


Antonio Pacitti - Introduction



Antonio Pacitti belonged to a family with a dramatic history, including a crime of passion involving a shooting, and a street fight that resulted in a sentence of exile.

Antonio's early years were marked by his uprooting at the age of three from fascist Italy to Glasgow.

Cassino, dominated by its mountain of Monte Cassino and its Abbey, was a place of sunshine, colour and religious festivals. .

In 1928, Antonio arrived in Glasgow with his parents and elder brother, having left two of his siblings behind.

The city was in the grip of depression, and the family suffered years of cramped lodgings, poverty and hunger.

Antonio Pacitti's Grandfather c. 1900



Antonio Pacitti's grandfather, after whom he was named, is seen here with his ice-cream cart. An immigrant to Scotland in the late 1890's, he went on to own two provisions shops in Camelon, which made and sold ice-cream. In 1913 he shot a fellow-Italian who he believed was his wife's lover. In a sensational case, he was found to be of unsound mind. After a spell in an asylum, he was deported to Italy.

**STARTLING
SHOOTING AFFRAY
IN GRAHAMSTON:**

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Shoemaker Seriously Injured.

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Italian Restaurant-Keeper in Custody.

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A shooting affray of a sensational character occurred about noon on Saturday last in Grahamston, as a result of which an Italian named Joseph Ventura is now lying in the Falkirk Infirmary in a critical condition.

Ventura, who is a shoemaker, carried on business in a small low-roofed shop in Graham's Road, near the corner of John Street. From the information available it appears that on Saturday forenoon he received a visit from a compatriot named Antonio Pacitti, restaurant keeper, Main Street, Camelon. The two were talking in the front shop, and in the back there were Ventura's wife and a child. A quarrel apparently arose between the two men, with the result, it is alleged, that Pacitti drew a revolver and fired five shots in succession, one of them entering Ventura's right nostril and lodging in his head.

The firing of the shots caused intense excitement in the locality, and the police were telephoned for, two officers, Detective Smith and Sergeant Turpie, being despatched to the scene of the affray immediately the message was received. On their way to Grahamston they observed Pacitti proceeding along Vicar Street and Sergeant Turpie apprehended him and took him to the police office.

