



Pirotino e Manuelo with "mascoli"

In the East Riviera salutes and shots to make merry in patronal feasts have an age-old tradition. They are

In Recco this tradition dates back to the beginning of the 14th century and is linked to the cult of Our Lady of Intercession, Patroness of the town.

In the church of Megliorini there is a votive tablet dating back to the 17th century which shows a man wearing a three-cornered hat.

Besides Parson	<b>Giacomo Olcese</b>	in his book dated	<b>1896</b>	"Storia
And the great French novelist	<b>Henri Stendhal</b>	who visited Recco in	<b>1818</b>	on 8th and



Shootings of 'mascoli' San Martino Quarter



The salutes in occasion of feasts and events could not be carried out with the guns kept in the fortresses of the Republic of Genoa, and in small centres there were no guns.

So small metal devices were invented, called in dialect "**mascoli**", easy to load with small quantities of gunpowder, easy to carry and to put where it was necessary to set them, to form drawings which burst in style: the so-called "

**riondini**

" (circles).

The use of these devices is common on fest days in every Ligurian town.

The "mascolo" is an icorn cylinder with a flat base which adapts to the ground, between 8 and 15 cm tall, with a thickness (liner) adequate to its size, 1 cm at least, and with a vent on the vertical side, near the base called "**aboggino**" for the connection of the strip of gunpowder that links all the "mascoli" of a gunshot bursting one after the other.

A "mascolo" weighs about 2 kg, the thickness of the liner prevents the explosion and every "mascolo" is filled with about 15 gr. of gunpowder, pressed and covered with sawdust. Every quarter own and keeps carefully thousands of "mascoli", handed down from generation to

generation.



**Legendary "Titta" Macchiavello and Verzemma Quarter shooting**

A "**sparata**" (gunshot) is composed of about 1000-2500 "mascoli", half of which are used for the "**riga**" (line) and the rest for the "**riondino**" (circle).

The "riga" consists of a line of "mascoli" set on a path of sand at a regular distance of 40/50 cm one from the other, connected by the strip of gunpowder laid on a bed of sawdust.

The acme of the gunshot is the "riondino", a number of "mascoli" set in the shape of a triangle upside down, at a distance varying from 50 cm at the beginning to 10 cm, that burst faster and faster in a crescendo of shots.

At the end of the "riondino" there are some ten bigger "mascoli" called "**fulminin**" (small lightning) that produce a very loud burst and contain a bigger quantity of gunpowder.

The gunshot is lit with the "**bettone**", a device formed of a stick with an iron ball at one end. This ball is made red-hot with the purpose of setting fire to the gunpowder, and the "mascoli" are primed by the line of gunpowder that brings the fire inside the "mascoli" through the vent.

The gunshot is followed by the volunteers of the Quarters who take care that the strip does not extinguish. They pass the "bettone" to one another for better safety.

The "mascoli" are no dangerous because the material on fire is not sent up or aside; the strong deflagration takes place inside the "mascolo" thanks to the compression of the gunpowder.



Shooting of mascoli with colored flares of Collodari Quarter



Nobody remembers any accidents or wounds or burns, to people or things.

There is no danger of accidental explosion because there are no fuses and every element is kept at a good distance from the others.

Nowadays the gunshots take place on the bed of the torrent Recco and in distant areas on well prepared grounds, levelled and covered with sand. All the stones and gravel are eliminated and the "mascoli" are set on the sand.

The biggest quantity of gunpowder is used to connect each "mascolo", and with the "bettone" the fascinating "**tongue of fire**" is started.

In 2001, complying with the new laws and after a long successful struggle with the Home Office,

this old tradition was officially recognized and about 150 volunteers of the seven Quarters, led by the mayor and the parson, got after an exam the "**patentino**", that is the permission necessary to continue the great tradition of the "old Ligurian guns".



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