

A VINEYARD • A WINE • A HISTORY

# Vigna Gustava The Castle

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**Barolo**  
*en primeur*

 **FONDAZIONE CRC**

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 **CONSORZIO DI TUTELA  
BAROLO  
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ALBA LANGHE E DOGLIANI**











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## THE VIGNA GUSTAVA CASTLE

After basking in the sun from the south-west all day long, at sunset Vigna Gustava is chilled by the shadow of the castle. In the winter months, this shadow is like a warm cashmere blanket. Much more than just a beautiful photographic image, it is the sign that Vigna Gustava is not just an afterthought, but an extension of the castle, as has been declared by history, revealed fully by Cavour's cellars and confirmed by the new Barolo solidarity auction.

Beyond its turreted medieval appearance and modern photogenic appeal, Grinzane Castle conceals a courtly nature. Designed for work rather than war, the fortress saw the development of agricultural projects instead of war strategies. No sieges. No destruction. It has been coveted, split and inhabited by Piedmont's most noble families, with the inevitable disputes generated by shared spaces. It has been munificent towards its Langa. Its greatest gift: Barolo. Its prosperous present. Its bright future.

To understand Vigna Gustava means telling the castle's story. Because the shades of the brick also found in its Barolo are

an expression of the sentiment of history, of the beauty and wisdom that have been deposited within the walls over the centuries. Because the soul of those bricks and bunches of grapes is the same: Tortonian marl from Sant'Agata Fossili. The story begins, has to begin, in the tiny raised internal courtyard; at the top of the hill, the heart of the castle and the story of Barolo, as well as of the Langa's now international profile. But once up here, before seeking refuge among the mighty, protective brick walls, the gaze searches for the sky. It is carried upwards by the soaring 13th-century tower, which, with the language of simplicity and practicality inherent in this land, stands as a witness to a type of architecture that has grown through additions; designed by the courtly and domestic ideas of the many status-hungry aristocratic families who lived in it, it has finally been brought back to its original, striking appearance.

Grand names accompany its history. Alba kept it high on its list, despite recognising its territory at all times. The jurist Petrino Belli embellished it with aristocratic elegance. Count Camillo Benso di Cavour ennobled it during his years as mayor, elevating it to a cradle in which modern Barolo was conceived. Marchesa Adele Alfieri di Sostegno gave it a soul by binding it to the donation. Presidente Luigi Einaudi saved it from neglect, restoring its original monumentality. Luciano Degiacomi filled it with projects, ideas and intelligence, paving the way for its bright future. The CRC Foundation, custodian and interpreter of Cavour's winemaking







values, has made it a wonderful and cohesive place thanks to the international Vigna Gustava Barolo auction and the donation. The most wonderful and cohesive way to give voice to the fruits of Alba's entrepreneurship and savings.

### FROM THE TOWER TO THE CASTLE

In the beginning, there was the tower. Also symbolically, as a narrative element and reminder of the place's historical soul, born from the union of the three distinct ancient and fortified allodial estates of Grinzane, Borzone and Babellino. Built to control routes up through the Langhe from the Talloria plain to powerful Diano, the three castles were destroyed in around 1198 during disputes between the Comune and the Bishop of Alba.

