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Cunison Deans (Cunison II) - 1904

AN ACCOUNT OF THE RANKIN FAMILY IN PORTUGAL

by Carol Rankin

The history of the Rankin family in Portugal is inextricably tied up with that of the cork industry, for it was this commodity that first linked them to the country over two centuries ago and ensures they remain here to this day.

Documents show that in 1778 William Rankin married Margaret McKinley at Barony in Lanarkshire. They then lived in the Falkirk district of Scotland, the births of their children are recorded there and various sources describe William's occupation as "cork manufacturer" of Falkirk. At this period cork was shipped to Scotland from Portugal and elsewhere in the form of sheets. The sheets were first cut by hand into strips and then into squares that were fashioned into cork stoppers using special knives. The skill required to do this took some time to acquire and is one that William obviously passed on to his sons William and Robert as both of them followed him into the cork business.

William, born in 1787, was the son who left his native Falkirk and went to Stirling in 1814 where he "commenced business as a cork-cutter in Baker Street. He subsequently went into the china trade, which he carried on with a very considerable measure of success". He took a great interest in the town of Stirling, becoming an extremely well known and respected public figure and was Provost of the town for three years. He remained a life-long bachelor so had no heirs. At some stage his widowed mother went to live with him until her death in 1840 as did his sister Margaret until she died in 1854. Both of them are interred in the same lair (grave) as Provost William who died in 1875.

Robert, born in 1789, remained in Falkirk where he worked as a cork manufacturer and was also involved in the glass and china

business. In 1809 he married Elizabeth Mark in Dalkeith and they had several children including a son, William, born in 1811 (to put the dates in context, it is perhaps worth mentioning that this was the period of the Peninsular War in Portugal). William, like his father became a cork manufacturer, he went on to marry Jessie Bogle Deans in 1832 and they subsequently produced a large family of 12 children, of the 11 who survived to adulthood 7 were sons.

With such a large family to provide for it made sense for William (hereinafter Snr) to set up a business that could also provide employment for some of his sons. Accordingly in 1855 we find the family moving to live in Hamilton and William Snr founding the firm of William Rankin and Sons (WR&S) in nearby Glasgow. The business was listed as "Cork manufacturers and wholesale packing merchants" and the offices and warehouses were at 46 Hutcheson Street. Glasgow was then a thriving, expanding city with a busy port where ships arrived regularly from Portugal carrying cork sheets as part of their cargo. With Scotland's many whisky distilleries and wine merchants there was a ready market for the cork stoppers that WR&S manufactured.

Obviously it made economic sense for WR&S to import cork sheets directly from Portugal so in the same year that the firm was founded William Snr's eldest son Robert then aged 21 came out to Portugal to buy cork. The diary that Robert wrote on this trip still exists and provides the first documentary evidence of any Rankin family member coming to Portugal. The diary makes fascinating reading; it starts in Lisbon on 11th February 1855 where his hotel bill at Street's Hotel "was 37 shillings for 7 days and washing". He left Lisbon on the 13th February crossed the Tagus and had an uncomfortable mule ride to Palmella and thence St. Ubes (Setubal) where he did business with a Mr. Broughton. "I have come at a wrong time, I should have waited till July when the cork is regularly in the market" he declares ruefully. He continued by boat to Comporta, "I would fain have slept but daren't owing to being all alone with 5 Portuguese sailors ... I was afraid that one or other of them who sat beside me were trying to get the amount of my cash by pressing close to me and putting their hands slyly on my pockets".

Bad weather, obstinate mules, inedible food in *hospedarias* where he had to share beds with unknown Portuguese are just some of the many trials he encountered on this leg of his trip.

