

The British impact on the development of sport in Portugal

Britain undoubtedly led the world in the development of new sports. Football, tennis, golf, cricket, squash, rugby, and hockey, as well as rowing and sailing as competitive sports, can all be traced back to the British Isles. This article briefly discusses how, with varying degrees of success, they then made their way to Portugal, and the role played by the British living here in making them known to the wider population.

By Andrew W. Shepherd¹

Football

Football as an organised sport can be considered to have begun in 1863 when teams in London got together to form an Association and agree on the rules. The game started to gain popularity in Portugal in the late 19th century, largely as a result of Portuguese students returning from England. Balls were reportedly being imported as early as 1870².

The first recorded game took place in 1875 in Camacha, Madeira, which was organised by the son of the sugar processor William Hinton, Harry Hinton, who had brought back a football from England. The ball was apparently damaged on several occasions during the match. Given the close association between Britain and Madeira it is likely that this game was little more than an informal kick around between British sailors, expats and the locals. There is little evidence that the game followed any rules.³

¹ The author acknowledges the assistance provided by Mark Crathorne, Andrew Bailey and Michael Sellers

² <https://www.lisboncasuals.com/history>

³ <http://www.visitmadeira.pt/en-gb/madeira/did-you-know-that/the-first-football-match-in-portugal>

The person responsible for football's spread on mainland Portugal was Guilherme Pinto Basto who, as we shall see, also played a dominant role in promoting tennis in the country. From around 1870, the Portuguese Royal Family spent part of the summer in Cascais. Aristocrats and other important people felt obliged to join them and, as the hotels were poor, built the elegant houses, known as "summer architecture", for which Cascais is famous. The Pinto Basto family were among those that built such houses and were also early members of the Cascais Sporting Club, which was founded in 1879 and counted the Royal Family amongst its members.



Guilherme Pinto Basto



The players at the original match in Cascais

In October 1888, an exhibition football match was organised on the Parada, the former Parade grounds of the Cascais Citadel, situated in front of the Sporting Club (now the Museum of the Sea). In this case the leather ball had been brought back from England by two Pinto Basto

brothers, Eduardo and Frederico, who, like their brother Guilherme, had been studying in England. The match was played on a Sunday afternoon and players apparently spent all morning picking up stones to create a suitable playing surface.⁴ Players included a count, viscounts, other prominent members of Lisbon's high society, and four members of the Pinto Basto family. They are recorded by a plaque in the Jardim da Rua Júlio Pereira de Mello, next to the Casa Sommer. The 50th anniversary of this match was marked by a game at the former Campo dos Salésianos in Lisbon. Some of the players at the original Cascais game attended, including Guilherme Pinto Basto.⁵



The memorial plaque in Cascais to the first game of football in Portugal

A more competitive match, between Portugal and a group of Britons, also organised by Guilherme Pinto Basto, was played in January 1889, at the spot in Lisbon where the Campo Pequeno bullring is now located,

⁴ <https://www.angloinfo.com/blogs/portugal/lisbon/cascais-live/champions-of-europe-and-it-all-started-in-cascais/>

⁵ <http://museuvirtual dofutebol.blogspot.com/2011/08/estrelas-cintilantes-27-guilherme-pinto.html>

which was won 2-1 by the Portuguese. This can be considered to have been the first proper match in Portuguese history, in that it had markings and goalposts, followed the rules, and lasted 90 minutes. Players in the British team came from, amongst others, the cable station at Carcavelos and the Graham's Textile and General Trading firm based in Lisbon at Braço da Prata. The cable station, which was inaugurated in the summer of 1870, played a particularly important role in the transfer of sports from England to Portugal. The British employees took part in several sports at the station at Quinta Nova, now occupied by St. Julian's School, which can genuinely be considered to have been Portugal's first sports centre. Football, cricket, tennis, golf, cycling, rugby, and gymnastics were all enjoyed at various times and the Carcavelos signal station provided many of the players for matches between "England" and "Portugal".^{6,7}

