

## The British presence in the Algarve over the centuries

By Peter Booker

### Travellers to the Algarve

One of the most famous writers of English and British interests in Portugal was Rose Macaulay. Her two wonderful books (*They went to Portugal* (1946) and *They went to Portugal too* (1990)) were written during the war after her London flat had been blitzed. The whole was originally one book, but post-war austerity publishing found the complete work too long, and the second book was published some 32 years after her death.

Rose Macaulay wrote one other book about Iberia in the immediate aftermath of the war. *Fabled Shore: From the Pyrenees to Portugal* was published in 1949 and describes her journey by car down the eastern coast of Spain and along the south coast of Portugal. Of the book's 225 pages, she devoted seventeen to the Algarve. She found Vila Real de Santo António dull, Tavira delightful, Olhão exotic, oddly modernist. Faro was not interesting looking, Loulé was white and very Arabic, Albufeira a picturesque and charming town. The Algarve was ... "lovely country, smelling sweetly of thyme and figs and aromatic shrubs, with gentle hills of cork and olive woods and plantations of sugar canes and almonds and carobs .... little white towns with a dream like charm - Alcantarilha with its Manueline church and ruined castle; Lagoa a charming village.... Portimão ...lies beautifully round its port....the best port in the Algarve..... the splendid town [of Silves], crowned by its huge red-walled Moorish castle. The sight of Silves from the bridge is stupendous... ....looking about, I was greeted by an Englishman on a bicycle, the manager of the great cork factory that I could see below...[It became the Museum Fábrica do Inglês] ...Lagos, where the railway ends, is an exciting place, very ancient, its bay of great renown...after Raposeira..... the Algarve garden lies behind; bleak moorland begins The south coast of the Barlavento in August is draughty and cool".

The dominant position of Britain in world affairs of the nineteenth century led to understandable frustration on the part of people of other nations. Two of Portugal's major writers of the nineteenth century succumbed to the temptation to be rude. Eça de Queirós wrote in *Os Maias*, published in 1888. .... "we import everything [from England]. Laws, ideas, philosophies, theories, subjects of conversation, aesthetics, science, style, industries, fashions, manners, jokes, everything comes in boxes on the boat. With the customs dues, we buy civilization at a very high price: and it's all second-hand, it wasn't made for us, it's short in the sleeves". Before that, one of Portugal's greatest authors, famous for his histories of Portugal and his novels, Alexandre Herculano (1810 – 1877) had also had a dig at the British in *O Pároco da Aldeia* (1851): "In England there is no idiot who does not write a tourist book, nor any prize idiot who does not write one about Portugal". Alexandre Herculano may have perceived only Englishmen, but António Ventura's book (*O Algarve Visto pelos Estrangeiros Séculos XII a XIX*) contains comments from thirty individuals, of whom only eleven were British, and fourteen of these comments were made in the nineteenth century. The comments

are not the work of idiots, nor are they all the work of Britons. These works are crucial to our understanding of the ancient Algarve and they shed an interesting contemporary view of this tiny peripheral region of Portugal. One of my favourites is *An Account of the Most Remarkable Places and Curiosities in Spain and Portugal* (there were two London editions, in 1749 and 1760) by Udal ap Rhys, whom Ventura guesses may have been Flemish; his name cannot be anything but Welsh. One critic suggested that because his book is set in such general terms, Rhys had never travelled further than his own armchair.

George Thomas Landmann (1780-1854) who retired as a lieutenant colonel in the Royal Engineers did travel further than his armchair, since he served in the Peninsula from 1805 to 1812. He wrote in his *Adventures and Recollections* (1852) that the Algarve's gardens "*abound in fruit of many kinds; and some of them produce bananas and date trees. Fruit is so plentiful in this part of the country and of course of such little value, that it is not even requisite to ask permission to eat as much of it as we please; but this liberty does not extend to filling the pockets*".

