

COMMUNITY MAP



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01. VIA DELLA REPUBBLICA

For generations, Via della Repubblica, also known as Via Maestra, stood as the beating heart of Poggibonsi's civil, economic, and social life.

More than just a street, it was a place for meeting and connection: it was the site of the daily ritual of the *giratina*, or evening stroll, when much of the community, across generations, would come together and mingle, lighting up the town's evenings and Sundays. The street was an open-air commercial and recreational center, even attracting customers from neighbouring towns. Alongside its famous bars, many other historic spots shaped the street's identity over the years: the Garibaldi Cinema, Bencini pastry shop, Lori's then Rosi's grocery, Lucii the photographer, Baragatti and Montucchielli (the radio and television shop), Bernardeschi jewellery, and Ceseri stationery. Burrini footwear was a landmark in its sector, the second-largest retailer in Tuscany for an important children's shoes brand. Further along the street were the optician's Pampaloni, the Monterecci photographer, Fede stationery, Leoncini and Dei household-goods shop, the Dei "bazaar", the pipe and tobacco shop, Cipriani clothing store, Angiolino knitwear, the Consortini and Pacciani butcher shops, Ricciolo hardware store, Burresi and Gistri grocery stores, and Cantini greengrocer.

The street also hosted historic restaurants such as Alcide, a meeting place and a must-stop for residents and visitors alike, who could stay overnight at the Aquila Hotel. There were also Fontanelli the photographer and, the branches of a number of banks: Banca Toscana, Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, and Monte dei Paschi di Siena.

Daily life was supported by essential businesses such as the pharmacies — Del Zanna Pharmacy, known as the "upper one", and Iozzi then Andreini Pharmacy, the "lower one" — and by historic stationery shops like Cesari and Fede. Finally, there were shops dedicated to technology and leisure, such as Mondo, where many young people bought their first vinyl records and household appliances.

01. QUOTES FROM THE LOCALS

"For us kids it was the place for *struscio*, the evening stroll, and later it also became my workplace - all the more reason for it to deserve the name of *via Maestra*, the main street but also a street that teaches you something."

"The stroll, the *struscio*, not just as a weekend moment, but as an evening ritual — between 6 and 8 p.m. — and a Sunday one as well, a place to meet and mingle."

"There was practically everything, and not just for a short stretch, but all the way to the top of the street. The historic center had so many shops — and really good ones, truly excellent."

"The shops were identified with the person that owned and managed them: there weren't any franchises or chains. The place names were the shops and the shopkeepers themselves."

"The shopkeepers of Via Maestra were not just retailers: they were an active part of the community. They organized events, initiatives, and even day trips open to all residents, turning the town center into a true place of sociability and gathering."

01. IN PICTURES

IMAGES OF THE AREA FROM THE 1940S AND 1960S



IMAGES OF THE AREA FROM THE 1910S TO THE 1930S



02. THE BOTTLE-WEAVERS

The *impagliatrici*, bottle-basket weavers, were a fundamental part of the social and economic fabric of Poggibonsi. Their craft, widely practiced from the late 19th century until the 1970s, formed one of the pillars of the local chain of wine production.

Poggibonsi has always been a key hub for the wine trade of the Chianti area around both Siena and Florence, thanks in part to its railway station and to a busy artisan district comprised of glassworks, cork factories, and coopers. The bottle weavers completed this production chain: with patience and skill they wove straw around the typical local wine bottles, the *fiaschi*, giving them their distinctive look and the sturdiness needed for transport and storage.

Carried out almost exclusively by women, this craft was an essential resource for many families, especially during times of hardship. The weavers collected glass bottles from the wine producers and worked either in their homes or in public spaces. Since running water was not widespread until the 1960s, they would often visit rivers, wells, or springs to soak the straw — a key step in the process — which, once dampened, was called *stiancia*.

The constant coming and going of carts loaded with bottles both already and not yet woven filled the town on a daily basis, especially along Via della Rocca, Via Vittorio Veneto, Via Gallurì and Galluriuzzo, and the narrow lanes known as *fondatini*. The mural in Vicolo Ciaspini, created by the artist Rame 13, pays tribute to the work, strength, and memory of the *impagliatrici* that continues to weave itself into the history of Poggibonsi.



02. QUOTES FROM THE LOCALS

"We must remember that without the bottle weavers many families in Poggibonsi wouldn't have had food on the table. We went through some truly difficult times, and the work of the weavers brought home at least a bit of bread."

"At the school where I worked, an elderly woman skilled in making *fiaschi* was even invited to show the children how she practiced her craft — there were also some photographs taken of this event."

