

Below are described five walks in the area, which should be undertaken in conjunction with a map (please do not rely solely on the sketch-maps included here) such as Kompass 1:50,000 Number 97 entitled *Omegna-Varallo Lago d'Orta* on sale in e.g. the newsagent in the main square in Orta San Giulio.

The numbers in brackets (1), (2) etc refer to the numbers on the sketch maps. Please pass any comments on these walks to William Schwitzer.

**Walks 1, 2, 4 and 5 start from Vacciago. If you drive to Vacciago (1 mile from Casa Bartula), leave your car in the parking area on the left of the road just before point (1) on the map on page 2 (just before the old tiled wash shelter), which is the starting point for these walks.**

## **Walk 1 Orta San Giulio and its peninsular, via footpath 'Prisciola'**

*Start/finish:* Parking area (1) on map on page 2.

*Time:* Descent about 50 minutes, ascent 70 minutes (NB: *the climb can be hard work on a hot summer's day, particularly after a full lunch (!) in Orta S.G.*)

*Altitude:* 200 metres descent, 200 metres ascent

*Suitability for young children:* Mostly off the road (restrain toddlers when walking on the lake front).

### ***Description of the Walk***

From the parking area (1), descend along the road and turn right at the T-junction (2). Turn left at the T-junction (3) and start to descend the hill.

Where there is a mirror and group of signposts on the left hand wall (4), turn right into an small road (initially surfaced), with a yellow house on your left, and a superb view of the lake below. This is the footpath 'Prisciola' (pronounced 'PRIsholla'), which is supposed to be a corruption of the Latin for the Great Tit bird.

Descend the track, with the lake below on your left. Ignore the path joining on your left (5) from Corconio. Watch out for glimpses of the island. For a brief stretch the road is made up.

At the bottom, when you are on the level with the railway line, pass the Hotel Villa San Francesco on your left, then watch out for and take a turning on your left (signposted "Prisciola") that passes under the railway (7). Then bear left (signposted "Passeggiata"), passing the playing field on your right (at this point there is a nice view of the Mottarone with its characteristic antennae between wooded hills), and descend the old *mulattiera* (mule track) that comes out by the Hotel San Caterina (8).

