



# The Cavaglia Glacier Garden

Complete documentation of the website: [www.ghiacciai.info](http://www.ghiacciai.info)

## History

### First sightings and emptying of the potholes

«It is not known who first observed the peculiar erosion effects affecting the rocks of the Moti da Cavagliola. After the withdrawal of the glaciers, which took place approximately 10'000 years ago, vegetation once again covered the high regions of our mountains. Could it be that some hunters were the first to discover the giants' pots?

We owe the first written document on the subject to G. Leonhardi, a protestant pastor from Brusio. In his book "Das Poschiavino Thal", published in Leipzig in 1859, he describes "cirkelformige Aushlungen" (round holes) dug in the rocks of the Puntalta gorge. The famous geologist Rudolf Staub, in his map "Geologie der Bernina Gruppe, 1948", places giants' pots on the Moti da Cavagliola. In my degree thesis (Freiburg, 1957) I describe at length the basin and the Cavaglia glacial



View of the potholes before they were emptied. They were covered by earth, stones and water

threshold. C. Burga studies the late glacial period of our valley and in 1987 publishes his findings in his qualification thesis».  
(Aldo Godenzi)

As had been the case for Switzerland's well known potholes in Luzern, it was clear from the very start that the possible emptying of those in the Poschiavo valley at Moti da Cavagliola could be of interest for tourism.

Alfonso Colombo, president of the Poschiavo Tourist Board (PTB) from 1966 to 1994, wrote: «As early as 1975 the PTB had already launched the idea and started some preliminary work. However, as costs were too high and support was scarce, activities had to be interrupted». Colombo called the Moti da Cavagliola and its surroundings the «Cavaglia natural monument».

In spite of the above difficulties, the original idea of emptying the potholes in order to create a new tourist attraction was kept alive and several attempts to restart work were made in the following years. In the



The hard job of extracting material from the potholes

early Nineties, the Poschiavo Boy Scouts, under the guidance of Plinio Tognina and with the support of Alfonso Colombo, partially emptied the pothole closest to the railway.

In 1994 another and more important contribution came from a group of twenty apprentices of the Poschiavo Raethian Railway Depot under the guide of Mario Costa, Aldo Fanconi and Giovanni Lardelli. The first pothole was completely emptied and, with the help of Poschiavo's Forest Warden, Gianni Zanoli, the circuit leading to the Poschiavo Valley lookout was outlined.

A study signed by Pietro Beritelli was published in 1995 by the Samedan School of Tourism under the title «The Cavaglia potholes: evaluation, potential, possible developments». This study, part of the more complex project «The organization of tourism in Valposchiavo», clearly underlined the positive impact that unearthing these potholes could have on tourism: «the practical lack of competition» and «the impossibility of artificially imitating these formations guarantee a long term selling point for the whole of Valposchiavo».



During the summer season the Glacier Garden Committee is constantly at work to extract rain-water from the potholes

As regards the possible development of the Cavaglia potholes, the above mentioned Beritelli study pointed out the following opportunities:

- an attraction for tourists and locals
- the potholes as a meeting point
- unique vegetation, interesting geological formations, biotope
- attractive views in several directions
- closeness to railway and road
- easy access
- no compulsory entrance ticket.

This interesting study generated increased attention for the potholes and the Moti da Cavagliola nature garden. Several enthusiasts formed a group which shortly after created the Cavaglia Glacier Garden Association.



The Glacier Garden is also a meeting point