In 1890, Britain and Portugal fell out over the "British Ultimatum", which threatened aggression against Portuguese colonies if Portugal did not withdraw from the contested colonial areas that eventually became Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This created tension between the British residents and their hosts in Portugal that lasted decades. Matches between a purely British team and a Portuguese one were always competitive and attended by several thousand people hoping to see the British lose. They had a long wait: the Carcavelos team went unbeaten from 1894 until 1907, but when Sport de Lisboa beat Carcavelos in February 1907, the public went wild. An estimated 8,000 watched the game. Sport de Lisboa, now Benfica F.C., was founded on 28 February 1904. Its first recorded expenditure was of a second-hand football purchased from Lisbon Cricket Club!⁸

⁶ The Eastern Telegraph Station at Carcavelos by *Mário Eurico Lisboa*. BHSP Annual Report, 42. 2015. <https://www.bhspportugal.org/library/articles/the-eastern-telegraph-station-at-carcavelos>

⁷ <https://museuvirtualdofutebol.webs.com/histriaofutebolemportugal.htm>

⁸ Cricket in Portugal by D.C. d'Arcy Orders, BHSP Publication, 1990

Another important annual football match was that between the Lisbon Cricket Club (which played all sports) and Porto. That of 1894, held in Porto, was notable for the presence of the Royal Family, although King D. Carlos and Queen Amelia did not turn up until the second half. This game was possibly the first ever in which “extra time” was played, as Queen Amelia reportedly was "so engrossed in the antics of the players that at the end of the game she requested that, as she had only witnessed the 'second act', would the cast be willing to play the first one over again?" The players were all rewarded with a kiss of the Queen’s hand. The game is also notable for being the first when a trophy was awarded – the silver King D. Carlos trophy, which was paid for by the King, and is now the most important museum piece of Portuguese football. Lisbon’s team that day had four Portuguese players and seven British (it was a long time before substitutes would be introduced).^{9,10}

From 1899 the Lisbon Cricket Club moved to Cruz Quebrada, where a large area of land permitted the club’s range of sporting activities to continue until 1921. What is regarded as the first ever football tournament in Portugal took place in 1906, known as the "Torneio de Foot-ball". The Lisbon Cricket Club emerged victorious, beating Sport de Lisboa.¹¹ In 1907 the Royal couple again attended a football match, at Cruz Quebrada, this time arriving on time. A few weeks later King Carlos was dead, from assassins’ bullets.¹²

⁹ Cascais: Aqui nasceu o futebol em Portugal. Cascais Municipality and Quimera Editores, 2004

¹⁰ Oporto Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club, 150th Anniversary Report, 2005

¹¹ <https://www.lisboncasuals.com/history>

¹² J.W. Chambers, “Cruz Quebrada, the mecca of soccer”. BHSP Annual Report, 12.

1985. <https://www.bhspportugal.org/library/articles/cruz-quebrada-the-mecca-of-soccer>



The Carcavelos football team of the 1915/16 season

If the English can be considered in some way responsible for the development of football in Portugal it turned out to be a good investment. Since the founding of the English Premier League in 1992, over 70 Portuguese have played in that league. In November 2019, three of the 20 clubs in the Premier League were managed by Portuguese.

Tennis

Tracing the exact origins of tennis is rather difficult but it is arguable that a Portuguese played a role. In 1872, Hoa Pereira, a Portuguese merchant, was one of those adapting the Spanish game, ‘pelota’, to play on lawns at Leamington in England.¹³ The Leamington Tennis Club was founded in that year and was the first club created specifically for lawn tennis.

From the early 1870s, British employees of the submarine cable company at Carcavelos were reportedly playing a version of the game and proper courts were available from around 1875. However, the cable station remained very much an English enclave, with visits by the locals being frowned upon, so its impact on tennis development in the country

¹³ http://schooltennis.ru/en/about_tenis/world-tennis-history.php

may have been limited. The Oporto Cricket Club, later to become the Oporto Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club, had three courts by 1877. At that time all members of that club were also British.

Although tennis was thus first played in Portugal by the British, its dissemination was mainly due to Portuguese who had been to England. As with football, the main credit for this goes to Guilherme Pinto Basto, who was for many years Portugal's best player. Cascais Sporting Club had courts by 1882¹⁴ and, as a member, he gave lessons, including to Prince D. Carlos. Later, as King, Carlos would also play in some of the club's tournaments. Pinto Basto, who was educated for a time at Downside School, a Catholic boarding school in Somerset, became known as the father of Portuguese tennis. He was the first President of the Portuguese Lawn Tennis Federation, in 1925, and was still playing the game in 1950 at the age of 87. But his interests were not just limited to football and tennis: he was an all-round sportsman who was prepared to have a go at anything.



