



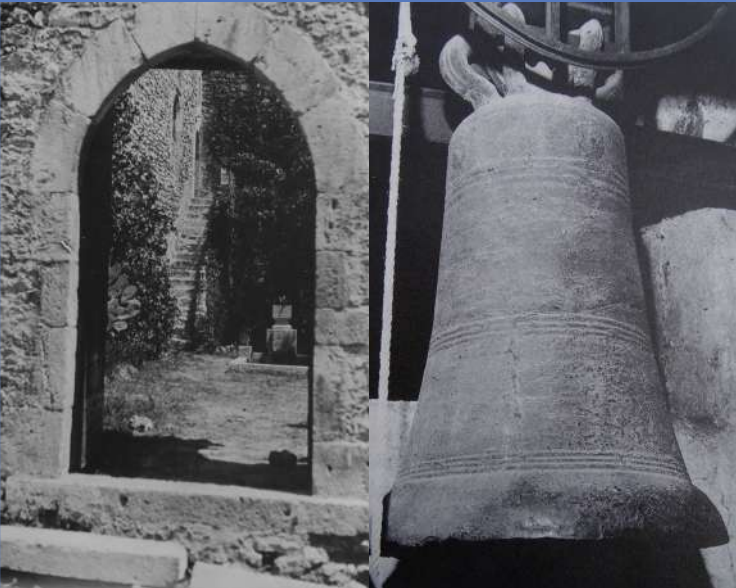
BADIA DI
SAN SEBASTIANO

LAZIO, ITALY

BADIA DI SAN SEBASTIANO

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Foreword

Set in an area whose beginnings are lost in the midst of time and legends, the Badia di San Sebastiano, founded in the late 5th century, is understood to have been a source of inspiration for St. Benedict. His influential Rule paved the way for the formation of communal monastic living as opposed to the old hermitic way of life, and upon which the modern Christian faith was built. It is thought that St. Benedict's teachings became the bedrock

on which Christianity in Western Europe evolved as we know it.

After 1500 years, it is time for a new chapter – a chapter that gently takes this extraordinary building and breathes new life into it. The Leslie Foundation has been honoured with this task and to this end, has put together this booklet to give the reader a sense of the place, and to allow conversations to flourish as to how to shape the next chapter for the Badia di San Sebastiano.

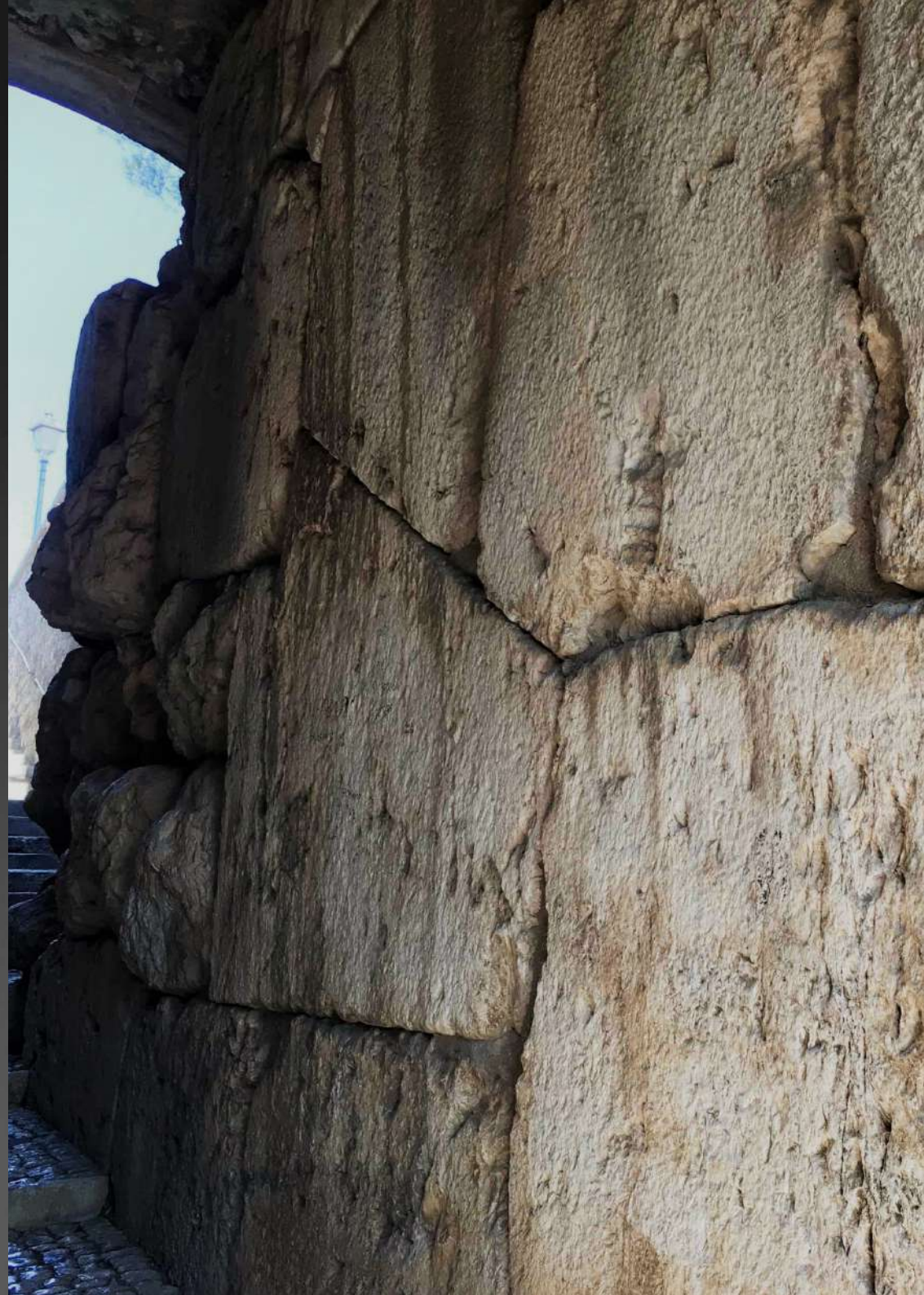
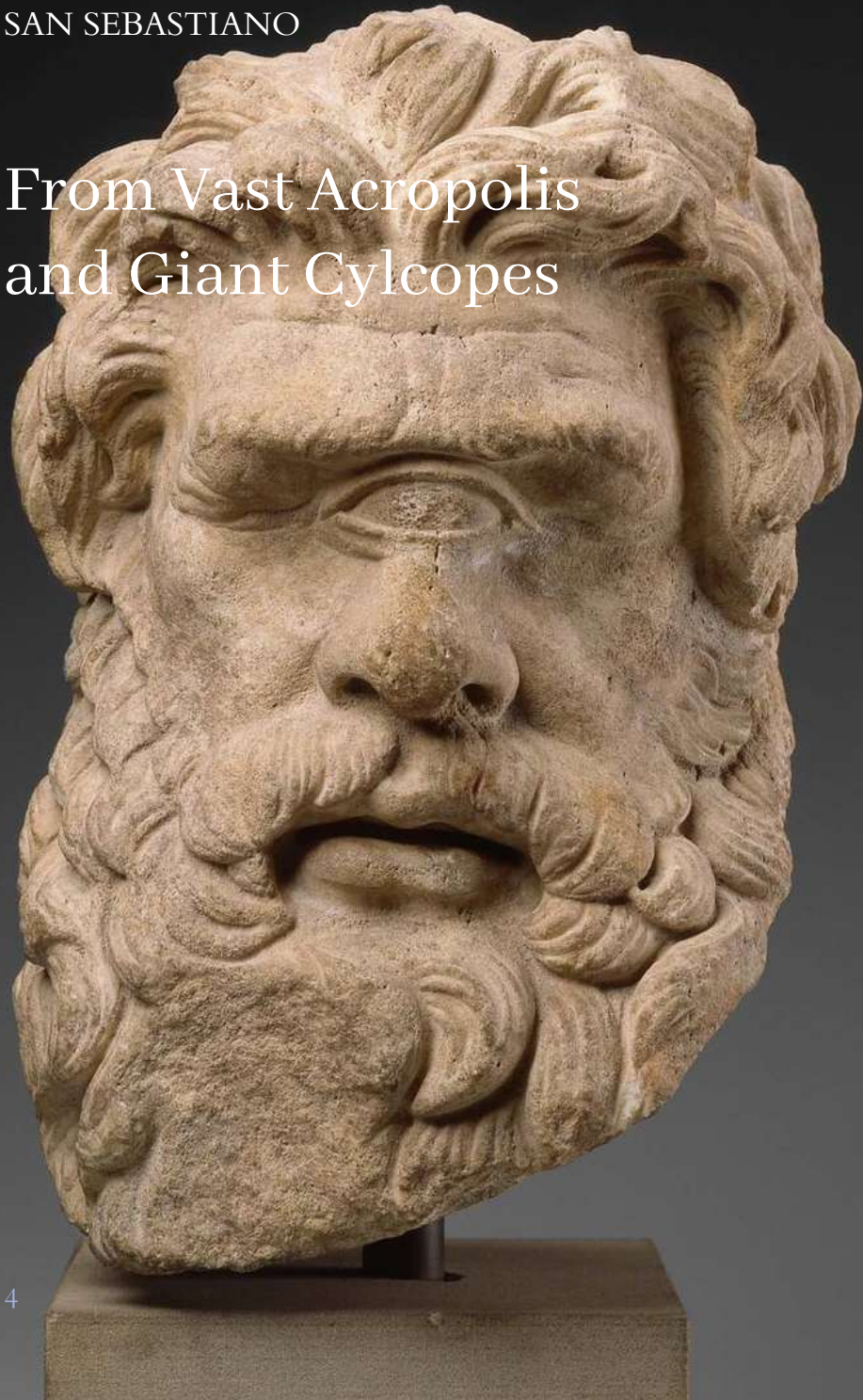
As the baton passes to new guardians, this in turn will allow the newly formed Leslie Foundation to fulfil its objectives of preserving and sharing the unique cultural heritage of a special corner of Ireland, concentrated in and around the village of Glaslough and Castle Leslie Estate, based in Co. Monaghan, Ireland.

