

Henrique Hawker Gamage Williams

By Peter Booker

The river in Tavira is strange, in that below the Roman Bridge, it is known as the Gilão, and above the bridge, it is called the Séqua. On the hill on the northern bank of the Rio Séqua, opposite the modern and ugly bus station which is situated on the site of the old tanneries and fruit packing factory, there is a small Chapel dedicated to Santa Ana, the mother of the Virgin.



Chapel of Santa Ana, Tavira, Algarve.

This Chapel dates from the time of the conquest of the town in either 1239 or 1242 by knights of the Order of Santiago. In fact, it was they who built the Chapel, but when the Order made a visitation in 1518, no one at that time could remember exactly when it had been built. The Chapel was extensively rebuilt in the early 18th Century, and appears to have escaped major damage during the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755.

The chapel was bought by the Câmara in 1936 and underwent more restoration in 2006. It is now a building of interest which sometimes serves as a concert venue. The building has a single aisle, and the two external doorways (to the SW and SE) are identical. The main altar is dedicated to St^a Ana and the two side chapels to N^a S^a do Rosário and N^a S^a da Piedade. The orientation of the building is NE – SW.



The altar, with the grave of Henrique Williams on the left.

Its most notable object for the historian is the British grave next to the main altar on its north-west side (for the Romans, the Gospel side; for Anglicans, the cantoris). The grave is in the form of a grey-black slab, measuring about 1m by 0.6m. It is a big stone for the small tenant - Henrique Hawker Gamage Williams, a five-month old baby.

The inscription on the grave (in Portuguese) reads as follows:

In memory of Henrique Hawker Gamage Williams, son of Sir Edmund Keynton Williams, Comendador of the Tower and Sword, Comendador of the Order of the Bath, Colonel of the Infantry Regiment No. XIV and Lt Colonel in the service of his Britannic Majesty, and of Caroline his wife. He died at the age of five months in the year of our Saviour, 1818.

There is no indication of an exact date.

This gravestone provides two conundrums. First, who was Sir Edmund and what was he doing in Tavira? The second question in my mind concerns the attitude of the Portuguese authorities to the burial of a heretic Briton inside a Roman Catholic chapel. For answers to these questions, I looked first to the local histories, which are silent on this particular subject but which provide a background; to the military records in Britain; and lastly to a contributing member of the British Historical Society of Portugal, General Rui Moura.

First then, the background. From at least the time of D Manuel I, Tavira was by some distance the largest town in the Algarve. D João III wrote in 1539 *havendo respeito à dita cidade [Tavira] ser a mais principal do Reino do Algarve*. In 1624, D Filipe III confirmed that the Governor of the Algarve could reside in either Lagos or Tavira. In 1755, Tavira had over 10,000 inhabitants, whereas the next biggest town, Faro, had only 6,500. Of course, the towns in the Sotavento were further from the epicentre of the earthquake and largely protected from the tsunami by the sand islands which are a characteristic of the Ria Formosa. There was material damage in the town, particularly to the two parish churches, but in comparison with Lagos, Tavira was relatively unscathed.

When the Lisbon Earthquake and the following tsunami had flattened the current residence of the Governor of the Algarve in Lagos, that gentleman (D Rodrigo António de Noronha e Meneses) decided to move his residence to Tavira, the chief town of the eastern Algarvian *comarca*. For this move, he did not require royal authorisation, and we

know that Governors of the Algarve spent periods of time in Tavira, one of which was during the 1637 disturbances against the new taxes imposed by the Castilian regime. The governor chose for his residence the buildings of which the Chapel of Santa Ana formed the western part of a quadrangle, and it appears that the Chapel was for his own private use. In due course, in 1808, the Bishop of the Algarve, D Francisco Gomes de Avelar, was appointed Governor and he must have continued in his own residence, which was of course the Bishop's Palace in Faro. The Governor's residence in Tavira was therefore empty. In the early 20th Century, it served as the headquarters of the PSP in Tavira.