Robert arrived in Sines at Carnival time and a lively description of the festivities ensues. Here amongst the people he did business with were two Englishmen, a Mr. Dryden and Mr. Charles Pidwell. He continued south by horse to Vila Nova de Milfontes where he says "Got my passport signed by the Consul who dated it 1845 instead of 1855, so it would appear he doesn't often sign them. Returned to my place of abode which was a shoemaker's shop". Travelling onwards his accommodation next night was in "the house of a potter", here his supper consisted of "beans boiled in water and olive oil poured over them" which caused his stomach to "rebel" and his bedroom like that of the previous night had "no glass in the windows and no lock on the door". Riding through the Monchique hills he describes the scenery as "the grandest I have ever seen" but it was certainly a perilous ride, the ascent was "through deep ravines and along narrow ledges which brought us over precipices 100s of feet high....my heart sank to think that one false step with my mule would have dashed mule and me to pieces at the bottom." Finally on 25th February he reached Silves and acquired "more comfortable lodgings" but his muleteers tried to overcharge him. Robert arranged to buy cork from a Mr. Garcia and continued on his journey to Faro where he bought more cork and hoped to pick up a ship sailing for Britain. However, there were none so he resolved to proceed to "Cadiz, and chancing my passage home". This was not to be, "Went to hire mules for Ayamonte and to my great grief found they had all gone to the fair at Loulé and would not return till Monday". An enforced weekend in Faro included a visit to the theatre "a very good one for such a small place" and a visit to see the hospital where the men's ward was "a beautiful, large, clean hall with a row of iron bedsteads on each side, in which lay the patients". His Sunday night dinner is described as "Boiled peas with butter instead of oil, fish and fine lettuce salad. The butter here is very bad as I frequently met with a good sized maggot in it". Having left by mule at six in the morning on Monday March 5th, he passed through Tavira, encountered very bad roads where his mule fell several times and

finally got to Vila Real at nightfall, where he resolved to spend the night as "I know the boatmen would take advantage of me if I crossed (the Guadiana River) so late". After crossing over to Ayamonte next day Robert then made his way to Seville, Jerez and Sanlucar where he managed to find a ship and set sail for his return journey home on 14th March.

Robert's pioneering first journey out to Portugal was followed by other regular trips to the country, his descendants today have diaries documenting his voyages out and back in 1869 illustrated with some charming sketches and a further diary written in 1873 where he says "I find myself alone once more to face the Bay of Biscay for the thirteenth time." United Kingdom Passports exist for voyages in 1855, 1859, 1869 & 1870 as do a *Passaporte do Exterior* issued in Lisbon 1859 and a *Passaporte de Transito* issued in Lisbon 1866 all made out in his name, the latter including *sua esposa e uma filha* (his wife and daughter). There is also a receipt dated 29th March 1859 for the sum of Ten pounds for a return Cabin passage per *S.S. Vasco da Gama* Glasgow to Lisbon – "this ticket available for four months to return from Lisbon by any of the Company's steamers." It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of journeys Robert made between Glasgow and Portugal but clearly there were many of them. It should also be remembered that Robert was lucky to survive so many voyages by sea.

William Snr's second son Cunison Deans Rankin (hereinafter Cunison I) joined the family firm in 1858 and came to Portugal for the first time in 1861 at the age of 24, the author has a transcript of his diary and it too makes fascinating reading. He sailed from Glasgow on 21st December 1861, spent a seasick Christmas Day at sea and reached Lisbon on December 29th, a Sunday, and was astonished to see "shops open and working apparently as hard as they do on any other day of the week". Obviously Robert had set up some sort of working arrangement with a Mr. Freyre, as he was the first person Cunison I tried to see and who entertained him very well during his time in Lisbon. Freyre had cork factories (one at Coyna) and estates near Estremoz which Cunison I set out to visit on 22nd January 1862. He crossed the Tagus by boat to Barreiro, then took

the train as far as Vendas Novas and rode on horseback the rest of the way. On his return journey he took an overnight *diligencia* (carriage) from Estremoz to Vendas Novas

In the 19th century /early 20th century there were four major cork businesses run by four British families in Portugal, the Bucknalls and a group known as the "Three Rs" – the Reynolds, Robinson and Rankin families. In 1861/2 Cunison I spent much of his time in Lisbon with Bucknall, (he does not give a Christian name) playing cards with him in the evenings and on one occasion crossing the river to see his cork "Thought a great deal of it. They had a splendid place, but there must be a great deal of expense connected with it". He also met a Mr. Reynolds "went to his stores and saw his cork but don't think a great deal of it, his prices are very high". (This would have been Robert Reynolds whose Lisbon warehouse was in the *Beato de Santo Antonio*.)

On this trip Cunison I's main problem seemed to be finding ships to take his cargoes of cork back to Glasgow, he spent days going to agents (many of them British) and to the Exchange in order to sort things out. Having concluded his business in Lisbon like Robert, he crossed the Tagus by boat, then experienced an uncomfortable ride south by horse to Sines. "Got into the Inn kept by an English Lady and found myself very comfortable. She remembered Bob, or *Senhor Roberto* as he is called here, and said he was very much beloved and had many friends". When his business was done in Sines, Cunison I took a boat down the coast to Portimão (paid 20/- for my ticket; very dear) where he found a reasonable *Hospedaria*. On 12th February 1862 he hired a boat to take him up the Arade River to Silves (in those days the river had not yet silted up) and went to see Mr. Garcias and his cork factory and stores returning to Portimão that same day. Bad weather delayed his departure for home as the steamer could not get out of Portimão harbour due to several days of storms. However, this meant he became involved with Carnival celebrations, "went out in Masquerade on Monday. I was dressed as a Lady with a black silk dress and had some very good amusement. I went out on Tuesday night dressed as a Sailor".