Sammy Leslie
On behalf of The Leslie
Foundation

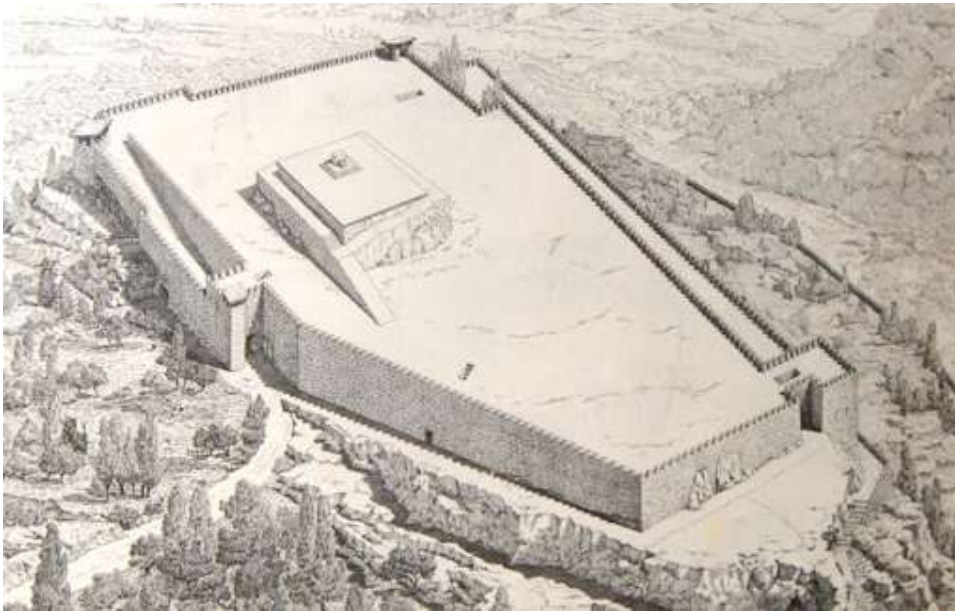
The earliest Monastic Settlement known in Europe

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From Vast Acropolis
and Giant Cyclopes



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Perched atop opposing hills, sits the vast and ancient monuments of Alatri and Veroli, said to have been built by the giant cyclopes of Greek legends as an Acropolis. These cities in the sky were built to be closer to their gods, with Alatri predating the acropolis in Athens by more than 1000 years.

The cyclopes themselves are said to be the children of son of Poseidon, god of the sea, and the nymph Thoösa, blessed with building skills second to none.

Over 3,000 years old, these vast cut stone structures, seen for many miles around, also acted as Astronomical structures marking various points in time such as solstices and equinoxes and others to be discovered.

A recent archaeo-astronomical study shows that the Acropolis could not have been built later than 1,270 BC, when the main axis of the city and of the Eastern wall of the Acropolis was aligned to the star Polaris, with the North-West wall aligned to the rising of the Sun on the morning of the Summer

equinox and its setting on the Winter solstice.

Alatri was designed after a roughly circular plan, with three concentric walls converging towards the Acropolis. The gates defined a number of axes which show evidence of having been carefully astronomically aligned towards the rising and setting of the Sun at the solstices and equinoxes.

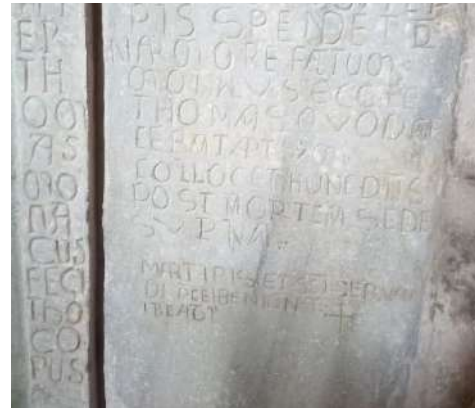
A number of stellar alignments also seem to point to the constellation of Gemini, Orion and the Southern Cross, at a time when it was still visible above the horizon in the Northern hemisphere.



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Ancient Pagans and powerful
Romans, grew the seeds of
Christianity

BADIA DI SAN SEBASTIANO



Made of polygonal stones of many sizes and no mortar, the largest being a portal stone over 38 tons and second only in size to the portal stone in Mycenae.

Over time, the early Romans took them over, Alatri (Aletrium) in 306 BC long before Rome itself was founded. In fact, locally, Alatri is known as the grandmother of Rome.

A well-worn route linked the two giant citadels, weaving down the valley from Alatri, over the river, up the next hill, past a cave with a spring running forth from it, inhabited by a wise woman or witch, whose story may still dwell in Greek mythology and on to Veroli.

To ease the passage between these cities, a bridge was built in the 1st century AD in the valley over the river which still exists. Archaeologists believe there is a whole settlement waiting to be discovered in the valley too.

Liberius, (465 to 554 AD) one of the 10 most powerful men ever in Europe chose a rocky shoulder on the path to Veroli to build his Villa, and an aqueduct to bring water from witches cave, to feed his villa and another now lost one in the valley.

There is an absolute wealth of facts, stories, and legends, that await discovery, as there is so much of the incredible story of this area to be yet researched and collated.

We hope this gives you a flavour of how, what is now understood to be the oldest surviving monastic settlement came to be, grow and thrive.



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Original Entrance
to Church Courtyard



1500 years of the Badia



The Badia di San Sebastiano (known in English as the Abbey of San Sebastiano) is an extraordinary estate dating back to the end of the 5th century.

Situated in the saddle of Mount Pizzuto on the ancient road to Veroli, with uninterrupted views across the valley of the River Cosa to the commanding presence of the pre-Roman acropolis of Alatri, the Badia is a 90 minute drive from Rome and Naples.

The stone exterior of the building serves as a counterpoint to the greys and greens of the centuries old olive trees scattered in the landscape that rise behind, and highlights the recent and historically accurate restoration that exposes its elegant proportions.