During the Peninsular War, as a result of the need for the Portuguese Army to adopt modern practices, the whole of the Portuguese military effort became modelled on the British pattern. In order to facilitate this remodelling, a great many, particularly senior, British officers were appointed to posts in the Portuguese Army. Their presence in the Portuguese Army continued until the influence of Marshal Beresford disappeared from Portugal in the year 1820, when most of these officers left their positions. In his work on the presence of British officers in the Portuguese Army, General Rui Moura shows that there were not more than 300 in total over the years 1809 – 1820.

Halliday, in his *The Present State of Portugal and of the Portuguese Army*, published in late 1812, shows that Colonel John Austin was the Commandant in Tavira (*sic*). Another military historian, Captain Lionel Challis, worked on a complete listing of British officers serving in the Peninsula for the period of the war, and afterwards (1808 – 1814). He shows that Austin was Military Governor in the Algarve from April 1810 until April 1814. I am grateful to General Moura for bringing to my attention the work done by Challis.

Austin had served in Ireland during the Irish uprising (the United Irishmen Rebellion) and was posted to Madeira in 1801 with Brigadier Clinton. He served in Jamaica, and in 1806/07 served as Brigade Major in Ireland and England. In September, 1807, he returned to Madeira as Deputy Adjutant General, and acted afterwards as Military Secretary to

Major General Meade. His rank was Ensign (30 January, 1800); Lieutenant (22 July, 1800); Captain (28 November, 1805); Brevet Major (4 September, 1807); and Brevet Lt Colonel (25 February, 1812). The Royal Military Calendar, or Army Service and Commission Book, published in 1820, concludes his entry as follows: *He is at present in the Portuguese Service*. Challis shows that he was appointed Brevet Colonel on 11 April, 1810, probably at the same time that he was appointed Military Governor in the Algarve.

In his book *Tavira e seu Termo*, (1993), Captain Arnaldo Anica shows that the interim Governor of the Algarve, Bishop D Francisco Gomes do Avelar, held office from July, 1808 until his death on 15 December, 1816; he was succeeded by Colonel John Austin, who had governed in the name of the bishop since 12 October, 1815. Austin was Military Governor until he was superseded at some point by Coronel Francisco José da Fonseca, whom we know held the position of Governor das Armas do Reino do Algarve in 1817. I do not know where Austin was subsequently posted, or whether he served under Fonseca.

At the end of the Peninsular War in 1814, the 14th Regiment returned to its base in Tavira, presumably with its small cadre of British officers, probably not more than five out of a total of about fifty-five.

In the town of Tavira, the outstanding Atalaia Barracks had been begun in 1795, but was not completed until the early 20th Century, and the Convento da Graça was not used as a barracks until after the suppression of the religious orders in 1834. I believe therefore, that the returning troops were billeted in Tavira, and that their commanding officer used the residence of the former governor, the buildings of which the St^a Ana chapel forms a part.

The London Gazette gives the following information:

Whitehall, April 4th 1816

His Royal Highness the Prince Regent hath been pleased, in the name and on behalf of His Majesty, to give and grant unto the undermentioned Officers in the Army, His Majesty's royal licence and permission that they may respectively accept and wear the insignia of a Knight of the Royal Portuguese Military Order of the Tower and Sword, with which His Royal Highness the Prince Regent of Portugal has been pleased to honour those Officers, in testimony of the high sense that Prince entertains of the signal intrepidity displayed by them in several actions with the enemy, during the recent arduous campaigns in the Peninsula:

And His Royal Highness hath been further pleased to command, that the respective royal concessions and declarations be registered in His Majesty's College of Arms.

Sir Edmund Keynton Williams, Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Military Order of the Bath, Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army, and Colonel of the 14th Regiment of Portuguese Infantry.

Sir Maxwell Grant, Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Military Order of the Bath, Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army, and Colonel of the 6th Regiment of Portuguese Infantry.