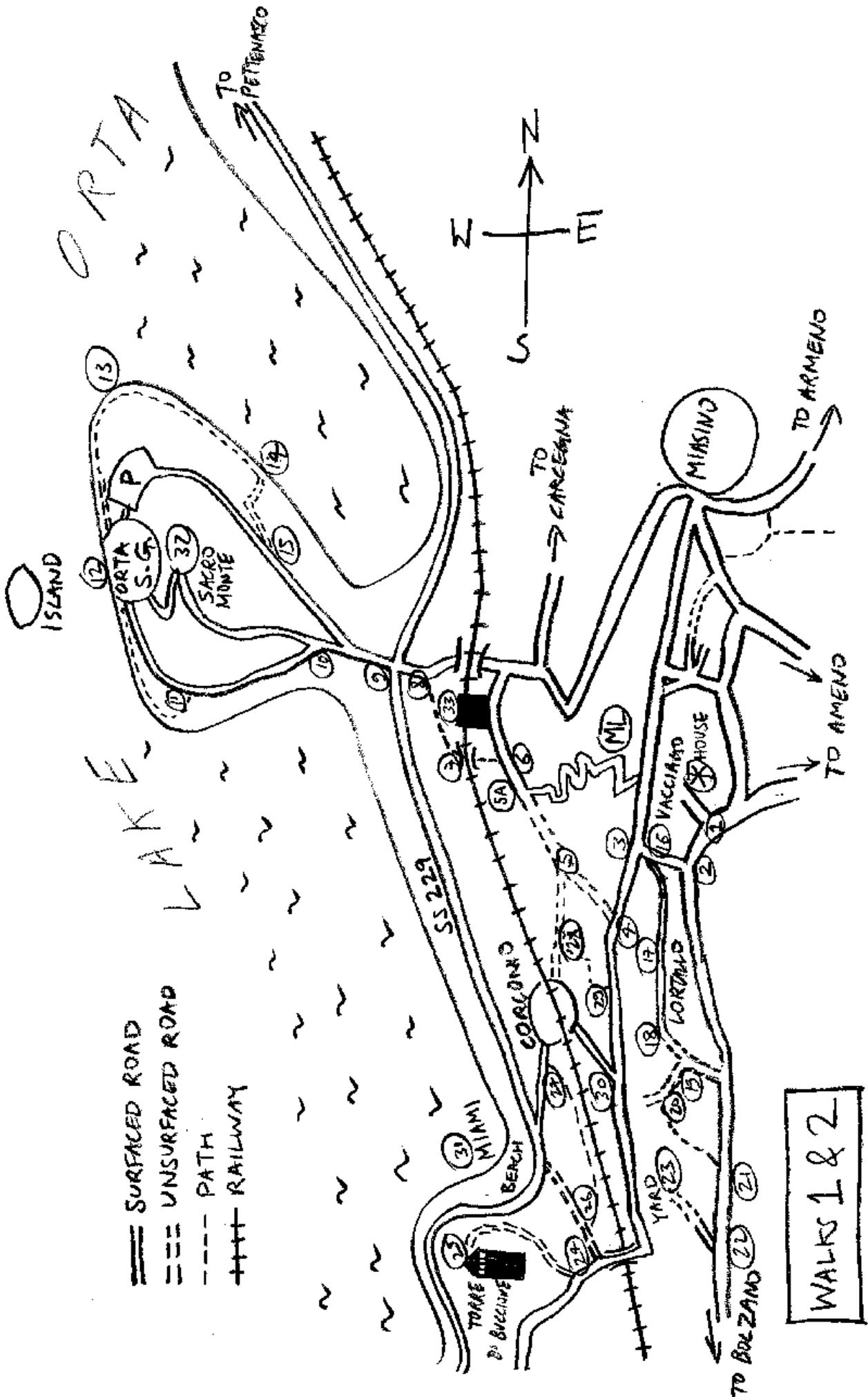
Cross over the *Strada Statale 229* (state road 229) at the roundabout (9). Bear left (10) following the Arabic-style wall of the Villa Crespi, an exclusive hotel in this magnificently restored oriental style palace.

You may prefer to follow the cobbled road (11) down to the waters edge and the path along the lake front (there are a few places to have a dip here) or just follow the road round the peninsular. Following the road, you round a bend and the island is suddenly straight ahead!

Walk through Orta San Giulio (12), taking a diversion up the Sacro Monte (32) and down again if you wish [*not included in time estimates above*]. Walk past the Hotel San Rocco, as close to the lake shore as possible. The perspective of the lake and island changes as you round the corner (13) with rushes growing at the edge of the lake.

Keep walking as far along the shore as you can. When the path turns straight inland (14) - it is now more of a ditch - you can go no further (don't walk through the private garden in front of you); climb back up to the road (15).

Return the way you came, over the roundabout (9), back up the *mulattiera* (8), under the bridge (7), climbing up through the woods (6), remember to bear left at the fork (5), and out on the surfaced road (4), (3), (2), back to your car (1).



## **Walk 2 Lortallo, the Tower of Buccione, and Corconio**

<i>Start/finish:</i>	Parking area (1) on map on page 2.
<i>Time:</i>	1 hour 40 minutes brisk walk, or about 2 hours leisurely
<i>Altitude:</i>	Mainly on the level; the climb to the Tower itself can be no more than 80 metres.
<i>Suitability for young children:</i>	Good, mostly off the road, but path up to the tower has a steep drop on one side.

### ***Description of the Walk***

From the parking area (1), descend to the T-junction (2) and turn right. Turn left up the track by the railings on left (16) (before the T-junction (3)).

