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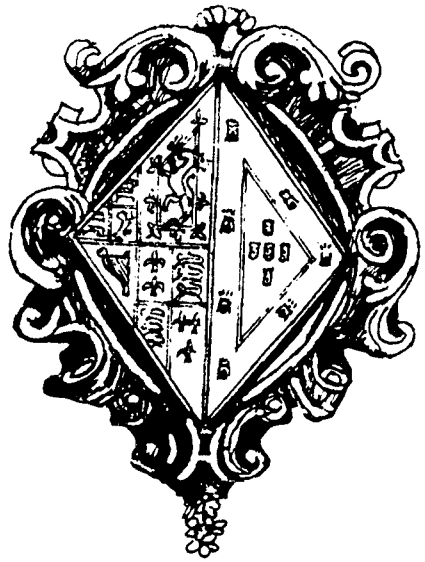

Bucknall Family History & Connections with Portugal & Cork

by Sarah Cavendish
(née Anita Sarah Bucknall)

Though there is no evidence as to the exact origin of the name Bucknall, it is thought that it originated in Flanders, which, in the 10th and 11th centuries, extended into France as far south as the Canche Valley, St Omer being the capital.

It has been said that the family resided on a knoll, which was surrounded with a spinney. This would give *Bulte (a knoll)-en-Hallier* (a thicket) which gives *Bultenhallier*. Another possibility is that they were Flemish merchants dwelling on a knoll. Hence *Bulte* (as before)-*en-Halle* (a market) gives *Bultenhalle*. There was, even before the Norman Conquest, an influx of Flemish merchants into England and it is easy to accept how by spoken usage (very little at that time in England was written down) a final and foreign syllable could be clipped or contracted to produce on the one hand *Bultenhallier*, *Bultenhall, Buklenalle*, and Bucknall; and on the other *Bultenhall, de Buchenhalee, Buckenale* and Bucknall. The 'de' is of course a result of Anglo-Norman influence.

In the prelude to Charles Kingsley's Hereward the Wake, there is a reference to Thorold of Buckenhale, Sheriff of Lincoln, who appeared in a charter of 1061, which is signed by Leofric, Earl of Mercia and his wife Aeodiva, better known as Godiva of Coventry fame! Subsequently, following the Norman Conquest in 1066, it appears that the family moved across England to the more tranquil side of Sherwood and the Shropshire/Staffordshire borders.

There were Bucknalls in Shropshire in the 12th and 13th centuries and they may have come from or given their name to the town Bucknall in that county. In 1459 during the first phase of The Wars of the Roses, Lord Salisbury marched from Middleham in Yorkshire to Ludlow in Shropshire, which was at that time the

rallying point of the Duke of York. The Queen, Margaret of Anjou, sent Lord Audley to intercept and arrest him and she watched the ensuing battle from the church tower at Bloreheath. Lord Audley was beaten off and killed, and the Queen had to make a hasty withdrawal. Roger de Bucknall, a local country gentleman, who had also escorted her up the tower of the church, assisted her in this. There is also an earlier record in 1403 of a Roger de Bucknall being in the retinue of Edward, Earl of Stafford.

By 1480 James Bucknall, from whom the main Bucknall line is descended, was living at Leehead House in the parish of Muckleston, Staffs. Later, in 1671, one of his descendants, William Bucknall, a yeoman farmer, rebuilt it and the house was passed on to succeeding generations. It is still in occupation today though no longer by any Bucknall. It is a fine Elizabethan style timbered house with substantial grounds and Bucknall initials are carved over the door (W & S for William and Sarah).

In the family possession is a copy of the will of James Bucknall's son John who died in January 1559. It starts:

"In the name of God Amen the eighth day of January in the year of our Lord 1558 I John Bucknall of the parish of Muckleston sick in bodie but thanks be to God being in perfect memorie make my last will and Testament in manner and form following. First I bequeath my soule to Almightie God and my body to be buried in the church of Muckleston aforesaid at my funeral also I will that my executors shall bestowe of my goods the day of my burial to the honour of God and the health of my soul as they shall think best....."

He goes on to make specific bequests such as "my great pot to my daughter Ellen Pyper to have it during her life and at her decease her child to have it if she fortune to have any and if not then Harry my son to have it or his child..." He also wills that "my executors shall give to Alyce Byrderick my daughter at such time or times as they shall see most need 11s 8d." "According to the lawe" he leaves his wife Joan the third part of his lands in addition to "my

house that I now dwell in with all pasture meadows wastes and commons with their appurtenances there belonging for the time of 21 years".

There is an attached list of possessions with estimated values and these include 4 oxen £4 and 6 kine £4, 3 calves 10s, 2 bullocks £1.5, many other farm animals and house belongings such as sheets and coverlets, pots and pans.

Although we have little family history covering the 16th and 17th centuries we understand that the Bucknalls continued to prosper and, so our family tree records, had large families.

The Bucknall family established themselves as cork dealers in London during the eighteenth century and Henry Bucknall, a direct descendant of the afore-mentioned James and John, founded the family firm of Henry Bucknall and Sons in London in 1742. Henry was, apparently, always referred to by other members of the family as Henry 'Cork'. They acted as cork merchants for the forests owned in Portugal and handled by an office in Lisbon, while in New York the family introduced and developed cork within the U.S.A.