Back in Scotland, WR&S was expanding. Records show that they moved to 96-98 King Street, Tradeston in 1864/5 and in 1869 moved to 10 Carlton Place where the firm was to remain until 1960. This was an extremely well situated building overlooking the River Clyde, almost opposite the Customs House, and in the second half of the 19th century boats loaded with cork could bring their cargoes practically to the door. In 1869 WR&S also took over the very well-established cork firm of John Mitchell and Sons, founded in 1813; for some years after this directories list the firm as: J. Mitchell & Son, 10 Carlton Place – Successors William Rankin & Sons and a WR&S business cards reads: William Rankin & Sons, Cork Merchants and Manufacturers (and Successors to John Mitchell & Son). After a few years WR&S dropped the name John Mitchell & Son but having successfully incorporated the firm into their own, felt justified in claiming that their business was “founded in 1813”.

As the firm expanded it was obviously thought necessary to have a member of the family living out in Portugal and the first one to come here and do so for any length of time was William Senr's third son, William Jnr. who is listed in the Glasgow Post Office Directory of 1872 as living at Caramujo, Outeiro do Alfeite, Almada. This would indicate that he moved to Portugal in 1871. The *Quinta do Outeiro* was one of the *Quintas do Alfeite* that made up the *Casa do Infantado*, a property acquired from the Conde de Tarouca in the early 18th century by the Infante D. Francisco. The part WR&S initially leased from the *Casa Real* consisted of a royal hunting lodge, some land and various buildings; whether William Jnr negotiated this first lease or his brother Robert when he had been in Portugal in 1870 is uncertain as no document has come to light so far. The property was in an excellent situation, a small cliff with a beach lay to the east and water frontage with a quay lay to the north enabling the Tagus *fregatas* (lighters) to deliver cork there or collect it for transfer to any ship that was taking it as cargo to Glasgow or London. It was also an easy matter to pop over to Lisbon and back in a boat although sometimes the wind and tide conspired against this and necessitated landing at Cacilhas and travelling onwards by *Charabanc* to Caramujo or vice versa.

William Jnr had obviously been entrusted with setting a number of things up for WR&S in Portugal, and by the time his eldest brother Robert arrived on a visit in 1873 there was already a factory at Caramujo. This would probably have consisted of boiling facilities and equipment to put the cork sheets into bales ready for shipment. Wood or charcoal to fire the boilers came from the Alentejo (having been brought down the Tagus by *fregatas*). The land at Caramujo had 3 wells that provided water for the boilers as well as drinking water for the personnel. Within a few years this Caramujo factory was obviously too small to meet the company's needs.

A piece of land with an *Estaleiro* and water frontage adjacent to *Outeiro do Alfeite* came up for public auction on 8th April 1878; for whatever reason WR&S failed to buy it, it went to the Sampaiao family from whom they eventually bought it in 1905. In the meantime, records in Sines confirm that later in 1878 a *Procurador* on behalf of William Rankin bought a piece of land on 22nd November. This was the first piece of land the family actually owned and though no documentation confirms this, it was undoubtedly the site where they built a cork factory. At the time of the purchase Sines was an important port for the cork trade, there was (and still is) much cork grown in the hills behind here and Santiago de Cacém and during the summer months regular mule trains would arrive from nearby and further afield heavily laden with cork to be offloaded at the warehouses or onto one of the regular boats that plied the coast between St. Ubes (Setubal) and the Algarve. WR&S had of course, already being doing business in Sines for over 20 years thanks to the efforts of Robert and Cunison I.

William Jnr himself made yearly journeys on horseback in his quest for cork, both in Portugal and Southern Spain. In 1881, to help ensure a regular supply of the commodity, he took out a 16-year lease on the property of *Bunheira*, situated between Coruche and Lavre. In 1882 he renegotiated the terms and took on a 27-year lease starting from 1884; this allowed WR&S to strip the cork trees every nine years and keep all the cork produced and take any virgin cork or

trimmings from pruning. It remained the owner's responsibility to maintain the land and keep it free of brushwood. *Trezoito*, the adjacent property was also owned by the same man, so it is possible that William leased this too though no documentary evidence is available to confirm this. Both properties came up for sale 10 years later when their owner got himself into debt, WR&S were able to purchase them in 1894 and they remain in the family to this day. Documents exist showing that in 1881 William Jnr formed a partnership with Manuel Lopes Rosa (who lived near Faro) in order to lease various cork properties, William would also have taken out leases on other properties. Although to date no ledgers prior to 1895 have been found, on 30th April of that year 17 properties are listed as having been leased by WR&S in different areas of the Alentejo/Ribatejo. While this practice ensured a supply of the raw material, dealing in "cork futures" this way could be a risky business, some years there might be a shortage and high prices, others a glut and low prices and they had bought ahead.