King D. Carlos and other tennis players at Cascais

¹⁴ Cascais: Territory, history, memory. 650 Years. Cascais Municipality, 2016



Tennis racket used by King D. Carlos (Museu da Vila, Cascais)

The Cascais Sporting Club organised regular international tournaments between 1902 and 1973.¹⁵ British players won until 1907, when João de Sousa Macedo was victorious. The famous French player, Jean Borotra, played in 1921 and 1922. In 1923 Pinto Basto persuaded Suzanne Lenglen, who was ranked No. 1 in the world and a global celebrity, to participate.¹⁶ English visitors included six-time Wimbledon Ladies Singles winner, Blanche Hillyard, and Noel Turnbull, Men's Doubles gold medal winner at the 1920 Olympics.



The tennis court at the Carcavelos cable station

¹⁵ O Ténis nasceu em Cascais. Cascais Cultura.

https://cultura.cascais.pt/sites/default/files/anexos/gerais/new/o_tenis_nasceu_em_cascais.pdf

¹⁶ ibid

Golf

Apart from a few holes at the Carcavelos cable station, golf was first introduced to Portugal in 1890 by Englishmen based in Porto, most of who were involved in the port wine trade. Their club was first called the Oporto Niblicks¹⁷ and the course was almost entirely of sand. There were 24 founder members. The first president was Charles Neville Skeffington, a surname still associated with port today. The tournament played for the Skeffington Cup is said to be the longest running golf tournament in the world, going back to 1891.

In 1900 a new course was established with grass, and the name was changed to the Oporto Golf Club. It is the oldest golf club in the Iberian Peninsula and the third oldest in continental Europe. Another President was Frank Yeatman, who played an important role at Taylor's Port.¹⁸ Portuguese were finally invited to play in 1921, although they were still not permitted to attend annual general meetings. The first Portuguese member was Fernando Nicolau de Almeida, creator of the *Barca Velha* red wine, who eventually became president. Women were allowed to become members in 1932, 82 years before this was finally permitted at the Royal and Ancient in Scotland.¹⁹

The Lisbon Cricket Club, which eventually became the Lisbon Sports Club, had six holes at Algés from the early 1870s. The Lisbon Sports Club was founded in 1922, with grounds in Ajuda behind the National Palace. Several sports were played there and there was a nine-hole golf course using sand "greens" mixed with oil. Following expropriation of the land by the Lisbon municipality to make space for housing, the Club purchased land at Belas in 1958, where the grounds were developed for tennis and golf. In 1962 it had nine holes. This was

¹⁷ A niblick was an early version of a nine iron or a wedge, which would be needed a lot playing on sand!

¹⁸ <https://www.taylor.pt/pt/sobre/historia>

¹⁹ <https://m.oportogolfclub.com/pt/o-clube/historia/>

increased to 14, with four of the holes having to be played twice. The full complement of 18 holes was only achieved in 1992.²⁰



The Portuguese Golf Championship, 1927. Some familiar surnames: Rankin, Rawes, and the winner, M. Symington, but no Portuguese

Despite the auspicious beginnings for golf in Portugal, it was to be some time before the sport really took off. The arrival of jet travel opened the possibility for the English and others to take short breaks in the country, particularly in the Algarve, and many of them were golfers. Three-time Open Champion, Sir Henry Cotton, was invited by John Benedict Stilwell of the well-known Anglo-Portuguese family, together with Portuguese landowners, to design the first 18-hole Algarve course at Penina near Portimão. Accompanied by a five-star hotel, the course opened in 1966 and the rest is, as they say, history. However, golf courses still seem to be aimed at tourists and foreign residents rather than the local population.