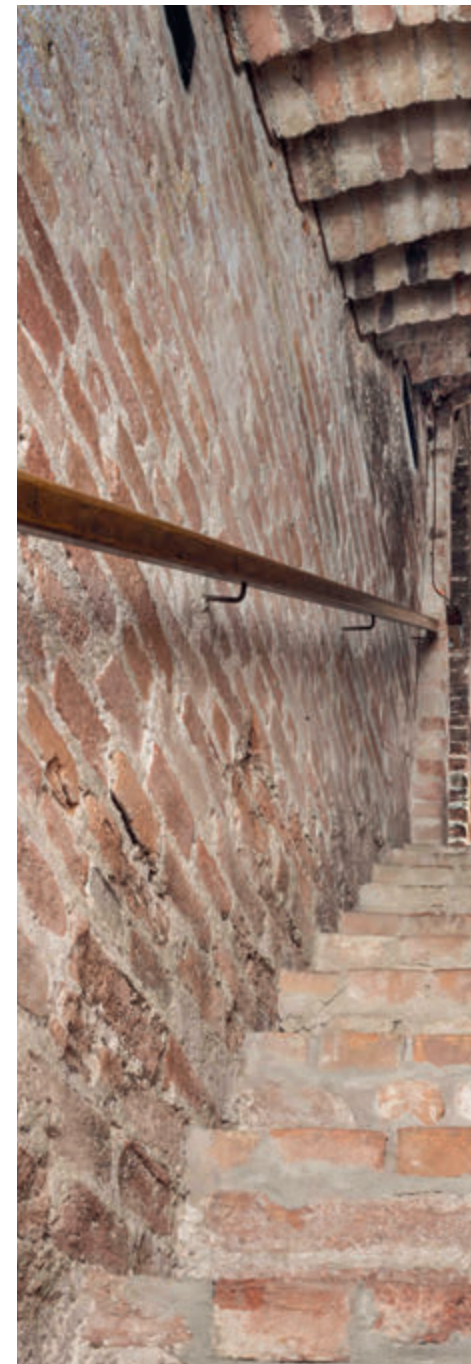
The castles of Borzone and Babellino quickly became tattered memories of legend and fact. In reference to Borzone, 1418 attests to "*dirrupti et explanati*", the places "*super quo et quibus fuerat edificatum et constructum dictum castrum et locum Borzoni*". As for Babellino, in 1464 the site was mentioned "*ubi alias constructum erat castrum ipsius loci*".

But not so for the castle "*in territorio Grinzanearum*", which was reborn in the 13th century, starting with the reconstruction of the tower and effectively dominating and defending the whole area. The 14th century was affirmative. The deed with which, on 15 April 1345, the Comune of Alba gave 60 lire astesi to Franceschino de Brayda, lord of Grinzane, for

the development and maintenance of a “*miliciam*” was drawn up “*in castro Grincanearum*”. The inheritance divided on 15 April 1391 between the three sons of the Marchese Raimondo di Busca, lord of Diano with dominion over Grinzane, Borzone and Babellino by way of investiture of the monastery of San Frontiniano, included the “*fortalicium Grinseniarum*”. The two terms “*castro*” and “*fortalicium*” refer etymologically to something more than a mere tower; not quite a fortress, not yet a castle but distinct fortified buildings both inhabited and protected. Enough to declare and visually demonstrate territorial autonomy based on immemorial yet undefined rights.

#### “LIBRAM UNA PIPERIS”

The monks of the San Frontiniano monastery in Alba claimed feudal supremacy over “*terratorio, iurisdictione et hominibus de Grinzane*” and, consequently, granted investitures that came to be defined by territory. On 6 November 1331, Abbot Filiberto testified that these rights were of such ancient origin “*cuius memoriam non extat*” and, as a consequence, difficult to prove. Their full and peaceful acquisition allowed the monastery to sell them with regular investitures in exchange for an annual monetary compensation (proportional to the land registration) and “*ad festum Nativitatis Domini libram una piperis comunit*”. A pound (0.369 kg) of pepper, repeated over time and supported by the authority inherent in the very rare documents of the time, stands out as a symbol of







the 14th century and seems almost to anticipate the popular spicy scent of what would become the most famous son of the castle and its vineyards: Barolo.

### FROM CASTLE TO “VILARIUM GRINZANEARUM”

The deed of sale dated 26 April 1418, with which for 1,200 florins “*Raymondus ex marchionibus de Buscha*” sold “*locum et castrum Grinzanearum*” to Nicolino Marsaglia, a soldier of fortune from Cherasco and podestà of Asti at that time, describes a land undergoing a transformation that mentions buildings and areas “*circumcirca ipsum locum existentibus*”. After somehow coming to John IV Paleologus and his mother Giovanna di Savoia, marquises of Monferrato, the fiefdom of Grinzane was sold by deed on 31 May 1448 for “*ducatibus 1400 auri*” to Antonio Calderaro, member of an ancient Monregalese family of notaries with citizenship in Alba since the early 13th century. The deed with which Calderaro translated the distinction of class based on wealth and profession into nobility of rank lists “*locum, castrum, villam, fortalicia, homines, posse, fines et territorium Grinzanearum*” with all related rights, providing a snapshot of a rural setting undergoing development and ripe for organisation into a community. The contemporary mention of the *castrum* and *fortalicia* confirms the still distinct presence of the original structures that the Calderari themselves, during the long century of their lordship by virtue of the full freedom of “*fabricandi et*



*construendi*”, would turn into a castle by connecting them to subsequent buildings dictated by the gradually growing needs of the manor and housing. This is demonstrated by the colours and texture of the bricks, together with the irregular and composite architectural lines, which clearly reflect different times and functions. Mentioned in a document dated 22 July 1448 and located near the Talloria, the Planum de Fornace takes on full historical importance, staking its claim as the industrious factory that supported the construction of Grinzane’s built heritage.

