



Illustrative photograph of one of the phases of execution of the statue of General Cialdini (detail)

Centra! Museum of the Risorgimento, first exhibition, plaster model for the monument realized by the sculptor Vito Pardo in honor of General Cialdini for the Castelfidardo's battle in 1860



Shrine of the Armed Forces' Flags

Vittoriano
Via dei Fori Imperiali- Rome Tel. 06 47355002

Shrine of the Armed Forces' Flags Opening hours: 09.30-15.00
Closed on Mondays

Bookings for groups and schools
e-mail: ramdife.dirsacrariobandiere @sgd.difesa.it

Institute for the History of the Italian Risorgimento Central Museum of the Risorgimento

Vittoriano
P.zza Venezia - Rome Tel. 06 6793598
Website: www.risorgimento.it
e-mail: ist.risorgimento@tiscali.it
Educational: mcrrdidattica@tiscali.it

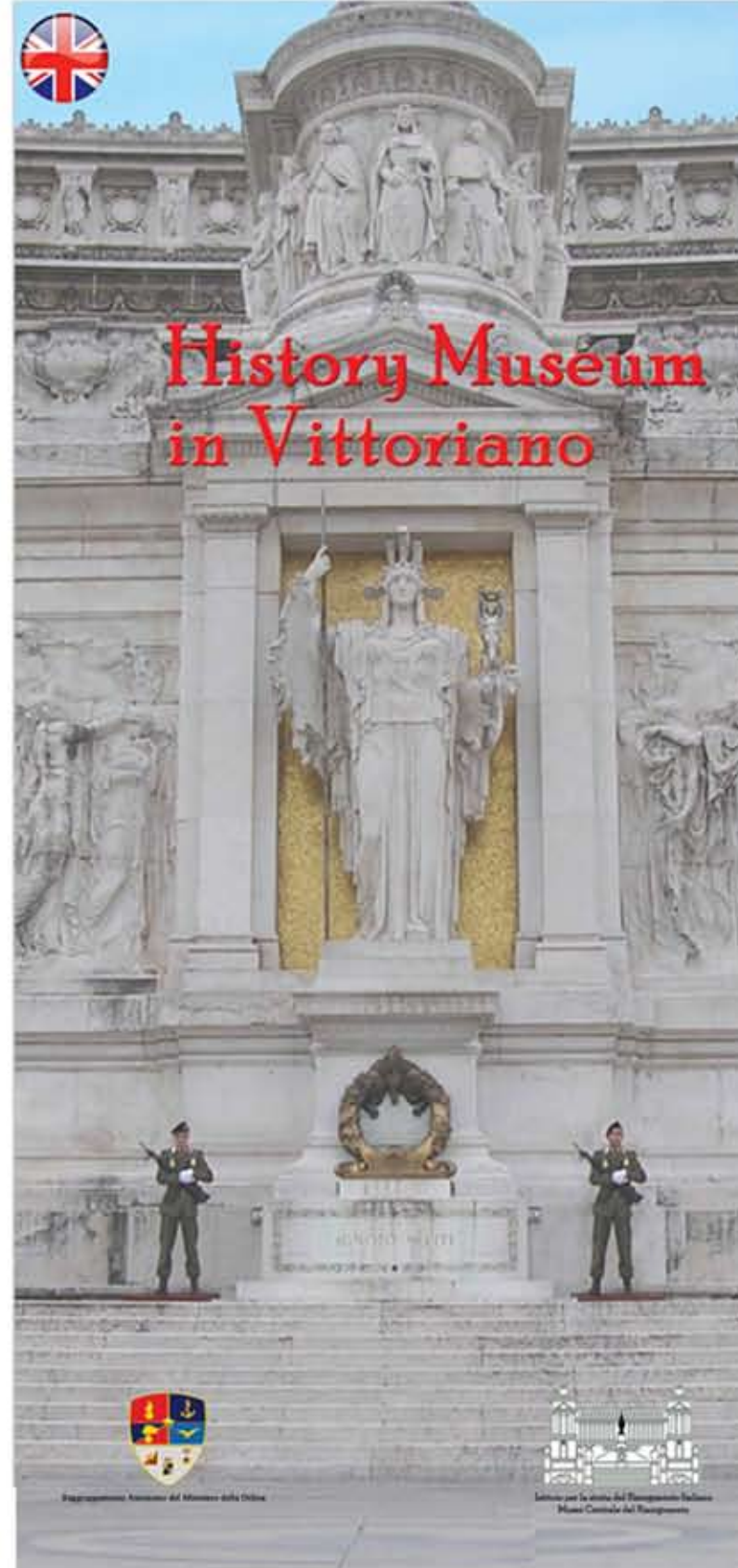
Museum Entrance
Via dei Fori Imperiali | Via San Pietro in Carcere