John Murray's *Hints to Travellers in Portugal* was also published in 1852. .... "*the climate of Algarve is different in many respects from that of Portugal. If it has been said that Africa commences at the Pyrenees, it may with a great deal more truth be asserted that it extends to Monchique.....Algarve furnished a large proportion of the adventurers who discovered India and Brazil; and the inhabitants are to this day considered the best mariners in Portugal.....The traveller will do well to be on his guard against a really dangerous reptile the gecko or as they call it here the osga.....The Algarvese have the character of being honest and industrious but great talkers. It is a common saying to anyone who has been chattering, "You must come from Algarve"..... The great heat of the summer day in Algarve is much tempered by the regular N wind which rises every afternoon about 5 o'clock and continues to blow with increasing vehemence till 1 am. It then begins to subside and by sunrise the air is perfectly still.....The cottages in this kingdom are generally much neater and cleaner than are to be found in other parts of Portugal and the manner of building their chimneys is quite peculiar and by no means distasteful*".

A French traveller, Gabriel de Saint Victor, commented in 1879 on an item of women's clothing, the *bioco*, the Algarvian version of the hijab. "*After us there came in some women. Their clothing was extraordinary. They were hooded [encarapuçadas] with an enormous black mantilla wound around their heads so that they left an opening by which they could see to walk, but it is impossible to recognize them underneath it. This mode of dressing dates back to Moorish times*". Its use is much more likely to date back only to the mid seventeenth century. The *bioco* was certainly in use in Olhão until as late as the beginning of the twentieth century.

With the coming of the railway in the late nineteenth century, the Algarve became much more accessible. In 1899 Henry Noel Shore, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron Teignmouth, published *Three Pleasant Springs in Portugal* in which he described a journey by rail to Faro. ... "*the better class Portuguese never travel if they can help it...and very few Portuguese go there from other parts*

*except on business and even they can tell you very little that is worth knowing ... a charming Anglo-Portuguese gentleman ... "You know in Portugal up to within recent times no one travelled because there were no hotels; and there were no hotels because no one travelled".*

There was one train each way during the day and when he arrived in Faro, he stated ... *"we spied some ripe figs and laying in a supply of oranges, we sought out a sunny seat on the esplanade near a miserable patch of ornamental garden. Here some sickly palms were dragging out a squalid existence under the depressing influence of dust and periodic waterings. The prospect before us was not entrancing. We gazed across a vast expanse of mud – it might have been Weston-Super-Mare – which at low tide represents the harbour here, the horizon being bounded by sand dunes, beyond which was said to be the sea. Midway across the mudflats we discovered a Portuguese man-of-war high and dry, reposing snugly enough on her self-made bed of mud. The truth of the commercial gentleman's remark began to dawn on us - that there was nothing at all to be seen in Faro".*

### **Military and Naval Matters**

Rose Macaulay's two historical books include only two stories about the Algarve and both stories have echoes which reach our modern ears. The first was the raid by Francis Drake on Cadiz, Lagos and Sagres in 1587. That raid was significant in historical terms, as one of his crew took the opportunity to make a sketch of the buildings on Cape Sagres. This sketch is the only record that has come down to us of the house at World's End built by Prince Henry, *O Infante de Sagres*, the Navigator. If the raid had not occurred, we should today have no idea of the original shape and construction of Prince Henry's house. Macaulay writes that Drake even had the notion of retaining Sagres as an English outpost, but had no support in this idea.

A second raid took place in 1596, when the Earl of Essex, joint commander with Lord Howard of Effingham, raided and burned the city of Faro, and much to the chagrin and astonishment of both Effingham and the sailors who had to carry them, stole books from the library of the bishop, D Fernando Martins Mascarenhas. Essex was executed for treason in early 1601, and probably some time in 1600 he donated the books to his friend Thomas Bodley, who was in the process of re-founding the library of the university in Oxford. Those books are of course now in the Bodleian Library, and reading their subjects and titles (they are mostly in Latin and about theology), I suspect that perhaps they do not often leave their shelves. A British resident in the Algarve has championed the cause of their return to Faro, and has corresponded with Bodley's Librarian and Members of Parliament, but there is no official momentum in either Britain or Portugal behind the move to have these books returned to Faro. In Faro itself, however, there is today a society petitioning for their return. The officers of the society may not have asked themselves the most obvious question: if these books had not been taken to England, where would they be now?