The Order of the Tower and Sword is an ancient order, founded by D Afonso V in 1459, and was similar in nature to the Order of the Garter in England, and the Order of the Golden Fleece in Burgundy. Its original purpose was to reward Portuguese who had distinguished themselves in the North African campaigns, and had a maximum of 27 members. In the name of D Maria I in 1808, Prince Regent D João re-founded this military Order with the aim of honouring both Portuguese and those foreigners who had served the cause of Portugal in the current war, even if they were not Catholics. No other Portuguese Order was open to non-Catholics. In a further reform in 1832, the name of the Order was changed to *A antiga e muito nobre Ordem da Torre e Espada, do valor, lealdade e mérito*, a name which it retains today.

From the London Gazette entry, it is clear that in April, 1816, the commanding officer of Infantry Regiment No. 14 was a Briton, Colonel Sir Edmund Keynton Williams (1778–1850), and we may reasonably suppose that Sir Edmund was the Senior Officer in Tavira at the time.

Sir Edmund Keynton Williams was a Lieutenant in 1800, Captain in 1807, Brevet Major in 1812, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel in 1813, and a Major in the Portuguese Service in October 1814. He was engaged in the actions at Bussaco, Almeida, Badajoz, Salamanca (wounded), Burgos (wounded), Vittoria, Tolosa, San Sebastian (wounded), Bidossa, Nivelles and Nive. He also commanded the 4th Caçadores at San Sebastian, where he suffered a slight wound.



A portrait of Sir Edmund Keynton Williams when he commanded the 41st Foot from 1827-1837, as a Major-General¹.

¹ By John Ponsford (1790-1870). Courtesy of the Regimental Museum, the Royal Welch.

From the entry in the London Gazette and the evidence of his son's grave, we may therefore deduce that Sir Edmund was in Tavira between April 1816 and some time in 1818, or quite possibly for even longer.

As far as I know, there is no other grave similar to that of Sir Edmund's son either in the Algarve, or perhaps in the whole of Portugal. Ever since the foundation of the Anglican Church, the English had been regarded in Portugal as heretics. In view of the difficulties faced by heretics (including Britons and protestants of other nationalities) in Portugal over the matter of the burial of their dead, it is highly unusual to find a British grave anywhere in the country, apart from in the English Cemetery in Lisbon (opened in 1717), The British Cemetery in Funchal (from 1770), and the military cemetery in Elvas (permitted by the Portuguese Governor of Elvas after the Battle of Albuera on 16 May, 1811). In addition, General Moura states that at least one British general officer lies in the Prazeres Cemetery in Lisbon.

To find such a grave inside a church is even more unusual. For 1818 was a time in England when Catholic Emancipation was a lively issue. The restrictions on Catholics in Britain were not lifted until 1829. It is probable that Sir Edmund and his wife were not Catholics, and that their child would have been regarded as a heretic. We are led to one of three possible conclusions. First, that the child may have been baptised as a Catholic, maybe when his poor health indicated impending death. This view is supported by the fact that his first name is in the Portuguese style of Henry. Second, the Colonel may have used his military position to insist on the burial of his son in the Governor's private chapel. Third, the Colonel may have pointed out that his decoration as Knight of the Portuguese Military Order of the Tower and Sword gave him the right to have his son buried in a Portuguese Catholic chapel.

The citation in the London Gazette shows that Sir Edmund became a Knight of the Order, which is the lowest of the six degrees. On the gravestone he is referred to as Comendador, which is the fourth degree. A possibility is that during this period the Order advanced him in rank.

It is clear from the foregoing entries in The London Gazette that many senior British Officers were in the Portuguese Service, at least in 1816, and The Royal Military Calendar shows that many were still in Portugal in 1820. After the downfall of Marshal Beresford in the autumn of 1820, many, or perhaps most of these officers left the Portuguese Service.

One of my Portuguese friends, with a twinkle in his eye, remarked to me about that period, “Yes, England gave Portugal a lot of help against the French during the Napoleonic invasions. But at the end of the war, you just did not want to go home again, did you?” Henrique Hawker Gamage Williams sadly never did make that journey.

I am grateful to General Moura for his help in writing this article.

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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.