Keep walking through the old part of Lortallo (17). Occasionally you get glimpses of the lake through the gardens of some of the villas, which makes you wonder just how stupendous the view from the upstairs rooms in some of the houses must be! The tall 15<sup>th</sup> century spire of the parish church of Ameno is visible on your left (the one that can be seen from the garden of the holiday home).

After Lortallo church, the road becomes unsurfaced. Descend slightly (18), and at the junction (19) turn right (so as to avoid returning to the main road straightaway). Descend through the woods passing some new villas, after which the track forks (20), bear left, (leaving a farm on your right). You come out on the public road at (21), and after 100 metres next to the crash barrier, just before the white sign announcing “Bolzano Novarese”, turn right (22) down a road blocked by large stones and a fence.

At the bottom, after stepping over a few brambles on the last part of the path, you come out in a large builders yard (23). Make for the large sliding gate (not usually locked, but leave it as you found it), cross over the railway on the road bridge, and turn right into what looks like a garage forecourt (24), at the back of which a path leads up behind a barrier.

Take this path and climb up the path that winds around the hill up to the *Torre di Buccione* (25), a defensive tower of supposedly roman origins. You cannot enter the tower, but the view of the lake, especially since the woods were cleared, is stupendous, and can be admired over a picnic lunch!

Descend by the same path to (24), but don't cross the railway. Instead, at the very beginning (26) of the private road on your left that goes down to Miami campsite and beach, take the track on your right that hugs the railway.

Follow this pretty path next to the granite railway viaduct - which makes you marvel at the work that went into building a railway on this steep slope - as far as Corconio (27). Corconio is a sleepy little village, with wonderful glimpses of the lake. Make your way up through the village (there is more than one way, but any way will do!). Make sure you see the beautiful little baroque church. The *Villa Bonola*, just below the church, is very beautiful too (from the tiny church ground, look at the size of the camellia in the garden of the *Villa Bonola*!).

From Corconio, there are three ways to get back to the main road, either via the surfaced road (30) (which leaves rather a long walk on the main road), or via the track (5), or as follows: turn left behind Corconio church, cross over a bridge, and on your right, next to a hedge, turn up a steep *mulattiera* (mule track) that passes between private gardens. The last part of the cobbled path is somewhat washed away, but you come out behind a crash barrier (29) on the main road, from where you can follow the road turning right (3) then left (2) up to the parking area (1).

### **Walk 3 The Three Little Mountains and a view of Lake Maggiore**

This is one of the most beautiful walks we know of in the area. On a clear day you have views of Monte Rosa and other Alpine peaks throughout much of the walk, and the view of Lago Maggiore along its length into Switzerland is perhaps more dramatic than from the Mottarone, because you are so close to it! And (unlike the Mottarone!) you may well have the place to yourselves!

*Start from:* Coiromonte (34), *finish at:* Coiromonte (34)

*Time:* About 2 hours

*Altitude:* Climb from 800 metres to 1080 metres, and back again.

*Suitability for young children:* Good - almost entirely off the road.

*Other:* Choose a good clear day (e.g. after it has rained), otherwise if it's hazy you won't be able to see *Monte Rosa*, and the view of Lake Maggiore will be much less impressive.

#### ***By Car to Coiromonte***

From Bolzano, drive through Lortallo and Vacciago towards Miasino and turn right at the cross roads where 6 roads meet. As the road curves round to the left (41) you will see straight ahead three rounded peaks on the skyline [to the right of the *Mottarone*, which is the highest peak with all the antennae]. This is your destination, *Le Tre Montagnette*, ('3 Little Mountains'), marked on maps as *Monte del Falò* ("Bonfire Mountain").

Turn left (44) so as to enter Armeno, and in the main square (45) go straight on then right following signs to Coiromonte. Pass over a brook (46), and after a careful climb up the never-ending hairpin bends (47) you enter the quiet village of Coiromonte (34). As the road curves to the right, there is a small parking area on your right. Park here.