It was, in fact, between the second half of the 15th century and the first decades of the 16th century that Grinzane’s castle and small “*vilarium*” took on the shape and structure of a landed lordship. The countless leasehold (and permanent) contracts drawn up by Antonio Calderaro from July 1448, in addition to tying farmers to the land, guaranteed the “*roide*”, or working days, required by viticulture, the predominant agricultural activity by some distance. In this sense, they represented the basis of the rapid development, favoured by the exemption from duties on “*lignaminibus et calce et quam conduci faciet ad dicta loca seu castra*”, obtained in June 1450 by the general council of Alba. The license obtained on 9 June 1459 by the Marchese di Monferrato to export and sell “*omnia frumenta, blada, legumina ac quascumque siligines, speltas et generaliter omnes et quoscumque et cuiuscumque generis sint fructus natos et nascituros ac recolligendos super posse et finibus locorum Grinzane, Borzone e Babellino*” was equally advantageous.





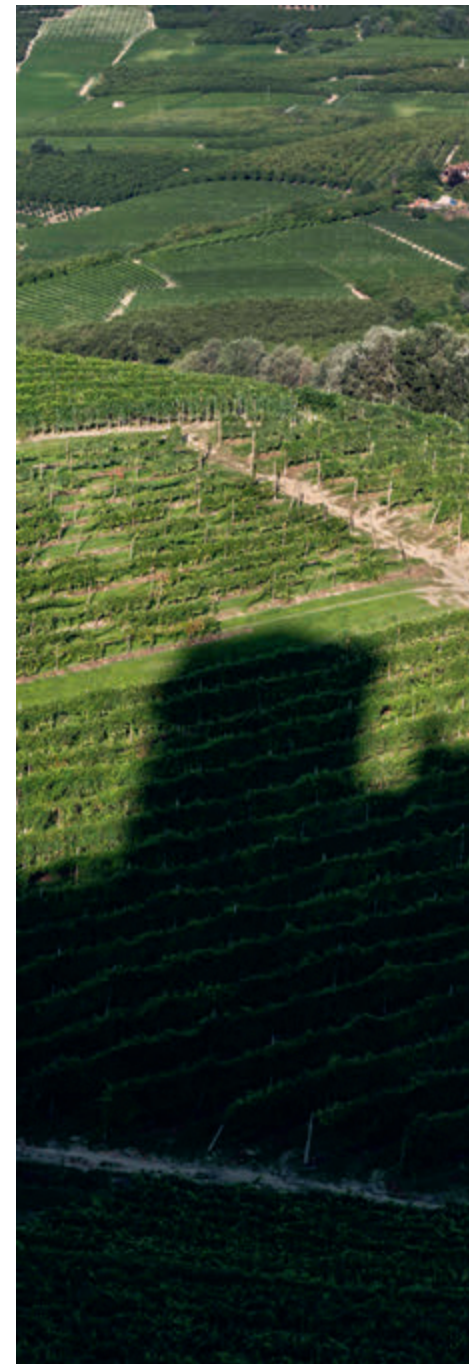


The room with a fireplace (*“in caminata”*) mentioned as early as 1448, was followed by fortification work and the building of rooms required by a now completed castle and lordship: from the moat to the drawbridge, from the ravelin to the prison (*“entered through a single hole shaped like a tomb vase”*), from the *“cochina nova que est iuxta pallacium antiquum”* to the chapel *“in intrata dicti castr”*, from the “cellario” to the “granaro”, from the two *“salle nove”* described in 1523 to the staircase, *“contigua ... muro turris”* required for them to be used independently among the descendants of Antonio Calderaro. Plus, outside but functional to the castle economy: the oven (*“existentem ante et extra portam dicti castr”*), pigsty (under the brick bridge at the first entrance to the castle) and mill (cause of conflict with the inhabitants of Diano over the use of water from the Tinella). The castle’s uniqueness and beauty lie precisely in this overlapping of the needs of everyday life with the requirements of the court. A reality softened by simple terracotta decorations and the two circular towers on the southern façade, inspired vaguely by the architectural style of the castles belonging to the powerful Falletti family, particularly the most spectacular in Serralunga d’Alba. A reality that nevertheless reveals an absolute respect for history, developing over planes and along vertical lines lower than those of the original tower and fortress, as if to recognise and glorify their pre-eminence. It was Antonio Calderaro who completed the design and sealed the indissoluble union between the castle and Vigna Gustava through

