



The Gardens of Villa Della Pergola at Alassio

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When the gardens of the Villa della Pergola at Alassio open to the public on the 29th March, 2014, visitors will once again have the delightful opportunity of visiting this rare example of the English garden in Italy.

Described by William Scott in 1908 as "one of the wonders of the Riviera" the garden, situated on the Pontente Ligurian Riviera, enjoys incomparable views that take in the whole of the gulf of Alassio and the island and Gallinara, with Corsica visible in the distance.

This little piece of paradise has undergone six years of careful restoration by the landscape gardener Paolo Pejrone. Now returned to its original splendour, it sits in harmony with its surrounding Mediterranean vegetation and exotic flora. In 1903 Edward Elgar was so inspired by the region he wrote his symphony "in the South (Alassio)" and it is easy to see why it became so popular with the British community as a preferred holiday destination.

The villa itself was built at the end of the 19th century and the garden was originally the idea of the Scottish General William Montagu Scott McMurdo, who created the earliest garden here in 1875. Developed over various levels and following the natural contours of a hill, McMurdo made space among the olive and orange groves for the Canary Island date and cypresses so loved by the Anglo-Florentine community.

In the early years of the 20th century, the garden passed into the hands of Virginia Woolf's cousin Sir Walter Hamilton Dalrymple. Then in 1922 a new owner Daniel Hanbury, the second son of Thomas Hanbury, designer and owner of the celebrated Hanbury gardens of La Mortola, Ventimiglia, began work on developing the collections of plants in the grounds, drawing on the resources of the family's own botanical gardens.

The Hanbury family introduced varieties of South American cactus, collections of cycads and Australian eucalyptuses as well as various types of species from the Mortola botanical garden, significantly increasing the variety of exotic plants in the park at the Villa.

The outbreak of World War II saw the Hanbury family move back to England and it was not until 1946 that they moved back to resume the work interrupted by the war. Daniel established an elite winter health resort but sadly he died in 1948 and his wife Ruth stayed in the Villa della Pergola where she gave spring parties among the flowering wisteria.

Author and artist Carlo Levi used the Villino (one of the three elegant buildings at Villa della Pergola) as an annex for his nearby villa in the 1960s and 70s and then sadly for a while the gardens became abandoned and deteriorated. In 2006 a group of friends guided by Silvia and Antonia Ricci, eager to safeguard and protect the landscape, purchased the property at auction to save it from developers.

Restoration has been carried out with care and respect for the historical continuity of the garden retaining the typical feel of those Victorian British gardens that have made them botanical delights on the Ligurian Riviera and the Mediterranean.



Within the gardens careful restoration of the Villa della Pergola and the Villino by architect Ettore Mochetti has been carried out. They now regain their old Victorian charm and English colonial style in which guests can stay from March to October.

The gardens are open with guided tours for visitors who book for dates from 29th March to the end of October on Saturdays and Sundays with tours from 9.30am to 11.30 and 3pm until 5pm. Bookings can be made for groups for weekdays.

Further information about visiting, accommodation and history of the garden can be found on: <http://www.villadellapergola.com>

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