

# THE EASTERN TELEGRAPH STATION AT CARCAVELOS

*By Mário Eurico Lisboa*

With the inauguration of the electric submarine telegraph cable station at Carcavelos in the summer of 1870, the telegraphic link between Britain and Bombay in India was completed. The original company involved was called The Falmouth, Gibraltar and Malta Company Limited, but the later association of various telegraph stations including the one at Carcavelos, led to the creation of the Eastern Telegraph Company in 1872.

The Carcavelos station was situated at Quinta Nova de Santo António, later referred to as the Quinta dos Ingleses. This property has documentation going back as far as the 14<sup>th</sup> Century and it lies within the Demarcated Region of Carcavelos Wine, an excellent and well known dessert wine.



**Quinta Nova. IGP Cartoteca 21 DP4-2**

The British presence here left a cultural imprint that contributed to the creation of the Vila de Carcavelos. However, the global importance of this station, or line of communications was enormous, due to diplomatic, political and strategic circumstances. All this took place during a period of colonial empires and in parallel with competing nations/empires/enemies/adversaries. This construction of the first extensive telegraphic submarine cable to avoid political and customs restrictions, both of a geographic and rival identity, allowed contact between the centre of the British empire and its principle

colony, India, in a mere 24 hours. Up until then, conditions permitting, the journey could take up to two months.

Although a cable between Ireland and Newfoundland already existed, connecting the two continents, together with some cables in Europe. Technology was developed during the second half of the 1860's that made it possible to allow an efficient transmission over long distances through transmission stations, or relays. Communication networks were set up rapidly under the oceans to such a degree that at present the global network of optic fibre cables has turned the planet into a web of connections.



**The relay station, Carcavelos. (Rompana Collection)**

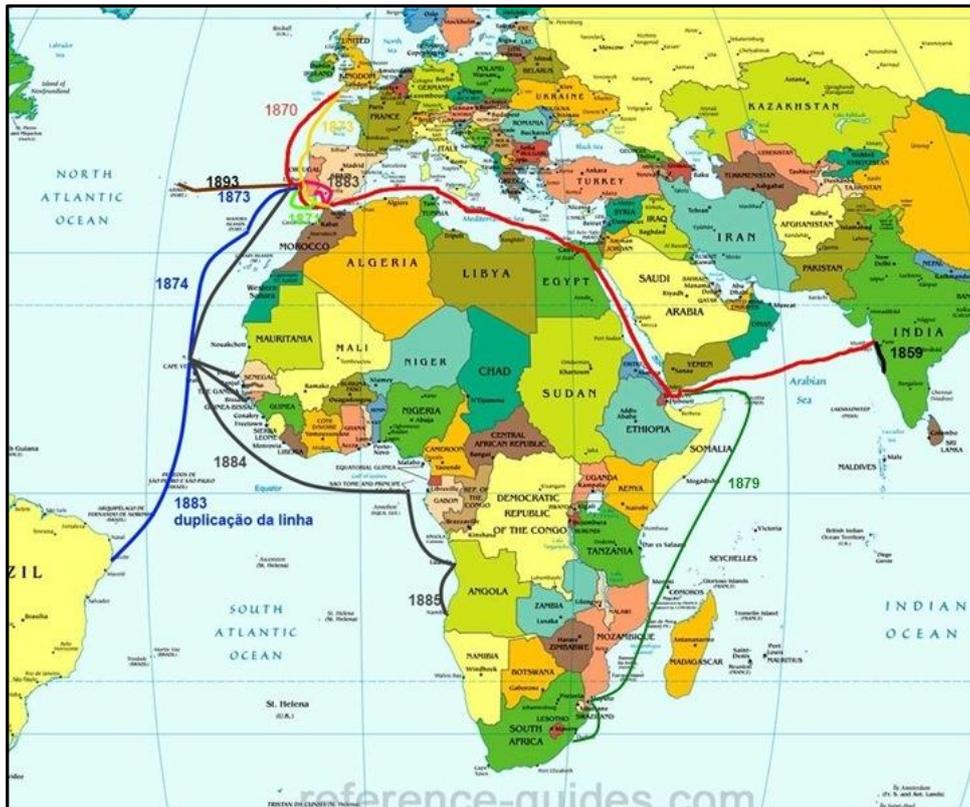
The day to day working and the ways of occupying leisure time, etc. had a great importance, not only on the region, but also at a national level and at that time there was a cult of amateur sporting activities. The presence of young Englishmen cultivated team sports as a fashionable leisure and character building activity. As a result, football, cricket (on a lesser level), tennis, golf, cycling, rugby and gymnastics all developed rapidly. It can be said, without a great margin of error, that the first sports centre in Portugal was set up. The first tennis courts were built in 1874/6 and a field for both cricket and football was created in a more extensive area that also included a golf course. Games and also competitions at a regional and even national levels were organised and the Carcavelos English dominated football over a period of many years, thus setting a standard during the early years of this sport in Portugal.



**A football game at Quinta Nova, c. 1920. (Historical Archive of the Cascais Municipality)**

As at Carcavelos, telegraphic stations were set up in other strategic points, such as Malta, Aden, Mindelo, Pernambuco, later on spreading out across all the oceans thus unifying the world. One of these stations was set up at the city of Horta, in Faial, Azores, in 1893. Three main companies were created in Horta, the English Eastern Telegraph Company (ETC), the American Commercial Cable Company (CCC), and the German Deutsche Atlantische Telegraphengesellschaft (DAT). Six companies of five different countries were eventually set up in Horta with fifteen functioning cables. The development of the town took place and the cultural influence of the foreign communities left their mark and its cosmopolitan and cultural way of life marked the identity of the town and the island. Many of the local employees worked for these companies during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century over a period of many years and many of them emigrated in the service of these companies

These Azoreans created the *Grupo dos Amigos da Horta dos Cabos Submarinos* which began efforts to create a *Roteiro Internacional dos Cabos Submarinos*, in an attempt to preserve the memories and material elements that made up this important heritage.



**Some of the first submarine telegraphic cables linked to Portugal**



*Mário Eurico Lisbon, graduated in History and holds a Masters in Heritage Studies. He works for the Municipality of Cascais, where he is responsible for the Historical and Cultural Heritage Conservation department, and his role includes maintaining an inventory of architectural heritage and disseminating the local culture and heritage, including that of Carcavelos, home to Carcavelos wine and the submarine telegraph cable station at Quinta Nova. He also leads guided cultural tours.*