The Badia di San Sebastiano, named in honour of the martyred Saint Sebastian, contains substantial reception rooms, a wealth of smaller chambers on both the ground and first floors, and a number of historically significant chapels (that are still consecrated at present).

The site is connected to an abundant local spring by an elaborate underground Roman aqueduct, dating to roughly the late 4th century. It was said that the monastery was sited close to the cave where a Goddess of Wisdom lived and held the power to tell the future.

This goddess was turned into a witch, and from the cave where she resided flowed a great spring.

The Romans tapped the water, building an aqueduct that still provides amazing water for local and Badia use.

The Badia di San Sebastiano has enjoyed a long existence and through its history has had close historical associations with major figures such as Liberius, St. Benedict, St. Servando, Cardinal Stephano Conti, and Renaissance humanists Giovanni Tortelli and Pope Nicholas V.

Happened upon by the late Sir John Leslie during a day trip to Alatri in the late 1960s, and remaining in his guardianship until his passing in 2016, the Badia continues to be cared for by The Leslie Foundation of Castle Leslie Estate, Glaslough, in Ireland.

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A Cenobite settlement

‘One of the best preserved, and earliest,
monastic buildings known in Europe’

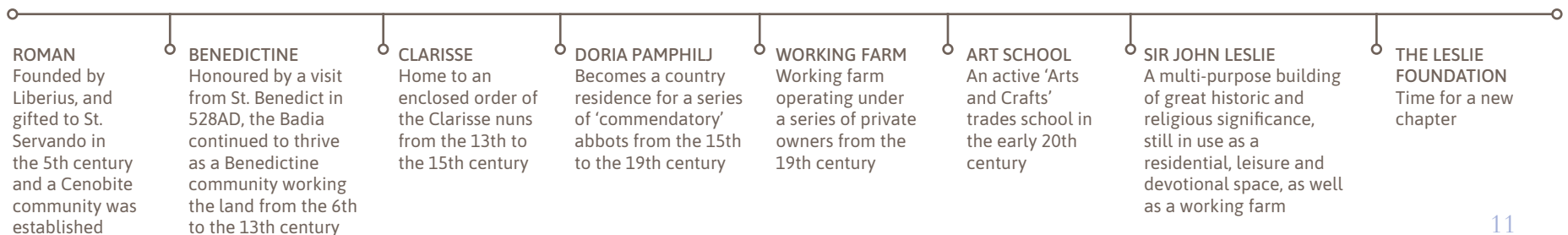
Rare by even Italian standards, the structure of the Badia remains virtually unaltered, a point which has been studied in depth by archaeologist Elizabeth Fentress and her team, who carried out studies on the building in the 2000s. Their findings culminated in a spectacular treatise entitled *Walls and Memory: The Abbey of San Sebastiano at Alatri (Lazio), from Late Roman Monastery to Renaissance Villa and Beyond*, published in 2005 and remaining the most definitive study of the Badia to date.

The monastic spaces on the ground level of the building remain untouched and retain all their original features. These spaces include the 13th century Lower Chapel with its wealth of frescoes, the groin-vaulted storage rooms, a Chapter Room with a carved central column, the Monks Refectory still complete with its abbots lectern, and barrel vaulted kitchens and food stores.

The simple rustic interiors are complemented by four generous outdoor courtyards and garden areas,

giving lushness and introducing light into the space.

The upper level has a suite of bedrooms with painted ceilings, inserted when the Badia was in use as a Roman villa. Most of these spaces retain their same original medieval features as reflected in the ground floor. The Upper Chapel, the Loggia, the Upper Chapter Room and the Monks Dormitory comprise these upper spaces.



St Benedict and Monastic settlement

Local tradition holds that the Badia was a Roman villa belonging to Petrus Marcellinus Felix Liberius, Prefect of Gaul, a man who helped administer the late Roman Empire on behalf of Barbarian Kings such as Odoacer. During the 5th century, Liberius gave his villa to St. Servando, a lowly abbot, to convert into a monastery. An intriguing feature of the building that remains to this day is the remnants of an old underground tomb situated underneath the Church Courtyard, now empty but perhaps at one time the final resting place of St. Servando, or simply a container for the relics of an earlier saint – one can only speculate.

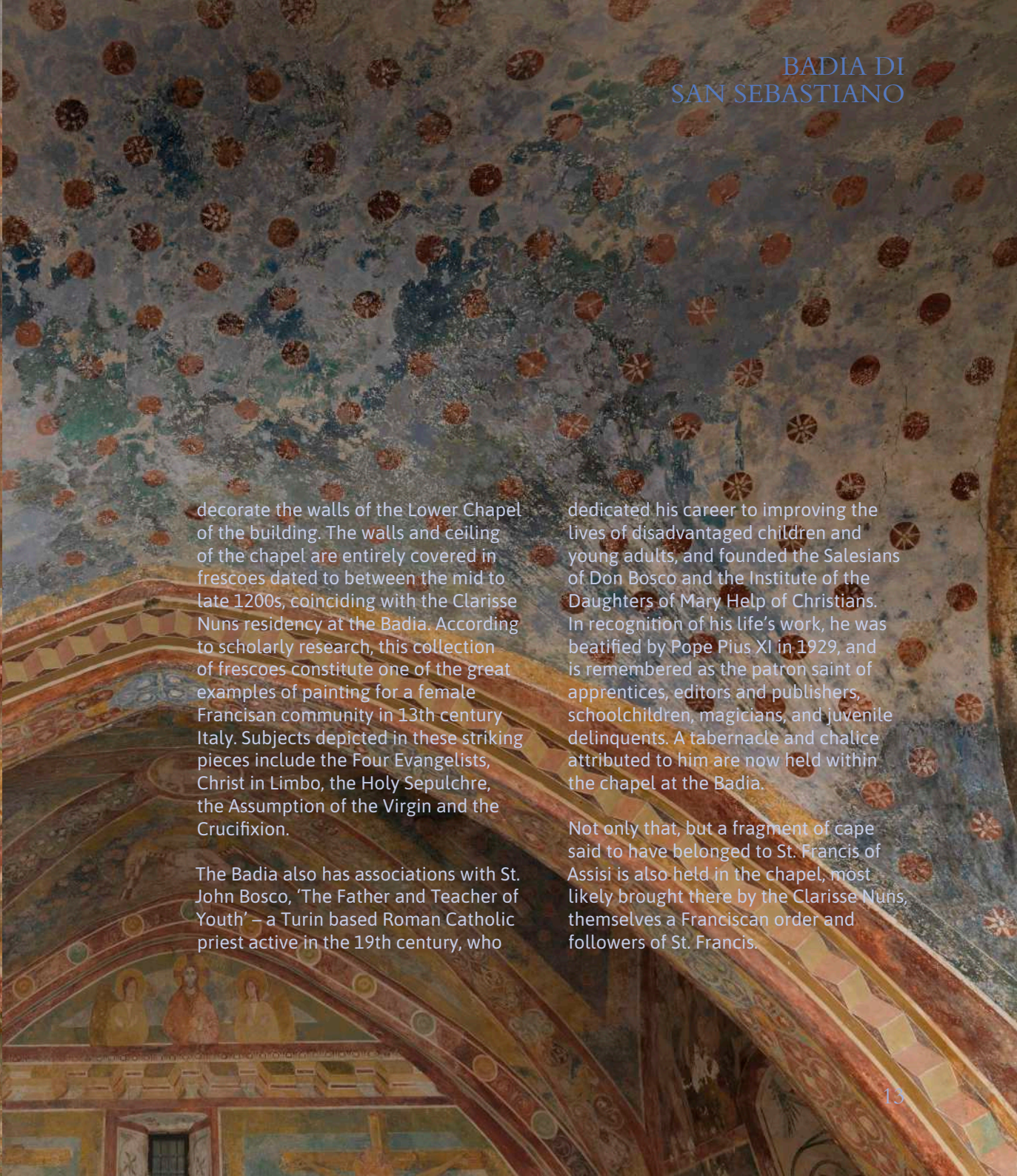
In 528 the monastery welcomed St. Benedict, considered the father of Western monasticism, as he made a stopover and studied for a while here whilst on his journey from Subiaco to Montecassino. The Rule of Saint

Benedict, which he wrote during his lifetime, was intended as a book of guidelines for monks living communally under the authority of an abbot, and became the norm for monastic living throughout Europe. The so-called 'St. Benedict's Cell' located underneath the Bell Tower (also referred to as the Campanile), is reputed to be where the saint spent his time in solitary study and reflection whilst resident at the monastery.

