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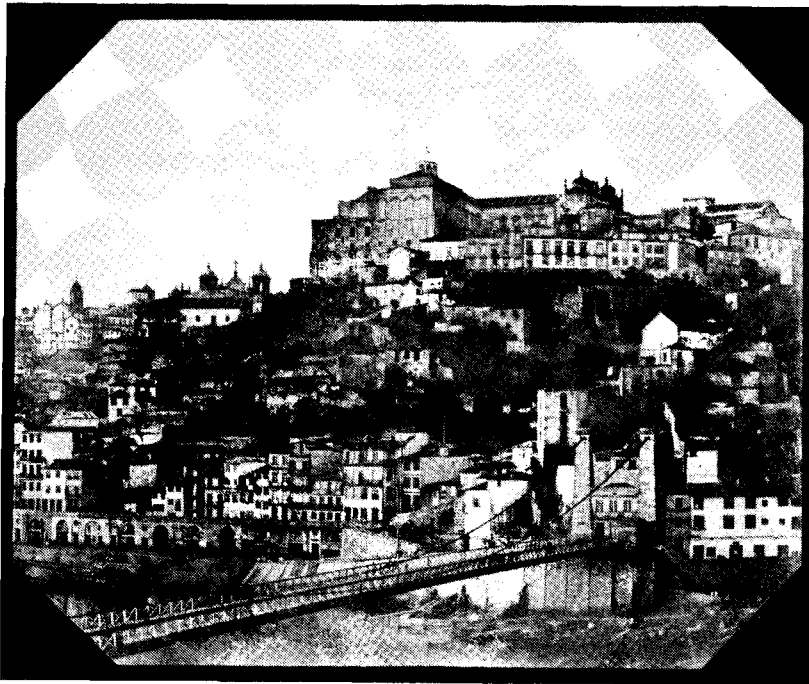
**FREDERICK WILLIAM FLOWER  
1815-1889**

by Jane Flower

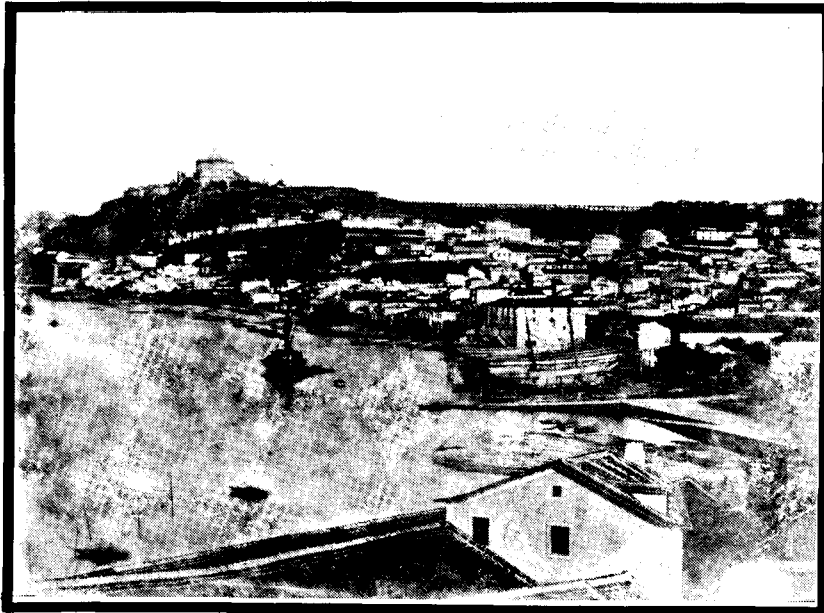


*Frederick William Flower, 1815-1889. Photograph by Emilio Biel & Co, Oporto.*

Frederick William, the first of the Flower family to go to Oporto, eldest son of Frederick Flower and Elizabeth Diana, his wife, was born on 23 February 1815 at Leith, Edinburgh. He was baptised at St. James's Chapel in Leith on 19th March 1815. As Frederick Flower held an official post in Hull, he had been nominated to conduct a relay of French prisoners of war to a detention camp in Scotland, this being the year of Waterloo.



