

This year, the *International Society for the History of Neurosciences* (ISHN) will hold its conference at Pavia (June 21-25). At the St Andrews meeting in 2005 several people expressed an interest in taking advantage of the time in Italy in order to spend a few more days engaged in cultural and artistic sightseeing in Tuscany. Accordingly, Nick Wade and I are planning a four-day period in a superb Villa midway between Pisa and Lucca (Villa di Corliano) immediately after ISHN – for the period June 26-29 [or 27-30 still to be settled, also depending on the programme of Pavia]. The website of the hotel for a preliminary virtual visit is:

<http://www.corliano.it/>

The idea is to combine visits to some particularly interesting monuments in these two historical towns, which are not normally included in tours of Tuscany (like the magnificent Certosa of Pisa, some Palaces in Lucca), with other kinds of activities. One possibility is hill walking in the mountains which are situated just behind the Villa di Corliano. These mountains are rich in botanical, aesthetic and historico-cultural connections: in addition to beautiful forests, and magnificent panoramas, one can still see the remnants of the Middle age frontier wall separating the ancient Republic of Pisa from that of Lucca, and one can follow in the footsteps of Dante. He walked there centuries ago and, with reference to this region, in the *Divina commedia*, he wrote:

“*Il monte per cui I Pisan veder Lucca non ponno*”.

“The mountain by which the Pisans cannot see Lucca”.

(Note that the verse contains a clear allusion to the difficult relations between the Pisani and the Lucchesi over the centuries which continue now mainly as Campanile rivalries). Other activities would include tasting Italian food and wines both in the restaurant annexed to the Hotel (*Villa Carlotta*) and in some small and typical *trattorie* in the mountains, in Lucca and elsewhere. One of the possible privileges of the attendants would be to taste the special myrtle berry liqueur prepared by Marco Piccolino with the berries collected just on the Monte Pisano, and possibly the whisky - or some other interesting alcohol - produced by Nick!

Surrounding these activities, and in a very liberal and free way, there would also be a scientific-cultural program occupying a few hours in the morning, dedicated mainly, but not exclusively, to the history of science. From our preliminary discussions, this morning program would be inspired by Galileo and by his *Dialogues*; indeed, it would be in the spirit expressed by one of the debaters of the *Dialogue* (Salviati) when he said:

The digressions made up to this point are not so foreign to the matter in hand as to be called entirely apart from it. Moreover, from such things there result trains of reasoning awakened by in the minds of not one of us alone, but all three. Besides, we are arguing for our own amusement, and are not obligated to any such strictness as one would be who was methodically treating a subject for professional reasons, with the intention of publishing it. I do not want this epic of ours to adhere so closely to poetic unity as to leave no room for episodes, for the introduction of which the slightest relevance ought to suffice. It should be almost as if we had met to tell stories, so that it is permitted for me to relate anything which hearing yours may call to my mind.

In this spirit, and with the suggestions of the colleagues interested, we might perhaps propose a theme of discussion for every of each “giornata” of our *Dialogues*: the “conversazione” would follow the “gusto” of the participants! Galileo would be surely one of the themes of our meeting. We plan to read some of the most stimulating passages of his *Dialogue* or of the *Saggiatore*,

possibly by placing ourselves in the appropriate intellectual and geographical location to appreciate what this great Pisan wrote some four centuries ago.

Practical information would follow statements of interest regarding such a gathering. For the moment we can say that the hotel is not expensive (about 85 Euro for the double room with breakfast). What we would like to know as soon as possible (within one-two weeks) are the names of those interested in participating; this is because of the limited number of the rooms in the hotel (11 double or twin rooms in all).

OF COURSE EVERYBODY CAN COME BEFORE OR LEAVE LATER BY PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION WITH THE HOTEL. THE ADDRESS, TELEPHONE AND EMAIL CONTACTS OF THE HOTEL CAN BE FOUND AT THE WEBSITE. THE ONLY DIFFICULTY IS THAT THE HOTEL IS NOW CLOSED FOR RESTAURATION UNTIL THE END OF FEBRUARY. MARCO PICCOLINO CAN HELP IN THIS PERIOD TO CONTACT THE HOTEL IF THE EMAIL CONTACT DOES NOT WORK.

PLEASE, DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT MARCO (OR NICK) FOR ANY OTHER NEED RELATED TO THIS EVENT.

Marco Piccolino

Nick Wade