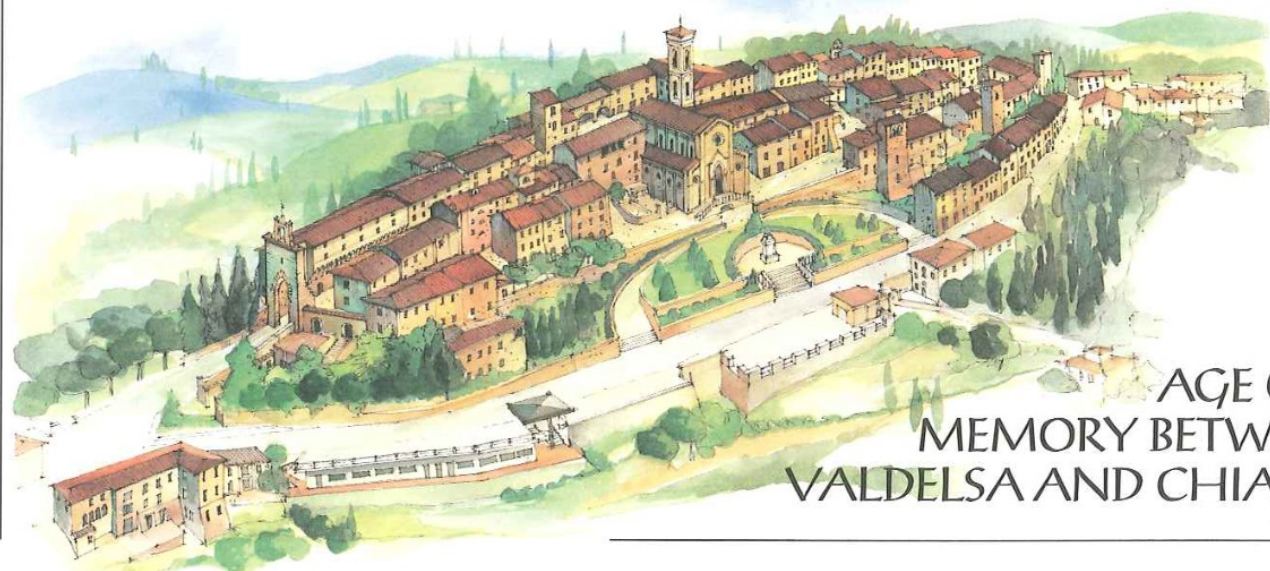




BARBERINO lies in the heart of Tuscany between FLORENCE and SIENA. It is an area that simply pulsates with history and legend. It's a visible history owing to the diffusion of the numerous existing architectural remains. There isn't a hill that does not have a church, a castle, villa or simply a chapel at its top. This countryside is a highly civilized and humanized one; one that finds the traces from its past nobly framed by its incredible natural beauty. The VALDELSANA area of this municipal territory is made up of hills that are rich in vineyards and olivegroves and is dotted here and there with centuries old cypress trees. The hills slope gently down towards the valley of the river ELSA, the ancient Tuscan boundary line that divided once similar but at the same time enemy Tuscan rivals. The hill of SEMIFONTE overlooks the area, high and solemn, even if bare, this hill commands respect; it holds the historical memory of Ghibelline pride which once dared to challenge the rising star of FLORENCE. "Florence move aside, Semifonte's to grow far and wide" this was a saying which resounded right up to the city walls of FLORENCE- and a city Semifonte must once have been if one takes into consideration the remains of three kilometres of city walls. So angry and violent was the reaction of FLORENCE to this challenge that after they had conquered Semifonte the Florentines destroyed it completely and prohibited any further building on that hill for centuries. In memory of this tragic event, which was all too clear a sign of Florentine power, a dome which is exactly like Brunelleschi's famous one, but five times smaller, was built on that very hill which is still strewn with burnt bricks and pieces of walls. Climbing upwards again one finds the state road the "Cassia", which separates the territory into two parts the Valdelsa and the Val di Pesa. Here the landscape changes becoming more wilder and remote, woody and rocky with cultivable tracts of rich Chianti vineyards. This area is recognized as the Chianti Classico belt, Chianti Classico being the prince of Italian wines renowned and appreciated all over the world. Scattered throughout the territory of BARBERINO are also a wide variety of small centres. These centres walled and fortified like castles, each being unique and different from the others within itself but yet each with the same age old memory of art and culture serving as a root and link that unifies this charming land. The centres are: SANT'APPIANO with its romanesque Priory and remains of a Protoromanesque Baptistry; PETROGNANO, the village of Semifonte with its civic flavoured medieval towers; LINARI, an ancient free Commune which is a delightful example of medieval town planning; TIGNANO a small walled hamlet; VICO D'ELSA with its noble palaces; MONSANTO with its imposing castle; finally worth visiting too with their own particular treasure to discover are MARCIALLA, S.FILIPPO, PONETA, PASTINE and POPPIANO. The chieftown BARBERINO has conserved its medieval structure with its walls, gate and towers and its Pilgrims' Hospital; it is found on the road that branched off from the Via FRANCIGENA in the bottom of the valley and led onto the old Badia a Passignano and then onto Florence. This landscape remains one of the most beautiful of the area, together with the restored and rivalued farmhouses that represent a remarkable example of a correct integration with the natural milieu. The Commune itself has a population of around 3,600 people that grows in the warm season thanks to the presence of holiday-makers, mostly foreigners, in the farmholiday resorts of the area. In the communal territory of BARBERINO in fact there are more than a 150 of these farms that besides wine and olive-oil production have decided to open themselves to tourism with excellent results.

BARBERINO



AGE OLD
MEMORY BETWEEN
VALDELSA AND CHIANTI