

Raffaello Foresi a short biography

Raffaello Foresi was born in Capoliveri on the 20th November 1820, and he died on the 12th October 1896.

He is one of the most important intellectuals and researchers from Elba Island.

He was son of Iacopo Foresi and Maria Guarelli. He took degree in Literature at University of Pisa and, after that, he settled in Florence in 1845: strongly influenced by the cultural atmosphere of the city, he published musical pieces on Florentine periodical *Il Passatempo* and, thanks to it, he became friend of Gioacchino Rossini. In 1858 he started a monthly magazine called *Il Piovano Arlotto*, with the support of his brother Alessandro and Pietro Fanfani. This literary satirical magazine owed its name to a medieval religious man, Arlotto Mainardi, *facetis sed honestus* character, as he defined himself. It was published in Firenze for three years, from January 1858 to December 1860.

Even if he studied Literature at university, he nurtured a fascination towards prehistory during his whole life: in his own words, he was really interested in “Stone Age” and in “anti-historical objects” of Elba Island and Tuscan Archipelago, and he was so possessive towards this kind of relics that “...he felt that Elba’s subsoil belonged to him and when foreigners went to Elba Island to seek minerals without his approval, he flared and closed off them”, according to Nello Toscanelli's words. He dedicated his life to paleoethnology and mineralogical researches on Elba Island, cooperating with the mineralogist Luigi Celleri, and he succeeded in setting up a collection of minerals that was exhibited in Bologna in 1864 and that led to the foundation of Foresi Museum in Portoferraio, in 1873. The collection was shown at Foresi Museum from 1873 to 1876 and the most famous pieces were the so called “Four Evangelists”, big blocks made of tourmaline and beryllium found near San Piero in Campo. He was so fond of doing such researches that he was able to find 1256 evidence belonging to Paleolithic, and thanks to his initiative and to influential friendships with scientists of the time, these objects were quoted in periodicals and in 1867 they were displayed at Universal Exhibition, the current Expo, in Paris .

A few months after Raffaello Foresi’s death, his heirs sold the collection to the University of Florence through the care of the chemist Giorgio Roster.

Today some materials are exhibited at the Mining District Archaeological Museum in Rio nell’Elba.

The Biblioteca and Pinacoteca Foresiana and the Liceo in Portoferraio are dedicated to his memory.