



## MEDIEVAL CASTLE\*

\* lost building

**You can find this point of interest in Argegno - Path 1 - Stage 3**

### INFORMATION

**Location:** The medieval castle stood on the hillock of the present locality Castello, approximately on the left of the stone staircase which still reaches the locality

### DESCRIPTION

(Silvia Fasana)

It is likely that in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, on a sunny hillock on the right side of the Telo torrent, some representatives of the Castelli family erected a castle, in the context of the struggles between the Vittani family (to which the Castelli family was allied) and the Rusconi family for the supremacy of the town and the Como region. Some authors however backdate the building of a fortress in this place to the late medieval period, arguing that the station Argegno was part of a defensive system involving the entire lake; in fact from this position it is possible to control a great part of the Lario centre and of the lower region, from the Comacina Island to Nesso and Torriggia. From the documented news and from the archeological surveys made in the late Eighties by the "Soprintendenza per I Beni archeologici della Lombardia", it can be assumed that the castle was bordered by a wall of defense that contained more buildings, partly used as dwellings, partly as stores or stalls and a wide court. An imposing tower was also present, in a higher position compared to other buildings, under which stood a chapel dedicated to Saint James. From the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, probably because of the political and economic changes of the Castelli family decline, the building began to go in ruins. Around the end of the following century, in the documentation of the Pastoral Visit of the bishop Ciceri in 1684 is proved that the entire castle appeared ruined and the locality itself almost abandoned. A popular rumour, reported by Domenico Gregorio in his book about Argegno, argues that in past periods there was a subway connecting the Tower of the Viscardi Family, placed in the centre of the town, with the castle of Argegno, which was rather doubtful given the distance, but cannot be altogether excluded. Another improbable news was reported by Anton Gioseffo of the Tower of Rezzonico, in his work "Il Lario" who, speaking about the Castle of Argegno, tells how the highest tower was used as lighthouse for the seagoing staff and how the tower itself in the year 1774 «*decrepita per antichità (very old and ruined)*» crashed with a great rushing into the lake. It can be assumed that the chapel dedicated to Saint James, although mentioned for the first time in a document of 1424, was actually older, perhaps even built at the same time of the castle by the Castelli family either for necessity and comfort, or to keep a vow or simply as a power sign; the bishop Ninguarda in 1593 writes that it was «*fabbricata per servizio del castello anticamente (built at the castle's service in ancient times)*». The acts of the pastoral visits of the bishops of the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century (Ninguarda and Archinti) describe it as a parish church with a single nave, long about 12 meters, oriented towards the east, with 4 windows. The altar, consecrated, was placed above an altar-step, in order to remain elevated and visible, and was surmounted by a small canopy and closed with gates of iron. Around the end of the following century, in 1684, since the chapel had by that time become impracticable, it was decided to deconsecrate it. When the walls of the castle collapsed, the stones were re-used in order to realize the terracing which, up to the end of the last century, could be observed in the locality Castello. Some of these stones can still be seen going up from via Pizzo Gordona, in the stone wall which borders the road, in front of the staircase that reaches the locality.