the purchase from brothers Guglielmo and Stefano Pellizzari “*habitatores Grinzanearum*”, with the deed dated 30 May 1454, of “*iornatas quinque ex pecia una terre auctinate ... loco dicto in Vallono, cui coherent prefatus d. Anthonius a duabus partibus ... pro florenis centum ad rationem de solidis septua ginta pro singulo floreno monete in Alba currentis*”. From a historical perspective, this was the symbolic act of matrimony between the castle and the place chosen in which to rest its aristocratic shadow.

### A CONTESTED CASTLE

The hard-working practicality of the Calderaro family, applied principally to the “construction” of the basic structures of a lordship’s residence, created what was a composite castle at the dawning of the 16th century, alternating living and working spaces. In 1538, the castle and its properties were divided between two dynastic branches of cousins for testamentary reasons. This division resulted in conflicts and disputes and, after the temporary and transitory reorganisation carried out when Gabriele Nuvoli purchased it in 1542, the castle would not be reunified until the 19th century. The south-western half passed from the Calderaro family to Nuvo-  
li to Teobaldo Cagnolo (purchased in 1554; actual possession and investiture in 1560) and then as a wedding dowry to the Argentero family (1602). The story of the north-eastern half is less linear: it was seized in 1541 by the Chamber as a result of unpaid debts and granted to the Community of San Dami-







ano; it quickly passed into the hands of Gabriele Nuvoli (who took possession in February 1542) and then into those of the Belli (April 1542); following a lively dispute, it then came to belong to the Dal Pozzo family, in part as a matrimonial dowry (1601, allodial rights) and in part through purchase (1603, feudal rights). The fragmentary events described above consign to history a number of figures with stubborn links to the castle. The most notable of these was Ottavio Belli, Count of Barbaresco, who was almost pathetically opposed to rights that denied him property and residence in favour of his cousin Giulia. As a courtly and divided castle, these costly disputes seem more to indicate the agreeable nature and prestige of the place than genuine wealth. They undoubtedly also reflect the beauty of the vineyard landscape and the quality of its wines, already significant status symbols at that time. It should also be said that in the second half of the 16th century, thanks to the ambition of Petrino Belli and his son Domenico, some of the castle's rooms took on the distinctive noble characteristics still preserved today. This is true of the “*salla grande*”, now the Hall of Masks, which, at the dawning of the 17th century, featured “a large fireplace in plaster, with two columns with the Belli coat of arms, all in relief, with an attic with poplar beams, and smaller beams with paintings along their length”. Paintings by an unknown artist create to celebrate the joining of the Belli and Damiano houses (marriage of Petrino Belli and Giulia Damiano di Priocca in 1541; 1542 purchase by the Belli family of half of the lordship of Grinzane), as well as the ostentatious re-

production of coats of arms mixed with faces, landscapes and allegories, together create a picture of aristocratic beauty.

The mention in 1601 of the “*cameras tres pictas*” located “*ad loca superiora partis predicti castri*” is equally confident, and their dating refers to the fifty-year period of the Belli family lordship, defining it as they most aesthetically fertile.

### THE CASTLE VINEYARD IN 1601

Peacefully whole, Vigna Gustava, indicated by the toponym Vallone, followed the natural south-west orientation and brought the Argentero family great wines, not yet known as Barolo but well on the way to becoming such, as revealed by the castle’s cellars. An inventory taken on 3 December 1601 describes the cellars handed down from the Belli family to the Dal Pozzo family in extremely detailed fashion (actually a bone of contention at that time), so we can think of those of Vigna Gustava as a mirror image.

The list outlines a cellar equipped with six vats with a total capacity of 130 *stari*; of fourteen *carrere*, four of which were “vacant”; ten *botalli* (four empty) and four *botalini*. Other cellar equipment was minimal. In early December, 230 *stari* of wine were recorded, and one *staro* of vinegar. The types of wine are listed as negro or bianco. Reasonably assuming that the generic old wine *carrere* contained negro (black) wine, the white wine must have been contained in small barrels, in quantities of just eleven *stari* in total, mostly *vecchio*





(old). The *vecchio* wine is always worth more than the *novo* (new) wine. But the “four-year-old wine” mentioned in reference to a *carrera* of sixteen *stari* was worth less than the generic old wine. Only Chiaretto and Moscatello were worthy of distinction both in name and price. The five-*stari botallo* of “*vino claretto vecchio*” was the most expensive in the cellar, while the Moscatello was worth as much as the old wines.

