

The Earl of Essex and the Bishop's Library

By Peter Booker

In February 2007, I was approached by a delightful lady who feels strongly that stolen books currently in England should be returned to their former home in Faro. Would I help Dorothy in her quixotic campaign with MPs in England and with the Librarian of their current home, the Bodleian Library in Oxford, for the return of these stolen goods?

In December of 2013, the association *Faro 1540* (Associação de Defesa e Promoção do Património Ambiental e Cultural de Faro) also passed a motion to reclaim the books, which they claim were taken during the sack of Faro by the English corsair, the Earl of Essex, in July 1596. On the other hand, it is clear from their silence that neither the establishment in England nor that in Portugal is concerned with this issue.

The raids on Cadiz and Faro - 1596

In 1596, an English and Dutch allied expedition jointly led by the Earl of Essex and Lord Howard of Effingham made raids on both Cadiz and Faro. In Faro, the library of the Bishop of the Algarve was looted, and four years later the Earl donated the books to Thomas Bodley, librarian to the University of Oxford. Those books are today in the Bodleian Library (sometimes eponymously referred to by members of the University as Bodley).

This raid formed part of the nineteen years of war that existed between the crowns of England and the United Monarchy of Spain and Portugal between 1585 and 1604. One of the reasons behind this war was that Philip of Spain (who had been of course King Philip of England, as the husband of Queen Mary Tudor), still harboured the objective which caused him to marry Queen Mary in the first place. Both his father, Emperor Charles V, and Philip himself aimed to reverse

the English Reformation, to re-establish the Catholic faith in England and to create a firm base in England for future campaigns in the Spanish Netherlands. The present cause for the war was the fact that Queen Elizabeth had signed the Treaty of Nonsuch in 1585, in which she promised England's support for the Dutch Protestants rebelling against the Spanish government. The Essex raid was an act of war between the two countries, and it is therefore not correct to call the Earl a corsair on account of this raid.

The union of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns in 1580 gave rise to the striking of a medal to commemorate the accession to the joint throne of Philip II of Spain. This medal was marked *Non sufficit orbis* and implied that the Iberian monarchy was universal. For most people, this idea encountered a mortal check in 1588 with the destruction of the Invincible Armada, but it persisted in Spain. Iberian pretensions to universal hegemony also attracted the enmity of Moroccan and Algerian privateers who raided the Algarve and Andalusia with regularity at this time, and the coastal defences which still exist on the Algarvian coast are more to do with defence against the Barbary corsairs than with English or Dutch raids.

In this article, I shall refer to Philip II, monarch of Spain, in the conventional English way. He was the son of the Emperor Charles V and when his father abdicated, he became king of Spain in 1556 as Felipe II. Among his many titles, was that of king consort of England and Ireland on his marriage with Mary Tudor (1554-58). He became king of Portugal in 1580 as Filipe I, and he said of Portugal that he had inherited, bought and conquered the throne of Portugal, as he became the first ruler of a truly global empire. Philip worked hard on behalf of his many kingdoms, and died exhausted in 1598.

The War – previous raids

The 1596 expedition was the second to conduct a raid in southern Iberia. On 29th April, 1587 Sir Francis Drake with a fleet of 23 ships had raided Cadiz and destroyed more than 20 Spanish ships. This was the raid in

which he was said to have singed the King of Spain's beard, and which caused Philip II to postpone for a year the sailing of the Invincible Armada. In the face of a large Spanish armed force, Drake was unable to disembark for further destruction ashore. On his way back to England, he landed near Sagres and caused destruction at Balieira, Beliche and Cabo de São Vicente as well as Sagres. He had tried to capture Lagos on 25th May, but Portuguese resistance under Fernão Teles de Meneses, Governor and Captain General of the Algarve, was too strong.

It was on this visit that an unknown Englishman had made a plan of the house at the end of the world (*Vila do Infante*), built by the Infante D. Henrique (the Navigator), which is providentially the only plan we have of that famous building. On this voyage, Drake terrorised other parts of the Portuguese coast and on 24th June in the Azores captured the Portuguese Indiaman *São Filipe*. Previously, in 1585, Drake had also attacked and sacked Cidade Velha, São Domingos and Praia in the Cape Verde islands, before going on to raid the Spanish Main.

The Invincible Armada and its defeat in 1588 cost the united Iberian crown dear, not only in terms of men, money and ships, but also in terms of reputation and self-belief. The ability of the Iberian Crown to defend its coastline and the vital treasure fleets from the New World was fatally weakened. The monarch had to call his *cortes* in order to ask for money and in so doing he demonstrated that the *cortes* of Castile now had the ability to exercise control over expenditure. Portugal was also required to pay an (unpopular) tax to provide for a naval escort service.

