

Those who did not watch even a single episode of Downton Abbey please raise your hand. Many have asked themselves: *where was this series shot? Most likely adding it would be great to visit those rooms.* And so you can. The TV series was shot in Highclere Castle, humble residence of the Earl and the Countess of Carnarvon, a magnificent home and gardens the family delights in sharing with many thousands of visitors. However, even though the number of visitors is impressive, the same can be said of the preserving costs - about 11 million pounds. Take a look at the [Highclere Castle](#) website to understand on how much the British stately home owners consider the opening of their historic houses (and much more) as an important revenue stream. Here Lady Fiona in her blog is "inviting you behind the scenes of my life and home and sharing anecdotes from my everyday life at Highclere Castle". However, revenues are not the only reason

why stately homes are open to public in Britain, there is also a cultural side: since at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century, great houses were designed with a visitor's circuit, in the spirit of sharing. Considering the privately owned historic houses as iconic symbols of Britain's unique heritage and recognising that private owners remain the most economic and effective guardians of these properties, is a principle well-established in Britain. What about Italy? *Not really*, Moroello Diaz della Vittoria Pallavicini tells us. Moroello is, since 2010 the President of ADSI, the Italian Historic Houses Association. He takes care of the Association every day, with enthusiasm. It could not be otherwise, thinking of the commitment and dedication needed to perform this task. He fights against prejudices - it seems incredible that stately homes owners may have economic difficulties to preserve the heritage due to fiscal burdens - and with a bureaucracy that, for example, considers

palaces, castles, manor houses and towers as condominiums. He does not surrender. The battle against the IMU (Italian property tax) in 2012 is memorable, when according to the new taxation, the amount due for a property like the Castello Odescalchi di Bracciano was going from 15 to 90 thousand euros. Without a proper fiscal policy, the conservation of historic houses wouldn't have been sustainable. ADSI does much more, and Moroello's passionate commitment is evident in this interview. If you never enjoyed the National ADSI Days, the way he talks about them makes you seriously regret having missed them. And surely won't miss them again.

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DIAZ DELLA VITTORIA  
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## MY HOUSE IS NOT A CONDOMINIUM

“Great Britain has done a great job reconciling the care and conservation of historical buildings and their open-doors reuse. This has allowed owners to not only make their heritage accessible, but also to continue to respect and preserve its memory.”

**Telos:** You have been the National President of the Italian Historic Houses Association (ADSI) since 2010. The Association works to preserve, enhance and manage historical houses with particularly important artistic, historical and archaeological features. Many say you have directed the Lazio Office with the same enthusiasm and dedication. Please tell us about the ADSI and how, every day, it takes care of an important part of Italy's historical heritage.

**Moroello Diaz della Vittoria Pallavicini:** Before the ADSI came into being, private owners of historical heritage had been solitary philanthropists; after its foundation, they had the opportunity to speak with a single voice. Another important priority pursued by the ADSI is to juridically and fiscally protect and enhance a heritage unparalleled anywhere in the world. We currently have about 4,200 members from all over Italy. We manage our activities thanks to close cooperation between our regional offices and our head office in Rome; we also tirelessly engage the authorities on a daily basis to try and make them understand the primary role that our historical and artistic heritage must play in contributing to Italy's social, cultural and economic growth. The owners of listed buildings have to fulfil numerous obligations due to the high standard of conservation imposed by those obligations. Their task would be practically impossible without State assistance which necessarily has to include a concessionary tax rate in support of a heritage which, it's true, is private, but does also provide benefits to the public at large. Every day the ADSI and its owner-members jointly struggle to make this simple truth understood. But we do more than this. We want to help our members when they decide to suitably reuse their historical heritage. In fact, in May 2014 the ADSI established a service company "ADSI Consulenze e Servizi Srl". The feather in the cap of this new company is our website [www.dimorestoricheitaliane.it](http://www.dimorestoricheitaliane.it), a tourist/commercial portal promoting all the real estate owned by our members. Almost 300 houses are part of such an ambitious and important project, that was presented during our annual assembly of last 13 May, and will go online within this month.

Most people don't understand the expression, a full fiscal equalisation system. And yet it's one of the priority items in your manifesto to the Authorities. Can you tell us more about it?