*City of Oporto, (above) showing Cathedral and Suspension Bridge. River Douro, (below) looking Eastwards from Gaia Hill (Castelo?).*



Subsequently, the family returned to Hull, but Frederick William's elder son, Robert, wrote that he had no records of his father's early life; not even where he was at school, but it was evident he had had a good education "and it is known he showed an interest in various aspects of science". Frederick William's father may have been a librarian in Hull, as the only known letter from him to his son, sent to Oporto, was written in Hull Library at the early hour of a quarter past four in the morning of 14th March 1834, which was the month in which Frederick William left England as a young nineteen year old in the ship "Hull" of and from Hull. On arrival at the bar of the River Douro, they were obliged to wait some three weeks for weather conditions which would allow entry up the river.

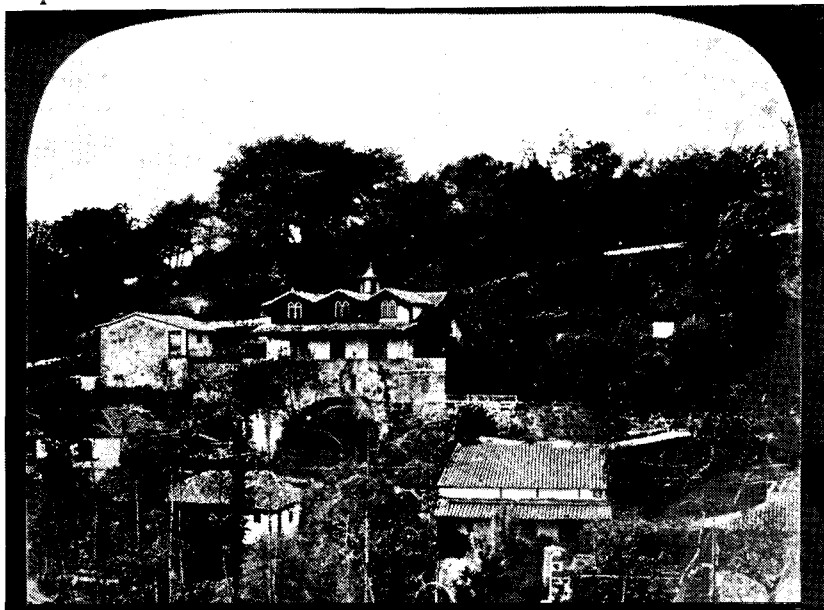
It is not known under what auspices he went to Oporto but not too wild a guess is that he went with a recommendation to take up employment with the firm of Smith Woodhouse. After arriving, he lived for some time in the house of the head of the firm, Mr. Robert Woodhouse in the Largo Coronel Pacheco, as was the custom at the time. Mrs. Woodhouse was Portuguese and Frederick William's elder daughter Linda was called Ermelinda Maria after her, Mr. Woodhouse being her Godfather.

Frederick William was only on his own in Oporto for about two years, being joined in 1836 by his mother, brother John and two young sisters, Rachel and Frances (Fanny), following the death of his father in Hull in July 1835. Frederick William took charge of his young sisters, then aged 12 and 4, making himself responsible for their schooling etc.

No one knows when he took up photography, or indeed where he learnt his photographic expertise, but it seems likely it was in the later 1840's, as his son Robert, born in 1851, wrote that "being photographed by him was one of my earliest recollections". It is thought he continued his photography for about ten years, since his younger son, also Frederick William (Fred Junior), who was born in 1858, had no recollection at all of his father taking photographs. He continued to be engaged in the portwine business during the whole of this period. It is thought likely that he was the first to use the Fox Talbot photographic process in Portugal, although Fred Junior recalled his saying that there had been another amateur using this process at one time. As Frederick William worked initially in the firm of Smith Woodhouse in Oporto and James Joseph Forrester (Baron Forrester) was a close friend of Mr. Robert Woodhouse, it seems likely that the two would have known each other, a supposition supported

by the observation made by Frederick William to Fred Junior about there being "another one (photographer) besides myself at first and professionals did not exist". Baron Forrester did not, however, commence photography until around 1853/54.

Frederick William prepared his own sensitizing emulsions and at times afterwards touched up the negatives with red brushwork, thus producing artificial cloud effects. His subjects were chiefly views, buildings, rural and riverside scenes of Oporto, Vila Nova de Gaia and other places in Northern Portugal. He also photographed the house, Miss Wilby's "chalet" in Vizela, where his younger son, years later, was to spend his honeymoon. There were no railways, so travel to these places, with the cumbersome cameras of the time, must have been by horse or mule diligence. To get from Oporto to Lamego, for instance, would have taken three or four days. Frederick William took few posed portraits, at least few have survived, but casual figures are included in a number of general pictures. There are a number of photographs showing washing spread out to bleach, and other aspects of country life which evidently struck a recent arrival in those days. One photograph shows a cask of portwine ready to be shipped, dated 1853, proving a date which was not necessarily the last of the photographs, although judging by the number in which the date 1849 appears, it could be considered that it was when his photographic work reached its peak.