D. António, Prior of Crato

In order to capitalise on the defeat of the Armada, the English landed at Peniche in 1589 in an attempt to help D. António reclaim the throne of Portugal, but the necessary popular support did not materialise. It is easy for Britons to forget the pretender to the throne of Portugal, D. António Prior of Crato (1531- 95), who was a natural son of the Infante

D. Luís and grandson of D. Manuel I. He is often referred to in Portuguese sources as D. António I, King of Portugal. There are similarities between D. António in 1580 and D. João I, Mestre de Aviz in 1383, since they were both illegitimate and were both acclaimed King by the people of Portugal. Opponents to D. António also alleged that his mother, Violante Gomes, was a New Christian. As usual in these cases, there are also historians who propose that D. António's parents were married, and it was the morganatic nature of the marriage which caused them to keep it secret.

D. António was captured at the Battle of Alcácer Quibir in 1578, and by pretending to be poor and of low birth escaped with the payment of a very small ransom. His claim to the throne was in the meantime overridden by Cardinal D. Henrique, but was resuscitated on the Cardinal's death in January, 1580. D. António's reign came to an end with the occupation of the Azores in 1583 by the forces of the Marqués de Santa Cruz, and he then became a pawn in European politics for the next 12 years. One of the uses to which Queen Elizabeth put him was the attempt in 1589 to stir up a rebellion on his behalf in Portugal. He issued letters-of-marque to English, French and Flemish (*framengos*) privateers, hoping to cover some of his personal expenses from the proceeds.

English campaigns

English privateers learned that the Iberian coast and sea-lanes were poorly defended and they began a campaign of plunder, concentrating on the route of the treasure and spice fleets near the Azores. Between 1589 and 1591, they took 299 Iberian ships which yielded £400,000 (the annual income of the English crown) and the annual average yield after 1591 was £100,000. The greatest of the English triumphs was the taking of the *Madre de Deus* in 1592 which yielded £800,000. By the end of the reign of Philip II in 1598, the Spanish navy in the Atlantic was divided between three bases: Cadiz to protect the Atlantic coast between the Strait of Gibraltar and Cape St Vincent; Lisbon to protect

the coast between Cape St Vincent and Porto and the approaches to the Azores; and Corunna to protect the coast of Galicia and the Bay of Biscay. Although there were also militias appointed to guard the coastline, the task of general protection of the whole of the coastline of the peninsula was clearly too great, and the English continued to raid with impunity.

The raid of 1596 - Cadiz

In April 1596, Lisbon merchants heard that the English were preparing a fleet to attack the peninsula, and Philip II sent vessels to the Channel to watch English naval movements. By June, the reports were so alarming that Lisbon was put on red alert, and the gates were closed and the city prepared for a siege because *se ueyo a descobrir tanto a uinda dos Ingresses e serteza disso que a redea solta comesarão grandes e pequenos, altos e baxos a despeiar fazendas, molheres e filhos, chegando a não auer ia quem ouuesse barca nem andas nem caualgadura por nenhum dinheiro* (they discovered that the English were certainly coming and as quickly as they could, great and lesser people, higher and lower classes began to send out from the city their property, their wives and children, and they arrived at the position where boats, carts and horses could not be had at any price). Even after their attack on Cadiz on 1st July, there was widespread rumour that Lisbon was the eventual target of the English.

Essex's fleet of 150 ships (including 20 Dutch sail) left Plymouth on 1st June and arrived off the coast of the peninsula on the 10th June. The joint commanders (Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex and Lord Howard of Effingham, created 1st Earl of Nottingham in 1597) decided to stop and capture any passing ships to prevent the news of their arrival being spread, and by chance they took three ships out of Cadiz and by questioning their crews, the English learned much about the state of the defences at Cadiz. The declaration of the English commanders, written in Spanish, appeared in Lisbon with the assurance that they would attack only subjects of the Iberian king and any other who supported him.

At Cadiz, the English overpowered many of the ships anchored in the bay, destroyed others and took the city, where they demanded a monetary tribute. Unable to defend all of their ships, the Spanish themselves fired some of them. The invaders allowed the inhabitants to leave with their personal belongings before they sacked the city over three days. Referring to the King of Spain, William Monson (who was a ship's captain during this raid) wrote, *For our attempt was at his own Home, in his Port that he thought as safe as his Chamber, where we took and destroy'd his Ships of War, burnt and consum'd the Wealth of his Merchants, sack'd his City, ransom'd his Subjects and entered his Country without Impeachment.*

The burning of merchant ships anchored in the bay at the order of the Duke of Medina Sidonia cost the merchants many millions of cruzados. The Spanish remarked that the invaders had treated the people well, and in particular that they had not offended the women in any way. Some of the allied commanders were in favour of keeping and garrisoning the city, but Howard insisted that such a move was contrary to the Queen's orders, and such a move was in any event too expensive. The English were so much in control that they remained in Cadiz for 16 days, and because the demanded ransom money was not forthcoming, when they left, they took with them many Spanish hostages. The attack on Cadiz in 1596 was one of the most damaging defeats for Spanish forces in the war, since it led directly to the bankruptcy of the Spanish crown in that same year.

