

“TREVIGLIO”

INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF TREVIGLIO

Taken from “**Treviglio: storia, arte e cultura**” by Barbara Oggioni - ed. *Clessidra* 2002

The first document to mention its existence date back to the 10th century, but topographical surveys and occasional archaeological finds give us the idea of a sparsely grouped settlement in existence in Imperial Roman Times times. The name *Treviglio* is given to derive from “tre villae” or three semi-urban groupings or villages of Roman origin. The hypothesis confirmed by the routes of some of the streets in the centre and on the outskirts of the town which have an “on-the-square” arrangement corresponding to the settlement which the Romans called *ager bergomensis* in the time of the Emperor Augustus.

At the time of the fall of Roman Empire the three “villae” had grown to a considerable number of inhabitants, and were grouped around an area which probably contained a castle or a temple. We know for certain that in late medieval times the inhabitants built a walled castle-like structure in which to take refuge in times of danger, creating Treviglio's oldest “nucleus” called *castrum vetus* traces of which can still be seen today in the area surrounded by Piazza Manara, Garibaldi and Via Galliari.

The inhabitants thus found themselves living as neighbours and began to set laws and regulations administered independently, from these beginnings the “vicinanze” or local legal administrative bodies were born. Around 1000 A.D. the three vicinanze joined forces and founded the Comunità Trevigliese. In the 11th century Treviglio was a strong and well-fortified town. In 1332 when the town came under the power of the Visconti family, Treviglio was forced to give up its political sovereignty but kept its administrative powers. In 1392 *the Statuta Castra Trevillii* or official legislative statutes were promulgated by the Town Hall. During the 15th century continued discord between the Duchy of Milan and the Republic of Venice brought alternative domination of the Gera D'Adda by one or the other, in spite of which the century was auspicious for Treviglio because the second half of the century saw the construction of large public works.

Instead the 16th century was a particularly sad period in Treviglio's history: from the beginning of the century it was the victim of contention between the Venetians and the French but the most dramatic episode took place in 1509 when the Venetians sacked and pillaged the town, setting fire to buildings and causing the death of some inhabitants and the destruction of historic books, documents and records. A few days after the sacking the French defeated the Venetians and banished them from the Gera D'Adda, which then became a target for conquest by Charles V of Spain who was in Milan. In the years following the now impoverished Treviglio asked for protection from Charles V provoking the French who, led by General Odetto de Foix, decided to go into battle against Treviglio on 28th February 1522. (read also "Sanctuary of the weeping Madonna").

The 17th century started well in economic terms, as testified by various public works including the Sanctuary of the weeping Madonna. But this well-being didn't last long: the plague killed more than 3000 people leaving the town in dire poverty.

The townspeople managed to restore the town to its former prosperous state by the beginning of the 18th century. Urban renewal works continued through-out the 19th century while Treviglio grew in population and became richer due to the strong impact of the Milano-Treviglio and the Treviglio-Bergamo railway lines on the local economy.

Political events which touched Treviglio during the 19th and 20th centuries are the same as those which involved the whole Lombardy: after the temporary rule by Napoleonic government, the Austrians returned and were met by the people of Treviglio who fought in the front line against them in the Battle of Cinque Giornate in Milan in 1848.

Treviglio was proclaimed a City in 1860 and continued to be in the forefront in affirming the principle of the freedom of its citizens in showing the whole world how skilful it was in social progress which its institutions had always supported: the illustrious citizens who contributed to the development of science and the arts give clear evidence of this.