It has been suggested that the Bucknall interest in cork started when one of the family became Master of Portsmouth Harbour. Certainly from the earliest days the company used chartered sailing vessels to carry out their business and with the growth of trade, the Bucknalls developed not only their cork business but also an interest in shipping and in trading beyond the Iberian peninsular.

In 1880 the shipping business was in the hands of Henry Corfield Bucknall, Richard Corfield Bucknall and John Lloyd Bucknall (son of Henry Corfield). In 1890 Bucknall Brothers was formed with three sons of the 1880 partners operating it. At the same time the vessels owned were transferred to a new concern 'Bucknall Nephews' run by Ernest, Arthur Leslie and Harry.

On August 24th 1891 Bucknall Brothers floated the British and Colonial Steam Navigation Co. in order to enter the South African trade and take advantage of the prosperous industrial activity which followed the development of gold and diamond areas. Contracts were placed for building nine vessels each of 4,250 tons deadweight – a commitment of great magnitude and a sensational augury of things to come.

A favourable opportunity presented itself in the construction of the Netherlands South African Railway with which President Kruger, the ruler of the Transvaal, proposed to link the Republic with Delagoa Bay (Lourenço Marques) and thereby secure a route to and from the coast independent of the British controlled Cape and Natal ports.

Tenders were invited for the transport of the railway material from Amsterdam to South Africa and the newly formed British and Colonial Steam Navigation Co. entered into an exciting contest to secure the contract in the teeth of furious competition from the established lines. On December 28th 1891, the Chairman, Henry Corfield Bucknall was able to announce triumphantly that they had secured the railway contract which would guarantee large and satisfactory shipments over three years.

The British and Colonial Line planned a seventeen-day service from Amsterdam and New York to Australia and New Zealand and a regular service was started from Australia to the United Kingdom. By 1901 the homeward trade position between South Africa and this country had developed to such an extent that a regular service was started from South African ports to this country. Later on in 1907 a service was inaugurated between the Eastern seaboard ports of the USA and the Pacific Coast to the Far East.

Meanwhile in London, not only was Bucknall business expanding but family numbers too. Indeed, they are said to have grown to such an extent that, one morning, staff arriving at Crutched Friars in the City of London - where the firm had offices as well as a warehouse and factory – were unable to get in because of the

numerous Bucknalls engaged in a family meeting who were taking up most of the room!

Henry Bucknall, the senior partner of the parent company, apparently became imbued with some of the spirit of recklessness characteristic of this new age of swiftly rising riches being produced from the diamond mines and gold fields of South Africa. He associated with Barney Barnato a well-known millionaire, became a director of several South African companies and is said to have walked into the office one day imperturbably announcing that he had lost a quarter of a million pounds that morning.

In November 1900 Bucknall Brothers decided to merge all their interests in one large company and successfully floated Bucknall Steamship Lines Ltd. with an issued capital of £1,250,000. The new company embarked on an ambitious building programme providing for ships of increased size and quality and the company's House Flag was changed to B.S.L. in red on three diamonds.

Meanwhile, however, the Boer War, which had broken out in October 1899, became a forerunner of disaster for the Company. As the war dragged on, the South African ports became completely congested with Government chartered ships from England bringing troops and stores, food and ammunition, with the result that ships of the regular South African Lines were detained on the coast for anything up to six months. In an endeavour to keep faith with merchants and maintain regular sailings, Bucknalls paid enormous sums for ships on time charter, which idled away on the South African coast.

The Boer War ended in May 1902 and a great boom was expected to follow but unfortunately it did not materialise and instead there was a disastrous depression in both England and South Africa. The building programme laid down under boom conditions could not be financed in the slump which followed and in August 1908 the management of the business was transferred to Sir John R. Ellerman, Bart.

Gradually arrangements were made for the absorption of Bucknall Steamship Lines and its fleet of thirty one ships into Ellerman Lines and in 1914 the name of the company was changed to Ellerman & Bucknall Steamship Co. Ltd.*

Family legend has it that a major contribution to the Bucknall Steamship Lines, financial difficulties was their patriotic, but one might say unbusinesslike, decision to transport British troops to South Africa at no charge to the Government!

During the 1920s Bucknall steamer names were superseded and their distinctive funnels replaced. At this time a South African journalist wrote a poignant epitaph to Bucknalls:

Bucknall ships had diamonds that were white
Surrounding funnels painted black as night
Ellermans having absorbed the well-known line
Made it part of their combine
Changed their name to famous Cities
Considered by many a hundred pities.