Notwithstanding Shore's remark, the Algarve is close to the sea and to shipping. Ships of the Royal Navy must have been a familiar sight off the coast of the Algarve as they made their way to Gibraltar and other naval stations in the Mediterranean, and on occasion defeated enemies were driven ashore at Lagos. On 27 June 1693, the French Admiral Tourville defeated

a combined English and Dutch fleet off Lagos and captured over 40 merchant ships from Admiral Rooke's convoy and dispersed over 90 others; and on 19 August 1759 Admiral Boscawen's fleet drove into Lagos bay four French warships, and there destroyed two and captured the others. On 16 January 1780, in the Battle of Cape St Vincent, Admiral Rodney defeated a Spanish fleet under D Juan de Lángara and on St Valentine's Day in 1797, Admiral Sir John Jervis defeated the Spanish fleet of D José de Córdoba off the same cape. Subsequently, Jervis was ennobled as Earl St Vincent.

Heinrich Link (1767 – 1851) wrote in 1801 that he had visited Cape St Vincent. *“At the utmost extremity in this desert country is a monastery of Capuchins. Ships can approach very near the rock, and the monks assured us that sometimes in fine weather they speak with them. They also related to us many particulars of the engagement between the Spaniards and Lord St Vincent, which they distinctly saw from the monastery. Such incidents alone can render a residence on this remote point of land interesting. On another point of the rock separated by a creek from the extreme end is the small fort of Sagres, within which nothing is seen but the commandant's dwelling, the soldiers' barracks.....Without the fort are only a couple of houses. When the great earthquake of 1755 destroyed Lisboa, the sea here also swelled, and pouring from a creek over the land laid the country waste”*.

During the short French occupation of Olhão in June 1808, the people rose against the French oppressors and took possession of their own town. Fearing French retaliation, they sent their families aboard their fishing boats for the night. French soldiers mistook the red clothing worn by Algarvian fisherfolk and their families for the redcoats of the English, and were driven to panic.

There are today few signs of the continuing occupation by British officers of posts in the Portuguese army after the end of the Peninsular War. They remained in post until at least 1820. At their head was of course Marshal Beresford, Marshal General of the Portuguese army under D João VI. One such sign is in Tavira, in the small chapel of Santa Ana, which was attached to the governor's residence. Near the altar there is a gravestone commemorating the short life of a British baby in 1818. He was the son of Major General Sir Edmund Keynton Williams (1778 -1850) who commanded infantry regiment no 14 in Tavira.

In 1833, a fleet under the Scottish Charles, a member of the redoubtable Napier family, fighting for the cause of liberalism and D Pedro IV, defeated the fleet of D Miguel the usurper, commanded by Admiral Marreiros; this strange encounter took place off Cape St Vincent and was a significant event in the defeat and overthrow of D Miguel and his absolutist forces. Napier was subsequently ennobled in the Portuguese peerage as Visconde do Cabo de São Vincente.

### **The Algarve and trade with Britain**

*“In the little kingdom of the Algarve there are vast quantities of wine, oil, corn, almonds, figs and other fruits”*, wrote Adam Anderson in 1762<sup>1</sup>. There was a major trade in these articles not only to Britain but also to other countries in Northern Europe. In 1889, Ernest Bergman

wrote .... *“The City of Faro on the edge of the ocean is the capital of this province. It has an excellent port built at the mouth of Valformoso. There is considerable export trade in oranges, sumach wood, cork, olive oil and dried fruit. In addition, coastal trade and fishing are good. The city has some curiosities, the cathedral, parish church, college, seminary and customs building”*. Bergman was clearly of a more inquiring turn of mind than Henry Noel Shore. What was exported from Britain and the north to the Algarve? Cereals, dried peas, cheese, butter, potatoes, woollen manufactures, hosiery, upholstery, shoes, hats, munitions, paint, pitch, boxes for tobacco, wooden combs, window glass, watches, ploughs and other iron goods. In short, northern agricultural produce and manufactures.