Antonio's Father and Mother



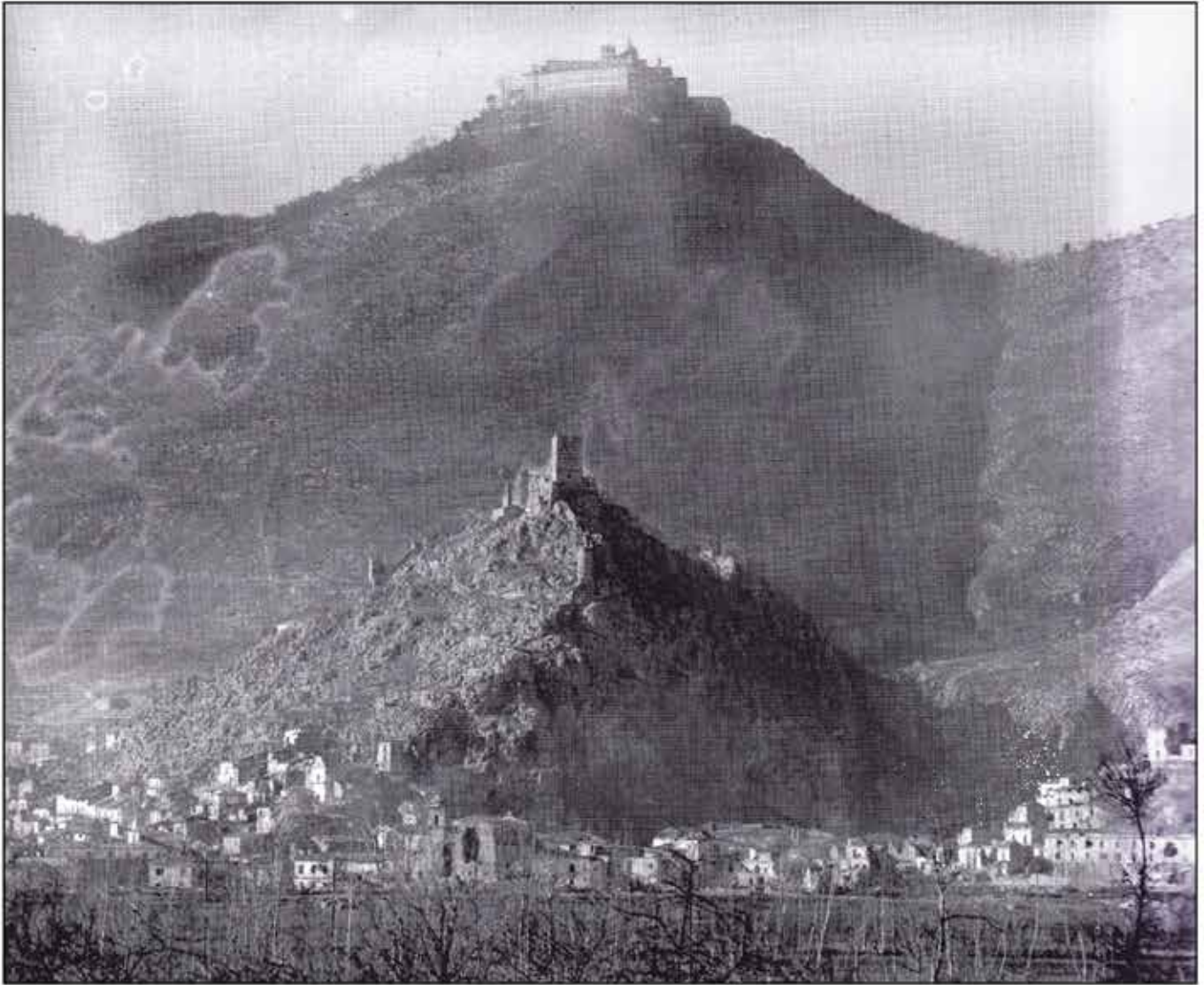
Top photo: Vincenzo on left



As a child, Vincenzo was separated from his brothers and sisters in Scotland and left in the care of his childless aunt in Cassino, Italy. After soldiering in the First World War, he was inspired by the Russian Revolution and became a socialist. He married Filomena Ciccirelli and, when their first son was born in 1920, Vincenzo insisted that he was named Lenin.

Fascist Italy was a place of violence and sudden arrests, as is suggested by this photo, possibly a mock arrest staged for the camera.

The Abbey of Montecassino and Cassino town



In 1924, Antonio was born at Cassino, an ancient Italian town dominated by the Abbey of Montecassino on the summit of the mountain.

His early memories include both religious festivals and lying on the grass of the mountain while his mother, Filomena, picked herbs.

Antonio Pacitti's early memories

The Flight from the Mountain

I remember going up a staircase and turning left and then right into a vast room. I remember the staircase with an iron railing which led to the first landing where you enter the house, and then down to the yard. At the bottom was a fountain and water from the spring came out of the fountain.

Going up the hill from our house in Cassino, I am sitting in the grass. Perhaps my mother left me while she was picking some herbs.

I remember leaving the house and going down to a bridge. On the left-hand wall of the building next to the bridge, was a very large picture of a mother and child. Then I am watching a procession and being held higher than the crowd. I think it was the feast of the Assumption in which the Virgin was carried, and my older brother was one of the bearers. The column that he held was a sort of chocolate brown., and the Virgin's robe was pale.

Then I see the inside of our church, San Pietro. Mass was being said, and my brother was an altar-boy. I remember voices chanting in Latin and a babbling of words I couldn't understand. I must have been three, but the sounds of the prayers seemed to echo in my ears.

Then I remember food on a plate, some white type of spaghetti. an oily sort of thing with chick peas.

Another thing I remember is a ball being kicked around. They were always tying up newspapers with string and using it as a ball because I don't think any balls were available. I was an onlooker, I suppose, watching, wishing I could join in.