*Miss Wilby's "chalet" at Vizela.  
(Print).*

What survives of his work is just over 200 calotypes (paper negatives) and around 100 salted paper prints made from the calotype negatives. As has been mentioned, it is not known where he learnt his photographic expertise, but in the expert opinion of Mr. Michael Gray, Curator of the Fox Talbot Museum at Lacock Abbey, his work shows careful and considered use of the technical facilities which were then available, whilst his ability to work so closely to the limits of the technology of the day, shows clearly his mastery over the art of photography.

The calotype negatives have, by and large, survived in good condition, but the positive prints have not, which, again in Mr. Gray's valuable opinion, is possibly because Frederick William was not at that time familiar with the latest discoveries regarding timings and washing off the fluids. It seems likely he purchased his materials from a London supplier, many of whom provided instruction in the art and practice of the calotype, waxed paper and wet collodion processes.

A few pencil, and one or two pencil and water colour drawings of the interior of the Smith Woodhouse lodges still exist, but these, clearly, would have been done prior to his taking up photography.

It was during this period of photography that Frederick William married, in July 1849, Mary Mason (widow of Benjamin Scarfe Oddy of Bradford). She had two daughters by her first marriage: one, Mary, died before her mother remarried, and the other, Ellen in 1854, aged about ten. Mary Mason was born in Bradford, the daughter of a prosperous mill-owner in that town, until the disastrous "cotton crisis" which brought ruin to so many, and to Mr Mason as well.

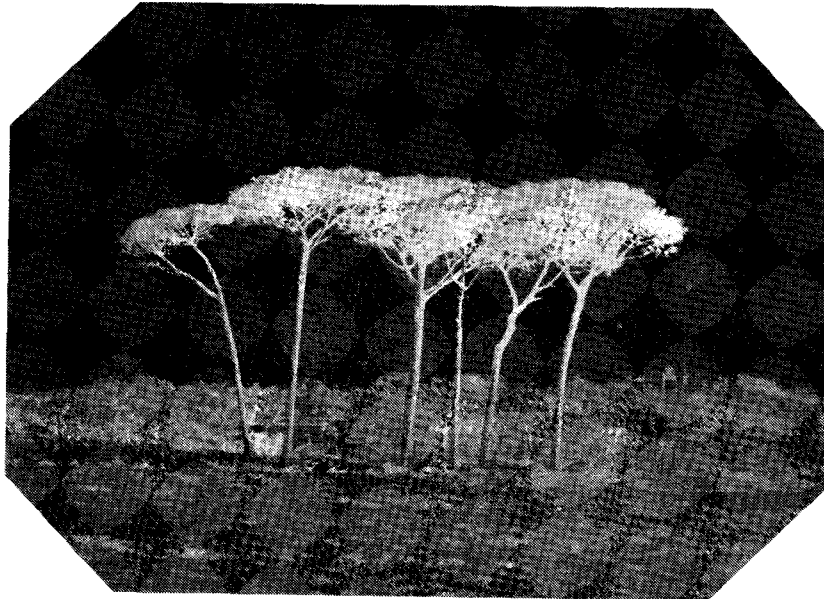
Frederick William left Smith Woodhouse's employ about 1853 or '54, due to a misunderstanding, having been induced by a statement of a Mr John Godfrey, nephew of Mr Robert Woodhouse, into joining him in starting a separate wine shipping business (Godfrey & Co). This was housed in one or two sections of the "Queimados" lodges, where Messrs Cockburn & Smithes were established for 60 years. The partnership did not last long and, as he felt unable to go back to Smith Woodhouse, he afterwards shipped portwine in his own name.

All four of Frederick William's children were born in the same house in the Marco in Vila Nova de Gaia, and the family continued to live there for many years. His sister Rachel lived with them and helped his wife with the lessons of the two eldest and took them for walks. He went to England occasionally, and his son Robert recalled a visit he made in 1855 or 1856. Robert writes "It was a great event when he returned and brought wonderful toys and picture-books,



*Chapel, Bom Sucesso (above), Oporto - camera in foreground.*

*Pine trees at Coimbrões, Vila Nova de Gaia. (below)*



presents from himself and friends and relations in England, principally Mother's sisters. There was a peculiar aroma of newness in these things which still sticks in one's memory and which we children used to call "the delicious smell of England".