The raid of 1596 - Faro

What next? The commanders were clearly undecided and chose to revictual on the coast of the Algarve; had they chosen to patrol the Azores, they could have taken the *São Pantaleão* which arrived in Lisbon from India on 8th August with an immensely valuable cargo of Eastern goods. The Portuguese were certainly afraid of such a move.

Philip II sent his *Adelantado Mayor*, Don Martín de Padilla Manrique, to take charge of the defence of Lisbon, much to the anger of the Portuguese; Manrique was later substituted by the Conde de Portalegre. By the agreement reached in Tomar in 1581, Philip II had undertaken to ensure that major posts in his administration of Portugal would be reserved for Portuguese, and clearly the Portuguese nobility supposed that he would abide by his promise. In the Algarve, the Governor and Captain General Rui Lourenço de Távora reinforced the defences of Lagos. They clearly expected another attack on Lagos (as Drake had attacked the town nine years before), and the Bishop of the Algarve, obeying a royal decree, also led his reinforcements from Faro to Lagos.

On the 23rd July, the English disembarked in the late afternoon to the west of Faro. It is probable that they landed at Farrovilhas, a small port formerly serving Almancil and Loulé, whose area nowadays forms a part of the Quinta do Lago estate. There was a castle and look-out tower at Farrovilhas, and on a visitation by the Masters of the Order of Santiago in 1565 to the Hermitage of Nossa Senhora de Farrovilhas, a record was made of a big tower with three storeys and windows from which *they looked out for Moorish raiders*. In the eighteenth century, there was a battery located here, one of the many along the Algarve coast designed to repel attacks by the Barbary corsairs. The port of Farrovilhas fell into disuse owing to the continuous silting of its approaches. One of the major farmsteads in the area of Quinta do Lago was called Quinta dos Descabeçados, meaning the farm of those who have been beheaded. It is entirely possible, although there is no shred of evidence for this supposition, that the farm bears this name because some of the English were caught by the vengeful locals and beheaded at the site of this farm.

Finding little resistance, Essex determined to attack the city on the following morning. As the Bishop had led off the menfolk to Lagos, there were few men left to defend their city. There was no heroic resistance to the invasion nor was there any great wealth for the English

to rob, since the remaining inhabitants had fled with their possessions. The invaders roamed far and wide in search of victuals, even as far as São Brás de Alportel, in the hills 17 kilometres to the north of Faro. They were opposed and repulsed outside São Brás by local people. This incursion must have taken place on 25th July, and those English who headed in the direction of Loulé and Tavira were opposed by the militias of Loulé and Tavira, and they subsequently retreated to Faro. Having sacked the city, the English fired it and then re-embarked on 27th July. News reached Lisbon on 28th July that *os ingleses entrarão en Faro e o saquearão deribando e queimando muita parte delle*. (*The English entered Faro and sacked it, destroying and burning a large part of it.*) The incursion as far as São Brás de Alportel was first acknowledged in writing in the work of Silva Lopes in 1841, and is clearly based in oral history. The successful resistance to this attack is commemorated every year in São Brás, not in July, but at the procession held on Easter Day.

The Bishop of the Algarve at the time of the raid was D Fernando Martins Mascarenhas, who was appointed to the see in 1595 and remained bishop until 1616. In the dedication to his book published in 1604, D Fernando wrote of the attack by the English, “*as mulheres lamentam-se, as crianças choram, uns ocorrem às armas, outros agarram-se às suas coisas, a maior parte são tomados de medo aqui, sem armas ali, sem saber que resolução tomar com a mente perturbada....*” The English were “*os inimigos impiedosos, insolentes, soberbos, truculentos, irados, em pouco tempo põem tudo a ferro e fogo, e tudo destroem: as igrejas, as casas são roubadas e incendiadas.*” This raid clearly rankled with the Bishop, for apart from the major destruction of the city, he had lost his means of both teaching and learning. Not only was this remark written eight years after the occasion, but Mascarenhas had not even been in Faro at the time of the raid, and so it is not based on personal experience.