The monastic community continued and flourished under the tradition of St. Benedict before gradually diminishing until 1233 when the monastery was assigned to the Clarisse Convent of nuns, who remained there until 1442.

Perhaps the most visually striking legacy and testament to the monastic and spiritual past life of the building lies in the expansive devotional frescoes that





decorate the walls of the Lower Chapel of the building. The walls and ceiling of the chapel are entirely covered in frescoes dated to between the mid to late 1200s, coinciding with the Clarisse Nuns residency at the Badia. According to scholarly research, this collection of frescoes constitute one of the great examples of painting for a female Franciscan community in 13th century Italy. Subjects depicted in these striking pieces include the Four Evangelists, Christ in Limbo, the Holy Sepulchre, the Assumption of the Virgin and the Crucifixion.

The Badia also has associations with St. John Bosco, 'The Father and Teacher of Youth' – a Turin based Roman Catholic priest active in the 19th century, who

dedicated his career to improving the lives of disadvantaged children and young adults, and founded the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. In recognition of his life's work, he was beatified by Pope Pius XI in 1929, and is remembered as the patron saint of apprentices, editors and publishers, schoolchildren, magicians, and juvenile delinquents. A tabernacle and chalice attributed to him are now held within the chapel at the Badia.

Not only that, but a fragment of cape said to have belonged to St. Francis of Assisi is also held in the chapel, most likely brought there by the Clarisse Nuns, themselves a Franciscan order and followers of St. Francis.





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Renaissance Villa / Abbots Quarters

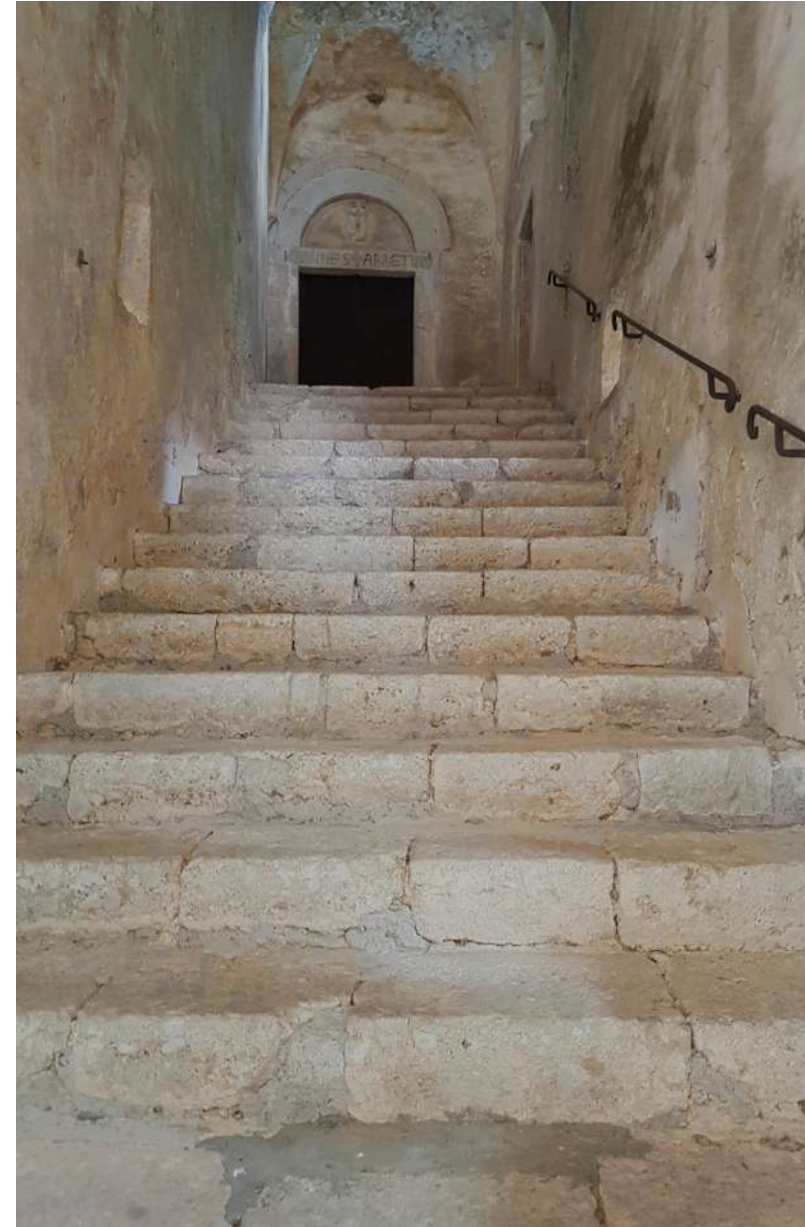
Following the departure of the Clarisse nuns, the Badia became a country residence of sorts for a series of 'commendatory' abbots from the 15th to the 19th century. In 1450, Pope Nicholas V granted the Badia in commendation to humanist Giovanni Tortelli, head of the Vatican Library. He restored and embellished the Badia, and spent much of his life there, writing 'De Orthografia', a vast study of ancient Greek and Latin.

These quarters now consist of a series of interlocking rooms; the Upper Chapel lies beyond, and a Chapter Room where the monks once pursued their studies.

The elegant hall leads to the bedrooms and loggia. This part of the building is solely lit by candles and lanterns. The 'Blue Bedroom' with its murals, painted to mimic wall hangings, looks over the valley towards Naples, as does 'Jacks Bedroom', with its local chestnut wooden furniture.

The next room was originally the Abbots dining room, and leads to the current kitchen, with charcoal burners and a big fire place. The door at the end of the hallway with the Clarisse Nun cheekily painted on it serves as a nod to the buildings past as a convent, and was the original door that connected to the Monks Quarters.

The Abbots Quarters can also be accessed by a majestic staircase, one of a fine pair that both lead from the central entrance arch found in the buildings courtyards.





Dining & Contemplation

Loggia & staircase

The candle lit loggia is where many an hour is passed, slowly sipping coffee as the sun comes up, long leisurely lunches on a hot day, reading books, sipping Negronis before supper, with its views toward Guarcino, home of the fabulous Amoretti, and on up to the Monti Ernici mountains. It is rumoured this is where Mussolini built a tiny ski resort for one of his mistresses. If you look hard enough you can see the ski lifts of Mount Passeggio in the top of the hills.

There is a hall for small suppers on an autumn evening.

In the 1970's Jack's old friend Danny O'Keefe-Browning installed a bathroom to his upset. This was constructed in the old dining room but it could easily be reinstated

Upper chapel and chapter room

Upper Chapel –
This room was used for contemplation, prayer and study for the monks who lived and worked at the Badia.

Chapter room –
The chapter room, with its magnificent fireplace, candlelight and an image of St Christopher, the patron saint of safe travels, is a wonderful space for entertaining. Perfect for more formal affairs.

Refugee story.

During World War II, the nearby Monte Cassino, the hilltop abbey founded by St Benedict in 529, was bombed on the 15 February 1944 on the order of General Alexander.

The Badia, located in the German held territory, could have suffered a similar fate were it not for an order of protection signed by General Kesterling. This still hangs on the walls of the Badia today.

The protection afforded to the monastery and its location near the Le Fraschette concentration camp, meant that it was a perfect location for hiding refugees.

Today, locals still tell stories of how they dressed refugees as peasants and brought them to work in the fields until they could escape safely. Those on the run were hidden in the attic of the Church which was accessed via a secret hatch behind a tapestry. They even built a false wall in the kitchens to hide people and precious possessions.

One day in the 1980's, a Canadian airman and his family came for lunch on the loggia with Jack. He wanted to show his family where he had been hidden and kept safe after his aircraft had been shot down. No doubt there are many more stories & secrets to discover.



