

## **Zita, the last Empress of Austria, grand-daughter of a King of Portugal**

Princess Zita of the Royal Houses of Braganza and Bourbon Parma was the grand-daughter of D. Miguel I, King of Portugal (1828 until his exile in 1834).

*By Malcolm Howe, G.C.M.W.*



**Zita, Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary, 1916**

The Infanta Maria Antonia de Braganza (1862-1959) was the youngest daughter of Dom Miguel, the exiled King of Portugal who, aged 48, married the 20-year-old orphan Princess Adelaide of Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rosenberg on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1851, in the chapel of Adelaide's birthplace in Germany, Löwenstein Palace, at Kleinheubach.



**Zita's royal grandparents, Princess Adelaide and D. Miguel de Braganza at their wedding in 1851 at the Löwenstein Palace, Kleinheubach<sup>1</sup>**

At the age of 22, Maria Antonia de Braganza married the widower Duke Robert of Bourbon Parma in 1884, as his second wife. The Duke already had twelve children by his first wife and Maria Antonia bore him another twelve. Their fifth child was Zita, who was born on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 1892, in Tuscany and named after a popular local Italian saint.

Duke Robert abdicated the throne of the Duchy of Parma in 1859, as a consequence of the unification of Italy. Although non-regnant, he was immensely wealthy and used to hire a private train with sixteen carriages to transport his large family between his castles at Schwarzau am Steinfeld near Vienna, Villa Pianore in northwest Italy, and the magnificent Château de Chambord, on the River Loire in France. His children could converse in Italian, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and also in English

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<sup>1</sup> The guests included many loyal Portuguese who supported the King's cause.



**Zita's parents, Robert Duke of Parma and Maria Antonia de Braganza**



**The family of Robert, Duke of Parma, at Villa Pianore, 1906**

**From left to right, 1<sup>st</sup> row: Immacolata, Antonia, Isabella, Duke Robert, Henrietta, Luigi, Gaetano, Duchess Maria Antonia, Renato, Zita (sitting on the far right)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> row: Francesca, Pia, Luisa, Adelaide, Teresa, Joseph, Xavier, Henry, Sixtus, Felix**

At the age of ten, Zita was sent to a boarding school at Zanberg in Upper Bavaria. She was summoned home in the autumn of 1907 on the death of her father and then her maternal grandmother sent her and her sister to be educated at the Saint Cecilia French Benedictine Convent at Ryde, Isle of Wight, in England. Her grandmother, the widow of the exiled King Dom Miguel of Portugal (1803-1866), lived at the same convent from 1901 until she died in 1909, aged 78, having taken vows, professing as Mother Adelaide de Braganza.



**Grandmother Adelaide**

Zita's mother, the Infanta Maria Antónia of Portugal, was widowed when Robert, Duke of Parma, died at Villa Pianore on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, 1907. She resided with Zita in Bavaria while in exile, before moving to Berg Castle, Luxembourg, where she died in 1959, aged 96. She was the last surviving grandchild of D. João VI of Portugal.

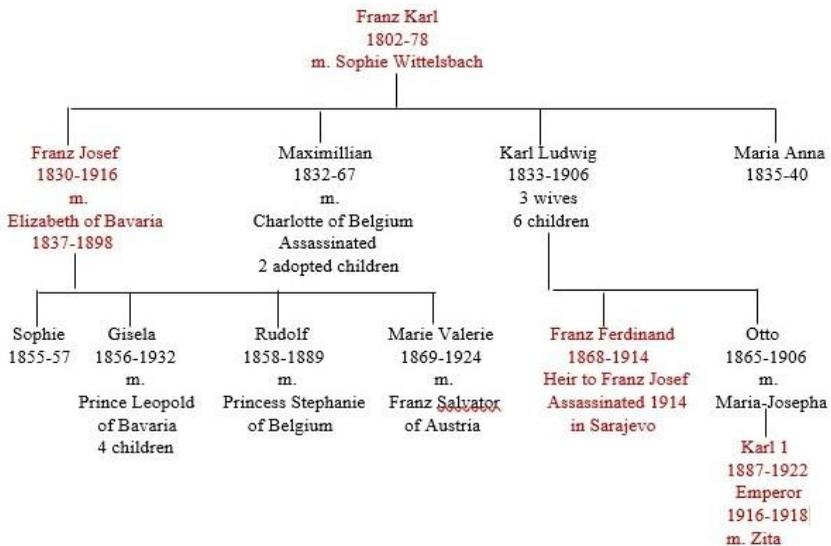


**Infanta Maria Antónia of Portugal, with some of her grandchildren  
Augusta Vitoria of Hohenzollern (middle of back row) married D. Manuel II in 1913**