#### ***Description of the Walk***

Start walking back from where you came, and after 50 metres, turn up the fork (now on your right) and climb up through the orchards (35) on a long right bend.

At the highest point (36), the road bends to the right. Follow the track on your left (signposted *to Le Tre Montagnette*) to the right of a house.

The track curves to the right and starts to climb up through the pine woods for some distance. Ignore tracks which descend to your left. Eventually you come out through the yellow broom onto open ground, with pleasant views of Lake Orta and the mountains.

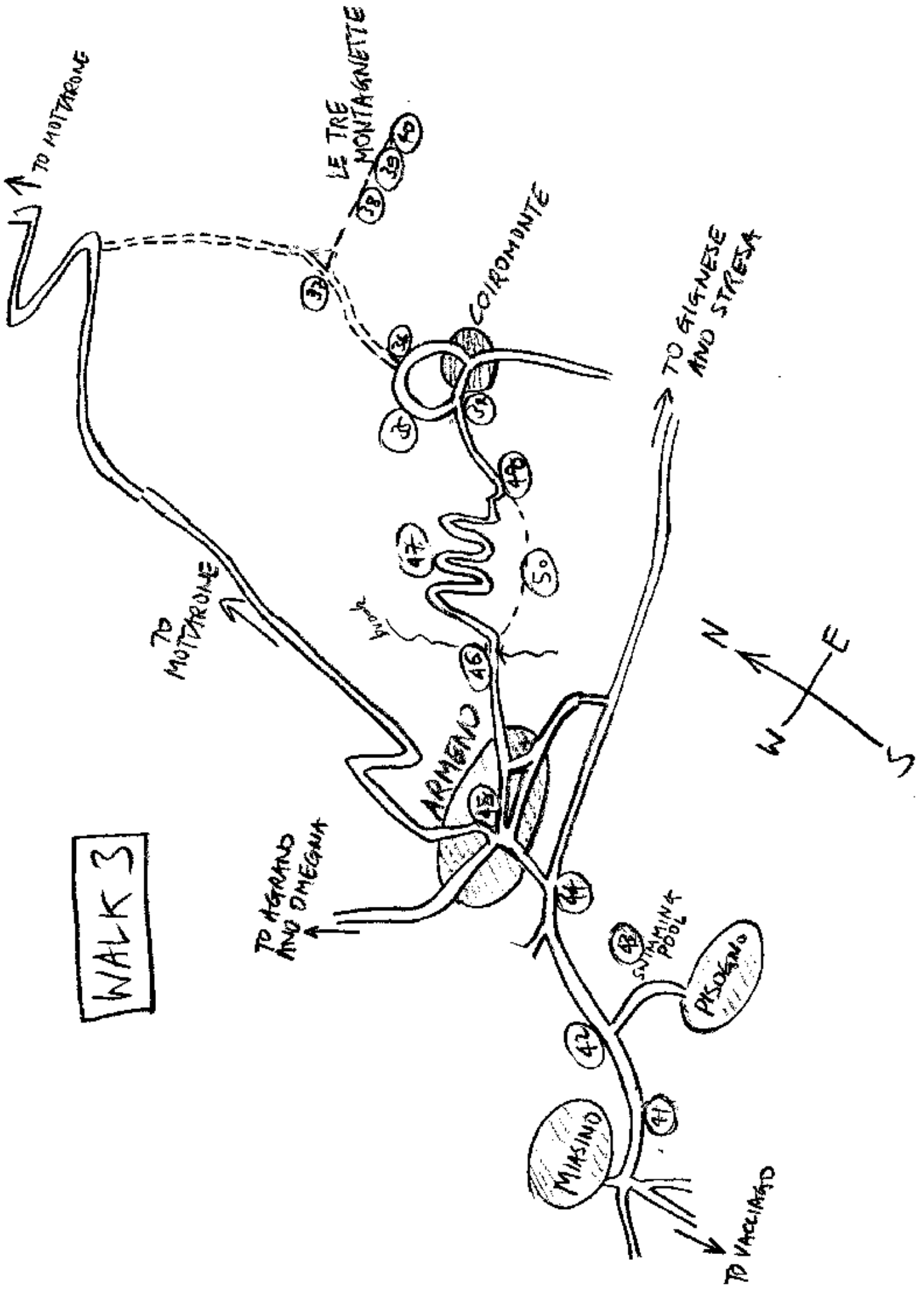
Follow this track for some distance. At the highest point (37) of the track, turn right up the grass and climb straight up the first mountain (38). Although the second (39) is the highest, the keenest will want to go the whole hog for the best view of *Lago Maggiore* from the third (40)!

