

**THE BRITISH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF PORTUGAL**

**THIRTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT
AND REVIEW 2011**

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PRINCES OF WALES IN PORTUGAL

1. VISIT OF HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES TO MONSERRATE IN 1876

Clive Gilbert

In May 1876 HRH the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII, made a private visit to Portugal on his return home from a State Visit to India. During his stay he also visited Sintra and together with his cousin the Portuguese king consort, D. Fernando II, planted a tree in Monserrate. Sadly these two trees have not survived.

D. Fernando also organized a donkey ride up to Pena Palace for the Royal party. However, on learning after the event that the donkey that had been especially chosen for him was to be renamed Príncipe de Galles – Prince of Wales - by its enterprising owner, HRH promptly purchased the animal for ten pounds sterling. He then had him escorted to HMS Seraphis, the warship anchored in the River Tagus that was to take the Prince back to England. The embarkation ended up as a great festive occasion when all of Lisbon turned out to watch the donkey being ceremoniously rowed out in a launch and taken on board by the Royal Navy. It was usual in those days to celebrate events of this nature by making up light verses that circulated around Lisbon on little pieces of paper. One of them, freely translated, rhymes:

O fortunate donkey from Cintra
You're leaving its leafy vales
You're going away to England
With the Prince of Wales.

(Memórias do Professor Thomaz de Mello Bryner 1869-1880),
Lisboa 1930)

2. SAILING WITHOUT LIMITES AT CASCAIS 29

MARCH 2011

Carol Rankin

In 2004 a boat en route from Galicia crewed by disabled sailors sailed into Cascais. Such was the impression it made that various local institutions and individuals resolved to set up a scheme whereby disabled people were able to sail there.

The Clube Naval de Cascais (CNC), its Câmara Municipal and Cercica, an institution catering for mentally disabled people, got their heads together. It was decided to model the Cascais project on the "Sailability" scheme in the UK which has HRH The Princess Royal as its patron. The Portuguese version was to be called "Vela sem Limites" (Sailing without Limits). The Câmara would provide support and some financial backing; Cercica would provide technical help and advice as well as two RIBS; the CNC would lend its facilities, help set up any special equipment needed (dinghies, crane, pontoon, life jackets etc), provide sailing instructors and recruit the many volunteers required to get the scheme off the ground.

Sponsors were needed. Luckily various companies thought it a very worthy cause and also stepped in. The many expenses initially included a supply of appropriate boats. English-made Access Class dinghies are well tried and tested and have been specifically designed to cater for the needs of the handicapped, three of these were acquired and in June 2005 the first sailing sessions commenced.

Since then the scheme has been a huge success. Participants range from the very physically or mentally incapacitated to those who are only mildly handicapped, ages range from the over 80s to the young teens. They all enjoy it, many have made

unbelievable progress and some have become very proficient sailors. The CNC now has eight boats, two of which have electric controls, suitable for paraplegics and tetraplegics. At the time of writing over 580 sailing sessions have taken place providing over 5,500 outings for approximately 150 sailors.

It's the volunteers though that make all this possible. Some are proficient sailors, they rig and handle the boats, get them in and out of the water etc. Others look after the "land" side of things, kit the sailors out with lifejackets, put slings under those who need to be winched into the boats and are always there with a ready smile and encouragement for the sailors. There are quite a few British volunteers; amongst them is Charles Lindley, one of the three original instigators of "Vela sem Limites".

Knowing there were British subjects involved, in January 2011 the British Embassy in Lisbon sent a representative to Cascais to observe a sailing session. They were putting a programme together for an official visit to Portugal by HRH The Prince of Wales and subsequently decided that including a visit to see the disabled sailing in action would be appropriate.

Fortunately on Tuesday 29th March 2011 the day dawned sunny and there was a light breeze. Perfect sailing weather. Disabled sailors were kitted out and launched in their boats, others waited on the quayside along with many volunteers. The press were everywhere. Excitement mounted as slightly behind schedule at 14.15 a helicopter landed on the marina quay and disgorged the Royal party. They were then driven round to the yacht club's slipway. Here The Prince of Wales was officially received by José Matoso, President of the CNC, representatives of the local Câmara including its Mayor, Carlos Carreiras and Charles Lindley. The latter then led the Prince down to a pontoon where he saw the sailors being winched out of their boats

and spoke to them all. He continued up to the quay where he met other sailors and most of the volunteers. Despite the crush caused by the protection officers and many members of the press, this part of the visit had a decidedly informal feel to it.