Although the Bucknalls were already established as cork dealers in the 18th Century it was not until the 19th that they ventured abroad. William Bucknall, whose younger brother Henry later founded Henry Bucknall & Sons in Lisbon in 1838, writes in gloomy tones to his parents from Bordeaux on 1st September 1814. Having dealt at length with the problems of choosing good cork and of the wily dealings of the merchants, he then goes on to describe this region of France and its inhabitants in far from glowing terms:

"I should give you some idea of this place, the country round it is certainly better than the sandy deserts I passed through from Bayhonne, the grapevines hide in some measure the sandy soil which

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supports them but they cannot do away with that sameness which everywhere meets the eye: it wants that relief and infinite variety we so often meet with in our own country – tho' the grapes look beautiful, they are planted like Indian Corn, sometimes 1 & 2 together, grow from 3 to 5 feet high – the hedges, if they deserve the name, give you often an idea of poverty yet they show the excellent manner in which the grapes are cultivated, being entirely free from weeds, the leaves and vines are put in such order to expose the grapes to the sun that they always meet the eye – and I may say they are the only things that thrive here - yet there must be some orchards as the fruit is plentiful and cheap. Ducks are 2/- and 3/- a couple, fowls are cheap; beef and mutton 6d per lb. Coffee 2/-, brown sugar 2/- Loaf sugar 5/-.

Bordeaux itself is a fine town having several wide streets, 'tis near the size of Liverpool, the houses are all of stone and would look beautiful were they kept clean - the river is as wide again as the Thames and the street or quay sufficiently wide. The inhabitants – I wish I could speak of them as men, are the meanest set of intriguing beings I ever met with, their cunning will not let them have even a show of common honesty. Of French politeness I have never seen an instance towards their women, they may have reason for that. I have heard it said and I think with truth "that it is as difficult to find a pretty woman here, as it is a common honest man". They likewise say they are plainer in Paris. The men are very good-looking and well made and I hope as commerce thrives here we shall put more confidence in them."

William was the eldest of a large family and was his father's agent in Spain buying and shipping cork with his headquarters at Barcelona. As my aunt Joyce Baylis recounts in her book *Growing Up English,* the peninsular, devastated by perennial war, was at that time no pleasure ground for tourists. The arm of the law was short; brigands roamed the wild countryside, robbing and sometimes murdering travellers, in winter packs of starving wolves raided the hardly less starving villages. William must have been a brave, tough and resolute man, spending days on horseback as a matter of routine. But there was money to be made. Cork was cheap. Labour was

dirt-cheap. British gold went a long way and acquisitive Englishmen could drive hard bargains and make big profits. William made a large fortune and when in England lived in a comfortable house in Dulwich. He owned a yacht and enjoyed racing her on the Thames.

Romance also played a part in what seems to have been a full and colourful life. While in Spain, William fell in love with a beautiful Catalan girl of humble origin, Anita Arxer from San Feliu de Guixols, persuaded her into a runaway marriage and carried her off to Dulwich. Here, accepted by her in-laws, she proceeded to adapt her outlook, religion, values and conduct to that of her new English relations. Her long widowhood was spent with her formidable sister-in-law Isabel in a gloomy over-furnished plush-draped house in Kensington from which the two dictatorial old ladies dominated the scattered members of the clan for many years, demanding news, letters, visits, attention, and complete submission from everyone.

The name Anita has continued to crop up in each succeeding generation of Bucknalls to the present-day, reminding us of our exotic forebear.

In 1860 there is an entry recorded in the Post Office London Directory: Bucknall Henry & Sons, Cork Cutters Merchants and Manufacturers, 22 Crutched Friars EC and San Feliu de Guixols, Catalones, Lisbon and Seville, Bucknall & Sons Cork Merchants, 31 Crutched Friars E.C. In 1870 there is a similar entry to the first with the addition of Sines.

In 1890 Henry Bucknall & Sons was registered as a Limited Liability Company, H.B. & S. Ltd., Cork Growers and Manufacturers was the title now inscribed on the Company's writing paper, and its Lisbon office, overlooking the Tagus, was at *10 Travessa do Corpo Santo*, Lisbon.
The Prospectus, published on the 26th September 1890, is a fascinating and informative historical record of the company, and confirms its London address as 22 Crutched Friars, London E.C. Listing its share capital at £1,000,000, it offers a first issue of

£700,000 in cumulative preference and ordinary shares both at £5 a share. Describing the company it writes:

"This company is formed for the purpose of acquiring, developing and extending the Cork-wood and cork manufacturing business of Henry Bucknall & Sons of 22 Crutched Friars, London, Lisbon (Margueira) Sines, Niza and Abrantes in Portugal and at San Vicente de Alcantara, Merida, Jerez de los Caballeros and San Feliu de Guixols, Spain, at all of which places they have Cork Factories.

The Cork-wood business, carried on under the name of Henry Bucknall & Sons, of London (England), Spain and Portugal, Cork Growers, Cork Merchants and Manufacturers, and owners of extensive Freehold and Leasehold Cork Forests in Portugal and Spain, was established about the year 1750, and the business has thus been carried on for about 140 years, and always in the same family. The Freehold Forests produce Cork, Olives, Timber, Acorns, Indian Corn, Stock and other farm produce, the Leaseholds produce Cork only; the various properties cover an enormous area.

In addition to the Cork obtained from the Forests held by them, the Vendors buy large quantities of Cork from Landed Proprietors, Farmers and other persons."

After giving detailed valuations of the cork, it goes on:

"The properties to be acquired include twelve Freehold Forests some of them of very large extent, and between 600 and 700 Leasehold Forests in Portugal alone, all of which were examined last year and the yield carefully estimated as above by head men or foremen in the various districts. These foremen are Portuguese and are in the employ of the Vendors, but their estimates are considered reliable by the Vendors.....