On a clear day *Monte Rosa*, at over 4600 metres the second highest Alpine Peak, will have been visible for much of this walk. It is to the North West, and appears as the highest and most massive peak with a jagged top.

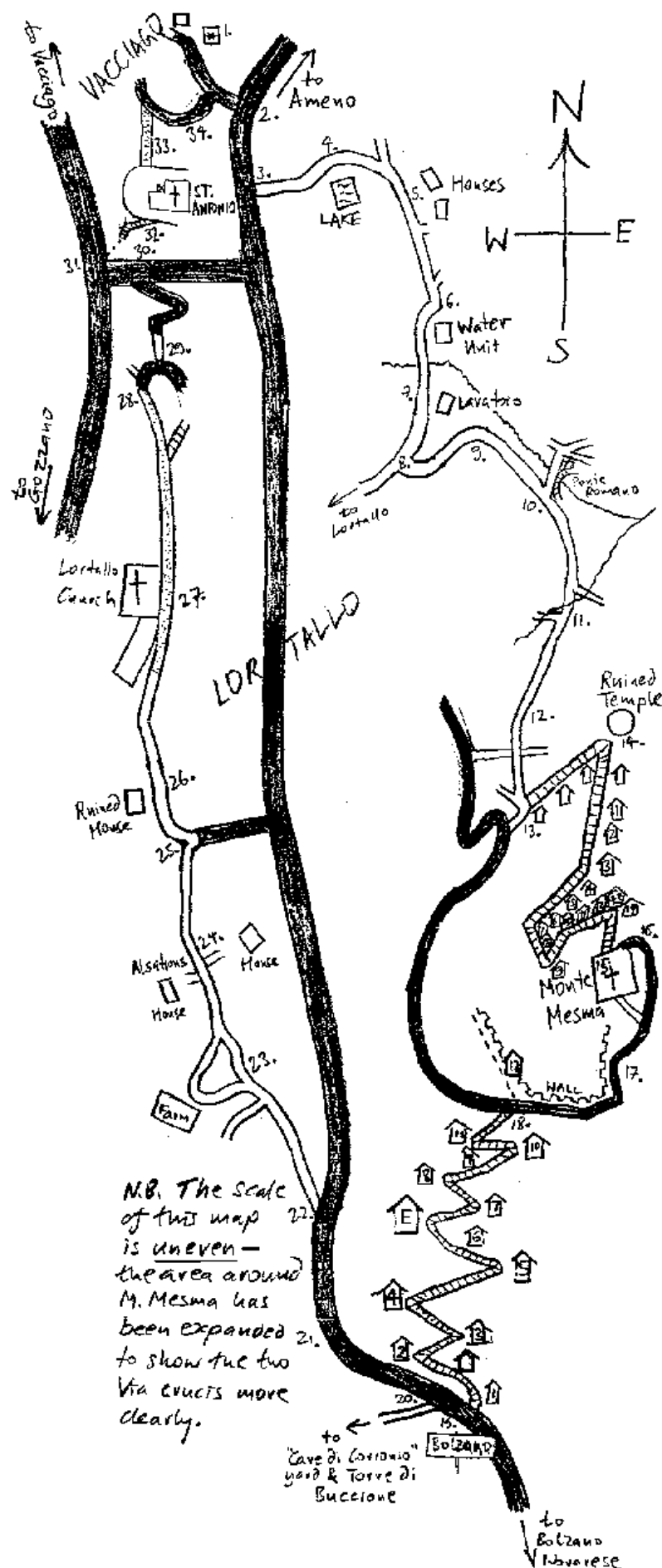
Return the way you came.