Finally, invited yacht club members and sponsors got their chance to meet HRH when he walked up to an area designated for them all. Here he unveiled a plaque commemorating his visit. After the necessary farewells and waves to many local people who had gathered by the official cars, the Royal visitor sped off to Monserrate for his next official engagement.

For information about Carol Rankin see page 112.

3. THE INAUGURATION OF THE ROSE GARDEN BY THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES THE PRINCE OF WALES AND THE DUCHESS OF CORNWALL AT MONSERRATE 29 MARCH 2011

Emma Gilbert

September 2010

My dog and I were walking on the cliffs above the Sintra beaches, listening to the soothing sound of the Atlantic and admiring the sunset when peace was disturbed by the ringing of my mobile phone.

“I have some VIPs coming to Portugal in early spring. Any ideas of where they could go?” asked Alex Ellis, British Ambassador to Portugal.

Spontaneously I suggested that the visitors inaugurate the Rose Garden at Monserrate. However there was one minor issue: very little was left of the original rose garden to inaugurate. Since 2004 the area had been several times cleared of

acacias and brambles, old and new paths marked, 300 roses planted, but that was all. I suspected the VIP might be HRH The Prince of Wales - his love of gardens and interest in restoration are well known. Monserrate, a unique English garden abroad, with its pavilion currently being restored was the ideal location. The garden was now beginning to take shape and the palace had already undergone serious repairs in the past four years, but there was still much to be done. At his request, the Ambassador was sent a short history of Monserrate and of the Rose Garden.

Alex Ellis agreed with the idea and suggested I speak with Prof. António Lamas, CEO of Sociedade Parques de Sintra-Monte da Lua, (PS-ML) who welcomed the project. There were many challenges however: the construction of paths in granite cobbles and borders, installation of drains, automatic irrigation and reservoirs, the purchasing of rose bushes and their subsequent planting, the restoring of part of the Great Lawn, and the preparation of the Garden to receive Royalty. All this work was carried out during a very, very wet winter and was very hush-hush. Work began in earnest directed by Landscape Architect and Horticulturist Gerald Luckhurst. All this before Clarence House had confirmed the visit.

Roses, sponsored by the Friends of Monserrate, were ordered from five different countries, whilst PS-ML was responsible for the landscaping.

February 2011

A reconnaissance team from the British Embassy came to Monserrate early February. They went round the wet and wilting rose garden as well as the palace, took notes and said they would duly inform the VIPs. We had cleared the first hurdle.

On February 25th the Clarence House team arrived including

the Secretaries to the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall and security and media staff, who gave some tips on the visitor's preferences:

- There should be an emphasis on meeting real people, not just dignitaries and these in groups of 4/5 people
- Not include too many stairs
- Visuals would be very important
- No walking too far in public spaces

It soon became clear that Monserrate would be the highlight of the visit. The British Embassy agreed to have music on the lawn and Jon Luxton and his horn quintet were invited to play.

March 2011

A second meeting was arranged with different members from Clarence House on the 16th March.

Meanwhile my husband, Clive Gilbert, remembered reading from the diary of Thomaz de Mello Breyner that the previous Prince of Wales (future Edward VII) had come to Portugal in May 1876 on his return from a state visit to India. There is a photo of the Prince at Monserrate with King D. Fernando showing them planting two trees to mark the close friendship between England and Portugal. This inspired us to organise the planting of two rose bushes: a "Bela Portuguesa" and a "Duchess of Cornwall". The Duchess of Cornwall rose bush was duly bought, but the "Bela Portuguesa" was very elusive. This rose bush is no longer in fashion and could not be found in England, France, Italy or even Portugal.

A week before the Royal Couple arrived Gerald Luckhurst rang me with this sad news and suggested I check out an old fashioned local nursery just outside Colares. Miraculously, right

there, as I got out of the car, was a single vase with a "Bela Portuguesa" rose bush for sale.

Two more reconnaissance teams came from England to check out Monserrate. Against all odds the rose garden was slowly beginning to take shape but the rain persisted.

Since the rose garden is at the bottom of the steep lawn an electric buggy was hired to carry the royal couple down. Choreography was set up. Guests were informed of the protocol. Tea ordered. Security and protocol were worked out. Invitations were sent and buses were organised by the "Friends" to bring in guests from Sintra to Monserrate to avoid traffic and parking problems.