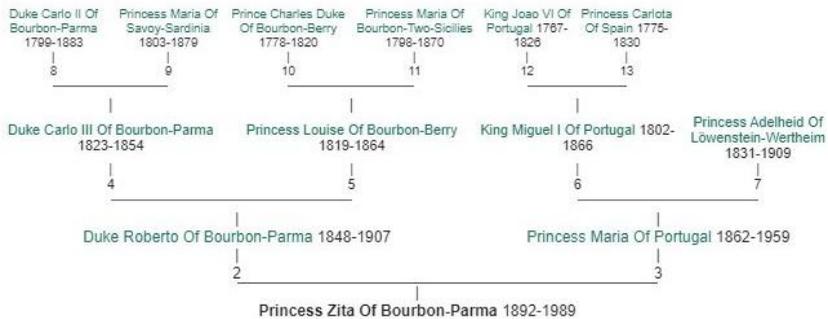
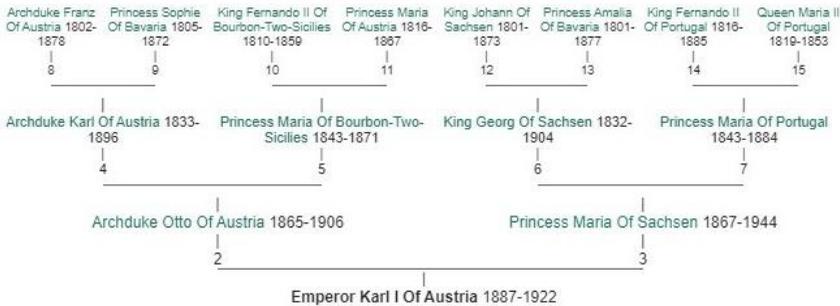
**The wedding of Karl and Zita**

On 21<sup>st</sup> October, 1911, Zita married the Austrian Archduke Karl von Habsburg. Karl joined the Austro-Hungarian Army and was a cavalry officer until the assassination of his uncle, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo in 1914, left him heir to the throne of the Austria-Hungarian Empire. In the First World War Karl commanded a corps on the Italian Front. On the death of his great-uncle, Franz Josef, on 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1916, Karl became the Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary. He held liberal views and made secret attempts to negotiate Austria-Hungary's exit from the First World War, but was unsuccessful. In April 1919 he was formally dethroned by the Austrian Parliament and exiled to Switzerland.



**The Habsburg family tree**

Interestingly, Karl was also descended from the Portuguese royal family, as his maternal great-grandmother was D. Maria II of Portugal, who was married to Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg and Gotha-Koháry.



### The family trees of Emperor Karl of Austria and Hungary and Zita

Karl and Zita went on to have eight children. On 19<sup>th</sup> November 1921, they arrived at Madeira as exiles, with the agreement of the Portuguese Government, notwithstanding Portugal having fought with the Allies in the War. When they landed at Funchal, the Royal couple was greeted by the Governor and Zita was presented with a bouquet tied with blue and red silk ribbons – the colours of her grandfather Dom Miguel, as King of Portugal. They and their children, who joined them on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1922, lived first in Funchal at the Vila Vitoria, next to Reid's Hotel, and later moved to Quinta do Monte.



**King Karl and Queen Zita of Hungary and Crown Prince Otto, Dec. 1916**

On 9<sup>th</sup> March 1922, Karl caught a cold, which developed into to severe pneumonia. After two heart attacks, he died on 1<sup>st</sup> April, in the presence of Zita (who was pregnant with their eighth child) and the nine-year-old Crown Prince Otto von Habsburg. His last words to Zita were "I love you so much". His mortal remains, except for his heart, still rest on the island in a chapel devoted to the former Emperor in the Church of Nossa Senhora do Monte. Beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2004, he is known to the Catholic Church as the *Blessed Karl of Austria*.



