Conclusion of the restoration of the Valley of the Lakes and the Garden of Camellias in the Park of Pena

- Valley of the Lakes (duck houses, towers, gateways, medallion, walls)
- Garden of Camellias
- Queen's Fern Valley
- Medallion in homage to King Ferdinand II
- Parques de Sintra backed investment of around €300,000
- Around two years of work across the 6.5 hectare site

*Sintra, 26th January 2015* – This month saw Parques de Sintra complete a series of restoration projects in the Park of Pena including both the built structures and the gardens themselves with the objective of conserving the features that best define this site of such historical relevance in addition to its aesthetic value.

The phased intervention, including work on the Valley of the Lakes, the Queen's Fern Valley and the Garden of Camellias, involved investment totalling around €300,000 Euros and incurred entirely by Parques de Sintra.

In 2012, work began on the intervention program for the gardens with the restoration of the network of pathways, staircases and walls. In parallel, the area was fitted out with the appropriate infrastructures in particular for water distribution, power for illuminating the paths and supplying the Hot House, telecommunications and means of irrigation. The original watering system structures, such as the mines, small channels, conducts, tanks and small decorative lakes, channels and waterfalls, were also subjected to restoration.

Recovery of the vegetation existing in the intervention area began in 2013, through the reproduction of the varieties and species existing in the park (violets, primroses, fuchsias and hydrangeas). In the Queen's Fern Valley, the tree ferns that formerly grew in the flowerbeds were re-introduced. In the Garden of Camellias (awarded the 2014 Camellia Garden of Excellence by the International Camellia Society), work began on the reproduction of *Camellia japonica* cultivars, originating from the collection of camellias grown by the botanist Marques Loureiro in Porto.
The layout of flowerbeds in the area of the Hot House was also restored in accordance with the descriptions and guidelines set out in the 19th century horticultural manuals in fashion during the Park’s original period of construction.

This restoration extended to the built structures located throughout the Park, including the Gate providing access to the Lakes, the two Duck Houses, the medallion in honour of Ferdinand II, the Fountain of the Small Birds and the Fountain of the Shell, the wall to the Tank of the Friars, the arch bridge and the two (Manueline and Small) Chapels. The complexity of the work involved required the establishing of multidisciplinary and experienced teams with deep knowledge about the techniques deployed.

The Gate to the Lakes spans a set of various wall sections (including one with a metallic grid), two gateways and two elliptical towers with their crenelated crowns typical of the medieval fortifications consisting of crenels (spaces) and merlons (volumes). The Duck House is a notable stone building set upon an island in the centre of St. Martin’s Lake.

The Octagonal Duck House, also in the Lakes area, was also restored. This decorative feature in the 19th century ornamental architectural style (a shelter for ducks with two floors and several openings for the access of birds) had its finishings, wooden sections and walls restored. Throughout, there was a particular concern to guarantee the minimum damage possible to the green moss “carpet” that covers the lower floor of the Duck House.

In addition to the general treatment stabilising the surfaces, the work focused on eliminating the biological colonisations that threatened the integrity of the structure, such as plants sending out roots capable of jeopardising the stability of the masonry.

The medallion in honour of Ferdinand II, unveiled in 1935 by a group of Sintra residents in memory of the King, also underwent conservation to stabilise its bronze and stone features while also cleaning and improving the monument's attachment and run-off system.

In the Queen's Fern Valley, work was completed on restoring the Fountain of the Little Birds, the Fountain of the Shell and a small shell adorned niche integrated into the Lake of the Shell. Tiles missing from various of the different structures were replaced alongside repairs to the iron grating on the spans of the Fountain of the Little Birds as well as its respective hydraulic system and basin.
The intervention also extended to the Manueline and Small Chapels, two buildings believed to have been constructed under the auspices of the monks that inhabited the Monastery of Our Lady of Pena, bestowed to the Order of St. Jerome in the 16th century. They are two outstanding examples not only for their architectural designs but also for their tiled finishing with one – the Manueline – still retaining the tiles across its inner walls. The Tank of the Friars, which supplied irrigation water to the surrounding orchards, was also subject to restoration. The wall holding the earth in place at this point, already at an advanced state of decay and at risk of collapse due to the growth of trees, was subject to thorough study due to its angle of slope with the option taken to remove the vegetative species in its immediate surroundings. Having pondered the options available for restoring its verticality, the final solution ended up involving its partial dismantling before subsequent reconstruction.

About Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua

Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua, S.A. (PSML) is an entirely state owned company founded in 2000 in order to meet the challenges arising out of the UNESCO classification of the Sintra Cultural Landscape as a World Heritage site. The entity does not resort to the State Budget and the restoration and maintenance of the heritage in its care are ensured by the revenues resulting from sales at its ticket offices, stores, cafeterias and the rental of facilities for the hosting of events. In 2014, the sites managed by PSML (the Park and National Palace of Pena, the National Palaces of Sintra and Queluz, the Chalet of the Countess of Edla, the Moorish Castle, the Palace and Gardens of Monserrate, the Convent of the Capuchos and the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art) welcomed approximately 1,928,000 visits, around 86% of whom were international in origin. In 2013 and 2014, PSML was distinguished with the World Travel Award for the “World’s Leading Conservation Company”. The PSML shareholders are the General Directorate of the Treasury and Finance (representing the Portuguese state), the Portuguese Institute of Nature and Forestry Conservation, the Portuguese Tourism Board and Sintra Municipal Council.

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