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As the seasons change, the bounty of the autumn harvest brings its own delights, such as local porcini mushrooms for pastas, truffles for grating over freshly laid eggs, beans for wild boar stews, and chestnuts for roasting on the open fire.

The Chapter Room can host more formal dinners at the long table, and the Courtyard and lower Loggia has been the backdrop to a Leslie family wedding with a seated dinner for more than 100 guests, cooked by local chefs on site.

Given the untouched 'blank canvas' quality of the building interiors, the Badia offers tremendous scope to create more memorable spaces to stay and entertain.

Bedrooms & the kitchen





Following the departure of the Clarisse nuns, the Badia became a country residence, of sorts, for a series of 'commendatory' abbots from the 15th to the 19th century. In 1450, Pope Nicholas V granted the Badia in commendation to humanist Giovanni Tortelli, head of the Vatican Library.

Tortelli reconstructed almost all the western block of the building, leaving only the chapel untouched. These changes included the creation of a great double stairway and a two-storied loggia, the division of the oratory into a smaller chapel and the transformation of the refectory into a dining hall.

The remainder of his life at the Badia was spent writing 'De Orthografia', a vast study of the ancient Greek and Latin languages.

The 'Blue Bedroom' with its murals, painted to mimic wall hangings, looks over the valley towards Naples and the Abruzzo mountains leading to the sea.

'Jacks Bedroom' as its fondly known is furnished with solid chestnut furniture and the same wonderful views. The little outcrop in the olive groves is thought to be the site of a Roman settlement waiting to be discovered, like the one in the valley by the 1st Century bridge on the ancient road linking Alatri to Veroli.

The White room is a charming twin room, simple with high timber ceilings.

The next room we understand was originally the Abbots dining room, and leads to the current kitchen, with medieval charcoal burners and a big fireplace. It's quite the little cook's kitchen and where many a fabulous meal has been prepared.

The door at the end of the hallway, with the Clarisse Nun cheekily painted on it, serves as a nod to the building's past as a convent, and was the original door that connected to the Monks Quarters. She has caused many a sharp intake of breath as guests tiptoes late into the night.

The Abbots Quarters can also be accessed by a majestic staircase, one of a fine pair that lead from the central entrance arch found in the main courtyard.

The stunning double scissor staircase leading elegantly up to the Abbot's living area is, Elizabeth Fentress has suggested, is perhaps unprecedented in the world of post-antique architecture and suggests a designer beyond a local stonemason.

Monks Quarters

At its core, the Badia functioned as a modest living space for those following a life and regime of spiritual devotion. The small religious communities resident at the Badia down through the centuries were self-sufficient and had simple needs. The living and working spaces they inhabited reflect that – they are free from unnecessary adornment, and consist of a series of smaller rooms that were used as cheese stores, larders, olive oil stores, meat curing rooms, wine presses and stores, and grain stores that served the needs of the resident community as their numbers of inhabitants grew and dwindled.

This community rested in simple quarters, sleeping in the large Dormitory with its lofty roof over 20 feet high, possibly to keep it cool in the hot summers. They dined in the vaulted Refectory directly below, with food served from nearby kitchens and old stone ovens, accompanied by wine from their own cellars and stores.

Next door is a curious room whose use has often been debated, with three oval slots in the arched ceiling, which possibly may have been used to lower monks down on ropes into the cell below for either solitary prayer or punishment. How the smell of the bread ovens in the neighbouring walls must have taunted them!

Most of a monk's life was spent in the Upper Chapter Rooms studying, interspersed with periods spent praying, sleeping, eating and working on the farm to provide food for the community.





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Gardens, Courtyards & Cloisters





Located alongside each other, the 6th century Upper Garden connects to the aqueduct and pool that is still regularly used for swimming; whilst the Church Courtyard gave the lay people access to the Lower Chapel via the Main Gate when it was still in use for regular religious activities and services.

The Cloister Courtyard, with its Romanesque range and 14th century double level arcade, is a defining space within the building complex, unifying and providing access to the various wings of the building.



The Monks Garden, (also known as the South Garden), where medieval herbs and flowers were once grown for the monastery, reveals a terrace offering panoramic views over the Liri Valley.

This garden leads to the 'aia', a flat sparse space once historically used as a threshing floor where wheat grown in the surrounding fields of the complex would be taken to be winnowed. This entire area opens out into further woodland and olive groves, and is tied together by a rocky outcrop, acting as a wall that shields the building from view as well as protecting the gardens from fierce weather.



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Gallery at the Palazzo Doria Pamphili



Fontana del Moro
on the Piazza Navona



Church of St. Agnes of the Sorrows
on the Piazza Navona

Portrait of Pope
Innocent X by Velázquez



Princes, Popes & Palazzos

The princely Doria Pamphilj family, which has included a pope and a 16th-century admiral, is one of few in the Roman aristocracy to retain its estates, palaces and private treasures. The Palazzo Doria Pamphilj has grown over the centuries; it is likely the largest in Rome still in private ownership and its gallery is one of the finest in the city.

The large collection of paintings, furniture and statuary has been assembled since the 16th century by the Doria, Pamphilj, Landi and Aldobrandini families, united through marriage and descent under the simplified surname Doria Pamphilj. The vast collection includes paintings and furnishings from Innocent X's Palazzo Pamphilj in Piazza Navona.

Velázquez's portrait of Innocent X, who rose to the papacy as Cardinal Giovanni Battista Pamphilj in 1644, is considered the collection's masterpiece.

In 1653, Pope Innocent X entrusted the

Badia di San Sebastiano and its contents to his nephew, Camillo Pamphilj. The church of St. Agnes of the Sorrows (also known as Sant'Agnese in Agone) situated on the Piazza Navona and adjacent to the Pamphilj family palace, was built at the insistence of the Pope just a year earlier, and many of the funds used to support the running of the church came from monies raised through the sale of olive oil produced at the Badia. The Pamphilj family retained ownership of the Badia until the mid-1800s, and since then, the Badia has served as a home, a working farm and an artistic retreat for a series of private owners.

The Archives of the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj contain a wealth of materials relating to the Badia di San Sebastiano, and good working relations exist to the present day between the Doria Pamphilj family and the Leslie Foundation.

Further information on the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj can be found at www.doriapamphilj.it

Working Farm, Olive Mill & Local Food

Self-sufficiency and living off the land has been the ethos of those resident at the Badia down through the centuries. First practised by the monastic communities of earlier times, this has been continued by those who have inhabited the building since. Livestock such as pigs, chickens, ducks and goats are still raised by the neighbouring farmers on the lands surrounding the building.

The Badia especially prides itself on its beautifully maintained olive groves - some trees within it are nearly 400 years old. The groves are dutifully harvested annually during the months of October and November, and continue to yield a generous supply of olives, much of which is then pressed locally into oil. At one time in the past, the Badia itself would have contained a dedicated olive mill where the produce from the groves could be processed on site before being sent on for sale in Rome and beyond.

Due to the rich fertile soils and historically pastoral nature of the Lazio and surrounding region, the area has

always been renowned as a producer of nourishing and high quality foods. Sustainable and responsible farming and cultivation lies at the heart of this, and the result is a feast of flavour and colour. Many foods grow wild in nature, such as asparagus and mushrooms, and the very best in meats, fresh fruits, vegetables, pulses and grains are grown seasonally and in abundance, ranging from prickly pears to perfectly roasted pork.

No summary of Lazio foods would be complete without a nod to the pasta specialities of the region; the famous spaghetti carbonara originated in Lazio, whilst the well known hot and spicy pasta sauce arrabbiata, which literally translates as 'angry', is also native to the area.

Local food markets take place in Alatri and Veroli weekly, allowing locals and visitors alike to sample and purchase the best culinary produce the region can offer.





