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Castello di Prasco

Category: Castles, Fortresses
business description: The first historical references to Prasco go back to the 10th century although the exact date of the building of the first castle is unclear and experts are unable to agree on a fixed date. It can be assumed that the current structure dates back to the 14th century and was ordered by the Counts of Gallesio, even though it is likely that there was an earlier building belonging to the Aleramici from the 12th century. Documents show that from 1240 the feudal period began under the Counts of Prasco and the history of the castle takes on a more organic and reliable shape, this being based in the main on hitherto unknown documents and records which are available for inspection and consultation in the Gallesio-Piuma archive.
The castle passed under the control of a successive number of families like the Occimano, the Monferrato and the Malaspina. It is almost certain that the original edifice was built on a rocky outcrop having the function of a fortified defensive position as witnessed by the three semicircular towers which contain the building itself. The castle has an excellent strategic position and looked out over three specific routes of communication. Water was guaranteed by the presence of four wells, all of which still work.
The building is on an embankment that includes three original gardens within the walls, surrounded by an extensive and historic park.
The original building was added to with residential buildings which had the effect of transforming the castle into a fortified house, thus becoming the official residence of the feudal owners.
The castle has a square layout with three towers, the main body being on an embankment divided into three courtyards and some eight metres higher than the road.
Construction was carried out using a mixture of brick and stone and architectural research carried out over time has revealed the amount of space given over to the living quarters of the feudal owners as well as that reserved for official, judicial or defensive use like the arms room, the meeting room, the guard room and the prison. The overall layout of the castle is extremely interesting and is an excellent representative example of Monferrato fortified architecture.
The main building, as well as being the owners' residence, is also home to a Research and Study centre for the work of Giorgio Gallesio, which organises meetings, seminars and cultural events with experts from the scientific community. The Centre is dedicated to keeping the castle at the centre of cultural development for the area and to encourage research activity into the work and studies of Giorgio Gallesio into plant genetics and fruit science.
In the castle is also a small museum that has on display a selection of old tools and implements with particular reference to wine making and bee keeping.
Of interest in the surrounding parkland is an ice store which dates from the 17th century and is noted for its architectural merit as much as for its excellent state of preservation. It is to be found by the side of the road that leads to the railway station at Prasco and is protected by a thick covering of woodland growth which means that it is constantly in the shade.

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