

An Old Mule Path

The other day I was walking along an old mule path that led me to the ruins of an ancient mill. I stopped and tried to imagine how life may have been perhaps a hundred years ago at that very spot. The chestnut groves would have been immaculately preserved, with little or no undergrowth, allowing the *contadino* to pick the chestnuts in the autumn. Firewood was cut, carefully stacked, and then transported by mule to the nearby villages to keep dwellings warm during the cold winter months.

The mule paths, or old country lanes, were the only means of meaningful communication for centuries before the advent of the motorcar. Life was full of hardship then, yet slower. Walking along such paths probably had a soothing effect on the mind among the peaceful and beautiful surrounds. Such pathways crisscrossed parcels of woodland to slowly meander up to the nearest hilltop village, or perhaps across a bridge over a river. Some of them were lined with beautiful stone walls and others were finished with paving, especially in more noble areas like the approach to a village or near a church. Crossroads were a social gathering point where people would talk about the harvest, share news, tell stories, or perhaps say a prayer at one of the *madonnina* stations.

Most of these country lanes now sit silent, forgotten, abandoned, and unrecognisable, with no purpose in today's hectic world. They have been replaced by big asphalt roads with busy cars driven by stressed drivers anxious to get to the next appointment. Then we get a holiday from all this pressure and there's a natural instinct to return to the beauty offered by such extraordinary natural surrounds. We disconnect, relax, and disintoxicate our minds from invasive technology with no coverage in such remote places. Instead of carrying firewood or bags of chestnuts, we go hiking with rucksacks on our backs and



dear friends to share special moments in a very special setting. It's funny how such places of the past allow us to reflect and regenerate in the present!

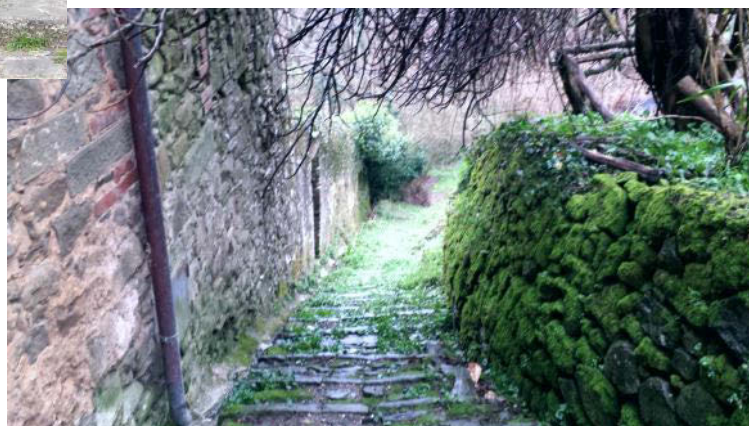
*David Collins, an engineer by profession, has lived and worked in Tuscany for over 20 years. He manages Our Toscana, providing house surveys, plans & permits and undertakes all kinds of restoration projects throughout Tuscany. David is author of **Buying & Restoring in Tuscany – A Practical Guide** and lives near Lucca with his Italian wife and two children.*

For information:

david@ourtoscana.com - www.ourtoscana.com

[<< home](#)

[Click here to read an article from last month: >>](#)



mgi vanucci & associati
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS & TAX ADVISORS

Our membership in a Top 20 international accounting network means we can help any client set up or grow their business internationally.

A member of
mgi worldwide

Viale San Concordio, 710 - 55100 Lucca, Italy
Tel: +39 0583 316636 - studio@vannuccieassociati.it
www.vannuccieassociati.it