The cork tree lives for hundreds of years, but only produces cork once in every ten years (as a rule), and when the bark is allowed to grow for the full term of 10 years it is generally of good quality and texture when it is peeled off or stripped, and is taken to the

various factories or depots. There are nine factories in Spain and Portugal; five Freehold factories in Spain, and three Freehold and one Leasehold in Portugal. The chief factory is at Margueira, in Portugal, opposite to Lisbon, another at Sines on the coast, another at Niza and another at Abrantes, besides large depots at Portalegre and Evora, all in Portugal. In Spain the factories are, one at Jerez de los Caballeros, two at San Vincente de Alcantara, one at Merida (all in Estremadura), and a factory for buying and cutting corks at San Feliu de Guixols, Province of Gerona, Spain. Directly and indirectly from 2000 to 3000 men are, it is estimated, on an average employed in the business."

The Prospectus goes on to give details of the company's income and financial position, pointing out that during the first five years of 1880 to 1884 profits averaged £49,382 p.a. which had risen to £64,732 p.a. in the last year of the 10, viz 1889. It also points out that the amount of business done in America, Germany and the North of Europe has enormously increased of late years. Agencies are established in America and in Germany.

Very profitable sales in advance have been affected, amounting to some £250,000, which will be carried out to the advantage of the Company.

The formation of this Limited Liability Company was, however, slightly divisive within the family with my great granfather John Stafford Bucknall, a Junior Partner, complaining bitterly about his share only to be met with a furious rebuttal from the Chairman, Henry Corfield Bucknall, who, in a letter dated 1892, tells him in no uncertain terms that the fact

"That you consider you have come off badly surprised and annoyed me exceedingly. I did my utmost to satisfy and please everybody and instead of thanks this is what I get for all the pains and trouble I took. I really can scarcely believe I am in my senses! Why, what on Earth did you expect to get for your 1/12th share in H.B. & S.?

After some four further pages in the same vein, he robustly ends the letter:

"If you don't like being Secretary chuck it up. We can easily get another to do that work. The Company won't stand in your way I am sure. This has grieved me enormously and I feel much annoyed and hurt – it is really more than I can stand."

An example perhaps of the problems of close-run family businesses!

William had died in 1866 at the very young age of 37 and it was his younger brother Corfield who had become the moving spirit during these times of later developments. He too was an able, resolute man and devoted all his energies to building up the expanding business, working first in Portugal and then, in about 1890, returning to England to take charge of the London Office. Fortunes were still being made in cork, and he lived with his big family very affluently in Prince's Gate.

During the next forty years he continued to rule the Company with a rod of iron and his dominating figure towered over the following generation. Unfortunately he never revisited Portugal and was unable to realise that anything could have changed there during his absence. As he passed from his seventies into his eighties and moved towards his nineties he refused to consider retirement from what he considered as his life-work. Every decision at the Lisbon end had to be submitted for his approval; every proposal was encountered with criticism.

A passionate obduracy became his trademark. He wrote indignant letters from his City office to Lisbon protesting at all the new-fangled ideas people had got into their heads nowadays. A car for the Alentejo properties – madness! It would break down in the first half mile. Nothing could ever replace horses and mules for work in the forests. Piped water for the *Polvo Rosas* cottages – whatever next? No wonder dividend dwindled with profits all going into such crazy extravagances! And how was it that wages kept

going up and up and up? Inflation! There'd been no nonsense of that sort in his day...

The next generation who had been left in charge in Lisbon and who had to suffer his strictures and tirades consisted of my Great Grandfather John Stafford Bucknall and his two cousins Will (William St Vincent) and Lee (Henry Leehead) Bucknall. John Stafford Bucknall was apparently gentle, romantic and sensitive and not really suited to the life of commerce into which he was thrust by unquestioned parental authority. But he was conscientious and hard-working and, with British trade still ahead of its competitors, his lack of business toughness did not matter - particularly as his cousin Will was extremely able - and the company continued to flourish. However, as the century drew to its close, there were signs that prosperity would not always be easy.

William St Vincent Bucknall married Louisa Caroline Drummond-Hay in St. George's Chapel, Lisbon in 1890. They had four children born in Lisbon and lived at *53, Rua Sacramento, Lapa.* Will died in 1910. His brother Henry Leehead, known as Lee, was the eldest son of Henry Corfield Bucknall and married Eleanor Cresswell who came from a long-established British family in Portugal. Their son Henry Cresswell Bucknall was educated at Eton and Oxford and won a gold rowing for Great Britain in the 1908 Olympics. He was also a talented amateur artist doing some fine pictures of the Tagus and shipping.

Lee and Eleanor, or Ellie as she was known, and their children lived in a memorable home, *Quinta de Esteiro Furado, Moita,* on barren land across the river from Lisbon, where, despite the inauspicious setting, a traditional British style had been determinedly transposed by them onto the large two storey house built above a former water mill. This grandiose superstructure was in reality flimsily constructed, susceptible to the ebb and flow of the water below, and it creaked and swayed alarmingly in the wind.