There are now close to 90 courses in Portugal but still only 15,000 signed-up members, of whom many can be assumed to be foreigners.²¹

²⁰ https://www.lisbonclub.com/fundacao_en.php

²¹ <https://www.top100golfcourses.com/golf-courses/continental-europe/portugal>

Cricket

While tennis, football and golf are now, of course, common sights in Portugal, most people would be hard-pressed to know where to go to watch a game of cricket. Playing of the game in Portugal is said to date back to the Peninsular War of 1807–1814, when English troops based in Lisbon found time to organise matches, although there are other reports of cricket being played as early as 1736.²² Cricket in Portugal was always primarily played by British residents or by Anglo-Portuguese families, although more recently some Portuguese players have emerged and there are also now many players from Commonwealth countries, particularly India and Pakistan. The end of Portuguese colonialism temporarily boosted cricket in the country as players returned from Goa, while others from Mozambique first moved to neighbouring English-speaking countries and learnt the game there.

The Oporto Cricket Club was formed in 1855 and, as the Oporto Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club, is now located in the central suburb of Campo Alegre. It is undoubtedly the oldest cricket club on mainland Europe. The club encountered difficulties in its early years, however, as it lost access to the field on which games were played. This led to the committee resigning *en masse* and the club's temporary dissolution in 1858. Three years later it resurfaced as the Oporto Cricket and Quoits Club.

In Lisbon, informal games were played at Campo Pequeno from 1860, resulting in the formation of the Lisbon Cricket Club in 1865, which also provided for football and tennis. Members came from the British community. A clubhouse was too expensive and a tent was pitched before every match instead. The building of the bullring at Campo Pequeno prompted a move to Algés. The BHSP library has some of the club's documents and accounts, dating from the 1860s, which recount that the club was concerned about members not turning up in time for matches, if at all, and introduced fines if that happened.

²² <https://www.lisboncasuals.com/history>

A game between sides from Porto and Lisbon has been played almost every year since 1861. The first match was won by Porto: quite an achievement given that some of the team sailed down to Lisbon in a Force 9 gale while others took stagecoaches and trains – a 33-hour journey at the time. However, things rapidly improved with the completion of a railway line between the two cities. In 1920, Mr. A.C. Kendall presented a challenge cup to be played for annually between the two clubs. Towards the end of the 19th century, Lisbon also played a team from Barreiro, south of the Tagus, probably composed mainly of members of the Reynolds family who owned a large *Quinta* there.²³ The Lisbon Sports Club moved to Ajuda in 1922 and a pavilion was built there in 1924.²⁴



Cricket being played at the cable station at Carcavelos – Quinta Nova

All Lisbon games are now (2019) played at Carcavelos, with the number of teams competing annually varying. There have also been teams in the Algarve and in Almoester near Santarém and others have played out of Coimbra. The Cricket Association of Portugal was

²³ Cricket in Portugal by D.C. d’Arcy Orders, BHSP Publication, 1990

²⁴ *ibid*

established in 1994, becoming the Portuguese Cricket Federation in 2001. In 1996 Portugal became an affiliate member of the International Cricket Council (ICC).



The Carcavelos Cricket Team in 1916/17

There are still very few Portuguese cricketers. That the game has not taken off in the country is not surprising. The lack of rainfall in the summer is hardly conducive to the development of smooth English ovals or reliable pitches. Porto now has an artificial pitch but, for a long time, it had the most southerly natural wicket in Europe.

It is fair to say that clubs designed for Englishmen were not particularly welcoming of Portuguese members. But, equally, it is perhaps no surprise that a country not speaking English would have trouble adapting to the game. What are the Portuguese to make of “silly mid-off”, for example? In 1960 this problem inspired Kenneth Graham in Porto to produce an amusing explanation of the game in a publication entitled “The Noble Game of Cricket and how he should be Played in Portugal Described in ‘Pombo’ Português”. This is also available for inspection at the BHSP Library.

Squash

There are varying stories regarding the origins of squash. As with lawn tennis the idea probably came from 'jeu de paume' or real tennis. It has similarities with 'pelota' from the Basque country and with 'fives', a game the author used to play at school in England, involving hitting a ball against an uneven wall with the palm of your hand. According to the World Squash Federation, the game was born at Harrow School in the second half of the 19th century.

Another version attributes the game's origins to the Fleet Debtors' prison in London, where prisoners used to hit a solid ball against the prison's wall. In 1883 the first court was built at Oxford University, thereby elevating the game's status, but international rules were not established until 1911. The name of the game presumably comes from the gradual use of hollow rubber balls, which become squashed when hit against a wall. Another version suggests that it comes from the sound the balls make on contact with the wall.