The English appeared off Lagos on 27th July, but appreciating that the potential profit in taking the town was probably not worth the effort after their experience at Faro, they sailed on. Lisbon felt itself under threat for the rest of the summer. The city was the scene of differences between Portuguese and Castilians about defensive measures, and there was risk of open conflict between them. For the Algarve, the cost of the English raid was high in terms of immediate loss and also in terms of the cost of maintaining garrisons and building defences for the future. As for Faro, among its losses was the library of its Bishop, which was now aboard an English ship and on its way to England. On his return, Essex must have stored the books in one of his houses, since they were not donated to Thomas Bodley's new library until 1600. It is fortunate that he donated them when he did because on 25th February 1601, Essex became the last person to be executed by beheading at the Tower.

Thomas Bodley (1545 – 1613)

Bodley had been educated at Oxford and Geneva. He had taken his degree at Magdalen in 1563 and was later admitted as Fellow at Merton College and served in many University posts. In 1576, the college made him a grant of £6 13s 4d to make a tour of the Continent. On his return, he began a parliamentary and diplomatic career, travelled widely in northern Europe, and became aware of the high standards of university libraries in Europe. It was at this time that he must have conceived the objective of restoring the library of the university. Bodley gave up his career in government service in 1596, largely because of the infighting between Robert Cecil and the Earl of Essex.

Bodley then returned to Oxford, but he was unable to resume his fellowship at Merton because since 1587 he had been married. The University Library at Oxford had been founded by Duke Humfrey of Gloucester (1391 – 1447), but suffered damage and dispersal during the turmoil of the English Reformation in the 1530s. In comparison with those libraries he had seen on the continent, the degraded state of the Oxford University Library horrified him. In 1598, Bodley offered to

restore the library at his own expense. He determined *to take his farewell of state employments and to set up his staff at the library door in Oxford*. His offer was accepted by the university authorities and he began collecting books in the year 1600. It was Bodley who first had the idea of giving publicity to those who supported him. Those who endowed his library were named in his Benefactors' Book, which was placed on display in the Library, and this handsome volume with names of donors prominently inscribed on vellum attracted more gifts. Bodley may well have been the first to publicise the names of his current donors in this way, and many institutions still follow this practice. When Bodley's Library opened its doors in on 8th November 1602, it already possessed 2,500 volumes, and in 1605 Bodley published the Library's first catalogue.

Essex's donation

The donation made to Bodley by the Earl comprised 176 titles and 215 volumes; of these, 65 titles and 91 volumes were certainly taken from the collection of the Bishop of the Algarve. These 91 volumes bear the Mascarenhas arms stamped in gold on their covers. There is one other volume and another manuscript which are dedicated to the Bishop but which do not bear his arms, and it is reasonable to deduce that these works were also taken from his collection in Faro.

It is not certain whether this collection of 91 volumes is comprises all of those taken from the Bishop's collection, since it is possible both that Essex did not donate all that he possessed and it is also possible that others stole volumes from Faro which were not in the Essex collection. It is also possible that Essex gave away those titles which were of no interest, and retained for his own use any which were more accessible to him. The Earl had also taken books from the raid at Cadiz, and books of Spanish origin represent the second most important collection given by Essex to Bodley. It is of course impossible to say whether the rest of the donation, or only a part of it, came from Cadiz.

Most of the books donated by Essex were printed after 1571, and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, books were still a valuable rarity. In comparison with other contemporary libraries, the collection of Bishop Mascarenhas was not large, and contemporary Portuguese prelates with similar backgrounds had collections twice the size. We cannot tell what proportion of the whole of Mascarenhas' collection is represented by those books donated to Bodley. After the raid, Bishop Mascarenhas set about rebuilding his library, in part through Inquisitorial confiscations which he diverted to his own personal collection. He was Inquisitor General for the twelve years 1616 – 1628, and was not alone in using the confiscations made through his office for personal gain.

Of the volumes given by Essex to the Bodleian, 35% were of French origin, and only 24% of Iberian origin, 20% German and 13% Italian. Of the 42 volumes donated by Essex which were printed in Iberia, only 20 were clearly taken from Faro. Other printing centres represented are France, Flanders, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. The subjects of the books donated are: theology (62%); law (17%); and teaching (15%).

The overwhelming majority of these books were written in Latin, one is in Castilian and two in Greek; Latin was of course the main language of learning until the mid-eighteenth century, although Galileo (1562 – 1642) began in 1612 to write in Italian.