"It was very hard work. I remember how my grandmother's hands were all damaged because she had to work with that very dry, tough straw."

"My mother, who lived in Romituzzo, also worked on the *fiaschi*. A cart from the Ancilli bottle factory would come by, and, together with the other women, she would collect them and get to work weaving them."

"My mother had all the equipment — she weaved the *fiaschi*. It was a normal occupation for most women in many of the town's families. Some lived in the countryside, but others, like my mother, lived inside the town: in our case, we lived at the end of Via Frilli."

02. IN PICTURES





03. THE HISTORIC BARS

The historic bars of Poggibonsi were, for decades, much more than simple watering holes: they were spaces of sociability, where the community would come together and build connections. Relationships, conversations, and moments of shared life intertwined daily in their halls, reflecting the lively and deeply felt identity of the town.

On the Via Maestra stood Bar Nandino, the main meeting point of the street and a staple for generations of Poggibonsi residents. Another hub of social life was the nearby Piazza Dario Frilli, home to Bar GE.LO.RI. (*Gestione Locali Ricreativi*), beneath which stretched the Giardino d’Inverno, a large hall used for dances, parties, and social assemblies. Not too far, on Via Montorsoli, stood the “Social Bar”, established in what used to be a *Casa del Popolo*. The venue, frequented by mostly by teenagers, was known for its afternoon dances and the lively atmosphere that filled it.

Other establishments along the town’s main streets helped punctuate the daily life of the community: Bar Paolina, a gathering place for fishermen and hunters; Bar Orazio, located opposite the old railway level crossing and frequented by sports enthusiasts; Bar Garibaldi; and Bar Tinti—all important landmarks for Poggibonsi’s social life.

During the 1970s, this network of local bars also promoted joint initiatives, such as a summer football tournament between the bars, whose nighttime matches at the stadium drew large crowds of fans and helped strengthen bonds between neighbourhoods and within the local community.



03. QUOTES FROM THE LOCALS

"Bar Nandino was the meeting place: on Sunday afternoons and evenings everyone gathered there, on Via Maestra, to chat and pass the time."

"The Winter Garden was below the Bar GE.LO.RI: in winter people went there to dance, and in summer the windows were opened and the music drifted out into the square."

"The Social Bar, established in an old Casa del Popolo, was the place for the younger crowd: we went there to dance in the afternoon, between the ages of fifteen and eighteen."

"Each bar had its own team: in the summer we played at night and faced off at the municipal stadium."

"And then there was the historic bar called Orazio [...] Orazio was across from the old level crossing. It was frequented by many generations – a gathering place, and also a spot for some serious drinking, hours of conversation, and laughter."

03. IN PICTURES



04. PIAZZA DARIO FRILLI

For decades, Piazza Dario Frilli has been a focal point for Poggibonsi's social life, embodying the spirit of community that defined its neighborhoods throughout the twentieth century. In the past it often hosted markets where farmyard animals—such as chickens and rabbits—were bought and sold, acting as a place for trade as well as social exchange and interaction.

Over time, the square became home to important community hubs and associations, turning it into the beating heart of the local neighbourhood. The presence of the Misericordia confirmed its role as a centre for essential services and assistance. Bar GE.LO.RI. (Gestione Locali Ricreativi) was also located here, serving not just as a café but as an authentic gathering place where social relationships sprung up and intertwined, news was exchanged, and bonds between neighbours were strengthened.

The square also served as a focal point for the daily life of the neighbourhood, animated by local figures that were deeply rooted in the community, such as Mario Bruno Cambi—affectionately known as Mario or “Marione”—who embodied the spirit of solidarity and intimate knowledge of the area that was characteristic of that era.

Piazza Dario Frilli is also tied to the city's tradition of women artisans, testifying to a local economy based on traditional crafts and manual labor. The area was enlivened by the constant coming and going of carts from the local wineries, such as Ancilli on Via Vallepiatta, loaded with bottles waiting to be woven and large bundles of straw.



