

MEMBERS OF THE LISBON «FACTORY» IN THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

(Contributed by Mr. S. George West)

Recent researches have brought to light a great deal of information about the commercial and social activities of the British «Factory» in Lisbon and about its historical function, growth and ultimate disappearance ⁽¹⁾. But, as Sir Godfrey Fisher has pointed out, there seems to be no record of any constitution of the Factory in the seventeenth century, although it is obvious that the members must have evolved some regulations, however rudimentary, for their own governance. We still need to discover what were the characteristics, other than nominal, by which the association known as the «Consul and the Factors» was distinguished from the larger association of the «Consul and the Merchants» of which it formed part. We know that the Factory meetings were presided over by the British Consul, who was a member *ex officio*, and that he acted as the Factory's spokesman in all dealings with the Portuguese authorities; that from 1666 onwards a Treasurer was elected annually «for distributing the charity and necessary expenses of the Factory»; and that the «Factors» were drawn from the British houses with mercantile interests in Lisbon. Not all British merchants resident in Lisbon, however, were members of the Factory, and we have yet to learn in what way the Factory developed into an exclusive corporation, what was its complement, how the variation in its numbers was regulated, and what were the conditions and procedure by which a Merchant became admitted to the status of Factor. The following extracts from contemporary documents may help towards finding the eventual answers to some of these questions, and are of interest in that they provide the names

of some, possibly all, of the members of the Factory in 1672-73, and the names of allegedly all the Factors in 1686.

James Jenifer, the captain of the merchantman *Saudades* ⁽²⁾, has left us his journal of a voyage from London to Lisbon, covering the period 12th October, 1672 to 1st June, 1673 ⁽³⁾. After a vivid description of Portugal and the Portuguese he gives an account of the Factories in the country which are «most English, some French, some Dutch, and a few «Italians. Of English there are about one hundred, whereof «25 are housekeepers, the rest factors and attendants; the more «principal whereof are by name as followeth: — Mr. Thomas «Hill and Mr. Boultell, partners; Mr. Henry Stanley, Mr. Nich. «Polexten (*sic*) and Mr. John Hicks, partners; Mr. Roger «Bradhill, Mr. Richard March, Mr. James Rudge, Mr. William «Colston, Treasurer, Mr. Humphrey Benning and Mr. John «Milbanck, partners; Mr. John Pargiter and Mr. William Bird, «partners; Mr. Francis Lenthall, Mr. Henry Jacobs, Mr. John «Wiggott, Mr. Peter Maddock, Mr. Joseph Domey, Mr. Bernard «Mervin, Mr. Joseph Hardwick, Mr. George Maynard, Mr. «Leonard Newham and Mr. John Clerk, partners; Mr. John «Adams, Mr. John Earle, Mr. Robert Cock, a decayed but «remarkable merchant, in the year 1649, for his kindness to «Prince Rupert. Mr. Barnaby Crafford the most eminent «formerly in Lisbon but now only famous for the good wine he «makes. The young factors: — Mr. Richard Gay, Mr. John «Banks, Mr. Knightly Alderne, Mr. John Parsons, Mr. William «Brookes, Mr. Charles Cullin». ⁽⁴⁾.

The captain continues with the somewhat pungent comment:

«Our English merchants have been very successful in «gaining estates but how honestly I cannot determine. Here «are three or four ingenious men, the rest are like our coffer «breed in England, who, no longer than they are choked with «privileges and riches cannot endure to speak well of any «Government under whom they abide. They are likewise such «strangers to the humours and customs of the place where «they live, that when I came to converse with them, I could «not gain the advantage of one passage in ten to any «satisfaction».

Captain Jenifer lists the following seventeen «merchants» of Lisbon as having returned home since the Restoration with comfortable fortunes: —

«Mr. George Lane, jun., Mr. Christopher Warren, Mr. «William Bird, Mr. William Lane, Mr. Edward Rudge, Mr. «Thomas Clarke, Mr. Thomas Bird, Mr. John Polexfell (*sic*), «Mr. Abraham Jacobs, Mr. William Peachy, Mr. Edward «Colson, Mr. Richard Stanley, Mr. Samuel Boltell, Mr. William «Clarke, Mr. Samuel Tucker, Mr. Roger Bradhill, Mr. James «Rudge». (5).

