



THE INTERNATIONAL TRUST FOR CROATIAN MONUMENTS

Charity Registration No. 1040187

34 Cadogan Square, London SW1X 0JL Tel/Fax: (020) 7589 1134 & (01677) 422811

Email: info@croatianmonuments.org - www.croatianmonuments.org

Trustees:

Lady Beresford-Peirse
Sir Henry Beresford-Peirse
Sherban Cantacuzino CBE
Capt. Ante Jerkovic
The Viscount Norwich

THE REBIRTH OF A RENAISSANCE GARDEN ON HVAR



For a number of years now the International Trust for Croatian Monuments, together with the British Croatian Society in Britain and the Croatian British Society in Croatia, have tried to gather funds to help return to its former glory the garden of the Croatian poet and playwright, Hanibal Lucić, 1485 – 1553, on the island of Hvar. The garden, just on the outskirts of the town of Hvar, surrounded the poet's summer residence and was once, "with its walls that from the parterre provided a view only of the sky and the peaks of the surrounding hills, with the well in the centre, marked with its two tailed mermaids known from the early Middle Ages, shaped like the space itself: closed and symbolic". (Ambroz Tudor, "Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji, 41).

With its roots deep in the Middle Ages, a flowering in the Renaissance, it still survives today in spite of its chequered history.

The garden is only about 2000 sq.m in size, with buildings on the south side and walls on the other three sides. There are paths along the walls and intersecting in the middle, thus dividing the garden into four parts. The paths are covered with stone slabs, but there is evidence that once they were covered in brick in a fishbone pattern. In the middle of the garden, where the paths meet, there is a well-preserved fountain head, possibly with the source of water still intact, with mermaids and the Lucić and Gazarović family coats of arms. Some of the columns surrounding the fountain still stand. There were columns all along the garden paths, forming pergolas, where vines, roses and jasmine once grew. Benches and other stone furniture, once a constituent part of such a garden, also existed, long since gone. There is no documentary evidence of the original planting scheme, but every kind of indigenous tree and shrub must have flourished there, as well as other species, imported, as was a custom on a seafaring island, from far a field.

The small Renaissance summer villa was built in around 1530. It is just charming. On its balcony, the poet sat during the hot, summer evenings. The Museum of Hvar Heritage has been located within the garden buildings, with a room on the first floor of the villa dedicated to the poet, while the ground/basement area has held the Hvar archives, extraordinarily rich and important, and yet housed under very inadequate conditions. Now, the villa and the outbuildings are undergoing restoration, the archives will be moved to a purpose built structure adjacent to the garden, but invisible to the eye. The villa will be then dedicated in its entirety to the poet.

Once all the building works have been completed, it will be the turn of the garden. We, our Trust and the two Societies mentioned above, have, in the meantime, had five new columns carved and placed in the garden and are anxious to obtain more funding to continue with this part of the project. Each column costs around EU 650 and there were over 50 once in the garden! In my 2006 report, I had this special “**Support a column**” appeal. The columns are carved by a young conservator, Ivan Sikavica, an employee of the Croatian Conservation Institute and an ex-alumnus of Weymouth College, where he trained under the auspices of our Trust. There are sufficient columns, or their fragments, remaining, albeit from different periods, so that they can be repeated. We have also contacted and have had a very positive reply from several members of the Mediterranean Garden Society who would be willing to travel to Hvar, with only their costs covered, to advise on the planting.

The garden is an oasis and an asset to the island of Hvar. It is worth every effort to make it again, lush and beautiful, as it once was, to the delight of visitors and inhabitants of Hvar alike.

Jadranka Beresford-Peirse
Founder and Trustee
International Trust for Croatian Monuments

Photos by: Nives Tomasovic, Curator
Museum of Hvar Heritage
e-mail: muzej-hvar@st.htnet.hr, telephone: 00 385 21 741 009

We would be most grateful for any donations towards this project. Gift Aid will be applicable.