04. QUOTES FROM THE LOCALS

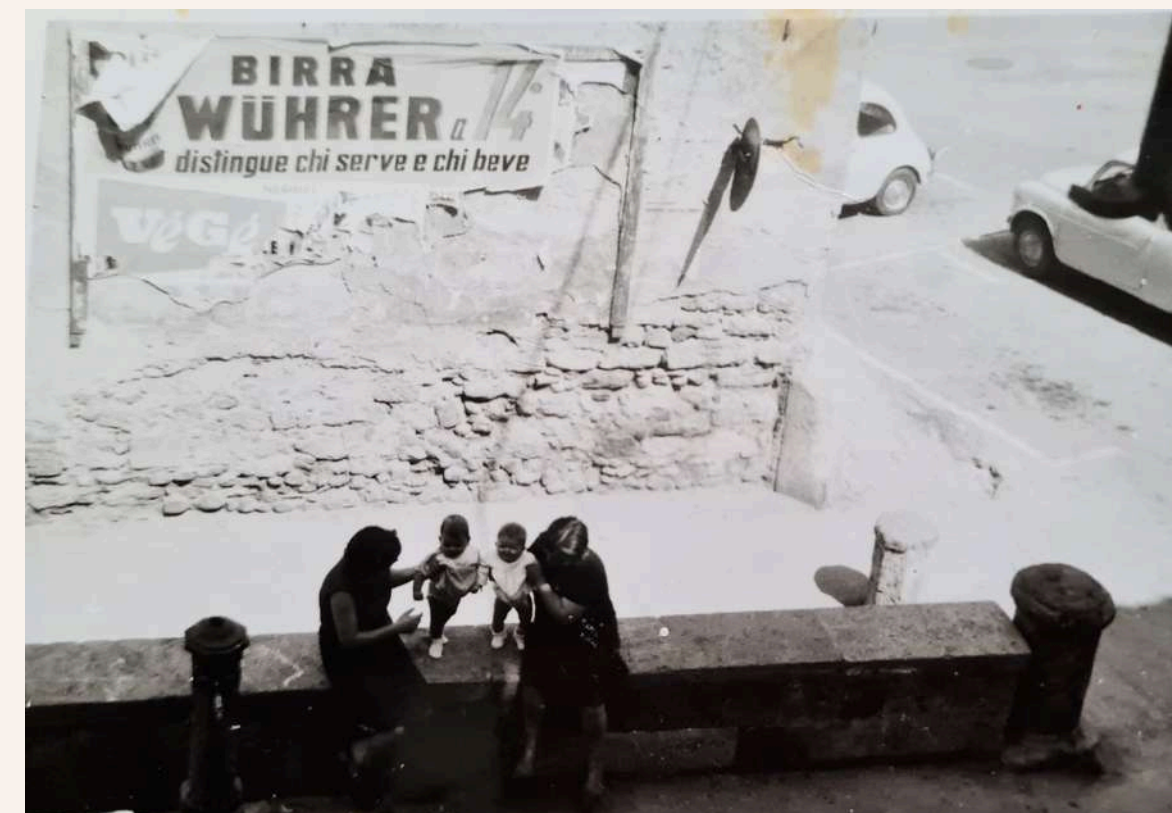
"I remember very well a person who, for several decades, was almost the face of the little square, Piazza Dario Frilli: the shopkeeper Mario Bruno Cambi, known to many simply as Marione."

"The square has always been a focal point point, across every generation. It was the neighbourhood's meeting place, and the older folks who sat there kind of acted as social lookouts."

"I remember the farmers from the surrounding countryside arriving in the square with the vehicles of the time—the little Ape trucks—parking and then picking up the farmyard animals that were sold at the market."

"I always met up here with my group of friends—this was our spot before heading over to Bar GE.LO.RI., which was just nearby."

04. IN PICTURES



05. PIAZZA IMRE NAGY

Piazza Imre Nagy, also known as the Covered Market Square, is a place that's deeply connected to the post-war history and rebuilding of Poggibonsi. Today, it stands as a symbolic reminder of the community's ability to start anew.

The area was heavily bombed during the Second World War, and many buildings were destroyed. The decision not to rebuild them created an open space that soon became the Covered Market (*Mercato Coperto*)—an outdoor marketplace sheltered by a roof. For decades, it served as a daily haunt for locals, hosting stalls of fruit, vegetables, cheeses, and other food products.

From the 1970s onward, the square also took on an important cultural and social role. Between 1973 and 1974, it hosted the Teatro di Zio Tobia, a street-theatre festival that ran for around four editions and was considered a unique and innovative event for its time.

Piazza Imre Nagy is a significant example of the urban transformations the city has undergone: despite the wartime destruction, the space continued to evolve, bearing witness to the community's ability to adapt, to rebuild, and to reinvent its public places.



05. QUOTES FROM THE LOCALS

"My grandmother would tell me that Piazza Nagy used to have houses, but it was bombed during the Second World War. After the war, they never rebuilt them—they decided to turn it into an open-air market."

"The heaviest bombing happened on December 29, 1943. It hit the whole square and even the area around the old station—it was a complete disaster."

"My mother and my older sister used to go there all the time to buy fruit, vegetables, cheese... I even remember the anchovies, things like that."

"It was known for the market, but even when the stalls weren't there, people went to the square to meet, chat, and enjoy the public space."

05. IN PICTURES