He follows this with a list of twenty-one British merchants resident at Oporto and concludes with the names of «His «Majesty's Agent in Portugal... Francis Parry, Esq., Mr. «Thomas Maynard, Consul at Lisbon, Mr. Thomas Smolt, «chaplain».

The second document is a letter, dated «Lisbon, 7/17 Sept. 1686», which the Factors addressed to the Bishop of London. This letter reported that the Consul, Thomas Maynard, and the Chaplain, Dr. Michael Geddes, had been summoned before the Inquisition and forbidden to hold meetings «to heare Divine Service and Sermons», asserted that the right freely to exercise their religion was secured to the King's subjects under the Treaty of Commerce between the Crowns of England and Portugal and asked that the matter should be brought «to the King's Cognizance» (6). It was signed by the Consul and seventeen members of the Factory. No sooner had it been despatched than the Factors resolved to strengthen their case by making their protest unanimous. They accordingly sent to the Bishop a second letter which was a facsimile of the first and which concluded with the following additional paragraph:

«May it please your Lordship

«This is a duplicate of a Letter wee troubled your «Lordship with by the last post, but then halfe the factory «att least being absent, about their necessary occasions, «wee have made bold to give your Lordship another; to «read: signed by every member thereof».

This second letter, which was similarly dated «Lisbon, the 7/17 September, 1686», was signed by the Consul, as before, and by thirty-three other British subjects, namely:

John Arlibeare	John Hickes
Josiah Bateman	Thomas Hunt
William Bathurst	Henry Jacob
James Bennett	William Langford
Humphrey Benning	John Le Duke
William Birde	Thomas Marsh
William Brooke	Peter Nepuell
Richard Buller	Robert Northleigh
Richard Buller, junior	Joseph Persivall
Peter Bultell (?)	John Person
Francis Carter	William Raphael (?)
John Clarke	Robert Stuckey
Daniell Denny	Willoughby Swift
John Earle	Joseph Whetham
Robert Gislingham	John Wiggott
Joseph Guston	Richard Willford
Joseph Hardwick	

Many of the names listed in these two documents are well known to research workers. Francis Lenthall was for some years a thorn in the flesh of the Consul Maynard and the leader of the most factious party in the Factory. William Peachey, Richard Stanley, Joseph Hardwick, Joseph Dorny, Edward Colson and Humphrey Benning were described by the British Minister, Sir Robert Southwell, in 1668, as «men of factious and unquiet spirit, who delight in nothing but debauching all the young men to make up a party». John Polexfin (*sic*) was cited by the Rev. J. Colbatch in 1696 as «a man so eminent at this time» as doubtless to be known to the Bishop of Salisbury, «a man of that Honour» as to be an acceptable witness in the chaplain's dispute with the British Envoy. William Colston, whom Captain Jenifer listed as Treasurer to the Factory in 1672-3, was dramatically murdered some three years later. Stanley and Pargiter were the two British factors who were testimonies of the deed (7).

Apart from the nominal interest offered by these catalogues, however, it seems feasible to draw certain inferences from them

as to the numerical strength and composition of the Factory. If we accept the statement in the duplicate letter of 1686 as accurate, the Factory at that date comprised the Consul and thirty-three other members. Internal evidence suggests that Captain Jenifer was not personally acquainted with «the more principal» of the «factors and attendants». If he had known the Polextens, for example, it is improbable that he would have written «Polexten» and «Polexfell». The scribal errors in his lists indicate that they were compiled not from oral evidence but from other written sources. It seems reasonable to assume that when he refers to «the rest» as «factors and attendants» he is thinking of the larger body of English merchants as a whole, and to conclude that when he asked for the names of «the more principal» he was given a list of the actual Factors (on some of whom he was able to comment from hearsay). At this point we add up the names of «the more principal» and find that they total thirty-three... the same number of Factors who signed the duplicate letter of 1686.