### BETWEEN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

As a result of the episodic presence of the Argentero and the Dal Pozzo families (it is no coincidence that there are no frescoes of their coats of arms inside the castle), there are minimal noble residential or decorative interventions that can be attributed to the 17th and 18th centuries. These include light early 17th-century retouching to the aforementioned “*stanze dipinte*” that coincided with an intermittent visit by the Dal Pozzo family, called to Grinzone by disputes with the Argentero family regarding rights of passage and ownership over a “square and shared and undivided site”. This retouching involved simply highlighting figures, as mentioned above, prior to 1601, the year in which their presence was first documented.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the rooms were furnished, partitioned, ventilated, illuminated, and false ceilings were added according to the needs of the lords of the castle. The cohabitation of two autonomous owners who shared



common spaces was not easy and led to the emergence of issues that, in the late 17th century, focused particularly on access to the so-called Santa Maria Maddalena chapel “in the said castle, on the right-hand side of the entrance”. The dispute even resulted in a scuffle, with flagrant actions and gestures that left their mark on the castle walls. A certain Camillo Busca, agent of the Dal Pozzo family, due to a “dispute and scuffle” with the agent of the Argentero family “so as not to pass through the usual castle gate, had the aforementioned illustrious marchese’s walls broken down before passing through the breach”. Conversely, the exterior rural structures grew in number, and the majority of those that had been defended became rustic outbuildings. This abundance of architecture cluttered, overlapped with and undermined both the aristocratic appearance and the courtly purity of the castle.

### COUNT CAMILLO BENSO DI CAVOUR’S TERRACE

Next came the Napoleonic domination, during which the cards were shuffled and reshuffled by the abolition of feudal privileges. In ways not yet fully investigated, the half of the castle and landed properties (180 hectares) belonging to the Dal Pozzo family came into the hands of “Veglio Monsieur Giuseppe Antonio fu Gio Batta” from Alba in the early 19th century. They were then purchased from him in 1815 by the ambitious Genevan countess Vittoria de Sellon, the second







wife (1815) of French duke Jules Gaspard Aynard de Clermont-Tonnerre, introduced to the marchesi Benso di Cavour through friendly bonds of acquaintance and family relationships (the sister Adele married Michele in 1805). Their arrival in the Langa area may well have been inspired by the Bensi's close links to the Marchesa Giulia Colbert Falletti di Barolo. Marchese Michele Benso Cavour purchased the other half of the castle and approximately 25 hectares of land in 1816.

As a result, the Benso di Cavour were responsible for putting the entire feudal property back together; nominally at first, through the administration of the assets of Countess Victoire immediately entrusted to her brother-in-law Michele Benso (for the annual fee of 4,000 francs), then in reality with the acquisition of the inheritance of Aunt Victoire (1949) and the family estate (1850) by the brothers Gustavo and Camillo.

It was Camillo who would go on to leave his mark on the castle and the age. Sent by his father to Grinzane to temper his youthful and political exuberance through the administration of assets and appointment as mayor (1832–1849), despite not living there permanently, he was given the chance to intervene in various parts of the castle in accordance with the needs of housing and agricultural modernisation, which involved the introduction of innovative wine-making techniques in particular. Dictated by prosaic heating needs, the partition wall in the Hall of Masks and the addition of a false ceiling to the precious wooden ceiling using reeds and plaster would prove to be providential, protecting it from smoke, looting and vandalism.

But, as we well know, it was the wine that deserved the most attention and, as a consequence, imposed its own architecture, under the direction of the French winemaker Louis Oudart, called upon by Camillo Cavour to create a dry Nebbiolo wine that could be aged in the “French style”.