Lisbon 1876

Standing L to R: William Jnr., William Snr.
Seated L to R: Mrs. William Jnr. (Annie McNicol), Mrs William Snr.
(Jessie Bogle Deans), Cecilia Rankin

With regard to William's personal life, when he first arrived in Lisbon he was a 31 year old bachelor but Robert's diary of 1873 indicates that he was soon courting. There are several references to dinners and outings in the company of Mr. & Mrs. McNicol and Miss McNicol and sure enough on 22th September 1875 William married Annie McNicol in a civil ceremony (as required by law) at the British Consulate in Lisbon. Undoubtedly they would have had a church ceremony as well.

William was already 35 and Annie 32 when they got married and in August the following year a daughter Catharine was born at Caramujo. This must be the child Annie is clearly pregnant with in a group photo taken of her in Lisbon together with her husband William Jnr, his parents and his sister Cecilia. It is possible to put an accurate date of 1876 on this photo as William Snr died in Hamilton on August 2nd of that year. William Jnr and Annie went on to have two more children born at Caramujo, William in 1877 and Jessie in 1879 and these and their sibling Catharine were the first of the Rankins to be born in Portugal.

Apart from business and family duties, William Jnr was obviously much involved with the Presbyterian Church in Lisbon; Robert's diary reads:

Friday 28 Nov 1873

"Went across to Lisbon in the afternoon ... Dined with young Nicoll his wife and Miss McNicoll: After dinner went to the opening of the New Church where we had tea and a few addresses with the statement of the Churches funds: After tea and having presented the Revd. Mr. Stewart with a new Gown we adjourned to the New Church formerly the Chapel of a Convent - the property having been bought by the Congregation: The Church is a very nice one but the echo is so great you cannot hear what the speakers say so out of the 3 speeches we heard as few sentences"

Annie McNicol's father had been appointed *Procurador* and had bought the former *Marianos* (Carmelite) Church from the Government in 1872 on behalf of the Presbyterian Congregation, her

brother Nicol went on to fulfil all kinds of roles within this church for 43 years, so unsurprisingly records show William Jnr too playing his part, auditing the accounts in 1875-77 & 1879, heading the "Harmonium Committee" formed to raise funds to buy a new instrument in 1882 and in 1883 being one of two men "sent to Edinburgh with full powers to arrange with the Continental Committee of the Free Church of Scotland for a successor to the Rev. Stewart".

For whatever reason by 1884 William Jnr was living back in Scotland his youngest brother Henry Charles Deans Rankin having come out to Portugal as Manager of WR&S. William Jnr's return to Scotland may have been due to ill-health as within a few months he had died at the age of 44. He and Annie had only been married for 9 years and he left his widow with 4 young children to bring up.

As already stated, William Snr. the founder of WR&S had died in 1876. His eldest son Robert who had made so many trips out to Portugal followed him to the grave shortly afterwards. This left three sons in the business, William Jnr, Cunison I and Henry, all of them relatively young men. William Jnr's death in 1884 was almost immediately followed by that of Cunison I who died aged 47 on 4th June of "Congestion of lung" having contracted pneumonia. He left his widow Annie Naismith with 8 young children to bring up including five sons. Henry was still alive and well in Portugal and as the founder's only surviving son, returned to Scotland after the death of his 2 brothers in 1884 expecting to inherit the business. However, this was not to be the case. His three elder brothers had all been made partners in the firm, he had been sent out to Portugal as Manager but had never been made a partner. Under the terms of the founder's will, the business was to be inherited by the last surviving partner, in this case Cunison I. Thus it was that Annie Naismith Rankin inherited the firm of William Rankin & Sons to run on behalf of her sons until they were old enough to do so for themselves.