#### ***Other Notes***

If you want to make this walk longer (or if you don't fancy driving up those hairpins!), you could park at the bridge over the brook (46) and take the short cut (50), a mule track (deeply rutted, full of leaves) which starts behind a house at the edge of the field in the valley, in at least one direction.



## Walk 4 Monte Mesma and the two Via Crucis



Start and finish: Parking area (2)  
 Time: About 2 hours  
 Altitude: Climb less than 100 metres  
 Suitability for children: Good, mostly off the road.

### Description of the Walk

Opposite and just below the parking area (2), take the path (3.) into the woods and walk past the *laghetto* (little lake, used for fishing competitions) at (4.). Follow the path round to the right, past some houses (5.) and past the water unit (6.). Just after the *lavatoio* (wash shelter) at (7.), turn hard left (8.) and follow the path as it straightens out on a gentle descent. Soon the brook on your left is next to the path. Note the ancient bridge (10.) (known to the locals as the *Ponte Romano*, though I'm not sure if it really is Roman), and start to climb up through the woods (11.), (12.).

Soon (13.) you can see the crumbling chapels of the cobbled *Via Crucis* ("Way of the Cross"); turn left up the steps. There are more than 12 chapels; the first 4 are numberless, even so the *Stazioni* go up to 14. Several frescos are well preserved; remnants of text are visible ("*Gesù è caduto...*" - Jesus fell, "*Gesù cade la seconda volta...*" - Jesus falls for the second time, etc).

Pass the round ruins (14.). You get a glimpse of Vaccinigo and the house from e.g. between chapels numbered 4 and 5 (the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>).

The terrace of Monte Mesma (15.) affords fine views. The marking on the wall, "ASM 576 m", *Altezza Sul Mare* 576 metres, is the height above sea level. For comparison, Vaccinigo is at about 500 metres.

From the terrace, take the path (16.) round the side of the Convent and continue on the road (17.) outside the wall. Soon (18.) another *Via Crucis* appears on your left. Descend the cobbled steps past some 13 or so chapels.

At the bottom (19.) turn right and walk 200 yards along the road, bearing left (22.) into the woods. Turn up right (23.) past the farm and between the houses with dogs (24.), turn left (25.), climb up (26.) where once stood a ruined house, passing Lortallo church (27.) (have a glimpse through the adjacent gate!). Where the road, now surfaced (28.) does a right hairpin, go straight on (29.) and descend to the main road at (30.).

Cross over and take the path at (31.); climb up the steps (32.) to Sant'Antonio (fine view of Lake Orta). Take the cobbled path (33.), turn right along (34.) and right down to your car (2.).

## **Walk 5 – Ameno and the Agogna Valley**

This great little walk will familiarise you with several local places, passing through the nearby village of Ameno, and descending into the very tranquil valley of the Agogna river.

*Start and finish from:* The usual parking area, which is point (4) on this map.

*Time:* 90 minutes leisurely walk (without diversions).

*Suitability for young children:* The walk crosses several roads, but is almost entirely away from traffic. The wide tracks are good for mountain bikes too!