Then I do remember very vividly the night when we were leaving in a great sort of panic. I seem to remember crying. It must have been my sister, and some other members of the family were crying.....

The concluding memory is of the night in 1928 when Antonio's socialist father fought in the street with the local fascists and was given twenty-four hours to leave Cassino. Antonio's parents packed in frantic haste and left early in the morning, taking with them the two eldest boys, Lenin and Antonio. Liliana, aged five, and one-year-old Raffaello were left behind in the care of their great-aunt.

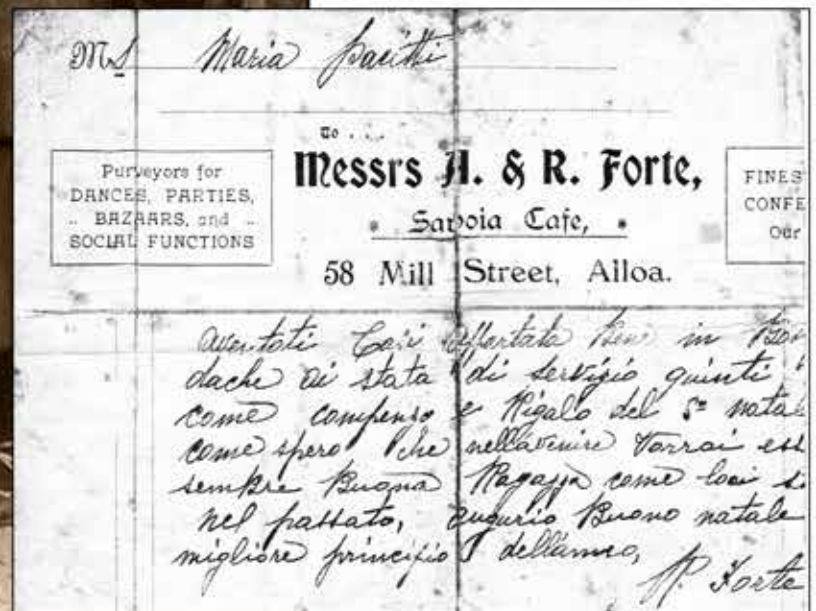
Leni and Antonio, Glasgow



The family settled in Glasgow, where they were first given shelter by one of Vincenzo's socialist contacts. The city was suffering acute economic depression and unemployment. Filomena cleaned floors and worked in cafes because Vincenzo never gained regular work. The family lived in cramped, crowded lodgings in Garscube Road and Stockwell Street.

On the day of this photo taken in a photographer's studio in Glasgow, Antonio was suffering from ear-ache and wearing clothes from the parish – an over-large jacket and tight shoes.

Antonio's Aunt Mary (Maria) , manager of the Savoia Café, Alloa, and a communication from Rocco Forte, its owner.



Mary was one of the children of Antonio's grandfather. In her late teens she was employed at the Savoia Café in Alloa, by Rocco Forte, the father of Charles, who years later became a life peer after creating the Forte empire of hotels and restaurants. Mary managed the café when Rocco was abroad and, after he failed to pay her wages for over a year, she successfully took him to court on his return from Italy.

Antonio loved staying above Mary's shop in Uddingston, where he would help her by churning the ice-cream. This gave him a taste of the experience of most Italian immigrants, who worked in family businesses such as fish and chip cafes or provisions shops.

Antonio's youngest sister, Tosca.



Tosca was born in 1932. In order for her to be baptised in a Catholic church, Antonio had to change schools from Abbotsford Primary to St. Andrew's. Shortly afterwards the family moved to lodgings in Gorbals Street, where Tosca is here seen standing by the tenement wall.

After this move to lodgings not shared with another family, Antonio's mother travelled to Italy to bring her other two children to Scotland. It was very difficult for Liliana (now aged thirteen) and Raffaello (aged 8) to adjust to life in Glasgow.

Antonio Pacitti aged 15



Antonio is wearing a suit from the thirty shilling tailor, a birthday present from his parents.

