



OLD MENAGGIO-PORLEZZA RAILWAY

You can find this point of interest in Menaggio - Path 1 - Stage 1

DESCRIPTION

The Menaggio-Porlezza railway was created by engineer Emilio Olivieri, with the input of various public and private institutions, Italian as well as Swiss (the BSI bank in particular), in order to link Lake Como, Lake Lugano and the Verbano (i.e. Menaggio with Lugano and Luino) by rail and boat, and favour the connection of the Insubria region with northern Europe through the Gotthard railway line. The railway started to function in 1884: it was 12.241 kilometres long, reaching a gradient of approx. 180 metres, with a track gauge of 850 mm (quite unique for government owned railroads). In addition to travellers, whether tourists or commuters, it transported firewood and faggots for bakers from the woods of the Menaggio Valley, which were then transported to Como by boat. Famous writer Franz Kafka used this railway line in September 1911. Unfortunately, its golden age ended when World War I broke out, and, after a change of ownership and management, the service was stopped on 30 October 1939. After the war attempts were made to put the line back in service, however unsuccessfully. Nowadays, the original course of the railway is a lovely footpath for a nice walk between the clear blue of the lakes and the green of the mountains.

«In Menaggio the railway track had little room, as it ran between the Regina Road and the retaining wall of the Olivi Nursery School's garden for approx.150 meters on flat ground. The track ended with a rotating platform for engines. Two further tracks started from the same platform, the one further upstream ended in the depot, while the middle one was a little longer, reaching the far side of the depot. A small building called "Casello n° 1" stood in front of the platform, at the side of the mountain. The station square was located at a higher level – on average 1.60 m above the railroad – alongside the carriageway of the Regina State Road (which was a Provincial Road at the time), where a 10 step enclosed staircase led to the train platform. Until 1903, the station-master rooms, the ticket office with the waiting room, and the parcel delivery office, were located in a small building part of the Menaggio Hotel. The new Station building, erected at the beginning of the 20th century between the lakeshore and the Regina Road, had the shape of a horizontal capital V, with two floors and a basement. The smoothed point of the V, which faced the railway, had a large opening at ground floor level giving access to the ticket office and left luggage. The higher floor, accessible by a staircase on the right of the building, hosted the station-master rooms. The station café was located at the other end, facing the lake».

(Adaption from the website <http://www.ferroviamenaggioporlezza.it>)