**The Church of Nossa Senhora do Monte, Madeira**

Widowed at the age of 29, Zita never married again. She resided with her children in the Palacio Uribarren at Lekeitio, near Bilbao from 1922 until 1929, when they went to Belgium. In 1936, Zita's brother, Prince Xavier of Bourbon Parma, was nominated the Carlist Pretender to the Throne of Spain. Prince Otto von Habsburg served as a symbol of unity for the exiled dynasty. He was elected Vice President (1957–1973) and President (1973–2004) of the International Paneuropean Union and also served as a Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU) Member of the European Parliament from its founding in 1979 to 1999.

For the remaining sixty-seven years of her life, Zita always dressed in black in mourning for her late husband, just as Queen Victoria had for Prince Albert. Her eight children endowed her with no fewer than thirty-three grandchildren. The hearts of both Karl and Zita were entombed in the Benedictine Muri Abbey, near Basle, Switzerland, founded in 1027 by Radbot, Count Habsburg, a progenitor of the dynasty.

On 6<sup>th</sup> April 1967, the mortal remains of Dom Miguel, the erstwhile King of Portugal, and his German consort, Princess Adelaide



**Empress Zita, aged 95**

of Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rosenberg were laid to rest in the Braganza Royal Pantheon within the church of São Vicente de Fora, Lisbon, in the presence of their descendants, including their grand-daughter Zita. In 1950, the Portuguese Parliament rescinded the law banning the descendants of the exiled King Dom Miguel from entering Portugal, on pain of death. Dom Miguel's grandson, Dom Duarte Nuno returned with his family to live in Portugal in 1952, bringing to an end 118 years of exile. His younger son Dom Miguel, brother of Dom Duarte Pio, now Duke of Braganza, went to Bavaria to accompany the coffins, transported by the Portuguese Air Force. Their

fine satin funeral palls are conserved in the Military Museum of Lisbon.

Zita died, after seventy years in exile, aged ninety-six, on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1989, in Zizers, Switzerland. The Republic of Austria acquiesced to her funeral in Vienna – on condition that the Habsburg family paid the costs, which were estimated at that time to be £200,000.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1989, the streets of Vienna were packed with crowds and the cathedral of St Stephen was filled to capacity with 8,000 Austrian and Hungarian Monarchists representing every single territory of the former Empire, many wearing their national dress. A former Chancellor of Austria, the Vice-Chancellor, the Mayor of Vienna, and several cabinet ministers and provincial governors also paid their respects. Zita's coffin was draped with the funeral pall of the Empress Maria Theresa. The principal mourners were 200 descendants and relatives. The funeral service began at 3pm, the same hour that Emperor Karl died on the Island of Madeira on the same day, April 1<sup>st</sup>.



**Empress Zita's funeral, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1989, Vienna, Austria**

The state television service broadcast the entire ceremony live and issued a video of the events that included black and white excerpts of the funeral of Emperor Franz Joseph in 1916<sup>2</sup>. It was estimated that over

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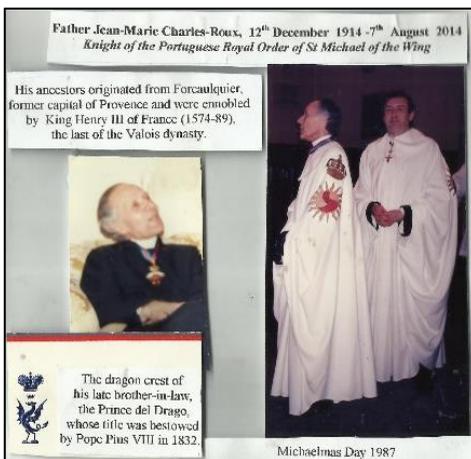
<sup>2</sup>[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBu2rx4kM7w&ab\\_channel=PatriciusRittervonKvan%C4%8Dnik](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBu2rx4kM7w&ab_channel=PatriciusRittervonKvan%C4%8Dnik)

40,000 mourners were present outside the cathedral; windows and balconies were draped in black and photographs of the Empress displayed. The cortege was followed by a procession a thousand strong, which took nearly an hour to walk about a mile to the Capuchin Church where the Habsburgs are buried, where only a few could have witnessed the unique and moving ceremony that was enacted behind closed doors.

