

The Museum of the River Conca del Bertazzolo

The Museum of the River-Conca del Bertazzolo created thanks to the collaboration between the Municipal Administrations of Bagnolo San Vito and Roncoferraro, together with Regione Lombardia. The museum is a cultural project that was born, grown up and ripened in the last years in the field of the "Open-air museum / Museo Diffuso - Conca del Bertazzolo" and in the wider area of the "Ecomuseum of the rice fields, the rivers, the rural landscape of Mantua / Ecomuseo della risaia, dei fiumi, del paesaggio rurale mantovano".

The area of the "Lower Mincio / Basso Mincio" from "Mantova" to the "Po", strategically important for the history of the city of "Mantua / Mantova", was the subject of archeological historical investigation. Scientific data along the walk tour, made up by explanatory panels at different reading levels, models and videos (Italian/English), allowed the experts to understand the time evolution, from antiquity to present days. The result is a fascinating journey whose main theme is water, taken as an indispensable resource to the settlement, agriculture, military defense, communications and commerce. A life-giving element and at the same time, with the floods, a threat to the survival of riverside communities and more broadly of "Mantua / Mantova", the Serraglio and the eastern lowlands. Virtual guide of exception is Gabriele Bertazzolo (1570 - 1626), the most famous of the hydraulic mantuan engineers, from whose professionalism depended the fate of the city and the Gonzaga Duchy. The Museum was set up next to his most famous creation, the navigation lock, an integral part of the tour with the twentieth-century Vittorio Emanuele III and the modern unloader of the river Mincio.

Responsibility and scientific care:

Carlo Togliani

The contents of the museum

The museum tour begins in the hall at the ground floor with the Etruscan evidences from the near archaeological site "Forcello" at Bagnolo San Vito and from the regional hydrographic and topographic order of the area, that has been configured during the Middle Ages with the reclamation of the ancient "Lake Bagnolo / Lago Bagnolo" and the transformation of the layout of the main rivers in the area, the Po Vecchio, the Lirone and the Mincio.

Later the whole history of the village Governolo is shown to the visitor; its transformation, the structure of the fourteenth century castle, the recent discovery of new archival documents, and the vicissitudes of two of the most famous people who have crossed their fate right here at Governolo, Attila in 452 and Giovanni delle Bande Nere in 1526.

The main theme of the local history and the museum is the hydraulic barrier/support, that has given to Governolo a strategic role in the navigation system of the "Lower Mincio /Basso Mincio", but especially in the territorial defense system of "Mantua / Mantova".

1609, saw Gonzaga hydraulic engineer Gabriele Bertazzolo (1570 - 1626) working on his hardest construction the Conca di Navigazione: "The most beautiful, the greatest and magnificent structure in the field of water that is in the world".

The extraordinary opportunity that the museum offers with the external path of access to hydraulic structures complements and enhances the extensive documentation gathered in the halls of the first floor of the Conca di Navigazione: the sequence of events of the construction site, the complexity of the work, machines and materials, operation of hydraulic systems.

The tour also provides the projects and hydraulic work undertaken at Governolo in the course of the following years. 1752 is the grand project of Ing. Antonio Maria Azzalini for a new hydraulic barrier/support near Governolo (only works started) and after a partial restructuring of the seventeenth-century artifacts in 1886, is the 1919-31 building ex novo a few meters to the north of the Vittorio Emanuele III navigation lock.