

Thematic Route

MANUFACTURING, JEWELLERY (ROOM 1)

Felice Pattaroni had identified the basis of production in the Pedemonte settlement right from the start. More recent research has been carried out on finds from both the burial ground and the settlement site. The finds provide evidence for a wide variety of male activities, such as livestock and arable farming, grape growing, carpentry and glass manufacture. Female activities revolved around spinning and weaving.^[1] The finds on show here represent only a few of this wide variety of productive activities in Pedemonte's ancient settlement. The focus here is on sheep farming and its offshoots, weaving and cheese production. A selection of jewellery was buried with the deceased of Gravellona Toce. Ornaments are found in both male and female graves. They include brooches, rings, necklaces and bracelets. The choice of jewellery sheds light on different aspects of the culture and personality of their owners. The jewellery on display comes from different cultural traditions, Celtic and Roman. The large Ornavasso type brooches are of the former. The several large signet rings inlaid with gems the latter.

KITCHEN AND TABLEWARE - COMMERCE (ROOM 2)

The selection of tableware used during the late Republic and early Empire sheds light on a transitional period in local society. This was when the local population, living on the far edge of the Insubrian Lepontic Gaulish community first came in touch with the Roman world. Lepontic "spinning top" vases were replaced by Roman pear shaped jugs. Black Varnish dinnerware, so characteristic of the Roman Republican period, gave way to reddish "terra sigillata" pottery in Imperial times. Towards the end of the Empire there were new trends in kitchen ware, including the introduction of jars with ribbon rims and small lid- cookers.

By late Republican times an intense commercial network had developed. It revolved around a fixed system of waterways, both fluvial and maritime. These were safer and faster than land routes. There was an increase in imports from the Po Plain and the Mediterranean (especially from the Adriatic and the East in general). Gravellona Toce found itself on a water route tying the River Po to the River Ticino and Lake Verbano (Lago Maggiore). Even at the end of the Empire, Gravellona Toce's ancient settlement was still in touch with the Southern Mediterranean.

THE BURIAL GROUND (ROOM 3)

Between 1954 and 1959, Felice Pattaroni excavated an extensive burial ground. It was in use for about a thousand years, from the fourth century BCE through to the fifth century CE.^[1] At least 126 graves were excavated. Five, including Grave 7, dated back to the end of the Early Iron Age. The deceased of Grave 7, and his grave goods, had been placed within a stone lining. Grave 15, with a wealthier array of grave goods lay close by; this may have been a relative. The cremated body had been placed in a large drinking vessel with a burnished banded decoration. A large, upturned bowl had been used as a lid. The fragment of a bracelet and two small sheets of bronze were found together with the cremated remains.

The grave structures, and the choice and type of objects placed with the deceased have been analysed. This has made it possible to piece together many aspects of the everyday life of the inhabitants of this area. They settled here in the second century BCE. The evolution of the Celtic community into a thriving, fully Romanised settlement can be traced right up to the end of the Empire. Over this period the community's funerary rites also evolved. In the earliest graves the deceased's body had been inhumed. This was a practice common to the Alpine peoples. In the mid first century BCE cremation was introduced. This practice continued throughout the Roman period, right up to the fourth century. From then on there was a return to inhumation.