The standard maintenance improvements made to the doors and windows of the vat cellar and two “Cavaliere” and “Pozzo” cellars in 1848 were followed in 1850 by the complete rebuilding of the vat room on the insistence of Oudart. Leading to the redefining of significant parts of the exterior, this intervention modified the appearance of the castle substantially. The roof of the vat room, converted into a terrace and served by a large staircase, redesigned the castle’s main entrance; in terms of the interior, this brought with it the demolition of the chapel, and, in terms of the exterior, the suspension of the two side turrets on the southern façade. The demanding structural intervention and the attention paid to the construction details reveal that the large terrace was conceived as an organic part of the castle rather than merely as an addendum. Sourcing the Barge flagstones, estimated at “4 lire per metre”, proved to be costly and complex, and it was consequently reasoned in March 1850 that “it would be convenient to collect them on site”. Nevertheless, on arriving in Alba with two large stone slabs on 3 April 1852, Donato the carter “had to attach up to nine animals on the road” to reach Grinzane and unload them next to the old oven “without damage or misfortune”. One slab was described as “*bellissima*” and “would be troublesome





to position because of its weight”. Relations with the Rastelli stonecutters in Cortemilia, who were charged with creating the stone cornice in the wine cellar “at 26 soldi per *rubbo* taken to Grinzane”, appeared strained. But news of the first shipment dated 8 July 1850 was followed a week later by the report “that the Rastelli stonecutter brothers in Cortemiglia have put the key under the door and left the country due to debts”. The work was eventually carried out by a certain Giovanni Ciavetta under the same contractual conditions.



### THE 19TH-CENTURY CASTLE THROUGH IMAGES

It was the 19th century that shaped the castle’s appearance as we know it today, which was previously only a vague outline. The maps that decorate the walls of the Vatican Gallery (1580–1585), which allowed the popes to travel across Italy without leaving their palace, conjure it up symbolically, overestimating its strategic importance and placing it at the top of the hill marked out by the confluence of the Tanaro and an unnamed tributary. This protective hill encloses and overlaps various ridges of the Langa with a great deal of approximation: Grasano (Grinzane) is the lower peak wedged between Cherasco and Alba; Nouello and M. Forte represent the top; Rodone, Rondel, Vendone, Mora, Dinano, Digliano, Volta and Somanà the locations deemed worthy of being included and named. A little over half a century later, in the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum sive Atlas Novus* (1655), Grinzane







can be identified in three unnamed gentle, bare hills between Alba and Diano, the latter named and represented by specific symbols. The task and honour of “faithfully” delineating the perimeter of the castle fell to the surveyor and measurer Pietro Antonio Musso when the land registry mapping of the entire Grinzane area was checked and published on 21 August 1783. But it would take the simplicity, sharpness and faithfulness of Clemente Rovere’s drawing for the castle to be seen in all its magnificence. Dating from 1827, the drawing also shows hill-sides covered entirely in vines. Taken from the Talloria plain, it would look like a preparatory drawing for the final decisive restoration work were it not that the corner turrets of the south-facing façade were still resting on the ground. Conversely, despite the many ways in which it corresponds to reality, the drawing of Grinzane castle by Francesco Gonin (1808–1889) produced in 1849 grants much to the artist’s interpretation and landscape inclinations. The castle’s free setting does allow all its characteristic features to be traced, but does not make it possible to pinpoint the details provided by Camillo Cavour. A few decades later, however, photography came to the rescue, documenting the complex stratifications of the building work.

### FROM THE BENSO TO THE ALFIERI FAMILIES

**I**t was Giuseppina, second-born daughter of Gustavo and favourite niece of Camillo, who inherited Grinzane on the death of her uncle (1861) and father (1865). By virtue

of her previous marriage to Carlo Alfieri di Sostegno (1851), the considerable Grinzane heritage came to the attention of one of the most eminent and noble Piedmontese families, despite losing the importance, vision and favours bestowed on it by Cavour. This downward spiral continued with Marchesa Adele, who focused more on honouring and keeping alive the memory of her illustrious ancestor, architect of Italian unification, than on continuing his agricultural plans.

Although inhabited, the castle became a memorial for occasional visits and patriotic celebrations, gradually losing its connection with the land. And with wine.

Consequently, just as Barolo of the type studied in its cellars was starting to make a name for itself domestically and internationally, the castle did not appear among the names collecting medals at wine shows across Europe between the late 19th and early 20th century.