Arthur William Costigan was a pseudonym for a Scot called Ferrier who served as an officer in the Portuguese army. Corresponding with his brother, he wrote in 1778.... *“The chief trade from this province consists in figs and almonds, some wine, orange, cork, and sumach carried on exclusively by three or four English houses established here, which make exorbitant gains, considering the reduced rates at which they purchase the different articles from the poor peasants of the country”*.

The future poet laureate Robert Southey (1774 – 1843) visited the Algarve in 1801. He published histories of the Peninsular War and of Brazil, and apparently owned many books written in Portuguese .....

*“We crossed the mountains to Tavira, seven leagues, long leagues, terrible leagues, infinite leagues... the road would be utterly impassable were it not that the Host is carried on horseback in these wilds and therefore the way must be kept open. Wherever we looked was mountain - waving, swelling, breasting exactly like the sea-like prints of the holy land which you see in old travels. At last the sea appeared and the frontier towns of Ayamonte and Castro Marim; we descended and entered the garden, the Paradise, of Algarve..... There are several sea waters in the bay of Faro. A dam is made on which the mill is built. The water enters with the rising tide; at ebb the flood gates are shut and as it flows out through the mill wheels they can work 5 to 6 hours per day. They estimate the population of the Algarve at 100,000. Of Faro 20,000; of Tavira some few thousands less; Lagos less still”*. Nowadays, the Algarve has a population of about 460,000.

### **The Foreign Dominance of the Algarve**

Under the dual monarchy, the Algarve (together with Andalusia) had prosperously enjoyed a rich legal and extra-legal trade with the Spanish Indies and there was a strong mercantile middle class comprising in great part New Christians in its principal ports of Lagos, Portimão, Faro and Tavira. (New Christians were descended from those Jews who had been forcibly converted to Christianity after the rescission of the expulsion order in 1497.) But after 1620, there were two major factors which drove many of these merchants to go abroad in search of a livelihood.

First, there was a serious economic crisis in 1619 – 22, and second, and more important, was the Holy Office of the Inquisition, founded in Portugal in 1536. It had started work in the Algarve in 1543, and in the 1580s it conducted a campaign against the New Christians of

Portimão. Again in 1620 and in 1633, the Inquisition opened major campaigns across the Algarve. What was worse, the Inquisition targeted rich people and seized the property of those whom it arrested, and if those people were later condemned their property was permanently confiscated. The religious Sister Brites do Espírito Santo wrote when the Inquisition began to arrest her family..... “*Those imprisonments were made only so that the Inquisition could take their money and the inquisitors could swindle them out of their goods, and these aims were more important than Inquisitorial inquiries*”. If any Portuguese trader was believed to possess a large amount of money, he became at risk of arrest by the Inquisitors so that they could confiscate his wealth.

Because it was relatively easy to escape from the Algarve to Spain, many of those who were under threat from the Inquisition fled to Huelva and Cadiz; some of the first foreign residents of Gibraltar were Portuguese, and it may be that some Portuguese arrived there in the seventeenth century. The result was that there were eventually no merchants in the Algarve with the financial strength needed for international trade. Foreign merchants were unwilling to extend credit to Portuguese nationals, since at any moment they might be taken by the Inquisition, their goods seized and the debt lost to the foreigner. The upshot was that the Algarve became an exporter of wealth and was thus impoverished. It was therefore the Inquisition, by weakening the Portuguese trading community, which ironically helped the Protestant merchants from northern Europe become established in the Algarve. Inquisition activities were indirectly a major influence in the impoverishment of this region.

The people of northern Europe continued to require the fruit, olive oil and wine of the Algarve, and because the activities of the Inquisition had ensured there were no Algarvian merchants capable of conducting this trade, the commercial expertise had to come from elsewhere. It came not from northern Portugal or Spain, whose merchant classes were equally under threat from the Inquisition, but from abroad. Dutch, German and English merchants settled in Faro, which was becoming the dominant regional port and which handled nearly all the northern European traffic to and from the Algarve.