Such a turn of events must have been extremely disappointing for Henry, but he magnanimously offered to remain in Scotland and help Annie Naismith run the business until her sons

were in a position to take it over themselves. A cousin, Robert Rankin, assisted him in this task. Henry appointed his brother-in-law John Leicester Wilson to look after the Rankin interests in Portugal, the Power of Attorney that Henry signed in 1886 gave John Wilson wide-ranging powers. Henry kept an eye on things himself though, making regular trips out to Portugal and according to family hearsay, distributing religious tracts when he travelled around the Alentejo as he had "religious mania". In the meantime, records show that John Wilson was able to purchase Caramujo, *Outeiro do Alfeite (Armazens e Casa)* on behalf of WR&S from the *Casa Real* in 1887.

Back in Scotland Cunison I and Annie Naismith's sons were growing up. Their eldest son William (Willie) is listed as being with WR&S in 1888-9, their second son James Naismith is listed shortly after that followed by the third son Cunison Deans (Cunison II). The Glasgow office and warehouses were moving with the times, in 1894/5 WR&S is listed amongst only 8 firms that were selling the latest model in corking machines. The fourth son John Naismith then came into the firm and he and Cunison II were entrusted with opening a London branch in 1897/8 whose address is given as 4 Sheppey Yard, Minories, later c1905 they moved to 42 Bermondsey Square.

This new generation of Rankins then also started to come out to Portugal. A British Passport made out to William Rankin dated 1886 and bearing Portuguese stamps indicates that Willie came out on a visit as a teenager before he joined the family business. Cunison II arrived in 1892/3 as a 19/20 year old and lived for three years with his Aunt Annie's brother Nicol McNicoll in Lisbon, (Nicol was employed by WR&S for some years). Cunison II was here to learn about the Portuguese side of the business which was expanding. There were some problems during this period, the Caramujo factory workers mounted a strike on 9th July 1892 demanding 8-hour working days and the prohibition of child labour, and this was followed two days later by a serious fire on the premises. However, this meant that after rebuilding the firm could then install the latest machinery that was hand or foot operated. An 1896 inventory lists the following: 1 Drawing off machine, 1 Squaring machine, 28 Cork

Cutting machines (known as *Garlopas* which turned the squares into corks), 2 Sizing machines and 3 Counting machines. Even before the fire though WR&S had started to introduce mechanisation in their factory, one of the first cork-producing firms to do so; they are listed in 1890 as having a 5 h/p steam machine.

With increased productivity more raw material was needed so it made sense to acquire more cork forests near those the family already owned. In 1896 James Naismith signed a 19-year lease for the property of *Quinta Nova and Pernada*. The firm then bought the property 10 days later, so there was clearly some financial or tax loophole to be exploited by doing this. John Wilson then took out a 19-year lease on the property of Figueiras in 1897 and bought it on behalf of the firm 10 days later. These two further properties on the Alentejo/Ribatejo border also remain in the family business to this day. It was probably in this decade too that WR&S took out a lease on a property in Vendas Novas that they used as a depot for their raw cork. From here the cork was taken by road to Salvaterra dos Magos and thence by fregata to Caramujo; the depot was kept until 1942 when the lease ran out.



1904 Wedding of Cunison Deans II to Hilda Mary Bell
On left: John Naismith Rankin (Uncle John)

In 1898 the *Casa Real* decided to sell the *Cavalariça e Pomar* and land that was adjacent to *Outeiro do Alfeite* at public auction. Cunison II put in a successful bid and with considerably more land at their disposal, WR&S were finally able to expand their factory and warehouses. The Sines factory became superfluous to requirements and was closed down or even sold by Cunison II "without him ever having seen it". The land itself is listed in ledgers as "property" or *quintal* until it was finally sold in 1907/8. With so many changes and acquisitions it is not surprising to find the eldest brother and Senior Partner Willie coming out to Portugal with his wife at the end of the 19th century for a short period, St Andrew's Church records show they were subscribers and regular attenders at that time.

The start of the 20th century saw a more settled family business. Willie and James the two older brothers had control of the company and exercised it from the Glasgow premises. By now their youngest brother Robert Cecil had joined them and was put to work in a Glasgow firm that WR&S had taken over which manufactured cork life buoys, life belts and fenders. It was Cunison II and John who were to come and live in Portugal, the latter for the rest of his life.