Significantly, we instead find it as a gift sent “to the brave Lieutenant Colonel Galliano” for his legendary military exploits on African soil. In this case, the “agents” called upon by the countess to administer the “Alfieri Estate” assume great importance given their almost complete control of the fate of the land and the many contracts connected to it. For example, the arrival in March 1914 of the new “agent of the Noble House of Alfieri” Tommaso Rossi to replace Luigi Viglione (“who is retiring”) was celebrated with a lunch organised by a “special committee”, served “in lordly fashion by Sig. Monchiero” and attended by around eighty people “including prominent figures from







neighbouring towns”. It was hoped that this transfer of power “would produce the beneficial fruits of peace, harmony and labour”. An emblematic date in the new vision of the castle’s role was marked by 4 December 1907, “a very auspicious date that would remain inscribed in golden letters in the glories of the small village and would always be remembered, down to the latest grandchildren, with a grateful soul”. As a “gift” from the marchesa, on that day five sisters from the Sacra Famiglia di Comonte moved into the castle “to benefit the people of Grinzane” through a daily work school and Sunday oratory for the girls of the town and surrounding area. With the immediate opening of a nursery school planned, the marchesa’s generosity was applauded, in the certainty that “it truly heralded a new era for Grinzane, an era of material and moral restoration”. Another symbolic moment came on 1 October 1910 with the celebrations of the centenary of Camillo Cavour’s birth. After the unveiling of the bronze bust and official ceremony, a procession was formed that “paraded through the town decked in flags and arrived at the old castle where, after visiting the room once inhabited by the Count of Cavour, an honorary vermouth was served by the Marchesa Alfieri, while the nursery children in their white uniforms sang the Marcia Reale. The banquet was attended by about 200 people”.

Another important step was marked by the establishment of the Colonia Agricola Camillo Benso di Cavour per Orfani di Guerra to support war orphans, which encompassed the founding values of the direction taken by the noblewoman.

## THE DONATION

With its agricultural importance lost and landed assets gradually diminishing, the castle maintained symbolic authority and resolutely affirmed its new charitable and social vocation through its donation to the Comune of Alba, formalised in 1932. In a letter dated 14 October 1932 the Marchesa Adele Alfieri di Sostegno, in recognition of previous agreements, officially expressed her wishes to the podestà Attilio Molineris to donate the castle and its estate – including the farmstead and surrounding land (approximately 12 hectares) and the building used as a nursery school – and to set the following binding conditions: “a formal commitment”, that it should be used “for charitable but not scholastic purposes”, be carefully conserved, “commemorate Count Camillo di Cavour with dignity”, and that “any future custodian” would be able to reside there exclusively.

Accepted by mayoral resolution on 18 October 1932 and approved by prefectural decree on 3 November, the donation was drawn up by the notary Raimondo Sacco on 11 November 1932, with a stated value of 253,110 lire for the buildings and land. In addition to the date of the deed, sacred to the peasant community, a great many symbolic values were contained in the donation. As Grinzane Cavour was annexed to Alba at that period, the timing seemed to seal the historical ties that had always characterised relations between the two neighbouring communities. The considerations sent by Po-







destà Molineris to the marchesa in a letter dated 9 September 1932 speak volumes to that effect: “Castello Cavour is undoubtedly a valuable historical monument and, now that it is part of our comune, it is one of the town’s most interesting buildings. One of the many things I have noticed is that the central coat of arms on the panels decorating the ceiling of the Cavour rooms belong to Pierino Belli, one of the most illustrious citizens of the old comune. Therefore, taking this into account, any mayor of Alba would have no choice but to accept your proposal with gratitude”.

These good intentions were expressed through the establishment of an ampelographic summer camp for children in the nursery premises and the careful management of the farm.

However, due to the distance and advanced age of the marchesa (1857–1937), the war and times that were not yet accustomed to ambitious high-profile projects, the castle instead fell into disrepair and neglect and was subject to looting. Furthermore, once Grinzane Cavour regained its municipal autonomy (legislative decree 4 November 1947; effective July 1948), there was no shortage of unhelpful parochial disputes and outbursts of dissent over ownership of the property.

But it was to be the spirit of the donation that dictated resolution of the friction and a fruitful division of actions thanks to the far-sighted Fondazione Adele Alfieri di Sostegno, active as a non-profit organisation since June 1957, before its status evolved.