As I mentioned earlier, the ADSI believes that the correct use of a tax handle can provide good conservation of cultural heritage. The tax relief system could be used to partly compensate the numerous constraints and obligations applied to heritage, as well as the constant, onerous commitments owners have to make to preserve our cultural heritage. This system could also play



**Moroello Diaz della Vittoria Pallavicini** is the grandson of General Armando Diaz (First World War hero) and the second son of Duke Armando Diaz della Vittoria and Princess Maria Camilla Pallavicini. Successful businessman mainly active in the real estate, energy, agriculture and wine sectors, Moroello is, first of all, a great lover of art. He has always been devoted to cultural activities with a strong sensibility for the protection of historical and artistic heritage of private property. His family owns the Palazzo Pallavicini, located on Rome's Quirinale Hill, which houses one of the finest private art collections of masterpieces by Botticelli, Guido Reni, Lorenzo Lotto, Tintoretto, Velázquez, Rubens and Van Dyck. Elected in 2003, at a very young age, as President of the Italian Historic Houses Association (ADSI) for Lazio, a non-profit organization that works to ensure the preservation, evaluation and management of private historic houses: a role he played with great enthusiasm and vivacity. In 2010 he became the National President of the Association (which counts on more than 4,500 subscribers) a post he still holds today, renewing the image of the Association and enhancing the harmony between the two objectives of ADSI: the legal protection of property-tax and most importantly cultural values. In addition to serving as a board member of several listed and unlisted companies, since 2006, he has been the Vice President for the Lazio section of the Italian Association for Cancer Research (AIRC). Moroello, who was born in Rome and will turn 45 in August, is an economics graduate.

a crucial role in encouraging a more dynamic and efficient management of historical houses. In particular, private properties in small provincial towns and the countryside (historical buildings, houses and villas) could become local points of reference and tourist attractions. In turn, this would lead to more subsidiary activities, cultural events, gatherings and also economically benefit the local community.

**The Italian Historic Houses Association was established in Rome on March 4, 1977 following the example of associations already active in other European countries. The most famous is the Historic Houses Association (HHA). Do you envy your British colleagues, for example their relationship with the authorities?**

Perhaps the word envy is a little too strong, but it's true that Great Britain has done a great job reconciling the protection and preservation of historical buildings and their open-doors reuse. This has allowed owners to not only make their heritage accessible, but also to respect and preserve its memory. A long-standing, synergetic relationship with the authorities and competent agencies is the key to Britain's success; they realise that historic heritage can really boost the country's tourist and hospitality industry. And I hope that sooner or later this will happen in Italy too.

**The ADSI often organises events and throws open the doors of historic houses so that the public can visit and enjoy them. This year you've introduced a new twist to the National Days traditionally held in May. Can you tell us about it?**

If I may say so, I am personally proud of the ADSI National Days. When I became President a similar sort of event used to be held. The concept was the same, but the events were organised by our regional offices and held on different dates and with different themes. In short each to his own. The idea to coordinate these events and hold them on the same day was a brainwave; the public flocked in greater numbers and the role of the ADSI has become even more important in Italy's cultural life. This year the event held on May 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, apart from the fact that people were able to visit places that are normally off limits for the public, they were also able to admire works by the master craftsmen who have kept these precious and increasingly rare technical skills alive. Artisans were on hand to display their works and demonstrate their skills. In addition, this year, the year of Expo 2015, we have included food and wine events so that visitors could taste typical regional products.

I'm also pleased to recall that roughly 40 ADSI members participated in the 2015 edition of Vinitaly. This is particularly important because it emphasises the key role played by historic heritage owners in Italy's economic growth. Their prestigious businesses and historic houses, often part of big agricultural holdings, are like little fortresses protecting the rural landscape, i.e., approximately 19,000 hectares of pristine land.

Another very pleasant memory was when I was President of ADSI Lazio and in 2006, 2007 and 2008 we held several exhibitions entitled "Masterpieces to be discovered". The public was able to admire masterpieces by Caravaggio, Lippi, Botticelli, Rubens, Reni, etc., masterpieces that had never been exhibited before. These exhibitions were held in the houses and buildings where these masterpieces were, and still are housed.

The exhibition gave visitors the chance to admire both the interiors of spectacular houses, but also their so far inaccessible private art collections. It was a marvellous opportunity to let public opinion get a close-up view of our private historic heritage! About 100,000 people visited the exhibition in just over 16 days. In ADSI we truly love to share the beautiful works of our history and past.