A career as a cork merchant was not John Rankin's first choice, as a young schoolboy he was an exceptional athlete and games-player and became an outstanding association football wing-forward, so much so that "whilst still in his 'teens he was approached by the famous Scottish League amateur club, Queen's Park and invited to join it. His mother, however, had strong views about professional footballers against whom he would play weekly, regarding them as no fit company for her boy, on or off the field". He very reluctantly turned down their offer, joined the family business instead and in 1902 came to Lisbon. Here he immediately joined the Lisbon Cricket Club at Cruz Quebrada where "between 1899-1921 British sportsmen partook in many social and sporting activities such as cricket, tennis and football". In 1906 the first ever football league tournament in Portugal was organised, Lisbon

Cricket Club was drawn to play against *Sport Lisboa*, a draw seemed certain until the British side were awarded a penalty "The Captain very wisely ordered John Rankin to take the kick. The goalkeeper was confronted by a deadly and accurate shot and as expected, the ball left Rankin's boot as if from a cannon." So the British team made the final. Such reports of John's sporting prowess were not uncommon as he played regularly for the cricket side and was a golfer too. When the Lisbon Sports Club started at Ajuda in 1922 he was a founder member, Golf Captain in 1924 and played the game until old age forced him to give it up. Throughout all his years in Portugal John never forgot his Scottish origins, a photograph taken c 1905 shows him complete with kilt as a member of the Scottish Carnival band, he was also a Founder member of the St. Andrew's Society and a keen supporter of the Scottish church.



C1915 – Hilda Mary (Bell) and her 4 sons: L to R: George Ian (Ian), Colin Whitelock, Kenneth Naismith, Cunison Deans (III)

For the first 9 years that he was in Portugal, John ran the family business together with his older brother Cunison II who brought his young bride Hilda out to live at Caramujo after their wedding in 1904. Two sons were born whilst they were here, their eldest Cunison Deans (Cunison III) in 1906 and their third Kenneth Naismith in 1909, their second son George Ian was born whilst they were back in Scotland in 1907. Old photograph albums depict family outings to places such as Sintra and Estoril and picnics on the beach with friends such as the Rawes children. With the unrest in Portugal following the assassination of D. Carlos in 1908 and the declaration of the Republic in 1910 Cunison II, his wife and young sons returned to England where a fourth son Colin Whitelock was born in Richmond (near London) in 1912. Thereafter Cunison II remained the partner in charge of the London office until his death in 1944 but whenever possible made yearly trips out to Portugal to do the accounts.

Under John's management as partner in charge of Portugal WR&S continued to thrive, many cork firms experienced great problems during the first quarter of the 20th century but, even during World War I with high taxation, transportation and shipment difficulties, the family business kept going. A really serious fire occurred at Caramujo in 1921, *bombeiros* came from Almada, Cacilhas and even Lisbon with their horse-drawn fire engines, and from the river tugboats armed with hoses helped to combat the flames. Despite their best efforts the entire factory was gutted and much of the stock was destroyed, only the house, offices and the boiler section escaped. Such was the calamity that it even made the British newspapers where the damage is said to have been estimated at £50,000 and the Portuguese newspapers put it at a million escudos, photographs exist showing the appalling scenes. Luckily WR&S was well insured so yet again managed to rebuild their factory and as before, it meant they were able to install the most modern machinery. Photographs taken after the rebuilding show machines such as *garlopas* and *brocas* (which punched the corks out of the strips) still being hand and foot operated but operating together with other machines which were driven by belts connected to a shaft powered by a large electricity generator. Gradually over the next 20 years all

the machines became driven by electricity. It is also worth mentioning that between 1920-40, 70-80% of the workforce were women and WR&S was the biggest employer of women in the *concelho* of Almada. WR&S always paid their workforce above the normal rate but nonetheless women were much cheaper to employ than men.

By the 1920s John had become known throughout the British Community in Portugal as "Uncle John", the kindly bachelor. Having no sons of his own meant he needed a member of the family to assist him and replace him when he eventually retired from WR&S. Of his brother Cunison II's 4 sons (all of whom had been educated at Clifton College, Bristol) 3 were to go into the family business. The eldest, Cunison Deans (Cunison III) came out to Lisbon in c1926. Like all his family he was a keen sportsman, as there was no rugby in Portugal, cricket and golf became his preferred sports. Between 1926-8 there are various photographs of Cunison III taking part in Lisbon v Oporto cricket matches and he was Captain of Golf at Ajuda from 1927-28. It was never intended that he should remain in Portugal and in 1928 he returned to England to work under his father in the London office. He always held Portugal in great affection and throughout his life returned to visit the cork factory and the family properties whenever he could. The son destined to come out to Portugal and make it his life-long home was George Ian (Ian), Cunison II and Hilda's second son.