Antonio's sisters. Tosca and Liliana.



The display in the Glasgow grocer's shop includes Cremola (custard powder), puffed rice and Kellogg's Rice Krispies.

Liliana in stage costume



Arriving at Glasgow aged thirteen and speaking only Italian, Liliana felt isolated and homesick for Italy. Her life changed when she was able to develop her skills as a singer. During the Second World War, she entertained the troops in St. Andrew's Halls, and it was through one of these concerts that she met her husband, Andre, a member of the Free French navy.

The prize-winning drawing



Given the brief to draw an object in a Glasgow museum. Antonio chose this challenging sculpture in Kelvingrove.

The award of the Gold Medal helped Antonio to gain entrance to the Glasgow School of Art in 1942. As well as producing drawings and paintings and studying sculpture under the well-known Scottish artist Benno Schotz, he took his turn at fire-watching in the attic of Rennie Mackintosh's famous building. Antonio's stay at the School of Art was happy and intensely creative, but after just two terms, he was called up for the army.

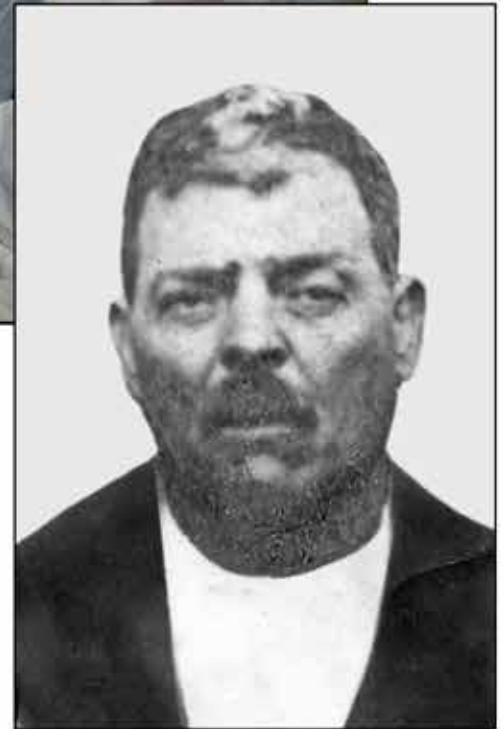
Antonio in the Highland Light Infantry.



Antonio is 2nd from left

Antonio had an unconventional army career. He nearly drowned because of the incompetence of an officer in an embarkation exercise, and was traumatised because the soldier who saved his life drowned trying to save others. He and other members of his platoon, convinced that there was an official cover-up, made a pact to desert. Antonio lived with Irish Republican friends and worked as a scenery painter in Glasgow for several months before he was arrested by the military police. After a spell in prison, in 1945 he was put on a troop-ship bound for India.

