the background of the Vergine delle Rocce looks remarkably like Bibbona's Santa Maria della Pietà which was completed in 1492, the same year that Columbus discovered America. On the way to Bibbona by the Sea we find ourselves in La California, a "frazione" or fraction of Bibbona. There is an apocryphal story that a group of Sicilian peasants wanted to emigrate to the United States at the end of the century and an unscrupulous ship's captain put them in the hold and sailed up and down the coast of Italy for three weeks before leaving them on the shore announcing "Here you are, La California!" For the Bolgherese, ten minutes away, La California has everything: Giuseppe in his pharmacy has a diagnosis and remedy for any number

of minor ailments and disorders, there is a post office, a gas station, a baker - Celli - with some of the best bread on the coast, Orfeo the butcher, Salvatore the dry cleaner, Crisalide the beauticians who cater to my corns and who specialize in fingernails that look like paintings by Klimt. A simple little restaurant serving good home cooking, Osteria Gabbani, is a favourite with the locals while along the roadside stands sell fresh fruit and vegetables also on Sundays. The Mastromonaco family runs a very well stocked nursery at the end of the village selling indoor plants and herbs, roses and olive trees for the garden. Bibbona by the Sea is like many popular Italian summer resorts with crowds of scantily clad holiday makers in flip-flops on bicycles, but hidden away in the pine wood right on the beach is one of the best restaurants in Tuscany, the Michelin-starred and aptly named "La Pineta" where three generations of the Zazzeri family, originally fishermen, have been serving superb fish menus for as long as anyone can remember. It was Luciano who first introduced me to raw fish antipasta which is so fresh it still smells of the sea.

Foto di Marco Bartolozzi

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YACHT CLUB A MARINA DI SAN VINCENZO

Su il sipario sul nuovo Yacht Club Marina di San Vincenzo che si propone di unire la passione per il mare e la volontà di aggregazione tra i vari settori della Nautica. Visto che il nuovo Porto si è ormai affermato, era necessario creare un punto di ritrovo per tutti coloro che sono appassionati del mare. I soci fondatori sono Marco D'Agliano (che è stato eletto presidente), Fulvietto Pierangelini e l'avvocato Mario Zambenardi. Nello Statuto compaiono le seguenti direttive: volontà di promuovere e diffondere tutte le attività che danno vita al porto, tra cui tutte le iniziative legate al mare, per uno sviluppo socio economico senza scopo di lucro e

rispettando la legge. Facendo un salto nella storia si ricorda che il primo porto venne creato in Grecia e nel corso dei secoli divenne molto più importante delle città stesse, in quanto accoglieva tutti coloro che arrivavano dal mare, all'epoca la via di comunicazione più importante. A poco a poco intorno al porto, piccolo o grande che sia, si sono raccolte attività produttive di grande importanza che mirano a valorizzare la potenzialità infinita che il mare offre, sia dal punto di vista economico che culturale con la speranza di riuscire a farne capire il valore ai giovani.

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