Following the Restoration of the House of Bragança to the throne of Portugal in 1640, D João IV reaffirmed the alliance with England in the treaties of 1642 and 1654, and the commercial clauses of these treaties were greatly favourable to English merchants. The religious clauses benefitted these English merchants, as their religion was tolerated (so long as their religious observance was in private). They were thus protected from the Inquisition, and they were also discouraged from converting to Roman Catholicism, since they would then also be subject to the Inquisition and its courts. There was a further treaty with England in 1661 concerning the marriage of Charles II of England to Catherine of Bragança.

Between 1651 and 1675, much of the international trade from Faro was in the hands of an Englishman called Henry Janson. Portuguese sources show that he came from *Lothouse* (probably Lofthouse) in Yorkshire and first came to the Algarve in 1645. Working for him were *Guilherme Miluart* (possibly William Millward) and *Guilherme Croque* (possibly William Crocker). Another English merchant called *Filipe Melhor* (possibly Philip Mellor) arrived in 1669 and he became the English consul in Faro in 1672. Succeeding him in 1684 -

92 was Samuel Small (whom the Portuguese called *Esmal*) who had been in Faro since 1672 and whose customers were in England, Holland, Lisbon and Andalusia. Small did not hesitate in 1687 to denounce a commercial competitor to the Inquisition, and although he ordered his employees to support his denunciation, the Commission of the Inquisition was perfectly aware that this case was one of commercial jealousy and had no religious basis. It seems strange that a Protestant should make use of the Inquisition in this way.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had seen a massive rise in the interests of foreign merchants in the Algarve. There were enough Dutch, Hamburg, Swedish, Spanish, Genoese and French merchants to require consular representation from their own countries from time to time. From the fact of a continuous English consular representation, however, we may deduce that it was the English who were the principal traders in the Algarve from 1646 onwards, and particularly, from the first half of the eighteenth century. The names of the main commercial houses were Janson, Small, Pitts, Parcar and Lamprière. This last family came to dominate commercial life in the Algarve for from 1714 until well into the next century.

The dominant position of the British traders in eighteenth century Algarve is beyond doubt. The King (D José I) was informed in 1759 by a royal magistrate in Lagos that the British consul's trading house in Faro was responsible for nearly all of the trade of the Algarve, and sold by retail all kinds of goods there as well as in other shops in other parts of the kingdom. "*The wealth of this house is very great, and the very great trade it carries in all kinds of grain, wines and spirits brings about a dependence and so the owners have become despotic in this land. The whole of the Portugal owes a dependence to Britain, but here in the Algarve, the inhabitants have become slaves, so that their laws no longer have effect and they have to give great obedience and are vilely humiliated*". It is highly likely that in this piece, the magistrate refers to the House of Lamprière.

A merchant called *Jan Parcher* (possibly John Parker) arrived from London in 1651. He was the probable ancestor of the Parcar clan. The first notable Parcar was D João Parcar, a citizen of Faro who was English consul 1715 – 1718, and who married the local D Maria Camacha da Silva. His commercial business flourished in the years 1712 – 36 and passed to his son-in-law and daughter (D Samuel Pitt and D Maria Parcar Pitts – Samuel oddly used the form Pitt where the rest of his family used Pitts). His widow, D Maria, then ran the business with her sons Pedro and Guilherme. Later, from 1762 she ran it with her son-in-law, D João Keating, who was born in Lisbon and was the son of Diogo Caetano Keating and D Maria Paula Keating, who are described in the Portuguese sources as being *naturais de Bertanha* (possibly a misspelling of *Bretanha* - Britain). Samuel Pitt was born in *Triquet* (possibly Trickey) in Somerset and emigrated first to Cadiz, and then to the Algarve. He was one of the few who converted to Roman Catholicism in 1727, and he then married D Maria Parcar. The Anglo-Portuguese Parcar family apparently often renewed its English links when its daughters married English immigrants.

Other British Consuls and important traders shown in the Portuguese records were: Diogo Holden (1695 – 1713), Diogo João Amon (1735 – 1749), Tomás Lamprière (1714 – 1735), André Lamprière (1719 – 1725) and João Lamprière (1749 onwards). The Lamprière

family founded what became the biggest commercial house in Faro in the second half of the century and attracted the fury of the Portuguese patriots who rightly or wrongly attributed to them all the economic ills of the Algarve. The commercial Lamprières were in partnership for a time with a certain Bequer (probably Baker).