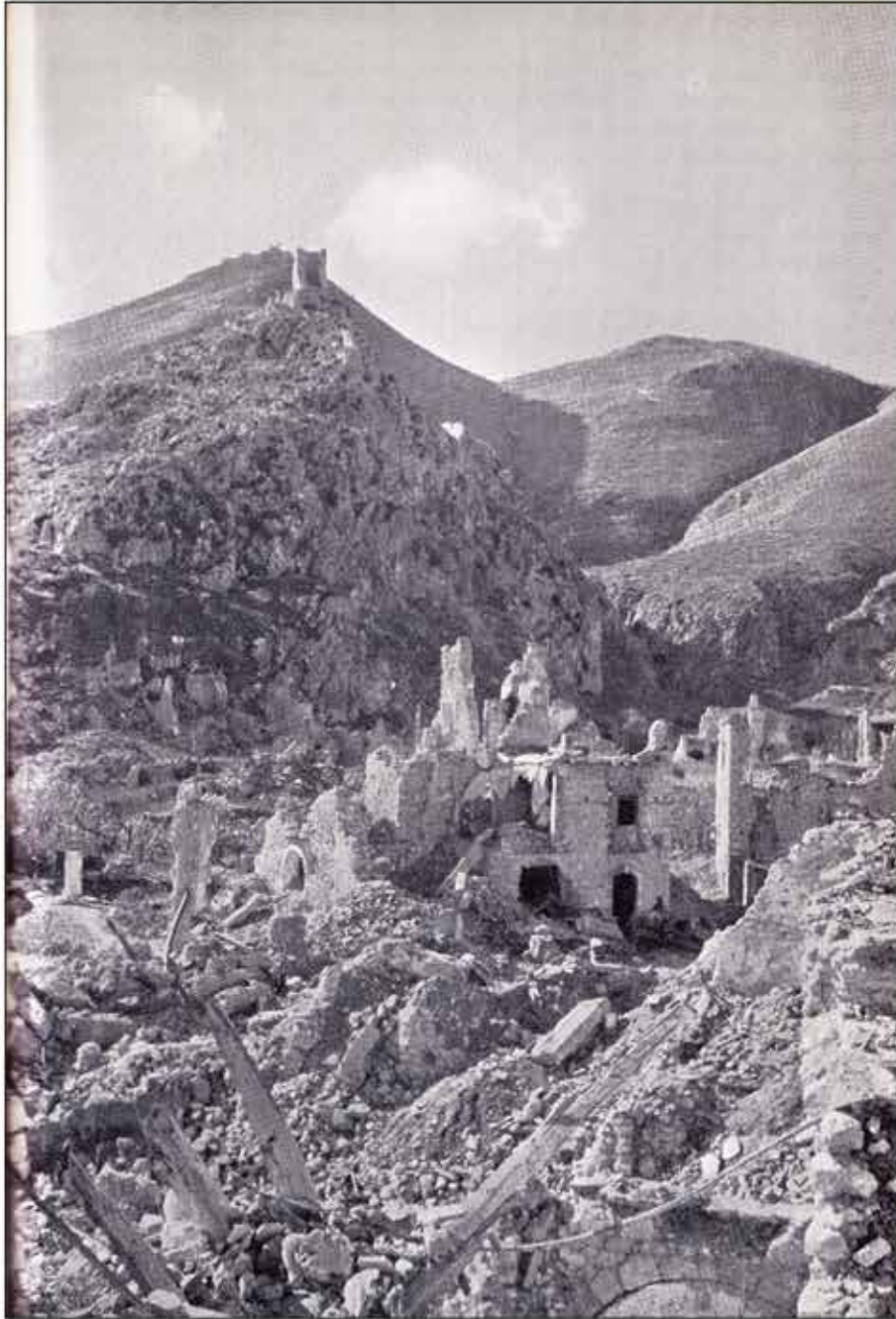
The tombstone of Antonio's grandfather
(replaced by a family tomb by the time of the photo)



After his deportation from Scotland, Antonio's grandfather and namesake (see first photo) settled in the village of Cerasuolo in the Abruzzi mountains.. There he lived with a new partner, Maria, who bore him a daughter, Angelina, but he always longed for Scotland and his Scottish family.

In November 1943, German troops occupied Cerasuolo. Having been informed that he spoke English, they regarded Antonio Pacitti as a potential threat. When he refused to leave his house, he was shot dead by an S.S. officer.

The destruction of Antonio's birthplace at Cassino.