Frederick William's two sisters both married in Oporto, Fanny a Mr George Searle, whose family lived on Faial Island in the Azores for many years, and Rachel, in 1859 Mr Henry Dartford, a recent arrival in Oporto. It was in November 1859 that Frederick William decided to move with his family to England and settled in Clifton, Bristol, where they remained three years. During this time, Fred Senior found he had to go constantly backwards and forwards to Oporto on business, so the family decided to move back again, to the same house in the Marco. They travelled both ways in a small screw steamer, the "Iberia", but all the furniture went and came by sailing vessel. During this period he was shipping portwine for George Garrard & Co of Bristol. He may have taken some photographs during this period; two of the surviving pictures are thought to be of England.

His two or three cameras sadly then lay about until they fell to pieces, the lenses and printing presses being disposed of when Robert retired to England in 1921.

His elder son recalls a visit from Candal to Oporto to see the streets lighted by gas for the first time (1855)\*; up to this time street lighting had been with olive oil lamps\*. Olive oil lamps were in use indoors as well, and had to be wound up every 20 minutes! They gave a pleasant soft light; paraffin lamps came into use about 1860.

In 1874, following a breakdown in Frederick William's health, he, his wife Mary and younger daughter Elizabeth (Nina) left Oporto for England. First they went to Yorkshire and then London (Richmond), while the other three children, Robert, Linda and Fred Junior remained in the large Quinta das Frutuosas in Candal, to which the family had moved four years earlier, the same year Fred Senior had given up renting a small house at the beach of Lavadores. This house Fred Junior bought, along with two others, a number of years later, which later still became the Restaurant A Casa Branca.

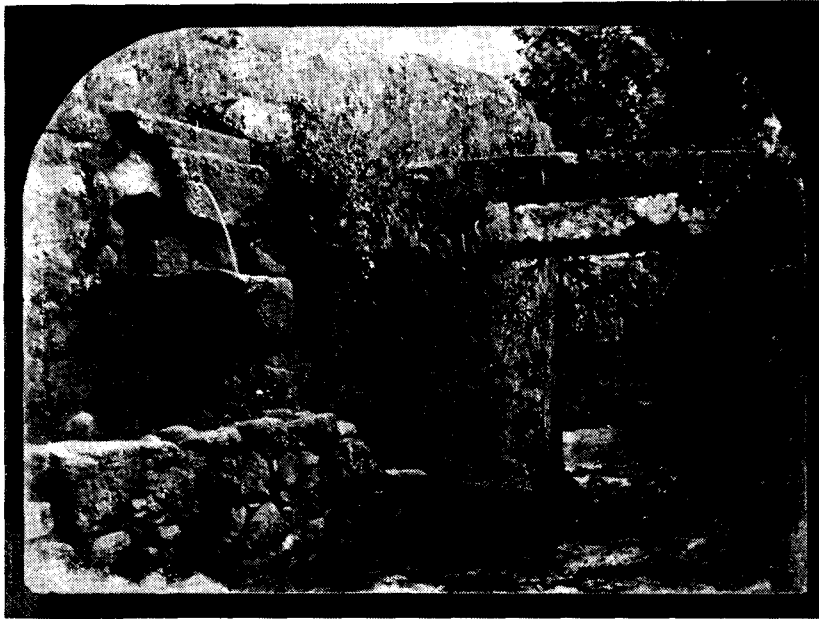
It is not know exactly when he, his wife and Nina returned to Oporto, but Mary died there in 1880. He himself died, also in Oporto, in 1889 after a brief illness of a few weeks. Recording his father's funeral in his diary, Fred Junior refers to it as "the saddest day of my life to date".

\* Information kindly provided by The Arquivo Historico Municipal do Porto.

Whilst remaining the property of Frederick William Flower's descendants, the calotypes and prints are all lodged, for safekeeping and conservation, with the Arquivo Nacional de Fotografia in Lisbon, who recently organized a very successful exhibition of them, together with other fascinating photographic items, some of them most generously lent for the purpose by the family of Fox Talbot and the Museum .

The Arquivo Nacional de Fotografia most kindly lent the copies of the photographs used in this article. It is understood they plan hold an exhibition of these photographs in Oporto in 1995.

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*Lane crossed by two large stones and fountain with inscribed stone*

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The author is the great-grand daughter of Frederick William Flower. She was brought up in Oporto, and works for the British Embassy in Lisbon.