Archive-Institute Entrance
Piazza Venezia Vittoriano (entrance on Ara Coeli side) or
Museum Entrance

Museum Opening Hours Every day 09.30-18.30 Last entry at 17.45
Closed on the first Monday of the month

Archive Opening Hours
Monday, Thursday and Friday 09.00-13.15 Tuesday and Wednesday 09.00-17.15 Closed on Saturdays - Closed in August

Part of the Museum's collections is also available on the websites : www.risorgimento.it www.culturaitalia.it www.l4-18.it www.europeanal4-18.eu



The shrine of the armed forces' flags, war flags

Overview of the main hall of the shrine of Navy, in the middle the MAS 15



The Shrine of the Armed Forces' Flags

The Shrine of the Flags was established in 1935 to house all war flags, starting from the ones used during the Risorgimento battles for Italian unification and independence. It also hosts the flags of the various Regiments disbanded from the end of World Wars I and II up until today. The choice of keeping the flags inside the Vittoriano and beside the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier meant to emphasize their sacredness and symbolism, as the simplest and most direct way to celebrate the courage and sacrifice of the many Italian soldiers that fought under the Tricolour. The large glass cases accommodated in the bays of the galleries display the flags of the Air Force, Cavalry, Engineers, Artillery, Bersaglieri, Infantry, Carabinieri, Tax Police and Public Safety. Before 1935, this space was occupied by architect Giuseppe Sacconi's personal studio, while he supervised the Vittoriano construction site. The polychrome marble floor is based on a design by painter Ludovico Pogliaghi. Two large galleries house approximately two hundred items, including flags, banners, standards and memorabilia. The exhibition also includes five display cases containing items recovered during combat operations in various war theatres. Some of the flags were torn by captured service men in order to hide them from the enemy and reassemble them at the end of the war. As a natural extension of the Shrine of the Flags, the Memorial Museum of the Navy occupies the ground floor. It houses the Combat Flags of decommissioned naval units together with their ornate cases. The cases are fine artwork pieces often signed by important artists. On the inner walls, exquisite vellums painted in miniature and dating back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century trace the history of individual naval units. A series of ancient flags used by the Royal Ships of the Kingdom of Savoy also decorates the walls.



The Shrine of the Armed Forces' Flags, War Flags

Some of the most important memorabilia of the Navy are collected in the main hall: Gold Medal recipient Luigi Rizzo's MAS 15, which was used to sink the Austrian battleship Szent Istvan on 10 June 1918; a slow-running torpedo, an underwater assault vehicle nicknamed "Maiale" (Pig); and a portion of the wreck of the Sciré submarine sunk in Haifa waters in 1942 and salvaged in 1984 when 42 bodies were also recovered. The Shrine of the Flags is managed by the General Office of the Secretary General of Defence - National Armaments Director and houses the War Flags of the disbanded units of the Army, Air Force and the State Armed Corps.

The Shrine of the Unknown Soldier

The Shrine of the Unknown Soldier, completed in May 1935, has a Greek-cross plan and a central dome and is connected to the gallery of the Shrine of the Flags by two flights of stairs. The floor is made of Karst marble slabs, in memory of the places where World War I was fought, while the altar was carved out of a single block of stone from Mount Grappa. The sepulchral altar, placed in a niche in the wall, perfectly corresponds to the tombstone of the Unknown Soldier on the outside and bears an inscription with the reason for the Gold Medal conferred. A cycle of Byzantine-style mosaics by artist Giulio Bargellini decorates the walls of the chapel. In particular, the space above the tomb of the Unknown Soldier features a Crucifixion, while the dome mosaics depict the patron saints of the various Services: Our Lady of Loreto for the Air Force; St. Martin, patron of the Infantry; St. George, patron of the Cavalry; St. Sebastian, patron of the Military in general; and St. Barbara, for the Artillery, Engineers and Navy.