The Lamprières centralised their business in Faro, and they also had agents throughout the Algarve. The size and commercial strength of their business allowed them to dictate prices for buying and selling, for which they were hated, and there was no other merchant with the financial strength or possessing the network of contacts to challenge them. Their comparative strength came from the commercial weakness of Algarve merchants, together with the British business practices and the systems of credit which they enjoyed. They apparently traded little on their own account, relying mainly on a system of charging commission of 5% for the loading of foreign shipping, of which business they had a near monopoly.

Robert Southey wrote again in 1801: ... *“to Faro through a beautiful country. It is rich yet not wholly cultivated. The occasional odour of orange gardens was like Mohammed’s paradise. Extensive vineyards, yet the wine is home consumed. We are now in Mr Lamprière’s, a very kind and pleasant family where I gain much information and receive all possible attention”*. In his book of 1852, Landmann reflected ... *“The society at Faro is very good, and the English consul is extremely attentive to the natives of his country; he will immediately present those who are military men to the Governor of the province”*.

Under the eye of the Portuguese was also João Crespim, an English merchant, a partner of the Lamprières, who lived in Faro, where he had a retail shop selling all types of goods. He took a stall at each of the fairs of the Algarve exactly as any Portuguese shopkeeper, and apparently often sold more than they did.

Merchants of other nationalities were also located in the Algarve: Samuel Joaquim was Dutch (1667 - 1682); João Pedro Buys (probably Johan Pieter Buys) traded in Faro from 1703 to 1750. Godofredo Willer from Danzig traded from 1707 to 1733, when his Portuguese widow took over the business. There were also others from Hamburg and France.

## **The Cork Industry**

Another of the natural treasures of the Algarve (and the Alentejo) is cork. After the ruin brought about by the French invasions of 1807 – 1811, Algarvian economic regeneration was based mainly on this resource, which was abundant along the southern reaches of the Serra de Monchique and the Serra do Caldeirão, and it was transformed mainly in Silves, Loulé and São Brás.

It is thought that cork was originally used in Roman times to stop *amphorae* and other pottery containers, and it was certainly exported to England from the time of D Diniz (1279 - 1325). The use of corks for stopping bottles started in around 1700. During the 18th Century the use of barrels for the storage of wine began to give way to the use of bottles. By 1797, Portugal was exporting 115,000 cork stoppers. The French invasions brought about a pause in the industry.

Soon afterwards, in 1813, the firm of W Rankin & Sons of Glasgow established itself in Silves with an export business in cork. They prepared cork sheets and pressed and heated them for export. Rankin also set up a jute sacking factory for packing cork products. They remained in business in Silves until 1884.

By 1831, exports of cork stoppers had climbed again to 34,000, and in 1834, after the victory of the Liberals in the civil war in Portugal, Maria dos Santos Garcia Blanco of Spain, who had fled along with other members of her family from Castellejos near Huelva in Andalusia, obtained her Portuguese residence permit from D Maria II. This Spaniard played a major role in rebuilding the cork industry in Silves, and she obtained the cooperation of specialized workers and technicians from the cork industry of Catalonia. Algarvian cork articles were exhibited at the first Paris Exhibition in 1855, and included cork stoppers for bottles and floats for fishing nets.

Two of the most important and influential of the cork merchants in the history of Silves were Gregório Mascarenhas (1847 – 1922) and Salvador Gomes Vilarinho (1825 - 1883). Vilarinho founded a factory in 1870, which by 1890 had become the biggest factory in Portugal with over 500 employees. The factory of João Mascarenhas Netto was represented at the Paris Exhibition of 1878, and its publicity showed that the factory had been founded in 1862, and that by 1878 it had 120 workers. By 1889, it had grown to 261 workers, including 43 apprentices.