Nevertheless, inside, Lee and Ellie had recreated the life and style of a grand English country house. English wallpapers

decorated with pheasants and hummingbirds adorned the walls, gigantic English pieces of furniture anchored the plush English carpets that in their turn covered the gaping floorboards. The latest English novel or copy of Punch sat on a table, the hearth burnt an almost perpetual log fire. Cousin Lee had a gunroom full of guns and a smoking room full of leather. Pure-bred English dogs sprawled everywhere. Out in the stables, in addition to carriage horses, could be found a pair of English hunters for the use of Ellie and her daughter, both of them fanatical horsewomen almost never to be seen attired in anything but riding habits.

Quinta de Esteiro Furado was most easily reached from the water. It lay up a side creek from the main channel and visitors had to board the ferry from Lisbon and then disembark in mid-water. A rowing boat would be sent to meet them, struggling crabwise across the strong tide to get alongside. Suitcases were hurled overboard and the visitors, aided by crew and passengers, followed precipitously into the rocking boat. It was a very hospitable household however and many guests were prepared to brave the journey. It had particular romantic associations for my family, as it was here that my grandfather Harold courted my grandmother Dainty and, many years later, George Reynolds my Aunt Anita.

Wedded to cork as they were, with a feel and a love for it embedded deep in their spirit, nevertheless the vicissitudes of the cork trade caused continuing angst and heartache among successive generations of Bucknalls. Though intelligent and courageous, upright and conscientious, they carried in them a streak of worry and pessimism, which was to recur in each generation. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose* one is tempted to reflect when reading through old family papers and comparing the thoughts uttered with those of one's own father, Stafford Bucknall, many decades later. In 1814, we have William's complaints to his parents about Bordeaux, its cork and its people. In 1904 we have a letter written by Henry William Joseph Bucknall in New York to his brother, John Stafford Bucknall in Lisbon:

Gudewill & Bucknall, Importers
193 Water Street, New York
Tel: No 352 John
September 20th, 1904

My dear Staff

I received your letter of September 8th, written from Berisal but I have so much to occupy my attention that it may be several days before I can answer it. I have been 22 years in business in this country, and in all that time I have not had so many worries, so many things go wrong, such serious situations to face, as within the past six months. It is perfectly dreadful and where and how it is all going to end God only knows. Fortunately, my relations with Armstrongs are of the best, but we are all in the same boat and it looks to me like the long feared final crisis of the cork business and the beginning of the end. About the only business left is thin cork and from letters received today that may end too and then goodness knows what we shall do. I have to go to Lancaster tonight to meet C.D. Armstrong and consult over the situation - for the past two months I seem to be doing nothing else. Often and often I long to throw it all up and settle down quietly somewhere free from all this strain and worry but I cannot shirk the burden, and I must try and stick to it. Why all these worries should come this year when I have not got Gudewill to help me bear them is just the cussedness of things.

Apropos of the above - I am convinced the cork business is pretty well doomed and I would strongly advise you to make every effort to sell more of the Pref. Shares. I hope I may be mistaken but that is my opinion.
In haste,

Your affec. Bro.
Henry W. Bucknall

(Whenever my father Stafford Bucknall was particularly worried about business he would remind himself of this letter written so many years before, with what turned out to have been excessive foreboding, and take heart!)

My great grandfather John Stafford Bucknall, mentioned above, followed the family tradition of retiring to England with his wife (Frances Ann Roberts) whom he had met in Lisbon, as soon as his oldest son, my grandfather Harold was old enough to enter the Lisbon office. Harold's senior cousins Will and Lee, also in the business, both died in middle age leaving him, still a young man, in a position of premature responsibility. His younger brother Douglas had joined a rival cork firm, and was later to set up his own cork business – acquired from Armstrongs-Bucknall and Wright with his son-in-law, L.H. (Jerry) Wright. Thus, although his younger brother, Wilfred was to join him in H.B. & S. after the First World War, it was on my grandfather Harold's young shoulders that the burdens of the business fell. These took an increasing toll on his somewhat delicate constitution and his health became fragile over the years.

However, as a young man, he responded with great enthusiasm to the challenges and the part of the work he most enjoyed were his visits to the cork forests of the Alentejo. Fascinated by cork and by the life story of each piece, which went back to the acorn of its parent tree, he loved his days up country, which, though arduous, were more stimulating and relaxing than duties in the Lisbon office. He was hardly more than thirty when he became the Company's Manager in Portugal, and he was keen to try out new ideas. He experimented with different methods of pruning and was one of the first to plough the land under the trees, clearing it of the scrub and putting down instead, wherever practical, cereals. His biggest reform was the introduction of spring water by aqueduct to the company's biggest property *Polvo Rosas*. Something of an amateur engineer himself, he took an active part in designing the aqueduct which followed the contours of the hillsides and then went springing triumphantly across a valley on a line of brick arches. Its completion was a source of great pride to him.

Harold was also keen to raise the living standard of the labourers on the properties, building them better cottages and introducing from England improved varieties of vegetables and fruits. Most but not all his ideas were successful. The local breed of pig was hardy but emaciated. My grandfather believed that, crossed with an English breed, it would retain its hardiness but become as fat as the English. Unfortunately the crossbreed inherited the delicate constitution of the English sire while remaining as emaciated as ever. Moreover, to keep it healthy, it required a luxurious sty, drained, ventilated and weatherproof – a regular *palacio* the peasants grumbled, and it had to be fed on cereals, which were their own diet. They loathed the pampered beast and sabotage may perhaps have played a part in its early end.