Overview of the Shrine of the Unknown Soldier

Anselmo Ballester
Sketch winning the 1921 competition for the poster celebrating the transfer of the Unknown Soldier's body



The Unknown Soldier

The Vittoriano had been originally designed as a tribute to the first king of Italy Victor Emmanuel II. It was only later that it was chosen as the site for the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, thus becoming a place of national patriotic cult. The tragic consequences of World War I led to a willingness to commemorate an "unknown soldier" in memory of the many casualties whose remains had been left unburied on the battlefields. The idea of glorifying the Unknown Soldier came from Colonel Giulio Douhet, who launched the proposal on 24th August 1920. The law on the "burial of the remains of an unknown soldier" was approved on 4th August 1921. The Vittoriano was the place chosen for the burial. More specifically, the site was identified under the aedicule of the goddess Roma, in line with the Monument to the King and at the very centre of the whole Altar of the Homeland. The body of the Unknown Soldier was chosen among eleven unidentifiable corpses that had been unearthed in various war cemeteries. The bodies were transferred to the Cathedral of Aquileia, where, on 28th October 1921, Maria Bergamas from Trieste, the mother of a missing soldier, picked the one that was to become the Unknown Soldier. On 29th October 1921, a train started rolling towards Rome, accompanied throughout its journey by impressive crowds lined along the tracks. On 4th November, the body was carried in a solemn procession along Via Nazionale and buried under the Altar of the Homeland in the presence of King Victor Emmanuel III. The final celebratory seal came with the decree declaring 4 November a national holiday. This is how the Vittoriano became the Altar of the Homeland, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.



Ceremony of the Unknown Soldier, 28th October - 4th November 1921
Pictures from the album "Funeral Honours of the Unknown Soldier 28th October - 4th November 1921" MCRR, 1998

The Central Museum of the Risorgimento

The Central Museum of the Risorgimento occupies the interior of the Vittoriano porch annular gallery. These spaces were designed from the very start to house historical memorabilia from the Risorgimento age; this is why quotations by some of the main historical characters of the Italian unification were carved on the walls of the two central halls. The floor, designed by Ludovico Pogliaghi, is made of ancient polychrome marble. Through a series of paintings and memorabilia, the exhibition itinerary revisits the milestones of Italian national unification from the late eighteenth century to the end of World War I. In chronological order: the Napoleonic Era; the Congress of Vienna; the Revolutionary Upheavals of 1820-1821 and 1830-1831; Giuseppe Mazzini and the Young Italy; Pope Pious IX; 1848: the Five Days of Milan; the Republic of San Marco; the First War of Independence; 1849 and the Roman Republic; Cavour and the Crimean War; Victor Emmanuel II and the Second War of Independence; Garibaldi and the Expedition of the Thousand; from Unification to the Aspromonte; the Third War of Independence; 1870: the Porta Pia Breach; and, finally, World War I. All the items on display come from the Archives of the Museum, which comprise more than one million documents, photographs, prints and engravings, and boast one of the most important collections on the Great War. A large plaster model of the monument by sculptor Vito Pardo commemorating the Battle of Castelfidardo and General Cialdini is located at the entrance of the museum, while at the end of the exhibition a series of busts dedicated to World War I recipients of Gold Medals is displayed around the gun mount used to transfer the Unknown Soldier's body from Aquileia to Rome in 1921. The exhibition is complemented by rare vintage footage produced in partnership with Cinecittà Luce and the Experimental Centre of Cinematography - National Film Archive, as well as some original military songs from the nineteenth century and World War I selected by the Central Institute for Audio and Audiovisual Heritage.



Central Museum of the Risorgimento,
World War I hall