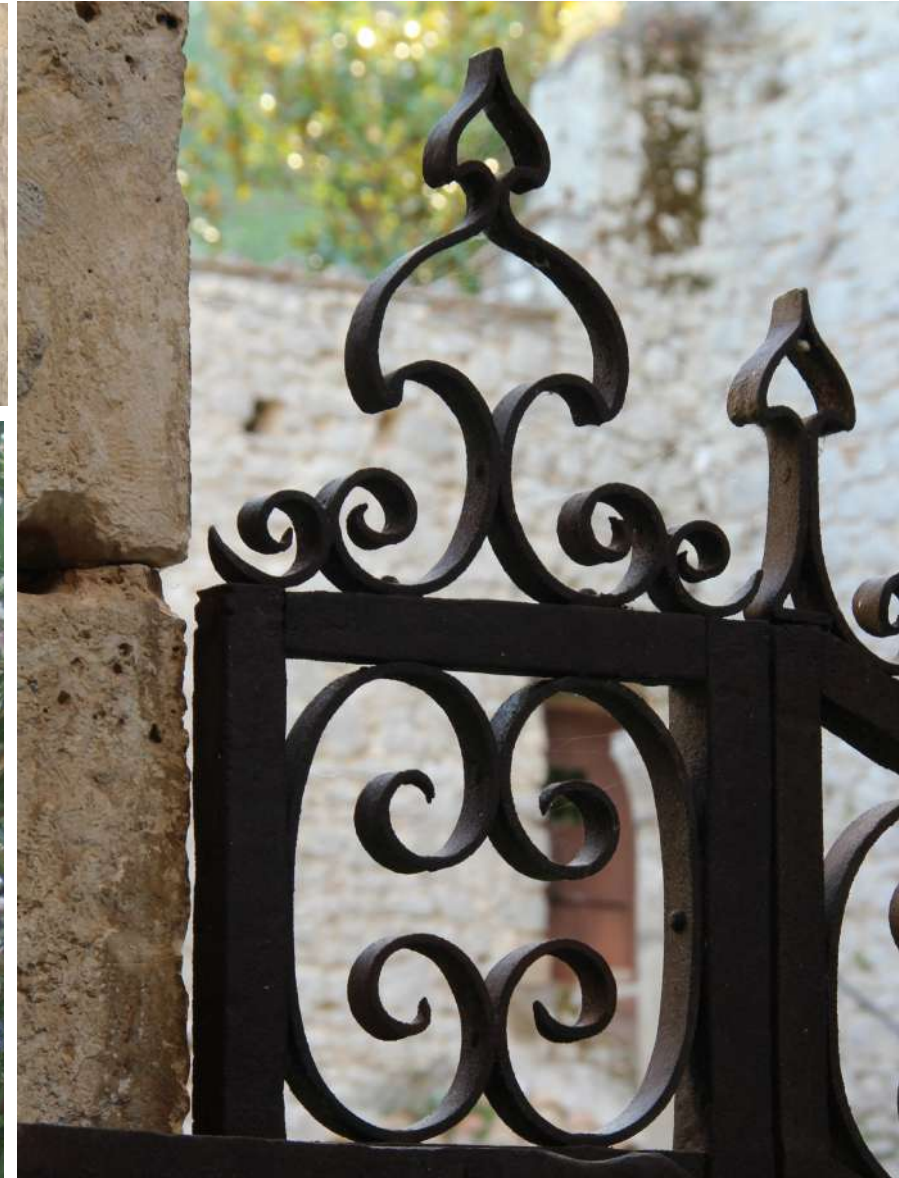
Art School & Further Education Opportunities

During the early 20th century Romolo Giralico, an art teacher from Veroli, used the restoration of the Badia as a training project for the young artisans of his trades school. In the courtyards and gardens his pupils contrived stone seats, steps, pools and fountains, covered walks, wrought-iron gates, hooks and brackets, and other such features.

Inside the buildings they made new timber doors and painted trompe l'oeil, new stone door and window jambs were carved and/or salvaged from other medieval buildings, adding charm and detail that softens the rational monastic austerity of the buildings.

Giralicos art school pupils were particularly adept in ceramics, and many old pieces of painted crockery and earthenware are still on display, and indeed still in use, at the Badia. Considering its age, the Badia has shown great versatility and resilience down through the years. Going forward, the multi-roomed building offers many opportunities for future uses as an educational space. There are spaces that could become teaching rooms, gallery, exhibition and events spaces along with a variety of accommodation for teachers and students alike. If this is of particular interest, further drawings and details of the building can be happily supplied upon request.





Celebrations

This Renaissance Villa is also very much the social heart of the building and has played host to many family summers and celebrations.

The Loggia overlooking the cloistered Courtyard is the perfect temperature for dining from dawn to well into the night and is a welcome retreat in the heat of high summer. Lit only by candle light, dinner stretches late into the evening, where all manner of topics are discussed or debated over chilled wine.

After feasting on a long delicious lunch, a refreshing dip in the Monks 6th century pool or lounging under the shade in the gardens is a fabulously lazy way to spend the rest of the day.

Cooking in the Badia is a sheer pleasure given the abundance of local produce on offer. The art of Italian cooking is simplicity – doing the least required with stunning local produce, where many of the fruits and vegetables are still warm from the trees they were picked from that morning.





Alatri, Veroli & local area

In the foothills of the Ernici Mountains

The Badia San Sebastiano is situated in an area of immense natural beauty, sitting on the foot of the Ernici Mountains and acting as a gateway to a great number of national parks found within the Lazio-Abruzzo region. To the north-west, the Badia overlooks the valley of the River Cosa towards Alatri, near Frosinone.

The region is well serviced by direct train and autostrada connections. The Badia di San Sebastiano is 25km from Fuggi, while Latina is 65km away. The city of Rome is a 90 minute drive away, whilst the nearest airports are Rome Ciampino Airport and Leonardo da Vinci International Airport at Fiumicino, 87km and 113km away respectively.

Alatri and the Cyclopean Cities of Lazio

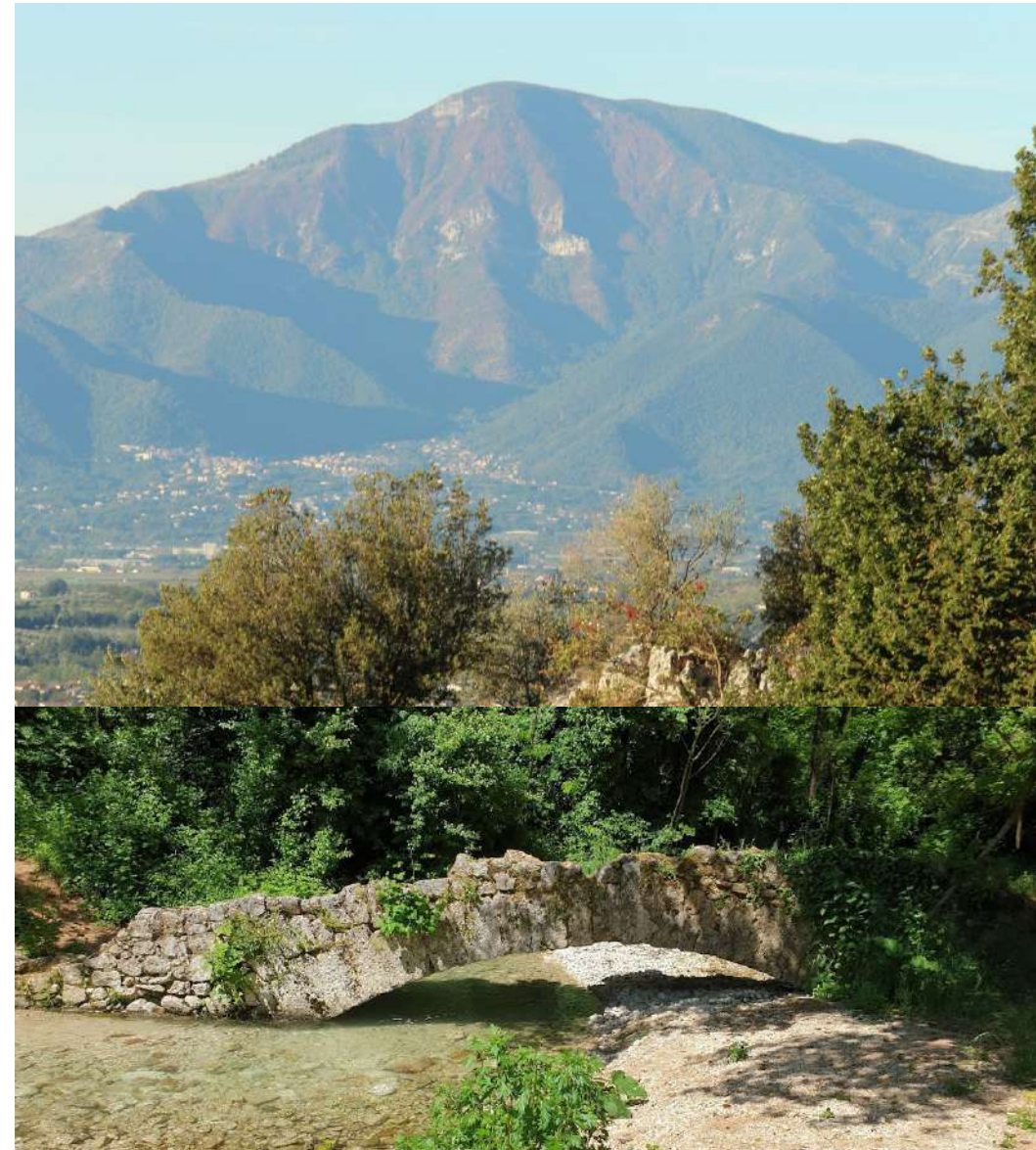
The city of Alatri was built over 3,500 years ago near Frosinone, in Lazio, Italy. It has often been referred to as 'The Grandmother of Rome', on account of