Visits to the Alentejo and the cork properties were however not carried out lightly. Cork was a speculative business and, as a result, cork merchants liked to cloak their dealings in an atmosphere of the deepest mystery and intrigue. As my Aunt Joyce records, no secret service agent could have acted more surreptitiously than my grandfather when he went up country to inspect a likely parcel of cork or to nose out the prospects of a big strip. All his movements had to be concealed from trade rivals who were supposed to be capable of the blackest treachery in order to discover them. When my grandfather was off on a trip he would go to the office in the morning as usual, be seen at his lunchtime café, and then vanish. Meanwhile a porter had conveyed his case direct to the station where it was put on a train. All my grandfather had to do was to sneak up the platform at the last minute and dive into his compartment. If, by unfortunate chance, a rival cork merchant was on the train, they pretended not to see each other.

My grandfather and my grandmother (Dorothy Munro Richards, known always as Dainty, born and brought up in Portugal and with many Portuguese relations) had two daughters, Anita and Joyce, followed some considerable years later by my father, Stafford.

Living initially in Lisbon in the *Rua Buenos Aires*, they moved subsequently to Estoril where they were surrounded by other relations.

Harold's brother Douglas and his French wife Marguerite* (who was to found St. Julian's School in 1932) lived nearby with their three children, Geoffrey, Cicely (who became Cicely Wright) and Margaret (Peggs, now Peggs van der Merwe). His younger brother Wilfred who was to marry Rebecca McCausland Stewart, governess to Douglas' children, also lived in Monte Estoril. Wilfred and Rebecca had an only child, Henrietta, who later married and moved to Rhodesia. (Now Henrietta Arthur.)

Living so close, the three Bucknall brothers, Harold, Douglas and Wilfred would take the same train from Estoril station to Lisbon each day. However, no doubt to the amusement of those who were aware of their relationship (they were in any event very alike and were good friends), they would ignore each other on the platform and always ensure that they took seats well apart from each other for the length of the journey. It is generally agreed that this behaviour was 'typically Bucknall'!

Times became increasingly hard in both Portugal and Britain during my grandfather's days. Having to contend first with the First World War and then with the Depression and General Strike in the Twenties, his vitality was sapped and his health suffered. This was a new era of increasingly tough competitive ways and it did not suit my grandfather's temperament and ethics or the gentle, paternalistic and ultra conservative ways of H.B. & S. Eventually my grandparents left Portugal for England in 1931 and settled quietly in Tunbridge Wells where my grandmother devoted herself to caring for her increasingly invalid husband.

*Marguerite Bucknall was awarded the M.B.E. for founding St. Julian's. In 1932 it opened with just 20 children. It now has some 900 pupils from over 40 nationalities. She was also awarded the O.B.E. for her substantial community work during the Second World War.

Following Harold's departure, his younger brother Wilfred managed H.B. & S. for a while. Wilfred was a gifted academic rather than a businessman and thus not really suited to the role but he soldiered on through the Second World War only to succumb sadly a few years later to T.B. He died in 1950.

My own introduction to Portugal came in 1946 when, after the Second World War, my father, Stafford, agreed to join H.B. & S. in Lisbon, where his cousin Cicely's dynamic husband L.H. (Jerry) Wright had just been brought in to take charge. My father went out first to find a home for us, and my mother (Elizabeth) and I followed shortly afterwards flying in a converted bomber which took nine hours from London to Lisbon.

We settled into a little pink villa in Caxias with a wonderful veranda overlooking the Tagus. From here we could watch the constant procession of boats on the river, admire the crimson sunsets and listen to the regular sound of car crashes on the coastal road from Lisbon. I was four at the time and was immediately entranced by the colour, the scents and the vitality of Portugal, and by the kindness of the Portuguese. At the age of five I took the train each day on my own to Carcavelos where I became a pupil at St. Julian's, joining Bucknall House! This journey normally went without problem apart from one day when, pretending to read a rather complex library book, I missed Caxias Station. What a hullabaloo! Fortunately a young Portuguese soldier took pity on me and escorted me gravely across the track at the next stop to catch the train back.

Despite some twenty nationalities in my day, the education at St Julian's proved of a high standard and when I later went to boarding school in England I was found to be ahead of my peers in some lessons, despite 'coming from overseas'.

We mixed with other members of the British colony and of course with our relations. My first cousins, Christopher Reynolds and Gillian (now Gillian Nott-Bower), and their parents, my Aunt Anita and her husband George Reynolds, lived first in Monte Estoril but following earthquake damage had to move and settled into the

lovely *Quinta* at *Ranholas* in Sintra. My great uncle Wilfred and his wife, my great aunt Rebecca, and their daughter Henrietta, continued to live in Monte Estoril, while my great uncle Douglas and great aunt Marguerite, also having sustained earthquake damage to their house in Monte Estoril, had moved to *Quinta da Bemposta* in Sintra. Their daughter Cicely and husband Jerry Wright lived with their children John and Mary Jane (now Mary Jane Butler) at *Torre da Marinha,* Cascais.