List of books presented by the Earl of Essex in 1600

In his correspondence with Dorothy, the Librarian showed that there is a published list of the volumes donated by the Earl of Essex. The list was published in 1922 in *The Bodleian Quarterly Record*, volume 3, no 34, pp 241-244. This list is still valid. Analysis of the entries in the catalogue shows that the works which were taken from Bishop Mascarenhas numbered 65 printed works and one manuscript; and that the balance of the Earl's gift was made up of another 111 works. Their provenance is as follows in modern geographical terminology:

	Certainly Mascarenhas	Probably not Mascarenhas
	(from Faro)	(from elsewhere)
Spain & Portugal	20	22
Manuscript	1	
France	22	40
Switzerland	0	7
Belgium	3	18
Germany	11	9
Italy	9	15
Totals	66	111

Only two of the works bearing the arms of the Bishop were published in Portugal (in Coimbra); of the other twenty-two others from Spain and Portugal, two were printed in Coimbra and one in Évora.

Writing in the 1640s, Monson stated that Faro was *a Town of Algarve in Portugal, a Place of no Resistance or Wealth, only famous for the Library of Osorius, who was Bishop of that Place; which Library was brought into England by us, and many of the Books bestw'd upon the new erected Library of Oxford*. Monson here implies that Essex gave most (that is, not all) of the books that he had stolen from Faro; he also repeats the mistake that D Jerónimo Osório was Bishop of the Algarve at the time. In fact, Osório was Bishop of the Algarve 1564 – 1580, and it was during his episcopate in 1577 that the bishopric was moved from Silves to Faro.

The questions remain as follows. If Essex did not donate to Bodley all of the books that he took from Faro, where is the remainder? As he certainly donated books to Bodley which definitely did not come from Faro, where did these volumes come from? There may be some books

among those taken from Bishop Mascarenhas' library which do not bear his arms and yet form part of this donation. Was the Bishop's library plundered in the same raid by other people? How many of the books that he donated came from the raid on Cadiz?

Dorothy's campaign

Letters sent to her by Bodley's Librarian (also the Director of University Library Services) and given to me by Dorothy discuss the repatriation of items of iconic status by museums and other institutions such as libraries. In these letters, the Librarian asserts that such repatriation is rare. He writes that if everyone were to repatriate such items, the library and museum worlds would enter a period of upheaval. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw widespread political commotion and collections all over Europe were affected, including Oxford's own library. Some of the works from Duke Humfrey's original library are now in St Petersburg and others in Rome. The Librarian explains that if these volumes are seen as a part of a vast European collection, it cannot matter in which part of Europe they are located if they are well cared for, if their location is acknowledged and if they are available for consultation. Dorothy's correspondence on this issue includes other letters from Members of Parliament who are clearly of the opinion that this particular lying dog is much better left asleep.

A faulty premise?

The last question which hovers menacingly over those who seek the repatriation of these items is quite clear in my mind. If we suppose that Essex did not steal these books, and that they remained in the possession of the Bishop of the Algarve, where would they now be? And if these books survived the passage of time, who would be their legal owner through inheritance? The answers to these questions cannot be pleasing to the citizens of Faro.

The erroneous premise is to suppose that the books were stolen from the city of Faro, or even from the Bishopric of Faro. But since the books bear his own personal arms, the evidence shows that Bishop Mascarenhas regarded these books as his own personal property. They were therefore stolen from him personally. The Bishop left the Algarve in 1616 to assume the office of Inquisitor General in Lisbon, and he undoubtedly took his reduced library with him. Consequently, if the stolen books had remained in his possession, they most likely would have been in Lisbon when Mascarenhas died, and not in Faro. Although as a Bishop, he could have no legitimate direct descendants, it must be that members of the Mascarenhas family rather than the Bishop of the Algarve, or even the city of Faro would have a prior claim to their ownership. To me it is clear that any demand for the return of these books to the city or bishopric of Faro must fail, not only on the grounds cited by Bodley's Librarian, but also owing to the basic logic of the law of inheritance.

Note: Some of the material for this article has been drawn from the booklet *A memória à luz da história ou a biblioteca do Bispo do Algarve revisitada* by João Teles e Cunha, published by the University of the Algarve in 2007.

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Peter Booker spent most of his working life with British Coal, after taking his degree in Modern History at Pembroke College, Cambridge. After the collapse of the coal industry in Britain, he and Lynne in 1998 chose to emigrate to the Algarve. In 2006 they founded the Algarve History Association (Associação dos Historiadores do Algarve), whose aim is to bring Algarvian and Portuguese history and culture to the notice of a wider expatriate and Anglophone audience. AHA now has a circulation list of well over 800 people from many nationalities, from all over the Algarve. Peter has lectured on a number of occasions to all the branches of the British Historical Society and also to the Anglo-Portuguese Society in London.