March 28 2011

The Royal Couple arrived in Portugal under pouring rain that continued all day and most of the night. In his speech at the Banquet in Queluz Palace, that evening Prince Charles said "I am proud that the British community in Portugal see it as important to 'give something back' to their adopted home by doing something that, dare I say it, British people often do rather well – volunteering. Be it through organizing sailing for disabled people in Cascais, restoring the Monserrate garden or the invaluable work of the Royal British Legion. I could not be more impressed by their determination to give some of their free time to help where they can."

March 29 2011

The day started off well with sunshine and no rain. However the Embassy staff rang to say that Clarence House had decided that the Royal couple would not go down the lawn to the rose garden and would remain around the Palace. It was a big disappointment to everyone involved in the visit. PS-ML had put so much time, effort and money into having the Rose Garden ready. The plaque, buggy, tea, music, guests: all was planned to

happen on the lawn and by the rose garden. But “noblesse oblige”. Quick thinking and flexibility were essential. The rose planting would be carried out on the terrace. Two large clay pots were bought. Gerald Luckhurst and Head Gardener Timothy Stretton arranged for spades, watering cans, earth and fertilizer to be on the ready for the planting.

When the Royal visitors arrived slightly later than scheduled everything and everyone was in place.



Both the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall won everyone’s admiration with their sense of humour, charm and genuine interest. One of the Friends of Monserrate said that “I felt like calling the Duchess ‘Camilla’ – she was so easy to talk to”. According to the Condes de Nova Goa the informal climate was also very impressive as no bodyguards were apparent, the couple moved leisurely from group to group. “The introductions and subsequent conversation lasted possibly no more than one minute but to us it felt like at least five, such was the undivided attention given to each of us.”

The planting of the rose bushes by the Prince and Duchess delighted the press. The various phases of the rose planting were the chosen photo in practically every paper. After questioning whether the fertilizer was “organic” the Prince then put his extremely elegantly clad leather soled shoe on the vase after saying “Now you have to tread it!”

Prince Charles was especially impressed “by the quality – not to mention the scale – of the restoration of the Palace and Gardens”.

From the day Sérgio Rau Silva, one time Committee Member of the Friends of Monserrate, received the invitation to Monserrate to meet the Royal couple, his three children (Inês 11, Rita 9 and six year-old Luís), grew more and more excited with the idea of going to Monserrate. They asked many questions, sparked by the magic of the place and the presence of royalty. With childlike innocence Luís decided that he would give “Camilla” flowers. She was, he imagined, like a princess in a fairy tale. Whilst the family’s Russian gardener hung bunting on their “Quinta’s” main gate that was on the Royal couple’s route to Monserrate, Luís pestered him to pick flowers to give to the “Princess”.

Finally at Monserrate, after what seemed to the children, beautifully dressed in grey suits, an endless wait, the Prince of Wales stopped by them holding the Union Jacks with Luís also clutching his flowers. Prince Charles jokingly asked them “Should you not be in school? Don’t tell me you missed school just to receive me?” At which point Luís promptly gave the already wilting bouquet to a very well dressed lady who was accompanying HRH. To Luís’ dismay and amidst general laughter he had given the flowers to the Friends of Monserrate Chairman, Dinah Azevedo Neves, not to the “Princess”.

Undeterred, he charmed Agnes Andersen, one of the guests, into picking a new bunch of flowers, for a second try. Whilst the guests of honour were being shown the Palace and its restoration, the guests outside were served the traditional Sintra “travesseiros”, covered in sugar, and “queijadas” which Luís happily devoured.

As the Royal couple were about to leave, Luís saw his chance, dropped his last cake, slipped through protocol and ran radiantly towards “Camilla” his face covered in sugar and presented her with the bouquet.

“Tankyou, tankyou, tankyou” said the Princess as Luís later proudly told his family, stressing as a sign of distinction the way the thanks was repeated three times by Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall.

I am sure that Luís, like most present that afternoon, will always remember the 29th March 2011 at Monserrate with a special aura of magic.

Emma Gilbert, former head of Associated Press in Portugal, founded the Friends of Monserrate in 1993. The Friends have proved fundamental in the restoration and preservation of the famous Sintra gardens and pavilion. Presently she belongs to the Scientific Comommittee of Parques de Sintra Monte da Lua. This institution is responsible for Pena Palace, Monserrate, the Moorish Castle and Capuchos Convent.