

IFPRA Europe Technical Visit and Commissioners Meeting, Turin, Italy, 28th and 29th May 2011

Our IFPRA members in Turin, Italy, Luigi Delloste (Technician of the Park and Garden Department of Turin and delegate of the A.I.D.T.P.G.) and Gabriele Schetter (consultant and member of A.I.D.T.P.G.), hosted a spring meeting of the Commissioners of IFPRA Europe followed by a most interesting weekend visit to parks and gardens in Turin

After the Commissioners meeting in the Turin City Council Guild Hall (Municipio, Sala Rossa) the group had a pleasant lunch in Bar vicino al Municipio followed by a walking tour of the city. The first stop was at the **Archeological Park** (Parco Archeologico) where we gazed at Porta Palatine, which was the gateway to the Roman city from the north. The park also includes the remains of an ancient theatre from the 1st century AD. Nearby is the Chapel of the Holy Shroud (Capella della sacra Sindone) which is dedicated to the relic held to be the burial cloth in which the body of Jesus Christ was wrapped after the crucifixion. Our next stop was **Piazza Reale**, the historical heart of Turin where we had a quick look at Palazzo Reale, the official residence of the Savoy royal family until 1865. A walk into a section of the royal gardens followed and of particular interest were some fine specimens of trees such as Pterocarya, (common name is Wingnut), members of the Juglandaceae (Walnut family). The Galleria Subalpina an elegant arcade (from 1873) with an iron and glass roof was a delightful building enroute to **Piazza Carignano** where we studied Palazzo Carignano (1679). This palace was the birthplace of Vittorio Emanuele II the first King of Italy when Italy was united 150 years ago.

The small **Balbo and Cavour Gardens** (from 1821) with their gardens based on the French square geometric system with monuments surrounded by alleys and centennial trees provided interest and topics for discussions on trees. Each specimen has a small numbered disc attached to the tree. Luigi explained that they had completed a survey and were monitoring the trees on a regular basis. The discussion included mention of recommendations by Claus Mattheck of Germany and the late Dr. Alex Shigo of the USA. We continued our walk and entered the larger space of Piazza Vittorio Veneto. Designed in 1825 it is claimed to be one of the most spacious in the world. Surrounded on three sides by porticoed buildings it lies between Via Po and Fiume Po (the river Po). Leaving this busy square we crossed the river Po and commenced our climb to **Monte Dei Cappuccini** passing the church of the Gran Madre di Dio on the way. Our climb was rewarded with a fantastic panoramic view of Turin. After meeting with Paulo Odone, former head of the Parks Department in Turin, we toured the Museo Nazionale Della Montagna. It is located in buildings of the former Capuchin monastery. A museum was planned for this site was opened in 1874 and operated until 1935. The buildings were later refurbished and the present museum opened in 1981. Its focus is on the Alps, its geography and access for travel, sports and tourism over the centuries. The day concluded with a very pleasant dinner in Piedmont style at a restaurant attached to the museum.

Paulo Odone spent the second day's tour with us and it began with a visit to the Gardens of the Castle **Venaria Reale**. The palace and grounds were first constructed in the mid 17th century by the Duke and Duchess of Savoy for hunting and leisure. The grand design included a villa, a park, woods, hunting grounds and a village. Less than a century later it was re-designed; the gardens in the French style, influenced by Versailles. The royal palace was later converted into a military barracks and the gardens became a drill ground. This remained so until after WWII. Restoration works began in 1996 and for ten years became the largest project of its kind in Europe. As stated in the booklet on La Venaria Reale, the 50 hectare gardens are "*ancient in their conception and inspiration but contemporary in their project and layout*". They were re-designed to meet our modern day leisure needs. The fountain of Hercules is not fully restored and glass fragments were used to represent water. The garden of the pergolas with its interesting designs using steel frames with a curved roof outline and covered with white climbing roses (Alberich Barbier) was a notable feature.

Pellerina Park, our second location, was named after an eminent professor (Mario Cararra o Della Pellerina), this 83.7 hectare park is divided in two by the river Dora. Some lakes were provided within the park by excavating areas and diverting river water through them. The undulating landscape was delightful with many trees crowning the hilltops and open valley areas providing secluded sections for people to soak up the sunshine. It is very popular park for family picnics, especially on Sundays. Its wide range of facilities included a fenced off area for dogs to be off the leash, many sporting activities, interesting sculptures, pathways and bridges crossing the river. A number of kiosks provided coffee and other refreshments for visitors to the park and our group made good use of them to sit and relax during our visit.

We also walked through the small **Tesoriera Park** (5.7 hectares) which dates from 1714. The principal building, Villa Della Tesoriera was constructed for Jacopo Maggi, the Treasurer for Duke Vittorio Amedeo. The Marquis of Sartirana acquired the property in 1846 and extended the buildings and re-designed the grounds. The building is a music library and the grounds are a public park laid out in an English-style with several exotic trees. Our last visit was to **Parco del Valentino**, Turin's most famous and oldest public park. This 46.8 hectare park on the western side of the river Po was inspired by the growth of Turin city in the early 19th century. The city walls were dismantled during the Napoleonic period and that gave rise to an influx of people which in turn led to an expansion of the urban area. One of the issues at the time was the provision of green space and this led to the birth of Valentino Park. In 1884 it was the venue for the General Expo for which a medieval village was constructed in the park. The complex was so popular that it remains a feature of the park today, having been restored following damage incurred during WWII. Its design was based on well known castles in Piedmont and Aosta Valley. There are important buildings within the park such as Castello del Valentino (built between 1621 and 1660) which is now part of the Polytechnic of Turin. Many monuments are positioned throughout the park, the most significant of which is the Fountain of the Months and Other Stories. Other park features include the Botanic Gardens, built in 1729 for academic and scientific purposes. This delightful park with its many flower beds, streams, fountains, pathways and interesting trees was a wonderful ending for our visit to Turin. To complete the occasion we enjoyed a very tasty lunch in the Imbarco Peresino restaurant adjacent to the river and from where we were able to view the canoeing activities on the river and in the distance the Monte Dei Cappucini we had dined the night before. When lunch ended we said our goodbyes and thanks to Luigi Delloste, Gabrielle Schetter and Paulo Odone for spending their weekend in providing an experience of enjoying the sights and delights of Turin.



Dr. Christy Boylan, Secretary, IFPRA Europe.

Picture 1



A statue of Julius Caesar in front of Porta Palatine in the Archaeological Park

Picture 2



Luigi Delloste and Gabrielle Schetter telling the group about Palazzo Reale

Picture 3



Group at Monte Dei Cappucini

Picture 4



Hanno Dirske and Paulo Odone in Pellerina Park

Picture 5



View of the River Po and Monte Dei Cappucini from Valentino Park

Picture 6



Panoramic view of Mole Antonelliana in the centre of Turin from Monte Dei Cappucini