By 1879, Gregório Nunes Mascarenhas & Comp<sup>a</sup> had important commercial relationships in both England and Germany, and its Fábrica Velha was situated on the site which is now occupied by the GNR in Silves. Mascarenhas traded in England with companies such as that owned by Messrs Avern, who had offices in the Minories in the City of London, where many of the English cork importers were based. The relationship between Mascarenhas and Avern became so close that they became formally associated in 1884, and were known by 1890 as Avern, Sons & Barris e Gregório Nunes Mascarenhas. Barris came from Palafrugell in Catalonia, where there was a cork industry similar to that in the Algarve. The English name Avern is rare, and there are records showing Avern in Lambeth, Southampton and Chester at various times in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, all of them involved in the cork cutting business in some way. It may well be that they were all part of the same family.

In 1893, Henry Avern (English), Arturo Barris (Catalan) and Gregório Nunes Mascarenhas (Portuguese) acquired in equal shares a site at the eastern end of the town (a site which had belonged to Mascarenhas) in order to build a new factory. The building work was contracted to João Vitorino Mealha, and the costs for building were shared by the three partners. When the new factory opened in 1894, it was the second biggest in Silves and the Algarve, after that of Vilarinho & Sobrinho. The new factory employed 200 workers and was called Avern, Sons & Barris and was managed by Mascarenhas, the only one of the three living in Silves. By 1918 the factory of Avern Sons & Barris was managed by another Englishman, Victor Sadler. This building, until recently an award winning museum of the cork industry, is

known as the Fábrica do Inglês. The museum has been affected by the financial difficulties of the Alisuper supermarket chain, and the Caixa Geral bank and the Silves Câmara are also involved. The site is currently on the market, and despite strenuous efforts of interested parties to save it, the museum itself appears to be doomed.

In 1897, King D Carlos I came to Silves with D Amélia and was received by the Vilarinho family (who were monarchists), but not by the Mascarenhas (who were republicans). The nephew of Vilarinho (Francisco Pereira Caldas) after this royal visit became the Visconde de Silves, and his factory came to be called Real Fábrica Vilarinho & Sobrinho.

The real growth in the cork industry happened in the years after 1890, when Portugal established itself as the world's leading producer of cork. Cork brought prosperity to all those parts of the Algarve involved with transforming cork, and it was at this time that São Brás grew rich, to the extent that the town broke away from the municipality of Faro in 1914 to become a separate council. São Brás eventually suffered from the relative remoteness of its location, and the proposed railway link, which would have aided the export of cork from the town, was never built.

### **The Fishing Industry**

While the English were powerful in the market for fruit, the fisheries of the Algarve coast were in the hands of Catalans, Mallorcans and Genoese, many of whom were established in Monte Gordo. Until 1830, the Algarve coast was under constant threat from the corsairs of the Barbary Coast. The Spanish spy, José Andrés Cornide de Folguera y Saavedra commented ... *“It is certain that the Algarve coast is exposed to invasion and that the almadras can be destroyed. The Algarve could equip good corsairs if the inhabitants were seamen, and if the government encouraged them; but this province is of little interest for the Portuguese monarch, in spite of being decorated with the pompous title of kingdom”*.

Vila Real de Santo António was founded in 1774 by order of D José I and it has always had a close connection with the fishing industry. The new town replaced an earlier town by the name of Santo António de Arenilha which had been destroyed in the Earthquake and its original purposes were to provide a frontier customs post and to play a lead role in the development in that part of the Algarve of the fishing industry, particularly tuna fishing.

Arthur William Costigan remarked in 1778, .... *“The new town of St António is beautifully situated upon the banks of the noble river of the Guadiana, very nearly opposite to the city of Ayamonte in the Spanish Estremadura, with plenty of deep water and room for shipping, an extensive and commodious quay with a spacious landing-place and stairs before the new custom house which is a handsome building. The houses of the town are all built regularly uniform on one plan with a neatness to be seen nowhere else in Portugal. Such was this new creation of the late minister which by its appearance at a distance raised our curiosity, but on coming into it, there was not a living soul to be seen in the streets, nor even in the town. It was a standing monument of the Marquis of Pombal's pertinacious obstinacy and vanity together: that he had built it to encourage the pilchard fishery which if properly attended to*

*might be turned into very great account on this coast. At the same time, his vanity prompted him to raise a new town in sight of his rivals and neighbours without considering how improper the situation was for the real purpose it was intended to answer”.*

Foreigners played a significant part in the development of the fish canneries in the town, and the principal families involved were Ramirez and Roldan (Spain), Parodi (Italy) and Dmitri (Greece).