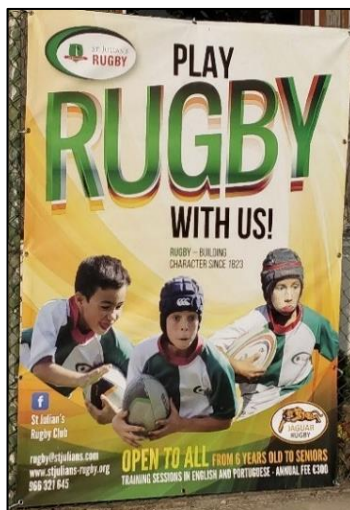
As with cricket, squash has appealed mostly to Commonwealth countries, and others with a history of contact with the British. In recent years Egyptian players have dominated both men's and women's world championships.

The first court in Portugal was built in Madeira in 1910 at the British Country Club. Squash has now spread throughout the country, owing much to the efforts of José Pimenta, known as the "father of squash in Portugal". There are now around 23 clubs playing the game.

Rugby

The first game of rugby (râguebi) in Portugal was reportedly played at Cruz Quebrada on December 11, 1903, bringing together two teams made up entirely of British players.

However, it was not until 1922 that truly competitive games began, and by then Portuguese players had begun to be included. The main organisers were a Frenchman, Maurice Baillehache, who had been captain of the team in Le Havre and Francisco Xavier de Araújo, who had taken a liking to the game while studying in England. The first match was played on 12 March, when a team put together by the Royal Football Club beat a team from Carcavelos.²⁵ A second game was played in April, with the same result.



**A sign outside
St. Julian's School, 2020**

With some of the Portuguese team coming from Sporting Club, that club embraced rugby and recruited Baillehache as a player and coach. This led to a match between Sporting and the Royal Club on 11 November 1922, with Sporting emerging victorious. Rugby seems to have arrived later in Porto, being played first at the Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club, which then supported the establishment of the Oporto Rugby Club in 1937. Lisbon first sent a team to play Porto in 1936.

A rugby football league was created in 1927, which was won in that year by Sporting. Portugal's first international was in 1935, against Spain, when Portugal lost 6-5. Portugal, which is ranked 24th in the world, has yet to play a full test match against England, having lost one match to the English second team. However Portugal has played one match each against Scotland and Wales, losing on both occasions.

²⁵ <https://ahistoria.info/historia-do-rugby/>

Field Hockey

Hockey is said to go back to the Middle Ages, or earlier, although it was not formally organised until the late 19th century in Britain. The first hockey club, founded in 1849, was Blackheath. Primitive wooden sticks were used and the “ball” was a solid piece of rubber. The game was really developed by cricket clubs in Middlesex to provide cricket players with a game to keep them fit during the winter. The Teddington club was particularly important in modernising and standardising the game, by introducing new rules, including prohibiting lifting sticks above shoulder height. In 1883 the number of players per team was set at eleven and this and other rules were adopted in 1886 by the newly formed English Hockey Association. The game was popular with the British Army, and it is no accident that ex-British colonies, such as India and Pakistan, are major players of the game. Popular worldwide, there are now 127 internationally recognised national federations.²⁶

Tracing the origins of field hockey in Portugal has not proved easy. The version played on roller skates (Roller Hockey or *Hóquei em patins*), for which Britain can also stake a claim as being the originator, is much more popular. Field hockey was played socially on the St. Julian’s School grounds from the 1960s, organised by the Lisbon Sports Club. It was also played in Porto at the Oporto Lawn Tennis and Cricket Club field and elsewhere, and regular matches were held between Lisbon and Oporto. Both men’s and mixed games were played, and presumably the lack of women’s games was due to insufficient female players. In the 1970s a National Hockey League was formed. In 1980 the Lisbon Casuals club was formed and St Julian’s agreed that hockey could continue to be played on the school grounds, on payment of an annual rent. In 2009 the Lisbon Casuals, which played several sports, was dissolved and the Lisbon Casuals *Clube de Hóquei* was formed, which continues to play at the Estádio Nacional.²⁷

²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_field_hockey

²⁷ Andrew Bailey, personal communication.