## LUIGI EINAUDI AND THE RESTORATION

This new-found unity of purpose was the fundamental condition for remedying the deplorable state of decay in which the castle found itself; although structurally solid, its interior was marked by total neglect. According to an authoritative report written in July 1959: “... It is lacking doors and windows... Anyone can enter, resulting in continuous tampering and damage without any respect for the building; children play at treasure hunts and dig holes everywhere. It is a regrettable disgrace”. The celebrations for the centenary of Italian unity and President Luigi Einaudi’s strong bond with the Langhe acted as a backdrop for the authoritative and monumental restoration carried out in 1960. The principle, innovative at the time, guided by the architect Andrea Bruno, was that the intervention “should not be limited to repairing the damage and conserving the monument by restoring its lost integrity, but should have the indispensable purpose of working towards a new goal that would bring it back to life and prolong this life over time”. This brought about the need to insert new functions without affecting the original structure that also took into account the stunning setting among the Barolo hills. A journey towards beauty – to quote the architect himself – in “an ideal atmosphere in which to work, almost a state of grace”. A journey that, due to the lack of archival documents, was based on direct investigation and retracing the castle’s construction phases until the central tower had been chosen as





the “pivot for the composition”. The consolidation work and removal of building superstructures returned the castle to its purest appearance. The largest obstacle was encountered at a critical level in the face of the imposing 19th-century terrace lent against the eastern façade; it may have been philologically and architecturally incongruous but was a reminder of Camillo Cavour, and the decision to remove it proved to be difficult. The requalification of the interior with the removal of inappropriate additions brought beauty back to the spaces whose functions were converted. The sumptuous enigma of the coffered ceiling in the Hall of Masks decorated with coats of arms and grotesques was rediscovered. The frescoed rooms, freed from the loft used as a granary, were restored to their magnificence at the time of the Belli family, and a natural simplicity was brought back to Camillo Cavour’s bedroom.

### LUCIANO DEGIACOMI

The founding years of the 1960s and 70s brought soul and vision to the castle, now a place of dazzling monumentality. This was thanks to the strong-willed personality of Luciano Degiacomi, who successfully predicted the future clearly and foresaw that the culture of wine and food would be the main drivers behind the tourism and economic development of Alba, the Langhe and the Roero. Charismatic and authoritative, his leadership assembled a network of prominent figures in Alba’s economy and culture, and could count

on the active support and intelligent administration of the town's mayors, lawyer Ettore Paganelli, and, from Grinzane Cavour, Secondo Viglino. With the foundation in February 1967 of the Order of Knights of the Truffle and Wines of Alba and the constitution in October of the same year of the Enoteca Regionale Piemontese Cavour, the second only in Italy after Siena, the tools were put in place to manage and take care of the castle while bringing it back to life. The year 1971 was key, with the opening of the enoteca and restaurant. These would be followed between 1974 and 1977 with the setting up of various exhibition spaces. In this way, the castle became a museum and laboratory for ideas, linking the memory of Camillo Cavour with the image of Barolo and underlining its pivotal role in a promotional strategy based on a deep pride in its identity, fuelled by a natural vocation for raising its profile on the international stage. Despite maintaining solid roots in the local culture and tradition, activities at the castle have successfully created a dialogue with both the modern age and the wider world, using a language focused on meticulousness, excellence and cultural vision, worthy of a region now recognised globally as a model.

### THE CASTLE IN THE LANGHE AND ROERO TODAY

Visited, photographed and talked about all over the world, the castle has become an emblem of what it means to be international, bringing life to the hills that are







home to both Barolo and truffles. To allow its magnificence to be grasped in full, in 2022 Vigna Gustava donated the Belvedere, offering a view that encompasses centuries of loyalty to viticulture.

As the cradle and treasure chest of the civilisation of Barolo, thanks to the diligent action of the then president of the enoteca Tomaso Zanoletti, the castle was recognised by UNESCO (2014) as a world heritage site. Aware of the attention focused on it and its responsibility towards the area as a whole, everything the castle does wears the guise of excellence. The great wines and typical products of Langa and Roero are showcased in the best possible way, both in the Enoteca Regionale Piemontese Cavour and on the tables in the adjoining restaurant. The historical cellars and halls play host to fascinating displays. The innovative open-air museum, opened in June 2021, immerses visitors in the landscape and civilisation of Langhe wines, helping them grasp their beauty and wisdom. The various initiatives include the international truffle auction (since 1999), which has become a media favourite, and the Barolo en Primeur auction (since 2021, promoted by the CRC Foundation). By celebrating the value of the donation, these charitable initiatives have contributed to strengthening the spirit of the castle, heir to a glorious past, the agricultural intelligence of Camillo Cavour inspired by innovation and an international outlook, and Marchesa Adele Alfieri di Sostegno's generous gesture











PRINTED IN  
SEPTEMBER 2025  
BY L'ARTISTICA SAVIGLIANO