Ian moved permanently to Portugal in 1928 and much to the envy of his brothers in the UK, Uncle John bought him a car, a Fraser Nash for his sole use. "In those days cars were a rarity among the British Community so the Nash proved a great thrill to all who clamoured for a ride. The Nash was later substituted for a vast Hudson, which became well-known for a deafening noise", Ian liked to release the silencer when driving at speed. He became almost as well known for his beloved green hat that he always wore at a rakish angle! There are many family photographs showing Ian at the Caramujo factory during 1929/1930s, but it was the properties in the Alentejo/Ribatejo that were his special love. He set about planting young cork trees in many areas, not for his benefit but for that of

coming generations as the *quercus suber* takes about 50 years to mature and produce top-grade cork. Today members of the family working in the business are reaping the full benefit of his foresight and are grateful that during his lifetime Ian became an acknowledged expert on cork forestry.

When it came to recreation, Ian was yet another Rankin sportsman, he immediately joined The Lisbon Sports Club at Ajuda, played tennis whilst in his 20s, concentrating more on golf as he got older. He was Captain of Golf at Ajuda from 1941-45 and again in 1954-55. He also loved to go surfing at Praia Grande, and in the 1930s he and two great bachelor friends Peter Dawson and Eric Rawes bought a large plot of land there and constructed a 2 roomed house; many summer weekends were then spent entertaining their friends and girlfriends and having marvelous parties by the beach. Inevitably one particular girl starts to feature rather a lot in Ian's photo albums, and that was Monica Pope whom he became engaged to and later married on 21st May 1939 back in England. (Monica's father Godfrey Pope was the managing director of the Anglo-Portuguese Telephone Co in Lisbon, her grandfather the legendary Canon Pope first came to Portugal in 1864 and was instrumental in the rebuilding of the present St. George's Church after it was destroyed by fire and in founding amongst other things what became the Royal British Club). *

Eleven months after they were married, Ian and Monica had a daughter, Barbara Jane, born at the British Hospital in Lisbon. In the meantime World War II had broken out, Ian wanted to enlist but was turned down for reasons of health and because it was considered that his presence in Portugal was essential to the war effort – much of the production at the Caramujo factory was turned over to manufacturing cork life-belts and life-buoys for the Allied ships. Monica and her daughter returned to England for the duration of the war. With no family to distract him, Ian did what he could to ensure that life in the British * community here carried on as normal,

*See BHS 25th Annual Report – Canon, Communications & Cork – An Account of the Pope family in Portugal

encouraging people to play golf and tennis at Ajuda, helping the British Hospital raise funds, supporting the Red Cross and St. George's Church and so on.

In 1942 a family row caused the company to split. The 3 Glasgow brothers and partners (Willie, James and Cecil) kept the Glasgow offices and business and the name William Rankin and Sons, Cunison II and Uncle John (the London and Lisbon partners respectively) paid their brothers an agreed sum and kept the London office, and the cork properties and Caramujo factory here in Portugal. A new company called Rankin Brothers and Sons (RB&S) was then formed. Its shareholders were Cunison II and Uncle John, and the next generation of Cunison III, Ian and their younger brother Colin. After Cunison II's death in 1944, Cunison III ran the London office until the end of the war as Colin was fighting in the army. The business had to move to new premises at 139 Bermondsey Street when their Bermondsey Square offices took a direct hit from a bomb. Here in Portugal Uncle John and Ian kept the cork factory on maximum production that engendered large profits but being a British registered company, these were rightly nearly all paid away in War Profits Tax at the end of the hostilities. When peace was finally declared all the workers at the factory were given 2 days off in celebration and as thanks for their contribution!

Up until this period of time members of the family had tried to visit their cork properties at least once a month, but staying "up country" was strictly a male prerogative, it was thought totally unsuitable for any female Rankin. This was largely because of the accommodation, the *monte* at *Quinta Nova* where they usually stayed consisted of 2 rooms, a kitchen presided over by the *caseiro's* wife, and a living room where straw mattresses were placed on the floor at night for all the men to sleep in the one room, there were no bathroom facilities whatsoever. With life in the UK and Portugal returning to normal after the war Monica rejoined her husband. A family friend, Douglas Rawes who had taken an architect's course was soon commissioned to draw up plans for extending the *monte* to include bedrooms and bathrooms. With the building completed the whole family could go and stay there as they subsequently did for

many years. Ian and Monica had two more children, a second daughter Carol Audrey in 1946 followed by their only son Ewan Naismith in 1950, both children were born in Lisbon.