As the obituary in The Anglo Portuguese News records on the occasion of her death on 29th October 1988 (by which time she was the last member of the Bucknall family living in Portugal), Cicely was a very gifted pianist as well as a dancer and actress but her interest in botany, which developed during the 1950s, was to prove her great talent as an artist. Entirely self-taught, she produced a great number of exquisite water colour paintings of Portuguese wild flowers and, in later years, exhibitions of her work were mounted both in Portugal and England.

Meanwhile, on the business front, in 1946, my father Stafford, delighted to be back in Portugal, had entered wholeheartedly and energetically into helping Jerry Wright build up Henry Bucknall & Sons Ltd. Many trips to the Alentejo saw him with bright blue eyes in a sunburnt face, while in Lisbon he became immersed in the day-to-day work. However, in the November of that year, H.B. & S. experienced a major fire which broke out at their factory across the Tagus from Lisbon at Caramujo. My father Stafford describes it graphically in a letter home to his father Harold:

"Dear Father

As you doubtless saw in *The Telegraph* – or possibly *The Times* – a serious fire broke out in Caramujo last Tuesday at 12.30 (noon). Jerry and I dashed over from Lisbon as fast as possible but by the time we arrived the fire was raging in the centre of the factory and one could not get from one end to the other, although it was then only 45 minutes after it had started.

It was a terrible sight – the whole of the centre of the factory, which was crammed with raw material – although not as much as we had in June/July – alight from end to end.

Numbers of fire engines arrived but water from the wells soon gave out. They started pumping from the sea, but when the tide went out at 4 p.m. they could not get any water from the sea, and it really looked as if the whole place was going up.

Fortunately more tanks arrived and they finally pumped water from the Naval Dockyard about 500 metres away. Finally, after a terrific struggle, the fire was more or less put out by 4 pm on Wednesday – after having burnt for about 28 hours. Nearly our whole stock of raw material – and the big shed – was destroyed. We were certainly very lucky, although we estimate having lost about 3,500 tons of raw materials, valued at around £65,000! Now we hope the insurance co. will pay.

The factory is now in the devil of a mess, as you can imagine, and some small points are still smouldering and while there is any danger, one of us spends the night on watch in the factory. I am on tonight and that is why I have found time to write!

I do not know when we shall be able to start up again – just as soon as we have cleared up the mess and can get more raw materials. Strangely enough, 3 factories nearby were burnt out 2 days before Caramujo, and consequently there is talk of *fogo posto* – but of course no proof or evidence at all really. There have been a lot of big fires of cork this year.

The only amusing thing was that the pile of coal near the elevator is of such poor quality that, despite the terrific blaze and heat, it only just began to smoulder and was quite easily put out! Many people have told me about the fire you had 20 years ago, but this one, I think, rather dwarfs it – and it would have been much much bigger if there had been any wind and if we had not been very fortunate."

Fortunately H.B. & S. overcame this setback and family life continued happily. In 1948 my brother, Richard John Stafford, was born in Lisbon and in 1949 we moved to Estoril where we were to live for the next five years. My sister, Helen Elizabeth, was born in 1950, also in Lisbon.

However the problems that had beset previous Bucknalls had not gone away. The Portuguese Government was coming increasingly to resent British run companies and was putting more and more obstacles in their way; the fears of previous generations that the cork trade had no future surfaced again and it was decided, despite some internal opposition, that they should diversify. (Gradually over the coming years H.B. & S. businesses, properties and factories were sold off, quite profitably, and both Lisbon and London offices closed for good in 1966.)

Thus it was that in 1954 we returned to England, to Wilmslow in Cheshire not far from Manchester where my father took over the running of the H.B. & S. office, which was involved in the leather trade. However it was very different from the invigorating life in Lisbon and the work was just not challenging enough for my active and able father. He missed the cork trade and the contact with Portugal.

In 1956 we moved to Surrey and my father joined Mundet Cork, which had an office in Croydon, as Managing Director. But here again he was to have much to contend with. Almost as soon as he had joined, the owner, Joseph Mundet, an American, died suddenly, still a young man. The business had been left to his wife Paula, a Portuguese lady with no knowledge of the cork trade, who, with this inheritance, became a millionairess. Always volatile by nature, she was to lead an increasingly colourful life as a widow, which culminated shockingly in her murder in January 1986.

To add to Stafford's problems, almost immediately after Jo Mundet's death, Mundet's factory in Croydon was burnt to the ground - his second experience of a devastating cork fire. But, resilient, resourceful, astute and diplomatic, my father weathered the

storms and built up the business very successfully, developing over time a profitable plastics side. He was also particularly successful at marketing cork flooring and the Bodleian Library in Oxford became one of his clients. He also developed niche markets and produced high quality decorative cork wallpapers.

In 1969, while Managing Director of Mundet, Stafford inaugurated and became Founder Chairman of the Cork Industry Federation, which brought together five previously independent trade bodies. The role of the C.I.F. was to harness the promotional activities of these associations which had tended to go their own ways and, to mark its founding, an exhibition was mounted in the West End of London, aimed at proving that despite critics trying to kill off the industry years ago, there was still room for cork in what was now truly the space age.

