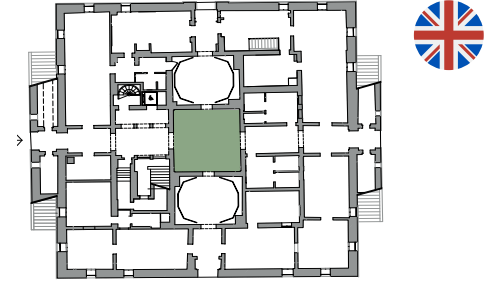


IMPLUVIUM

(originally the room for the collecting of rainwater)



A perspective view of the ground floor of the Villa dei Vescovi

Recent archaeological research has demonstrated the existence of a tower or, more probably, of an octagonal baptistery at the centre of the mediaeval building that occupied the site before the villa. From at least 1077, the parish church of San Martino was located on Luvigliano Hill, and nearby there was also a residence of the Bishop of Padua.

Over the course of the 16th century, Giovanni Maria Falconetto and Alvise Cornaro designed a new villa for Bishop Francesco Pisani. This was a revolutionary building, featuring at its centre a small square courtyard that served as an impluvium - i.e. a room dedicated to the collection of rainwater, as in an ancient Roman villa. 16th century Paduan scholars claimed that Luvigliano owed its name to its having been the original site of the villa of the Latin historian Livy (59 B.C.-17 A.D.), which was also known as the Livianum.



DID YOU KNOW

With its square plan, the Villa dei Vescovi was a model for Andrea Palladio's La Rotonda, built in Vicenza, which itself was constructed like a "machine" to watch the landscape.

Indeed Luvigliano was the birthplace of the civilisation of the "Ville Venete" (Villas of the Veneto Region), thanks also to the importance attributed there to the fresco decoration. Paolo Veronese (1528-1588) would be the leading light of that civilisation in the 16th century.



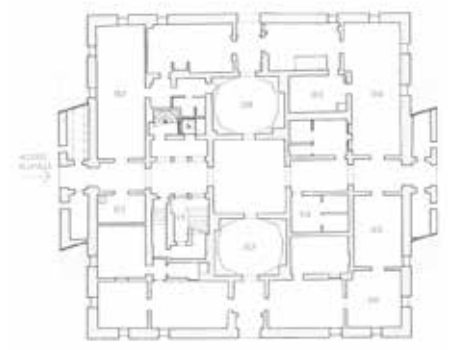
The archaeological excavations



The archaeological excavations

As indicated previously, during the restoration works major archaeological excavations were carried out, which saw the emergence of the remains of an octagonal foundation located in the very centre of the villa. It is likely that this was an ancient baptistery, adjacent to the cemetery and the old church of San Martino, which was located in the area of the current villa. The church was actually moved in 1474 to allow for the construction of a larger villa for the bishop. The dimensions and footprint of the octagon are today marked by an outline of bricks on the floor.

The element at the centre of the octagon indicates the original function of the central courtyard: the collection of rainwater. It was constructed in this way in the 16th century in a refined reference to the ancient Roman *domus*. This architectural element soon revealed itself, though, to be of limited practical use in the daily life of the Villa dei Vescovi, and was eliminated during the 18th century. The well in the villa's garden was built in the 1970s to collect rainwater.



Plan of the ground floor



Plan of the *first floor*



The "well"



The courtyard well in the 1960s

The Villa dei Vescovi was constructed in accordance with rigorous mathematical rules that resulted in a symmetrical internal distribution of the rooms and, externally, in a balanced geometrical articulation of the fronts. The axial arrangement of the spaces can clearly be seen from the central room of the ground floor. This mathematical construction can also be interpreted as the upshot of the concentric insertion, one inside the other, of three squares of decreasing size, where the external walls of the residence delineate the sides of the largest square.