Rowing²⁸

Rowing as an organised sport began in Portugal in 1828, coincidentally the same year as the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race was first held. The spearhead of the sport's development in Portugal was Abel Power Dagge, who was born in Lisbon of British parents. In 1828 he formed the Arrow Club, the first organised rowing club in the country. Dagge went on to become a founding member of the Royal Naval Association (1855) and the Lisbon Naval Club (1892).

The sport became popular amongst the aristocracy of Lisbon, including the Count of Alcáçovas, as well as English residents. The first official competition was held in 1849, promoted by Dagge. From 1852, races became annual events as part of the annual festivities of Paço de Arcos. That of 1853 was presided over by the future King D. Luís. Taking advantage of the presence of the British battleship *Odin*, anchored in the Bay of Paço Arcos at the time, a race was held between British and Portuguese sailors. Annual competitions proved insufficient and two clubs were formed – the Tagus Rowing Club and the Lusitano Rowers Club, which often competed against each other.

The Oporto Boat Club was founded in 1866, the Clube Naval Portuense in 1868, and the Club Fluvial Portuense in 1876. The Boat Club was reserved for the British and was considered invincible at the time. In Figueira da Foz, the Figueira Naval Association was also founded in 1866 and the Modern Club in 1881. The Setúbal River Association was formed in 1880 and rowing began in Aveiro in 1894.

Still active in 1884, Abel Power Dagge organised the first Portuguese Rowing Championship, which was held on the Tagus. The winner was Manuel Braamcamp, the future Baron of Almeirim. He won a gold medal, which he proudly wore on his watch chain. From 1884

²⁸ This section is largely based on: “História do Remo em Portugal” by Carlos Manuel Gomes Henriques. <http://www.vianaremaadoresdolima.pt/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Hist%C3%B3ria-do-Remo-em-Portugal.pdf>

onwards, races were always straight, over the distance of one mile. Previously they had been carried out between two buoys, with one return. In 1896, D. Carlos and D. Amélia were transported in an 8-oar longboat during a competition in Cascais organised by the Royal Naval Association. It is reported that there were 6000 spectators on the day.

In 1908, Henry Bucknall of the Naval Club of Lisbon, and son of the Club's Commodore, won an Olympic gold medal as part of the British Eight. He had rowed as stroke for Oxford University in the Boat Races of 1906 and 1907, losing to Cambridge on both occasions. Two years earlier, fed up with always losing to Porto, Commodore Bucknall had taken his son and other Club rowers to a property that he owned in Sarilhos, for intensive training. Only Henry and three others could keep up with the workload but they went on to beat the English from Porto in the 1906 Cascais regatta, the first time Porto had lost.

Sailing

Sailing as a competitive sport is believed to have started in the Netherlands in the 17th century. In England, custom-built racing "yachts" began to emerge soon after and the Royal Yacht Squadron was established in 1815. What is considered to have been the first sailing regatta in Portugal was in the mouth of the Tagus in 1850 on the initiative of Abel Power Dagge and other British residents. They were supported by the commander of the Vixen, a British schooner then visiting Lisbon.

After this, the development of sailing closely mirrored that of rowing. Promotion by a group of Portuguese enthusiasts, headed by the Count of Alcáçovas, led to the establishment of the Royal Naval Association, which was the first nautical club of the Iberian Peninsula. The Portuguese Sailing Federation was established in 1927.

With the development of Cascais as a summer resort, as a result of the Royal Family's interest in matters nautical, sailing quickly came into its own. The first Cascais Regatta was held in 1871. In October

1893 the first race sailed entirely by amateurs was held. The first international sailing competition held in Portuguese waters was in May 1898 at Cascais, during the 400th anniversary commemorations of the discovery of the sea route to India. Lord Dunraven's ketch, *Cariad*, beat *Lia*, which King D. Carlos had signed up just so that the event could take place. In 1902 Cascais also hosted the finish of the first ocean-going race based in Portugal, which began in Leixões, just north of Porto. While Cascais continues to be an important sailing centre, particularly since the construction of its marina, Portimão on the Algarve has also now emerged as a major sailing location.

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