

History, survey and improvement proposal of a significant agricultural settlement far away in time and habits: Darola estate in Trino Vercellese
Rice-weeders came from far away to work in a checked sea, nowadays people come from far away to remember and taste

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The object of this survey is an extended agricultural settlement, laying in Trino Vercellese town and known as Darola Estate or Darola Grange; this is one of the seven former compounds of the ancient Cistercian Abbey of Santa Maria of Lucedio.

Adjacent compounds, which take a wide area (about 40 sqkm) on the territory between Trino and Vercelli, are called: Lucedio, Leri, Montarolo, Castelmerlino, Montarucco, Ramezzana and Darola.



Overview of Estate Darola

The history of these places goes a long way back in the past since they are already mentioned in 933 in a donation made by king Hugh and king Luther to Aleramo - soon after better known as the Marquis of Monferrato - of a feud set in the territories of Trino, Fontanetto and Livorno between Lamporo and Stura rivers and referred to at "*cortem que nominatur Auriola*".

In order to obtain a rent from these lands, which were covered with woods, moors and swamps, the Marquis Ranieri of Monferrato decided to adopt a typical policy of that time, i.e. entrusting them to religious orders.

For this reason between 1123 and 1183 Cistercian monks coming from the French monastery La Ferté settled in Lucedio building the monastery and abbey and all the other settlements.

In Lucedio granges, between the end of 14th century and the beginning of 15th century, rice growing spread out (*Oryza sativa*) until it became the main cultivation and still today the characterising local element. Rice fields or the checked sea is surely fascinating and picturesque.

Darola Grange now Darola Estate still nowadays stands out for an enclosed courts building disposition. Inside you can still see the end 14th-century four-sided well-preserved tower from which you can have access to all the other courtyards.



View of the tower, north site.

In 1457 Lucedio Abbey was turned into a Commendam and the Cistercian monks slowly lost their importance. In 1784 the secularisation of the Commendam took place, which definitely became part of the Duke of Savoia property and all his assets are transferred to Mauriziano order.

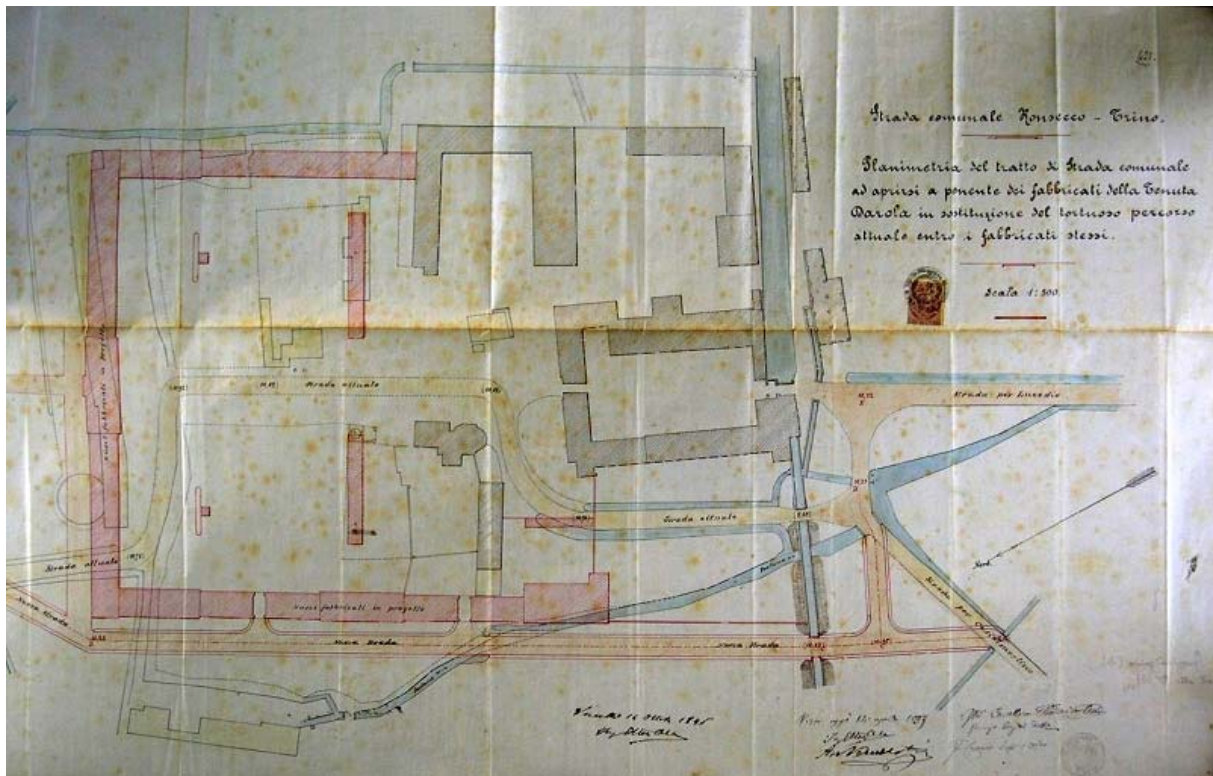
French occupation in 1798 determines the final transfer to the citizens of the aforesaid assets and in 1807 with an imperial act, the seven former granges of Lucedio abbey are sold to Prince Camillo Borghese, Napoleon's sister's Paolina Bonaparte husband.

In 1818, Lucedio granges were bought by a society formed by Marquis Michele Giuseppe Benso di Cavour (Camillo's father), Marquis Gozzano di S.Giorgio and Luigi Festa; in 1821 the society fell apart and Darola possession was granted to Mr. Festa, who soon after passed it on to Marquis Luigi Solaro del Borgo.

The Solaro del Borgo maintained the property until 1869, when they left it to Marquis Domenico Pallavicino family and from then on Darola Estate has always belonged to this Genoese family.

The second half of 19th century is marked by several industrialisation and experimenting attempts most of all in agriculture, which offer the real possibility of major investments and altogether allow a gradual transforming of building assets.

Between the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century at Darola an important transforming intervention takes place on the buildings, as shown in a planimetry by engineer Ettore Ara in 1896 and preserved in Trino Historical Archive.



A.S.C.T.. Adjudications 1895-1898, vol.106

Comune road Ronsecco-Trino, Planimetry of part of the communal way to realize on the west site of the Estate Darola buildings, to replace the current tortuous way into the buildings themselves, cm. 52x90, Ettore Ara, Engineer 1896, October 14th.

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Through historical, social, producing and building events which have turned this settlement into the present great agricultural estate, specialised in rice growing, we have tried to better understand the reasons of the present territory layout of this part of Vercellese.

Most of all we have tried to widen our knowledge of a great estate from its ancient origins, a fascinating example of rural architecture and a most significant expression of a peculiar agricultural territory as rice fields are.

If the present landscape can be considered a rich archive - whose historical, territorial, social and cultural significance must be frequently interpreted - data searching and due information to tell its history and country survey operations have allowed to reinforce this knowledge, in order to formulate a concrete assumption of site improvement.

The aforesaid assumption - starting from the idea of a re-use strictly connected to rice cultivation, pivoting on those activities deriving from grain and its components processing and at the same time giving the visitor the chance of visiting, remembering and tasting- has led to consider the creation of a “*rice court*” .

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