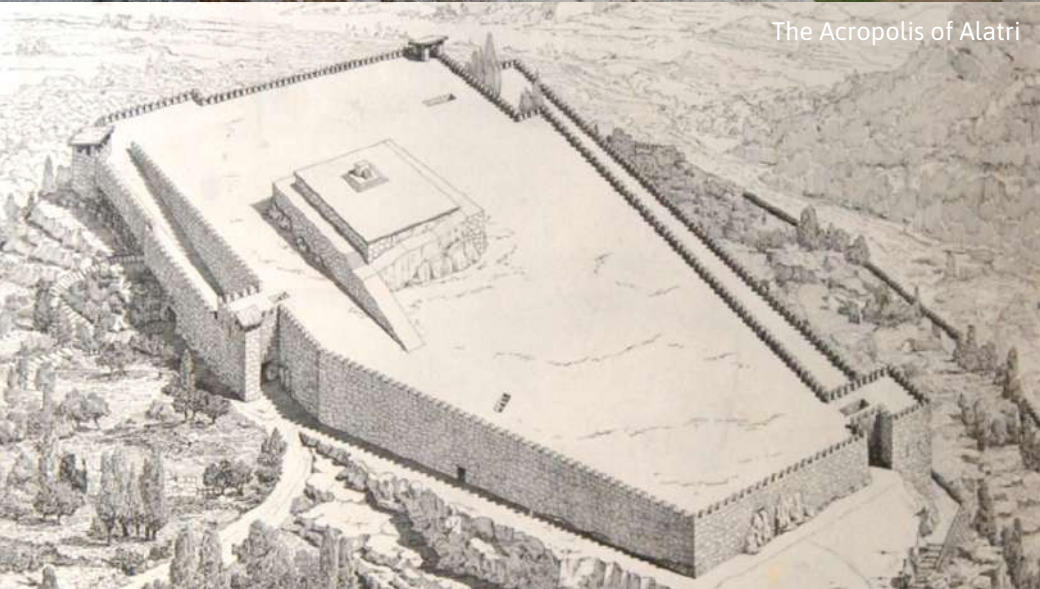
its striking ancient architecture that pre-dates the more modern Classical styles found in the capital.

Alatri has many fine medieval buildings, some dating back to the 12th century, but the town's double ramparts of giant interlocking cyclopean stones testify to an origin lost in pre-history.

Way back in the mists of time, a giant Acropolis was built at Alatri, older than and a rival in size to the Great Acropolis of Athens in Greece. Legend has it that this Acropolis was constructed by an ancient race of giants that roamed the land, known in Greek and Roman mythologies as the Cyclopes. Standing at an incredible height and with only one eye in the middle of their foreheads, it was believed that only the mythical Cyclopes had the amazing strength to move the enormous boulders that made up the walls of Alatri.

One of the great astro-archaeological sites in Italy, and like its cousins around the world - Newgrange in Ireland,





The Acropolis of Alatri





BADIA DI SAN SEBASTIANO



Stonehenge in England, the Pyramids in Egypt, Tikal and other magnificent Mayan sites - the sun strikes the Acropolis of Alatri on an equinox or solstice at a very specific time.

This discovery was made by a local historian, Giuseppe Capone, who ascertained that the layout of the city was planned on the basis of particular geometrical and astronomical alignments starting near a 'privileged point' lying behind the northern wall of the central megalithic structure within the heart of the Acropolis.

Ideal straight lines connect the gates of the city on opposite sides of the Acropolis at the same distance from this point, and the line connecting this same point with the North East corner of the Acropolis points to the rising sun at the summer solstice on 21st June each year. On this morning the sun hits the front wall and slides along it till it hits a portal and illuminates a chamber for reasons we can only speculate.

Was this a giant calendar for planting much needed crops, was it a place of worship or sacrifices, was it a place of gathering and celebration, or was it perhaps all of the above? A number of stellar alignments also seem to point to the constellation of Gemini, Orion and the Southern Cross, at a time when it was still visible above the horizon in the Northern hemisphere.

The archaeological evidence available suggests that the actual shape of the Acropolis itself seems to have been based quite purposely on that of the Gemini constellation, as opposed to being determined by the shape of the hill on which it stands. UNESCO has also taken a great interest in the astronomic alignments within the city plan of Alatri, defining it as "the most spectacular example of the use of geometry and astronomy in planning" and is considering its inscription as a World Heritage site.

In addition to Alatri, the towns of Ferentino, Segni, Sezze, Veroli and Arpino in the Province of Frosinone, Norba, Cori and Circei in the Province of Latina, Amelia in nearby Umbria, as far as Ansedonia, Orbetello and Roselle in Tuscany and Alba Fucens in Abruzzo, are entirely surrounded by similar enigmatic cyclopean walls that survive to this day in varying states of preservation. The Civic Museum in Alatri is a fantastic resource for learning more about these ancient structures and the archaeological history of Southern Lazio.

To find out more about Alatri, visit www.comune.alatri.fr.it

More information about Veroli, the equally stunning and ancient neighbour of Alatri, can be found at www.comune.veroli.fr.it

BADIA DI SAN SEBASTIANO

Ancient Ruins

The city of Naples lies some 155 km to the south-east, a perfect destination for a trip away to take in the ruins of Pompeii and visit Mt. Vesuvius. Ostia Antica, the remains of the prime harbour city of ancient Rome, is a large archaeological gem also well worth a visit 'when in Rome', sitting near the mouth of the Tiber, just outside the main city centre.

Mountains and Monasteries

The Badia is cited as a waypoint on the Cammino di Benedetto – one of Italy's five pilgrim 'Wonder Ways'. This trail, which passes by the front gates of the Badia, follows a 300km path through the heart of Italy, which moves from Umbria, runs through all of Lazio and reaches the border with Campania. An itinerary of 16 stages traces the life of St. Benedict, combining the three most important Benedictine places: Norcia, his birthplace; Subiaco, where he lived for more than 30 years and founded numerous monasteries; and Montecassino, where he spent the last part of his life.

Further information can be found at www.camminodibenedetto.it

The Carthusian monastery of Trisulti hangs on the edge of the Collepardo Gorge a few kilometres from the Badia. The Cistercian abbeys of Casamari

and Fossanova stand in the nearby Liri Valley. The Badia is a perfect starting point for the dramatic mountain drive to Subiaco via the cliff hanging 9th century abbey of St. Benedetto.

The Badia is fortunate to sit on the footsteps of a number of national parks in the region, with the National Park of Abruzzo sitting to the west, and the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park located further north. The natural habitat of the Lazio region is mountainous and heavily forested, providing the perfect conditions for a variety of flora and fauna to thrive, including bears, wolves, chamois, deer, and golden eagles.