Uncle John died in 1958 leaving Ian in sole charge of the Portuguese side of RB&S whilst his brothers Cunison III and Colin looked after the London end. There were changes at Caramujo in the 1950s when a decision was made to expand the Naval dockyards adjacent to the house and factory. The expansion meant that there was no longer enough draft for the *fregatas* to come up to the Rankin quayside; this did not present a huge problem as improved roads and motorised transport meant that it had become more viable to transport the cork from the Alentejo/Ribatejo by lorry. The authorities then decided that they did not want "foreigners" overlooking their Naval dockyards despite the fact that they had been doing so for years, so the upper parts of the land including the house were all forcibly expropriated. Some rebuilding lower down was then necessary to replace various facilities.

On the personal side, Ian and his family moved from Lisbon in 1949 to a rented house in Oeiras surrounded by a large garden and open fields, all of which have now been built on. Ian served as a Churchwarden at St. George's from 1947-1962 and became a Trustee as well, for many years he also served on the British Hospital Committee (he was supported in all of these activities by his wife). In the early 1960s they moved to a house overlooking the Tagus in Alto do Lagoal, Caxias which was built to Monica's design and they lived here until all their children were married. In 1980 they moved to an apartment in Cascais where they were to spend the rest of their years together. (Ian eventually died in 1988 and Monica in 1992, both are buried at St. George's Cemetery in Lisbon alongside Uncle John.)

By the second half of the 20th century however the family were rather short of sons. In the UK Cunison III married briefly when in his 60s and had no children. Colin had married Mary Hindmarsh in 1939 and their only child a son, John Whitelock, was born in 1941. With his education finished John came out to Portugal

to work under his uncle Ian in 1960, he was in the process of learning the business when one of the left-wing factory workers denounced him to the PIDE (Salazar's Secret Police) for working without a permit. He was promptly deported but came back to finish his job when he was granted a working visa by the Portuguese Embassy in London. On his return to the London office he worked under his father and uncle until they both retired in the 1970s, he then took over as Managing Director, a job he continues to hold. In 1973 John married Judith Crawford and their only daughter Joanna was born in 1974, Judith however, had a son James William (Jim) from a previous marriage whom John adopted and who took the surname of Rankin. Jim joined the family business in 1990, at the time of writing he is Sales Director, has been married to Sarah Cross for over a year and as yet has no heirs. RB&S in the UK no longer operates from London. They sold their premises in Bermondsey and in 1999 they moved to new offices and warehouses at Long Crendon, an area of Buckinghamshire with excellent motorway access.

Out here in Portugal both Ian's daughters Jane and Carol were married and living in the UK by the time their brother Ewan joined the family business in 1970. He started work on the factory floor and gradually moved up through the clerical side of the business before he eventually became General Manager. The 1974 Revolution brought huge problems to many manufacturers, and the RB&S cork factory at Caramujo suffered its fair share, more structured unions making impossible demands, strikes, lock-ins and inflation running at 35%. Ian found it increasingly difficult to cope with the situation and retired in 1978/9 leaving Ewan in charge. By 1982 the factory had been running at a loss for some years and needed a large injection of capital if it was to continue. Such an investment was thought to be unwise at that time and consequently the factory was taken over by its Portuguese accountant, Carlos Alberto Rocha who kept the name of Rankins Ltd. He ran the factory for a few years until it went into liquidation; selling the freehold to the Portuguese Government cleared the debts.

With the factory disposed of Ewan worked as a director of another cork company until 1995 when he resigned to look after the

4 cork properties and other RB&S interests in Portugal, when not doing this he can usually be found on the golf course. In 1980 he married Karena Patricia Mitchell but sadly they have no children, they spend much of their time living at the *Quinta Nova monte* that has been extended yet again. With communications having improved dramatically over the last 20 years the properties can now be reached in under an hour from central Lisbon, a journey that even in the author's lifetime used to take at least half a day.

Jane and Carol both have 3 children from their marriages and are now enjoying being grandparents. Jane has bought a small *monte* near *Quinta Nova* for occasional visits with her husband Neil Blair, Carol and her husband Peter Mason spend at least 7 months of the year in Cascais where they now own what was Ian and Monica's apartment. Both girls and their families take a keen interest in Portugal and their Rankin heritage.



Ian showing visitors cork sheets at the Caramujo factory – 1930s
(The small man at the back is Willie Tait who was the General Manager of the factory)

SOURCES:

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(The author would like to record her gratitude to John Cooper Rankin for his invaluable help with the early part of the account)

PORTUGAL

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Carol Rankin was born and brought up in Portugal. Having gained her BA (Hons) as a mature student, for the last decade she has lectured extensively on Portuguese History and History of Art to specialist cultural group, has written various sections for inclusion in two guide books on Portugal and contributed an article entitled “Canon, Communication and Cork – an account of the Pope Family in Portugal” to the 25th Annual Report and Review of 1998.