Secondly, if we now accept Captain Jenifer's list of «the more principal» as the nominal roll of Factory membership for 1672-3, we note that it was possible for firms to be admitted as Factors no less than individuals trading on their own account or acting as local representatives of firms in England. Of the thirty-three names listed by Jenifer in 1672-3, only eleven recur among the signatories of the 1686 letter. This would, on the face of it, suggest a change in the composition of the Factory of two-thirds of its membership in the space of thirteen years — a disturbingly high proportion. It is, however, to be noted that one member out of each of the five pairs of partners listed in 1672-3 reappears in 1686. It seems probable, therefore, that the elements of continuity and stability, represented by the partnerships, were stronger than would at first sight appear, and that not more than one-third of the Factory membership may have changed during the period under review. Whether the surviving member of a partnership was permitted to nominate a new Factor, or whether the retiring Factor proposed his successor is conjectural. Residence in Portugal, however, was not a statutory condition of membership of the Factory, and it is quite conceivable that Factors who returned to reside in England maintained their interest by continued membership or by proxy (⁸).

Finally, Jenifer records in his list a class of members described as «young factors». There is insufficient evidence to determine the characteristics of this class. Of the six individuals here mentioned two (John Person (or Parsons) and William Brooke) signed the 1686 letter as Factors. I have not, however, traced any of these names as members in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. While it would be unsafe to infer from this that they were then too old to have been «young» in the purely physical sense in 1672-3, I incline, nevertheless, to the view that this category of membership related not to a junior or adolescent type of factor, but rather to a Factor-designate or newly-elected, who might be of mature years, but still serving a period as probationer-member or novice, a relative new-comer to the ranks of the elite. Be this as it may, the fact that this group is separately classified in Jenifer's list lends colour to the idea that the «young factors» enjoyed a constitutional distinction in the Factory hierarchy. What precisely was implied by that distinction, future researches may perhaps uncover.

NOTES:

- (¹) See Sir Richard Lodge, «The English Factory at Lisbon», in the *Transactions of the Royal Society Historical*, Vol. XVI, 1933; A.R. Walford, «The British Factory in Lisbon», Lisbon, 1940; Sir Godfrey Fisher, «Early Days of the British Factory», in the *Tenth Annual Report of the Historical Association (Lisbon Branch)*, Lisbon, 609-619; H.V. Livermore, «The 'Privileges of an Englishman in the Kingdoms and Dominions of Portugal'», in *Atlante*, Vol. 2, pp. 55-77.
- (²) The *Saudades*, built at Portsmouth (6th rate) as a yacht for Queen Catherine, was lent by her to Charles II and used variously as a merchantman and as an auxiliary in the Royal Navy. See the *Descriptive Catalogue of the Naval Manuscripts in the Pepysian Library*, ed. J.R. Tanner (Navy Records Society), Vol. II (1904), & Vol. III (1909) (*passim*).
- (³) *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Dartmouth MSS, III*, pp. 23-27.
- (⁴) Jenifer's transcriptions are unreliable. He writes 'Polexten' and 'Polexfell' for 'Polexten', and 'Domey' for (perhaps) 'Dorney'.
- (⁵) The name 'Boltell' or 'Boutell' is uncertain. In the *printed* list of signatories to the 1686 letter, the name appears as 'Bultee'

- (*) The letter, which was reproduced (without the names of the signatories) in the *First Annual Report of the Historical Association (Lisbon Branch)*, Lisbon, 1937, pp. 48-49, was first published in Michael Geddes, «Several Tracts against Popery», 1715, pp. 376-377. The two lists of names are printed, but there are typographical errors and one cannot be confident that the names are accurate transcriptions. One name, that of «Anthon Jordan», which appears in the list of signatories to the original letter, is not included in the list appended to the duplicate. The manuscript originals of these two letters are preserved in the British Museum (Add.MS. 19,399, fl. 142-144). «Anthony Jordan» appears in the first letter sent, but is missing from the second. The name of «William Ra(phael?)» appears in the second manuscript copy, but nowhere else.
- (?) See M.S. Jayne, «British Consuls in Lisbon: Thomas Maynard, Part II», in the *Fifth Annual Report of the Historical Association, (Lisbon Branch)*, 1941, pp. 314-324; Mrs. R.G. Jayne, «The Murder of William Colston», in *Tenth Annual Report*, ditto, 1946-50, pp. 620-633; «Private Letter from the Rev. J. Colbatch to the Bishop of Salisbury, 1696», in *Second Annual Report*, ditto, 1938, pp. 99-144.
- (*) Of the 82 members listed on 10th February, 1803, 35 were shown as resident elsewhere than in Portugal.