Visitor friendly walking and horse-riding trails are available within the parks, and skiing is popular in the region during the winter months.

Sea & islands

A 90 minute drive away, the coast is well within reach of the Badia if one desires an escape to the sea for a day trip or longer.

The towns of San Felice and Terracina are ideal for a sun filled afternoon, whilst further afield, the Pontine Islands, comprising the six islands of Palmarola, Ponza, Gavi, Zanone, Ventotene and Santo Stefano, and the more southern islands of Capri and Ischia, are easily reached via regular ferries.







Sir Jack Leslie & Badia Restoration

Sir John Norman Ide Leslie, 4th Bt. of Castle Leslie, Glaslough (1916-2016), affectionately known as 'Uncle Jack' by his family, was born in New York on 6th December 1916. He was the son of Sir John Randolph Shane Leslie, 3rd Bt., and Marjorie Ide, daughter of the American diplomat Henry Clay Ide, of Vermont, USA. He was a first cousin once removed of former British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill as his paternal grandmother, Leonie Jerome, and Churchill's mother, Lady Randolph Churchill (born Jennie Jerome), were sisters - the daughters of American financier Leonard Jerome.

He was educated at Downside School, and later graduated from Magdalene College at Cambridge University in 1938. During World War II, he served as an officer in the Irish Guards during the

Battle of France before being captured at Boulogne-sur-Mer in May 1940. He then spent five years in POW camps in Germany before liberation in May 1945.

He returned to Glaslough upon his release, where he spent a few years managing the estate before then leaving to travel around Europe and the USA. He finally settled in Rome for the next 40 years of his life, where he thrived and lovingly restored old buildings back to life, including his beloved Badia di San Sebastiano di Alatri, an abandoned monastery he acquired in 1967.

Sir John adored the austere interiors of the building and kept the Badia in good repair, making as few modern interventions as possible in order to preserve the historical character of the

structure. He took on his most ambitious structural repair project to the Badia soon after purchasing the building, which saw the restoration of the campanile and the casting of a new bell to replace the original - both of which had been cast by the same company in Agone in the Abruzzi hills, an area with a tradition of foundries dating back many centuries.

Upon the death of his father Shane, Jack succeeded to the title of 4th Baronet Leslie, of Glaslough, Co. Monaghan in 1971.

Having spent over 40 years living in Italy, Jack returned home to live at Castle Leslie in 1994 at the age of 78. One of his great passions in his later years was dance music, which he referred to as 'Boom Boom Music',

BADIA DI SAN SEBASTIANO



and in 2001 he travelled to Ibiza to celebrate his 85th birthday. In 2002, he became an overnight celebrity when he inadvertently revealed the wedding location of Sir Paul McCartney and Heather Mills by admitting to reporters it was to take place in Castle Leslie, but that it was “a secret”.

Jack received an array of awards from chivalrous orders throughout his lifetime. He was decorated with the award of the Knight Commander, Order of St. Gregory the Great, and the award of the Knight of Honour and Devotion, Sovereign Military Order of Malta. He was presented with the Chevalier de la Legion d’Honneur, the highest French order for military and civil merits, at the French embassy in Dublin on 9 November 2015.

Jack survived his older sister, the author Anita Leslie, and his younger brother, Desmond Leslie, an RAF pilot, film maker, writer, musician and avid ufologist. In 2006 he published his autobiography, *Never a Dull Moment*.

Sir Jack passed away at the age of 99 on 18 April 2016. He never married or had children, but is survived and lovingly remembered by a dedicated bunch of nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews.

Never a Dull Moment...

'Driving down very rough and dirty roads I finally reached what was then a mule track, at which point, a strange complex of ancient walls came into view. Crumbling, forgotten, abandoned and unloved, I had stumbled on the Badia di St Sebastiano di Alatri. I fell in love with it at first sight.

I drove up alone and spent a candlelit night there, as there was no electricity. I lit a candle in the

window of the chapter room and wandered around outside to see what it looked like. There were three cows, a pig and a donkey in the stable in the church court and when I lay on the bed, ...barn owls nested in the wall under my window began screeching. Finally I blew out the candle and more than ever, fell in love with the charming old place.'

Sir John Leslie discovering the Badia in 1967, taken from his memoirs, *Never a Dull Moment*, 2006



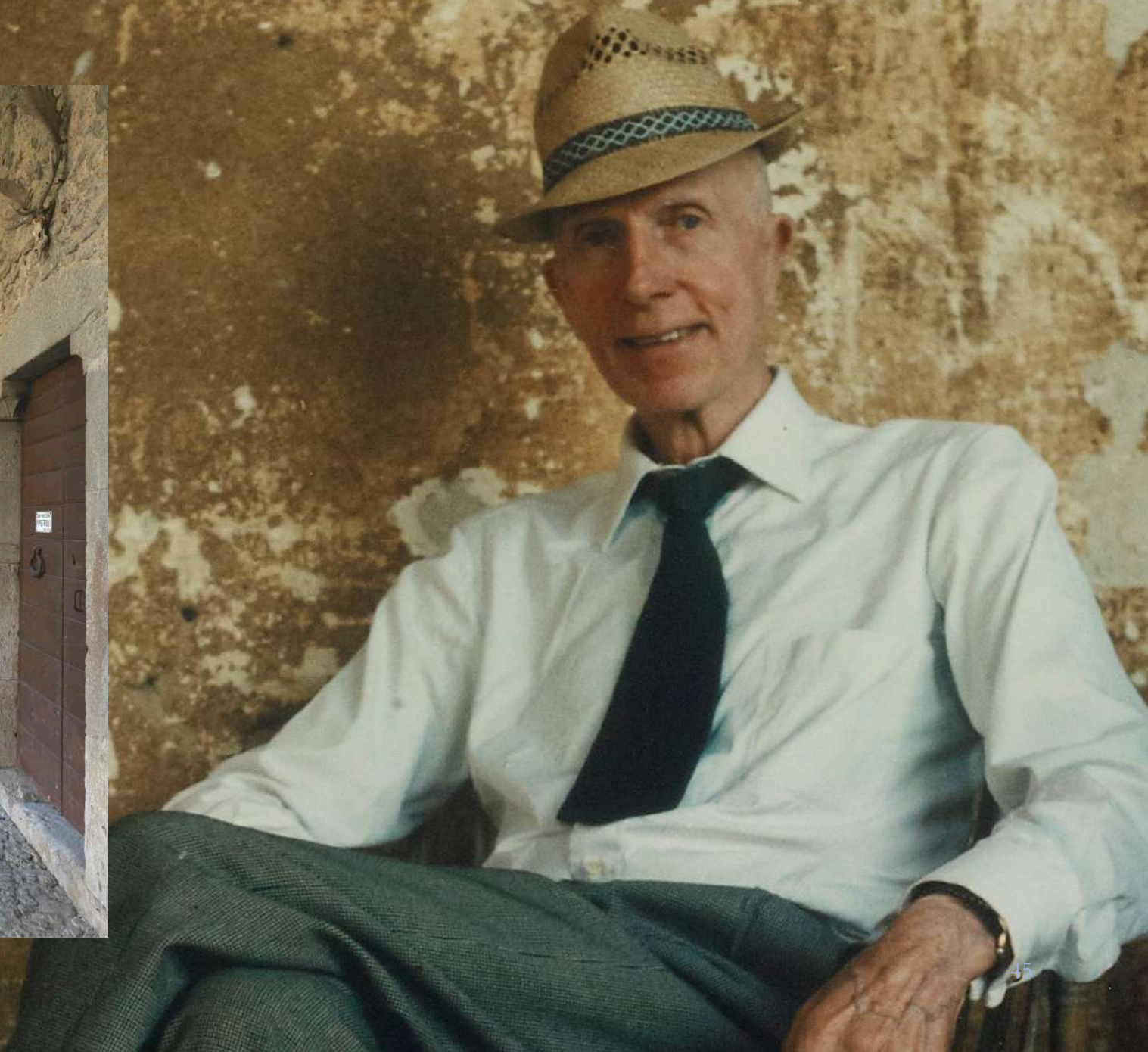


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