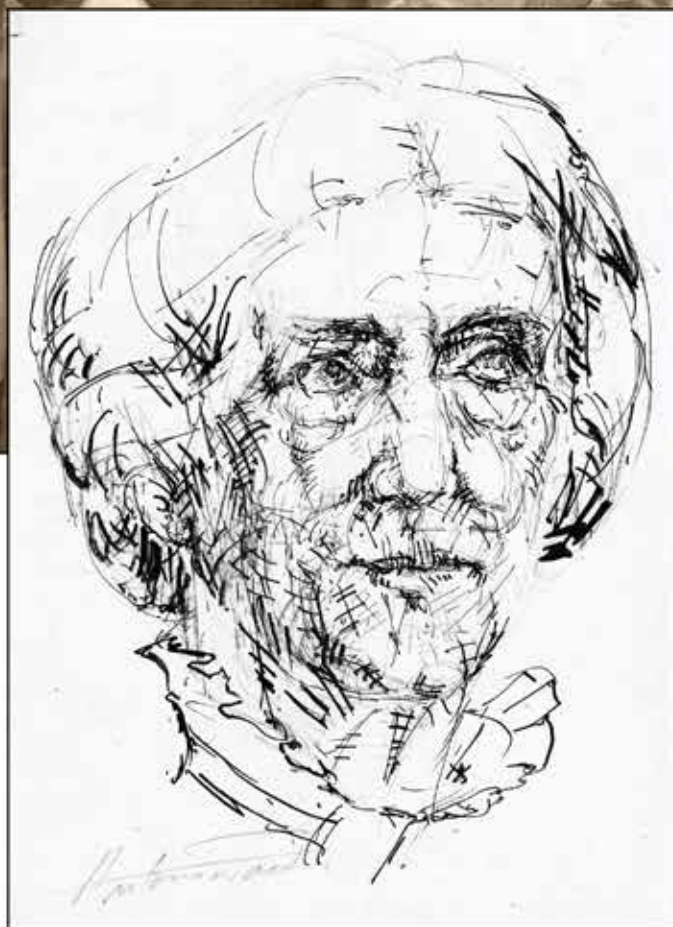
The advance of the Allied army northwards through Italy was halted by the German defence of Cassino for over five months.

The destruction of the Abbey of Montecassino by bombing was followed by the obliteration of Cassino town. The fighting was especially fierce around Castle Hill (the Rocca Janula), which offered an access point to the mountain of Monte Cassino and its Abbey. The house where Antonio spent his early years is somewhere among these bombed ruins looking towards the rocky hill and castle, with the mountain in the far background.

The aunt forced to leave her home.



*l-r
Letizia, Antonio's grandmother,
Mary, his aunt and
Antonia, his great-aunt.*



Antonia was the aunt who had brought up Antonio's father, Vincenzo, and who looked after Liliana and Raffaello when the family was split by the flight to Glasgow. As the Allied army advanced in 1943, the Germans forced all the citizens of Cassino to leave so that the town could be heavily fortified. With other refugees carrying all the possessions they could manage, Antonia struggled to the station, where she was able to board a train to a relative in northern Italy. After the war, she travelled to Britain to visit the Pacitti family, and it was on this occasion that Antonio made this drawing of her.

The Pacitti family in their lodgings in Gorbals Street



l-r Vincenzo, Ralph (Raffaello), Tosca, Filomena, Liliana, Leni

At this time Vincenzo was working in the fire service. Ralph and Tosca had both been evacuated to Larkhall before returning to Glasgow. Liliana was singing in concerts for the many troops passing through Glasgow, and Leni was on leave from his work in the army canteen at Aldershot.

The face of Filomena (centre) perhaps shows the strain of worrying about the missing member of the family, Antonio.

Antonio Pacitti (3rd from left) with fellow-soldiers and a native guide by a waterfall in the state of Bihar, India.



In India, Antonio was trained to fight the Japanese. After completing a huge mural in the barracks, he collapsed and was left in a native hospital while his regiment moved on. There he was put out on the verandah to die. After fighting back to health, he was befriended by a military officer stationed at Ranchi in the state of Bihar, and given work as an educational sergeant. He learnt Urdu (one of the native languages), supported two orphaned Indian children, and took every opportunity to explore the country.

The move to London: Tosca in a Soho coffee bar with pop star Billy Kent



While Antonio was still in India, his family decided to move to London because an old socialist friend from Cassino had assured them that it offered more job opportunities. This was disappointing to Antonio, who had looked forward to returning to his friends in Glasgow and resuming his studies at the Glasgow School of Art. He rejoined his family, who had settled in south London, in December 1947. Tosca (2nd from right) is here seen behind the counter of the famous Two l's coffee bar with pop star Billy Kent. Soho was also one of Antonio's haunts, where he funded his art studies by sign-writing and decorating.