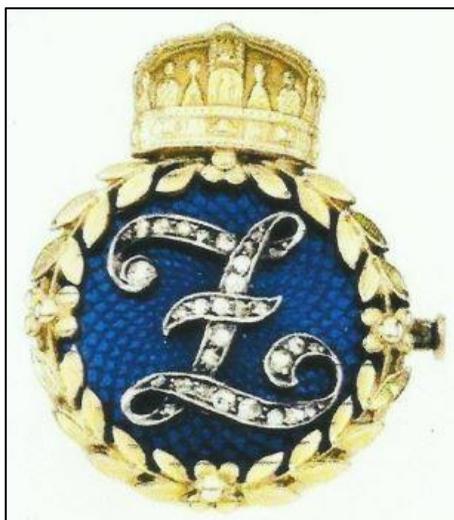
The ritual included the Court Chamberlain knocking on the door of the church three times with his staff of office. The Capuchin monk, wearing a plain brown robe, custodian of the Habsburg burial crypt within, then asked who was seeking entry. The response was *Zita, Her Imperial Majesty, Empress of Austria; Her Royal and Apostolic Majesty, Queen of Hungary* followed by all her titles related to fifty separate territories of the Austria-Hungarian Empire, from *Queen of Bohemia* to *Grand Vojvoydinja of Serbia* and ending *Infanta of Spain, Princess of Portugal and of Parma*. The monk replied *I do not know her*. The Chamberlain then knocked another three times and when asked again who sought entry, his response was *Zita the Empress and Queen* but the monk once more replied that he did not know her. For the third and last time, the chamberlain knocked thrice on the closed door and humbly responded *Zita, a mortal sinful person*. The custodian Capuchin monk then opened the doors and the coffin entered as the Vienna Boys Choir sang *Salve Regina*, music of the Austrian composer Haydn, and the Lutheran hymn “O Sacred Head, now wounded”. The final ritual was Archduke Otto giving the gold key of the coffin to the custodian, symbolising transfer of the guardianship of the mortal remains of his mother Zita, the last Empress of Austria, to the Capuchins.

Zita was proclaimed an Infanta of Spain, as it was understood that her father had been created an Infante of Spain by his kinsman, King Alfonso XIII, for supporting the Spanish Monarchy. In addition, other members of Duke Robert’s family who were living in Spain were granted Spanish nationality and the right to be called ‘Infante/a’.

A memorial service was held in London, at the Catholic Church of the Holy Redeemer in Chelsea. The Austrian and Portuguese Ambassadors were represented at the solemn requiem mass and an evocative eulogy was rendered by the Reverend Jean-Marie Charles-Roux (1914-2014), formerly a French diplomat before professing Holy Orders as a Rosminian, who was devoted to the divine nature of Monarchy. As chaplain of the Portuguese Royal Order of St Michael of the Wing in the United Kingdom, he wore the insignia on a red and blue striped ribbon, the colours of Dom Miguel, King of Portugal, who restored this medieval Order of Chivalry in 1848, when in exile.



**Father Jean-Marie Charles-Roux (1914-2014)**



**Brooch of Queen Zita: monogram under the Hungarian crown of St. Stephen**

Zita's piety, Portuguese patrimony, and virtuous longevity are worthy to be extolled, as expressed in the Apostolic Epistle to the Philippians: *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

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*Longstanding member Malcolm Howe, GCMW, has been a prolific writer of articles for the British Historical Society of Portugal since 1986. He is a Knight of the Order of St. Michael of the Wing, which is believed to have been founded in 1171 by the First King of Portugal, D. Afonso Henriques. It was revived in its current form in 1981 and recognised by the Royal House of Braganza in 1986. Malcolm is the author of the following books relating to the history of Portugal: “The Braganza Story: a visit to the Royal Pantheon of Portugal” published in 1999 by the Society, with the preface by the late Paulo Lowndes Marques, O.B.E., Chairman; “Portugal’s Perplexing Panels: the meaning of a medieval masterpiece”, published in 2001, with copies donated to the Society for each member; “Dom Manuel II, The last King of Portugal: His Life and Reign” published in 2009; and the “Barons de Sandeman”, published in 2019.*