Interviewed by the press, Stafford pointed out that although cork for sealing bottles was probably the most widely known application, cork had found its place in a variety of modern technologies. A vital layer had been whizzing around the skies in the heat shield of the Apollo 9 spacecraft; the QE2 liner had cork insulation; nine out of every 10 cars exported from Britain had cork gaskets and the containers used to transport radio-active isotopes were lined with cork. The versatility of cork had made it an essential commodity in the motor vehicle, electronic, printing, building, engineering, textile, shipping, cigarette and aeronautical industries.

While not trying to hide the fact that cork had had a hard fight to survive against plastics he emphasised that if there were no substitutes for cork in the world there would not be enough cork to do all that was required. It was noted that Portugal was the world's largest producer of cork and in 1968 exported nearly £19.5 m. worth. In terms of value, the U.K. had over recent years been Portugal's third best overall customer, behind the United States and West Germany and last year demand had quickened with imports rising around 12 percent. There was therefore, he felt, despite the forebodings voiced (including those of one of his own ancestors right at the beginning of the century) a continuing future for cork.

A considerable amount of press coverage resulted from this exhibition including a large article and photograph of Stafford in *The Times*.

Unfortunately my father was to be hit again by huge worries in the 1970s when, following the Portuguese Revolution, he had to deal with Workers Co-operatives and had enormous problems obtaining and maintaining cork supplies of sufficiently high standard. Nevertheless he never lost his total commitment and it was only as a result of ill-health (cancer in 1979) that he decided to retire in 1981, after 25 years with Mundet. The Mundet Board in Portugal duly marked the occasion with the following letter:

"Your presence throughout these 25 years, during which you were conducting the destinies of Mundet-Croydon, was always viewed here with gratitude for the great efforts and initiative demonstrated, for the dedication manifested, very often under the most adverse conditions.

We can assure you that notwithstanding the various changes which took place throughout these years in the administration of Mundet-Portugal, all are unanimous in the just appreciation for the work which you knew how to develop for the better direction and expansion of Mundet-Croydon.

At the moment of your retirement it is with great satisfaction that we are expressing to you our deep appreciation and thanks, which we are convinced to be fully justified and well deserved."

(Mundet was the only Portuguese-owned cork company operating in the U.K.).

Although the Bucknall family no longer retains a close involvement in every day Portuguese life, a link nevertheless remains. But the legacy is an emotional one. Beneath that very English Bucknall exterior beat hearts that quicken at the mention of Portugal, and we are indebted to our forebears for their pioneering

spirit, which brought about these ties. In my father's case a vital spark ignited whenever he was in Portugal. Portugal was in his blood and his love for the country was catching. My mother and I fell in love with it ourselves when living there and some of these feelings have perhaps been assimilated - by osmosis as it were - by my brother and sister who, though born in Lisbon, were too young when they left to have many strong memories of their own.

Whereas Bucknall homes in Portugal may have contained many reminders of England, our homes in England were decorated with a wealth of Portuguese memorabilia. After my father's death in January 1992, my mother helped to keep her memories of Stafford alive playing *fados* and remembering their life in Portugal. (She herself died in April 2001.)

We, their children, have inherited a continuing interest in and affinity with all things Portuguese and a love of 'abroad' – those lands of summer across the sea, 'that sunburnt otherwhere'. For myself I have only to get a whiff of a heady scent of eucalyptus, cistus or pine to be instantly transported back to the Portugal of my childhood under that brilliant clear blue sky. What *lembranças*, what *saudades*, what happy days!

* * * * *

Postscript – an update on our family today

My brother Richard has spent all his working life in insurance broking and has spent many years abroad, as a young man in Israel, and later in South Africa. Now living and working in the City of London, he is Chief Operating Officer of Willis and continues to travel widely on business. His second wife, Genevieve, is French and he has three children by his first marriage – James Andrew Stafford who has followed him into the insurance world and twins Jonathan and Claire who have just left university.

My sister Helen Whitten lives in South Kensington and has a flat in Nice where she spends an increasing amount of time. She runs her own business and has two children Rupert and Oliver. Rupert works in banking and Oliver is currently spending two years in Japan teaching English.

As for myself, I am married to Leo Cavendish, an Old Amplefordian, Polish by birth, who was very friendly with Peter Mollet and other members of the Reynolds family before I met him. He had been out to Portugal to stay with them and it is as a result of this serendipitous Portuguese connection that we met – at a party, where he overheard me talking about Portugal and asked if I knew the Reynolds! We live for the moment in Sussex though have plans for retiring abroad and we have two children – twins Dominic and Antonia. Dominic is married with a little boy, Lucas, aged 2 and lives in North London. He is a theatre critic for the *Daily Telegraph*. Antonia too lives in North London and works for the BBC.

As for other close members of the family, we are all, apart from Christopher Reynolds, who lives in Cascais and the Algarve, now living in England. Peggs van der Merwe, who is now the only surviving member of my father's generation of Bucknalls, lives in Bath.

--ooOoo—

Sources:
Joyce Baylis – Growing Up English
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Family records including additional research by Rixon Bucknall and Stephen Bucknall