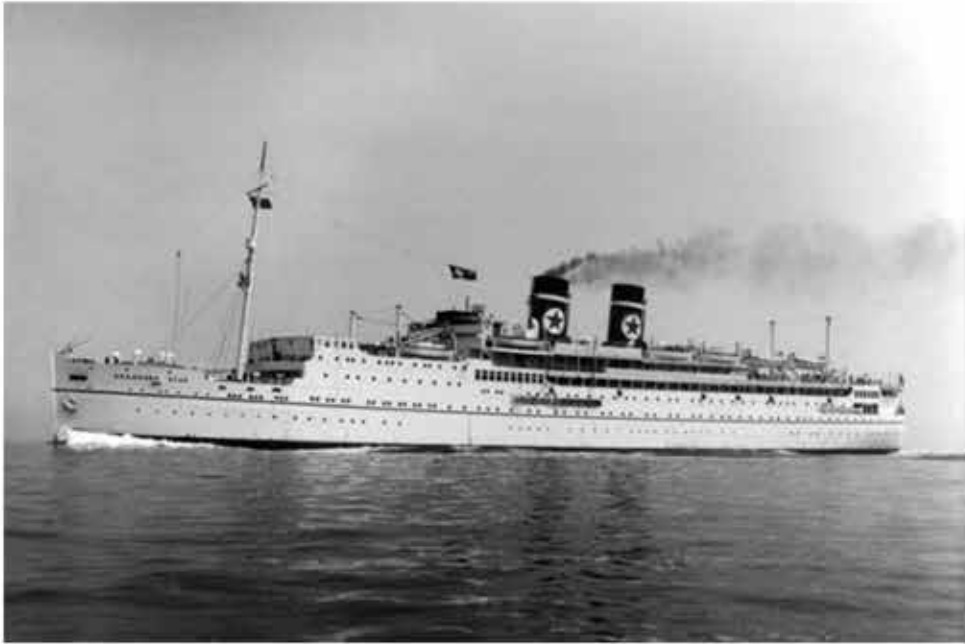
The Slade: detail from group photo.



Antonio (front row, 2nd from right), Craigie Aitchison (back row 2nd from right)

From 1951 to 1954 , Antonio studied for a post-graduate diploma in Fine Art at the Slade. He is seen in this class photo with his life-long friend and fellow Scot Craigie Aitchison, who later became a Royal Academician and had the first solo exhibition at the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow.

The Second World War



The Arandora Star in its cruiser days (above) and the mast of its lifeboat, which was washed ashore on the Isle of Mull (below).

When Mussolini, Italy's fascist dictator, entered the war in 1940, there was mob violence and the looting of Italian shops in Scotland. Many Italians, some active anti-fascists, were interned and sent to prisoner-of-war camps. Many Scottish Italians were drowned when the Arandora Star, a ship carrying Italian internees and German Jewish refugees, was sunk by a German torpedo off the Irish coast. The Pacitti family, who had friends who drowned with the Arandora Star, shared the shock and outrage felt by the whole Italian community. They were also outraged by the destruction of their home town, Cassino, and its famous Abbey by Allied bombing in 1944.



The Years Afterwards



Antonio Pacitti on the steps of the Glasgow School of Art during one of his visits back to Scotland.

The south London home of Antonio's parents was the focus of family life, which soon included grandchildren. Leni, Ralph and Tosca all married fellow-Italians. Ralph, who ran a highly successful café, became an outstanding snooker player. In 1977, he had a heart attack during a snooker match against the world champion, John Spencer, and never recovered consciousness.

Liliana's singing career ended with her marriage to Andre and the birth of her eldest child, Marquita. She always resented the move from Italy to Glasgow, and lived in the warmer climate of Spain for many years.

Antonio taught art in schools, prison and adult education while continuing to produce a wide range of creative work. He lived to the age of eighty-five, having seen his grandchildren grow up and the birth of his first two great-grandchildren. The demands of his work in education and the illness of his first wife, Gina, impeded the promotion of himself as an artist, but his art saw a remarkable late flowering.