### ***Description of the Walk***

From the parking area (4), walk up the road and immediately turn left up Via Frey, ignoring the road on the level on the left, past (5) up the steep hill. Turn right at (6) above the new condominium, with walls of some grand villas on your left. Go straight on when the path joins on the left from the village (7). Continue on this path, and at (8) you pass a house with the typical long balconies on your right, after which you will see the Bar/Pizzeria Aquila across the field to your right. At (9) you pass some villas on your left and then on your right, and may catch glimpses of the lake and Monte Rosa to the left through the white railings. At (10), turn right round the corner with ornate grey railings onto a short piece of surfaced road which brings you out to (11) where you need to cross the *circonvallazione* (bypass) road (NB traffic can be fast). Cross straight over; the path the other side has the shape of a hanging rope, hence the local name *corda molla* (= loose cord). In the dip (12) you can see a little lake in the garden to your right. Climbing, the first (yellow) houses of Ameno are high above you in front. At (13) a footpath joins from the left, and you bear right up a steep surfaced road on the edge of the village of Ameno.

At the T-junction (14) turn right, then left at the T-junction (15) into Via Oberdan. Immediately after passing a church with high façade on your left at (16), turn up the stone-cobbled road Via Ducloz on your left. You will pass the *Asilo* (nursery school) of Ameno on your left. You come out on the ‘main’ road through the village at (17), just along from the main *piazza* and *Comune* (town hall) if you wish to make a brief diversion. (There is also a bar on the right just after the *piazza* if you are in need of refreshment already.)

Crossing over the zebra at (17), continue on the road opposite (via C. Termignoni), bearing first right (18), and then ignoring the right turn (19) so as to pass to the left of the *lavatoio* (=wash shelter) at (20). The road turns to the left, and, now unsurfaced, starts to descend at (21). You are in fact walking on a beautifully made stone *mulattiera* (=mule path) which has probably kept very much in this state for a hundred, if not hundreds, of years. Nearer the bottom, the stone retaining bank on the left seems to have kept remarkably well too. They don’t make them like this any more!

Whilst descending into the wide valley of the Agogna (pronounced AH-GON-YA), you get a great view of the Mottarone in front of you, the mountain with the TV masts (which at 1491m is the highest point between Lake Orta and Lake Maggiore). At the bottom you turn right when you join the surfaced road at (23). Pass under the power lines, and turn left at (24) before the *Molino Alto* horse riding school.

(Make a short diversion to see the Agogna river by instead going straight on at (24), across the wide, flat valley - the road crosses the Agogna on a hump back bridge. You might find a nice spot for a picnic around here.)

From (24), continue next to the horse rising enclosures, around two corners at (25). A private road joins at (26) from some houses on your right. Ignore the right turn at (27). On your left at (28) you see another *lavatoio* in the corner of the field. Ignore the left turning just afterwards to the farm on the hill.

At (29), you will see the main road in front of you, but the walk stays a short distance away from it at all times. Bear left (but not hard left up the hill) on a surfaced road. At (30), take the grassy track to your right, which brings you out to a sort of car park (31) in what appears to be a builder’s yard. Walk straight on as the car park narrows to a track. After a few yards in the woods, turn left at (32) up the long, straight, steep and stony track.

Eventually you reach the tiny church (34) of San Carlo at the top (take a well earned rest...). Bear right down the stone cobbled path with central slabs on to the main road at (35) and turn left. After 50 yards, at the end of the perimeter wall of the castle on the opposite side of the road, a track (36) leads off to the right. Crossing the road (watch the traffic around the corner!) follow this track into the woods.

Soon, at (37), as the path bends to the left, you may catch a glimpse of the castle above the gates on your right. Continue on this gently rising and falling path. At (38) you pass a clump of bamboo on your right, which seems to grow fairly readily in these parts. Ignore the narrow track (39) leading down between fences to the road near the beautiful *Santuario della Bocciaola*, the baroque church with the *piazza* and view.

When you come out to the junction (40), turn left and a steep but short walk takes you to the junction (10) with the ornate grey railings where you should turn right. You are now retracing your steps from the beginning of the walk, and so can continue back the way you came.