### **The São Domingos Mine**

There have been mining operations in three distinct phases for over four thousand years at São Domingos in the Alentejo, to the northeast of Mértola. First, the calcolithic Phoenicians, second the Romans for nearly 400 years to 397 AD, and third and last, the British. The mine was worked from 1859 by Mason and Barry, an English company owned by James Mason and his brother in law Barry. At first, they worked the deposit through shafts and the Roman underground galleries, and from 1868 the mine was worked by opencast methods. Mason quickly saw that the ability to export was crucial to the survival of this mine, and in 1860 built the mineral railway between the mine and the river port of Pomerão on the Guadiana. By the 1880s there were 142 mines registered in the Alentejo, and because Mason was able to use British capital which was unavailable to Portuguese competitors, no-one else solved the transport problem so quickly. The Pomerão tramway was the first such construction in Portugal, and was first worked with mules, and by steam locomotion from 1865.

The mineral was then transported down the Guadiana south to the sea at Vila Real de Santo António. A British visitor, John Latouche, wrote in 1875 ... *“Vila Real, on the sandy estuary of the Guadiana, has within twenty years become of commercial importance. At São Domingo a copper mine has long been known to exist; but as it was also known to contain but a very small percentage of metallic copper, that is less than four parts in a hundred of ore, no prudent person would meddle with it. The ore is a sulphuret of copper, and contains fifty per cent of sulphur. Herein lay the undetected richness of the ore. An English gentleman bought the mine, and the ore is largely exported to the smelters of Great Britain who extract both the copper and the sulphur. It is now by far the richest mine in Portugal. The proprietor constructed a railway to Pomarão on the Guadiana eleven miles from the mine, and there the ore is loaded. About six hundred British steamers and sailing ships annually enter and leave the port of Vila Real, where formerly a dozen coasting vessels sufficed for the whole trade in tunny, sardines and dried figs. Mr Mason is commonly said to derive £80,000 a year from this mine - a fair reward for his skill, energy and intelligence; and if the Portuguese government had made him Baron of Pomarão, the moral of his history would be complete”.*

Latouche must have had powers of prediction, because James Mason became Barão de São Domingos in 1866, Visconde de São Domingos in 1868, and then Conde de Pomerão in 1897, soon after D Carlos I and D Amélia visited the mine. Even his London based brother-in-law became Barão de Barry in 1876. While at São Domingos, Mason lived at the mine manager's office, which was called the Palácio, and which is now the comfortable four-star Hotel São Domingos.

The mine was managed by Britons, and the language of the mine was English. The British managers, engineers, doctors and accountants enjoyed two weeks' leave for every three-month stint at the mine, and most travelled down river. It was necessary to continuously dredge both the riverbed and the bar in order that shipping could enter the Guadiana at Vila Real de Santo António, to reach Pomarão some sixty kilometres further north.

There is a particularly sad gravestone in the small English cemetery in São Domingos. Its inscription reads: *Sacred to the memory of David Aitken. Died at Villa Real de Santo Antonio on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1875 aged 42 years, and of his beloved wife Isabel Duncan. Died at the mine of São Domingos on the 29<sup>th</sup> of the same month and year RIP.* One can only guess the heartbreak behind these bland words.

The mine itself continued under the British ownership of Mason and Barry until it was exhausted in 1966. At that time, it was sold back to the original lessor, La Sabine, a French consortium, and the mine closed completely within two years.

<sup>1</sup> Adam Anderson (1692 or 1693 – 10 January 1765 was a clerk for forty years in South Sea House, the headquarters of the South Sea Company). *An Historical and Chronological Deduction of the Origin of Commerce from the Earliest Accounts to the Present Time, containing a History of the Great Commercial Interests of the British Empire* (1762, 2 vols.).

## References

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Unless otherwise stated, the quotations in the article are taken from this book. The translations are my own.

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